

STRATEGIES FOR EXITING RUNWAYS.

Ricarda Bigolin

Walk

Separate the signal from the noise / listen / hear your own ears / cut the string / be yourself / only you. Walk. Follow your own path / go at your own pace / find your origin / listen to your limbs. Walk. It's all about balance / it's all in the knees / one foot in front of another / one, then two, then endlessly... / Tap tap your own morse code / your wired that way / your witnesses are out there / step out / step up. Walk.¹

The way you walk reveals more than you think. There's the pace firstly, the state in which you get yourself from one point to the next. A menacing silhouette, a curling forward shoulder, a slump, a stager, a fuck-you stroll etc. It's not a reductive thing to say, watch a little, and learn.

I see her from at least 20 to 30 meters afar; silhouette and stoned cadence, hmmm. It's trite to say she did not give a fuck, the cliché 'walk' cues for models, e.g. saved by fashion, clothes curing your flailing self esteem (and soul) and now you *own it*. This was the walk of someone with money, or other things inherited from birth. Or that over-nurtured child, devoted parents, cultural kindergarten, setups, reassurance every damn day that *you are a star and can do anything you want*. Anyway, I knew she had money, I didn't know how much or what kind, old, new, daddy, blue, faux, thirsty? 16 years of ballet, faint aristocracy cheek bones, they made marble into noses like hers. *Walk assured* in the knowledge that there are dividends, family trusts and connections. Hair was a pixie crop, or am I ripping this from some other story. She had it done at an expensive hairdresser, it came out more quiff than pixie. The hair was then met with her own blunt scissors, mannered hack, a cigarette, and a blue coloured glass tumblr half filled with merlot. A long sleeve white jersey on, I knew it wasn't GAP, I just knew it was expensive. I didn't know enough about fabrics to know or care what it was but it certainly had a natural sparkle. Benign basic done luxe; which are always a little haughty, a little utilitarian useless, *thank you very much*.

I had no idea about fashion at the time, but she had apparently been modelling. [She wasn't] a chosen beauty but she [didn't] go unnoticed². Later on she would go on to naturopathy, then physical therapy, raising a family and pursuing other dormant dreams that were usurped by their modelling ambitions³ after sticking it out a couple of years being unconventional for those unconventional designers. No I would never use the term *avant garde*. She was so slim, womanly stretched. Slightly cropped sweaters I had thought were thrift

1 Excerpt from the script written and performed by Tilda Swinton and played during Viktor & Rolf's Fall 2003 collection 'One Woman Show' in *Viktor & Rolf: Fashion Artists*, T.M. Lorient (ed.), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2017, pp. 110–111.

2 Customer profile excerpt from text embossed on a BLESS belt from *N°27 Eased Up*, 2004, author's own.

3 Gaboué, S.; '90s models just can't get enough', in *Dazed Digital*, March 2013, viewed on 5 October 2018, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/15860/1/90s-models-just-cant-get-enough>

were designer. Marle, mohair, belly button piercing. long sleeves, washed silk shift dresses that were stringy and cut-off as skirts. Frayed, but not overly, cross hatched [bias]. A solid black shoe. Clumpy (sensible) square toe and heel, or an all-out stomper. Elongated frame swathed in jersey, grayscale silk, faded blue jeans and mohair. She was a lipstick length taller than most women. The smile she gave as she noticed you, that was so sincerely for you, that you always bought it. Every sentence she said ended with your name. Her beliefs were inflamed with slightly contrived politically conscious nuisance; fueled by an arts major and a covert shame related to the balance of her real bank account. She never had any money. Looking in a k bag for \$2 for a coffee. Maybe there was a secret parental AMEX, not revealed amongst friends. Saved for lone and guilty outings to Barneys and Bendel. Even though I lived through this, a lot of this is gleamed. I wasn't actually there. Multiplicities of bodies, sites and scenarios. Body as backdrop, as avatar, as catalyst, as site.⁴

Séance de travail

Enter.

Walk briskly about a yard behind the other model.

Take two circuits of the runway without stopping. Look at audience members or don't. Smile or don't. Walk as though you know where you are going. Do not stop or pose. At the end of the second or third circuit make your exit. Choose your exit. If there are audience members in front of the passageway. Continue walking until they move out of your way.

Exit.

Helmut Lang referred to his format of fashion shows in the 1990s as 'séances de travail' or work sessions. It was more of a smell than a memory, of raw concrete and hi-fi. Definitely a buzz.⁵ Lang retired in January 2005, a few months after Prada bought the remainder of his company (he sold the first 51 percent in 1999).⁶ Paris was really the only dominant force in fashion. It was about Montana, Mugler, Gaultier and other big fashion designers from the '80's with dramatic shows.⁷ This new type was chiefly to be found in countries like Japan, England, Belgium and the Netherlands...⁸ Even if it wasn't defiant middle finger to the favoured and still pertinent fashion capital at that time, it still represents a rejection of the tackiness of the veneer, spectacle, polish and exuberance of those 1980s designers. Quotients of beauty expanded as the world opened up—(metaphorically, culturally and

4 Busta, C 'BODY: CON: What can be done to a body?' in *Bernadette Corporation: 2000 wasted years*, published in relation to the exhibition *Bernadette Corporation: 2000 wasted years* held at Artists Space, New York, September–December 2012 and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, March–June 2013, *Koenig Books Ltd, Köln*, pp. 70–71.

5 L, Borrelli-Persson, 'A Shock to the System: Helmut Lang on His Industry-Changing Fall 1998 Virtual Show' 2016, in *Vogue*.

6 *Vogue*, 'Helmut Lang, Fall 1994 Ready to Wear' in *Vogue.com*, viewed on 5 October 2018, <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-1994-ready-to-wear/helmut-lang>

7 Lang, H & von Olfers, S, 'We were not concerned with Mass Approval' published in relation to the exhibition *Not in Fashion: Photography and Fashion in the 90's*, 25 September – 9 January 2011, MMK Museum für Moderne, Frankfurt, Germany, 2010 pp. 52–56.

8 Van Mechelen, M, 'The tête-à-tête of performance in fashion and art', in Brand, J & Teunissen, J (eds), *Fashion and imagination: about clothes and art*, ArtEZ Press, d'jonge Hond, Arnhem, 2009, pp. 104–115.

corporately) global constructions and conceptions of ethnicity and identity smeared. On the edge of the internet. Star designers grappled with their stardome, pressures, expansions 10+ collections per year, diffusion lines and luxury conglomerate buyouts, the *business*. The career of the designer as one long fashion show with sometimes forced and raw *exits*, the schema deviates from hype to no show, budget blows out and the sales negatives, the audience present who wants / cares. Each exit is a different look.

Salon,

1. "It's a beautiful show, isn't it..."
2. Your collection expresses the texture and quality and even the smell of your life. It reflects everything about you, from the condition of your teeth to the way that you love. You're branded by the objects you love. They mark you as the property of your culture, the property of your class.⁹

What's at stake in symbolic struggles for legitimacy? Bound up with one's relationship to cultural objects, is one's relationship to one's history, one's familiar and domestic culture, one's environment, one's body, the ways that one identifies oneself socially, and the conditions under which one might see oneself as acceptable within one's community or the community toward which one aspires.¹⁰ People stopped caring so much about the conventions of fashion cities. Casting friends, family, people met on the street, the postman as well as real models created a melange between the amateur and the professional, sometimes you couldn't see the difference, 'democratising fashion' pops up more than in one decade. Not one fixed body. The awkwardness could be the charm. Sometimes locations or scenarios would usurp this, without having to know how to model, specific tasks or instructions diverted the self consciousness and their attempts to find ways to give the appearance of being comfortable. The awkwardness seemed to emphasize the fact of the variety of women: some were overweight, some were thin, almost none projected an ideal of beauty, but the "flaws" seemed to emphasize the idea of individuality.¹¹

Would you like some more wine?

Specialists in unlikely venues and unusual scenarios¹²
#1

Enter (multiple)

You will be guided by your dressers. No house lights.

9 Excerpt from the script written and performed by Andrea Fraser in *May I help you*, first performed in 1991 at the American Fine Arts, Co., New York published in *Andrea Fraser*, Museum der Moderne Salzburg Mönchsberg, United States, 2006.

10 Excerpt from the script written and performed by Andrea Fraser in *Aren't they lovely? An Introduction* first performed in 1991 at the American Fine Arts, Co., New York published in *Andrea Fraser*, Museum der Moderne Salzburg Mönchsberg, United States, 2006.

11 On one of Vanessa Beecroft's earlier performances where non professional models were used in Chin, D 'Models of fashion' in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Volume 20, Number 3, MIT PRESS, September 1998, pp. 22–25, viewed on 4 October, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/25691>.

12 Van Mechelen, M 2009, 'The tête-à-tête of performance in fashion and art', in Brand, J & Teunissen, J (eds), *Fashion and imagination: about clothes and art*, ArtEZ Press, d'jonge Hond, Arnhem, pp. 104–115.

Music continues. Lights on. You will step up to the table. Stand in the centre. Walk around a bit. Smile, laugh, do what you want. Follow the music. Lights off.

Exit (multiple)

Repeat.

#2

Walk into the dining room. Ask as many tables as possible if they want some wine.

Exit 1

Take the basket of bread to the table.

Exit 2

Bring the menu around to show the specials to each table.

Exit 3

Offer each table still or sparkling water.

Exit 4

Take the customers orders.

Exit 5, 6, 7

Deliver food (entrees) to each table.

Exit 8, 9, 10

Clear the entrees.

Exit 11, 12, 13

Replenish cutlery / serviettes.

Exit 14, 15, 16

Deliver mains to each table.

Exit 17, 18, 19

Deliver dessert, replace cutlery, clear etc and or coffee or tea.

Exit 20+

Stage

Enter 1

Walk in and precisely place shoes for the model on the podium.

Exit 1

Enter 2

Walk in and stand on the podium. It will rotate.

Enter 3

Walk in with first look. Dress model slowly and precisely in first look. Ensure it is sitting properly. Take your time but please don't take a lifetime.

Exit 3

Podium does one rotation. Do not move.

Enter 4—repeat for all looks

Model remains.

A woman who wears flashy clothes to be noticed could wear the shadow of the clothes and be invisible... There are the editors who only wear black, shrinking away in the landscape, and the ones who dress to redress the rest of the world.¹³

13 Spindler, A. *Viktor & Rolf: Haute Couture Book*, Groninger Museum, Netherlands, p. 10.