

A Visual and Contextual Comparative Study of the Work of Picasso and Chanel Towards an Understanding of the Overlaps Between Modern Art and Fashion

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Abstract *From the beginning of the twentieth century, 'Modernism' impacted and transformed art and clothing. Pablo Picasso and Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel were two of the most central characters in Modernism working simultaneously in their disciplines. Picasso's innovations, particularly in abstract art and Chanel's fashion designs, that dramatically departed from the previous corseted and highly decorative styles, were so significant that they have left an influence on contemporary art and fashion. This study will compare their visual works and documented evidence of their motivations, within the context of their cultural backgrounds, to reveal meaning in the occurrences of overlaps. This approach has examined the historical, cultural background of the artist and designer's environment from different perspectives, adding to previous research in this area. Through this research, outcomes of the analysis have shown similarities and divergences in the wider genres of art and fashion and the practice of the artist and fashion designer. The reference list to this text, used in the survey, gives a comprehensive overview of pertinent publications disseminating Picasso and Chanel's visual works, oral perspectives and cultural impact.*

Key words Chanel, Culture, Fashion Art , Modernism, Picasso

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many artists and fashion designers were integral in the inception and development of 'Modernism', whose encompassing nature revolutionised art and clothing and many other aspects of society. Two of the most important protagonists of Modernism, who had the greatest, most far reaching and most unprecedented impact on their genres were Picasso and Chanel. Their collaboration and overlaps in motivations and visual outcomes are of particular interest because of their stature. When their visual outcomes have simultaneously overlapped or when they have, despite having strong visual and predominant viewpoints, allowed their work to be considered together, as with

their theatrical collaborations, the reasons for these occurrences can throw light on the highest, most significant affiliations between art and fashion or the artist and fashion designer.

Picasso and Chanel were inspirational in bringing about radical changes in modern art and fashion, working concurrently in their fields. Picasso's innovations, particularly in abstract art and Chanel's fashion designs, that dramatically departed from the previous corseted and highly decorative styles of the late 19th and early twentieth century, were among the foremost occurrences in shaping modern day art and fashion respectively.

Picasso's most unprecedented ideas in art and Chanel's most revolutionary designs came about at a comparable time in history as a response to their analogous time and surroundings. Their work was primarily a response to significant issues in society and culture, to which they both reacted through their particular media, in their extraordinary and individual ways, making them such considerable figures in their fields. It could be interpreted that their eventual collaborations and superficial similarities in their work came about through their being a similar age, living through the same times and living in the same place with the same friends.

From around 1908, when Chanel started selling her designs in Paris, Picasso and Chanel shared the city they were living in and a parallel circle of creative, inspirational friends. Paris was, at that time, considered a hub for innovative work in the arts and Picasso and Chanel's mutual group of acquaintances included many of the most famous artists, writers, musicians, actors, dancers and entrepreneurs of the time and the equivalent of today's 'celebrities'.

The purpose of this study has been to fully compare the visual works and individual motivations, through data collection and interpretation of written interview evidence, behind the outputs of Chanel and Picasso, in the context of their particular historical milieu. This substantiation and uncommon comparative approach to the two practitioners, and their creative outputs, adds rigour and innovation to the study of their works. This evidence has then been analysed and decoded to facilitate the elucidation of the more contemporary phenomenon of art and fashion crossovers and the blurring of the two genres, with the innate traits of each becoming more indistinct through Postmodernism. This paper adds to academic knowledge in this area through responding to pertinent, contemporary challenges in fashion and design through a historical, comparative, qualitative case study.

This paper, through qualitative text and object based observations and interpretations, disseminates the visual and inspirational overlaps and convergences in the work of Picasso and Chanel. Comparative object based analysis is used when regarding the composition, technique and manufacture of key examples of their work. This is converged with a substantive subject - specific literature review, exploring the cultural context of the prevailing social and historical conditions and the artists' impact on culture. The collected data has been analysed using semiotic interpretation of meaning and the interpretation claims are intended to convey the importance of the works and artists to Modernism and to contemporary understandings of the nature of art and fashion and their relationship.

Collaborations

Picasso and Chanel's collaborations came about through their mutual friend Jean Cocteau. (Charles-Roux, 2004; Cooper, 2006; Franck, 2003) Picasso had provided the costume designs and the backdrop for the Ballets Russes production of 'Parade', with the Scenario written by Cocteau, in 1917. The first collaboration between Picasso and Chanel came about with Cocteau's modernised version of the play 'Antigone' in 1922 followed by the Ballets Russes production of 'Le Train Bleu', written by Cocteau and performed in 1924. In both cases, Picasso provided the backdrops and Chanel supplied the costumes.

Cocteau's choice of Chanel rather than a traditional costume designer or, in the style that the Ballets Russes had encouraged, by having costumes 'designed' by modern artists, came about through his admiration of Chanel's Modern style and through the 'fashionable' spirit of the plays that reflected contemporary French society. In all the Cocteau collaborations with Picasso and Chanel, both the artist and designer proffered the style of work they were cultivating at the time. Cocteau's ballet 'Parade' overlapped with Picasso's preoccupation with circus performers and included costumes in both his realistic, solid, 'blue period' manner and his burgeoning 'Cubist' style. For 'Antigone', both Picasso and Chanel based their designs around the theme of a Greek vase. Although harking back to a classical style, Greek dress differed in construction in a revolutionary way from the established corseted styles and were inspirational to the reform dress movement, the Pre-Raphaelites and Mariano Fortuny. In Figure 1, Chanel's 'Greek' costumes for 'Antigone' were decorated in her trademark reserved, spare style with simple shapes and a muted palette. The main character was dressed in a long tunic dress in white wool, decorated with brown bands, over which she wore a woollen cloak patterned in brown. For 'Le Train Bleu', Picasso's backdrop was a blown-up version of 'Women Running on the Beach', painted in 1922. Chanel's contribution, in Figure 2, was knitted swimming costume designs and tennis outfits, versions of which were part of her contemporaneous fashion collection, with striating and a colour scheme which had already become part of her ubiquitous style.

The Picasso curtain had been chosen by Diaghilev, the 'creator' of the Ballets Russes, as it fitted with the young, energetic, contemporary beach theme of the ballet, and contemporary, emancipated lifestyles of women at the time, but the figures depicted in 'Women Running on the Beach' were somewhat of a mismatch with the ballet dancers dressed in the Chanel sportswear in that they were 'voluptuous'. Their style of dress, although simple like Chanel's designs, were classic and flowing rather than fitted and modern. Chanel's designs and the slim ballet dancers, who would have been archetypal models for Chanel's designs, and her idealised liberated woman, matched with Picasso's 1918 painting on the same theme as 'The Bathers', in Figure 3. This painting shares the portrayal of unbounded movement in a beach setting, with similar flowing-haired models. However, in 'The Bathers', the models are more nimble and the stylised bathing costumes are extremely similar to Chanel's 'Le Train Bleu' designs. Shead said of the play's applicability to the contemporary culture of the time and lightening of Picasso's artistic intention, levelling it with the intention of Chanel's designs,



Figure 1.
Chanel. Patterned brown cloak and costume for the play 'Antigone'. (1923) Copyright (2012) by V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reprinted with permission.



Figure 2.
Chanel. Knitted Costumes for 'Le Train Bleu'. (1924) Copyright (2012) by V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reprinted with permission.

"There was a plot - of sorts - but an extremely lightweight one, not for a moment to be taken seriously. It concerned the kind of happenings which occur less often on the beaches of real resorts than the plagues of countless musical comedies. People flirt, bathe, argue, lie about, take photographs of each other. It was all very cheerful and agreeably silly." (1989, p.138)

The Ballets Russes had innovated in involving 'avant garde' artists in set and costume designs. (Davis, 2010; Vettese Forster, 2008) It was the cultural climate of the time that ballet and theatre productions could be a position of influential, inventive creativity, involving the most auspicious writers, musicians, choreographers, actors and dancers, so Picasso's involvement was extremely pertinent. For Chanel to be involved in the production of costumes for the theatre and ballet, the consequence was favourable for her in ways that differed to that of Picasso. The theatre served as a high profile 'fashion show' for her work with the dancers and actors as 'celebrity' models and her association with Diaghilev, Picasso and Cocteau lent her work a gravity that added to and enhanced its radical character.

In art and fashion design, when practitioners collaborate from the different genres, such as Picasso and Chanel, Shiaparelli and Salvador Dali, Claire McCardell and Miro and Vivienne Westwood and Tracey Emin, it points to overlaps in the aspirations of the different art forms at particular times in

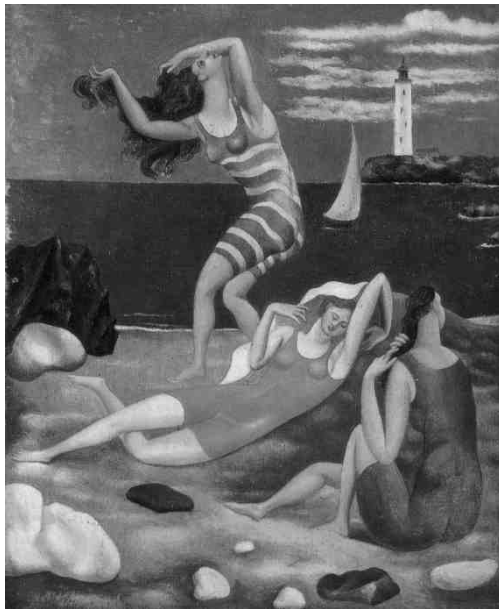


Figure 3.
Picasso, *The Bathers*. (1922) Copyright (2012) by Succession Picasso, Paris. Reprinted with permission.

history. (Vettese Forster, 2009) In Modernism, for Chanel and Picasso, their work signifies the seriousness and collectivist intentions of both practices, and a reflection of the wider society. In Postmodernist times, collaborations between art and fashion, including the Vivienne Westwood and Tracey Emin collaboration, signify a reflection of a lightened culture, when a fine artist allows her work to be read and consumed as cyclic, disposable fashion design.

Affinities in Methods

Affinities in Methods – Pursuance of Success

Picasso and Chanel – and their circle of friends – were revolutionary, cultural ‘creators’ and as such, in their ‘time’, became renowned luminaries, akin to certain ‘celebrities’ of today. Picasso pursued this kind of outward success, recognition and wealth, at this time, in a way that differed from the archetypal ‘tortured’, ‘starving’ artist. Chanel developed a definite ‘trademark’ Modern fashion and packaging style, encouraged widespread replication of her designs and cultivated her own identifiable persona. Picasso said,

“Success is something very important! It has often been said that the artist should work for himself,

for the love of art, so to speak, and despise success. That is wrong! An artist needs success. And not only to live on, but also to be able to create. Even a rich painter needs success. (...) I wanted to prove that you can be successful in spite of everything and everyone, without comprising oneself." (Walther, 1993 p. 26)

Mirroring Picasso's intentions, Chanel has said,

"A world was dying [1910s France], while another was being born. I was there, an opportunity came forward, and I took it. I was the same age as the new century, and it was to me that it looked for sartorial expression." (De la Haye, 2011 p. 24)

Picasso and Chanel's social lives and their involvement in theatre and ballet productions were tantamount to 'publicity stunts', but in both their cases, their pursuit of 'success' never compromised their creative production, instead becoming part of it. Both Picasso and Chanel sought success without conceding their vision, which, often, went wholly against tradition and what may have been favoured by their typical audience – the rich people most likely to become patrons. While money was not necessarily their primary motivation, their pursuit of success brought them both wealth. (Picardie, 2010; Richardson, 2010) Their quest for success jointly came from their desire to change the conventional systems within their genres and from their wish to produce innovative, authentic pieces.

At the time when Picasso was establishing his reputation, around his Cubist period, his primary goal was to express nature in an un-naturalistic manner, a direct response to the relatively new medium of realistic photography. (Karmel, 2003) His form of abstraction, while innovative and honoured by critics and peers, was often 'ugly' and lacked the obvious representational artistic 'skill' thought to make art 'great' by the mass audience. (Huffington, 1989) His approach, founded on the pursuit of innovation, while thought of as being 'genius', wielded unfamiliar and therefore visually disagreeable imagery. Primarily, Picasso sought the 'genius' designation – meaning success within his genre and widespread recognition – without wealth being his foremost motivation.

Chanel was motivated by similar concerns. While she accrued wealth, it was not her principal incentive. Personal issues inspired her to try to change conventional medians of prevailing fashion so that the 'rich' look no longer existed, that women did not have to wear corsets and that a 'dress-maker' could receive as much acclaim as an aristocrat or renowned artist. (Madsen, 1991)

In contemporary times, fashion designers seeking a celebrity status to promote a fashion brand is not uncommon. It has been done in Postmodern art, by artists such as Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. Instances of this are rarer and often scrutinised. Picasso's adoption of this way of promoting himself, as with the Postmodern artists, can be interpreted as highlighting the inclusive, society reflecting aspects of fashion and particular artists, at particular times. Picasso wanted to affect society rather than only talk to an intellectual elite, as is the practice of fashion design. 'Fashion', in its broadest interpretation, seeks to be adopted by the masses, and incrementally change the way they dress, for the better.

Affinities in Methods – Work Made for the Present

Chanel was one of the first fashion designers to recognise that fashion could be changeable and disposable in nature. She also stated that her work had a definite connection to what was happening within contemporary society rather than her designs being a completely separate entity, or for a privileged elite. There was also a casual, personal confidence in her work that allowed her to include ideas that were to hand, that were sometimes ‘accidental’ happenings, that would become mainstays of her distinctive style. De la Haye said of Chanel’s designs from 1925 – 1929,

“Chanel’s blazers, waistcoats, cardigans, shirts with cuff links and her famous tweeds were all inspired by the Duke [of Westminster] and his friends. Following her fishing trips to Scotland with the Duke, she introduced tweeds and knitted Fair Isle designs into her fashion collections.” (2011, p. 41)

In Picasso’s case, although art had, many times before, been a representation of contemporary society, he attempted to include affective issues of the day and ideas, individuals, objects and material that were immediately around him, in a non representational manner. (Ashton, 1989; Cowling et al., 2009) Chanel’s maxims on the spirit of fashion are particularly analogous to Picasso’s declarations on the nature of art. She is known to have spoken on fashion being more than clothes ; that it had more to do with ideas and the way people live. (Degunst, 2008) Picasso said,

“I have always painted for my time. I have never burdened myself with searching. I paint what I see, sometimes in one form, sometimes in another.” (Walther, 1999 p.57)

Some of Picasso’s work was in the ‘mode’ of the time. His involvement in contemporary theatre and ballet productions had become a rightful venture for the most avant-garde artists of the age. His portrayal of ‘low grade’ elements of society, such as in his paintings of circus performers, and the aggrandisement of everyday objects, such as his use of newspapers, had been advocated by artists immediately before him. Picasso frequently included items from his immediate surroundings and members of his own retinue as the subject of his work, to express matters that went beyond his own relationships with the objects or subjects. The Picasso’s paintings, using models that he had a relationship with, were often more significant for their intellectual style than for the emotion between Picasso and the sitter, although the model was chosen as they were involved in Picasso’s life at the time.

Chanel’s chance encounters with the men’s wear worn by aristocratic friends and the Russian Byzantine jewellery given to her as a gift went on to become the core of her style. (Charles-Roux, 2004; Mauries et al., 1999) Her ‘Russian’ look came about at the same time as her relationship with the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and her involvement with the Ballets Russes. (Leymarie, 2010)

Both Picasso and Chanel have definite styles that evolved and changed somewhat throughout their careers. They also had a clear view of what they wanted to achieve on a wide scale, towards a wide society, and what they wanted to change in their fields. But while they both seemed to embrace an

overall strategy, they were both swayed and guided by highly personal events and accidentally found objects.

Although both Picasso and Chanel's work was immensely innovative and a heightened reflection of the concerns of their time, both of their creative outputs have lasted in influence and value. Picasso's work is a touchstone for modern and contemporary painting while Chanel's designs have become a uniform from which nearly all women's garment shapes come from, to some extent. Even Karl Lagerfeld's 'changing' fashion collections for Chanel are mutations of her first 'uniform' designs.

Art is known to be 'self expression' or even, in some cases, biography. Although Chanel's designs were abstract and understated, they were also biographical in their reinterpretation of her immediate possessions. This trait is used, in this way, by other fashion designers and signifies a similarity in approach but difference in execution, between the artist and the fashion designer. Artists often show and sell their work on the basis of this individual soul-baring. Fashion designers may do it, but the execution is tempered by wear-ability, pricing and changing it, visually, to fit with how the brand projects itself.

Affinities in Methods – Modification of Images from the Past

Although Picasso and Chanel's work was instrumental in revolutionising art and fashion and was predominantly innovative and new, they were both heavily influenced, at particular times in their careers, by art and designs from the past. Both Picasso and Chanel took this influence and modified it, turning it into something unfamiliar.

Throughout Picasso's career, it was always part of his creative process to go into the history of art and to make ingenious use of elements that were quite traditional. As a young painter, these traditions helped Picasso to find his own style and to construct his own language in art. (Cowling et al., 2009)

Among Picasso's most notable innovations was his development of Cubism. Cubism, for Picasso, was heavily influenced by his study of Iberian and African sculptures. (Cooper et al., 1994; Karmel, 2003) At that time, the elements that Picasso took from these primitive sculptures were the stylisation of forms, which he additionally deformed, using several different perspectives within one picture. Picasso's influence from ancient art and subsequent Cubist work was more than an aesthetic effect. It was a rebellion against Western art since the Renaissance including many of the conventional 'rules' and skills in art and the tradition of 'beauty', including female beauty in art. It was also a rebellion against the tradition of glamorising wealthy patrons in realistic portraiture. (Green, 2001)

Many of Chanel's designs, including those seen in Figure 4, are a reworking of classic costumes including sailor's outfits, school uniforms, men's suits, blazers and knitwear and hunting and riding dress. Her innovation was that she adapted these styles into women's wear at a time when women's fashion could not have been more different. (Bolt, 2007; De la Haye, 1997)



Figure 4.

Chanel. Sequined evening suit and accessories based on menswear designs. (1937 - 1938) Copyright (2012) by V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reprinted with permission.

Chanel's most significant adaptation of past styles was her jewellery collection, launched in 1924. She copied precious, antique pieces in semi-precious materials so that they would be affordable and 'fashionable' while retaining much of the traditional style. (Baudet, 2003; Mauries et al., 2000) Her designs were made purely for their aesthetic appearance and impact, rather than for their 'value' and this inspired Chanel to continue to mix precious and non-precious materials. (Mauries et al., 2000; Morand, 2009) Instead of completely inventing a new style of jewellery, as with her clothing designs, Chanel manipulated the valuable, antique designs in her collection, faithfully remaking them in fake gemstones, pearls and non-precious metals.

Chanel's costume jewellery innovated in its combination of materials and in the way it was worn, with casual, everyday dress. The actual designs themselves were traditional. The cross, strings of beads or pearls and the 'cuff' bangle were already well known styles. Also, her gemstones, pearls and metals were copies of original materials rather than unfamiliar, innovative ones. (Mauries et al., 2000)

Both Chanel and Picasso proffered antique art, changing it somewhat to suit their intent. They modified elements of it, adhered to parts of it but both redefined its meaning to their contemporaneous society, using it as a revolutionary mechanism in their fields.

Both art and fashion seek to innovate and change, whether for reasons of disaffection with society or for commerce and planned obsolescence. After the revolutionary nature of Modernism of art and design, there is, arguably, little that can be radically changed, visually, in the genres of art and fashion. Both Chanel and Picasso, and subsequent artists and fashion designers, seek out visual elements from the past to inspire their work but often look for less well-known, less obvious visual sources to add

'innovation' to their practice. This practice continues in both art forms, with found objects, unusual textiles and 'retro' imagery being used in both art and fashion design.

Affinities in Methods - Multiples

Chanel was among the first fashion designers to produce ready-to-wear collections and easily reproducible jewellery. (Bolt, 2007; Mauries et al.) She encouraged widespread duplication of her designs, seeing this as proof of their success. (Bolt, 2007; De la Haye et al., 1997) With her 'comeback' in 1953 she anticipated the rise in the power of 'youth culture', the ready-to-wear boom and the advances in mass production methods and new fabrics. (Bolt, 2007; De la Haye et al., 1997) Picasso, like many other artists, made multiple bronze casts of his sculptures, limited edition etchings, lithographic prints and ceramic pieces. He worked with a particular dealer to sell his etchings and bronzes at the outset of his career - Ambroise Vollard. This went some way in promoting Picasso and building his 'fame'. (Walther, 1993)

Picasso sought success rather than the trappings of fame. His involvement with Ambroise Vollard, in the production of his etchings and bronzes, lessened his initial financial strictures rather than being a premeditated promotional move. Also, in some cases, the techniques used in these processes became creative projects for Picasso. In his collaboration with Fernand Mourlet, in the production of lithographic prints, which lasted from around 1945 to 1949, he experimented with different techniques, making a precise technique fit with his frenetic approach, with very little opposition to his original ideas and spontaneity of his drawings. (Leal, 2003; Muller, 2011)

The way in which Picasso expressed his ongoing concerns through his art made 'multiples', occasionally, the most appropriate way for him to convey himself. Picasso wanted to promote his antifascist beliefs and his love of bullfighting. (Leal, 2003; Muller, 2011) The multiple 'poster' genre suited his self promotion better than his single art works. (Leal, 2003; Muller, 2011)

Both Picasso and Chanel have used multiples at times when they felt strongly that they wanted to extend a message. In Chanel's case, she took the previous exclusivity out of couture so that it could be copied by the masses while her own creations remained relatively expensive. For Picasso, although his fame allowed him a large audience among art devotees, when he wanted to spread a more encompassing message, he used the more reproducible poster format.

Chanel innovated in her practice as a fashion designer by encouraging reproduction of her designs and, eventually, mass production and the ready-made market. Picasso, as a *fine* artist, was somewhat unusual in his field, in the pursuance of multiples and posters. In contemporary fashion, these methods are common practice but in fine art, they are still more unusual. When artists do embrace this commercial format it signifies that they wish to connect with the wider population, either to paternally try to change it, as with many Modern artists, or to identify with lower, less elite elements of society, as with many Postmodern artists. Fashion, on the other hand, always has to relate to society in some way, so to survive financially and in the fashion media system.

Similarities in Visual Works

Similarities in Visual Works – The Relationship Between Two and Three Dimensions

Cubism, one of the most revolutionary movements in Western art, coincided with the upheaval in fashion that changed from sculpted, corseted dresses to corset-less, flat styles, championed by Chanel but introduced by designers such as Paul Poiret and Mariano Fortuny. (Martin, 1999) Martin said of the famous Cubism and Fashion exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1999,

“Cubism and fashion is an attempt to understand the fundamental changes in fashion that occurred between about 1908 and about 1925 and to offer the proposition that perhaps Cubism, which transformed art so fundamentally during that epoch, is also a prime cause of fashion’s modern forms.”

Picasso was among the key artists to manoeuvre two and three dimensions in his work in a way that differed from the traditional artistic rules while Chanel still worked with the human figure, as the ‘sculptural’ designers before her, but her garments draped flat.

Picasso’s work, from its inception, had always been concerned with the depiction of form through the two dimensional medium of painting. Even his still life paintings gave everyday objects an almost monumental status. However, in his Cubist works in particular, Picasso attempted to disassemble the regulations in the interpretation of two and three dimensions through his art. The influence of primitive sculptures on Cubism led Picasso to paint an object from more than one perspective at a time, instead of viewing it from one central point of view. (Karmel, 2003; Cooper et al., 1994) The lack of obtrusively convex areas and distinction between light and dark shading in this methods of painting made them seem almost completely flat with the painted facets forming a continuous surface.

In Cubism, Picasso stuck to a geometric principle which imposed ‘laws’ on the natural proportions of the subjects he painted, fitting shapes together in varied, complex structures. (Karmel, 2003; Cooper et al., 1994) This developed into ‘constructed’ pictures, with collaged sections, then constructed relief, where Picasso actually combined two and three dimensions on one picture with planes and syntheses. (Umland, 2011)

Picasso’s work, particularly from this Cubist phase, which lasted until around 1928, intersected with Chanel’s designs in several ways. Picasso’s rejection of the realistic depiction of form in painting, in the usual ‘shaded’ manner, corresponds with Chanel’s rejection of the sculptural, corseted look. Her female ‘depictions’, as in Figure 5, were also flat, with the decoration and details appearing like the faceted sections in Picasso’s work. Chanel’s rejection of the delineation of the female form, as had been represented with corseted styles, led her to invent a new silhouette that was more tubular and ‘abstract’.

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Figure 5.
Chanel. Sleeveless, beaded dress with geometric detailing. (1922) Copyright (2012) by V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reprinted with permission.

Even though Chanel's designs were in some way 'sculpted' – taking note of form as in Picasso's work – they were still, in essence, flat, cylindrical exaggerations of the female body. Chanel did not draw her designs and created them by draping fabric on models and wooden mannequins. (Bolt, 2007) Her dresses were usually constructed 'in the round' as opposed to being two flat panels stitched together. (De la Haye et al., 1997) Many of Chanel's designs were made in a clinging, silky, jersey fabric. Chanel's designs suspend from a hanger completely flat but when worn, each female bump or protuberance of a collar, cuff detail, button or piece of jewellery would play on the juxtaposition of two and three dimensions, like a Picasso relief. (Martin, 1999)

Picasso's Cubist and later abstract depictions of women gave them an angular, hard form. This crisp, clear-cut outline and image is mirrored in Chanel's designs. Their lack of frills and surface decoration pares them down to their abstract bareness, that she then rebuilds with her addition of costume jewellery and unusual collages of fabrics previously not married together.

Picasso's cubism and Chanel's innovations in pattern cutting and garment construction were particularly revolutionary in nature and happened at almost exactly the same time. This occurrence was particularly significant and unique to the two practitioners and does not have any real parallels in movement with art and fashion since. The Cubist and Chanel's methods of construction have remained as mainstays

of practice in both genres. It could be interpreted that their revolutionary concerns, whether about the political or feminist developments of society have remained concerns in art and fashion so that no change to Picasso or Chanel's 'inventions' have been appropriate.

Similarities in Visual Works – Anti-Exoticism and Reductive Abstraction

Both Picasso and Chanel embraced 'anti-exoticism'. In their choices of subject matter and in their inspiration – in Chanel's case for garment shapes and decoration, they both rejected exotic sources. This was pertinent as, immediately preceding Picasso's Cubist phase and Chanel's development of her definitive style, exotically inspired colours and decorative items were particularly popular, not just in mass society, but with more avant-garde artists such as those creating works for the Ballets Russes. (Vettese Forster, 2008)

In his method of abstraction, Picasso was inspired by the reductive simplicity of primitive sculpture. He sought out geometric shapes for his still life paintings. The clothing depicted in his figure paintings were usually represented by plain, dotted, striped or diamond sections, rather than patterned, 'oriental' fabrics, as in Figure 6. He said of this,



Figure 6.
Picasso, Harlequin. (1915) Copyright (2012) by Succession Picasso, Paris. Reprinted with permission.

"I hasten to add, however, that I detest exoticism. I have never liked the art of China, Japan or Persia. In antique art, it is the restraint - the restraint synonymous with beauty - that I respond to, but I admit that the most mechanical rhythm which destroys the proportions of all Greek works of art has always thoroughly repelled me. (Cowling et al; 1994 p. 41)

Chanel's first fashion designs were brought out in direct competition with those of Paul Poiret, the leading fashion designer at that time. (Mackrell, 1990) His designs were primarily based on 'exoticism', particularly 'Persian' garment shapes, rich fabrics and colour schemes. Chanel's designs were a straight rebellion against such fashions. Although Poiret had introduced corset-less designs, a form of women's trouser and a fashion 'package' - including jewellery and perfume - Chanel simplified and metamorphosed his innovations. (Mackrell, 2005)

Chanel's clothing shapes were sensible, comfortable garments that were abstract, uncomplicated versions of the enduring skirt, trousers, and jacket designs, and so on. In contrast to the female fashions that had preceded them, they were pared of all inessential detailing. Her garment shapes were inspired by 'traditional' men's wear and uniforms rather than exotic sources. In the small elements of decoration of her garments Chanel rejected most 'exotic' sources. The details themselves, such as contrasting collars, buttons, linings and the graining and knit patterns on the fabrics were often the only form of ornamentation. In her most elaborate beaded gowns, as in Figure 7, and costume jewellery, the decoration was usually geometric.



Figure 7.

Chanel. Detail of heavily beaded evening dress. (1919) Copyright (2012) by V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Reprinted with permission.

Chanel's pared down, anti-exotic abstraction had various visual similarities with Picasso's work. Picasso's reoccurring 'harlequin' theme is echoed in Chanel's frequent use of diamond knits and large checks. (Alain Bois, 2009) In both Picasso and Chanel's case, they often use this design to cover a whole figure, rather than using it in small sections. The diamond and square design acts as a decorative centrepiece while being wholly geometric and abstract. They both also use diamonds and squares to demonstrate bold contrasts in colours and shades.

The speckled, painterly effects, that often break up Picasso's unadorned abstraction, are mirrored in the plain yet dappled tweeds, such as those used in the 'classic' Chanel suit. The overall, slightly mottled appearance of Chanel's designs gives them just enough interest to break the plainness, without impeding their precise cut and elegance.

Chanel's work revolutionised, in fashion, in its rejection of feminine decoration. Her work can be analysed as abstract art and acts as a signifier for the intentions of Modern art and Modernism. Fashion often swings between ostentatious decoration and minimalism and it can be interpreted that when fashion becomes more abstract, its intention is more 'serious', as with Modern art. Postmodern art can use decoration, but it is done in an 'ironic' way. Postmodern fashion, which has no discernable overall style or linear timeline of style acceptance, often uses decoration, simply as a visual device rather than it having meaning.

Similarities in Visual Works – Innovations in Materials

One of the most lasting legacies of Chanel's work was her use of fabrics that were previously unexploited in women's fashion. In Picasso's Cubist collages and relief works, and later sculptures, he also innovated in his use of found, throwaway materials.

Among the materials used in Picasso's Cubist works were newspaper, corrugated cardboard, tin, string and wire. In his later sculptures, he was known to scour rubbish tips and bins for elements to use in his sculptures. (Cowling et al., 1994)

In Chanel's first forays into garment production, her choice to use jersey fabric was led, to some extent, by the French system in which the particular rules of the lease in her shop prohibited her from making 'couture' dresses – with the use of jersey providing a loophole in this. (Madsen, 1991) Jersey had previously only been used in France for fishermen's apparel and in the production of men's underwear. Chanel was attracted to it for its stretch, comfort and drape. She also chose to use it in black, navy and 'biscuit' – also seldom previously used in 'fashion'. (Bolt, 2007; De la Haye et al., 1997; Madsen, 1991) She also innovated by making 'paste' jewellery as valued as its precious counterpart. British Vogue in April 1918 stated that,

"Ruffles and frills are forbidden fruit these war-time days, but we may have embroidery to our heart's content. And surely nothing could be lovelier than the beige embroidery which trims the tunic and the collar and the vest of this frock of beige or marine blue serge [by Chanel]." (De La Haye, 2011 p. 31)

The May 1918 issue of British Vogue said,

"No coat could be more unpretentious than this one of brown wool jersey but Chanel who designed it felt it her duty to simplicity ended there and embroidered it to her heart's content with brown wool and gold tinsel thread and bits of dark green." (De La Haye, 2011 p. 31)

At times in their careers, both Picasso and Chanel used throwaway materials in pieces that went on to become worthy and expensive. They both highlighted certain material's aesthetic value rather than its foregoing connotation. As both their careers and work progressed, they both also developed their work in more refined ways, but adhered to many of the skills and visual qualities they learned from the properties of these throwaway materials. Picasso's metal 'folded' sculptures were solid copies of his work in cardboard. There were bronzes cast from sculptures originally constructed from found objects and plaster. Paintings such as the 'Three Musicians' actually seem to mimic his use of collaged, printed papers. In Chanel's work, she selected exact colours of beige and pale grey jersey rather than using the stock, dyed colours. In Chanel's later suit designs, the knobbly tweeds were expertly woven by the likes of Bernat Klein.

Picasso and Chanel highlighted the beauty of simple shapes, colours and materials, making them applicable and meaningful to their times.

Throwaway materials, found objects and pop imagery are now mainstays of contemporary art. Chanel's use of jersey in her early work, although 'throwaway' and non-precious, because of its revolutionary nature, was more akin to a contemporary fashion designer using SMART or ecologically friendly textiles in her designs. In this way, Chanel's work, at this point, and fashion designers who pursue innovative or sustainable solutions to their designs, fit into the ethos of the burgeoning Post Postmodern or Metamodern movement, with their ideals of technological innovation, sustainability, non-irony, soul and sincerity. (Nealon, 2012) Fashion and design, following in this path, in many ways, is more forward looking than contemporary art practice.

Conclusion

Picasso and Chanel were, conceivably, the most significant figures in Modern art and fashion. They have both continued to reign over their respective genres, bringing about the some of the most fundamental changes. They both radically responded to the vision and needs of their times, producing work that was not only individual to themselves but answered many ubiquitous questions within their society through the media of art and fashion.

They shared many innate traits, such as their being part of a unique cultural 'movement', that included many of the most revolutionary intellectuals of the day and were both open to their influence. Both Picasso and Chanel pursued widespread success, rather than being satisfied with personal or relatively exclusive appreciation. They both included aspects of their contemporaneous culture and personal occurrences in their work. In certain areas of their creative output, they were able to separate their way

of working. They both also exploited ways in which they could reproduce their work on mass, while still retaining its initial meaning or individual technique.

Chanel and Picasso's simultaneously produced work visually intersected in several ways. They both played with two and three dimensions in a way that differed from what had been seen before. They both favoured an anti-exotic, reductive simplicity in their work, in their abstract shapes, their decorative elements and in their palette, and they both exploited materials previously not thought of as 'beautiful' or that should have been used in fine art and couture.

While there were, evidently, other artists and fashion designers working at this time, responding in similar ways to their surroundings and happenings, Picasso and Chanel were the most eminent, with work often seen as the most innovative. While Picasso and Chanel's styles often swayed with the times and with their personal events, their approaches remained a 'standard' for Modernism and in the case of Chanel's designs, as a 'uniform' from which most contemporary women's fashion never veers too far from.

In the twentieth century, when art and fashion, or particular artists and fashion designers work have traversed, many of the commonalities in the approaches of Chanel and Picasso may be present. Parallel intersections in visual works, between artists and fashion designers, may happen accidentally but in the case of Picasso and Chanel, their personal affinities engendered this similitude, in their procedures and in their observable works.

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