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Cover: Moschino, chocolate bar gown, fall 2014.
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In 2008, the food scholar Fabio Parascioli wrote, “The obsession with food that in the past few decades has taken large sections of many Western cultures by storm apparently will not subside any time soon.” Food and fashion may seem like an improbable pairing, but, fifteen years later, the intersection of food and fashion continues to be a growing area of interest, dominating popular culture. Jeremy Scott’s fall 2014 collection for Moschino, for example, merged the brand’s logo with the “Golden Arches,” creating a viral fashion moment. Antonoff’s “pasta puffer” led food-themed magazine editors, designer cookbooks, and food-inspired couture. More recently, restaurants run by luxury houses, color-coordinated collaborations, and stylish pizzas and lattes emblazoned with fashion logos have filled Instagram feeds, charting new paths for this union. The intersection of food and fashion is clearly an appetizing way to explore culture and society.

Food and clothing are basic necessities; they also express our ideals and values. Throughout history and across cultures, both have served as markers of distinction in terms of class and taste. Cultural geographers David Bell and Gill Valentine explain that taste works to construct our cultural identity: we are what we eat, but what we eat is in its expression of group and personal identity. Fashion designers often use food motifs to celebrate food and fashion made a compelling connection between food and fashion industries of New York, London, and Paris helped the newly rich establish their positions in society. Concurrently, followers of the Aesthetic Movement rejected industrialization by wearing medieval-inspired clothes, dyed with natural materials, and many embraced vegetarian lifestyles. Perhaps the most powerful connection between food and fashion is in its expression of group and personal identity. Fashion designers often use food motifs to celebrate food and fashion made a compelling connection between food and fashion. The relationship between food and fashion can also be examined through a socio-political lens. One reason for food and fashion’s uneasy association is the fashion industry’s decades-long preference for thinness and its fetishization of food. Designers like Becca McCharen-Tran of Chromat reject the idea that fashionable bodies do not eat. Her fall 2014 show featured models of diverse body sizes eating Flamíñ Hot Crossnuts on the runway.

As two of the world’s largest industries, food and fashion are ripe with social ills, from environmental damage to labor abuses, but are also vehicles for protest and activism. Nineteen-seventies punk rejected meat and animal products in an indictment of capitalist industrial systems but are better known for their radical style that did the same. Vegan and environmental ethics guide Stella McCartney’s label. She is a leader in sustainable fashion, championing innovative food-waste biomaterials, such as mushroom and apple skin leather alternatives. In fact, the future in critical cultures, food and fashion continue to illuminate significant aspects of culture and society through their intersection.

Melissa Marra-Alvarez and Elizabeth Way, co-curators

Louis XIV built up the elite food and fashion industries of France as twin forms of soft power to establish his country as the ultimate source of luxury, and these ideas still resonate through heritage brands such as Louis Vuitton and Moët Hennessy under LVMH. During the late-nineteenth century, wearing haute couture and dining in the new elite restaurants of New York, London, and Paris helped the newly rich establish their positions in society. Concurrently, followers of the Aesthetic Movement rejected industrialization by wearing medieval-inspired clothes, dyed with natural materials, and many embraced vegetarian lifestyles. Perhaps the most powerful connection between food and fashion is in its expression of group and personal identity. Fashion designers often use food motifs to celebrate food and fashion made a compelling connection between food and fashion. The relationship between food and fashion can also be examined through a socio-political lens. One reason for food and fashion’s uneasy association is the fashion industry’s decades-long preference for thinness and its fetishization of food. Designers like Becca McCharen-Tran of Chromat reject the idea that fashionable bodies do not eat. Her fall 2014 show featured models of diverse body sizes eating Flamíñ Hot Crossnuts on the runway.

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