

Esther Stewart's Influence in Valentino's 2015 Fall Collection

Adriana Castillo

New York City College of Technology

Abstract

In the history of fashion, art has always had a huge impact on fashion and its influence is not only shown in the catwalks, but also in fashion capitals around the world. Historic and modern paintings have inspired many designers to use their designs in their collection. This essay explains how Australian painter Esther Stewart influenced Valentino's Fall 2015 accessories and menswear collection. Using the seven elements of design, juxtaposition, rhythm, symmetry, balance, proportion, dominance and repetition, it was possible to show how Stewart's paintings inspired the designer to incorporate her designs into his collection.

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Throughout the years, one has seen how fashion has become more than just a reflection of art. It has become a way for designers to appreciate and celebrate beautiful pieces of artwork that have inspired and impacted societies in one way or another. Every year, designers are influenced by painters or artists and many of their designs are reflected in the catwalks. One of these designers is Valentino. His Fall 2015 accessories and menswear collection were inspired by Australian painter Esther Stewart's art. Using the 7 elements of design, this collection influenced by Stewart will be analyzed.

Esther Stewart make painting using geometric designs. In her paintings, she incorporates different shapes using several elements of designs. Her complex paintings show her interest in maximalism, as she tries to incorporate as many elements in her paintings as possible. Valentino's collection was inspired by her geometric designs, which are clearly reflected in the garments and accessories. However, her designs were translated in a very minimalistic way to keep the simplicity of the garments. This is because Stewart's painting might be too overwhelming and might not look as good in the garments.

One of the elements of design that clearly reflect the similarities between Valentino's 2015 collection and Stewart's art is juxtaposition. Juxtaposition refers to the placement of two or more elements side-by-side to compare or contrast both elements (South, 2018). In her paintings, Stewart used different shapes and colors that contrasted with one another, which is seen in the collection. For example, a sweater from the men's collection has a red triangle placed in the center with a white rectangle underneath and the lower part of the sweater covered in brown. Above the red triangle, there is a horizontal line, dividing the upper part of the sweater, which is

covered in olive. In this design, there is a contrast between bright colors, which are red and white and earth tones, which are olive and brown. There is also a contrast in the shapes (triangle and rectangle).

Another element of design used in Valentino's collection that shows Stewart's artwork influence is Rhythm. According to Na (2000), "Rhythm is the repetition of visual elements- colors, shapes, or lines". Many garments and handbags in the menswear and accessories collection had repetition in the design. For example, a wallet in Valentino's collection illustrates a type of rhythm called regular rhythm. In the wallet, large brown and pink triangles are placed sequentially one after the other. Both colors also repeat in different parts of the wallet. This element was influenced by one of Stewart's paintings in which many triangles and pastel colors are portrayed.

Symmetry is another element of design incorporated in the collection. According to Spacey (2015), "Symmetry is a design approach that makes opposite sides of something the same".

Because Stewart's paintings are based on geometric designs, Valentino's creative directors tried to translate all these geometric designs into the collection using different elements of designs including symmetry. In the menswear collection, Valentino's creative directors did this effectively. For example, one of the jackets in the collection was black and had one large triangle with a hard-edged red line underneath on each side of the jacket. Both triangles were blue and were on opposite sides. It looked as if one side was the reflection of the other one because both sides have the same design.

Like Stewart's paintings, Valentino's collection also demonstrates a balance of elements within the garment's designs. Balance refers to the visual equilibrium of two or more elements in an image that makes it appear balanced (Na, 2000). It can be symmetrical and asymmetrical (Na, 2000). As explained in the previous paragraph, an asymmetrical balance was applied in the jacket as one triangle on one side reflects the same triangle on the opposite side of the jacket, balancing the elements. Asymmetrical balance also takes part in the collection. For example, a leather backpack in the menswear collection has asymmetrical balance as the upper part consisting of a downward-facing triangle is balanced with a semi-circle placed at the lower part. Although both shapes are not the same, it balances out.

Another element of design that shows how Valentino Fall 2015 collection was influenced by Stewart's paintings is proportion. According to Essak (2019), "Proportion is the relative size of different parts within a whole". Stewart's paintings incorporate several shapes in different sizes, which is also reflected in Valentino's collection. For example, one sweater in the collection has two triangles, one black, and the other one orange. Both triangles are facing each other. This was purposely done to show the relationship between both triangles, even if both have different colors. This design implies that both triangles are the same, although in two different colors.

Dominance is also part of the 7 elements of designs and it is illustrated in the collection. Dominance is when one element exert some level of dominance over another element in a design (Bradley, 2015). For example, a leather jacket in the collection consisted of several earth tones including navy blue, burgundy, light gray, and black. However, the center of the jacket consists of a bright white color, which also serves as the dominant color. The reason why this color

dominates the other colors is that this color is bright and has the highest value, compared to the earth tones with a low value. When a person looks at the jacket, his eyes will look directly at the center due to the intensity of the color.

The last element of design is repetition. Repetition refers to a single element repeating many times in a design (Soegaard, 2018). Repetition is the element that Stewart uses the most in her paintings. This element is one of her signatures, something that Valentino's creative designers did not want to leave out of the collection. This is seen in one of the purses in the women's accessories collection. The purse's design is based on a sequence of triangular shapes from one of Stewart's paintings. The same exact burgundy triangles are repeating.

In conclusion, art has and will always influence fashion in many ways. Not only it inspires designers to create garments displaying artistic designs, but it also influences the whole collection in a very creative way. Stewart's influence in Valentino's 2015 Fall collection was described and explained using the seven elements of design, juxtaposition, rhythm, symmetry, balance, proportion, dominance and repetition. This collection showed how perfectly a painting is perfectly translated into a garment.

References

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