

**Valeria Pukhovitskaya**

Art & Design School at Higher School of Economics, Moscow

### **Fashion & Politics: transformations & mediations of identity in Russia since 2014**

In this research, I would discuss how fashion designers' personal views on identity have been transforming and how their works mediate their views both explicitly and implicitly.

The object is fashion items and their representation in media created and curated by local fashion designers in Moscow, Arkhangelsk Region and Tatarstan. The selection criteria for fashion designers are deep involvement in the production process and a small scale of production. The subject does not embrace mass production clothes, works of renowned designers with an established audience and clothes with an evident political statement.

The subject of the research is transformations and mediations of identity in vestimentary items. The differences in approaches to understanding identity can be traced in fashion designers' works: vestimentary items are a mediatizing identity to an increasing extent.

The research oversees the period from 2014: it was the year of the beginning of the discussion on national identity, which provoked re-defining approaches to understanding the notion of identity.

I group the questions into three sections:

1.) Defining the scale and tendencies of change in approaches and perception of identity

Which fashion projects emerged since 2014 when notions of identity were being redefined?

In which ways the political discourse influenced fashion designers?

2.) Fashion designers' understanding of political discourse: identity aspect

How fashion designers define the concept of the Political?

Which terms and concepts do they use to describe their outlook?

What are the sources of forming their concept of the Political?

How the Political and identity correlate, according to the fashion designers words?

Which aims do fashion designers invest in their works? Do they want to build communities, united with shared ideas?

Which terms and notions do fashion designers use to describe their «ideal consumer»?

3.) Influence of political discourse on designers' creative process

How fashion designers articulate current changes in political discourse?

How the transformation of the discourse affects the creative work of designers?

I'm basing my research on the theoretical works of a renowned researcher of nationalism, Benedict Anderson and a critical theorist, postcolonialist Homi K. Bhabha.

The empirical base is the results of my own research: interview analysis and content analysis of works' descriptions and visual method of analysing media publications and works.

I'm planning to interview the panel of fashion designers from 3 regions of Russia (not more than 5 from each region) in Autumn 2019. In Autumn 2020 I'm planning to reiterate interviewing to track the transformation of their understanding of identity and to verify the received data.

I'm planning to analyse the media publications via formalised parameters such as format, genre, objectives of the publications etc. I'm planning to analyse the works (collections) via such formalised parameters as colour, fabric, size, product matrix, applied technologies and references etc. The researcher's subjective perception of the works is minimized by analysing transformations of subjective designers' imagination of notions, authors' descriptions, and interpretations.

I suppose that the transformations of identity understanding can be seen through works of fashion designers and their impulse to transformation was the start of the discussion on national identity and self-determination in 2014.