ACNE STUDIOS
*
BRAND IDENTITY ANALYSIS
BA HONS FASHION PR
London College of Fashion
Ilona Angelova
Year 1
Katerina Jebb
Self Portrait - 2003

Hans Bellmer
The doll
Andre Kertesz

William Wegman
In the dark a coat rack looks like a man
1972
Jack Pierson
Andre Simeons Gallery (left)
Angel Youth (right)

Jamie Hawkesworth
Benjamin Alexander Huseby
Stills from Goodbye Johnny Angel
music video for Primal Scream
THE LETTER

The pages of this book are a written and visual analysis, which have the aim to illustrate understanding of the world of the fashion brand Acne Studios. It looks at the different creative individuals with whom the brand has collaborated with through the years. The book looks at selected campaigns, collaborations and collections and represents the works by single images on pages, in order to visually engage and capture the values of Acne Studios’ creative team. The analyses are based on the concept - look at the brand’s surrounding in order to understand the creative director and the brand from inside.

The book is created as a magazine, where flipping through the pages instead finding adverts as a beginning, it provides visuals of the work of artists, photographers and stylists involved in Acne’s work. This idea is based on the idea of ‘tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.’ It believes that showing people’s work gives a visual experience of their personalities, visual aesthetics and values. This helps the attempt to understand what it is about Acne, which makes it so unique in the fashion industry.

It also provides the reader with two main analyses, which focus on the values of the brand. They are entitled The Story and Acne Paper. Here the publication is seen as one of the most important aspects of understating Acne’s identity. The magazine is their unconventional way to promote (advertise) the brand and its analysis gives an opportunity for insightful research about Acne itself.

They are followed by writings on Acne’s collaborations: artist Katerina Jebb, who is the brand’s most recent collaborator and Luis Venegas, editor of Candy magazine. The analyses see the importance of associating the brand with innovative individuals, while building its image as an innovator itself.

Looking at Candy magazine and its collaboration with Acne Studios gave the opportunity to explore the culture phenomena of transsexuality and its impact on fashion today. This controversial topic also inspired the print and online trend features written as possible content in Acne Paper. The two features are dedicated to Antony Hegarty and his ideas as a transgendered musician, artist and co-founder of the Future Feminism Foundation.

In order to illustrate understating of the brand, the book also contains SWOT and Competitor analysis. The aim of the SWOT analysis is to represent Acne itself, as well as the analyse of its competitors is important aspect of understating the brand’s way to stand out of the crowd. I have also created two Pinterest boards, which believe to answer the brand vision about its use of social media channels.

As an end of this journey is a written piece as a conclusion, which aims to sum up my understanding of the broad cultural influences of the brand, its values and vision.

Ilona Angelova / BA Fashion PR
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Ilona Angelova
London College of Fashion
BA Hons Fashion PR
Year 1
Term 2 - March 2014

email: ilona.angelovaa@gmail.com
telephone: 07887 3 999 32
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THE STORY

ACNE
ABMITION TO CREATE NOVEL EXPRESSION

"We loved everything about the Factory, how they looked like, and the way they did things - whether you were old or young didn’t matter."

JONNY JOHANSSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

BY ILONA ANGELOVA

Dannis Hopper, 1963
At the beginning it was Andy Warhol and Interview magazine, as the creative director Jonnny Johansson says himself. This story is based on the fact that pop artist’s multidisciplinary approach to art serves as an inspiration to Acne’s founders and is seen as a fundamental aspect of the building the image of the brand. It has the aim to draw different references to Andy’s philosophy and start explaining the brand’s vision.

In 1996 in Stockholm the creative team of Acne was formed as a digital-film-design-creative collective. The brand was born from the idea of its creators to ‘dip their hands into every possible pocket of art and culture’ (Dazed). Having said that, it is mostly reflected by Acne Paper, as well as the collaborations of the brand with different artists and today’s culture influencers. Similarly to the large range of Warhol’s art works, Acne Studios provides its consumers not only with innovative clothing, but with unique cultural experiences and inspirations.

Citing Johansson who says that at the beginning they ‘loved everything about The Factory, how they looked like, and the way they did things—whether you were old or young didn’t matter’ (Interview magazine). A possible reference between Warhol’s factory and Acne’s team exists. The creative director says: ‘We wanted to be a creative entity, an eclectic universe.’ It is about the idea of having a place for people to create art in many different ways and everyone to be a part of the creation of something valuable and meaningful.

Through referencing interviews with the creative director, it is evident that Johansson and his team aim to create something “novel with integrity.” Honesty is considered as one of the biggest values of the brand, and when a bit of mystery (one of Warhol’s strongest personal characteristics) is added, creates Acne’s formula of playing the game in the industry. This statement could be proved by their refusal to have classical advertising campaigns. It could be analysed as an attempt to save their integrity. People tend not to believe in adverts. There is a created impression about advertising in general: that there is always something hidden behind an advert, which aims to manipulate people’s purchasing decisions. This is because the product is always shown in its full magnificence.

There is this moment of kitsch and superficiality in today’s post-modernistic approach to fashion and its visual language. Too many references are taken and mixed together. All the references tend to lose their original meaning when they are put together in a mixture of different ideas and references. The final image is produced solely to sell people something they have already had and which has been recycled many times. Avoiding this, Acne has positioned itself as an innovator within the industry.

The brand remains honest to its consumers by actual activities, collaborations and unique inspirations, which build its identity. This is considered as the right way to make people believe you who you are and what you stand for. Furthermore, it distinguishes Acne from its competitors and supports its vision and aim to inspire its consumers. However, the brand does not have a priority to explain everything to everyone. Similarly, to the way in which Warhol is described as ‘a person is his art’, the creative director of Acne has become his brand, for whom is very important not to reveal and explain each action he makes, because it is been taken out of his personal life.

This is a story without an end: it is just the beginning of the journey through Acne Studios’ brand identity.

“’It is not about delivering ideas and dreams, it is about making them physical and that is a big challenge... Acne is more than a clothing company’”

JONNY JOHANSSON
Below is an example of one from just a few Acne Studios' advertising campaigns. It is a collaboration with the artist William Wegman, who is famous for photographing his Weimaraners. The use of dogs, instead of conventional models for this advertising campaign, speaks for itself. It could be read as an attempt to escape from classic advertising, as well as to create an image of the brand as a supporter of art and culture. In general, a dog is seen as honest and man’s best friend. There is something very grabbing and innocent in the eyes of these Weimaraners.

“I’m a big fan of William Wegman’s work, its beauty, witty humour and intelligence but also what it says about identity and culture. I always thought it would be interesting to work on a project together. The outcome is beyond all expectation.”

JONNY JOHANSSON (www.itsnicethat.com)

all photos: William Wegman
Acne was founded as a jeans brand; however, it lifted itself very quickly to a high market level within the industry. It owes its success to the ambitious strategies of associating itself with the high-end lifestyles of creative fields like fashion, art, interior design, culture in general.

Acne's managing director Schiller says that when he started at Acne he 'decided to forget the lesson he had learned in school - “analysing markets and figuring out consumers targeting, and he started the opposite way--by making a fantastic product, whether it is a gown or a magazine, if they do this, it will be easy to sell and if people like it, they will come back”. This speaks about Acne's authentic approach. The brand does not try to fit anywhere through doing consumer researches and analysis, its creators are part of the society - the brand’s desirable target market and actual where it is sold.

**Style:** “On the streets with identical chain stores selling identical merchandise, ACNE is perceived as different.” [Dazed]

**Johansson’s signatures:** JUXTAPOSING with:
- Design and attention to details
- Emphasis on tailoring
- Eclectic use of materials
- Custom developed fabrics, which express what the brand stands for; authenticity by creating their own materials with eclectic spirit of the designs, as well as quality and perfect tailoring.

**Words:** offbeat, edgy and slightly twisted, slightly avant-garde and ‘eminently’ wearable, bohemian, but NOT minimal; it is colourful, loving nature, loving life.

**Acne signatures** are pale pink, Swedish grey and sky blue.
In order to get a better grasp of the brand’s identity, a look at the creative director Jonny Johansson’s interests is important. This is inspired by the quote, that a person becomes their art, and in this situation the creative director becomes his brand and vice versa. However, the person behind the company is the former of its identity.

“I like current and honest fashion, which is working with my life, things that are very close to me at that moment, makes it current for me”, Jonny Johansson (Interview magazine).

It is easy to understand the brand’s multidisciplinary approach to fashion when looking at the many interests of its team. For example, Johansson is fascinated by photography, art, architecture and contemporary culture. However, for Interview magazine he says that when he is asked what he is connected to, ‘Neoclassicism is what he brings up’. The Neoclassical movement is known to have modern approach to the creation of its arts, as well mixed with historical references. This is a little bit of what Acne is trying to do today.

The Neoclassical movement drew inspiration from the classical art and culture of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theatre, music and architecture. Furthermore, the Eighteenth century is believed to be the Ages of Enlightenment: Ages of Reason (there is always an added meaning (value) and a reason behind Acne’s creations), as well as Ages of Elegance, where Acne finds itself as elegant, however with a bit of a casual, contemporary twist. As it was shown, references between those neoclassical values and Acne Studios’ visual aesthetics can be made.

Key Terms in Neoclassicism are Order, Balance and Harmony
The movement is about the golden medium, as well as symmetry between objects. These ideas about things which are to be perfectly symmetric and the search for the great medium refer to the vision of Swedish culture. Johansson describes it as Design-wise, which is not minimal, but functional. It is called lagom “just in the middle”. The creative director says that Swedish people like to be in the middle. It is about being in the middle, making references to several things, but never going too far. A little bit of a twist and oddness but still saving the functionality. It sounds like Acne’s golden medium for design.

Characteristics of the Neoclassical period are also austere, pure, clean and masculine, which refers again to the design features of Acne Studios. In general, Neoclassicism was a conscious reaction against the opulence and ostentatiousness of Baroque and Rocco, both associated with the church and the monarchy.

Looking at Acne Studios’ visual culture, collaborations, store designs, etc. many references to Neoclassicism could be made. As a particular example is the collaboration with British born sculpture artist Daniel Silver. For him Jonny says that he was fascinated by the similarity of the way they both work. As the creative director describes it: “it is not a modernistic thing, but more of a neo-classical style with a re-interpretation of classical forms in a contemporary manner” (Dazed).
left: Jacques-Louis David
The Death of Socrates, 1787

right: cover Acne Paper, issue 13,
Spring 2012
Every issue of Acne paper is dedicated to a particular theme, which is broad enough to satisfy even the most creative minds. Every issue approaches its topic from the very close, as well as from the very far perspective, in order to be interesting, different, unpredictable and inspiring. However, this analyses will focus on the last #15 issue entitled “The Actress”. In general, the publication speaks in intelligent and creative manner, while issue #15 have pieces from works by one of the best writers of contemporary literature, such as Joyce Carol Oates, Blonde (2000). This immediately associates the paper, as well as the brand with high cultural pieces of writings.

‘Acne paper’s signature has always been to bridge the past and the present by working around a timeless subject, to make it our own’, says Persson, Editor-in-Chief and Creative Director.

Inside the paper:

Design and content:

Format: Similar to the books found Acne paper is an A3 magazine and it is always a heavy paper with much important content. Its format suggests that this magazine is a paper with value. Apart from its soft paper cover, it looks like a book on the shelves of TASHEN book stores, which people keep for a lifetime. Acna paper has collector value.

Cover: The title of the publication is at the bottom of the page, which suggests to the reader that the magazine is different from other conventional publications. It is designed on a white background and the images are mainly black and white. When put on the page, the image creates the illusion of having a white border around itself. It looks like an old photograph, taken by Polaroid camera, which at some extent might refer to Johansson’s vision of combining past and present.

Furthermore, the image takes most of the space on the front cover, which suggests the importance of the visuals as a communication tool of the brand. This is also seen in Acne Studios as a brand with multidisciplinary approach, as well as a member of the big family together with Acne Digital and Acne Creative.

Visuals: Perhaps, the most interesting fact about the magazine is that it does not accept advertising, similarly to the brand itself, which does not advertise. It demonstrates to big extent the authenticity of the brand and its level of independence.

However, there are two types of visual materials inside the Acne paper #15. These are fashion stories and the images, which complement the features. It is also very likely to see a sequence of images on several pages. In this particular issue for example they are portraits of Hollywood actress by George Hurell. Today, he is known as the man who invented the Hollywood glamour (this is a simple example of Acne’s aim to feature of the best individuals who are related to its topic).

Fashion stories: The brand’s strategy to associate itself with high-end fashion and consequently situate itself on a high level within the industry, is demonstrated by the creative works in Acne Paper.
Within the #15 issue the name of the stylist Mattias Karlsson is found very often, however, in general he is an individual who works closely with Johansson and Persson. Examples of the brands used for photo shoots within this issue are Rochas, Yamamoto, Celine, Carven, Raf Simons and Acne. Furthermore, the different use of models shows the deep exploration of the subject by its creators. In just one of several fashion stories they have used real models and the rest of the shoots are dedicated to different actresses from different age groups such as Onata Aprile and Dina Painsner. In terms of colour palettes Acne’s visuals are often black and white photographs, which give a feeling of nostalgia about a timeless idea, as well as referring to the past by placing it within a modern concept.

Photographers within the issue:
Benjamin Alexander Huseby, Andreas Larsson, Dennis Schoenberg, Paolo Roversi, Vincent Van De Wijngaard, Jamie Hawkesworth, Laura Sciacovelli. Examples of their works are within the pages of this book.

Most of the supportive visual materials of the features are taken by photographers mentioned above, who are common Acne’s collaborators. In this way of thought, the brand creates its own visual materials, which helps it to create an authentic image for itself within the industry.

Features are very long, usually at least 2-3 A3 pages. The text layout is designed to fill the entire page, divided in two or three columns. The features are smart, insightful and analytical pieces of writings. Their aim is to show a different angle of the topic by referring to variety of fields, cultures and people. They also aim to inspire and educate. The pieces are not created to be on the tube reading. Their format and content ask the reader to dedicate time to read them, as well as to provoke the readers to think, as well as to give them new ideas.

Furthermore, most of the features in #15 issues are interviews or conversations between the writers and the individuals interviewed. This approach gives a feeling of novelty to an old, but timeless subject. It also makes the features special, in a way that the conversations are authentically created for this magazine and its readers. It could be said that this allows Acne Paper to approach the subject in its own way and to make it its own.

In addition, a comparison between Acne paper and Interview magazine, which was started by Andy Warhol back in the 1960s, could be made. Interview featured interviews with celebrities and famous people who Andy asked questions such as ‘do you dream’. The answers of those sorts of questions automatically give people a deep insight about the character of an individual. The same as Warhol’s magazine, Acne paper is interested in people’s way of thinking, ideas and inspiration behind their work. Assumedly, this is the reason why conversations and interviews dominate the content of the magazine.

Style, fonts – The font used in the features is Serif, which is related to their length. Long texts are usually written in Serif in order to make them easier to read. Furthermore, this type of font is usually used for books and publication with serious content. The Serif font used in Acne Paper is Didot Font. It is known to be created for “one of the most dramatic magazine reinventions in history.” H&FJ Didot honors a heroic period in French typographic history.

Vocabulary: smart as well as simple. Acne commends intelligently on subjects, but at the same time in very clean and supposedly in a simple way for discussion. Sometimes because of their unique character, the ideas themselves are a bit complicated, so the language remains smart but not difficult.
"...to do a movie is a trip itself; it is a trip within you and outside you. Acting is about incredible imagination."

ISABELA HUPPERT
THE COLLABORATION

KATERINA

“I like collaboration that are not about co-branding, that are about experience”

JONNY JOHANSSON

Who is Katerina Jebb?

Jebb was born in England in 1962 and studied photography in California. In 1991, while working as a photographer for the French newspaper Liberation, she was involved in a car accident, which left her right arm paralyzed. This accident could have put an end of her career as a photographer and artist. However, her passion for creating helped her find a way to make life-size images by using scanners. One of Jebb’s most famous scans are of herself, lying down on a high resolution scanning machine.

“Progressively, she diversified, posing subjects and objects, exploring the medium in parallel with the expanding possibilities in digital technology.”

Katerina Jebb
for Purple Magazine
KATERINA X COMME DES GARSON

"I dedicated the interior design of DSM New York, to the outsider spirit"

REI KAWAKUBO

Rei Kawakubo invites Katerina Jebb to create and show work at the opening of DSM in New York in May 2014. Meanwhile there is a Balthus exhibition at the Metropolitan museum of Art. It is the first retrospective exhibition of Balthus in the USA in last 30 years.

This inspired the artist to scan Balthus’ working garment and create art pieces, which complemented the opening of the DSM store. The Balthus’ working garment is famous for never being washed by the painter for over sixty years. It brings the feeling that the artist went very close to something very personal, as well as something that has in itself a long history of work.

However, the artist has also created several fragrance campaigns for Comme des Garcon.
Katerina Jebb
left: Purple Fashion, Fall/Winter 2013
right: Blonde Hairbrush
Acne began collaboration with Katerina Jebb in 2010, when they asked her to create a video featuring a Swarovski solitaire crystal on a scanner. Three years later, the artist creates the prints for Acne Studios’ Men and Women’s Autumn/Winter ’13 collections. Both collections were presented in Paris.

Apart from the business decision to show in Paris, Jebb as is based in Paris, and the Musee Galleria was a key element for the creation of the collections. Jebb and Johansson used the galleries’ archives to select fashion pieces, which Katerina then scanned and subsequently made the images into collages. The final images were integrated by Johansson into Acne’s ready-to-wear collections.

It is clear that Katerina Jebb is seen as an influential figure in today’s art culture. The aim of this analysis is to show the connection between Kawakubo, Jebb and Acne on a level of innovation. Kawakubo has a strong reputation of innovator herself.

Jebb could also be considered as an innovator in the contemporary art scene, because of the finding of a new way of creating images. This is one more example of how Acne Studios communicates its values to its consumers, as well as building the brand’s high association with today’s high-culture influencers.
Vivianne Sassen
left: Acne Studios Autumn/Winter 2013
right: Vivianne Sasse’s work
Katerina Jebb and Acne Studios played with the concept of pop art, creating art images from fashion garments. Their collaboration takes the idea that objects can become art’s subject matter. Pieces of Acne’s collection were scanned by Katerina and developed as pieces of art. It is well known that Johansson plays his ideas around Warhol’s concepts with a great success. Nat Finkelstein, The Factory photographer says: “Andy took the artefacts of ordinary life and used them to create mirror of society. He put into an assailable Gestalt the signs and symbols of reality. Not creator...an innovator, Andy was the Sony of modern art” (1996).

Acne Studios and Jebb take objects from one of the biggest obsessions of contemporary culture - fashion. The idea behind these scans of pieces from Acne’s collection could be seen as an attempt to blur the boundaries between fashion and art. As Malcolm Barnard (1996) says: “But fashion could never hope to achieve the status of an art until it overcame its ephemerality. Closely associated with its theatricality.” The question is: could this collaboration be considered as an art form. By documenting fashion garments in this artistic way, the pieces of clothing automatically became something more than just fashionable clothes for a particular season.

A photograph is forever, as Warhol says “people change, but images do not.” Photographing fashion in this non-commercial way, but at the same time with the final aim to sell the garments, gives fashion the long lastingness it needs to be considered as art. The feeling of these garments to be seen as art could be created by the fact that the images do not have a date or a season. This saves the images from obsolescence.

Acne should continue its collaboration with Jebb and work on an exhibition in collaboration with the artist. Possibly, she can create some more abstract scans out of Acne garments.
Hilma af Klimt
The Ten Largest
Acne Studios takes original paintings of the Swedish abstract artist Hilma Af Klimt to interpret them into new special collection of sweatshirts, tops, totes and scarves for spring 2014. Af Klimt was an avant-garde artist in the late 19th and early 20th century, who is often juxtaposed to artists such as Mondrian, Kandinsky and Malevich. She began painting abstractions in 1906, years before artists such as Kandinsky had his first exhibition in 1912 or Mondrian, who established himself on the art avant-garde scene with the work he produced after the 1920s. Moreover, she is known to have made automatist drawings decades before the surrealists (Searle, 2006).

However, Af Klimt lived and worked in isolation and ignorance from the European avant-garde movement. As Searle (2006) says in the Guardian to be a woman artist in the early 20th century was difficult, but to be a woman artist and to believe as she did, was even more difficult. She believed her art was meant to be for humanity in the future and stipulated that it should not be shown until 20 years after her death. During her life she was convinced that people were not ready for her paintings.

Acne was fascinated by her extreme ideas and beliefs. The complex collection of works that she created was driven by her interests in esoteric and occult questions of life. Assumably, the brand embraced her colourful abstractions, prompted by her desire for a reconciliation of contradictions. Her aim was unity and totality. In the art pieces, which Acne used for its collection, her ideas are driven by the attempt to visualize a higher union between the opposites of male and female and light and darkness.

In general, it is interesting to see how brands are able to communicate their aspirations and ideas through the work of other individuals with a similar way of thinking. Af Klimt’s painting printed on Acne’s sweatshirt is a big statement about the brand. She is a very controversial and spiritual artist, who once forgotten, then began to be recognised as a pioneer within abstract art.

In order to explain how she is relevant to the brand one should start with Af Klimt’s ideas about mixing male and female and expressing a possible unity and totality between them. As it was explained in the analyses of Acne x Candy magazine (Luis Venegas), Johansson has been always interested in blurring the lines between male and female designs and creating garments which are slightly twisted and create confusion. Af Klimt did not challenge gender stereotypes; however, she had the avant-garde idea of females and males bonding together and existing as one. On a spiritual level expressed in a painting or seen in the forms of a fashion silhouette, the idea of juxtaposing men and women to a level to make them equal and unified is very much avant-garde for early 20th century; it is avant-garde today.

Moreover, much of Acne Studios’ work shows, reflects or implies references from high culture of Sweden. Acne is a brand with multidisciplinary approach: it is fascinated by different cultures of America for example, collaborates with British artists, but it is good that they also support their cultural heritage and take ideas from cultural individuals on a national level.
"It was the moment for me to do something really straightforward; I wanted it to be really pure. I revisited the classic poem 'Till Havs' (Out to Sea). It's about the power of the sea, and humanity relating to the sea. Stockholm is sixteen islands, so we're brought up with this thing; everyone spends a lot of time in the archipelago. And my mother and father met at sea, so it's a very personal thing." via Dazed Digital

**JUSSI BJORLING - TILL HAVS / OUT AT SEA**

Nu blåser havets friska vind ifrån sydväst
Och smeker ljuvligt sjömans kind av alla windar bäst!
Till havs, till storms, du djärva jakt
Till storms, till havs, var man på vakt
Till havs!

På endlös led är livet fritt, ej trives tvång
När havet sjunger, grönt och vitt,
in sin höga frihetssång
Till havs, till storms, du djärva jakt
Till storms, till havs, var man på vakt
Till havs!

Sväll härligt, sköna segel, sväll i vindens dust
Flyg fram med fröjd mot vågens fjäll
i stundens högsta lust!
Till havs, till storms, du djärva jakt
Till storms, till havs, var man på vakt
Till havs!

Smokey and ocean fresh breeze from the south
And caresses sweet sailor’s kind of all winds the best!
To the sea, to the assault, you bold hunting
For storms, sea, where the guard At sea!

On Endlos suffered life is free, not forced thrives
When the sea sings, green and white, its high freedom song
At sea, the storms, you bold hunting
For storms, sea, each man on guard At sea!

Surge beautiful, beautiful sail swelling in the wind dust
Aerospace forward with delight to scale the mountain of the moment highest desire!
To the sea, to the assault, you bold hunting
For storms, sea, where the guard At sea!
In these paintings I accept the inadequacy of any system of representation to presume truth, and dig for below-human-register frequencies.

HANNELINE ROEBERG
Acne Studios’ Fall 2012 collection is an example of the broad spectrum of Johansson’s inspiration. Behind the strange designs of this winter collection is hidden the influence of three different artists, who have something in common – body obsession.

The result is clothes, a mixture of distorted silhouettes of Andre Kertesz, the erotic sculpture Hans Bellmer and the colour pallet of the painter Hanneline Rogeberg.

This collection proves the aim of the creative director to challenge himself, challenge design, mind and body, as well as to challenge his consumers. Fall 2012 creations explore body proportions and it plays on the border between strange, new and different.
COLLABORATION

ACNE STUDIOS x LUIS VENEGAS

‘It touches on ideas I have always played when designing for Acne, the tension between male and female and what happens when you shift things around a bit’

JONNY JOHANSSON

The capsule collection (2011) with Luis Venegas, editor-in-chief of the cult transsexual magazine Candy is a pure example of an attempt to embrace diversity within today's culture. Venegas created three androgynous shirts in silk, crepe and Italian denim, taking inspiration from transgenderism and cross-dressing. Johansson and Venegas celebrated diversity by designing shirts, which make people ask themselves if it is for a girl or for a boy. The collection has the aim to confuse, but assumably in order to make people think that at the end it is alright to dress how you feel, not according the social norms of gender stereotypes. They are not just the unisex shirts people know, they are garments which make statement about society and its perceptions about diverse people. With the aim to challenge one more time Johansson's work and collaborations, I asked the question ‘Why is Acne Studios so different?'
‘is a fashion and transversal style magazine that doesn’t seek to pretend to fight for anything that it actively does not justify. But if we ever want to stand up for something anything, it would not be ‘equality’, it just does not cross our minds.’

LUIS VENEGAS

Deeper research is required in order to make any definitive statements, but it is interesting to question the idea about diversity and how transgressed people make their mark on popular culture today. Twenty first century societies of big culture influenced by cities tend to become more and more open-minded and for example, transgressed people are more often found as an inspiration for fashion designers, artists, as well as on the pages of leading magazines, within street and club culture.

It is still time for people to forget the old fashion associations about transgressed people. However, there is a possible shift of people’ perceptions. It needs just a look around and among people and see that there are important and successful transgressed individuals in many different business fields.

Transvestites and transsexuals have long been inspiration for different people. For example the relationship between Amanda Lear and Salvador Dali, David Bowie’s muse Romi Haag or Grace Kelly and Divine.

It is important to look at people like Luis Venegas who started Candy the first magazine, which celebrates transvestism, transsexuality, cross-dressing and androgyny in all its all manifestations.

And when something new and different is on the market, it slowly starts making its way in changing people’s perceptions about what society has taught them.

Venegas named his magazine after Candy Darling, who was also a muse of Andy Warhol. The magazine was created with the idea to be something groundbreaking, something which people will think, it has never been done before.

He says that ‘Now trannies in fashion are sort of a trend, but when the first issue of Candy came out in October 2009, no one was doing it. That was way before Andrej Pejic and Lea T. So, I feel like somehow, from my little office, I started something of a trend.’

 Having said that, and having in mind the collaboration with Johansson in 2011, place these two individuals as innovators within their industries. However, it is considered as a brave step for a fashion company, because people need time to accept the challenges of sexual diversity in particular.
The campaign of Acne Studios’ Resort 2013 collection could be considered as inspired by transgender aesthetics. Natasa Vojnovic is a well-established and beautiful female model. However, a closer look at the images of the campaign suggests how well Acne’s team worked the idea of blurring the lines between femininity and masculinity. The choice of a model seems to make sense about the final aim. She has interesting beauty and masculine features.

Shot by Kacper Kasprzyk (left)
STORES

“Every store is different, the idea to make something new, to reflect the local environment and to give the customer a unique experience”

ANDREAS FORNELL

“Open stores in cities they find personally appealing, when everyone else maybe be rushing to China, ACNE was seduced by Japan”.

(Reference)

Acne leaves its signature of being ‘truly different without saying it out loud’ in every aspect of its communication with the public. The brand’s retail spaces are one more example that Acne has a very authentic approach to decision making.

The brand has in-house architect, Andrea Fornell, who designs every store differently. He is a part of the creative collective Bozarthfornell. They are a group of 10 architects who are more than a consultant company. As the architects describe it, Bozarthfornell is a brand, a collective personality based on mutual references and inspiration. However, their focus is fashion retail design and the interiors of Acne, Sandro and Repossi are made under their creativity.

Fornell says about Acne’s stores that ‘every store is different, the idea to make something new, to reflect the local environment and to give the customer a unique experience’.

Furthermore, an article in Another magazine finds the relationship between Acne’s approach and Andy Warhol: ‘Inspiration from Andy Warhol’s multidisciplinary approach to arts seen in their store’s interior’

Flagships: London, Paris, New York City and Tokyo

Tokyo · opened in 2012 · Jonny and architect Andreas Fornell redesigned a raw industrial space in the Aoyoma district (East) to an interior, which resembles a modern Swedish house.

Perforated walls designed by Fornell are often seen in Acne’s stores. The idea behind perforating them is an attempt to achieve transparency, a sort of honest, but not total, openness. This interior design reflects to the full the brand’s values of integrity, as well as a little bit of mystery.
The brand's eclectic art universe. Playing with the interior design of retail spaces enable Acne to communicate very well its brand values to the public.

Any interest in the artworks in the store is satisfied by readings about them. It is interesting to look at the book related to Goodman and his painting in the store. It is also interesting to find out that his work was inspired by Baroque, the opposite movement of Neoclassicism, and its heavy ornaments. This might be analysed as that the creative director does not put himself boundaries only with the ideas he truly likes.

93 Pelham Street: As Schiller, the managing director, says this is the 'territory of yummy mummies'. Once again Acne's store reflects the environment of the area it is placed and this store in particular is a picture of Mayfair elegance. A statue of Helmut Lang expresses Johansson's fascination with sculpture, as well as customers are invited to enjoy a roof garden.

Paris Store: For the store in Paris Johansson and Fornell again redesigned an old garage space and turned into modern piece of interior phenomenon. It is interesting to follow the fact that Acne's team always chooses to re-construct places, which are not meant to be retail stores. In the Parisian store, there is also a marble sculpture by English artist Daniel Silver, with who Acne did a capsule collection. Johansson says about the store that 'about Paris it had to be something very Stockholm, with the materials and functionality.' Perhaps, because they moved their showroom from Stockholm to Paris due to commercial and business reasons.

Stockholm office: Old Town, Lilla Nygatan 23, Old Bank Building

The creative team of Acne likes to surround itself with inspirational spaces. For example in the office in Stockholm there is vintage copies of the 1950's Fair magazine: one of the most talked about and influential magazines ever created. It was an icon, as its founder Feur Corules in the world of fashion, as well as graphic design and publishing. Contributors to Fair Magazine were Tennessee Williams (American play writer), W.H. Auden (American poet), Jean Cocteau (writer) and Salvador Dali.

Words: for the eyes and the mind, unique, original, and iconic

‘the magazine was influencing the time, not reflecting it’
left: William Wegman - Detail from Reading Two Books, 1971
right: Hans Bellmer - Dolls
SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Very well established reputation as a ‘different’ and innovative brand
Successfully established association of the brand with high-end brands and culture
Multidisciplinary approach, associated with Acne Design and Acne Creative- well known within a broad creative society and defines their target audience
Well maintained reputation of integrity and mystery in the brand identity, which makes them interesting to the public
Not using conventional way of advertising, having their own magazine as a tool to communicate their values to the right people, it is seen as a good way of establishing integrity and authenticity.
‘Frankly, nutty decisions’ and ‘Shrewd business practices.
Very broad and successful cultural inspiration for collections, projects and collaborations

The best brand in Sweden, which means no competitors on national level
Working with in house architect-different and recognizable retail space
Good quality of the clothes matching their prices
Eclectic use of materials, custom developed fabrics and high attention to details and cuts
Stores in top 17 cities around the world
Good locations of the London stores, South Kensington and Dover Street, with reaching different types of high-end consumers
Spaces in top shopping centres e.g. Selfridges, Harrods, Liberty, etc.
the staff is represented with a very good image, as well as good knowledge and arty engaging atmosphere in store
Very nice packing, e.g. receipts in small pink envelops

WEAKNESSES

No online brand content
Not very various social media presence, mainly collections’ looks and catwalk videos for example
Sometimes the merchandise can be considered as too quirky for ‘ordinary’ people, which for me personally once again define their audience. It is not for everybody

OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding their stockist with countries likes Italy or Middle East for example
Improving the online content of the brand including social media presence, but need to find a way to save their brand values and identity; social media has the reputation of revealing secrets, so for Acne will be quite interesting to work on their Social media in order to engage more, but not to reveal too much
Opportunity for developing of an even better product, better quality and design details, which will place Acne on a higher level in the industry. This will be an opportunity for attracting more consumers.

Opportunity for saving the old consumers by still keeping a range of affordable merchandise

THREATS

Growing popularity of the so-called ‘contemporary’ market, which involves designer clothes on affordable prices.
Well known and well established high-end brands, which lead the market
Growing popularity of social media and online branded content and its main use for promotion by other brands
Compeptitors with longer stockists
CÉLINE
In order to understand why Acne is so different, this book will provide analyses of three other brands - Celine, JW Anderson and Alexander Wang, also considering them as Acne competitors. The analyses will attempt to draw the difference between the brands’ identities.

Starting with Celine, it is obvious that there are similarities in the design aesthetics of both brands, which are silhouettes inspired by androgyny. Both designers add a bit of a twist when designing their collections. Phoebe Philo says that ‘she likes androgyny in her clothes, in the face of the models wearing these clothes and even in their body language.’ The designer also shares her fascination with menswear and explains the inspiration she finds in the idea of having limits. For her, menswear is about limits. It is true that men usually have a set uniform and for her there is something liberating in not having too many choices. Philo says that this is something women are responding to in her work. Her designs are also a bit strange, interesting and different. She has a Parisian classical chic aesthetic. Celine is very classical, but at the same time has the twist. As the designer says, ‘she has a natural ability of making things to look a bit fucked.’ It could be seen as empowering, which is pretty close to liberating, this Yves Saint Laurent’s value. There is a connection between her and Johansson in the way they both give something different to women in order to empower them and allow them to stand for their aspirations. Perhaps because personally Philo says she often feels insecure and I can say her designs are a way to secure herself and women who follow her. Phoebe Philo is a mother of three children. The way she deals with personal life and her position at Celine has been an inspiration for many women. Her lifestyle reflects what Celine as a brand stands for. This is a brand for the real woman. Philo says that Celine for her is also ‘a real life.’ She says: ‘I hope women identify with me, because I identify with them. I am a woman living in a very real world. I have responsibilities at work and at home, dealing everyday with trying to get everybody’s needs met.’ Philo also says that ‘she does not like clothes imposing themselves on women: they are to be used in real life.’

Both Celine and Acne Studios embody the idea of integrity in a different ways. To give an example for Celine, it is well expressed in its advertising campaigns. In order to understand their campaigns, it is important to look at Juergen Teller. He has been the photographer of all Celine campaigns since 2008, when Philo was appointed as Creative Director of the brand. He as a photographer and Celine as a brand have this idea about the natural aesthetics of appearances of the 1990s. It was time when kitsch and established stereotypes about beauty were rejected in fashion. It was about reflecting real life, mostly seen in the work of Corinne Day and Teller for example. For me this is what put closer the vision of Acne and Celine. The idea about remaining real and honest: it is about saying the truth. The adverts suggest integrity in the way the model Daria Werbowy is shot with a lack of make-up; she looks amazingly beautiful and comfortable in her natural skin. Teller’s technique of over-exposure makes images light and full of life which gives them kind of simplicity and brings them closer to reality. It is not surprising that for the last couple of years we mostly see the face of Werbowy in Celine’s campaigns. Looking at her personality, it is easy to see that she really fits the idea about a representation of the ‘the real woman.’ First considering she is now over 30, it make a ‘real and strong woman’, with a lot of life experience. The model also had a few years away from the industry and assumably the designer can see some crossing points in their lives’ stories. Philo (39) also says that she is looking forward to being older. She is interested in older women than her, their way of thinking and living. However, in their campaigns they show a woman that “they know and understand, who is real to them.”

In terms of innovation, Lulu Kennedy, a founder of Fashion East, says that Pheobe was a ‘game-changer’. In Parisian fashion, which is well-known with taking its
inspiration from history and traditional notions of chic, Celine’s creative director addresses femininity and modernity by “opening up a wider discussion about women’s lives, which reaches beyond fashion.” Her designs are very fresh, unconventional, modern and perfectly classic. There is something about her and the way she delivers her vision. Philo manages very well to combine “classicism and badness, fantasy and craziness.” For her the consistent threats are the fabric, silhouettes and constant learning. In terms of fabric, it sounds a bit limiting, but this is what inspires her. She focuses on fabric developing, exploring and creating.

A place for comparison between Acne and Celine also finds Philo’s words that there is always a sense of street culture in her work, something also seen in Acne as a jeans brand. What could be more street cultural than jeans? Celine has established its classics as a brand, pieces which people go to buy specifically, such as the ‘Luggage tote bag’, the crepe jumpsuit or the fluid wide-legged trousers. This is something, which makes it stronger than Acne in terms of products.

When it comes to website and social media comparison, Acne Studios has more online presence than Celine. Celine’s website is quite similar, simple and clean aesthetically, as well as laconic (short-spoken). They both focus on collections presentations, catwalk show videos and look books, as well as archives, stores, etc. Differently, Acne has the option for online shopping directly from the website, where Celine has a separate one, which sells only the brand’s classics bags such as luggage tote bags and the luggage phantom bag. This might be considered as Celine’s disadvantage from a commercial point of view.

Celine does not have an Instagram, Twitter or Tumblr account. Its Facebook page is actually a fan page, which was updated for the last time on the 20th of March 2012, almost two years ago. It might be assumed that for a luxury, classical and sophisticated brand like Celine, its women are supposed to be professionals, with busy lifestyles, who do not really spend much time on Facebook. For Acne their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are purely developed for promotional purpose and show collections and collaboration projects.

For example, Philo says that she does not want images of her collections, to be upload online straightforward the catwalk shows. She says: “Content for the sake of more content is devalued content,” and the designer explains that collections are for stores and to be bought, the communication should be useful for the consumers and posting photos of something, which cannot buy for six months, is not useful.
Isa Genzken, a German artist born in 1948 is believed to be arguably one of the most important and influential female artists of the past thirty years. This exhibition is the first retrospective of her diverse body of work in an American museum, as well as the largest to date. Genzken’s more recent assemblage sculptures, which includes not only three-dimensional work but also paintings, photographs, collages, drawings, artist’s books, films, and public sculptures—is still largely unknown to America.

The exhibition is made possible by Celine, as well as major support provided by The Modern Women’s Fund, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, as well as Lonti Ebers. It could be said that Celine’s values as a brand are very well communicated by this project. It is seen as an attempt to support great women and their work. The association that the brand makes with art and in particular, institutions like MOMA and Andy Warhol Foundation is something which Acne Studios would do too. The difference in the messages of the two brands are seen in the reflection of their consumers. The profiles of Acne and Celine’s women are perhaps different, but they are also overlapping in terms of culture preferences. They both speak to self-aware, high-cultured and professional women, (men) in general. However, Celine is focus on the ‘real’ woman and her life (creative industry or finance), Acne’s consumers are more quirky, open-minded and creative.

Isa Genzken is not an obvious choice when it comes to a fashion’s collaborations; however, it reflects the authentic approach of Celine. The artist is in her 60s now and tends to shop, as Philo says ‘at charity shops and makes multilayered, challenging art that is hard to categorize’ (forum.thefashionspot.com).
A very young brand, which is on schedule for LFW since February 2011, however, it has been one to watch since then. Anderson arouses furore and confuses people with his quite challenging designs for both men and women, which seem that they almost blended both genders together. The idea behind this is more deeply situated than just being on the surface of playing with gender identities. It is about the relationship between the two genders. As the designer says: 'I love the relationship between men and women—that coupling, men with men, women with women and men, that kind of mixture of sex and sharing of garments. It's about wearing clothes that tell a story and an emotion, it's not just about gender.'

Purely aesthetically, the brand is build on the idea of androgyny. Anderson personally says that he thinks the brand will always be about androgyny. Within the brand of Anderson, it is seen as a way of exploring new worlds. It is seen as a way of experimenting with new ideas and pushing fashion design to move, as he feels nothing new has been done recently.

The designer does not fly in the clouds and does not consider himself as an artist: neither does he consider fashion as an art form. He sees it more as an archetype, where you are trying to build a silhouette, which itself is very similar to building. In fashion designing one is trying to create a new structure, a new proportion, a new shape. What drives him is the idea of finding something new in terms of proportion.

His biggest advantage is that he stands for fashion design to evolve and in order to do so, Jonathan is open to the idea of wrongness and understands that evolution does not happen, without criticism. Something Johansson is concerned about.

The biggest similarity between the two designers is in the fact that they both do not look at designing clothes on a first place-commercially. Moreover, they both try to escape from it, considering it as a wrong approach. The same as Celine and Acne, Jonathan believes that design is about contribution, 'in a weird way-giving.' He sees the idea about a brand, as a space, where people want to dream in. Furthermore, Celine and Acne also create this kind of spaces, where their consumers are free to dream in, even when it comes to very reality of Phoebe Philo.

Anderson strongly believes in the power of not compromising. He says, ‘When I was at Prada, they did not compromise, and it is the most powerful and incredible brand, because ultimately, they have integrity.’ From this statement it is clear that for the different identities of the three brands, integrity lies somewhere in their centre.

From the advertising campaigns of JW Anderson, it seems that the brand is for young women, who want to experiment and feel different, as well as to be real and are not afraid of making mistakes. Celine on the other hand is about the real woman, who faces the real life. However, isn’t it experimenting part of real life? Yes, it is, but it is just a different aspect. It is possible to assume that the young woman of Anderson would wear Celine too. These types of girls are strong and the empowerment of Celine is something, which suite them as a brave and ambitious young women.
Jamie Hawkesworth photographs situations that display everyday realities. From the post-industrial north, to train stations and suburban estates - he plucks his subjects from the street and places them into the prescribed context of fashion. (Taken from conversationwith.biz)

‘It’s the simplicity that I really love about taking portraits like this and maybe that keeps things honest.’

To capture the reality and to save the moment of unpredictability of ideas, the photographer usually goes off to places like Liverpool or Newcastle. The idea is to explore, to meet new people and to feel different on a new place. For him everything shot in London, feels predictable. His ideas and vision are important for these analyses, because he is a photographer, who works closely with Acne Studios and JW Anderson.

The two brands are situated as different within the market, each of them has its own values. However, the two brands need people with different vision, people who are trying to get away from the commercial production and who are trying to create something new with a different point of view.

The love for exploration and challenge of Jamie fits very well the visions of Jonny Johansson and Jonathan Anderson. Working with this kind of photographer, they secure themselves to have unpredictable and non-commercial result in order to promote their brands in an appropriate way for them.
Alexander Wang is another very young designer with a strong vision and authentic approach. The business of the brand is run by the Wang family. It is interesting the role, which family plays when building the identity of a brand. For example, Phoebe, mother of three children, her lifestyle as a mother and woman reflects very much what the brand is about. In addition, Acne is run by a creative collective, however, they are not relatives, the idea of building this ‘creative universe’ by certain people, build them as a family within the house of the brand.

The first collection of Alexander Wang was shown in 2007 and since then took the best of it and develops it with each following collection. Aesthetically, Wang also has this slouchy; casually cool ‘downtown style’, a mixture of eighties, French chic and rock grunge. He elevates the everyday, the idea of ease in his designs. Similarly to what Philo and Johansson do by creating clothes which reflect real life.

However, Wang expresses this vision in a different way, by designing sportswear. He takes the sweatshirt for example: a garment made for lounging on the sofa and transforms it in something as he says ‘completely abstract’. Similarly, to JW Anderson, Alexander Wang has two important things for him. He wants to tell a story with his work and want to feel the connection with the customers. For Wang the connection between music and fashion is very important. He says that so much of what happened in fashion, can be or should be attributed to music. The idea about the concert is a big inspiration about his catwalk shows. When he organises it, the designer wants to bring this excitement, the energy in the room of the encore moment.

Music and in particular hip-hop is strongly reflected in the T-Alexander Wang campaigns. They highly associate the brand with the hip-hop scene, by featuring for example Azalia Banks. Singers like Rihanna are often seen performing at Wang’s afterparties, shop openings and catwalk shows. It is a successful way to communicate and promote what T-Wang is about and make it popular very quickly among consumers, whom culture is seen in casual and sporty dressing. This associations set Wang apart from Acne, Celine and JW Anderson, where the three brands do not go so deep into the concept of casual clothing. However, the visual and design aesthetics of Alexander Wang still have many crossing points.

Inside Interview magazine: People quickly fell not only for Wang’s luxury refinement and clean silhouettes but, more importantly, for his ability to bring a youthful sensibility so playfully and flippantly into his pieces as if an Alexander Wang girl could shop high-end and still get out of bed looking good in the clothes she had on the night before.

For me is fascinating how fast his clean and simple vision became such a big thing. The idea of taking something very simple as the sweater and transforming into luxurious, stylish and different garment, could be considered as innovative. Something, which is also seen in Acne, which started as a jeans brand and elevated itself to a certain level of luxury. After Wang’s first show, even Diana Von Furstenberg asks him to create a sweater for her and later she becomes his mentor. Wang also receives a huge support from Anna Wintour, which automatically lifts the young designer to very mature and high-level of thinking and appreciation.

Wang says he created T by Alexander Wang with the idea to provide people with what they need for everyday, e.g. basic t-shirts. Apart from Alexander Wang the brand, which casual chic can be worn for a special evenings.

In addition to the campaign analyses, they are about the empowerment, which Wang also gives to its consumers. The idea about sport might be seen as an attempt to speak also to women with strong sense about themselves and who does not look for a conventional way to feel sexy and desired, but casual, simple and sporty reflects their strong personalities.
ALEXANDER WANG NEW YORK FLAGSHIP

The flagship store in New York is famous with its Cage installation, which every season features work by different artists or creative individuals. The idea behind every project is to reflect the inspiration of a current collection or different events associated with the brand. Visually, it is very artistic and creates gallery atmosphere, which places the in-store experience of its visitors on a higher level. It strongly engages them with the visual aesthetics of the brand, also creates the feeling of being part of something different every season stronger. It is also a way of Wang to maintain its image, to do different collaborations and to create his store as a place for art and fashion.

Installation 14

Alexander Wang worked with florist Jeff Leatham to create floating hydrangeas as an installation of 3000 of them. Leatham previously created floating hydrangeas for the opening of the store in 2011, this collaboration coincides with the stores 2-year anniversary.

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Acne Studios is ‘lucky’ enough to be found by a team with already well-established reputation within the creative fields. The idea about Acne is born in a circle of creative people and this allowed them to promote themselves very quickly among influential individuals. All that a new brand needs in order to build its image quickly and efficiently is its aimed consumers to be influencers among the society.

From Johansson’s words ‘I work to have fun’, it seems like he plays a game. It feels as brand’s decisions are made on intuition, triggered by the instincts of the creative team. As Johansson says, ‘We knew as consumers that if we liked something we did not care if it was sweater, vintage or couture.’

As I said before Acne does not try to fit in any specific target consumer group, because he already is part of this culture of influential people, they just had to get them to wear it. They knew if they create something very good, it would sell. Acne’s ‘coolness’ is something, which comes from inside. As it was mentioned that looking at the person behind the company, people understand the brand. In other words, a brand has the personality of its creators; in a way we often hear ‘Andy Warhol is his art’. This allows them to experiment, be themselves and do what they believe in.

For their first denim trousers, Jonny says ‘The strategy was to get someone cool to wear it in front of our colleagues and it worked. Fashion insiders, graphic designers, filmmakers · hipster kids’ (people from Johansson’s surrounding wore the jeans.) Their aim was ‘the creative kids’ in Stockholm.

The creative director also says something very interesting and simple, which explains their price points and positioning on the marker and in people’s mind. He explains that for them the same consumer who was able to afford expensive garments was averse to buy from high-street labels. In addition, it is not because buying into the logo of a luxury label, but these people buy into an idea, quality and design, the story behind the brand and its authenticity. In other words · a different product with value.
Originally, from Chichester, South West England, Antony Hegarty has become a significant figure in the New York avant-garde scene since Antony and the Johnsons won the Mercury music prize in 2005. The musician is a visual artist as well as a co-founder of the Future Feminist Foundation. As he says in an interview for the book Let’s start a pussy riot (2013) the term “Future Feminism” was first used as an attempt to describe the approach of four artists who he feels aligned with: Kembra Pfahler, Johanna Constantine and Bianca and Sierra Casady.
Antony’s biggest concern is about the ecological future of our planet. He considers people’s way of making decisions on a biological level and insists on the alarming need of ‘more oestrogen-based thinking’ in the power structures of our societies.

Future Feminism does not have a manifesto. Antony sees the creative approach to problems as a foundation of the organisation. For the book *Let’s start a pussy riot* (2013) he says ‘It is about eyes wide open, hearts wide open, minds open….’ Antony has a dream of an artist to prompt a different way of thought. He believes that as a life performer he is able to participate in ‘a real rewarding dialogue with the world’.

In an interview for the Guardian newspaper he says: “I have always realizing that people can imagine the collapse of ecosystem more easily than they can leave capitalism.”

Antony admits that as a transgender person he has a different point of view about experiencing of masculinity and femininity than a normal person. However, he does not see himself as a spokesperson of the transgender society. Antony has general solidarity with them, but speaks about himself.

However, more important is the fact that he is able to understand the difference between women and men’s ways of thinking. He says, ‘Soon scientists will have to admit that the alleged gender neutrality of rationalism is kind of fallacy, that all of our thoughts and approaches are coloured by our endocrine system.’

However, Antony faces the reality that people have been lost their fate in Mother Nature. The artist says that from his conversations with taxi drivers in New York, they all seem to think that ‘the world is about to end.’ For him, to make work is to hope and to participate in the evolution of our planet and of people, because masses are discouraged of expressing meaningful opinions.

He believes that one of the things humanity needs in order to survive is a transfer of power between men and women. However, it is not about the economic equality fought for in the feminism of the 1960s. This is about women ‘getting on deck to save nature itself’, where all these male structures of thinking failed because of aggression in decision-making.

It proves that feminism’s time has not passed and that it has not achieved its goals. Women want more than participation in politics, voting on a ‘smokescreen of fake moral issues like abortion and gay rights.’ This is not enough, because meanwhile the real decisions about the energy industry and the fate in nature are taken by corporations and lobbyists.

Perhaps it is that women are capable of taking care of their planet using their maternal instincts? There is a lot to be said and done in relation to considering the future idea about emotional and intuitive systems of human thinking to be considered as viable as rational systems.

Antony has already received support from leading art foundations such as South Bank London, which asked him to curate the Meltdown Festival in 2012. Fashion designers such as Ricardo Tisci from Givenchy placed a little letter on the chairs of his guest entitled ‘Future Feminism.’

His ideas will be discussed in an interview for Acne Paper.
Antony Hegarty is a British-born, transgender avant-garde artist of our times. He is the front singer of the band Antony and The Johnsons and a visual artist. Antony is also a co-founder of The Future Feminist Foundation. This term is used to describe the approach of four artists, whom he feels aligned with: Kembra Pfahler, Johanna Constantine and Bianca and Sierra Casady. Antony’s biggest concern is about the ecological future of our planet. He considers people’s way of making decisions on a biological level and insists on the need of more ‘oestrogen-based thinking’ in our governance systems.

An aim for participation is expressed in every aspect of his work. Currently two paintings of Hegarty are on display at the Louvre in Paris as part of exhibition entitled ‘Living rooms’. His drawings are curated along with works by Paul Thek, Robert Mapplethorpe, Kiki Smith and others. The exhibition continues from November 14, 2013 to February 17, 2014.

Hegarty creates his art from found images, scraps and fragments. He washes, burns, cuts and sews them in order to remove ‘the bad’ from them and restore dignity to the rest of the landscape. For him, the use of found materials symbolize that the material is already full of life.

James Elaine, a curator of Hammer Gallery in Los Angeles says about him, ‘like Joseph Beuys, Antony’s work originates in personal experience yet it also addresses universal artistic or social ideas and poetically suggests the healing potential of art.’ Much of his work provokes cross-gender identification, in a way to reestablish a zone of true experimentation and fluidity. However, more important is the fact that as transgendered, he is able to understand the difference between women and men’s ways of thought. He says, ‘Soon scientists will have to admit that the alleged gender neutrality of rationalism is kind of fallacy, that all of our thoughts and approaches are coloured by our endocrine system.’

Hegarty describes himself as a dreamer, who dreams about embracing the world around him, when the rest are convinced, that paradise awaits them in death. He refers to Stephen Hawking, who said that ‘our destiny lies in the colonization of planets’, but Antony sees our planet and its biodiversity as a real frontier for a dream creation. The artist simply believes that the future of our earth should be put in female hands. Humans need to change their way of thought towards the empathetic system of interacting with the world and consider a little bit of emotionalism and intuition in the approach of our governance.

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Antony shares his apocalyptic impressions of people’s concerns about where the world is going. For example from his conversations with taxi drivers in New York, all of them seem to think that ‘the world is about to end’. However, he and his collaborators, the artist Kebra Pfahler, say for the book For Let’s start a pussy riot (2013), that they have to change the world. Antony wants to move this world forward, to do something great and reverse all of the failed male structures of thinking, all the aggression in decision-making. He believes that in the future, emotional and intuitive systems of human thought will be considered as workable as rational systems.

He says, ‘I have been always realizing that people can imagine the collapse of ecosystem more easily then they can leave capitalism.’

The avant-gardist has already received support from institutions like South Bank London, which invited him to curate Meltdown Festival last year. Antony has also brought inspiration to fashion designers like Ricardo Tisci from Givenchy for his fall 2013 collection. The designer supported the idea by leaving a handwritten piece entitled ‘FUTURE FEMINISM’ on each chair of his guests for the catwalk show.

His ideas will be discussed in an interview for Acne Paper.
WHY ANTONY HEGARTY?

Antony Hegarty is a transsexual musician, artist and co-founder of a new movement in feminism today. This topic allows for a discussion around a person, who is different and has unconventional ideas about the world. The idea came from Johansson’s words in relation to Acne’s collaboration with Candy magazine. He says that when he designs, he has always been interested in blurring the lines between men and women’s clothes and what happens when you shift the things a little bit.

This inspirted two features around the subject of transgendernism and diversity. However, this kind of a topic is something, which is also very relevant today.

Furthermore, Antony Hegarty deserves to be looked at by Acne, because he fulfils the brand’s ambition to be different, innovative and interesting. The features had the aim to show a successful transgendered person, and in particular Hegarty has very avant-garde way of thought and his biggest concerns are the problems of the planet today.

The artist and his vision about the ‘Future Feminism’ is something, which makes sense to people’s future way of living and it is an idea, which deserves to be considered. In the concept of Acne, which tries to be ahead of its time, as well as looking at the past, Hegarty could be an interesting person to looked at, because his ideas are provocative, innovative and futuristic.

The features are written as close as possible to the tone of voice of Acne Paper, which was already considered as very intelligent and profound. The creative team always tries to put the ideas in a very deep context, making references to different parts of culture. These features relate Hegarty to different collaborators of him, individuals from the art and music scenes, as well as fashion designers and art institutions. The aim was to show him as a person and transgendered, as well as his vision and how they are represented through his work.

BY ILONA ANGELOVA

FUTURE FEMINISM

We have created our society in man’s image. But now the ecology is collapsing. We have abused the bodies of women and the body of the earth in the same ways. We are reaching the end of the story. Our old methods of survival as a species are becoming the cause of our downfall.

Men must find the humility to retreat. Women must step forward and start to forge a new way forward for our species and for all of nature. If there is to be a future on earth that includes us, it will be feminine.

-Antony
March 2013
As it was analysed before, Acne is a fashion brand, which does not rely on conventional means of communication to promote itself. Moreover, the use of social media today, for business or personal, tends to reveal a lot about people's personalities. However, it is a personal choice, how far and close one will allow society to view his/her work/life. Acne has created the mysterious image about itself and the conventional use of social media might be considered as too obvious and revealing for the brand promotion. However, the best content for a brand’s online presence would be a contentment created by the company itself. Acne is part of a big group of creative companies, so ideally for Pinterest it would be appropriate if the images are all put through the prism of the brand, which means created by the brand.

People would love to see different images of other companies, art, music, etc. which the brand associates itself with, but Acne needs to find the right way to reveal a little bit of its work and engage more with people. This is important because the use of digital and social media is growing every day and for fashion brands is essential to keep themselves up-to-date.

The first board ‘collection of words’ is an experimentation, which had the aim to produce images, which reflect Acne’s identity. The use of Pinterest and social media in general, should be something, which suggests the brand’s broad cultural inspirations, but at the same time does not reveal too much. The aim is to promote values, but not completely reveal them. The idea was to create a Pinterest board about great individuals, inspired by the fascination of Acne with people and their personalities. Furthermore, the idea about the quotes came from a personal association of them with being very inspiring. These two ideas put together created an inspiration board with quotes by individuals, which Acne Studios admires. The easiest place to find these people is Acne Paper, as a document which collected all of the brand’s inspiration and aspirations. It aimed to create images, which focus on the quotes, as well as to represent Acne’s work. The idea behind hiding faces of the people or the use of transparent colourful paper is to create mystery, simply to hide parts of the pages of the magazine, and to change colour, in order not to show and say too much. However, their visual aesthetics need improvement.

The second board is entitled ‘sculpture’. It was inspired by the idea of Acne’s team to share books, knowledge and inspiration within its stores. The second board focuses on sculpture, because according to the research it is one of biggest fascinations of the creative director. The artists chosen are mixture of nationalities, age and styles. This aimed to show the variety of people Acne’s team looks at. For example, these are contemporary Swedish and British artists, as well as Carl Milles, who is a Swedish sculptor from the 20th century.
On the other hand, a look at the very basic ideas of marketing could explain it better. It is generally accepted that humans have needs - physical, social and individual. Otherwise, marketing is about creating wants and demands according to these needs. Ideally, its ambition is to impact the consumers’ choice of a brand, based on their needs. Its traditional communication tools are advertising and commercials.

In this vein of thought the question is ‘what is the ‘added’ value to the Acne’s product?’ Buying Acne seems like an engagement with a broad creative universe. It is a fashion brand born from an unconventional company, which automatically makes it special and different. The big inspiration from Warhol and his Factory makes metaphorically associations of the jeans brand with the whole idea behind pop art. Similarly to how Andy Warhol took the most mainstream objects from consumerism culture and transformed it into an art movement, which continues to influence people in many creative fields today - the same association with Acne and its creative team could be made. They started by producing jeans - a symbol of the street, of the rebellious new generation.

However, very successfully Acne lifted the idea of a jeans brand to a very high level within the industry. Now the brand has an image of strong vision and aesthetics, luxury in terms of ideas, innovation, authenticity, quality of the design, stores and collaborations. Acne twisted the perception of a jeans brand and made to be accepted as a high-end one. Acne does not use traditional marketing to promote itself. This is one of the most important aspects of this conclusion, because totally refraining traditional marketing communications is a unique approach, which leads to many other different aspects, which define the brand. It seems that the things Acne does are and will always be unconventional and unexpected. Schiller defines it as a ‘Branding by doing’ in which the focus is on the product. This was a conscious choice of the brand from the beginning, when due to financial recourses, Acne had to choose between investing in advertising or in products. By the time this has created the strong image of the brand to have a unique product, which speaks for itself.

According to Suhrab Lachin (Credit Manager responsible for the Human Resource Management, Stockholm office) Acne does not aim to create a specific image. Acne stands for “Ambition to Create Novel Expression”, and it continuously seeks new ways of expressions, which is shown in the research above by examples of its collaborations with individuals like Katerina Jebb and Luis Venegas. In this way, the brand maintains its surrounding ‘air of coolness’ (Daniel Bjork, Swedish journalist) by never being considered as conventional and ‘being on the edge regarding new thinking.’ (source: student primary research and project online)

Acne has created an image, which appeals to a specific target group of non-conformists, who share the unique values and associations of the brand. Its recipe includes integrity and mysticism, modernism, which also looks at the past, as well as timeless themes mainly expressed in the Acne paper.

Acne Studios and Acne Paper can also be described as independent with an intention to be confident, strong and individualistic in terms of personal expression. Functionality plays an important role where the focus is on lifestyle, and translated into the product. Remembering the words of Johansson:

‘We did not want to be the next sweater brand’. It can be concluded that Acne has become more than a fashion brand.

Conclusion

‘Don’t talk about yourself too much, do something that embodies your brand and that people want to participate in’
- Johansson

This quote embraces the conclusion about Acne Studios’ identity and its communication strategies. However, it aims to start by approaching the question from a bit farther. In order to sell fashion today, the functionality of a garment is not enough to make it stand out in the market. Clothes, and subsequently the fashion industry, altered and complicated its purposes and meanings in the 14th century along with the evolving of the city.

In today’s highly competitive fashion industry, the product needs to have ‘added’ value. This added value can be created through telling the story of the companies’ origins and more importantly making sure this story remains consistent. The aim is to create a loyal and trustful relationship between the consumers and the brand, as well as among the employees.
Acne