

## **Kathrin Schiffner**

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Every design process is inspired by something else, something the designer has seen, heard or felt

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***Is there a global style in fashion design or do geographical differences and dependencies have to be taken into account?***

I think that today we can indeed speak of a “global style”. The large brand houses feature the same collections in Tokyo as in Sao Paulo. Demand might not be the same everywhere, but this can also vary between a store in, say, Berlin and one in Düsseldorf. Since a style or product trend is often shaped by the cultural trends of a social environment and attitudes are similar everywhere in the western world, differences are tending to disappear. Traditional, culturally oriented designs influenced by a specific place will not – it is to be hoped – vanish completely, but they seldom play a dominant role in the fashions of the big brands.

***Was this the case a few years ago? Is there a trend in trend development?***

This development is no longer really new, but it will continue to intensify. With the steady increase in world trade, trends will continue to merge. True, there is a recognizable trend towards special regional or geographical features, but I don't think that this will establish itself so firmly in the foreseeable future that we can speak of a real counter-movement.

***You work with fashion as well as with trends in general. Is there a parallel between fashion and other***

***trends or do fashion trends develop independently of investment goods, architecture and interior design?***

A fashion trend is not a trend in the sense of a major transformation process. We distinguish between a fashion trend, like the “New Look” of the fifties, and a short-term craze, like the horizontally striped shirts of this summer. Fashion as an industry has developed into a very fast-moving sector with numerous collections every year and new trends every month. This process can scarcely be compared with developments in the automobile, furnishing or architectural sectors. Quite apart from the fact that these investment goods require much longer research, design and production phases, very few consumers can afford to buy a new car, new furniture, etc., every year.

***Does that also apply to color trends?***

Statistical surveys show that color trends have a seven-year cycle, although the “classic” colors always sell – in general better than the trend colors. However, I think that color trends are similar to other trends – except that they change more rapidly and frequently in fashion than in investment goods for technical reasons. In addition, some colors lend themselves to specific products, for example a lilac ladies' sweater is more likely to catch on than a lilac car.

***In fashion, designers often imitate the style of another generation. Why is that so? Is there nothing new to invent?***

There are numerous reasons for this in my opinion. In the fashion sector, it is probably true that there is no longer anything new to invent – not necessarily because we have already seen it all, but because the scope of the human body in terms of functionality and esthetics is very narrow. Another important reason is that beautiful objects have been judged to be so by a large number of people. So why should they vanish forever? We still listen to Mozart's music today, although Mozart himself is long gone.

Retro trends are not a twentieth century phenomenon, even if it might often seem so. The classical fashions of the eighteenth century resemble the shirt-like clothing of antiquity, and in about 1850 fashion went through a new rococo age with the return of the crinoline. And exactly 100 years later, Dior's “New Look”, with its narrow waists and full skirts, was reminiscent of these forms. In this way, shapes and details reappear slightly changed, translated to reflect the spirit of the time. Our increasing awareness of trend repetition is due to the extremely high frequency of new trends. Today, it does not take 100 years for a trend to make a reappearance, because all the resources necessary to develop and propagate it have been greatly simplified and accelerated.