

9. Cinematic Intertexts: H&M Goes YouTube

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Abstract

'Cinematic Intertexts: H&M Goes YouTube' studies the designer collaborations of H&M, with a focus on the campaigns launched at the beginning of social media's ubiquity. The campaigns as such combine high culture and popular culture, and span from exclusive consumerism to equal opportunities for all, with the Lanvin collaboration as an early example of 'friendvertising'. I will also discuss how H&M uses YouTube as an archive.

Keywords: H&M, YouTube, friendvertising, archive

When the Swedish fashion retailer H&M (Hennes & Mauritz) first launched their collaboration with Karl Lagerfeld in 2004, it was before the rise of social media. However, the Lagerfeld collaboration turned out to be only the first in an ongoing campaign of collaborations with different designers. During these years, within a rapidly changing media landscape, H&M have also gradually changed their advertising platforms. In the following, I intend to discuss how H&M have, to an increasing degree throughout the years, used social media to launch their designer collaborations – with Lanvin 2010, the first campaign that was launched through social media, as a specific case study. Still, H&M relies heavily, as I will argue, on established devices from the culture of advertising film. Finally, I will also shed some specific light on the use of YouTube, both as an advertising channel and as an 'archive' of advertising films.

A key moment in this transitional process could be identified with the launch of the Balmain campaign. On 18 May 2015, H&M globally advertised their new collaboration with the French design house Balmain through a

press release on their home page.¹ The collection was announced to be on the market as of 5 November. Simultaneously, through their other social media channels – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Google+ – H&M also invited everybody to experience and join ‘#HMBalmaination – a movement of togetherness’. As Balmain’s creative director Olivier Rousteing stated in the press release,

I want to talk to my generation: this is my main purpose as a designer. H&M offers me the unique possibility to bring everyone into the world of Balmain, getting a piece of the dream and creating a global #HMBalmaination: a movement of togetherness, fueled on a hashtag. The collaboration felt extremely natural to me because everybody can connect with the H&M brand. It calls for unity, and I am all for it.²

The quote from Rousteing introduces a new, specific focus on social media as such, as a key to a new, global nation, including everybody regardless of nation, class, or any other potentially excluding category.

This initial launch was followed by a number of ads in social media, in the form of interviews and teasers as well as opportunities to ask questions, until the advertising film ‘Balmain x H&M’ was published on YouTube (with links from other social media pages) on 29 October.³ The film – directed by Johan Sandberg and Henrik Timonen (Sandberg&Timonen) and produced by Strange Cargo Film – had reached more than five million views within a week. The campaign was a mix of television, fashion magazines, social media, online banners, and out-of-home, digital exterior ads. The aim was ‘to invite our customers to our shops and show them the latest in our fashion. We want our advertising to be inviting and surprising’.⁴

I use the term ‘advertising film’, in relation both to the Balmain commercial mentioned above and later also to discuss the ads for Lanvin. This

1 ‘H&M is proud to announce its autumn guest collaboration with the Parisian house of Balmain. A veritable bastion of French luxury, under the creative directorship of young Olivier Rousteing, Balmain has grown into a global pop-culture phenomenon’, *Balmain and H&M call for #HMBalmaination*, H&M home page, <https://about.hm.com/news/hmbalmaination.html> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

2 Ibid.

3 ‘Balmain x H&M’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9o96NoAowM&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuR1i8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=1 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

4 According to Johanna Dahl, PR manager at H&M Sweden, Julia Lundin, ‘Svenska kreatörer bakom H&M:s Balmain-kampanj’, *Resumé*, 3 November 2015. <http://www.resume.se/nyheter/artiklar/2015/11/03/kendall-jenners-danstavling-i-hms-balmain-kampanj/> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

may seem odd at first, given the new media channels used for the actual releases. However, both these advertising campaigns, just like the Marni campaign (2012) directed by Sofia Coppola, use established styles and devices borrowed from cinema, as well as established film directors such as Sofia Coppola or Mike Figgis, while they also explore the different topologies and new networks of moving images.⁵ Yvonne Zimmerman also deals with these topological issues within a broader theoretical perspective, following Jean-Louis Baudry, in her chapter 'Advertising and the Apparatus'. Here, I will focus primarily on the intersection between the cinematic medium and the emerging 'new media' platforms, the latter including everything from private use of the internet to digital out-of-home screens. A quote from Mike Figgis, the director of the advertising film for Lanvin, emphasizes that the releases of the new H&M ads in different social media still heavily rely on 'old' media, in this case primarily on the film medium:

Normally when you do something like this, they say 'Okay, 60 seconds and 30 seconds.' This is 5 minutes, 6 minutes... as long as it needs to be. You know, it's a film. [...] And it's designed as something that is entertaining and at the same time you learn something about this particular design. And it's gonna be in the store and it's gonna be on the internet, and it's gonna be in the cinema, and so on. It has many functions.⁶

The use of specific cinematic devices associated with certain directors, as well as the use of general cinematic intertexts – such as visual references to *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) in the advertising film for Lanvin – contribute to the general idea of 'advertising films' rooted in cinematic tradition, regardless of the medium by which they are released. H&M – like many other advertisers – also tend to use a longer format for ads shown on their own channels. These longer ads are thus associated more closely with cinema, while shorter versions, using different parts of the longer films, are released as commercials on other media channels.

However, to start from the beginning, with H&M this close relationship between advertising and selling has only become more integrated over

5 When presenting the latest collaboration with fashion designer 'ERDEM', which would be available in stores in November 2017, they wrote in a press release:

'H&M is also pleased to reveal that the visionary filmmaker Baz Luhrmann will bring the collection to life through his unique storytelling.' <https://erdem.com/en-eu/posts/h-and-m> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

6 Mike Figgis in the 'Behind-the Scenes of The Lanvin Ad for H and M', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53llv2fGBsQ> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

the years. The company that was to develop into fashion retailer Hennes & Mauritz AB was founded in 1947 in Västerås, and was at first named simply 'Hennes' ('Hers'), offering only women's clothing. In 1952, the first store opened in Stockholm. In 1968, the company bought the fishing and hunting equipment store Mauritz Widforss, and then also changed their name to Hennes & Mauritz, while also beginning to sell men's and children's clothing. In 1976, the first store outside of Scandinavia was opened, in London. In 1990, the first advertising campaign using well-known actors or models was launched. Online shopping was launched in 1998, and in 2000, the first US store opened in New York. H&M had become a truly global brand.⁷

Historically, the stores have remained the most important channel of marketing for H&M. 'When used correctly, the storefronts on the hottest commercial streets – as well as the internal streets, floors and walls – are formidable advertisement, formally for free'.⁸ In the early 1990s, the most visible change in H&M's advertising strategy was the change from the press ads to out-of-home ads. The most important ads were found on poster advertisements in streets and public places, at bus stops, and in the subway. From Swedish press ads in the daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in the 1970s, H&M had changed to a global perspective with bus-stop advertising and billboards by JCDecaux in the 1990s.⁹

It was only in 1988 that television ads were allowed in Sweden, and then only on the TV3 channel, which in the beginning, was broadcast from London. In 1992, TV4 also initiated television ads. The early, quite limited, attempts of H&M to get into television were quite like the poster advertisements, with models posing in front of a white or neutral background. In 1999, H&M launched, under the label 'Strictly Personal', a series of six advertising films featuring actor Gary Oldman, produced by McCann Stockholm (Gary Oldman was also the poster model that year). In the films, Oldman describes his own personal view of different aspects of clothing, always with a humorous twist.¹⁰ The same year, a series of juvenile film ads for 'bad idea jeans', that is Rocky Jeans, was made for H&M by Hollingworth/Mehrotra.¹¹

7 Bo Petterson, *HandelsMännen, Så skapade Erling och Stefan Persson sitt modeimperium* (Stockholm: Ekerlids Förlag 2001), 49, 54, 70–71, 114, 147, 172.

8 Ibid., 223.

9 Ibid., 224.

10 See, for example, 'H&M Ad with Gary Oldman', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScICjRvTy3E> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

11 See 'Rocky Jeans H&M Small Dicks', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiA7ihgqRLI> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

In 2001, H&M radically changed its advertising policy by creating its own ad department instead of using an external ad agency. They began to choose only to engage directors, set designers, and the like for special assignments. As marketing strategist Jörgen Andersson stated in an article in *Resumé*:

What we need is to buy creativity and communication solutions from outside, and this is what we will do. This gives us flexibility and freedom to work with whoever we wish to work with, and to find the best solution for any area.¹²

The new in-house ad department was called 'Red Room', as an equivalent to the design department called 'White Room'. Its first series of five films was made in 2002, 'People's Front for Nudist Liberation'. In these films, a radical political group aiming to liberate the nudists stages a series of demonstrations, including sending a fully clothed (supposedly in H&M products) 'reverse-streaker' through a nudist camp, much to the outrage of its inhabitants.¹³

In 2004, as already mentioned, H&M started its collaboration with designers, with Karl Lagerfeld. This international campaign used all of the then available channels: out-of-home ads, the press, the stores, as well as commercials for television and cinemas. The collaboration was initiated by Jörgen Andersson and creative director Jan Nord, who were leading the H&M ad department. The idea was to turn away from 'bad advertising' – at the time, there was general criticism of H&M for their underwear advertising in particular¹⁴ – as well as to attract new customers to the ordinary range by playing the luxury card.¹⁵ A professional director, Johan Renck, was hired to make the official advertising film for the Lagerfeld cooperation. The film hints at 'rumours and gossip' preceding and surrounding it: 'I have heard...

12 Pia Grahn, 'Ovåntat byråval av H&M', *Resumé*, 10 December 2001. <http://www.resume.se/nyheter/artiklar/2001/12/10/ovantat-byra-val-av-hm/> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

13 The videos are available to subscribers at Advertolog: <http://www.advertolog.com/brands/h-m-6120955%2Cyear-2002/> (last accessed 15 July 2017).

14 Jessica Enbom and Stina Gustafsson, *Sexually Provocative Advertising: How Young Men Respond to It* (thesis, Department of Business Administration and Social Sciences, Luleå University of Technology 2005), 28: 'When Anna-Nicole Smith was on the H&M's ads it raised a major outcry. People tore down posters and now they don't care anymore. It doesn't matter who is sitting there.' A glance on the internet indicates a shift in the critique, from women's lingerie to male underwear, and from posters to commercials: the series of ads with David Beckham (2011–2016) has more recently come under fire.

15 Oskar Serrander and Ted Wärnåker, 'Karl Lagerfeld for H&M' - *En studie av Hennes & Mauritz varumärkesstrategi* (thesis, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, 2004), 26–29.

is it really true? Looks like it... it is on everybody's lips... whispers... keep all this under covers... Has he really?' Then the rumours appear to have been confirmed, which in turn gives rise to new questions: 'Some pleased, some plain disoriented; what will people say and do? Why have a garden when you can have a forest?'¹⁶ Although this advertising film was made several years before the breakthrough of social media, it builds to a large extent on a similar communication model that was to be fully developed only later as they became commonplace, by spreading by word of mouth, playing on different rumours and hints.

As the Lagerfeld project became a success, H&M followed up by launching a new series, 'H&M Guest Designer Collaborations', with a campaign every year, sometimes twice a year: Stella McCartney in 2005, Viktor & Rolf in 2006, Roberto Cavalli in 2007, Comme des Garçons in 2008, Mathew Williamson in 2009, Jimmy Choo in 2009, Sonia Rykiel in 2010, Lanvin in 2010, Versace in 2011, Marni in 2012, Maison Martin Margiela in 2012, Isabel Marant in 2013, Alexander Wang in 2014, Balmain in 2015, Kenzo in 2016, Erdem in 2017, Moschino in 2018, and Giambattista Valli in 2019.

Independently of each different release, they all seem to share the same aim: to reach a broad audience across different media channels. Initially, I described this as a 'mix'. This also seems to remain true to a large extent throughout different ambitions and media varieties expressed by the company. But whereas the concept of a 'mix' still seems valid, there is also a clear turn towards social media as the main mode of media presence, even though this 'new' communication channel still heavily relies on 'old' media channels. The advertising films produced mainly for other media formats are continually also used on big screens in storefronts and inside of the stores. Though the techniques are new, they are still based on the same concept as quoted above – with internal streets in addition to other arenas as an important topos for advertising.

When H&M launched its collaboration with Lanvin in 2010, it was the last one for which Jörgen Andersson and Jan Nord were responsible for the advertising; they both left H&M in 2011. It was also the first time that social media played a central role in the advertising campaign. Already in 2007, H&M had started a YouTube channel, and in 2010, they had just launched a page on Facebook. Interestingly, the Lanvin launch shares a general theme

16 The video is not to be found on H&M's YouTube channel, but it is available elsewhere on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNYGtjVXcmw> (last accessed 6 April 2021), or on Johan Renck's home page, <http://www.johanrenck.com/#/projects/karl-lagerfeld/> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

of rumours and gossip with the earlier Lagerfeld ad, though the advertising strategies were refined and elaborated. I have chosen to focus here on the H&M Lanvin collaboration as a case study. The Lanvin case stands out among other H&M advertising campaigns as quite a unique exploration of new ways of advertising for the first time. My specific aim here is to investigate how H&M uses social media, and YouTube in particular, as a means of reaching new markets, more or less for free. But before going into this specific case, a few words must be said about advertising and social media.

Friendvertising and YouTube

Today, the home pages of all major companies typically contain references to their Facebook pages; Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest accounts; and to their channel on YouTube. Social media became increasingly important advertising channels, and 'friendvertising' became a catchword.¹⁷ According to forecasting company Zenithoptimedia, the internet turn was supposed to take place in 2016, when internet advertising grew three times quicker than television advertising. By 2017, they argued that the change would be accomplished, and internet advertising took the lead over television advertising.¹⁸

In her book *Advertising 2.0: Social Media in a Web 2.0 World*, Tracy L. Tuten devotes a chapter to 'friendvertising', which she describes in her glossary as '[a] branding and communication approach, which relies upon social networks to enable consumers to befriend brands and share brand information with other friends in their networks'.¹⁹ According to Tuten, social-networking sites could be divided into different categories, in which 'general social-networking sites', such as Facebook, 'have social networking among friends as the primary focus'.²⁰ YouTube, according to Tuten, is often mentioned in other contexts, but '[it] does, however, meet the basic criteria

17 Kicki Ahlm, "Friendvertising" är reklamkarnas nya metod', *SVT Nyheter*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/friendvertising-reklamkarnas-nya-metod> (last accessed 6 April 2021). Another, earlier expression, with almost the same connotations, is 'word-of-mouth marketing' (or sometimes just 'buzz'). The term 'Friendvertising' is more connected to social media, however.

18 'Internetreklam hetare än tv-reklam', *TT-Reuters, SvD*, 22 March 2016.

19 Tracy L. Tuten, *Advertising 2.0: Social Media Marketing in a Web 2.0 World* (Westport: Praeger 2008), 180.

20 *Ibid.*, 35.

of social networking in that it enables the development and maintenance of networks on the site'.²¹

In his article 'The Appearance of Archives', Rick Prelinger cites YouTube's offer of 'basic [...] social-networking features' as one of five aspects that made YouTube attractive to the public, which is here in line with Tuten's argument.²² He refers to the fact that 'it's possible to link individuals to their uploads and favourite videos, to send favourite videos to other people', but there is also the possibility to use the comment field to communicate with other viewers.²³ Eggo Müller writes, that 'a dialogic structure is characteristic of online video-sharing sites, which links YouTube to traditions of oral cultures'.²⁴ This brings us back to word of mouth and 'friendvertising'. It is clear that all those social network possibilities have contributed immensely to the general outcome of the new paradigm at H&M. Two of Prelinger's other aspects may have also played a part in making the H&M advertising campaign successful – namely, that YouTube was 'open to user contribution'²⁵ and that 'though it takes some skill to download a video from YouTube, the videos were very easily embeddable'.²⁶ The two last aspects that Prelinger mentions are related to more traditional archival questions: accessibility and completeness – issues I will come back to later.

The Lanvin Launch on YouTube

It all started with a 20-second video teaser on 29 August 2010, directed by Sandberg&Timonen and produced by Strange Cargo Film.²⁷ Over the course of four days, until 1 September, no less than seven video teasers were posted on the Web in which different people appear, supposedly designers,

21 Ibid., 39.

22 Rick Prelinger, 'The Appearance of Archives', in *The YouTube Reader*, ed. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden 2009), 271.

23 Ibid. That is, at least at this early stage of YouTube. For the Balmain campaign in 2015, the 'comments are disabled'.

24 Eggo Müller, 'Formatted spaces of participation: Interactive television and the changing relationship between production and consumption', in *Digital Material: Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology*, ed. Marianne van den Boomen et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 58.

25 Prelinger, 'The Appearance of Archives', 270.

26 Ibid., 272.

27 Strange Cargo Film has actually been involved in almost every 'H&M Designer Collaboration' from Stella McCartney (2005) to Balmain (2015), as well as a lot of other ads made for H&M during these years.

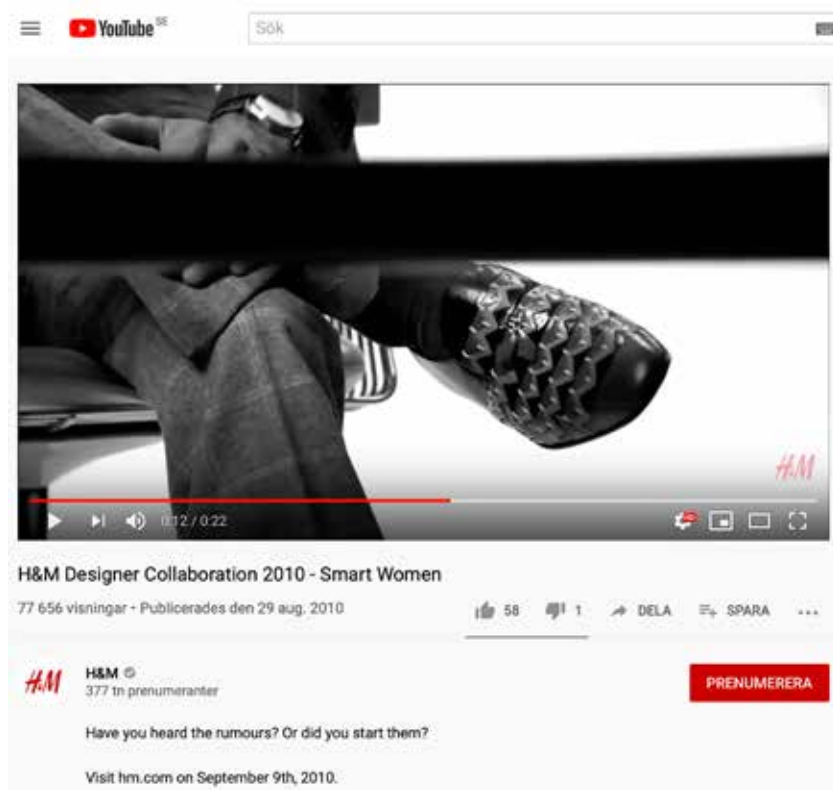


Figure 9.1: 'Have you heard the rumours?...?' – an aura of mysticism by H&M.

but without their faces being revealed.²⁸ Four of them apparently depict women, and three men. On the soundtrack, Lanvin designer Alber Elbaz actually appears in all seven of the ads, but with a manipulated voice, both with male and female connotations. All of this of course aims to create an aura of suspense concerning the upcoming project: with whom will H&M collaborate next?

Each ad has a title, and most of them seem to hint at specific designers, according to the online comments. Each film actually creates intense discussions on who it might be, but the communication is not only between spectators – H&M also comments on the ongoing speculations concerning each of the teasers. 'Smart women' was supposed to refer to Tomas Maier

²⁸ 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Smart Women', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXCHeYUhjBU&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=49 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

(Bottega Veneta), or maybe Christian Audigier or Christian Lacroix. Here, a comment from H&M asks, 'Have you heard the rumours? Or did you start them?' – another reference to the 'rumours and gossip' theme from the very first Lagerfeld collaboration.²⁹ Concerning 'Future of Fashion', which seems to allude to Vivienne Westwood, H&M asks, 'Can you go high and low at the same time? The speculations range from high to low. Where will they go now?'³⁰ In 'Very Melodramatic', the H&M comment states: 'Interesting. Aha. Yes, that makes perfect sense.' According to one comment, the ad refers to Anna Sui, whereas another commentator claims that 'she is too thin to be Anna Sui', and a third comment suggests 'IS LANVIN'.³¹ Concerning 'Speed of Fashion', there was another debate; someone suggests that it might be John Galliano (Dior), but another spectator replies that he doesn't have any tattoos, and Stefano Pilato (YSL) does. The question of speed made H&M comment: 'How fast can you work out what's going on? Have some water. Helps you think'.³² As the person in the ad is drinking water, this is only to explain that the designer in the new collaboration shares with H&M the obsession of speed in fashion. 'Smart Design', in which H&M states that 'Smart is beautiful. Are you beautiful enough to understand?',³³ seems to allude to Frida Gianini from Gucci, whereas 'Design is Relevant' states that 'Cool becomes cold. Relevant is always the right temperature. Have you figured it out yet', and was associated with Hedi Slimane at YSL.³⁴ In the last teaser, 'Real and Surreal', H&M asks the rhetorical question: 'How rational are your emotions? Are your dreams more real than your life?' The ad clearly hints at Lanvin.³⁵ The H&M comments both refer back to earlier

29 Ibid.

30 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – The Future Fashion', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZF5a5hJPc&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=48 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

31 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Very Melodramatic', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF8o7naOqb4&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=51 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

32 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Speed of Fashion', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNuxNsAloOw&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=53 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

33 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Smart Design', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SK7tiXfHEcw&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=52 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

34 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Design is Relevant', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_nyE79vjIE&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=54 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

35 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Real and Surreal', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x03wz8bOLO&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

discussions and point forward to the actual ad. Clearly, these 'rumours' may also be interpreted as a self-reflexive way of dealing with social media and their specific function to build 'word of mouth'.

The first of September was also the day of the actual revelation, when Alber Elbaz appeared as himself in the film 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – The Dream',³⁶ created in much the same way as the teasers but now showing his face and with his own voice. A text comment states: 'Guess what? Some of you got it right. Here is a special thanks to all of you who took the time to comment.' There was also yet another teaser: 'On September 9, visit www.hm.com for more videos!' On 8 September, a film in the series 'Fashion Video' was posted, a 'Behind-the-Scene Project' in which a number of actors and actresses are presented who had worked for the upcoming launch, talking about their excitement and the great fun they had – but we only see their faces.³⁷ The Lanvin clothes they are wearing are blurred to pixels, just to maintain the suspense – to the great disappointment of a number of spectators in the comments. Within the behind-the-scenes footage, one can also find comments on the multiple functions of the ad: that it will be shown in cinemas and on the Web as well as in the actual stores. Following this, yet another series of clips were posted, with Alber Elbaz developing his views on the collaboration with H&M. On the home page, the H&M Fashion Show, to be shown on hm.com at 8:00 a.m. on 2 November, was also advertised.

On 2 November, then – more than two months later – the real secret was finally revealed. Pictures of the collection were published on the home page, and the official advertising film, 'The Show', was launched – four and a half minutes long.³⁸ On 18 November, another programme was made for the 'Fashion Video' series, in which Joe Zee, creative director for American *Elle*, but also famous for playing himself in the TV series *Stylista* (2008–2009) and *The City* (2009–2010) looks at and comments on the collection.³⁹ On 20 November, another programme was made for 'Fashion Video' about a

36 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – The Dream', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGd4dzfCljI&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=42 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

37 'H&M Fashion Video – Lanvin for H&M', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nScoporcr1Q&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=41 (last accessed 15 July 2017).

38 'Lanvin for H&M – The Show', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8s3VSGqijS&index=57&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

39 'Lanvin for H&M Collection – H&M Fashion Video', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtDbNUHow-o&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=55 (last accessed 15 July 2017).

fashion show in New York, following blogger Susie Bubble (Susanne Lau) rather than representing the show or the clothes.⁴⁰ These two programmes are clearly directed towards two different target groups: the *Elle* version towards a more mature audience, and the blogger version to attract younger spectators. Then, on 23 November, nearly three months after the first teasers on the Web, the collection finally came to selected stores, as well as to the online shop. There was an instant rush.

Other Social Media

As the Facebook page of H&M was created in January or February 2010, the H&M Designer collaboration 2010 with Lanvin was also launched on Facebook.⁴¹ On 30 August, four different posts were published to launch the collaboration, such as 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Click the YouTube tab on our Facebook page and start guessing!' (which generated 40 comments), and 'Have you heard the rumours? Or did you start them?' (which echoes the YouTube ad and includes a link to the ad 'Smart Women'; the post generated 109 comments). But an active dialogue was also initiated with the commenters, inviting them to react: 'Good eye there, @Michael McQueen! So what do you make of the hands in this video?' (linked to 'The Future of Fashion', with 74 comments), or 'Interesting connection, @Natalya Posukhova. Will this video confirm or confuse? Let us know!' (linking to 'Very Melodramatic', with 56 comments). On 31 August, five posts were published according to the same pattern, followed by four more teasers on 1 September, the last two of which mirroring the YouTube formula, 'Guess what? Some of you got it right...' (the second generated 121 comments, the best result so far). On 8 September came 'Lanvin <3 H&M. Hope you like it!' (96 comments), and on 9 September another three posts, which, in addition to repeating 'Lanvin <3 H&M' also added an ad for the backstage material. Two more posts on 13 September were followed by a period of suspense until the real launch of the Alber Elbaz video on 2 November: 'Watch the Lanvin <3 H&M Fashion show [...] and let us know what you think of the collection', which generated 109 comments, followed by 'Lanvin <3 H&M Fashion Show! What do you think of the video?' (with a link to 'The Show

40 'At the Lanvin for H&M Fashion Show – H&M Fashion Video', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuzZJ-wSaZo&index=56&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7 (last accessed 15 July 2017).

41 H&M Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/hm> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

Video', generating no less than 290 comments). To conclude the Facebook campaign, the two 'Fashion Video' programmes were also launched on 18 and 23 November, respectively.

The use of Twitter was also explored for the first time by H&M in the Lanvin launch (Twitter had started in 2006).⁴² The use of Twitter, however, was much more limited at the time than that of YouTube or Facebook. On 30 August, a first tweet announces: 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010. Speculations are in full swing. Have you seen the latest video?' with a link to the YouTube page. The following day brought another tweet: 'We are very impressed with your guesses concerning H&M's next guest designer. Here is some more information', with a link to the 'Design is Relevant' video on YouTube. On 1 September, the tweet of the day was: '#Fashion lovers! Finally it is official and you can see the first video on the H&M #Designer Collaboration 2010 at [...]'. On 9 September, another tweet encouraged followers to 'Check out #Lanvin for H&M at www.hm.com – hope you like what you see!' On 2 November, finally, a tweet announced: 'Now you can see Lanvin for H&M Fashion Show at www.hm.com/lanvin.'

The conclusion that may be drawn from these examples is that it is obvious that, with the Lanvin launch, H&M had started to actively use YouTube as well as other social media as a means of 'friendvertising', a practice that was prefigured already in the Lagerfeld collaboration. Their campaign is largely built on word of mouth and on 'buzz marketing', which implies a reliance that the message will be spread and conveyed to those interested. Here again, Prelinger's point on the social networking aspects of YouTube is of huge relevance for H&M's friendvertising agenda. Today, however, friendvertising has spread over the whole field of social media. In the Balmain campaign on YouTube, it is stated that 'Comments are disabled for this video', but the communication takes place on other channels, such as Twitter, Instagram, or Google+.

The Balmain launch, which after a week had generated five million views on YouTube, had on 3 April 2016 – five months later – generated 6,660,342 views. A comparison with the Lanvin ad, 'The Show', which has hitherto only generated 246,515 views on H&M's YouTube site, shows the explosive development of social media.⁴³ Prelinger's comments (about user contributions and

42 The examples given are from H&M's Swedish Twitter account, but the tweets from H&M's accounts in other countries are very similar.

43 Another interesting comparison: 'Smart Women', the first teaser for Lanvin, has to this day 77,501 views, while the teaser for the upcoming collaboration with ERDEM had 313,146 views in one month – more than four times the earlier total. 'ERDEMxH&M teaser film by Baz Luhrmann', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgd9ox_AM5A (last accessed 6 April 2021).

downloading or embedding) are supported by a general search in the YouTube archive, because, as Eggo Müller writes, '[e]ven those who do not upload their own clips can still create a channel by choosing clips already available on YouTube'.⁴⁴ There are actually (at least) four more versions of 'The Show' on YouTube; the only difference is that they lack the initial red H&M logo in the lower right corner, and the final image that announces the time of the release. The handle 'watchFashionNews' has 658,367 views; 'Wendy Lam' has 475,445; 'stripbg' has 76,803; and 'cerestv' has 79 views.⁴⁵ This makes 1,457,209 views in all.⁴⁶ In addition to the official YouTube launch, the new releases made of the clips by the different users grant an 'afterlife' to the ad campaigns.

Thus, the first question launched in social media – who is it? – as well as the second – what will it look like? – all add to the suspense preceding and gradually introducing the advertising film, which is supposed to be the culminating point of the campaign. This clearly illustrates the point raised above, how the turn to social media in moving image advertising at least during the early years still to a large degree tended to rely upon, and point to, the launch of the 'actual ad' – the film.

The 'Actual Ad' – 'The Show'

The advertising film 'The Show' was produced by Strange Cargo Film for the H&M in-house agency 'Red Room', with Mike Figgis hired as director and Shona Heath as set designer. The ad is indeed complex, as it includes an intricate relationship between at least three elements: brand, creator, and agency. The picture is further complicated by the fact that there are two brands at stake here, as well as two creators. Is it an ad for H&M or for Lanvin? Of course, it is for both, but how does the ad balance these very different brands? And what about Figgis or Heath – to what extent does the ad exploit their respective brands? They both add to the campaign because of their artistic track records,

44 Müller, 'Formated spaces of participation', 57.

45 watchFashionNews, 'Lanvin for H&M – The Show (Promo 2011)', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NqxL4uwqHE>; Wendy Lam, 'Lanvin for H&M – Fashion Show', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdV4xpTiS1s>; stripbg, 'Advertising campaign Lanvin for H&M – Fall Winter Full Fashion Show', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZovaZkyQQZQ>; cerestv, 'Lanvin y H&M juntos', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtNkRngxCJM> (last accessed, in all cases, 15 July 2017).

46 In addition, there are two more examples of The Show, with different music added: from user 'sharung11' with 906 views ('Lanvin for H&M – The Show [Promo 2011]', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky_F8EszA4k) and from user 'kcolls88' with 406 views, ('TV ON THE RADIO – young liars meets Lanvin X H&M' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRQiw16SWIY>) (last accessed in both cases 6 April 2021).



Figure 9.2: Split screen in *Time Code* by Mike Figgis, 2000.



Figure 9.3: Split screen in 'The Show'.

but by lending their names to the campaign, they also add to their own artistic personas. The Red Room agency, finally, which had started so successfully with the designer collaborations in the Lagerfeld campaign, here reached a peak by uniting the three elements – brand, creator, agency – which also allowed for multiple expressions and brands to coexist and cross-fertilize each other.

Figgis and Heath have indeed both left their traces in different ways in the film. In the opening sequence, a screen divided into four – Mike Figgis's



Figure 9.4: Set design for Mulberry by Shona Heath.



Figure 9.5: Set design by Shona Heath in 'The Show'.

signature from his own feature film *Time Code* (2000) – shows four different models each wearing the same dress in similar hotel corridors. Shona Heath's set designs featuring animals, and uncertain borders between indoor and outdoor space, are also clearly recognizable.⁴⁷

47 There is also a director's cut version of the ad (nine minutes long), which contains scenes cut from the released version. One of them concerns a girl wearing a red dress who gets in the shower.

There is a dreamlike quality about 'The Show' as a film, which to a large extent has to do with repetition and sameness; Heath's set designs also share this surreal dimension. But, as already mentioned, the first ad with Alber Elbaz was also called 'The Dream'. In this ad, he talks about dreams in another sense of the word – namely, the H&M request to 'translate the dream that we created at Lanvin to a bigger audience'. Figgis's director's cut version was also called 'Is It a Dream?', which not only connects to the first ad but also clearly reflects his own track record: an ad from 2007 for Agent Provocateur made with Kate Moss was called 'The Four Dreams of Miss X', and in 2009, he participated in a collective work with 42 directors each making a 42-second contribution on the theme of dreams: *42 One Dream Rush*. In the case of the Lanvin ad, it is indeed a dream, but a dream that has come true. In Alber Elbaz's words:

In design we are dealing actually with real and surreal, with surreal and real, with fantasy and a dream, dream and fantasy. The mix of the two, I think, is the essence of design. It's this emotional and rational, both at the same time. ('Real and Surreal')

A central episode in 'The Show' consists of women from three generations wearing the same dress, which draws upon and develops the original Lanvin logo from 1927, by Paul Iribe, showing a mother and a daughter in the same outfit. This is also something that Elbaz talks about in the behind-the-scenes material and further elaborates on in one of the clips on the collaboration, called 'Daughter, Mother and Grandmother'.⁴⁸

One of the 'stories' runs as a common thread all the way throughout the ad; here, a girl rejects both flowers and diamonds from her lover-to-be: 'I want Lanvin. [...] I love Lanvin.' In the behind-the-scenes footage, the actress

This remains quite enigmatic in the ad; in the director's cut version, however, we also see her leave the shower and go to her wardrobe, where she has six more dresses identical to the one she was wearing. This version is not accessible on H&M's YouTube page, however. See 'H&M Lanvin by Mike Figgis, DIRECTOR'S CUT.mov', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpRXuFpn7fc> (last accessed 6 April 2021). Another interesting aspect of the scene mentioned above is that there is a queer side to it: a person coded as a man is putting on nail polish, and is later seen in a purple frock. In 2010, this scene was cut from the official advertising film, but seven years later H&M has 'come out' showing a dress worn 'by her... or him...'. 'Bring it on', <http://www.fb.se/work/hm/bring-it-on> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

48 'H&M Designer Collaboration 2010 – Daughter, Mother and Grandmother', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3xVmgGPLsQ&index=47&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkoVQ_7 (last accessed 6 April 2021).

comments: 'He doesn't know how to please me, basically'.⁴⁹ The ads for the designer collaborations were supposed to contradict the sexism of which H&M had been accused, not least in relation to their underwear campaigns, which were criticized for being all about how to please men, while what is at stake here is instead how to please women.

When the girl desiring Lanvin finally gets what she truly wants, it is one of the dresses that the spectator has already seen the girls in the waiting room wearing. Whereas Lanvin as haute couture stands for the expensive, the exclusive, and the singular, H&M stands for the cheap, the mass-produced, and the widely available. But this in no way contradicts the idea that Lanvin for H&M can be the true fulfilment of her desire. As Alber Elbaz comments in 'The Dream', in which he first 'comes out' as the H&M designer in public: 'I loved the idea that H&M was going luxury rather than Lanvin is going public.' Thus, instead of complaining about everyone wearing the same thing, the ad seems to turn things upside down. The 'Oh My God' exclamation when two girls meet in a hotel corridor and discover that they are wearing the same dress, or the 'I love your dress' compliment when two others, also wearing the same outfit, meet in an awkward situation and find relief in this, also contribute to telling a story in which sameness rules. From Lagerfeld to Lanvin, then, the H&M ads seem to firmly establish their own position concerning the critique generally directed towards their label, in both cases with humour and irony as weapons. In the former, they argue that H&M isn't cheap – that the concept of 'cheapness' has two possible meanings is of course a major question; even if the inexpensive part in itself is uncontroversial, the question remains whether inexpensive fashion can ever be anything but cheap. In the latter, they argue that everyone wearing the same thing is a strength rather than a drawback. Fashion, after all, is about people wanting to dress alike. Of course, as Lagerfeld stated, 'If you are cheap, nothing helps' – but as he also argued, 'It is all about taste'. The advertising part for H&M still remains very discreet; only the 'Lanvin loves H&M' bag, and the final image with the release date of the collection, reveals the actual object of the ad.

This advertising film thus, as mentioned, includes both a film director and a set designer: the former associated with feature films made for the cinema; the latter previously involved mostly in printed ads. As it contains not only two different artists, but also two different brands, and through its launch in social media, which has been highlighted in my discussion, it may

49 'H&M Fashion Video – Lanvin for H&M', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nScoporcr1Q&list=PL8SMpuBlgs3nFtfuRii8SSTEMQlkovQ_7&index=41 (last accessed 15 July 2017).



Figure 9.6: Discreet advertising for H&M in 'The Show'.

also contribute to the understanding of the complex topologies that are at stake here, which include several different media technologies and hence also equally diverging frameworks for reception, through many different platforms. The reliance upon the cinematic auteur tradition, with a number of renowned directors involved, combined with the – at least initial – novelty of the social media platforms, as well as the general principle of collaboration across media, nations, and cultural boundaries, indeed forms the specific framework of all these designer collaboration advertisements for H&M.

H&M's YouTube Page as Archive

As I have attempted to exemplify above, in addition to their advertising campaigns using YouTube among other channels, H&M have also actually expanded them to include a meta dimension to the ads, in creating a Web archive on YouTube, documenting the very process of advertising their collections and their campaigns. Whether there has been an actual ambition to use YouTube as a public archive, or if this is just a way for H&M to use a low-cost or free interface to share parts of their collections and their advertising history, is not the point here. Regardless of the aims, the H&M YouTube page,⁵⁰ divided into a number of themes, does function as an informal archive. H&M Fashion Inspiration contains 231 videos, whereas H&M Campaigns contains 92. Then follows H&M Fashion Events, with 106

50 H&M's YouTube page, <https://www.youtube.com/hm> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

videos, ranging from store openings to the H&M Design Award. The category H&M Conscious, which contains a number of ads for the corporate social responsibility of the company, contains only 23 videos, but spans a large number of fields, from 'H&M in Bangladesh', to 'H&M Conscious Action Highlights 2014', to the presentation of the 'H&M Conscious Foundation Ambassador' Alek Wek, or 'H&M on Water Stewardship'. Behind the Scenes at H&M contains 113 videos, both from the designer collaborations and several new collections or campaigns, such as H&M Fashion Against Aids 2011. The Popular Uploads category contains no fewer than 988 uploads, several of them, however, figuring repeatedly. Beside these central headlines, there are also a number of 'Created playlists', with examples such as H&M Loves Music (23 films), H&M Design Award 2014 (12 films), H&M Conscious (23 films), Lookbook (5 films), and Liked Videos (38 films). Here, H&M Guest Designer Collaborations also figures, with 69 films.

To return to Prelinger's idea of YouTube as archive, it is interesting to study the H&M process of archiving on YouTube. More specifically, how are the guest designer collaborations staged on YouTube? The advantages for the company are obvious. As the investment in the film ads had already been made, uploading them on YouTube is a way to reach new audiences essentially for free. Rick Prelinger's point about YouTube's openness for user contributions, here applies well to H&M, for users may take advantage of YouTube as a communication channel. However, users are not only users, but also producers, which allows for new users to additionally contribute to the campaign, through the possibility of social networking by commenting.

As H&M obviously have used their YouTube page in quite a systematic manner, one could have expected that all the collaborations would have been there, forming a complete archive of the campaigns. However, a quick glance at the list of collaborations reveals the opposite. The campaigns from 2004 and a couple of years afterwards – Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Viktor & Rolf, Roberto Cavalli, Comme des Garçons – are all absent. The 2009 Mathew Williamson collaboration, however, appears on the YouTube page, but not Jimmy Choo from the year after, whereas Sonia Rykiel and Lanvin, both from 2010, appear. After that, both Versace and Marni are absent, whereas Maison Martin Margiela as well as Alexander Wang are there, but not Isabel Marant from the year in between. The Balmain 2015 campaign is there, as well as Erdem 2017, but Kenzo 2016 is not, nor is Moschino 2018 or Giambattista Valli in 2019. Still, it is unclear how these decisions are made. There may well be copyright issues or other problems that remain unarticulated. There is also the question of how long this archive will remain. Several of the films, such as the Marni film, were removed from the H&M

YouTube page after some time. Who makes these decisions, and for what reasons? This thinning-out process is also typical for corporate archives, which usually sort out what no longer generates any value – to which of course a specific and more complex dimension is added in the advertising context as several layers of ‘value’ are at stake: the immediate commercial value, which could be downplayed as soon as the specific campaign is over and the products are sold, but also the added value of collaboration across ‘high’ and ‘low’ fashion, with its global and democratic ambitions, which is a more stable, ideological value, but possibly also generating commercial effects in a long-term perspective. Whether a ‘complete’ corporate archive, where the original material is stored, actually exists in this case also remains unclear.⁵¹ It is equally clear that understanding YouTube as an archive introduces a new conception of the archive, where stability and complete coverage are no longer evident, but where the basic idea of the archive, to preserve and to transmit the essential, is perfectly in place. Companies may be less motivated to preserve advertising campaigns, ephemeral by definition, in an archive than other materials with more long-standing aims. At the same time, the same ephemerality is true of YouTube as a channel. And even though far from all the campaigns are available, the H&M YouTube page still allows for fundamental insights into the H&M way of advertising. It is useful from a conceptual viewpoint, though less so from a strictly historical perspective.

To conclude, it remains perfectly clear that the H&M YouTube page as an archive, at least in the sense that we are used to, suffers from serious gaps in information. At the same time, much of the information lacking from the official H&M YouTube page is to be found on other YouTube pages. For example, the advertising film *Marni at H&M*, directed by Sofia Coppola, with music by Bryan Ferry (*Avalon*, by Roxy Music), which can no longer be found on the H&M page, may instead be found on Ferry’s YouTube page, which strengthens the hypothesis of copyright issues being at stake.⁵² Still, this practice, in which spectators and other people involved in the videos

51 I tried to get in touch with H&M several times to get answers to those questions, but I have not even received a reply. The strange thing is that H&M – through the ‘The Erling-Persson Family Foundation’ – made possible the foundation of the Center for Fashion Studies at Stockholm University, and in that sense supports scientific research. But, it seems, not research on H&M.

52 ‘H&M Marni – Directed by Sophia [sic] Coppola’,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPoqyCzSc-w> (last accessed 6 April 2021). There is a ‘Behind the scenes of the Marni at H&M commercial’ on the H&M YouTube site, though, showing that not all material concerning the Marni collaboration is gone, just the advertising film with the tune by Bryan Ferry. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7x4pCMRVQw> (last accessed 6 April 2021).

have uploaded them on YouTube, also refers to the last point made by Rick Prelinger – that the videos were very easily embeddable. The reason for their presence on YouTube – or on someone's website or blog – is precisely this practice of spreading by uploading – yet another way of 'friendvertising'.

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