

“My head hurts!” ... I text my friend.

JETLEGGED

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(Even the smallest) changes in the environment can affect me when I move myself into a different space. I feel the air: is it more humid, or is it maybe a bit drier? (Sub)consciously my body will adapt to the new conditions around me. I feel my breathing getting deeper, slower, or faster. Still acclimatising, I scan the people around me. What are they wearing, and how do they behave? How do I position myself within this new situation? Adapting to drastic changes, like stepping onto an airplane and knowing that the cramped amount of space provided will be your home for the next ten hours, between the clouds tens of thousands of feet above the ground. Adapting to smaller changes, like coming home from a long bike ride through the city on a rainy day (which is not so unusual when you live in Amsterdam). These changes need adaptation on a physical level, and surprisingly our bodies adapt way faster than we think.

Last September I flew to Hong Kong (GMT+8). They say that one hour of your jetlag is restored for each day you are in another country with a time difference. I estimated that in a week I would be in a *normal* rhythm again. But what about my mind? At that time, I started my internship at a fashion brand in Hong Kong. I still had to adjust to the working hours and the common language people were speaking. The Hong Kongese dishes in the small eateries reminded me of my parents' Chinese influenced Vietnamese home cooking. I did not miss them as much as had I expected since we FaceTimed from time to time. In moments of loneliness I warmed up my heart with dishes that, in the Netherlands, my parents tried to recreate with any spices and sauces that were available at the Oriental

supermarket. In Hong Kong I tasted the authentic version of those dishes for the first time.

But the world is exactly what my problems are about: The fact that I got the chance to grow up in the Netherlands, when I also could have grown up on the other side of the world, where I am 'really' from. It gets

"I WANT TO MAKE THE WORLD MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY PROBLEMS, THEREFORE, I HAVE TO MAKE MY PROBLEMS SOCIAL."

- Chris Kraus¹

even more complex now that there is the possibility to be in contact with where I am from — whether it is Vietnam or The Netherlands — in many ways without actually being there, through the internet and the products that I consume.

Globalisation contributed to economic development in Asian countries, causing a shift in the labour force from West to East. This cannot only be seen from an economical perspective but also from a cultural one. Modernisation as a Western idea is being reinterpreted in major cities in Asia. This symbiosis, where capital cities develop their own adaptation of capitalism is what interests me: *The ping pong effect, a copy of a copy of a copy. Is pasta an Italian adaptation of noodles? 'Anything goes'*.²

In the following paragraphs I do not want to present something that is completely *new* to all of us. I will unfold different tropes that could contribute to defining Western-Asian identities, lead through the realm of Asian Futurism. Opening different folders in my

1. Chris Kraus, I Love Dick (2006, p.196)

2. According to Feyerabend, new theories came to be accepted not because of their accord with scientific method, but because their supporters made use of any trick – rational, rhetorical, or ribald – in order to advance their cause. Without a fixed ideology, or the introduction of religious tendencies, the only approach which does not inhibit progress (using whichever definition one sees fit) is "anything goes". "[A]nything goes' is not a 'principle' I hold... but the terrified exclamation of a rationalist who takes a closer look at history."(Feyerabend, 1975)

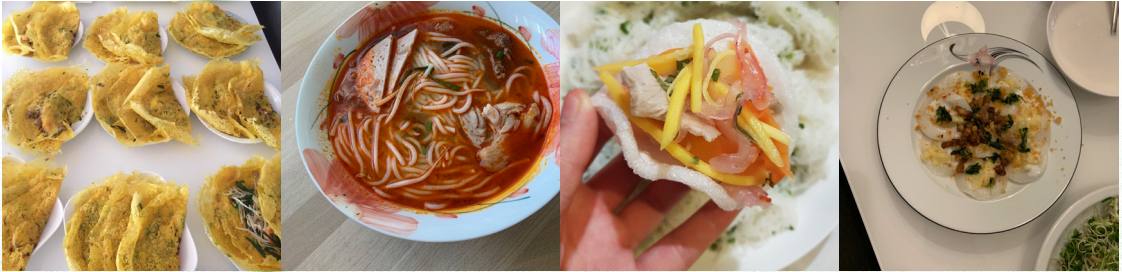
Finder you might discover randomly found footage, snippets of illegally downloaded movies, screenshots of funny memes, outfit photos of complete strangers, quotes from fashion magazines ...

These folders contain information that has probably never been brought to our deepest attention, but it is lingering in our unconscious minds. My writings will analyse occurrences surrounding Asian representation and identity, with a focus on our global citizenship. I want to shed a light on these topics and see what could eventually come forth from it: like opening all of these files in my Adobe Creative Cloud and slowly trying to find a red thread between their supposed randomness. Which givens coexist there? How can I merge and transform these givens? By continuously zooming out and back in again, I can see what adjustments are needed to take all these pieces of information to the next level, or: how can I comprehend or wrap my head around the future? If I want to be able to *predict* the future, it is first of all necessary to understand the present and what is lingering within it.

Growing up in a digital realm with bi-cultural experiences, I found refuge in turning to communities of peers with fluid existences that I was not physically in touch with. Through this text I wish to reach and speak for this generation and demographic, that I myself am a part of. I want to question the generalised perceptions of this group of people to both demystify this Orientalising and exoticising and also to reconnect with my roots.

Bi-culturality

As a second-generation immigrant, I feel displaced. I cannot say that either The Netherlands or Vietnam is 100% my home. But if there is something that can slightly make me feel at home, it is the food I grew up with. In the weekends when my parents were off work, my mom used to cook the nicest meals for us. She recreated the flavours and recipes she had grown up with herself: bánh xèo, bún bò Huế, gỏi tôm, bánh bèo and many more. Influenced by my grandpa's Chinese roots, and the limited choices for Asian ingredients that were available in the Netherlands, we merged all these givens into a new style of cooking.



When I went to elementary school, I brought sandwiches with Vietnamese sausage to school. I got many responses of *Ew* or *that looks disgusting*. Of course, you can imagine how it frustrated me years later when the Vietnamese sandwich, which is called Banh mi, became a huge trend in foodie³ culture.

My parents would always feel embarrassed towards my Dutch friends and their parents because of the intense fragrance of the pho broth that would have been boiling for over 24 hours. They would hide it away when I would have kid-playdates. Potential boyfriends and homework buddies were served weird

3. A foodie is a person who has an ardent or refined interest in food and who eats food not only out of hunger but due to their interest or hobby. They would proudly share this interest with their social networks by posting pictures of their latest restaurant finds and the new food trends they tried.

rip-offs of the dishes that I grew up with. Lo mein with Maggie instead of soy sauce ... I was so confused.

These memories made me think about how much adaptation my parents had to go through. To be always aware of what the other might see as weird or foreign, always overthinking situations and adapting themselves to the culture of the other.

Following the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, my parents fled the country as political refugees. They were part of the so called *boat people* who emigrated from South-Vietnam per ship or boat. They were among the 800.000 Vietnamese people who made it

TRYING TO FIT IN = BEING EVEN
MORE ALIENATED

safely to the shores of the small islands that are in the proximity of Vietnam. From there they got transferred to, at that time, *wealthier countries* in the West. Most of the refugees' wish was to live the American dream, which explains the large number of Vietnamese migrants in the United States, but for my parents it didn't really matter to them where they would end up.

With the help of a lovely Jewish couple some of my family made it to the Netherlands. They do not talk that much about what happened in the war, but speak more of their hopes and new beginnings. My sister and I were given Dutch names so we could adapt more easily into the society we were going to be part of. Irene comes from the Greek god Ειρήνη, who represents

peace. My sister is called Anne, after Anne Frank who was part of the resistance in the Second World War. I remember how I would feel proud when people asked me if I was adopted, or when they thought I was *Dutch-Dutch*, like *really* Dutch. As in: 'your Dutch sounded so perfect through the phone that we did not expect you to be Asian.' Thinking of this now, I am ashamed. Not because of my weekly round at the Asian grocery market or the fact that I'm not familiar with the typical Dutch board games my classmates played with their families in the weekend. Nor for talking on the phone in Vietnamese, nor my inherited superstition inherited from my ancestors' folktales. I am ashamed of the fact that I neglected my culture for a long time. Rather than picking its vast fruits, I saw it only as an obstruction. Slowly maturing I asked myself: why can't I be proud of who I am? And where do I *actually come from?* Why can't I embrace my double identity? This thesis turns out to be a reconciliation.

On Asian Futurism & Asian representation

We see a shift towards a new epoch happening in the vicinities of flourishing Asian cities, which has become the backdrop for a whole new generation of science fiction literature and cinema. In Cyberpunk, stories are told within dreamscapes of hi-tech, dark, urban dystopia. Its cities house citizens who have merged their bodies into the rapidly developing technology. Its stories tell of human-like engineered robots and illegal bike gangs that rush around these cities. Scenes which seem to be shot by drone, show crammed skyscrapers and smoky little alleys where interactive hologram adverts pop up

in the air. Speculation of an Asian inflected future is of course inevitable considering Japan's technological dominance, China's industrialisation and the free market economies of Singapore and Hong Kong.

On the airplane to Hong Kong I was scrolling through the list of blockbusters Qatar Airlines was offering. I selected *Blade Runner* (1982). The first scene was set in a rain-lashed neon-lit alley. Of course, I instantly remembered this article on Hypebeast: "A Technicolor Sci-Fi Dream: Raf Simons's 2018 S/S Show Channelled 'Blade Runner' & Asian Cultures." It's cool when brands such as Raf Simons highlights art/cult movies in their collections: but where are the actual Asian people in this collection? I mean it clearly stated that the brand tried to channel Asian Cultures, but as far as I researched there were less than a handful of Asian models walking the show, even though it was set in the heart of New York's Chinatown. My thoughts drifted away from the movie which Simons tried to replicate: 'REPLICANT'⁴ exactly was the word that was displayed on scrolling LED signs, staged chaotically next to the Chinese lanterns and neon lights in that exact S/S 2018 show. It seemed a bit ironic to me. In the movie the Replicants were portrayed in such a human way, while for the short few seconds that an Asian person appeared on the screen, they felt really alien and misplaced. If Asians shaped this cyberpunk future, where are they?

"When real Asian Americans—by which I mean people and not stereotypes—appear in media, we do so in the future, but not the present; in alternate realities, but not this one." – Dawn Chan⁵

4. A replicant is a fictional bioengineered being who is virtually identical to an adult human but has superior strength, speed, intelligence, agility and resilience. Often it is hard to debunk a replicant since they are so well programmed that they can identify with a *real* human on many levels.

5. Dawn Chan, *Asia-futurism* (2016)

It is interesting that these semi-predicted futures are all set in colonial cities which can be seen as the blueprints for what contemporary capitalist world cities might eventually become. “[T]he representatives and institutions of industrial capitalism first confronted those of ethnically, racially, and culturally different pre-industrial and pre-capitalist societies at any significant scale.”⁶

Films like *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) are clearly inspired by the cityscape of former British colony Hong Kong, where high-tech architecture is mixed with densely populated working-class buildings. It is a melting pot where East meets West, where both need to adapt to one another.

When we look at Hong Kong’s skyline of Victoria Harbour, we see an eclectic collection of buildings which derive from a Western view on post-modernism mixed with an ancient view on Feng Shui.⁷ Statement buildings like the HSBC building and Bank of China Tower are designed with this principle to have a good flow of energy (which equals with a good flow of money). When we zoom in on the Central district of Hong Kong, we see these the buildings rise from luxury shopping malls with some traditional shops and shrines that are left in the small alleys between these corporate settlements.

To modernize means also to replace. Adaptation of East meets West sounds great, but when, in the end, it is more of a one-sided adaptation — where the East has to adapt to being a colony of the West — we see important historical and cultural keystones fading away. Traditional businesses are disappearing rapidly: old shops and buildings become French bistros, con-

6. Anthony D. King, *Global cities* (1990, p.38)

7. (In Chinese thought) a system of laws considered to govern spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of energy (chi), and whose favourable or unfavourable effects are taken into account when siting and designing buildings. – Wikipedia

temporary art galleries, or exclusive boutiques. This gentrification won't create more diversity, but will create a more homogeneous lifestyle, one that is being spread globally.

ASIAN INFECTED FUTURE ≠ JUST BORROWING
 ASIAN AESTHETICS
 BUT = CONSERVING AND REPRESENTING ANCIENT
 HISTORY & CULTURE

~ At night I walked by myself through the crowded neon-lit streets. These neon lights were exactly what I was looking for: the original ones, made from hand-blown glass tubes. Due to new regulations, throughout the years neon lights have been replaced with more efficient and durable LED lights. It was hard to find an original one. You can clearly see the difference between the machine-made pixelated lights and the handcrafted blown ones. An owner of one of the last small shops crafting these neon signs sighs: "society changes and we have to follow the rules."

An immense rise of economy and its complex layers unfold really clearly in Chinese director Jia Zhangke's magic-realistic portrait of contemporary China, *A Touch of Sin* (2011). He is known for picturing the downtrodden of a society and the effect of the country's rapid globalisation. Consequences for rural Chinese citizens are clearly visible in this film. Here we see four different workers who are suffering while trying to make a living for themselves. Unrealistic working conditions in clothing factories, sexual exploitation



Fig. 1 Hong Kong streets (2011) randomwire.com

of poor women in private massage clubs and the shift from local to metropole burst out in violent scenarios where we see grief, loneliness, and self-destruction. A Touch of Sin guides us through the causations of these violent acts while pointing out our toxic capitalist system which made these workers perpetrators. It shows that there are real humans behind crimes, and that bad circumstances brought them to commit bad actions. But they are just as human and relatable as we are.

Globalization

THIS COULD BE ANYWHERE AND
THIS COULD BE ANYTHING

~ Hit me up, I am in Saigon! On Instagram stories I posted this text with a picture of myself standing next to the Notre Dame. I mean, it is a replica of the French ca-

thedral. It is situated in the inner city of Ho Chi Minh, formerly known as Saigon, which is the biggest city in Vietnam. On the tourist description sign I read that all the construction materials were imported from France. To me it feels like a big dollhouse, the architecture style completely mismatches with everything around it. Though it felt like a good decision to change the bricks into a more red-ish colour. Otherwise the building would have looked so pale next to the bright coloured flowers and plants, that can only be grown in a humid environment such as Vietnam. A street vendor stares at me. I stare at my phone. A photo reply of my friend: 'I am in Saigon too, little Saigon!' It's a photo of a bowl of Pho soup. The window on the background indicates that it is raining in Europe's oldest China town. *Little Saigon* lies in Amsterdam, and in many other cities spread around the world.

Adaptations of Western architecture is being taken to a whole other level regarding duplitecture⁸ that can be found in rising cities in (South)East Asia. Not only American or European styled buildings, but whole towns are being duplicated. These adaptations go way beyond Chinatowns in Western capital cities like the one in New York, the 13th district in Paris or Amsterdam's Zeedijk. The existence of Chinatowns is bound to the rise in Chinese and other (South)East-Asian immigrant populations in big cities. They ended up in rougher areas of these cities where rent was cheaper. From there on they tried to build a future in a foreign country, far away from what they called home.

Unlike Chinatowns, artificial duplitecture does not exist out of necessity, nor out of longing to be connected and surrounded by people who are more *alike*.

8. Duplitecture: duplicated architecture

They exist as a reflection of Chinese wealth, to show off that they are able to have what Westerners have, because above all foreign means better. In premodern China, imperial rulers started with copying American or European landmarks to show off their authority. Sometimes even importing flora and fauna to recreate foreign landscapes within their own domain. Emulating foreignness, whether it's buildings, products or lifestyle, is linked to modern China's desire to compete against the West, showing that they could have the same but even better.

These replicas had to be (slightly) modified considering the new conditions they had to exist in. Buildings had to be adjusted to work in accordance with Feng Shui's principles. Materials could be replaced to be more suitable to China's climate, or buildings could be painted in another colour to fit the scenery. Downscaling of landmarks was inevitable: there was only 46.7 hectares available to fit in the highlights of the (Western) world.

The World, a Beijing theme park which promises visitors will "see the world without leaving Beijing", is central in another masterpiece by Jia Zhangke, *The World* (2004), named after the theme park itself. Miniature versions of famous sites around the world are reproduced and gathered. Just like *A Touch of Sin*, the story is about migrant workers from outside the city, longing to escape their downtrodden lives by performing in the park as entertainers. Alternating between costumes, one day they are dancers in front of the miniature Taj Mahal and on the next playing a Geisha, serving tea to visitors in the Japanese garden. We see a mini Eiffel tower and a couple fighting next to the Tower

of Pisa. After working hours, the protagonist sits in an airplane that will never take off: “Oh, if only I could see the world.”

~ ‘The fragrant blends of different sorts of coffee penetrate my nostrils. Can I get an oat milk cappuccino? I am surrounded by concrete walls and interior. Some hints of wood and the plants in the corner should give us a notion of reconnecting to nature and most likely the tables have a marbled stone surface. The girls on the table next to me are taking selfies with the milky heart that was poured in their coffees by the barista. This place could be anywhere in the world.’

The Market Bag Effect

The concept of pasta is the same as noodles. Italian pizza can be eaten in America, American pizza can be found in the fridge of an Italian supermarket. But what is it like to eat the American version of the Italian pizza in Italy? Will it taste the same as the *authentic* Italian pizza? Or will the essence of the pizza (thin crust, brick oven baked, mozzarella and tomato sauce) be completely lost? A rough thought experiment: what if the consistence and quality of the American flour used for the pizza dough is different than the one in Italy, but the preparation methods are similar: is it still in essence an Italian pizza? *The pizza effect*⁹ is adjustable on many different levels and many different cases. It is in all the products we consume and actions we perform each day.

A great example: my housemate had this bag I really liked. I asked if I could borrow it from him. When I wore it to school my classmate pointed out to me that it looks like a Balenciaga market bag. “But this is a *real*

market bag.” I told her. “No, no, that’s not the point,” she answered. “Well, actually that is the point: the market bag exists, Balenciaga copies it and puts its brand name on it in small golden letters. People notice this trendy bag and start to reproduce this in a slightly different size, slightly different colour and it ends again where it came from: on the (fake) market. The bag in your hand is a copy of a copy, but it looks even more like the original! And I love it!”



Fig. 2 Asian Market bag v.s. Balenciaga Market Bag (2016) source: worldofbuzz.com

9. This theory is emanated from the Ship of Theseus: 'In the metaphysics of identity, the ship of Theseus is a thought experiment that raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. The concept is one of the oldest in Western philosophy, having been discussed by the likes of Heraclitus and Plato by ca. 500-400 BC. - Wikipedia

I want to put this as easy as possible,
or at least this is what I have come to understand:

Collectivism > Individualism
Individualism = Authenticity
Authenticity = Representation
Representation = Commodity
Commodity = Mass consumption
Mass consumption = Possibilities
Endless possibilities = Craving to fulfil (unnecessary) needs
More cravings to fulfil needs = Demand
More demand = More production
Mass production = Rapid industrialisation
Rapid industrialisation = Even more demand
Even more demand = Cheap labour
Cheaper labour = Shift of production
Shift of production = Transnational flow
Transnational flow = Access to anything/anywhere
in the world = Globalisation
Globalisation = Interconnection
Interconnection = Digitalisation
Digitalisation = Self-expression
Self-expression = Individualism
^ Capitalism



Fig. 3 New Town Plaza in Hong Kong

On Materialism and hyper-normalisation of luxury

"WE EXPRESS OURSELVES WITH
PRODUCTS AND GOODS THAT WE OWN,
USE AND WEAR."

~Lost between the commuters, I find myself in a sky corridor that connects the underground to a luxurious shopping mall. I bump into people continuously while checking my Google Maps, those people in turn staring at their own phones, which have become an extension of their arms.

I reach the entrance of the mall. If you would ask me what the most inhumane place on earth I have been to is, I would say one of these gigantic-Asian-metropole-seven-floors-shopping malls. The white floors reflect the bright lighting, a strong artificial smell of vanilla is being released and the pop-ish background music is a bit too loud. All to block our senses – we cannot hear nor see well, or even think straight – to convince us to buy more and more. All I see around me is boutiques of my favourite brands and products which I clearly cannot afford.

What are missing are the clothes. The storefronts are all filled with bags and accessories, displaying the next It-bag of the season. Apparently, we like to buy into brands and not into goods. A recognisable bag will show your (supposed!) wealth and social standing, while a nicely designed piece of clothing can be bought anywhere.

Luxury = Exclusivity
Exclusivity = Authenticity

Here we get to the point where I will be talking about fashion... and we all know that fashion is crazy. What happens in the absurdity of duplitecture —copying of *wealthier* cultures to show authority or ability, which means exclusivity — the opposite happens in fashion. Instead of copying the wealthy upper class to show one's authenticity, working class culture has become an *edgy* source of inspiration which results in complex cultures being reduced to surface-level commodities.

**"IN OUR QUEST OF BECOMING AUTHENTIC, WE
BECOME EVEN MORE AIKE."**

We are socially conditioned growing up to read clothes and interpret them. When we walk down the street, we see how form follows function: the man in his suit is on his way to the office and the boy with the skateboard in his hand is probably skipping school. This changes when everyone can get access to the same *kind* of items, but indifferent price ranges. I elaborated upon this in my essay Flame Spread Rate in the first year of this BA.¹⁰

For example sweatpants have been a key item in anyone's wardrobe since near the end of the 2010's. From confection to luxury, Primark to Selfridges, cheap to expensive: the stripe was stitched down the side. We saw sweatpants becoming more tailored, taking away their bagginess and even seeing their materials adapted so they could be worn in an office.

10. The Flame Spread focuses on how the flame pattern appeared in high fashion by influencers who started wearing the brand Thrasher but was also found copied and mass produced on websites such as AliExpress. That made it possible for anyone to jump on the bandwagon with as outcome Thrasher accusing everyone of the appropriation of skating culture. In Thrasher's flame typo I saw strong resembles to the flames depicted along with dragons embroidered on traditional Chinese garments, mostly in yellow and red colours.

Adaptations of brands such as Palm Angels, Needles and Ian Connor's Revenge¹¹ sold these kinds of sweatpants for \$200 and upwards. Regarding these brands, wearing them was to be part of a tribe. After all, a little butterfly embroidered next to the stripe showed others that you were not only able to afford, but also to understand. In this case you would understand the philosophy of Japanese street wear influenced brand Needles: the merger of both American and Japanese cultural movements.

Digitalisation = Self expression

~ I love to read YouTube comments because for some reason it gives me a notion of interconnection, a green light for collective memory. When I scroll through the comment section, I see people commenting what I was thinking seconds before. As soon as I have a question about something that occurred in the video, I know I will have to scroll a bit more and most of the time there will be a random user who has answered it.

That anyone can become anything can be proven with the rise of the internet's absurdity. Younger users can easily be influenced by the mass circulation of imagery on the internet, especially on social media like Instagram. It is inevitable that a desire for products and items (which one sometimes does not even need) is being created. The internet is a place where everything comes together: a big throw-up of our society's absurdity, with celebrities and influencers as biggest examples. Take for example the photo of Kylie Jenner surrounded with seven Louis Vuitton bags, why isn't one enough? Or in that episode of *Sneaker shopping with Com-*

11. These three brands all have similarly styled sweatpants which resemble the infamous Adidas ones. Palm Angel's one is recognizable for its one stripe stitched on top of a bigger surfaced stripe along the side with Palm Angels branded in Gothic letters at the place where normally the Adidas logo would be. Needles has a wider surfaced stripe with five vertical stripes printed and a little butterfly as branding on it. Ian Connor's version can be recognized by its more baggy fit and rainbow colored stripes along the side.

*plex*¹² where one of the members of Rae Sremmurd is wearing a Rolex on his head. And let's not forget Billie Eilish, who at the moment has 61 million followers on Instagram, frequently being spotted wearing a full monochrome Gucci outfit.

Luxury has been normalised. For teenagers, to wear certain brands or own certain items means that they fit into a certain group, or that they know what is cool in the current moment. Therefore, we see a larger shift in teen culture towards strong brand association, tapping into popularity instead of authenticity. But with Gen-Z's weekly pocket money you can imagine it's unlikely for them to spend as much money on their looks as the celebrities and artists they are trying to mimic.

“Gen-Z uses the internet as a place that can nurture and foster personal development” –

Michelle Santiago Cortés¹³

~ Online, Gen-Z starts to find creative solutions to get access to items to express their own style: YouTube is full of DIY videos which teach you how to customise the Nike Swoosh so that it looks similar to Travis Scott's version of the Air Force. Gen-Z starts to turn to archive fashion, scouring eBay and Grailed for second-hand designer items. Parallel to that, we see a rise of (archival) fashion meme accounts where Rick Owens is portrayed as a god. And not to forget, the demand for bootleg items has strongly been increased

High Demand + Low Budget (consumers) = Niche market

12. Rae Sremmurd Go Sneaker Shopping With Complex https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPa_q20-jlE&t=59s

13. Michelle Santiago Cortés, What Youth Culture Looked Like in 2018 (2018) <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-12-people-moments-shaped-youth-culture-2018>

To live up to the demands (of not only Gen Z) for a more homogenous look, the market starts to reproduce and replicate these simpler constructed items. With Asia as epicentre of production and its rapid industrialisation, items can be copied en masse. I:1 Yeezy boots, Supreme box logo shirts and Louis Vuitton monogram handbags can be found at any fake market in a (South)East Asian country. Here it still applies that foreign is better. With the Market Bag Effect in the back of our minds, this will get even more confusing when we start to wear a copy of a copy that was maybe inspired by our own culture.

Niche Market = Creative Parallel

A whole world is hidden within these niche markets where brand names are being modified to avoid the violation of copyrights, typefaces are slightly up or down-scaled and colourways are made to distinguish the fake from *the original*. This process of copying adds another layer to the process of finding creative solutions to get as close to the real thing without 100% copying it, while still coming across as real enough to be worn by the consumer. Bootlegging has evolved into something beyond illegal copyright infringement, and instead has become an act of creativity. “Poetic research and archival unit” @ shanzhai_lyric, documents these awkwardly translated slogans from Chinese bootleg T-shirts, nearly turning the pictures of these absurd phrases into memes. Spreading these on Instagram feels like a postcolonial statement. Language becomes a hybrid with more than one way to state things. It now justifies the existence of Chinese adaptation and modification of the English language.

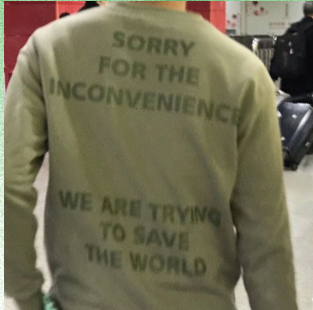


Fig. 5 Source: @shanzhai_lyric

“This inquiry into the glossolalic and supra-sensical text that often appears on counterfeit (Shanzhai) clothing looks at how the distorted rhetoric of fashion and branding uses mimicry, hybridity, and permutation to revel in and reveal the artifice of global hierarchies.” – Shanzhai Lyric

~ In my point of view, opportunities are being created within this parallel system of bootlegging. Since there are enough resources and apparently no lack of creativity, I am wondering what cool products can come forward out of reinterpreting Western branded bootlegs. Someone in a production factory might start to realise that the fruit and success of the Balenciaga Market bags can be abbreviated to the Market bags that they have already been producing for years. Discoveries and treasures can be found by looking at one’s own culture before making a copy of a copy of one’s own: as a reaction to the market’s cynicism we reverse this cynicism by reclaiming our culture, and therefore reclaiming our products. I wonder what will happen when this parallel system breaks the cycle and develops products before luxury brands could even think of appropriating them.

Asian representation (in Fashion)

When we see Asians in relation to fashion, we see them either as consumers (regarding the stereotype of crazy rich Asians) or producers (regarding the generalised image of *Made in China* as meaning fake or cheap). For a long time, well known Asian designers were only of Japanese descent. Asian models were rarely cast for big shows and only welcomed if they had more Caucasian features

like high cheekbones, long legs and *relatively* big eyes.

When I was younger, there were just few examples in popular media like the science fiction movies I mentioned before, but I also only knew like five Asian designers in the dominant system of fashion. Asians have always been there – for example, the fact that a lot of Vietnamese people came to Western countries following the end of the Vietnam War – but often stayed very much in the background.

This climate is slowly changing: Western Asian designers who do not share a unifying aesthetic are rising. This contradicts the Orientalist belief that there is only one particular Asian mode of expression. Asian models are appearing on the catwalk way more often, not only lighter skinned but also darker skinned Asians. And with movies like *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) and Netflix special *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2018), Western Asians are portrayed in just as human as anyone else; finally as protagonists instead of as extras.

The achievements of Asian designers helped me to convince my parents that I had chosen the right path, and subverted the shared belief of Asian parents that you are only successful if you became a lawyer or a doctor. It is amazing to have role models who you feel connected to just by the way they look and the assumption that they have been through the same kind of troubles you are going through yourself. Success is hard won in a very conservative system such as fashion, which makes it even more admirable for me that the voice of Western Asians is finally being heard. Asian invisibility still persists, but Western Asian designers have already become an indelible part when it comes to what we wear and how we choose to wear it.

THE FUTURE OF ASIANNES

Slowly we detach from previous power structures, disrupting the system from within.

We decolonise and create a parallel that emerges from both Western and Eastern cultures. Not only one of them adapting to the other, but in both directions.

Reclaiming the copy of the copy by creating a parallel in the process of bootlegging and finding the bootleg before it is bootlegged.

We get together and turn back to our roots, trying to understand them instead of being embarrassed of them.

We speak up, creating a voice for new generations to follow. Represent them and show that it is possible to undermine this persistent invisibility.

Communities are being created online where our experiences will be shared. Complex layers of emotions can be simplified in easy images and texts in a meme format.

In this way our story will be shared at a fast pace: by memeing already existing structures we find a way to voice ourselves

Offline we start to feel less alienated, less questioning of where we actually belong, since we have created a parallel where we exist in, a parallel that is in between both East and West, neither here nor there.

All these voices above show that there is not just one Asian identity, but multiple.

The future of Asianess is showing that all these Asian identities can exist in the now and not in a faraway imagined future of Cyberpunk.

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