<CT>Stylist as Auteur: Hierarchy, Reputation and Creative Control
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<H1>Introduction

<NP>Demand for the fashion stylist is arguably greater than ever before. Fredric Jameson (cited in Lyotard 1979) claims that fashion and commodity styling are inherent to the rhythm of the capitalist economy in the postmodern world; postmodern life is defined as focusing on identity, appearance and the presentation of self. Beyond the field of fashion, stylists are now employed for a range of cultural and commercial activities. The new middle classes expend increasing amounts of time and effort in developing a sense of taste that is 'flexible, distinctive and capable of keeping abreast of the plethora of new styles, experiences and symbolic goods which consumer culture and the cultural industries continue to generate' (Featherstone 1991:109). Heightened awareness of taste in all sectors of daily life has created an increased need for those cultural intermediaries who possess the expertise and practical skills to affect this process of stylization (Bourdieu 2010; Featherstone 1991).

<TEXT>Academic interest in the practice of fashion styling has subsequently increased; Beard (2013) examines the emergence of the role of the stylist in the 1970s and Martin (2009) highlights the importance of the stylist Simon Foxton's contribution to fashion photography over the last thirty years. Martin curated the 2009 exhibition of Foxton's work at the Photographer's Gallery entitled *When You're a Boy: Men's Fashion Styled by Simon Foxton*. The exhibition was unique, in that it prioritized the creative role of the stylist in the image-making process over that of the photographer. Further to this, a recent retrospective of the career of Judy Blame, at the ICA, has again brought to light the influence of the stylist in contemporary fashion editorial and advertising.

This chapter discusses the role of stylist as art director, exploring the dynamics of hierarchy, creative control and 'auteurship' within fashion photography and drawing on both fashion and film theory to debate the practical and abstract aspects of styling practice. The study incorporates the initial findings of a research project that examines the creative partnership of the photographer and stylist and includes material gathered as part of an ongoing collaboration with the sociologist Paolo Volonté.

<H1>The emergence of the stylist

<NP>It is largely accepted that styling became recognized as a discrete profession during the 1980s (Williams 1998; Martin 2009; McAssey and Buckley 2011), the 'stylist' being a freelance version of the fashion editor, who was employed to write, produce and 'style' features for fashion publications. However, there are recorded instances of the term being used prior to this. A magazine article published in 1937 in the US publication *Delineator* claims that Taubé Coller, also known as Tobé, was the first person within the fashion industry to label herself as a stylist. The feature states

that she had invented the term during an interview with a group of journalists twenty years earlier. Taubé operated predominantly as a brand consultant, her expertise being defined in the article as 'someone who knows from experience, better than anyone else, what styles you are going to like best and what will be most useful to you' (Anon 1937: 24).

<TEXT>Martin (2009) maintains that the emergence of styling as a defined occupation and the 'infinitely expandable parameters' of the role are linked to the working culture within 1980s style press magazines, such as *Blitz*, *i-D* and *The Face*. These independently produced publications sought to provide a counter-culture alternative to mainstream fashion publishing. Martin cites the informal working dynamics within these publications as contributing factors to the advent of the freelance role. McAssey and Buckley (2011) support this, stating that the first freelance stylists appeared during the eighties and fulfilled roles within such magazines because they did not have permanent fashion staff. The flexibility of freelance working life allowed the stylists to contribute to a range of different publications without being restricted to one way of working or one point of view (McAssey and Buckley 2011).

If indeed the role was defined as a profession in the 1980s, it could be suggested that it became an established one in the 1990s. Mower (2007: vii) credit the 'fashion marketing boom of the 1980s' and the diversification of modes of global communication in the 1990s and new millennium as factors contributing to an increased demand for stylist. Reframing Pierre Bourdieu's arguments, the British sociologist Mike Featherstone (1991: 35) describes the expansion of 'market-orientated consumer cultural occupations' such as media, advertising, design and fashion. Featherstone even argues that Thatcher's Britain witnessed the expansion of the new middle class into occupations beyond that of cultural intermediary.

New professional roles were being identified during this period and the advent of the Internet has amplified this, facilitating a demand for further creative roles. McRobbie (1998: 155) compares fashion media to the pop video industry, where the need for new specialist roles often comes about as jobs are created and 'gaps and opportunities' are identified in related areas. McRobbie quotes Tunstall (1971) and Elliott (1977) who argue that this flux within industries led to constant re-evaluation of roles, augmented labour mobility and the introduction of new job titles 'almost overnight'. Within this context, women's magazines such as *Marie Claire* operated with a minimal team of full-time staff members and commissioned contract workers to address specific needs. This way of working led to the generation of a new freelance culture within women's magazine publishing (McRobbie 1998: 160). Styling began to be recognized as a distinct occupation as the editorial team started to value the contribution that these assistants were making to the production of features and the overall look of the magazine. McRobbie (1998) claims that Sally Brampton, the editor of *Elle* magazine in 1985 when it first launched in the United Kingdom, was instrumental in giving stylists more creative freedom because she was keen to ensure that they maintain a greater reputation for innovation and experimentation than that of their competitors, such as more established titles like *Vogue*. She says

that these stylists started out as assistants running errands but were soon given a greater remit.

Defining styling

<NP>Perhaps a symptom of an increasingly flexible working culture, the full range of the stylist's responsibilities is far from clearly defined. Many practicing stylists struggle to describe what it means 'to style'. Depending on a variety of factors, a stylist could be employed to fulfil one, or a combination of, the following roles: plan the initial concept or narrative; provide storyboards or mood boards to communicate the concept to the creative team and the client; source locations; cast models; source and collect all clothing and accessories; supervise set design and the making, or customization of, clothing and accessories; contribute to the planning of lighting set-ups for studio shoots; work alongside the photographer on set, directing the shoot; and direct make-up and hair design.

<TEXT>The dearth of literature devoted to the subject has meant that, although a number of publications describe in practical terms what a stylist does, very little attempt has been made to define the creative process on a theoretical level. The idea that styling is somehow an innate, instinctive use of available materials has led to association with the notion of 'bricolage'. The term, a French word appropriated by Levi-Strauss (1966) in an anthropological context, has since been more broadly used to define postmodern design process. Barnard (2002) draws on Levi-Strauss' comparison of bricoleur and engineer when discussing the level of skills and expertise required to be a fashion designer. He says that, although designers may see themselves as craftsmen or engineers, the appropriation of materials and styles from the past to create new clothing designs is 'straightforwardly the work of the bricoleur' (Barnard 2002: 180). The principle of bricolage, of using found objects rather than specialized tools, could be more easily associated with the work of the stylist, who uses ready-made clothing or objects to create an outfit or a narrative in an advertising or editorial image (Anyan and Clarke 2011; Beard 2013).

The association of bricolage with styling practice is supported by those discussing the emergence of the role in the 1980s, which coincided with the introduction of 'street style' into editorial fashion features. Beard (2013) claims that the stylist Caroline Baker adopted a Do-It-Yourself approach, inspired by what people were wearing on the street rather than by fashion presented in magazines or on the catwalk and Martin (2009) reiterates this point, also suggesting that this DIY approach was born from the limited production budgets within the small-scale, independently produced publications that first introduced the concept of 'styling'. The notion of styling evolved as fashion became freer and less dictated; emphasis was placed on choice, optionality and individuality; women were mixing and matching outfits rather than adopting prescribed head-to-toe looks (Beard 2013).

Although one could imply that a stylist is 'crafting' an outfit, narrative or image with clothing, the stylist is not actively involved in constructing, designing or engineering a product. Perhaps surprisingly, the suggestion that the ability to style is an innate skill

is iterated by a menswear stylist, interviewed as part of an ongoing research project investigating the social role of the stylist. He recognizes the craftsmanship in photography and in other roles such as hairdresser and make-up artist but struggles to see the stylist's role in the same way:

<EXT>The photographer has a lot more technical ability, I guess, so they bring that aspect into it. They have to be proficient technically in a way that perhaps the stylist wouldn't need to. It's a craft, and this is really, really interesting to me, the hair and the makeup, if they are having a bad day, can go and do a wedding, the photographer can go and do wedding photography, the hair can go and get a job in a salon, all of them have a craft, a trade. The stylist, it's completely superficial, not superficial, it's kind of subjective, it's taste, it's what you are doing, you are creating this stuff; it's abstract. <SRC>(Blake 2013, personal communication, 12th March)

<NP>The interviewee likens his own role to that of storyteller and Baker (2013) also supports this, suggesting that the role requires thoughtfulness and developed aesthetic awareness. Williams (1998) and Beard (2013) both support this, crediting Baker as one of the first fashion editors to develop complex or meaningful narratives in editorial fashion photography.

Stylist as auteur

<NP>The degree of creative freedom and directorial control enjoyed by a freelance stylist can vary dramatically. For example, stylists for commercial projects, such as photography for home shopping catalogues, may be employed solely to source and collect appropriate props for each shoot whereas for other jobs they may equally be expected to 'art direct' the photography, working alongside the photographer in the studio and being actively involved in the planning, organization and production of the shoot. This variation in levels of responsibility can often be dependent on budget constraints, the degree of involvement of the client and the experience or reputation of the stylist. Another participant, a freelance stylist who interviewed for the same research project, claims that the degree of creative control accorded to a stylist is dependent on the stylist's own level of ambition, maintaining that some stylists 'make this job not feel like a creative job' (Buxton 2013, personal communication, 1st May).

<TEXT>If a stylist has a role in the decision-making, in the generation of concepts and in the development of a narrative or theme, similarities could be drawn with the role of film director. Although the roles are not directly comparable, the debate around 'auteurism' within film theory provides a useful framework for discussion of the emergence and subsequent legitimation of styling as an occupation. As McIntyre explains, ascribing the making of a film to a single, artistic 'genius' figure reflected the film industry's desire to achieve higher cultural status (2012: 134). The term 'stylist' was originally used in a literary context to describe the way that an author used words (Anyan and Clarke 2011) and auteurism in film theory is, according to Sellors (2010: 11), 'rooted in the Romantic concept of the author'. Within the field of fashion theory McRobbie (1998) has criticized the fact that British art schools continue to

promote the notion of designer as auteur, or romantic artist and it is perhaps possible to frame the stylist within a similar debate.

The film critic Andrew Sarris is cited as being the first writer to use the term 'auteur theory' (1962) but the notion of auteurship emerged through film criticism, primarily the French magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*, who began discussing 'la politique des auteurs' in relation to key directors at the time (McIntyre 2012). The theory relates to the attribution of authorship to the director of a film, over any of the other key creative or technical roles in the production process. Sarris defines the three key criteria of auteurship as 'technique', 'personal directorial style' and 'interior meaning'; he classes those directors who meet all of these criteria as auteurs. He lists directors who could be considered auteurs, those who only act as metteurs-en-scène (scene-setters) and those who, interestingly in the context of this debate, are mere 'stylists'.

Understandably, auteur theory is criticized for creating elitism within the film industry and for overlooking other important roles in the production process. Although film theorists are divided over the relevance or appropriateness of auteur theory, it was acknowledged as a necessary debate because it brought into question the issue of credit when discussing the critical or commercial success of a film (Sellors 2010). The debate around auteurship could equally be applied to a discussion of credit and creative responsibility within the field of fashion photography, particularly when discussing the levels of responsibility and ownership afforded to either the stylist or photographer. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that both are collaborative processes. However, despite being performed on a much smaller scale and with a much smaller network of creative or technical roles, there are similarities between the production processes for film and those for fashion photography. It is possible to assess a stylist's role as auteur against similar criteria to that of the film director.

A stylist can be assessed on degrees of technical competence; mastering technical issues relating to both photography and clothing they work alongside the photographer in the studio, they direct or dress the model in an appropriate way. Indeed, much of the existing literature discussing the role focuses on technical aspects of the role and the practical tasks involved in styling (Dingemans 1999; McAssey and Buckley 2011; Yates 2011).

Sarris (1962 [1985]: 562) defines directorial style as 'recurrent characteristics [Ö], which serve as his signature'. A stylist also tends to be recognized for a particular style, characteristics of taste and aesthetic formed by an awareness of currency in fashion terms, of historical and contemporary image making and the influences of other cultural reference points (McRobbie 1998; Coddington 2012).

The latter category of 'interior meaning' is more difficult to apply. Although a stylist's signature style is informed by their own tastes and developed from their own background or design education, it is perhaps not possible to attribute the same level of meaning and personal value to a fashion photograph as an image that is being presented in a fine art context or a film that may explore social or political subject matter in a more complex or sustained way. Even so, Beard (2013) claims that many

of the narratives developed by Baker for *Nova* magazine were inspired by her own political beliefs and it is possible to identify recurring themes in the work of other stylists. Simon Foxton's scrapbooks were a key element of his show at the Photographer's Gallery and they clearly illustrate how his own obsessions and personal interests (pornography, black male sexuality, English eccentricity) informed his styling practice (Martin 2009).

The *Strictly* series, photographed by Jason Evans and styled by Simon Foxton, for *i-D* magazine in 1991, is also cited as an example of editorial photography communicating on a more complex level than had previously been seen in the pages of a fashion magazine. Williams states that the photographs, which depict black men dressed as 'dandified' country gents in urban London locations 'propelled fashion photography into a new arena in which it could discuss photography, race and sexuality', making statements in the same way as politically driven filmmaking (1998).

Auteur theory presents the film director as a 'true artist', pitching the commercial value against the artistic credibility of a film, highlighting the tension between the industrial nature of cinematic production and the auteur's creativity (Caughie 1981). According to Sarris, 'the auteur critic is obsessed with the wholeness of art and the artist' (1962 [1985]: 563). McRobbie uses the same arguments when discussing 'fine art values' within the fashion industry in the United Kingdom. McRobbie (1998: 49) cites Bourdieu, who claims that 'embracing an "inverted economy" where money does not matter, is in fact the clearest pathway to cultural consecration'. The British fashion industry and education systems are both respected and criticized for prioritizing art values over commercial considerations (Volonté 2008).

Auteurism is also criticized for focusing predominantly on the 'less apparently industrial' cinema being produced in Europe and Asia (Caughie 1981: 10). Critics of auteurism claim that it can only be applied to a certain type of filmmaking and that the criteria used to define the auteur can only be applied to a relatively small number of directors. The same criticism could be levelled at the, albeit limited, debate around the fashion stylist's role. Any existing literature devoted to the role of the stylist tends to focus on those practicing within the more creative field of editorial photography (Mower 2007; Martin 2009; Baron 2012; McLean 2012; Beard 2013). It should be noted that many stylists work in commercial fields. As mentioned, those stylists interviewed made the distinction between 'commercial' and 'editorial', and it is the latter, despite frequently being unpaid, that is accorded the greatest level of critical acclaim.

<H1>Auteurship and the fashion photographer

<NP>As indicated, the same criteria used to define the stylist as auteur could also be applied to the photographer's role in the process, and it is this tension between the roles that creates further debate. Sellors warns against over-simplifying the creative process of filmmaking and is wary of certain aspects of auteur theory. He points out that the relationship between the film director and film cast is 'not as straightforward

as the relationship between, for instance, a painter and painting or a writer and a work of literature' (2010). The levels of responsibility held by the stylist and/or photographer vary from situation to situation; as such, we should be equally wary of oversimplifying the creative hierarchy within the field of fashion photography.

<TEXT>A freelance photographer, interviewed about his role in the image-making process, supports the notion that the photographer has ultimate responsibility for the success of a fashion photograph, claiming that 'in the main, I think if the picture doesn't turn out well I think that everyone will look for the photographer's credit' (Warwick 2013, personal communication, 18th February). Could the fact that the photographer has responsibility for capturing the moment, that he or she hits the button and 'seals the deal', be the sole reason for this? Regarding the stylist's contribution to the creative process, Foxton (in Martin 2009) also feels that the stylist is no longer needed once the model has been dressed:
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> I'm happy to interact when needed. Certainly, with younger photographers, I will be a bit more proactive and stand beside them. Nick (Knight) likes a bit more of a hands-on approach, for the stylist to be with him and give feedback. But, if I'm honest, I prefer to just get them ready and then say 'you do your stuff'.

<NP>Foxton's (in Martin 2009) attitude to his own creative direction of the image-making process is further supported by his belief that the photographer takes the lead role in the studio: 'There is a real hierarchy on shoots that you have to be aware of. On set, I like to think of the photographer as "top dog"; it's his or her show'. It is unclear whether he considers that this subservience applies only in the photographic studio, the photographer's territory, or whether he feels that this hierarchy applies throughout the image-making process, from conception of idea to final fashion image. Another stylist interviewed supports this notion of pecking order within image making, claiming that 'the hierarchy is: photographer, stylist and then the hair and the makeup. In that order'. He goes on to say that 'as a stylist you're very secondary to the photographer, you're second place and he's like the God'. Beard (2003) sees the relationship as mutually dependent, quoting Baker, who goes as far as likening the relationship to a love affair but who suggests that, despite being a two-way creative process, the photographer has the ultimate decision-making responsibility.

<TEXT>The attitude of the photographer to the stylist could be seen as a consequence of his own need to justify his status and role in the creative process. Bourdieu (1990: 72) is particularly dismissive of the photographer's role, claiming that
<EXT>
> attempts to apply artistic intentions to photography appear excessive because the models and norms required to do this are missing, and also because the opportunities for personal expression or creation seem to lie in the choice of object rather than in the treatment of the object, which could have, one imagines, only a limited number of variations.

<NP>McRobbie (1998) criticizes Bourdieu's dismissive attitude to fashion design as a specialist profession and the same could be noted in his treatment of photographic practice. This treatment of particular creative roles could provide an interesting framework for further discussion. However, one could also argue that, in fashion photography, the stylist's role is the 'treatment of the object' and that they are involved more closely (or certainly *as* closely) with the crafting of the final image than the photographer. In commercial photography, both are expected to consider how the aesthetic of the image they create relates to the visual identity of the brand they are working for, both need to be aware that how the elements of the image are crafted and captured should be 'fit for purpose', should communicate a suitable message to the audience, one that reflects the wishes of the client.

<H1>New directions, new disciplines

<NP>In her autobiography, the stylist Grace Coddington reflects on the evolution of the role. Having worked as a model in the 1960s, when she was expected to dress herself, and having seen further shifts in the fashion publishing industry since then, she is philosophical about the current popularity of, and demand for, the role. Coddington (2012: 111) claims that although she is credited as 'creative director' in magazines she still considers herself a 'stylist' but acknowledges that even this job title could easily become redundant if 'the mood changes'.

<TEXT>Despite the heightened public profile enjoyed by the stylist, there remains a perceived lack of critical acceptance of the role within the industry, amongst peers, which contrasts with public recognition of the role. As stated, Nicola Formichetti is one of the most publicly recognized stylists but, despite this, his attitude to his own profession is the opposite to that of Coddington. He prefers to be labelled as an art director rather than a stylist and discusses the transition he feels he has made from one role to another: '… when I was a 'stylist' I was never doing the stylist's job. I couldn't care less about the clothes. I was much less into the clothes than the person I was shooting. I was never like a 'proper' stylist… so I never wanted to do that.' Formichetti is now credited as fulfilling a range of roles, he works as 'fashion director' for music videos and as 'artistic director' of Italian fashion label *Diesel* and for Japanese clothing brand Uniqlo. The continued creation of further cultural intermediary roles within the field of fashion media, particularly 'directorial' roles, reflects a continuing drive, amongst the ever-expanding middle classes, to legitimize the intellectualization of new areas of expertise within popular culture such as popular music, fashion and design (Featherstone 1991; Bourdieu 2010).

Beard (2013) bemoans the lack of recognition given to stylists or fashion editors, where the photographer's is typically prioritized. However, she (Beard 2013) notes a shift in this area, crediting the online platform SHOWstudio as acknowledging the larger production network, that of photographer, model, fashion editor, stylist, art director and designer.

SHOWstudio has been instrumental in creating a shift in the way that fashion image-making is presented, particularly moving image. Interestingly, the role of the stylist

within the emerging field of fashion film is less clearly defined as within stills photography. Since advertising was first featured in cinema on television, it has been used as a way of promoting new fashion products. Where there have been new developments, since the advent of the Internet, is in the use of online channels to publish moving editorial content. This development has also allowed the stylist to be recognized for their contribution to the creative process in a way that would not have been seen in advertising, where the creative team is rarely credited. SHOWstudio encourages creatives to challenge traditional modes of production. Foxton has been involved in a number of projects that question the role of the stylist in the production process.

The film *Skin* by Simon Foxton and Nick Griffiths featured a series of filmed portraits, where the models stood as still as possible but could nevertheless be captured blinking, looking away and scratching their face. Foxton works predominantly with stills' photographers and in this situation the photographer would generally be given primary credit. What is also interesting about the *Skin* project is that Foxton and the stylist Nick Griffiths are given equal listing as the authors of the work, credited for 'concept and styling'. The cameraman is listed below both the stylists and the producer. The credits are presented in a way that film credits would typically be presented. In this context, has the stylist quite literally adopted the role of director, the key role in the creative process, with other technical roles, such as that of the cameraman, listed below him?

The *Sittings: Thirty Men* performance, staged as part of the Showstudio: Fashion Revolution exhibition in 2009 at Somerset House asked further questions. A chair was placed on a set and on each day of the 30-day event, Foxton dressed a different model, as 'living magazine pages' (Yusuf 2013: 105). Interestingly, the sessions were recorded via a fixed webcam, thus negating the need for either a photographer or film director. Although one could question the commercial application of such a process, the project served to specifically highlight the contribution of the stylist to the image-making process, without the interference of collaborative roles.

Sellors discusses the film industry prior to the elevation of director to auteur or primary role in filmmaking. He harks back to a time, at the turn of the twentieth century, when the camera operator and the 'person in charge of rehearsing the actors' managed the production (2012: 8). As new fields emerge in fashion communication, as new media are explored and new platforms are presenting creative output in increasingly innovative ways, the stylist, and other evolving directorial roles, will continue to challenge the photographer as auteur in the image-making process.

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