

Tekst 6

Little women

By Katherine Knorr

1 **P**ARIS – When Calvin Klein was criticized last month for an ad featuring small children in underwear, it wasn't just more of the outrage that has greeted so many disturbing fashion images – notably skeletal models in tiny undies.

2 The marketing of clothes – some of them pretty raunchy – to children and pre-teens raises all sorts of issues about what clothes “mean” and about the influence of the vast network of popular culture salesmanship. It is ironic that, as fashion enters the third millennium, clothes for grown-up women have become positively genteel, with the twin set seeming ubiquitous and even the bad Brits toned down. It seems the real fashion victims now are Lolita's age.

3 Fashion is so self-referential and its cycles are so short that a lot of the “content” of fashion has disappeared; nothing today has the political impact of '60s near-nudity, or shirts made out of the American flag. Bra burning? Huh?

4 Fashion no longer tells us women are becoming more independent or men are getting in touch with their inner child.

5 And fashion, dipping into the world of uniforms and utilitarian clothing, blurs class lines in a dizzying way: expensive ready-to-wear drawn from ghetto threads; sportswear morphed into evening clothes; Casual Friday vs. the suit. And of course middle-class teens dressed in their own sad rags uniforms: think back to the farmboy look, which horrified so many American parents in the late 1960s and early 1970s, who had grown up on Depression-era farms and fled them for college degrees and serious desk jobs, and could not understand why their children started wearing baggy overalls and baggy T-shirts and looking pretty much like the Beverly Hillbillies.

6 **A**LL THIS makes sense in societies with soaring stock markets where the social fabric is money. In fashion the social fabric is just that, fabric. All of us in this way invent ourselves like Jay Gatsby, with, one hopes, better results. In that sense, fashion helps to create

some kind of melting pot.

7 When it comes to children, however, what fashion “means” does become more prominent. An 11-year-old wearing come-hither clothes isn't in the same position as a 25-year-old. She is being used, in what would seem the most cynical way, to sell not only clothes but synthetic popular music groups and gooey animated movies.

8 The only real customers for the extraterrestrial floozy look of the Spice Girls or the irredeemably commercial tie-ins of those movies are little girls. Clothes catalogues sell skintight two-piece outfits (bra

and pedal pushers) advertising the boys band 2 Be 3 (the Chippendales for the pre-teen set) to 10-year-olds. The boys in the band are barechested. The little girl models strike alluring poses.

9 Marketing to little people is nothing new, of course, and Saturday morning American TV early on specialized in telling children to tell their parents what to buy. But the marketing of clothes is something else.

10 **I**F CLOTHING has lost its “guild” breakdown – if it no longer separates the blue and the white collars, the ghetto and the country club – it has not lost its power to disturb when it blurs the line sexually. The decadent pictures of willfully androgynous models, of anorectically thin and sickly young models, of “heroin chic” – none of which has gone away despite lots of noise to the contrary – seem to have paved the way toward breaking the ultimate taboo:

children.

11 This isn't selling Barbie dolls, this is selling the Barbie doll look to girls in grade school. At the same time as Barbie herself turns 40 and is being reissued with a more realistic body, we're remaking little girls into disturbing erotic figures.

12 It's difficult to judge how much of this tacky costume party is harmless, just more of the waves of popular culture that we can't, after all, do anything about.

13 There is an argument that the reason only adults are shocked by these things is that kids have an elaborate but complicated relationship with truth and



The Lolita look from Dolce & Gabbana

fiction that allows them to put on faces and costumes without absorbing the associated behavior. They can play cowboys and Indians without becoming killers and they dress up as showgirls just as they would dress as princesses.

- 14 Maybe it is, after all, just the old game of putting on Mom's clothes – except it's hard to believe Mom would ever wear these clothes.
- 15 Once upon a time, before the sexual revolution and the Me Generation, school uniforms or smocks served

laudable purposes: they protected street clothes, they made children look studious (this is actually useful, in a clothes-make-the-man kind of way), and most important perhaps, they avoided keeping-up-with-the-Joneses clothing competitions. As fashion recycles the greatest hits of the last 50 years, it's high time for a comeback: Call it the Return of the Nice Kid.

KATHERINE KNORR is a deputy editor of the *International Herald Tribune*.

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- 1p 12 > What is the main point made in paragraphs 1 and 2?
- A Fashion shows will always be too extravagant for the popular taste.
 - B The mature look in fashion has definitely given way to the Lolita look.
 - C The targeting of the very young by the fashion industry gives cause for concern.
 - D Youth culture has a firm hold on contemporary fashion.
- 1p 13 > Which of the following can be inserted between 'disappeared' and 'nothing' in paragraph 3?
- A and if so,
 - B however,
 - C that is,
- 1p 14 > Which of the following statements are in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 5?
- 1 Clothes used to reflect social trends and developments.
 - 2 It has become impossible to keep up with the pace of change in fashion.
 - 3 Modern fashion encourages a person to express his individuality.
 - 4 Modern fashion has the effect of disguising social status.
 - 5 The change in fashion marks the end of the class system.
- A 1 and 4
 - B 1 and 5
 - C 2 and 5
 - D 2, 3 and 4
 - E 4 and 5
- 1p 15 ÿ Welke zin in alinea 7-9 geeft het standpunt van de schrijfster ten aanzien van de jongste ontwikkelingen in de mode expliciet weer?
Noteer de eerste twee en de laatste twee woorden van deze zin.
- 1p 16 > Which of the following phrases from paragraph 10 indicates a positive state of affairs?
- A 'no longer separates the blue and the white collars'
 - B 'blurs the line sexually'
 - C 'willfully androgynous models'
 - D 'heroin chic'
 - E 'breaking the ultimate taboo'
- 1p 17 > What is the main point made in paragraphs 12-14?
- A For children it has become difficult to ignore trends in fashion.
 - B Little girls like to imagine that adult clothes make them look prettier.
 - C Present-day fashion trends are bound to be bad for the child's psyche.
 - D Wearing sexy Barbie outfits may be just a game little girls like to play.
- 1p 18 ÿ Welke functie van het schooluniform bedoelt de schrijfster, gezien de uitdrukking "clothes make the man" (alinea 15)?