

Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme
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Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme

The Museum at FIT (2017) exhibits Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme explores clothing made for survival and protection that have been incorporated in high fashion. The exhibit journeys from the arctic, mountain peaks to the depth of the sea, and outer space all extreme environments to bring together their inspiration for the selected designer items. Designers such as Issac Mizrahi Yohji Yamamoto, Alexander McQueen, and Karl Lagerfeld. The diversity of designers all come together in the exhibit with the same inspiration, the pieces make their way to the wardrobe.

Patricia Mears, deputy director at FIT Introduces Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme the first major exhibition to examine the impact of extreme exploration and how it influenced and was incorporated in runway looks. Mears references to Charles Darwin publication *Origin of Species* (1859), this scientific publication focuses on adaptation and how different species evolve overtime. The exhibitions atmospherics connects with all three environmental explorations, using technological effects to interoperate a sense of air, color of the exhibit was blue and lighting used for signage to the foam blocks used to evoke the feel of high mountain peaks brought the environment to life.

During the 1916 magazines became more interested in exploration, by the 1960's designers incorporated extreme weather into their designs. Couturier Madame Grés designed ski apparel inspired by Arctic explorers. The Arctic clothing were made by the indigenous people like the Inuit. The function of the clothing for the Inuit was to provide protection to their bodies, without protection their bodies wouldn't survive the extreme weather. *The Origins of Dress* (p.6), explains "The Economic Theory — Clothing as a protection against elements". Man on nature is written in the article to explain since the beginning of time that humans have adapted to the environments they lived in. They referred it as "The Men Dressed in Skins," covering themselves with animal skin to protect them from cold and winds.

In Carol Brice-Bennett written article *The Inuit* (2012), explain that the Inuits are decedents from a hunting society that migrated from Canada to Alaska. The Inuits migrated by following the migration of the wales, seals and fish that they hunted. Inuits have tried to follow their old customs of living, fishing is a way of them to feed swell as dress. Living in the extreme Arctic environment they experience negative temperatures, and harsh winds. Seal skin was used to make clothing for element protection while they hunted in the summer and wool while they hunted in the winter (Image 1). This culture depended on their fur and skin clothing for bodily protection.

In the exhibit designers Issac Mizrahi silk taffeta, cotton, and down "lumberjack" evening ensemble, from his fall winter 1996, piece was exhibited (Image 2). Mizrahi was inspired by the extreme arctic environment in his 1994 collection. The Eskimo inspired collection turned clothing need for protection in other cultures to a runway must have designer piece. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Either, explain dress versus fashion in their article *Dress and Identity* (1995). Dress versus fashion was differentiated as follows,

Further, like ornaments, it forces positive or negative value judgment on body modifications and supplements and their properties in the basis of their relative

positions within a fashion cycle of introduction, mass acceptance, and obsolescence. (pp.10).

Mizrahi like other designers incorporated the Eskimo with a twist to modern fashion. The collection was filled with vibrant colors, arctic chic giving off a playful interpretation. In Image 1 the fire is dyed in vibrant complementary colors, sky blue and purple. It was finished off by a round long tail gown, the piece spoke for itself with the creativity and incorporating of what the modern audience had accepted as successful. It made his collection a wardrobe need in the 1990's.

Fashion is perceived to be innovative, and uses other culture dress for inspiration it isn't always a positive in take on how other cultures feel. Fashion is viewed as both positive and negative, Inuit and Eskimos perceive their clothing as a matter of protection and cultural to them. Joanne B. Eicher explains in her article *The Anthropology of Dress* that culture and history are closely intertwined as stated

We learn to wear fur or feathers(or to despise or avoid wearing them); we are not born with them. ... We see that other people do not live by our rules... They can feel as strongly about their rightness of their choices as we feel about the rightness of ours. (pp.60).

The actions we take on creating fashion that is accepting to our audience isn't always the same feel that other cultures have. The views differentiate because of the need of clothing the Inuit and Eskimos use in order to protect themselves from the harsh environment to the vibrant dyed fur coats while models are wearing short dresses. Both end uses are different, one is for pure fashion attraction and the other for a reason of mandatory protection.



Image 1. Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme. Mathew Henson's North Pole Expedition suit. Inuit Blue for fur parka and polar bear pants(1909).



Image 2. Exploration: Fashion from the Extreme. Issac Mizrahi silk taffeta, cotton, and down “lumberjack” evening ensemble, from his fall winter 1994.

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