THE POSSIBILITY OF UNSEEN CREATION WITH WHITE, 'THE COLOUR OF NOTHINGNESS'

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Abstract

White has been mainly regarded as a symbol of purity or spirituality since ancient times, and it is often referenced as such in various fashion costume histories and design examples. However, is that the only possibility of expression that white has? Hara described white as follows: 'This identity as a colour that can "escape colour" makes white very special. Not only does white's texture powerfully evoke the materiality of objects; white can also contain temporal and spatial principles like *ma* (an interval of space and time) and *yohaku* (empty margin); or abstract concepts such as non-existence and zero' (Hara, 2008:6). In other words, white can be said to be an existence that indicates the denial, erasure, and absence of existing colours and their concepts, while at the same time creating a completely new and infinite stage of expression fromit. In this research, white is defined as 'the colour of nothingness' by equating it to the concept of 'nothingness,' which is a unique and irreplaceable existence with infinite possibilities of expression. The purpose of this research is to investigate how white has been adopted and developed as a colour or form of expression, focusing on characteristic examples of architecture, art, and fashion design in and after the twentieth century, and to reveal potential possibilities of creation in it. First, the expression of white found in the concepts of pioneering examples of modernist architecture from the 1900s to the 1930s is elucidated, mainly focusing on the essays by Adolf Loos, who advocated the denial of decoration, and Le Corbusier, who aimed at functionalism through decorative art without decoration. Second, expressions such as non-objects and the abandonment of existing concepts brought about by white are investigated by examining the art movement Suprematism, founded by Kazimir Malevich in 1915, and especially *White on White* (1918). Finally, from the example of fashion brand Maison Margiela, formerly Maison Martin Margiela, focusing on the period from 1988 to 2003 in which it was mainly operated by Martin Margiela and Jenny Meirens, three major types of white are considered: commercial white, which is associated with the absence of the designer and arouses curiosity; anonymous white, which does not show anyone or threaten anyone; and white that is worshiped and attracts fascination as a religious cult.Elucidating these potential creativities of white can be expected to provide new guidelines for creation that is not bound by the existing rules or frameworks of fashion costume history and design, and lead to the proposal of innovative methods of expression.

Introduction

Is white a colour? Is it light? Or is it just a blank space left by drawing something? It is very natural that there are different views on white, because this is a trajectory of how white has existed. It is also the result of how white has been treated as a symbol of various things, or rather, of how it has not been regarded as a symbol of anything. In this study, white is defined as a colour and treated as a statement that was intentionally used for a specific reason, not as light or as something unintentionally left over from a drawing.

It is also about nothingness. What is the colour of nothingness? Does nothingness even include colour? Is it not black? Or transparent? Certainly, nothingness has no rules to be defined as one particular colour. It can be no-colour, black, transparent, or semi-transparent. Or it may be white. This study is just the beginning of a great journey of defining nothingness. This time, first of all, white is assumed to be the answer to the colour of nothingness, and is the first to be investigated.

The purpose of this research is to break through the conventional treatment and symbolism of white, and to derive the possibilities of white creativity and white statements that could not be seen or have not been discovered from the centre stage. Furthermore, the answers derived from these new investigations of white are entrusted with the mission of creating new fashion design examples with white, in order to counter the concepts such as purity or spirituality that have already appeared many times. The research method is summarized according to the following four sections.

The first section unravels the origin of white and classifies what white symbolizes. This classification can lead to the basic hypothesis that white is not just a colour as it is an existence, a concept (a form of expression), capable of negating, erasing, and absenting existing colours and concepts, while at the same time creating a completely new and infinite stage of expression. This hypothesis will then be explored in the subsequent examples of architecture, art, and fashion design from the twentieth century onward to uncover how white has been incorporated and developed as a concept (a form of expression) or statement, and what the creative potential of white might be.

The second section elucidates the representation of white in the pioneering modernist architectural concepts of the 1900s and 1930s. The main examples are Adolf Loos, who advocated the denial of decoration, and his essay ‘Ornament and Crime’(1908), and Le Corbusier, who aimed at functionalism through decorative art without decoration, and his essay ‘The Decorative Art of Today’(1925). In the context of white walls, Mark Wigley’s book *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (2001) is also included in the references.

The third section discusses the artistic movement Suprematism, founded by Kazimir Malevich in 1915, and in particular *White on White* (1918), as well as the expressions such as objectlessness and the abandonment of existing concepts brought about by white. Malevich’s book *The*

Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism (1927) and Sei Takeyama's essay 'Decolorizing Space' (2017) are the main sources of investigation.

The fourth section uses the example of the fashion brand Maison Margiela to illustrate the creative influence of white on fashion design. Key references include Susannah Frankel's article'The birth, death and re-birth of conceptual fashion' (2009), 'The Woman Behind Martin Margiela' (2017), Eric Wilson's article 'Fashion's Invisible Man' (2008), and the film *We Margiela* (2017).

1. White: The colour of nothingness

The meaning of 'white' in English is 'colour produced by reflection, transmission, or emission of all kinds of light' (Simpson, 1989:263). The etymology of white is Old English *hwit*, which means 'bright, radiant, clear, fair'.

The word for 'white' in Japanese, *shiro*, means 'colour seen when the sun's rays are reflected uniformly over all wavelengths' (Niimura, 2018:1489). One etymology of *shiro* is said to be '*shiroshi*, meaning "to stand out". The second is that it comes from the word *shiro*, which means the "unaltered" plain colour of a material' (Masui, 2010:457).

In both English and Japanese, the etymology of white is associated with the meaning of clarity and brightness. So, what else has white symbolized in its development? White has left a variety of symbolic marks from the trajectory of its existence. Taking into account the ethnic and cultural background, the following major classifications are made from a broad perspective.

(1) Purity

Innocence, virginity, purification, hygiene: many of the things that white symbolizes are associated with 'purity'. It represents a state of innocence before colours are stained. The state of blank paper: a *tabula rasa.* (Suoh, 2004:178)

Some of the tales of the period depicted characters in all-white clothing, and this was described as *Ito namamekashi* (very beautiful). In particular, *The Tale of Genji* (which is Japanese classic literature written by Murasaki Shikibu in early 11th century) emphasize the beauty of a colourless world sublimated into colours that are not colours at all. (Fukuda, 1997:101)

(2) Spirituality

In Egyptian mythology, as in other mythologies, white was the colour of the gods. The god Osiris, represented in Egyptian wall paintings, is represented in colour by a white kalasiris. (Jo, 2016:9)

> In Japan, *shiro* has been considered the most sacred colour. […] Even if it is always clean and polished, it will soon be damaged by time and must be made again from scratch. This was the most precious *shiro* for the Japanese. (Horihata, 2019:77)

(3) Fading

> Everything in which life is extinct approximates to white, to the abstract, the general state, to clearness, to transparence. (Goethe, 1840:234)

> The colour of autumn in five phases. It is the colour of white autumn. In China, white is the colour of mourning and funerals. (Jo, 2016:9)

> In most parts of ancient Europe, people wore white to express their grief at the loss of a close relative. […] Like the monks' clothes, mourning clothes were also made of raw cloth as a sign of obedience and penitence. (Varichon, 2009:30)

(4) Reduction

> The Cistercians were a Catholic order born in France at the beginning of the eleventh century, which adhered to strict precepts and forbade idolatry. In clothing, too, they wore simple white monastic robes in opposition to the authoritarianism of flamboyant dress. (Jo, 2016:21)

> White is not the absence of colour, but the end of the saturation of colour. The 'end' is an aesthetic that seeks to quell the afterimage of intense colour and reduce it to white. (Hara, 2018:119)

(5) Absence

> Whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour; and at the same time the concrete of all colours. (Melville, 2001)

> In some cases, white denotes 'emptiness'. White as non-colour transforms into a symbol of non-being. Yet emptiness doesn't mean 'nothingness' or 'energy-less'; rather, in many cases, it indicates a condition, or *kizen*, which will likely be filled with content in the future. On the basis of this assumption, the application of white is able to create a forceful energy for communication. (Hara, 2008:28)

In a sense, it can be said that (1) through (3) according to the above classification show the typical symbolism of white. White, in this sense, has been cited many times as a source of inspiration in fashion design because of its direct link to clothing culture, such as wedding dresses, sacred costumes, and white mourning clothes. However, this study will focus particularly on the white of (4) 'Reduction' and (5) 'Absence', which have rarely been cited in fashion design, and will examine the potential for new designs to be discovered from them. What is particularly interesting here is that these symbolisms of reduction and absence are also found in the symbolism of

'Nothingness'. In other words, these whites can be linked not as a negative nihilistic aspect, but with the aspect of positive proactive creativity that 'Nothingness' brings, and can be a trigger for new creativity in fashion design in the future.

2. White: Denial of ornamentation

Adolf Loos (1870–1933) was an Austrian architect and theoretician of modern architecture in Europe. In his essay 'Ornament and Crime' (1908), he advocated smooth, clear surfaces in contrast to the sumptuous ornamentation of the Vienna Secession, and contributed to the theory and criticism of modernism in architecture and design.

Loos strongly affirmed the elimination of ornamentation, stating that 'The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use' (Loos, 1997:167). His ideal figure of the removal of ornamentation from architectural surfaces can be seen in the following statement: 'We have gone beyond ornament, we have achieved plain, undecorated simplicity. Behold, the time is at hand, fulfilment awaits us. Soon the streets of the cities will shine like white walls!' (Loos, 1997:168).

Thus, this statement assumes that the elimination of ornamentation is connected with being unadorned, simplicity, and whiteness, and draws from Loos's argument regarding what effects and creativity such an ideal image can bring about.

Loos asserted that 'I do not accept the objection that ornament is a source of increased pleasure in life for cultured people' (Loos, 1997:169). He stated that the idea of ornamentation as a product of culture is backward, and that culturally sophisticated modern ornamentation means finding value in plain, unadorned surfaces. Loos continued as follows:

> We have become more refined, more subtle. When men followed the herd they had to differentiate themselves through colour, modern man uses his dress as a disguise. His sense of his own individuality is so immensely strong it can no longer be expressed in dress. Lack of ornamentation is a sign of intellectual strength.
>
> (Loos, 1997:175)

Ultimately, the complex personality of sophisticated moderns and modern society no longer has a content so shallow that it can be expressed by superficial ornamentation and colour. From now on, the absence of ornamentation must be looked at from the positive point of view that it is not a cause of grief, but leads to the creation of a progressive attitude towards the acquisition of various intellectual, spiritual, and cultural improvements.

Le Corbusier (1887–1965) was a French architect of Swiss descent as well as a designer, painter, urban planner, and writer, and he is one of the pioneers of modern architecture. His essay 'The Decorative Arts Today'(1925) became famous as a spirited attack on the very concept of the decorative arts.

Le Corbusier likened his concern for decoration to that of Loos above, stating: 'It would seem correct to assert that the more a people's culture improves, the more ornamentation fades into the background. Perhaps it was the architect Adolf Loos who was the first to make such a statement' (Le Corbusier, 1966:104).

In addition, Le Corbusier asserted that 'False "riches" are not only filthy, but the mind that decorates its surroundings is already a false spirit, an abominable depravity' (Le Corbusier, 1966:109). He dismissed decoration not only in terms similar to those of Loos, as unsuitable for cultured moderns, but also in terms of the way in which decoration itself disguises and corrupts the inherent charm of objects. Le Corbusier's examples of ideal situations are:

> The walls are white. Rattan chairs or curved wooden chairs made of tonneau. White Ripolin-painted tables in the department stores' Hotel de Ville (beautiful Louis XIII-style tables). Well-cleaned lamps. White porcelain tableware. […] Health, tidiness, and modesty. So few things are needed to make a good room.
>
> (Le Corbusier, 1966:109)

From all this it should be clear that, as far as Le Corbusier is concerned, white plays an important role in his ideal of an unadorned, simple, and clean scene. In other words, white can bring us not the luxury of falsity, but the 'purity of finish, the true luxury of practical efficiency' (Le Corbusier, 1966:112) that we really need. The removal of ornaments only facilitates the creation of a real spiritual luxury, removing only what is falsely called decoration. The richness born from this will lead us to a new world of 'decorative art without decoration' (Le Corbusier, 1966:110), which could not be achieved with decoration.

The architect and writer Mark Wigley (b. 1956) provides a more thoughtful analysis of the creativity of white and white walls in modern architecture, particularly in the work of Le Corbusier, as follows: 'Clearly the white wall is far from neutral or silent. For the modern architect, it speaks volumes. Indeed, nothing is louder. The white wall is precisely not blank' (Wigley, 2001: xiv). He refers to the role of white as a 'non-statement statement' (Wigley, 2020). The first thing he argued for was the purifying and cleansing action of white. He claims that white paint is an act of 'replacing the degenerate layer of decoration that lines buildings. […]Whitewash liberates visuality. It is a form of architectural hygiene to be carried out in the name of visible truth' (Wigley, 2001:3). Next, after preparing the surface and restoring hygiene, whiteis expected to take on the task of shaping the contours of the building and its existence. He states:

> The white wall, like the white shirt, institutes the very distinction it appears to merely demarcate, carving out a space that was not there before. The white surface does not simply clean a space, or even give the impression of clean space. Rather, it constructs a new kind of space.
>
> (Wigley, 2001:7)

A white surface, with its clean surface, can liberate the vision and help to re-establish ideas and spaces that have been lost, hidden behind things. After all, the creativity that white brings is not

merely neutral, pure, and so on, but, as Wigley argues, an 'active mechanism of erasure' (Wigley, 2001:8) that looks far ahead of purification.

3. White: Radical regeneration

Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) was a Russian avant-garde artist and art theorist, whose pioneering work and writing had a profound influence on the development of non-objective or abstract art in the twentieth century. He founded the art movement Suprematism, which used its subject matter to access the supremacy of pure spirituality.

Malevich described his system of Suprematism as 'constructed in time and space without depending on any aesthetic beauty, emotion, or state of mind whatsoever' (Néret, 2003:49), referring to a way of being in art that does not require any of the things that have often been the subject matter of art movements in the past. Furthermore, he stated that even objects and consciousness are not necessary for Suprematism: 'The object itself is meaningless to the Suprematist—the representation of consciousness is worthless' (Malevich, 2020:65).

He reasoned that the direct description of the object, on the contrary, prevents us from seeing the pure emotion behind it: 'The pictures of Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, etc., have become nothing more than a mass of innumerable "things" for critics and the public. It obscures their inherent value—the sensations they evoke' (Malevich, 2020:72).

He produced one of the most famous works of the Russian Suprematist movement, *White on White*, in 1918 (Figure 1). Malevich eliminated most of the characteristics of figurative art in this painting, leaving simple geometric shapes with no sense of colour, depth or volume, no precise symmetry, and no clear boundaries.

Figure 1. White on White 1918

What, then, was the possibility of white in Suprematism that he expected? In a statement in the catalogue of the Tenth State Exhibition: Non-Objective Creation and Suprematism (Moscow, 1919), Malevich described the transcendental position of white as follows: 'The blue of the sky has been conquered and bleached by the system of Suprematism, giving way to a transcendental white which represents the real and eternal concept, thus freeing it from its sky-blue background' (Bowlt, 1988:181).

His rebellion against various conventions and practices, and his insistence on the existence of white as a complete departure from these notions of colour, was even more evident in the following:

> I have bleached the blue lampshade that marks the limits of colour and have moved on to the transcendental white. Come with me, comrade aviators. Let us sail into the depths. I have completed the signal of Suprematism. I have conquered the underside of the coloured sky, I have uprooted the colours, I have put them in my bag and I have tied it tightly. And off we go! White, free and deep, eternity is beforeyou.
>
> (Bowlt, 1988:182)

This extreme restructuring of his prescriptive concept is of course understandably confusing. However, he did not see this confusion as a negative thing, but as a positive thing that can lead to new creation:

> Nor did Malevich conceive his square as nihilistic. On the contrary, he viewed it as a culminating point: painting, sculpture, the applied arts and even writing would have to be reformed and reconceived in the light of it. His *tabula rasa* was the precondition of a renaissance.
>
> (Néret, 2003:50)

The Japanese architect Sei Takeyama (b. 1954) summarizes the similarities between Loos's and Malevich's unconstrained view of decoration and objects as follows:

> In art, too, instead of leaning on the narrative and symbolism of the depicted object, a reduction process was pursued, away from the depicted object, out of the object, so to speak, to the pure senses, without otherness. The impurities are removed. If we are to follow the words of Adolf Loos, 'Ornament is a crime', 'style', 'causation', 'meaning', and all that is not needed is removed and reduced to pure form. Reduce art, reduce architecture, to a state so pure that it cannot be removed any more.
>
> (Takeyama, 2017:58)

He also states that the task of modern architecture is 'a thorough departure from conventional values. To erase meaning. To extract the pure flow. To find in it a new value, a new order' (Takeyama, 2017:58). As in the previous paragraph's arguments, he also reiterates that this reduction process is not a negative one.

Decolorizing is not about removing colour as a mere pigment and leaving a plain, tasteless world of white. Rather, it is the creation of a plentiful white that removes the meaning of colour and the stereotypes surrounding it, in order to create a new world.

4. White: Anonymous statement

Maison Margiela is a fashion house that was founded in 1988 by Belgian designer Martin Margiela (b. 1957) with Belgian retailer Jenny Meirens (1944–2017). This section focuses in particular on the period between 1988 and 2003, when Maison Margiela was run by mainly Margiela and Meirens.

First of all, investigation will start from the origin and achievement of the white label without the brand name, which is a characteristic feature of the Maison (Figure 2). As Meirens mentions in her interview in the film *We Margiela* (2017): 'The tag was a very distinctive image. It was my idea. […] I persuaded Martin. He said that "my parents would be disappointed if they didn't have my name", but he thought about it and said "Let's do it"' (*We Margiela*, 2017). Also, Meirens explained the reasons for it: 'When people come into a shop and see strong clothes with no name on them they are going to be more curious' (Frankel, 2017). Having owned a boutique and handled many designers' clothes, Meirens felt that the generic appeal of logos and brand names had become commonplace for many customers, so she wanted to create a new effect by intentionally showing nothing at all.

Figure 2 Maison Martin Margiela White Label

Additionally, about the stitching at the four corners to hold the white label in place, she noted that 'The white thread stitching was Martin's idea. It's instantly recognizable from a distance' (*We Margiela*, 2017).

As a result, the idea of a white label, made of plain, unprinted fabric with the corners sewn on with white thread, was a great success. It became, as they had envisaged, one of the most

prominent signatures in the world of fashion design, generating curiosity and recognition from various quarters that could not have been achieved with a traditional brand label. The lack of prominence of the brand name has conversely led to greater prominence.

The whiteness and namelessness of the brand's name label overlaps with the anonymity of Margiela and Meirens themselves, too. 'Like that label, and despite critical acclaim, both Meirens and Margiela remained almost entirely anonymous throughout their 16-year partnership, refusing to be photographed or to speak to the press' (Frankel, 2017). Also, their official glossary explained anonymity as follows: 'A reaction against the ubiquitous star system, the desire to let the idea do the talking. Not one published portrait of designer, no personal interviews' (Margiela, 2009:360–361).

This was supposed to ensure that the meaning given by information such as the details of the designer himself and his features did not affect the work itself that had been created. As previous section mentioned several times, when there is too much information (sometimes ornamentation, sometimes objects) this prevents the work from reflecting its true meaning. Margiela stated: 'Like a lot of things, when you try too hard, then it's definitely "out of it" and you have missed what you were aiming at. A dress that tries too hard to be intellectual and/or intelligent will automatically become ridiculous' (Margiela, 2009:40–41).

As a result, for Meirens, 'the "freedom of creative expression and the courage and conviction" that small piece of untreated white cotton represents is her proudest achievement' (Frankel, 2017), it is clear that white allows for creative expression in a way that no other material can from these examples of Margiela's achievements.

White remains a big part of the Maison Margiela itself and the people who work there: At the Margiela atelier, in a former schoolhouse here in the 11th arrondissement,

everything is shrouded in a lightly scuffed white fabric, including the furniture, walls and even staff members, who wear uniform lab coats that have the unsettling effect of eliminating a sense of the individual. (Wilson, 2008) (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Maison Martin Margiela Atelier

Their official glossary explained this white coat as 'A symbol of belonging to the house of Margiela, a repudiation of hierarchy' (Margiela, 2009:360–361). White contributed to the development of a sense that everyone was equal.

Meirens also described the white in their studio as follows: 'The uniform was white. White is good to look at. During the show, we could tell at a glance that it was someone from our company' (*We Margiela*, 2017). The white colour also served as a marker to link people in the company together as allies.

However, it is here that white also takes on the role of capturing side effects that are derived from Margiela's (and Meirens's) anonymity, as mentioned in the previous section:

The house's democratic, determinedly anonymous uniform of the blouse blanche, the fact that any questions sent to Margiela are answered using the pronoun 'We' as opposed to 'I', and that it is a group of people as opposed to one man that comes out to receive the applause at the end of the show are all aspects of this one central idea. (Margiela, 2009:40–41).

In this way, the democratic discipline of equality, without hierarchy, which had been the Maison's corporate culture, was replaced by a new discipline of 'We' by the glue of white.

In their official glossary, they also emphasised that the results of their work (for better or worse) are not the work of a single designer: 'The Maison… The collective name chosen to highlight the work of the group rather than that of one designer. External communications using the word "We" rather than "I"' (Margiela, 2009: 360-361).

In the film *We Margiela* (2017), the staff who worked at the Maison at the time described their mixed feelings about this 'We':

> Martin didn't speak, so 'We' did. There were many of us in the company, so we became 'We'. 'We' is easy to use, it's easy for the outside world to understand, and if you use 'We', you are not identified as you. (Axel Keller, then Commercial Director)

> 'We' can mean something positive, but it's also a cleverly deceptive use of the word. (Lutz Huelle, then knitwear designer)

> Margiela was like an opaque cloud, reflecting everyone's thoughts. White is a screen on which people project themselves a lot. (Patrick Scallon, then Communications Director)

For the Maison, and for the people who work there, white (= We) is a symbol of community, of unity, and of allyship. It does not identify you as an individual, it makes you feel safe. On the other hand, it also makes them involved and consistent in various responsibilities. Coordination, co-operation, group decision-making, and various democratic disciplines also arise there.

Lastly, a reflection on the sanctification of Margiela in which white was complicit. As explained in the first section, uncoated white readily stains and changes colour. For this reason, it has been considered as a sacred colour. If Margiela saw white as a symbol of the finite, he must have embraced white as it is with the passage of time. In a way, Margiela's obsession with white sometimes overlaps with this general symbolistic idea of white as a sacred colour. The peculiar structure of the Maison referred to in the previous paragraphs also accelerates the development of this kind of sanctity.

'Once you are in that company you have no choice. There was no such thing as working half-heartedly. That's why some people used the word "sect". That's what they thought of the company' (*We Margiela*, 2017). There is no denying that many fashion houses have this temperament, but with Margiela, there are too many factors leading to perceiving it as such, like, Patrick Scallon mentions that Margiela himself said: 'I exist by not showing myself' (*We Margiela*, 2017).

In this case, absence also evokes complex desires and expectations due to the conflict of wanting to see but not being able to see, and longing to touch but not being able to reach. The following facts also remain: 'What surprised us was that one day we sold out of nothing. The price was fixed, but we didn't tell them what we were selling. But everyone bought' (*We Margiela*, 2017). The customers' faith in Maison Margiela, their willingness to believe, creates a desire to buy his collection even when there is nothing presented. After all, white is one of Margiela's greatest assets, helping him to achieve many things, in some cases as intended, in others unintentionally.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to break through the conventional treatment and symbolism of white in fashion design, such as wedding dresses and sacred costumes, to focus particularly on the symbolism of white as reduction and absence, and to derive a creativity and potential of white that has not often been cited in fashion design. The investigation conducted above in Sections 2 to 4 has revealed how white has been incorporated and developed as a colour and method of expression, focusing on characteristic examples of architecture, art, and fashion design in and after the twentieth century. This section provides summaries of possibilities of creation with white derived from the results of the investigation.

5-1. Surpassing decoration

According to the summary in Section 2, Loos stated that the complex individuality of sophisticated modern society is no longer a shallow kind of content that can be expressed by superficial decorations and colours, and a lack of decoration leads to the creation of progressive attitudes to achieve various intellectual, spiritual, and cultural improvements.

Also, Le Corbusier stated that decoration itself erases and corrupts the inherent charm of an object, and that white brings us not the luxury of falsity, but the purity of finish that we really need: the true luxury of practical efficiency. In other words, the creativity of white derived here is ‘white that surpasses decoration’. The layers on layers of decorations and colours that seemed necessary were completely unnecessary. In fact, it is the pursuit of white that leads to the acquisition of a more refined spiritual richness and luxury that cannot be obtained through decoration.

5-2. Creating a new world

Also, according to Section 2, Wigley stated that white surfaces can help build new kinds of space that were previously absent and invisible, and help re-establish ideas and spaces that had been lost behind things. The creativity that white brings is not simply neutral or pure, but is an ‘active mechanism of erasure’ that looks far beyond purification. Section 3 notes that Malevich also stated that the meaning of things – any aesthetic beauty, emotion, or consciousness – is meaningless: the transcendent being that represents the concept of reality and eternity is white. This is not a nihilistic point of view, but a craving for an extreme reconstruction of the prescriptive concept in order to create something new. Likewise, Takeyama stated that instead of leaning on the narrative or symbolism of the depicted object, there is a need to erase the meaning, extract the pure flow, and find new value and order in it. For Takeyama, reduction means to get rid of the meanings of colours and the stereotypes associated with them, and to create a rich white in order to create a new world. In other words, the creativity of white derived here is ‘white that creates a new world’. The idea is to thoroughly detach yourself from all the information, knowledge, and prescribed concepts you have acquired so far, and turn everything into a pure white (*tabula rasa*). After a mental reset, creation begins in the new-born white, in a new, non-calculative world, according to new rules and concepts.

5-3. Artificial, together, fascination

The overview of Maison Margiela provided in Section 4 can be summarized in three parts.

Firstly, the meaning of information needs to be thoroughly anonymized to avoid affecting the work itself. The work must reflect the true meaning, not the meaning transmitted by such information. It is important to note that the concept of white in this case is the act of intentional anonymization based on the assumption that basic essential information exists, which is different in meaning from the removal of unnecessary decorations mentioned in Section 2. This kind of anonymity, such as withholding information about the designer or collection, or hiding the face of the model, is in a sense a contrived act of self-creation. In other words, the creativity of white derived here is 'artificial white'. White made on purpose: Where there should be information, but there is nothing… only white. It is only white, but the question 'why is there white?' cannot be erased, and people become more and more curious about white.

Secondly, 'White (= We)' is a symbol of community, unity, and alliance. It does not identify something, someone, or an individual, but it brings a sense of security. On the other hand, it is also something that makes it possible to be involved and consistent in various responsibilities. Additionally, it creates coordination, cooperation, group decision-making, and variousdemocratic disciplines. In other words, the creativity of white derived here is 'white with everyone together'. It can be called the white of security and stability, but is this perhaps becausewhite is just a sensible choice? It could be called universal white, but does white have that muchvalue or qualification? Other motives will also be provided, which include the disappearance of individuality, peer pressure, and various other issues.

Thirdly, when white is singularly intertwined with absence, it sometimes causes mutation as a bizarre kind of sanctification. The conflict of wanting to see but not being able to see, and longing to touch but not being able to reach, evokes complex desires and expectations, adhesion, addiction, and clinging. White has the power to bring about both intended and unintended attraction. In other words, the creativity of white derived here is 'white fascination'. Is this fascination dangerous? It is not dangerous at all, because, as we may recall from the last time we were truly into something, there is a sense of elation that comes with being impulsively addicted to something. It is truly a pleasant sense of danger, like being hooked on a swamp of white.

5-4. Conclusion

The results of this research only extended to the extraction of the possibility of creation with white, but in the future, it will be necessary to develop it to a practical stage to examine if it can actually be cited as a new case study of fashion design. Ultimately, all the results will be compiled to combine the research and practical parts. In addition, this research was limited to an investigation of examples of white in architecture, fine arts, and fashion design in and after the twentieth century. Future projects will include examples of white from other eras and fields, and an investigation of more varied examples of white that can be developed into fashion design.

Figures

Figure 1 MOMA https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80385 [Accessed 29 November 2021]

Figure 2 ARCHIVED https://archived.co/FROM-0-TO-23-A-LOOK-INTO-THE-MAISON-MARTIN-MARGIELA-REFERENCE-GUIDE [Accessed 29 November 2021]

Figure 3 AnOther Magazine https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/7363/inside- martin-margielas-all-white-maison [Accessed 29 November 2021]

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