

The Labyrinth: Metaphor and Method

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Giorgio Armani: An Introduction to the Labyrinth

In October 2000 the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City debuted a retrospective dedicated to the Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani. The exhibition was co-curated by Germano Celant, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim, and Harold Koda, then Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, and was designed by the stage director Robert Wilson. *Giorgio Armani* subsequently embarked on a five-and-a-half-year-long international tour that included stops at the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, London's Royal Academy, the National Roman Museum Baths of Diocletian, and the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, among others. The inaugural exhibition at the Guggenheim was the subject of criticism and controversy regarding a reported \$15 million donation to the museum from Giorgio Armani S.p.A. As with other monographic exhibitions of contemporary fashion designers, *Giorgio Armani* was perceived as an advertisement rather than a retrospective.

The endowment was not the only worrisome link between *Giorgio Armani* and the commercial fashion industry. Reviews published in both popular and academic press repeatedly drew parallels between the exhibition and the spaces and experiences of shopping. For example, the architectural critic Herbert Muschamp, writing in the *New York Times*, compares the scale of the installation as having "the proportions of shop windows." Regarding the gallery presenting Armani's latest collection, he comments, "The atmosphere here is too much like a boutique for my comfort."¹ In a review for the *Independent*, Damian Fowler highlights the carpeting of the Guggenheim's spiral gallery as contributing to an "atmosphere even more reminiscent of an up-scale department store in Paris."² Deyan Sudjic, currently Director of London's Design Museum, noted in the



Fig. 1. Installation view of *Giorgio Armani*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 20, 2000–January 17, 2001. Photo: Ellen Labenski. © 2012 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Guardian, “In the language of retailing, Armani’s crowded displays at the Royal Academy simply look over-merchandised.”³ Furthermore, in an article on the popularity of fashion exhibitions, fashion and cultural historian Chris Breward suggests that “grouped according to style and colour,” the visual impact of *Giorgio Armani* at the Royal Academy was that “of a glossy but ephemeral department store window.”⁴ Lastly, according to fashion theorist Elizabeth Wilson:

*The main effect of wandering through room after room was to experience the frustration of a thwarted shopping opportunity. Some of the garments were so beautiful and desirable that the only possible response was to imagine wearing them and be tempted to pull out a credit card... How was this different from a trip to Bond Street?*⁵

In addition to alluding to shopping as an act of desire and possession, Wilson’s commentary, like those listed above, cites the spatial context and visual vocabulary of retail. The function of such analogies is twofold. First, they are deployed towards questioning the validity of fashion’s presence in the museum. Second, and of significance to this text, they hint at a spectatorial experience that transgresses the walls of the museum.

In the article “Fashion and the Art Museum: When Giorgio Armani Went to the Guggenheim,” John Potvin underscores the exhibition’s inaugural venue as exemplary of the spatial metaphor of the “notional white cube.”⁶ The “white cube,” as initially outlined by Brian O’Doherty, is both self-referential and subject to a particular set of established architectural codes and conventions that largely concern the demarcation of sacred space. According to O’Doherty, like a medieval church, “the outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light.”⁷ This reverberates in Potvin’s evaluation of the Guggenheim. Through its art and architecture, the museum embodies a “complete experience of radical modernism for the visitor and hence marks a significant if not sacred space, whose famous spiraling pathway, as if ascending heaven-bound, feels physically analogous to the modernist upward trajectory towards pure form, or simply purity itself.”⁸ Ideology is thus embedded in architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright’s designation of the Museum as “my pantheon”⁹ affirms the sanctity of its space, as well as its architectural ancestors. Hence the particularity of the Guggenheim as a “white cube”: simultaneously a leaf on an architectural family tree and symbolic of modernism’s self-referentiality, as if hermetically sealed from the outside world.

Originally published as a series of articles in 1976, O’Doherty’s investigation into the ideology of the spaces of modern art is situated within the late twentieth-century art historical turn towards institutional critique, context, and setting. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach’s two co-authored articles on the museum—“The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographical Analysis” (1978)



Fig. 2. Installation view of *Giorgio Armani*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 20, 2000–January 17, 2001. Photo: Ellen Labenski. © 2012 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

and “The Universal Survey Museum” (1980)—may also be read as participating in this endeavor. Like O’Doherty, Duncan and Wallach are concerned with particular institutional types: the modern art museum and the universal survey museum, represented in their studies by New York’s Museum of Modern Art (henceforth MoMA) and Metropolitan Museum of Art (henceforth the Met), respectively. Again, like O’Doherty, the authors challenge the dominant belief in the museum as an empty, separate, and ahistorical space.¹⁰ The museum, they suggest, belongs to the category of monumental architecture that also includes temples, churches, shrines, and palaces. Like these sites, the museum and “the installations, the layout of the rooms, the sequences of collections” contribute to an experience comparable to one of religious ritual.¹¹ As the viewer moves through space, they enact and internalize the ideology “written into the architectural script.”¹² Navigating the museum is thus akin to performing a ritual.

As a means of visualizing and spatializing this ritual, Duncan and Wallach invoke the labyrinth. “To walk through the permanent collection is to walk through a labyrinth. We intend more than a spatial analogy,”¹³ they write. While not deliberate on the part of the architects or curators, the labyrinthine form of MoMA, they suggest, organizes its ritual activity. In a manner compatible with Potvin’s account of the Guggenheim’s “heaven-bound” spiral galleries, Duncan and Wallach describe traversing the labyrinth as “an ordeal that ends in triumph—a passage from darkness to light and thus a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment.”¹⁴ Their proposed labyrinth mediates ritual with the quotidian: “The everyday world, ostensibly banished from consciousness, nevertheless haunts the labyrinthine way. The labyrinth is, in fact, not a realm of transcendence but of inversions in which the repressed realities of the mundane world return...”¹⁵ They continue, “As an institution MoMA appears to be a refuge from the materialist society: a cultural haven, an ideal world apart. Yet, it exalts precisely the values and experiences it apparently rejects by elevating them to the universal and timeless realm of spirit.”¹⁶ By implicating the everyday and consumerism, Duncan and Wallach’s classification of the museum as labyrinth is rendered particularly poignant for displays of fashion, design, and decorative arts. As evidenced by the reviews of *Giorgio Armani*, the museum is haunted by the quotidian and the commercial. Adopting the model of the labyrinth in discussions of exhibitions supports an exchange between the museum and the spaces, experiences, and ideological forces outside of it, thus subverting notions of the museum as pure and self-contained.

Relying on the reviews of *Giorgio Armani* as a point of departure, this essay will address museum space and ideology through the model of the labyrinth. In so doing, it will challenge, on the one hand, the belief in the museum as a sacred space that exists as at a safe remove from external influences and, on the other, the methods with which museum space and exhibitions are analyzed. Grounded in a close reading of texts by and about Walter Benjamin and,

secondarily, Michel Foucault, the labyrinth will be introduced as both a metaphor and a method. These theoretical considerations will be put in dialogue with two case studies, *Giorgio Armani* (2000) and *Rei Kawakubo / Comme Des Garçons: Art of the In-Between* (2017). Ultimately, this exchange will nuance prevalent ideas of the museum and fashion's presence therein, as well as expand the associated fields of visual and spatial analysis. Throughout the essay, fashion's unique potential to activate and illustrate the labyrinthine model will be emphasized.

The Labyrinth as Metaphor

Scholars of Walter Benjamin frequently invoke the philosopher's proposed "labyrinth." The result is often hazy, if not vague, as if in allegiance to the gestural and metaphoric nature of Benjamin's own labyrinth. Benjamin initially suggests this image in "A Berlin Chronicle," a reminiscence of his childhood in Berlin at the turn of the century. On an early page he teases, "Paris taught me the art of straying: it fulfilled a dream that had shown its first traces in the labyrinths on the blotting pages of my school exercise books."¹⁷ From the outset the labyrinth is simultaneously visualized and spatialized; it accurately conveys the feeling of wandering the disorienting space of the in-between. Later, Benjamin recounts sitting at Les Deux Magots café in Paris when he is suddenly "struck" with the idea of drawing a diagram of his life. The resultant sketch resembled "a series of family trees."¹⁸ It was lost and never redrawn. Recalling it, Benjamin writes:

[R]econstructing its outline in thought without directly reproducing it, I should, rather, speak of a labyrinth. I am not concerned here with what is installed in the chamber at its enigmatic centre, ego or fate, but all the more with the many entrances leading into the interior. These entrances I call primal acquaintances... So many primal relationships, so many entrances to the maze.¹⁹

The labyrinth is a mnemonic space. Benjamin was, after all, a translator of Proust. A single memory functions as a point of entry that opens onto a vast space filled with the fragments of past events, thoughts, and ideas. With its multiple entries, the labyrinth is experienced through the preexisting or prospective relationships between these points. When mapped, the connective routes appear as series of twisting loops, dramatic reversals, and sudden stoppages.

The open framework and limitless paths that swirl inside of the labyrinth encourage its mobilization towards various metaphoric ends. Benjamin himself offers an example in "Central Park" when he refers to the city as a labyrinth personified by the flâneur.²⁰ Moreover, his unfinished magnum opus, *The Arcades Project*, is very much a labyrinth, both in its form and content. Philosopher Christine Buci-Glucksmann describes Benjamin's labyrinth in these texts as "intrusive," as it passes from the labyrinth of big

cities to that of commodities, and later to the ultimate labyrinth: history.²¹ She reminds readers that it is the very “desire not to know” that fuels the labyrinth. This echoes Susan Sontag’s introduction to *One Way Street*, in which she stresses the complexities of the labyrinth as a space where one gets lost.²² We are reminded of Benjamin’s prophetic “art of straying.” While losing oneself within the labyrinth may resemble the pleasant strolling of the flâneur, it also implies difficulty of access and navigation. Furthermore, it may involve frustrating encounters with obstacles, forbidden passages, and dead ends. As such, it is very similar to memory. Both the pleasure and the peril of memory is its collapsing of time. The labyrinth does not recover the past, but rather “condenses it into spatial forms” and, in so doing, gets lost in it.²³ Navigating the labyrinth becomes indivisible from wandering the serpentine alleys of one’s own memory.

Ultimately, Benjamin’s labyrinth proposes a tracing of possible routes through the past. It is a spatial arena dedicated to the “art of straying” amidst twisting and overlapping memories. The insistence on the labyrinth as a metaphor for memory is significant to spectatorial experience in the museum. As Henri Bergson posited in 1896, “There is no perception that is not full of memories.”²⁴ Memory, he proposes, “creates anew,” or doubles perception in an operation that may repeat itself endlessly.²⁵ Considering the museum within the framework of the labyrinth is to anticipate the role of memory within spectatorial experience. This not only challenges the supposed purity and isolation of the museum but also its ethos of continuous progress. Memory interrupts the forward flow and linear unfolding of time. While seemingly polyvalent in its applications, the labyrinth as metaphor is strictly non-chronological in its operation. The connecting arcs between its multiple entrances are relays between past and present, between memory and perception, and between various spaces and places. As it forces an encounter of seemingly distant events that would otherwise remain disconnected, the labyrinth as metaphor becomes the labyrinth as method.

The Labyrinth as Method

As a result of its many entries and the endless possible connections between them, the metaphoric labyrinth lends itself to specific methodological practices. Metaphor and method are not merely the two sides of a labyrinthine coin. Rather, their operations are symbiotic, simultaneous, and inextricable. In *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness*, fashion scholar Caroline Evans eloquently adopts Benjamin’s labyrinth as a metaphor for history to justify her juxtaposition of historical and contemporary images. The labyrinth is the site for unexpected encounters. As Evans writes, “Distant moments in time can become proximate at specific moments as their paths run close to each other.”²⁶ Like Bergson’s infinite cycling of memory and perception, Evans’s labyrinth is repetitive: as it “doubles back on itself, what is most modern is revealed as also

having a relation to what is most old.”²⁷ The metaphoric labyrinth is an ongoing prerequisite for its function as a method.

A labyrinthine landscape, as the precondition for specific methodological processes, forms the bedrock of *The Arcades Project*. In their foreword, translators Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin describe The Arcades Project as a “blueprint of an unimaginably massive and labyrinthine architecture—a dream city, in effect.”²⁸ This is reminiscent of Buci-Glucksmann’s summary of Benjamin’s ever-evolving labyrinth, from city to commodity to history itself. Eiland and McLaughlin use such a “labyrinthine architecture” to introduce Benjamin’s compositional principle: montage. From 1927, when he first wrote a newspaper article on the arcades, Benjamin’s work developed under the influence of surrealism.²⁹ Montage involves juxtaposition, reversal, intersection, repetition, and displaced—or replaced—context. Returning to the metaphoric labyrinth, such actions and outcomes are easily imagined as the relations between various entry points. The deployment of such mechanisms within a labyrinthine setting allows for the “flash occurrence” of Benjamin’s methodological unit: the dialectical image.

The dialectical image concerns the relation between history and the present. It addresses the afterlife of the past and how it resonates, (re)appears, and haunts the historian’s own time. Like the labyrinth, the dialectical image undergoes constant evolution. Fashion, therefore, is considered its exemplar. As Benjamin suggests in “Theses on the Philosophy of History”:

*History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now (Jetztzeit). Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago it is a tiger’s leap into the past.*³⁰

This *Tigersprung* (tiger’s leap) is dialectical. Like O’Doherty’s white cube, and the broader modernist agenda, fashion is self-referential. As Ulrich Lehmann writes in his comprehensive inquiry into fashion and modernity, the fusion of the classical (the thesis) with the contemporary (the antithesis) renders fashion transitory and transhistorical.³¹ He suggests that Benjamin’s *Tigersprung* recognizes fashion as *the* metaphor for the construction of history. In his words, “As Walter Benjamin shows, *Moderne*, in its necessary relation with *Mode*, has no certainty of progress, it is made up, through quotation, of autonomous fragmented periods that may relate independently to each other.”³² Fashion’s revisiting and revisioning of history is both compatible with the labyrinth’s compounding and collapsing of forward-flowing time and incompatible with the modernist ethos of continual momentum and transcendence.

Reconciling this tension and connecting its fragments is the labyrinth's methodological preoccupation.

In a departure from the continual progress inherent in Hegelian dialectics, Benjamin's dialectical image appears as a sudden moment of recognizability. It is not, he insists, a matter of the past illuminating the present or vice versa. Rather, "image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill."³³ The significance for the historian—or critic, curator, cultural analyst, etc.—is twofold. First, it implicates the historian and their contemporary period within the subject of study. Second, it challenges the practice of recounting history as a chronological unfolding of successive series of cause and effect, or, as Benjamin writes, as "the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary."³⁴ Underpinned by the metaphoric landscape of the labyrinth, the dialectical image introduces its temporal condition as a methodological consideration.

According to Max Pensky, Benjamin's dialectical image presents both a new method and an alternative conception of time and historical experience.³⁵ Pensky convincingly sets forth three elements of the latter that contribute towards a vital understanding of the labyrinth's temporal regime. First, an alternative temporality emerges against the standard chronological model of time. The resultant "time differentials" appear as "interruptions, discontinuities, inassimilable moments, lags, or disturbances... as unplanned or uncanny repetitions or recapitulations."³⁶ Second, such time differentials are located in historical moments that, "in the 'normal' context of historical time, would be dismissed as immemorable...."³⁷ Third, Benjamin's "trash of history" functions as a time differential when it is excavated from its "embeddedness in a dominant, approved tradition of interpretation and reception, and reconfigured, rescued from the history that consigns it to oblivion, yet in a way that shockingly reveals that history for what it is...."³⁸ Pensky effectively maps the impact of Benjamin's micro-methodological unit on the macro of history and time. Like memory's suspension of the linear unfolding of time, the dialectical image operates such that a single chance encounter within the labyrinth has the potential to disrupt the grand narrative of progress inherent to modernism and dominant museum ideology.

Along with temporal juxtaposition, the labyrinth enables spatial juxtaposition. This invites a brief consideration of Michel Foucault's "heterotopia." In a text based on a lecture he delivered in 1967 at the *Cercles d'études architecturales*, Foucault describes space as "the form of relations among sites."³⁹ Among the network of relations that constitute space, Foucault is most interested in those sites that "have the curious property of being in relation to all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations they have to designate, mirror, reflect."⁴⁰ Like the labyrinth itself, the heterotopia has both spatial and temporal dimensions. Of the six characteristics Foucault assigns to

the heterotopia, the following three are most pertinent to the exhibitionary labyrinth. First, the heterotopia juxtaposes several sites and spaces—at times incompatible—in one single place.⁴¹ Second, the heterotopia is both “isolated” and “penetrable”; admittance is either mandatory or one must submit to “rites and purifications” upon entry.⁴² Third, the heterotopia functions in relation to remaining space so as to create a space of illusion or other, real space.⁴³ This resultant “space of illusion,” built of real spaces, is the labyrinth. The amalgamation and refraction of various sites, along with their respective ideologies, rituals, and relations, designates the labyrinth as heterotopic.

Duncan and Wallach’s proposed labyrinthine museum is evidently heterotopic. The ritual experience performed by viewers is analogous to the compliance of rites mandated by the heterotopia. Furthermore, the labyrinthine museum, in Duncan and Wallach’s words, reverses and returns the realities of the quotidian. According to Beth Lord, the museum is a heterotopia because it is a space dedicated to the representation of “objects *in their difference*.”⁴⁴ She explains, “Foucault’s museum is not a funeral storehouse of objects from different times, but an experience of the gap between things and the conceptual and cultural orders in which they are interpreted.”⁴⁵ By virtue of its fragmentary composition, gaps are abundant in the labyrinthine landscape. Pensky’s time differentials, the alleged chasm between commerce and the museum, gaps in memory and those between perception and reality, and the distinctly heterotopic space of the in-between define the labyrinth. The museum is built on relations of difference, not only within its walls, but externally as well. The model of the labyrinth fosters an expanded scope by placing the museum in a dynamic and, at times, disorienting relation to other sites and experiences of cultural modernity.

Fashion and Museums: “The Labyrinth Doubles Back”⁴⁶

The remainder of this essay will apply the labyrinth’s metaphoric potential and methodological attributes to two distinct case studies. The first, *Rei Kawakubo / Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between*, presented at the Met in 2017, offers a counterpoint to *Giorgio Armani*. It introduces a very different designer in a very different museum. The second involves a return to *Giorgio Armani* that will conclude this essay and revisit its opening paragraphs, revealing its own labyrinthine structure. Both exhibitions will be considered as active participants in a heterotopic labyrinth composed of related sites, spaces, images, and personal and collective memories. Within this labyrinth of fashion display, spectatorial experience takes the form of montage. Bouncing between distant times and places, it mimics the *Tigersprung* methods of the labyrinth.

With the recent exhibition *Rei Kawakubo / Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between*, the Costume Institute at the



Fig. 3. Installation view of *Giorgio Armani*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 20, 2000–January 17, 2001. Photo: Ellen Labenski. © 2012 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Met defied its longstanding policy prohibiting monographic exhibitions dedicated to a living designer. This protocol was implemented following the controversial Yves Saint Laurent show mounted in 1983, under the curatorial tenure of former *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland. The exhibition was criticized for being “closely tied to the economic interest of that particular designer.”⁴⁷ Rather than enforcing a hardline separation between designer and museum, Rei Kawakubo was directly involved in the exhibition. She oversaw its design while Andrew Bolton, Curator in Charge at the Costume Institute, was responsible for the curatorial components. When discussing the vision for the design in a preview of the exhibition for *Frieze*, exhibition-maker Judith Clark rightly references the retail settings conceived by Kawakubo. Along with standalone Comme des Garçons boutiques, Kawakubo developed Dover Street Market—a multi-brand retail concept with locations in London, New York, Tokyo, Singapore, Beijing, and, in the near future, Los Angeles—and the Comme des Garçons Trading Museum. Writing in *Artforum* in 2004, Thelma Golden described Dover Street Market as “the perfect museum.”⁴⁸ In 2009 the Victoria and Albert Museum loaned nine wooden display cabinets to the Trading Museum in Tokyo. According to a *Wallpaper** article reporting on the opening of the store, it was envisioned as a “space in which the art of ‘just looking’ will be encouraged”⁴⁹ According to Clark, the impact of these gallery-like retail spaces is one that “confuses and fetishizes the idea of looking and buying.”⁵⁰ The act of window shopping, an inherently visual form of consumption, accurately attests to the spectatorial practice engendered by this collective of spaces.

Kawakubo’s exhibition design materialized as a series of large geometric volumes positioned irregularly to create a serpentine, maze-like path through the galleries. These forms, hollowed and finished in matte white, both shelter mannequins and obfuscate views and paths across the exhibition. To viewers aware of Kawakubo’s retail settings, the forms likely appeared familiar. Similar shapes, rendered in gold, house rows of garments available for purchase at the CDG Chelsea boutique in New York. At the Met, their colorless rendering recalls Mark Wigley’s *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (1995), in which the insistence on white walls across modern architecture is critically reviewed in relation to other surfaces of modernism. According to Wigley, “The white wall, like the white shirt, institutes the very distinction it appears to merely demarcate, carving out a space that was not there before. The white surface does not simply clean a space, or even give the impression of clean space. Rather, it constructs a new kind of space.”⁵¹ In the case of *Art of the In-Between*, this new space is distinctly heterotopic and labyrinthine; it issues a *Tigersprung* that is suspended between the museum-like boutiques and the boutique-like museum. This is confirmed in Wigley’s essay, published in the exhibition album, in which he notes, “Visitors take their own paths past clusters of outfits at different heights facing different directions. The clothes emerge from the shapes; hover at thresholds; withdraw inside, hide, or occupy in-between spaces.”⁵² The exhibition fractures and fragments the white



Fig. 4. *Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Lila Acheson Wallace Wing, The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Exhibition Hall (Gallery 999), May 4 – September 4, 2017. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y., U.S.A. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, N.Y.

cube. These scraps, interspersed with memories of Kawakubo's retail venues, constitute a labyrinth. The labyrinthine museum and the heterotopia both involve adherence to rites and rituals. In the fashion exhibition, this manifests as a spatially informed spectatorial montage that simultaneously fuses and confuses the acts of "buying and looking," of window shopping and museum going.

While *Giorgio Armani* was installed exclusively in museum galleries, the exhibition evoked many external sites and types of space. As indicated in the above discussion of *Art of the In-Between*, an exhibition exists as an ongoing dialogue or dialectical exchange between its set and contents, the immediate museum setting, the broader geographic and cultural surroundings, and the plethora of untethered connections between them. The Guggenheim, like the subsequent host museums designed by Frank Gehry and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, respectively, presents a distinctly modernist organization of space. Alongside such "radical modernism,"⁵³ installation photographs of the inaugural Armani show emphasize the museum's iconic glass dome. This architectural feature is charged with historical and ideological associations. Returning to Duncan and Wallach's categorization of the museum as a ritual site, the cupola recalls the many monumental domes topping palaces, universities, seats of government, and places of worship. Additionally, in the context of a fashion exhibition, it prompts consideration of those sites consecrated to commodity worship. The glass dome is an archetypal element of the modern department store. Bathing the floors below in celestial light, the dome metaphorically extends notions of the sacred and the ceremonial to the secular, capitalist realm of commodities. Within the development of modern consumer culture, the dome—enabled by advancements in plate glass and cast iron construction—drew upon memories of shopping arcades, the Crystal Palace, and subsequent exposition pavilions.⁵⁴ These sites and their function within collective cultural memory are active within the labyrinthine landscapes of *Giorgio Armani* and *Art of the In-Between*.

Throughout *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin alludes to modern consumer sites through the language of ritual. In the 1935 exposé "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" he writes, "World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish,"⁵⁵ followed by, "Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshiped."⁵⁶ He refers to arcades as "temples of commodity capital"⁵⁷ and to department stores as temples consecrated to "Baudelaire's 'religious intoxication of great cities.'"⁵⁸ Like the museum, the department store and the exposition pavilion are comparable to the traditional temple. When staged at the National Roman Museum, *Giorgio Armani* presented fashion as the object of sacred worship. In one particular section, three groupings of white garments were installed against a backdrop of a classical portico of Corinthian-capital topped columns supporting an empty pediment framed by a decorative cornice. The colorless dresses of various lengths and trademark Armani pantsuits

were mounted on nearly invisible mannequins that appeared to float, magically, as if summoned to haunt the architectural ruin. In dialogue with the displayed garments, the archived portico initiates a *Tigersprung* that transcends the confines of the museum and skips between the neoclassical facades of various cultural and commercial sites. Considered within the framework of the labyrinth, *Giorgio Armani* is a spatial, temporal, and perceptual montage.

Four years prior to the Guggenheim exhibition, Giorgio Armani opened two new retail locations in New York City. In a *New York Times* article titled “Armani Opens Museum Shops Selling Clothes” the atmosphere of the boutique designed by Peter Marino at 760 Madison Avenue is described as “museumlike.”⁵⁹ The accompanying image depicts a geometric trio of gowns on headless dress forms against a clean white wall. In the background, four perfectly spaced suits dot an otherwise blank space. Armani’s Chater House venue in Hong Kong, realized in 2002 by Studio Fuksas, is detailed by the firm as an “exhibition area for fashion [that] develops within luminous paths.”⁶⁰ Like the accounts of Kawakubo’s retail settings, such *descriptive language* reveals a conflation between exhibitionary and commercial space, and between merchandising and curating, that is reflected in the *visual* and *spatial language* of *Giorgio Armani*. As if winking at the self-referential white cube, *Giorgio Armani* the retrospective was consistent with Giorgio Armani the boutique. Across its various venues, garments were unified by color and either staggered in clusters or posed one by one with linear regularity. At the Guggenheim, mannequins were mounted in front of imposing white scrims that served to contain the figures while limiting spectators’ views of the gallery. This staging has been described by Potvin and Dirk Gindt as an aesthetic of decontextualization. The effect of such display strategies, they argue, is the presentation of Armani’s garments as “emblematic of a transhistorical ‘style’ transcendent of the mere ephemerality of fashion.”⁶¹ Returning to Lehamnn’s reading of Benjamin, fashion is rendered transitory and transhistorical through the dialectical image. The methodological unit of the labyrinth, therefore, generates its own history and temporality.

Studio Fuksas’s “exhibition area for fashion [that] develops within luminous paths” reads as a definition of the metaphoric labyrinth. The “exhibition area” corresponds to the interior of the labyrinth. Its points of entry are manifold: the museum, the department store, and the boutique, among others. Fashion, Benjamin’s dialectical image *par excellence*, triggers a spatial and spectatorial *Tigersprung* when exhibited in the museum. Born of commerce and capitalism, fashion’s presence in the museum invites a relay—a tiger’s leap—between past and present, between memory and perception, between present space and distant space, and between the curatorial and the commercial.

Navigating the mnemonic, heterotopic space of the labyrinth is analogous to wandering the twisting, disorienting paths of



Fig. 5. Installation view of *Giorgio Armani*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 20, 2000–January 17, 2001. Photo: Ellen Labenski. © 2012 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

one's own memory. The resultant spectatorial experience can only be described as montage. Under the iconic glass dome of the Guggenheim, or the hollowed spheres of *Art of the In-Between*, the many cupolas that top modern temples of commodity worship emerge from their embedded positions in history. Unanticipated, perhaps even unnoticed, these hauntings—along with the memories, free associations, and references they elicit—serve to disrupt the chronological unfolding of time and ethos of progress encapsulated by the museum. The blurring of boundaries between the boutique and the museum, along with their spatial attributes and spectatorial positions, are evidence of such momentary gaps and interruptions. They attest to the exhibition as an active, dialectical exchange occurring within a labyrinthine, heterotopic landscape and, in so doing, challenge the belief in the museum as contained and self-referential. In the museum, fashion prescribes its own ritual.

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