**Space, Gaze and Power: A Foucauldian Methodology for Fashion Advertising Analysis**

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**Abstract:**

This article examines fashion imagery in regard to representations of power as they pertain to the *mise en scene* of fashion advertising. By employing a specific form of image critique employed by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* [1966], a new methodology for analyzing fashion advertising is proposed and formulated. This form of critique enables elements such as the gaze, light and space to be framed into lines of sight. These lines can be examined in regard to the viewing subject, the staging of the advert, and structures of power. In his critique of the painting by Diego Velázquez *Las Meninas* (1656), Foucault states: "No gaze is stable, or rather, in the neutral furrow of the gaze piercing at a right angle through the canvas, subject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity". This sentence presents us with the phenomenological form of Foucault's critique, containing a number of the themes that thread their way through his analysis of this baroque painting of the characters surrounding the child princess. These themes enable us to use this methodology to critique fashion imagery and this article offers up a new approach to visual analysis, one that has not been considered before and that can now be added to the fashion theory toolbox.

**Keywords:** fashion advertising, Michel Foucault, hermeneutics, pedagogy, phenomenology

**Introduction:**

Historically visual analysis has taken many forms with different methods becoming popular at particular times. It is also the case that depending on which field of study one is oriented, there are different means of analysis on offer to both academic and student. Examples of visual analysis include: formal analysis, iconography, narrativity, picture theory, stylistic analysis, semiotics, spectatorship, and, of course, the gaze. While specific systems of critique tend to be preferred by particular practitioners, when placed together they form a toolbox of visual analysis devices that anyone can use, depending on the situation at hand. This article suggests that 'lines of sight' be added to that toolbox because it: provides a critique of the relationship of the viewer to the characters in an image, takes into account the spatial setting of the image, and enables one to include the dynamics of power at play both in the image and in regard to the viewing subject. By examining the lines of the gaze of the viewer, and those of the actors in the image, one can critique specific undercurrents and nuances that can be missed on an initial viewing or by using alternative tools. What this form of analysis is particularly concerned with is how lines of sight can be used to examine the role of power as it is (consciously or not) written into the image and how these can be interpreted. It is Michel Foucault's essay 'Las Meninas' (*The Order of Things* [1966]) that puts forward this model for interpreting lines of sight and from which I have borrowed the term.

While Foucault has not been ignored by contemporary fashion theory he appears to be represented mostly, and understandably so, by those theorists who approach fashion from a socio-cultural perspective, as indeed I do. He is sometimes touched up on in theory-oriented fashion textbooks, such as in Carol Tulloch's contribution to Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson's *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* ([2000], 2007). In her chapter on Malcolm X's clothing she discusses the changing of subjectivities in regards to Foucault's technologies of the self and how this can affect those around an individual (2007, 299). However, Joanna Entwistle's book *The Fashioned Body* [2000] consistently makes reference to Foucault throughout, also giving over a section to him entitled 'The Influence of Foucault', whereby she situates his theory within that of

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, introducing the reader to the concept of bio-politics and to that of discourse (2008, 16-28).

In Jane Tynan's chapter, 'Michel Foucault: Fashioning the Body Politic', she looks at social control in regard to everyday practices, which lends itself well to the study of fashion and the body as a site of both expression and control (2016, n.p.). There are also those that use the work of theorists influenced by Foucault, such as Angela McRobbie and her concentration on Judith Butler in regards to performativity in relation to fashion and technologies of the self (for instance in *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music* [1999]). So, too, a number of individuals have authored articles in this journal that reference Foucault, however there is only one in which his work is mentioned in regard to visual methodologies. In 'Between Image and Spectator: Reception Studies as Visual Methdology' Morna Laing offers up reception studies as another form of visual analysis in fashion imagery critique, where Foucault and Butler get a brief mention, although not under the rubric of lines of sight (2018).

Foucault, therefore, in regard to fashion theory, is mostly mentioned in regard to the body and the social (biopolitics), technologies of the self and self care, and power and discourse. I can see no existing evidence for the lines of sight method of enquiry having already been used before in regard to fashion imagery, however Catherine Driscoll does use *The Order of Things* [1966] to provide a cultural analysis of Chanel by using Foucault's discussion on modernism (2015).

While this article provides a unique approach to the analysis of fashion imagery by utilising the lines of sight method offered by Foucault, we cannot separate it from the underpinning themes that run through his work, such as those of power, space and discourse. However, it is the visuospatial aspect of lines of sight that is specifically useful in the examples discussed here, and what lends itself so well to fashion imagery, with its combination of factors such as space, distance, eye levels, actors, positions, relationships, status and, of course, physical and abstract hierarchies. And while the images chosen here are from luxury brands, since they were developed for a particular postgraduate course with a specific interest in designer clothing, any still imagery that contains actors in relationship to each other lends itself well to this method of inquiry.

It is in 'Las Meninas' that Foucault carries out his in-depth analysis of the lines of sight in Diego Velázquez's baroque work of art (1656), which unfold in over sixteen pages of his critique of the artist's painting (figure 1). While Foucault's analysis has engendered both support and criticism (there are many competing analyses of the painting *Las Meninas*), it is not that with which this article is concerned, but, rather, the method he uses to tease open the painting itself. Employing themes such as representation, light and opacity, artifice, reflection and the mirror, surface/depth, the other, the double, narrativity, and the setting, Foucault helps us to understand what is happening behind the superficial appearance of an image, one that is beyond that of a casual observer. He is also interested in more abstract concepts such as instability, invisibility, similitude, reversibility and proximity (his terms), and in his analysis demonstrates how they are connected to the relationships between the individuals in *Las Meninas* which can be read through the lines of sight, and how these are connected to the viewer. Foucault contextualizes these themes and concepts early on in his essay when he says that these lines highlight "the play of metamorphoses established…between spectator and model" and that the line of "reciprocal visibility…embraces a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints" (2005, 5).

FIGURE 1

Figure 1: *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez © Museo Nacional del Prado

This method of critique, which I am proposing for fashion imagery analysis, I first introduced on a module entitled Cultural Research Methods (MA Fashion Enterprise and Society, School of Design, University of Leeds, UK) and have subsequently presented to students and academics at the Manchester Fashion Institute (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK) to much success. Because it can be readily translated to other settings, from that which it was initially presented by Foucault (e.g. art history and philosophy), it is simply a case of using the techniques set out by him, adapting them to the specific context and using them to generate discussion and analysis on the content of an image. One of the key benefits of using this tool in a classroom setting is that, providing the image under analysis can be displayed on a screen, it is easy for the teacher to help the student place themselves in the position of the viewing subject and, once that has been established, talk them through the lines of sight that are being proposed. I offer this method up here as a progressive pedagogy that helps to bring cultural (philosophical) enquiry to the fashion table. Robert Wicks, in his article 'Using Masterpieces as Philosophical Examples: The Case of *Las Meninas*', demonstrates that using classical art history forms of analysis alongside philosophical examples leads to a better understanding of visual art history (2010, 259-260), and I propose that this works just as well for fashion imagery.

This article discusses both my own initial discovery of the lines of sight tool for fashion advertising, and what it can reveal to the critic (and creator) of this particular form of 'picture'. It is concerned, specifically, with how power is manifest in a spatial setting, in terms of how actors are situated in a specific *mise en scene*.

**A Representation of Representation**

In 2017 when preparing a lecture on 'Looking and Seeing' for MA fashion students I wanted to propose to them a new way of looking beyond the surface of fashion adverts. As well as briefly offering up both John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* [1972] and Nicholas Mirzoeff's *How to See the World* [2015], I also considered Foucault's 'Las Meninas', having previously spent some time studying it and working through the lines of sight he proposes. At that time, however, I had not then discovered a specific El Cortes Inglés's advert and it was not until preparing for the lecture that I came across it. This advert provided an opportunity to demonstrate to students that things are not what they necessarily appear to be in an image (for instance, this is not just a photo of a 'random' staging of models in the department store's clothing, but a representation of a baroque masterpiece), but, also, this advert provided the most direct (and for the author, fortuitous) way to open up discussion on using Foucault's lines of sight in fashion imagery.

In 2011 El Cortes Inglés's advertising campaign featured a re-staging of the set of Velazquez's famous painting *Las Meninas* which hangs at the Prado Museum in Madrid. The artist in the original painting has been replaced with a photographer in the advert and the models in the image, representing the various characters in Velazquez's painting, are wearing fashion items from the store. The advert was aimed at tourists and "used the cultural symbolic universe of the Prado Museum…to attract quality shopping tourism to the capital of Madrid" (Díaz and Martín 2016, 98). While my discussion here is not especially concerned with the reasons why the department store chose the advert (this makes for a whole other conversation that is not the pedagogic concern of this article, although I do recommend that fashion students who are exploring fashion adverts in this way, do investigate the success of any campaign), Díaz and Martín state that

> various studies in the field of social psychology have revealed that visual art positively influences perception and evaluation of products or brands that use it in their communication. It has to do with a contagious effect understood as a mechanism according to which, direct or indirect contact between two objects can produce a permanent transfer of the properties of one object (art) to another (the product advertised) (2016, 100).

Díaz and Martín do not provide a critique of Foucault's method, and there is no mention of his work. They are concerned with advertising, although I am not saying that this can readily be separated from the discussion here, just that it is not the scope of this article. However, it is pertinent that they do see the value in using references to art history in advertising, since this opens up a space for discussions on representation, which, ultimately, is what underpins Foucault's essay and is a good starting point for thinking about this in regard to using lines of sight as a methodology for fashion representations.

Stuart Hall explains that in regards to representation "we are able to communicate because we share broadly the same conceptual maps and thus make sense of or interpret the world in roughly similar ways" (2009, 18). This means that, while we will have individual differences in how we interpret representations, there will be much consensus due to our cultural similarities. This makes for a rich discussion in terms of any form of visual analysis, since there is still space available for difference and nuance in how we interpret pictorial representations, and it is this that is a valuable experience for the fashion student when it comes to critical and contextual analysis. Cultural and philosophical enquiry has much to offer in regard to initiating students in terms of underpinning themes that, when introduced to them, helps open up a multiplicity of how the world can be viewed and interpreted. Foucault's phenomenological 'Las Meninas' analysis introduces the student, even without necessarily bringing any overly complex phenomenological theory to the discussion, to themes around oppositions such as visible/invisible, seen/unseen, subject/subject and inside/outside. It offers a kind of deconstruction – alluded to by both Anthony Close (1987) and Amy M. Schmitter (1996) – without the use of dense Derridean language. And what is key to *Las Meninas* being a perfect tool for Foucault's own analysis, is that the "picture is intended to give the spectator the illusion of standing in the very spot occupied by the model and of seeing the scene from his viewpoint" (Close 1987, 31). This places the student in a unique position as interpreter of the image, giving them power from both a physical perspective (they are the one being looked at by the actors in the image) and from an ontological perspective (in regard to their own subjectivity and relationship with: the painting as object and the objects and subjects within the painting). It is this that lends it to being a useful example to bring to the classroom: the student is sutured into the very image on display on the screen in front of them. This, and *Las Meninas* (the painting) being a representation of representation as form, then opens up a space - and it also does this in a literal sense – and helps students to think about a number of themes that work across cultural theory, philosophical enquiry, and analysis in general, three of which will be discussed here in the context of this lines of sight methodology. From both a pedagogic, and analytical, critique this article will concern itself with space, the gaze and power, however while these themes will become the main discussion points of this article they cannot be separated from each other in regard to using lines of sight as a methodology, or when considering actors in the 'real world' or otherwise.

**The Painted Gaze and the Viewing Subject**

I will start with 'the gaze' aspect of the lines of sight methodology since Foucault himself uses the term three times in the opening paragraph to his essay, when he dives into his critique with no introduction other than the opening sentence: "The painter is standing a little back from his canvas" (2005, 3). Providing we have a copy of the image at hand, we are immediately interpellated into the image and compelled to follow his instructions as if they are a route that will take us to a specific place, which in a sense they are: "Between the fine point of the brush and the steely gaze, the scene is about to yield up its volume" (ibid.).

The gaze as a form of critique is well laid out in cultural theory by people like the aforementioned Berger [1972], and also by Laura Mulvey in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' where she discusses, specifically, the male gaze [1973]. It is also the case that the study of scopophilia (the love of looking, often responding to Freudian and Lacanian theory) is a popular method of analysis in

film studies).[1] The analytical landscape is not short of ways of critiquing the gaze in its multifarious forms. However, what Foucault does is walk us through the painting as if it were a landscape to be traversed. Taking us from gaze to gaze and back again, he draws us into the image from the perspective of the viewing subject, introducing us to the actors on the stage of the image (and outside of it: the audience/us/the subject of the painting), creating lines of sight that can be interpreted. This strategy forms an epistemology for Foucault which offers up the mode of representation as it was for the Classical epoch, but, more importantly for us, it is also a way of critiquing fashion advertisements.[2] As Mathew Ancell states: "*Las Meninas* extends its frame outward, involving the viewer and its creator…the world is 'being seen'" (2013, 165).

However, we do not need to be analysing a Renaissance or Classical painting to use Foucault's method, nor do we have to agree or disagree with those who affirm his assessment of *Las Meninas* or criticize it, we simply have to pick up the tool and use it for our own purposes. In her analysis of Foucault's method as a tool for art history, Yvette Greslé says of Foucault:

> His act of observing and describing draws from the pictorial surface a complex network of visual exchanges which simultaneously reinforces and dissolves assumptions about the relationship between painter, subject-model, world and viewer; between those who represent, those who are represented and those who look (2006, 213).

Even though Greslé is talking about an analytical method for pictorial works of art, we can see from the terminology she uses that they could just as easily be applied to any image that contains actors within a setting. In regard to the El Cortes Inglés advert, Greslé's summary of Foucault's method above can be applied: one simply has to exchange the word 'painter' for 'photographer'.[3]

Foucault's own instructions, with a degree of patience and concentration, can be followed step-by-step as he leads the reader through his own understanding of the gazes that make up the image. It would behoove anyone attempting this to print out a copy of the original painting and draw the actual lines on to it.[4] After introducing the reader to both the position of the painter *of Las Meninas* and the painter *in Las Meninas*, Foucault then takes us around the room depicted in the image (its light and dark), drawing lines in our minds and hinting at the significance of the mirror on the back wall. He then introduces us to the other characters in the image itself. I will not repeat all of these lines of sight of the gaze, since they have been well covered elsewhere (and, of course, are best read directly from Foucault's own words) and it is not the object of this article.[5] But, I will now demonstrate, using adverts, how students can be introduced to a new way of analyzing fashion imagery.

After walking students through some of the key lines of sight in Foucault's essay, I then introduce them to some simple fashion imagery that contain a limited number of lines of sight, such as one of the images from Moschino's Spring 2017 campaign (this particular example also enables discussion to open up around the subject of the male gaze). This advert is a diptych. In the left frame the model

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[1] A film often referred to in regard to scopophilia is *Peeping Tom* (1960). Directed by Michael Powell, the main character stalks, photographs and then kills his victim with a knife which he has attached to his camera in conjunction with a mirror whereby his victim can see their own fear reflected back to them.

[2] "Classical representation accordingly assumes that it can represent the world as it is in itself, or at least with universal intersubjective validity, by self-consciously abstracting away from, disregarding, or overlooking the presence of the person who is doing the representing" (Wicks 2010: 263).

[3] I will return to this advert in more depth in the conclusion, so as not to get side-lined by its similarity to the baroque painting. It is important that, to demonstrate how useful this tool is across an array of images, I provide examples that have no bearing on the vehicle Foucault uses to express his own form of critique.

[4] For the purposes of teaching, the author would recommend not drawing all of the gazes/lines on the image, but placing the key ones on the slide one at a time and colour-coding them.

[5] You can view some of the lines set out by Foucault that I have made for the purposes of teaching at a blog post entitled 'Foucault Does Las Meninas': http://particulations.blogspot.com/2017/12/foucault-does-las-meninas.html

is central and wearing an off-the-shoulder pale peach evening gown. She is surrounded by male photographers all wearing black, at close proximity to her and focusing on her with their camera lenses. The right frame is a similar image, but zoomed in closer to the top half of the model, with mostly only the hands, heads and cameras of the photographers in view. They are closed in even further to her than in the left frame.

Due to the simple content of the image, in terms of staging, it is easy to focus on just the actors in the advert, as there is no set apart from this (the background being white). The central actor is female, and the periphery contains the male actors who are all inward looking with their lines of sight focusing in on the female. If this was an image of royalty, like that of Velazquez, this may be interpreted in one way, but it would be difficult to translate this as anything other than a traditional male gaze, on an initial viewing, although I have heard attempts made in class (unsuccessfully, I might add) to propose this as one where the woman has power, since she is able to engender the male gaze. A typical reading of the lines of sight in relation to the traditional male gaze theory would place the power with the males in the image, not least because they are not simply looking but also 'taking' something 'belonging' to her, too – her photograph.

Efrat Biberman, employing a Lacanian analysis, states that: "The gaze is a product of representation", meaning that it is not something separate and distinct from representation itself, that we can separate from the constructivist process of representing something (2006, 247). She goes on to say: "This formulation of the gaze, I claim entails narrative consequences" (ibid.). And, this can be seen in the advert above, which has very simple lines of sight. But, in this advert we have an interesting double-image – one that is not quite an exact replicated enlargement of the other. On the zoomed-in image on the right, with a slight first level deconstructive displacement, the photographers are still looking in at the model, who then averts her gaze, no longer looking at us, the viewer (this is reminiscent of Barbara Kruger's image *Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face* (1981)). The reader can see the simple lines denoted on this double-image and can offer them up to students for discussion and enable them to create their own narrative about what might be happening within the image (although the lines get more complicated if one wishes to see the double image as a single image, which may, or may not, be useful in the early stages of teaching this form of analysis). However, Biberman warns us of the problems around creating stories around imagery. Employing Slavoj Zizek to explain herself, Biberman says that "narrative is a kind of package deal in which one gains meaning at the price of accepting temporal order, coherence and unification" (ibid.). Therefore this type of interpretation comes with a warning, one that may or may not be useful to introduce students to in the early stages of learning about how representation operates on the psyche of the viewer.

Returning to Foucault's own discussion, in terms of the gaze his analysis continually involves the viewer/reader, who fluctuates between sensing their own position within this narrative (and the other subjects of the painting who take up the same geographical position as the viewer) and being pulled back into the image again through the lines of sight of the various gazes depicted and explained by him. "No gaze is stable, or rather, in the neutral furrow of the gaze piercing at a right angle through the canvas, subject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity" (Foucault 2005, 5). And it is this, and the complex spatial staging of the actors in the image, that makes for a dense narrative (this is well reflected in the differing interpretations of the image itself by other critics). One of Foucault's key gazes is that of the painter Velàzquez within the image itself, standing at the canvas on the left. Taking about the gaze of the painted painter, Foucault says:

> As soon as they place the spectator in the field of their gaze, the painter's eyes seize hold of him, force him to enter the picture, assign him a place at once privileged and inescapable,

> levy their luminous and visible tribute from him, and project it upon the inaccessible surface of the canvas within the picture (2005, 5-6).

As the viewer of the image, this is one of the crucial moments for students as they suddenly understand how significant it is that Velàzquez has not only painted himself into the painting, but draws us into his created image by gazing at us from inside his own painting as if it is us who he is painting. When using Foucault's 'Las Meninas' as a teaching aid, it is the triangle created by the painted painter, the painted canvas, and the viewing subject (us), that I always begin with, as it is this that connects the student-viewer very quickly to their 'place' within the painting itself, what Foucault describes as "a virtual triangle" formed by "the painter's sovereign gaze" (2005, 5). In regards to Close's statement, above, about the intention of *Las Meninas* being to give the viewer "the illusion of standing in the very spot occupied by the model" (1987, 31), I maintain that it is not artifice at all as this position is actual and real in the sense that once the student-viewer understands, via all these gazes, that they are standing in the same position as the subject of the-painting-within-the-painting, then a shift of consciousness occurs bringing about an understanding of the paradox of representation.[6] And, as previously touched upon in the advert depicted in the Moschino advert (highlighting the power of the male gaze), these lines of sight denote relationships of power. This is especially important to Foucault's own analysis of *Las Meninas* and it is this that I shall now turn.

**Sovereign Power and the Influence of Interpretation**

One of the key, but subtly used, terms in Foucault's essay is "sovereign". This is not simply around his hinting at the subject of the painting, the one the painter in the painting is painting on his canvas, and whom we can just about see in the mirror on the back wall – the King and Queen.[7] It also denotes the power of the viewing subject, who actually takes up the same space as the King and Queen outside the painting. However, there is no suggestion that this is "tantamount to usurping the throne" (Schmitter 1996, 263). Schmitter explains that no viewer can take the sovereign position just because the "placeholder" of the viewing subject is the same one, since the viewing subject actually comes after the image (ibid.). However, if we were to rethink this idea through the lens of the viewer of the El Cortes Inglés advert we could interpret this differently, by giving the viewing subject, the potential shopper at the department store, the sovereign position in regard to purchasing power (this then makes for a further discussion with students over concepts such as freedom of choice in terms of marketing influence, and so on).

What Foucault's analysis enables us to do in regards to how lines of sight denote power is, through his skillful web of lines that circulate through, and in and out of, the image, he opens up discussion on what the various topographical positions might mean within a particular setting. For example Dolce and Gabbana's 2007 campaign included an advert showing men in dominant positions in regard to the female model in the photo, a highly controversial campaign. In one image we are presented with a number of men who are fully dressed in smart business suits, standing (and in one case crouching) over a prone woman dressed in a swimming costume. The men are in a physical position of power over the other, but also the female's vulnerability lies in her lack of clothing.[8] The woman does not look out at the camera, but in the mid-distance to the left of the photographer, with a slightly glazed and emotionless look (is she traumatized?). Again, the men are gazing inwards. But, without even looking into all the individual gazes we can understand that this denotes

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[6] Elsewhere in his article, Close also maintains that Foucault "tends to equate artistic illusion with real experience", explaining that *Las Meninas* is "a faction" (1987: 33). However, this comes across as somewhat disregarding of the complexity of representation and how it affects subjectivity.

[7] King Philip IV of Spain and his wife Mariana of Austria.

[8] Business Insider have categorised this campaign, with one image allegedly representing 'gang rape' of a woman, as being one of "The 10 Worst Ad Campaigns of all Time" (2011).

a relationship of dominance – as cultural beings we can read these signs, they are what Hall, above, refers to as part of our shared language and understanding when it comes to representation. However, in another image from Dolce and Gabbana (from the Fall 2012 campaign), the power dynamics start to get much more complicated.

This image contains a number of individuals in what appears as a real setting (probably an Italian street market). On the left of the image, sitting outside a stall, is an old man with, quite likely, his wife. Either side of them is a female and male child of around 5 to 6 (probably their grandchildren). All the characters are wearing black or dark grey (the female child is wearing black and white). In the foreground are the three female models promoting the fashion items, all wearing black and leaning down towards the elderly couple, while one of them takes a photograph of the couple on her phone. Next to them are two teenage boys. Almost everyone is looking towards the elderly couple (two of the models are looking at the image on the phone) except the male grandchild closest to the camera, who looks directly at the audience. The couple look towards the models.

Apart from the old woman and the young girl, all of the females are in a more physically dominant position than many of the males. The three female models are standing over the elderly male and female couple and the two youngest children, who are all sitting down. While standing over someone is a domineering stance, the female photographer is bending her legs somewhat. This makes for a better photograph for her as the character in the narrative, but it also makes her less threatening (standing over someone and taking a photograph, if they are not a close friend or family member, could be considered overly assertive, overbearing or even somewhat threatening if no permission was asked). It is also the case that the two teenage boys are 'on the same side' as the young women - unlike the Moschino advert (above), where all of the males are on one 'side' (on the outside), with the woman in the center (the inside). In this Dolce and Gabbana advert, excluding the young boy who is gazing at the camera, the gazes within the image are almost entirely reciprocal. This image displays a completely different power dynamic than the previous Dolce and Gabbana advert. The aesthetic is familial, colloquial and social.

In terms of the classroom, the above analysis can be carried out in an open discussion with students, in a similar format to how Foucault's own 'Las Meninas' unfolds. The images provided so far are good examples of how one can discuss the gaze and the structural position of actors in relation to power, and the one above is complex enough to enable students to think about a story behind the image based on the lines of sight. So, how might we introduce students to some basic theoretical ideas around interpretation?

In his own discussion on *Las Meninas,* Ancell introduces us to two broad forms of interpretation. The first is when interpreters "seek the 'meaning' of an object" and attempt to ascertain its "significance, reference, intention, ideas, and use" (2013, 156). While the other is what he describes as "'relational'" and is concerned, rather more, with its connection "to something else" (2013, 156-7). Ancell, thinks these two approaches are often to do with which field of theory one is coming from (say art history or philosophy), but he does not see them as actually being opposing approaches, having much in common and with both being useful (ibid.). What is particularly significant in what Ancell says, in regard to the task at hand, is a comment he makes about Foucault's own analysis, which is actually the crux of Ancell's thesis: "The question I wish to address in this essay, then, is how a philosophically-driven, theoretical methodology, such as that employed by Michel Foucault, might attune us to ways in which art enacts philosophy as part of its meaning" (2013, 157). This is key to my own proposed methodology for two reasons. Firstly, it introduces students to the basics of hermeneutics without even having to use complex theoretical language. Secondly, it demonstrates how interpretations that are presented to the world, in a constructivist sense, are what creates meaning in the first place. This is important because, while anyone who has

read the multifarious interpretations of *Las Meninas* knows, images are constantly reworked and represented throughout time. This is, in fact, one of Foucault's key projects, to present to us the archaeology of knowledge in terms of how it appeared *within* specific epistemes (to, as it were, contextualize it for *us*). However, he does this retrospectively, from a different cultural epoch than those he is discussing (you can see the paradox of taking up this subject position as a philosopher).

These paradoxes, contradictions and nuances are all subjects ripe for introducing fashion students to in terms of critical and contextual thinking. In Ancell's quote, above, one could readily replace "art" with "fashion advertisements", and both Velàzquez's *Las Meninas* and Michel Foucault's 'Las Meninas' are a useful tool to employ in this regard, for reasons that Schmitter highlights: "*Las Meninas* suggest that the nature of the subject position, its relation to representation, and the connections to the represented object are all functions of the representation itself, and not some natural or external givens" (1996, 265). Here Schmitter highlights the significance of the viewing subject in terms of their place in the narrative that is laid out before them, whether it is a baroque masterpiece in a gallery, a fashion advertisement for a designer brand in a glossy magazine, or fashion promotion on social media. However, she also goes on to say that "what constitutes the representative power of a representation itself might be open to various constructions" (ibid.) and it is this that is helpful in terms of explaining to students how images are actually formulated 'objects' (as Schmitter highlights, there is nothing 'natural' about them at all). It is also at this point in the teaching that one could introduce to students ideas around questions in terms of the 'sovereignty' of the subject position, interpretation, and meaning-making within postmodernity, in regard to theories such as Roland Barthes's semiology and the second level of the sign, connotation (*Mythologies* [1957]) or, even, the writerly in regard to how some cultural texts are open enough to enable multiple interpretations (*Image Music Text* [1977]).

As demonstrated above in the previous two Dolce and Gabbana adverts, it is Foucault's analysis that helps us to build up a relationship between the characters in a specific setting by looking at their gaze in relation to each other and to us, and ascertain the dynamics of power as they are played out before us. This enables us to think about a narrative that might well be an intended aspect of the scene presented within the adverts by those designing it. If this has been skillfully carried out within the design itself, we are more likely to read it the way it was intended. However, there is one more related aspect we need to consider: power and the gaze do not appear in a vacuum, and for Foucault this is one of the key themes throughout his oeuvre - space.

**Space: The Primal Frontier**

Foucault is well-known for his critiques of space, be they physical structures (the prison or the mental health institution) or abstract (such as utopias). And, while Foucault states that his own analysis of *Las Meninas* is a critique of Classical representation, he also says that Velàzquez's own painting is a representation of that particular form of representation, and, in fact, is "the definition of the space it opens up to us" (2005, 17). Foucault makes further reference to the spatial aspect of his own critique of it when he says: "In the depth that traverses the picture, hollowing it into a fictitious recess and projecting it forward in front of itself, it is not possible for the pure felicity of the image ever to present in a full light both the master who is representing and the sovereign who is being represented" (ibid.). Even when Foucault is not explicitly using the word 'space', we can see related terms infused in his text, such as "recess", "depth", "traverses", "hollowing" and "projecting". For Foucault, space is an ever-present dynamic in regard to power.

In terms of the sovereign power and the spatiality of the room in Velàzquez's own image, Schmitter says that if we take the actual position of the King as the sitter of the image on the canvas of the-painting-in-the-painting, the King would "see himself filling the various 'centres' that the painting

constructs. The rear center of the room reflects the representation of the king on the canvas; the geographical center of the room is filled by the king's natural body in the person of the Infanta; and the viewing position is filled by the sovereign body itself" (1996, 264).[9] So, even in the seeming absence of the King (and Queen) from the image itself (apart from in the mirror), he is somehow spatially present in his own absence within the space of the painting. So, how can we think about the spatial aspect of fashion imagery when we are using a lines of sight analysis, and what might the consideration of space within an image reveal to the student-viewer in regards to how they rethink fashion advertising?

Within my own lines of sight teaching, my lectures build on the key themes highlighted by Foucault (and are also taken from critical/cultural theory in general), and these can be introduced stage by stage by using ever more complex images. One image I use is taken from the Gucci Spring/Summer 2016 campaign. It is a still that accompanies a short film, by Glen Luchford, of young people gathering together, running through a shopping center and collecting on the roof of a building. The still is taken from the final shot of the film. While the film could be critiqued from a film studies perspective (and I do show students the film in order to contextualize the still I show them for the purposes of analysis), it is the still that has enough complexity in terms of investigating the gaze, power relations, and the spatial aspect of the photo, too. This image provides a good workshop for students, because at this stage they are beginning to see beyond the surface of an image, are starting to look at its actual construction and they begin considering how it can be read in terms of lines of sight. In regard to this particular image, students already understand that there is a narrative behind it, since they have viewed the preceding film.

This makes for a useful discussion with students on the hugely complex relationship between vision and language: "it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say" (Foucault 2005, 10). While Foucault's comment gets to the nub of the paradox of representation, it also enables the teacher to discuss historical ideas about representation in, for instance, art history, such as the difference between presenting an image as if it was a window onto the world, or as a reflection of the world that has been generated onto its surface (Alpers 1983, 36-37). This enables discussion on ideas around the position of the creator of the image - "The artist of the first kind claims 'I see the world' while that of the second shows rather that the world is 'being seen'" (ibid.) - and what this means for the viewer of the image. These are philosophical concepts that can be introduced as discussion points with students, without necessarily bringing in overly-complex concepts.

Fashion images are as good as any other image, art history or not, to get students thinking about vision and meaning-making: "The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'" (Hall 2009, 9). And, it is not by coincidence that in his opening chapter in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* Hall closes this chapter with an exercise for students on how to think about representation by looking at Norman Bryson's critique of a baroque painting (2009, 30).

So, in regard to what we have learned from Foucault's own analysis of *Las Meninas* so far, how might we direct the students in what to look for in the Gucci image? After showing the students the

[9] While Foucault (and others) believed that the mirror is reflecting the King and Queen from their position outside of the painting (as the sitters of the painting-within-the-painting, if you were), Joel Snyder and Ted Cohen have disputed that it is that particular reflection. Following a painstaking geometrical exercise to find the vanishing point of the painting, they state that the mirror reflects the canvas within the painting (1980: 437).

film, I then present them with the image, asking them the following questions and a justification for their answer (it is good for students to do this exercise in groups):

1. Who is looking at who or what?
2. Is there a central character in the narrative?
3. If you switched the positions of the females with the males would the power dynamics change?
4. Are the characters engaged with the viewer, each other, or something else?
5. Is there a dominant character position within the image?
6. Is there another 'character' in the image that is not so obvious?

The above questions enable students to discuss their reasons for providing the answers they do as, even if an obvious answer comes to mind, they have to find a reason why they came to that conclusion. This also enables them to understand how quickly we make choices about what we see (or think we see) in the visual field, without often any obvious conscious thought coming to the forefront of our minds. Students make their decision and then have to work backwards to why they think the way they do about how something appears to them in a representation.

Like the Dolce and Gabbana Italian market advert, which also has a narrative, the Gucci image has a background setting which enables an opening up of the space of the image, bringing more to it in terms of what is available for interpretation. Also, what is beneficial about both these images is their cultural settings which encourages discussion on how cultural background influences how we see and interpret images. In the Dolce and Gabbana one all the characters are dark-haired. Would an Italian student view this image differently from a British student or a Chinese student? The same goes for the Gucci image. Is this an Italian metropolitan skyline, and is the other 'character' in the story the very city?

These questions, relating to space, are what are considered when forming an advert and creating an advertising campaign. Not just the geographical setting of the image, although that is extremely important, but the spatial placing of the characters within the image. Also the choice of one image over another, from those available in the rushes, in regard to what the character's relationships are with each other within the space of the set itself. None of this happens by chance, these images are constructed, just like *Las Meninas*, and as Foucault states in his own essay on representation ('Representing', *The Order of Things* [1966]): "The sign does not wait in silence for the coming of a man capable of recognizing it: it can be constituted only by an act of knowing" (Foucault 2005, 65).

**Conclusion: The Ontology of the Viewer**

Ancell says of Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas* that it "might attune us to ways in which art enacts philosophy as part of its meaning" (2013, 157) and later says that images like Velázquez's offer up discussion on how things appear and the multiplicity of ways of translating them (2013, 163). Even without actually recognizing the El Cortes Inglés advert as a Velázquez, it nevertheless has the appearance of a stylized setting, with a nod to it being of a 'period style'. With very little art history, or historical, knowledge, one could infer that it is probably a representation of an old master of some sort, or at least is representative of a style that ranges from the 16$^{th}$ to the 18$^{th}$ Century. So, even outside of any absolute knowledge of it being the specific painting by Velázquez, it still has a particular aesthetic that embeds it historically. However, when we bear in mind the intention of the department store, as mentioned above, that it is to draw in the international tourist, it is possible that the visitor to the store will have already, or is likely to, encounter the actual painting in the Prado at some point on their trip.

In my teaching I have not given students the exercise of analyzing lines of sight within this particular advert so as not to get them too entrenched in the idea that this lines of sight methodology is just about *Las Meninas* or just about the El Cortes Inglés representation of it. The most important thing about lines of sight is its adaptability to different scenarios and its promotion as a valid tool for visual analysis. Nevertheless, the advert would make for a good exercise, since we can replace the word student-viewer with potential customer, and this means that its analysis will take on a whole new meaning (it would also make for a good focus group if one were to do research in regard to the advert). It is the position of the viewer and the observation of the lines of sight that make it so adaptable. Greslé says "Foucault focused on the artwork itself as though it were there before him, describing in extraordinary detail what he saw" (2006, 212) and this physiological position of the body in space is so easy to replicate with any image. Having delivered this lecture more than once, I have found that it is best presented with a large screen, with space in front that enables the lecturer to stand in front of it in order to demonstrate the actual position one would be in in a gallery setting. However, even if this is not always so easy to replicate, providing one explains this dynamic to the student, they are able to imagine this position even when viewing the image on a smaller screen.

The key to the lines of sight methodology is "looking and describing" (ibid.) and it is surprising how well students respond to this once they are interpellated into the image, whether it be *Las Meninas* or a Moschino advert. Students feel confident when they realize there are often multiple ways of analyzing an image (and they are rarely wrong in their answers to questions one poses in class). Also, they tend to engage with the exercise enthusiastically, for a number of reasons. They understand, possibly for the first time, the power they have as the viewing subject, and how this is connected to meaning-making. Also, by using Foucault, this enables one to utilize a number of the other themes he is known for, in particular space and power, and adding this methodology to the visual studies toolbox enables one to easily draw in discussion around concepts such as discourse, and begin to connect concepts such as subject/object relations and biopolitics to the wider cultural milieu of a given moment in time.

Students also begin to understand that images are manufactured, in other words they are not natural in any way, they are carefully constructed to elicit specific responses in the viewer – nothing in the image is a co-incidence, even if sometimes mistakes are made in assumptions to how they will be read by the viewer. The viewing of the lines of sight, and the consequent analysis, help the student to think about suppositions that they may be bringing to the table. Greslé says of Foucault:

> His act of observing and describing draws from the pictorial surface a complex network of visual exchanges which simultaneously reinforces and dissolves assumptions about the relationship between painter, subject-model, world and viewer; between those who represent, those who are represented and those who look (2006, 213).

It is this that lends the lines of sight methodology to the dynamics that make up characters in an advertisement setting, connecting them directly to the viewer and providing a subject position from which to carry out the analysis. The El Cortes Inglés advert makes for a neat bridge between the baroque painting and other fashion adverts. And, the very painting itself, *Las Meninas*, makes for a perfect introduction for the fashion student because it "celebrate[s] the possibility of perspectives and serve[s] as an aesthetic commentary on the nature of apprehension [because] it is designed to resist stable interpretations and, in its ontological interrogations, suggests phenomenological readings that take into account the embodied viewer" (Ancell2013, 166). And, none of these terms need to be introduced to the student, because they will have, after completing the exercise, experienced the image phenomenologically and this will change the way they look at adverts from then onwards.

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