

УДК 687.1:792.2:008

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/facs-2025-6-50>**Yanina ZHUKOVA***Lecturer of the Department of Management and Finance, Ukrainian State University of Science and Technology, ESI «Ukrainian State University of Chemical Technology», Nauky Avenue, 8, Dnipro, Ukraine, 49000***ORCID:** 0000-0001-5021-9623

To cite this article: Zhukova, Ya. (2025). Teatralizatsiia fashion-show yak semiotychna systema: ohliad naukovykh pidkhodiv [Theatricalization of the fashion-show as a semiotic system: an overview of scientific approaches]. *Fine Art and Culture Studies*, 6, 397–402 doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/facs-2025-6-50>

THEATRICALIZATION OF THE FASHION-SHOW AS A SEMIOTIC SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES

The article is dedicated to a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of theatricalization in contemporary fashion-shows through the prism of semiotic theory. The aim of the article is to investigate how the integration of theatricalization transforms the fashion-show from a commercial presentation into a multilayered artistic text that generates cultural meanings and intensifies communication. It is argued that theatricalization creates a unique semiosphere (following Y. Lotman) – a closed communicative space where every element functions as a sign within an interconnected system. This system not only presents clothing, footwear, accessories, and jewelry but also constructs narrative, emotional experience, and cultural codes. Based on a synthesis of classical works by R. Barthes on fashion as language and contemporary studies of performance (F. Granata, M. Boucher, C. Evans), the article examines in detail four key semiotic subsystems of the theatricalized fashion-show, which are in constant dialogical interaction. First, scenography as a semiotic field: the show's space (location, runway architecture, light, sound, color, special effects) is analyzed as a powerful intertextual sign that sets the primary codes for perceiving the collection and forms the event's mythologeme (A. Rocamora). Second, the model's body as an active sign-performer: the focus is on the performativity of the body, where gait, facial expressions, plasticity, gesture, and interaction with space serve as non-verbal codes that transmit the character, concept of the collection, and the brand's socio-cultural positions (A. Goncharova, O. Buvalets). Third, clothing within the context of stage action: it is demonstrated that the theatrical context radically alters the semiotic status of clothing, allowing it to be used as a hyperbolized, grotesque, or metaphorical sign to express an artistic, social, or political idea, moving far beyond its utilitarian function (O. Medvid). Fourth, the spectator as a participant in semiosis: the fashion-show is considered a ritual and interactive practice where the audience, being involved in the action through mechanisms of invitation, immersiveness, and direct communication, becomes a co-author of the meaning-making process, and the event itself functions as a tool for legitimizing the brand and forming a community (J. Entwistle). The article concludes that theatricalization is a powerful tool for semiotic enhancement and complication of communication. It multiplies the codes for "reading," activates intertextual connections with creative industries and the relevant socio-cultural context, and transforms communication into an emotionally charged ritual. Thus, the fashion-show establishes itself not merely as a format for presenting clothing, footwear, accessories, and jewelry, but as an independent synthetic form of contemporary culture, which actively produces relevant meanings, cultural images, and identities. The research is based on a critical analysis and synthesis of scholarly works by Ukrainian (O. Buvalets, L. Shevchenko, O. Medvid, A. Goncharova) and international authors, ensuring a comprehensive view of the phenomenon. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the systematic unification of semiotic and performative paradigms for the analysis of the fashion-show, as well as in identifying gaps for future research, particularly regarding the influence of digital formats and neuroscientific aspects of perceiving the theatricalized fashion-show. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the comprehensive semiotic analysis of the theatricalization of the fashion-show, which is for the first time considered as an integral communicative system with four interconnected subsystems. The article synthesizes international and domestic sources, and also identifies gaps for further research in the field of digital and comparative semiotics of fashion-show.

Key words: theatricalization, fashion-show, semiotics, creative industries, cultural code, communication.

Яніна ЖУКОВА

викладачка кафедри менеджменту та фінансів, УДУНТ ННІ Український державний хіміко-технологічний університет, просп. Науки, 8, м. Дніпро, Україна, 49000

ORCID: 0000-0001-5021-9623

Бібліографічний опис статті: Жукова, Я. (2025). Театралізація fashion-show як семіотична система: огляд наукових підходів. *Fine Art and Culture Studies*, 6, 397–402, doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/facs-2025-6-50>

ТЕАТРАЛІЗАЦІЯ FASHION-SHOW ЯК СЕМІОТИЧНА СИСТЕМА: ОГЛЯД НАУКОВИХ ПІДХОДІВ

Стаття присвячена комплексному аналізу феномену театралізації сучасного fashion-show через призму семіотичної теорії. Мета статті – дослідити, як інтеграція театралізації трансформує fashion-show з комерційної презентації в багаторівневий художній текст, що генерує культурні значення та інтенсифікує комунікацію. Аргументується, що театралізація створює унікальну семіосферу (за Ю. Лотманом) – замкнутий комунікативний простір, де кожен елемент функціонує як знак у взаємопов'язаній системі. Ця система не лише презентує одяг, взуття, аксесуари та ювелірні вироби, а й конструює наратив, емоційний досвід та культурні коди. На основі синтезу класичних праць Р. Барта про моду як мову та сучасних досліджень перформансу (Ф. Гранта, М. Буше, К. Еванс) стаття детально розглядає чотири ключові семіотичні підсистеми театралізованого fashion-show, що перебувають у постійному діалогічній взаємодії. По-перше, сценографія як семіотичне поле: простір показу (локація, архітектура подіуму, світло, звук, кольори, спецефекти) аналізується як потужний інтертекстуальний знак, що задає первинні коди для сприйняття колекції та формує міфологему події (А. Рокамора). По-друге, тіло моделі як активний знак-виконавець: акцент робиться на перформативності тіла, де хода, міміка, пластика, жест та взаємодія з простором виступають невербальними кодами, що транслюють характер, концепцію колекції та соціокультурні позиції бренду (А. Гончарова, О. Бувалець). По-третє, одяг у контексті сценічного дійства: доводиться, що театральний контекст радикально змінює семіотичний статус одягу, дозволяючи використовувати його як гіперболізований, гротескний або метафоричний знак для вираження художньої, соціальної чи політичної ідеї, виходячи далеко за рамки утилітарної функції (О. Медвідь). По-четверте, глядач як учасник семіозису: fashion-show розглядається як ритуальна та інтерактивна практика, де аудиторія, будучи включеною в дійство через механізми запрошення, імерсивності та прямої комунікації, стає співавтором процесу творення значення, а сама подія функціонує як інструмент легітимації бренду та формування спільноти (Дж. Ентвісл). У статті робиться висновок, що театралізація є потужним інструментом семіотичного посилення та ускладнення комунікації. Вона множить коди для «зчитування», активує інтертекстуальні зв'язки з креативними індустріями та актуальним соціокультурним контекстом, а також перетворює комунікацію на емоційно навантажений ритуал. Таким чином, fashion-show утверджує себе не просто як формат презентації одягу, взуття, аксесуарів та ювелірних прикрас, а як самостійна синтетична форма сучасної культури, що активно продукує актуальні смисли, культурні образи та ідентичності. Дослідження базується на критичному аналізі та синтезі наукових праць українських (О. Бувалець, Л. Шевченко, О. Медвідь, А. Гончарова) та міжнародних авторів, що забезпечує комплексне бачення феномену. Наукова новизна роботи полягає у системному об'єднанні семіотичної та перформативної парадигм для аналізу fashion-show, а також у виокремленні прогалін для майбутніх досліджень, зокрема щодо впливу цифрових форматів та нейронаукових аспектів сприйняття театралізованого fashion-show. Наукова новизна роботи полягає в комплексному семіотичному аналізі fashion-show, що вперше розглядається як цілісна комунікативна система з театралізації чотирма взаємопов'язаними підсистемами. У статті синтезовано міжнародні та вітчизняні джерела, а також виокремлено прогаліни для подальших досліджень у галузі цифрової та компаративної семіотики fashion-show.

Ключові слова: театралізація, fashion-show, семіотика, креативні індустрії, культурний код, комунікація.

Statement of the Problem. In light of the communicative challenges of the digital era, the study of the theatricalization of the fashion-show through the prism of semiotics is driven by the need for an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon of contemporary culture, as it lies at the intersection of creative industries, commerce, communication, and social practice. Considering the context and the fashion industry's transition to a new stage of

its historical development, which demands a new analytical toolkit capable of revealing new, profound mechanisms of transformation and influence, the semiotic approach offers precisely such a perspective.

To date, there exists a significant number of fragmented studies: the semiotics of fashion is examined separately (Barthes, 1990; Goncharova, 2019), while the phenomenon of performance and theatricality is treated in isolation (Granata, 2017;

Skliarenko, 2016). However, there is a lack of comprehensive works that would systematically integrate these approaches specifically for the analysis of the fashion-show as a single object. Therefore, there is a need to consolidate interdisciplinary knowledge. The relevance of this review lies in bridging this gap through a synthesis of theories, which allows for the construction of a holistic model of the fashion-show as a semiotic-performative system.

Analysis of Scholarly Literature. The review of scholarly literature reveals three principal paradigms in the study of the fashion-show.

The Semiotic Paradigm (originating from R. Barthes) treats fashion as a system of signs, an approach further developed in domestic scholarship on costume analysis and brand communication strategies.

The Performative Paradigm and studies of spectacle (C. Evans, F. Granata, J. Entwistle) focus on the event, the body, and the economy of aesthetic labour, interpreting the show as an act.

The Paradigm of Theatricalization (M. Boucher, O. Buvalets, L. Shevchenko) directly analyses the evolution of the show into a total stage performance, examining its scenography, direction, and interaction with space (A. Rocamora).

The analysed sources highlight a trend towards synthesizing these approaches and contextualizing the fashion-show within the media environment. However, a research gap remains for studies that consider the theatricalized fashion-show as an *integrated semiotic-performative system*, where all elements (space, body, clothing, spectator) function in constant dialogical interaction. It is precisely this gap that defines the scientific novelty of the present article, which aims at a comprehensive analysis of such a system.

The aim of the article is to investigate how the integration of theatricalization transforms the fashion-show from a commercial presentation into a multi-layered artistic text that generates cultural meanings and intensifies communication.

Presentation of the Main Material. Contemporary fashion has definitively moved beyond the utilitarian production of clothing, transforming into a powerful industry of producing images, identities, and meanings. The fashion-show, as a key point of presentation, has evolved from a closed commercial viewing into a large-scale public event that aspires to the status of an independent artistic

work. As scholars note (Shevchenko, 2019; Evans, 2001), the fashion-show has acquired the features of a total theatricalized act, synthesizing stage art, choreography, video art, and sound design. Theatricalized fashion-shows are increasingly becoming a platform for expressing urgent social topics: inclusivity, sustainability, gender equality, political protest. The method of theatricalization and its complex toolkit (dramaturgy, artistic vision, location, scenography, models, music, lighting, video, special effects, broadcast, etc.) make such messages particularly convincing and emotionally charged. Semiotic analysis makes it possible to understand which linguistic and visual codes are used to construct these new narratives and to measure their cultural effectiveness. In this context, theatricalization acts as a key mechanism for transforming and immersing the fashion-show into a total artistic text, while the semiotic approach provides the toolkit for decoding its meanings.

As noted by Ukrainian researcher O. Buvalets, «the stagecraft of the fashion show as a theatrical event is defined by the presence of dramaturgy, direction, and artistic design, which transforms the runway into a stage» (Buvalets, 2017, p. 13). This transformation can be viewed through the prism of Y. Lotman's (2000) concept of the semiosphere – a closed space where meanings function and are generated. Within such a semiosphere of the fashion-show, every element – from the location to the model's movement – becomes a sign in an interconnected system.

The fundamental basis for the semiotic analysis of fashion was laid by R. Barthes, who viewed it as a language, a system of signs, where clothing acts as a carrier of social and cultural codes (Barthes, 1990). However, theatricalization elevates this system to a new level. As M. Boucher remarks, «the fashion show is a visual spectacle where the semiotic codes of clothing are amplified and interwoven with the codes of performance, music, and space» (Boucher, 2018, p. 495). Thus, the fashion-show becomes not merely a sum of individual costume-signs, but a complex narrative text. This text is constructed through direction, script, and dramaturgy that unfold over time, creating an emotional arc from start to finish (Shevchenko, 2019).

Scenography acts as the central semiotic field. The show's location is not a neutral background; it carries powerful intertextual weight. A. Rocamora demonstrates how urban space (a palace, factory,

museum, etc.) becomes an active participant in communication, adding meanings of heritage, urbanism, or elitism to the collection (Rocamora, 2009). The stage space, according to C. Evans, is «an arena in which the dream and authority of fashion is constructed» (Evans, 2001, p. 78), and the architecture of the runway (straight path, labyrinth, circle) sets the mode of perception – from classical to ritualistic. Light, sound, and decor form a syntagmatic chain that amplifies the core message.

The model's body in the theatricalized show transforms from a passive mannequin into an active sign-performer. F. Granata, in her work on experimental fashion, emphasizes that through grotesquery, carnivalesque, and performative plasticity, the body becomes a carrier of alternative meanings that evoke aesthetic shock in the viewer (Granata, 2017). Ukrainian researcher A. Goncharova examines visual communication in the art of costume precisely through semiotic analysis, where the body, dressed in a garment, becomes a single sign «read» within the context of the stage situation (Goncharova, 2019). The walk, facial expressions, gestures are non-verbal codes that convey the character of the collection: from mechanical impassivity as a sign of conceptualism to individual emotionality as a sign of humanization (Mears, 2011). Makeup and hairstyle act as connotative signs that complement the primary meaning.

Clothing itself, within the context of theatricalization, acquires new meanings. It becomes contextualized, and the same garment on a runway in an opera house versus in a showroom will signify differently. The theatrical lens allows designers such as Alexander McQueen or John Galliano to use clothing as a hyperbolized or grotesque sign, creating not a utilitarian product but a powerful artistic image (Granata, 2017).

O. Medvid, in her study of fashion show semiotics, notes that for luxury brands, theatricalization becomes a key communication strategy for building myth and exclusive image (Medvid, 2021).

An important element of the show's semiotic system is the spectator. Theatricalization transforms them from a passive observer into a participant in a ritual. As J. Entwistle shows, attending a fashion-show constitutes aesthetic labour and the performance of a specific social role (Entwistle, 2009). The spectator, by receiving an invitation (a sign of status), becomes a witness-initiate, whose presence legitimizes the meanings being

created on stage. Participants in the fashion-show as an event collectively form a stylistic community that deciphers the encoded messages. Interactive techniques (models walking among the audience, direct eye contact) blur the boundaries of the semiosphere, making the audience co-authors of the communicative act.

Therefore, the theatricalization of the fashion-show from a semiotic standpoint is a strategy for enhancing and complicating communication through the multiplication of codes (vestimentary, performative, spatial, musical, etc.) and their integration into a single narrative. It shifts fashion from the utilitarian plane into the plane of cultural experience and meaning-making, activating intertextual links with creative industries and the social context. As O. Buvaiets summarizes, «the synthesis of arts in the space of the contemporary fashion-show with the dominant theatrical aspect ensures its perception as an integral artistic phenomenon» (Buvaiets, 2020, p. 48).

The globalization of media and the dominance of social networks (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) have transformed the fashion-show into transnational viral content. Clips of shows, highlight moments, and backstage videos spread instantly worldwide, becoming languages of global dialogue. Semiotics allows for the deconstruction of this flow of images, revealing the strategies for encoding messages aimed at diverse target audiences (Boucher, 2018; Medvid, 2021). In these conditions, understanding how meanings (brand codes, social messages, aesthetic ideals) are constructed and transmitted precisely through theatricalized forms becomes crucial for the analysis of contemporary culture. Further research makes sense to develop in the direction of analysing the specifics of digital theatricalized fashion-shows and their semiotics within the conditions of a hypermedia environment.

Conclusions. The conducted analysis demonstrates that the theatricalization of the contemporary fashion-show is a complex system-generating mechanism that transforms it into an independent synthetic art form with its own semiotic structure. Viewing the phenomenon through a synthesis of semiotic theory and performance studies allows for several fundamental generalizations.

Theatricalization creates from the fashion-show an integral semiosphere – a closed communicative

space where meanings are generated, transmitted, and interpreted. Within this semiosphere, the traditional language of fashion is radically complicated. To it are added powerful parallel codes: scenographic, performative, musical, and choreographic. Thus, the fashion-show becomes a polycode text, where clothing, footwear, accessories, and jewelry are merely one, albeit central, element in the palette of signs. This transformation confirms the thesis of the show's evolution from presentation to a total act.

The analysis of the identified subsystems – space, body, clothing, and audience – reveals their close dialogic interaction. Scenography not only decorates the event but also acts as a meta-signifier, setting the primary code for perceiving the collection. In this context, the model's body ceases to be a passive mannequin and becomes an active sign-performer. Its plasticity, walk, and facial expressions are non-verbal messages that either harmonize with or intentionally contrast the space and clothing, creating tension and meaning. Clothing loses its utilitarian nature within this theatrical system, becoming an image-concept, a hyperbolized sign of an artistic or social idea.

A key feature of the theatricalized fashion-show as a semiotic system is its ritualistic and interactive nature. The show constructs not only images but also specific relationships with the audience. The spectator performs the role of an initiated participant, and the event itself functions as a ritual legitimizing the new status of the brand and collection. Interactive techniques blur the clear boundary between stage and hall, shifting the spectator from the position of observer to that of an immersive co-participant in semiosis. This fully corresponds to the logic of contemporary art, focused on experience and participation.

The scientific novelty of the presented review lies precisely in the systematic synthesis of two

powerful analytical paradigms – semiotics and performance theory – for the study of the fashion-show. This allowed not merely stating the fact of theatricalization, but revealing the internal structure of this phenomenon, its communicative mechanics, and cultural functions. The integration of domestic research into the context of global theory is especially important, opening prospects for further comparative studies.

However, the conducted analysis also reveals obvious gaps in the scholarly discourse, which form directions for future research. This includes, first and foremost, the digital transformation of the semiotics of the fashion-show, requiring a deep analysis of how the mechanisms of theatricalization and sign-creation function in digital show formats, virtual reality, or hybrid events. Secondly, the question of the economics of semiotic theatricality, specifically, how an expensive theatrical production converts into concrete commercial results, and how to measure the effectiveness of this sign capital. Research into the local specifics of theatricalization to identify cultural-identification codes in shows of different regions, as well as studies on the inclusion of models with diverse body types into the theatricalized narrative as a semiotic shift, also remain relevant.

Therefore, the theatricalization of the fashion-show constitutes a powerful semiotic system that acts as an engine transforming fashion from a sphere of producing things into a sphere of producing meanings, experiences, and cultural identities. This system functions according to the logic of synthesizing arts, ritual, and communication, making each show a unique act of contemporary visual culture. Further study of this phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach combining the tools of cultural studies, art history, economics, and creative industries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Boucher M. Fashion as a Visual Spectacle: Semiotics of the Runway Show // *Fashion Theory*. 2018. Vol. 22, No. 4–5. P. 491–513. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174118X15284313786041>
2. Бувалець О. О. Еволюція поняття «театралізація» в культурному просторі масових видовищ: історія та сучасність. *Культура України*. 2012. №38. С. 141–149.
3. Бувалець О. О. Погляд на поняття «театралізація» крізь призму сучасності: варіативність змісту як прояв часу / О. О. Бувалець // *Культура та інформаційне суспільство XXI століття : матеріали всеукр. наук.-теорет. конф. молодих учених, м.Харків, 19–20 квітня 2012 р.* Харків, ХДАК, 2012. С. 204–205.
4. Entwistle, J. *The aesthetic economy of fashion: Markets and value in clothing and modelling*. Oxford : Berg Publishers, 2009. 200 p.

5. Evans, C. *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. 334 p.
6. Гончарова А. С. Візуальна комунікація в мистецтві костюма: семіотичний аналіз. Актуальні проблеми історії, теорії та практики художньої культури. 2019. Вип. 44. С. 213–220.
7. Granata, F. (2017). *Experimental Fashion: Performance Art, Carnival and the Grotesque Body*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.
8. Медвідь О. В. Семіотика модного показу: комунікаційні стратегії брендів люкс. Вісник КНУКіМ. Серія: Мистецтвознавство. 2021. Вип. 45. С. 124–130. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31866/2410-1915.45.2021.238349>
9. Mears, A. *Pricing beauty: The making of a fashion model*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011.
10. Рокамора А. Fashion as a Medium of the City: The Paris Catwalk [«Мода як медіум міста: Паризький подіум»] // *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion* / за ред. Е. Шінкл. Лондон : I.B. Tauris, 2009. С. 43–55.
11. Шевченко Л. М. Еволюція fashion-показу: від комерційного презентування до тотального театралізованого дійства. *Мистецтвознавчі записки*. 2019. № 36. С. 273–279.

REFERENCES:

1. Boucher, M. (2018). Fashion as a visual spectacle: Semiotics of the runway show. *Fashion Theory*, 22(4–5), 491–513 [In English]. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174118X15284313786041>
2. Buvalets, O. O. (2012). Evoliutsiia poniattya «teatralizatsiia» v kulturnomu prostori masovykh vydivyshch: istoriia ta suchasnist [The evolution of the concept of “theatricalization” in the cultural space of mass spectacles: history and modernity]. *Kultura Ukrainy – Culture of Ukraine*, 38, 141–149 [In Ukrainian].
3. Buvalets, O. O. (2012). Pohliad na poniattia «teatralizatsiia» kriz pryzmu suchasnosti: variatyvnist zmistu yak proiav chasu [A view on the concept of “theatricalization” through the prism of modernity: Variability of content as a manifestation of time]. In *Kultura ta informatsiine suspilstvo XXI stolittia [Culture and information society of the XXI century]: Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian scientific and theoretical conference of young scientists* (pp. 204–205). Kharkiv State Academy of Culture [in Ukrainian].
4. Entwistle, J. (2009). *The aesthetic economy of fashion: Markets and value in clothing and modelling*. Berg Publishers.
5. Evans, C. (2001). *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
6. Goncharova, A.S. (2019). Viziualna komunikatsiia v mystetstvi kostiума: semiotychnyi analiz [Visual communication in the art of costume: A semiotic analysis]. *Aktualni problemy istorii, teorii ta praktyky khudozhnoi kultury – Actual Problems of History, Theory and Practice of Artistic Culture*, (44), 213–220 [in Ukrainian].
7. Granata, F. (2017). *Experimental Fashion: Performance Art, Carnival and the Grotesque Body*. London: I.B. Tauris [in English].
8. Medvid, O.V. (2021). Semiotyka modnoho pokazu: komunikatsiini stratehii brendiv liuks [Semiotics of a fashion show: Communication strategies of luxury brands]. *Visnyk KNUKіM. Seriia: Mystetstvoznnavstvo [Bulletin of KNUKіM. Series: Art Studies]*, (45), 124–130. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2410-1915.45.2021.238349> [in Ukrainian].
9. Mears, A. (2011). *Pricing beauty: The making of a fashion model [Otsinka krasyy: Stvorennia modeli]*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press [in English].
10. Rocamora, A. (2009). Fashion as a medium of the city: The Paris catwalk [Moda yak mediuum mista: Paryzkyi podium]. In E. Shinkle (Ed.), *Fashion as photograph: Viewing and reviewing images of fashion* (pp. 43–55). I.B. Tauris [in English].
11. Shevchenko, L. M. (2019). Evoliutsiia fashion-pokazu: vid komertsiiinoho prezentuvannia do totalnoho teatralizovanoho diistva [The evolution of the fashion show: From commercial presentation to total theatrical performance]. *Mystetstvoznnavchi zapysky*, (36), 273–279 [in English].

Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 13.11.2025

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 10.12.2025

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 31.12.2025