Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts 2015, vol. XVII
ISSN 1641-9278

Magdalena Samborska
Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź
m.samba@poczta.onet.pl

INTOLERABLE UGLINESS. A TURN IN EUROPEAN FASHION AS A RESULT OF CONFRONTATION WITH JAPANESE AESTHETICS

Abstract: The article is devoted to the impact of Japanese aesthetics on European fashion. In the first part, I will present an outline of Japonism, a trend in 19th century fashion. It brought no significant changes then. The designers just used decorative ornaments originating in Japan or fabrics imported from Asia. At the turn of the century, influenced by reforms in clothing and inspired by the Japanese kimono, the feminine silhouette was radically modified. In the 1920s, these innovations were abandoned. The main part of the paper concerns Japanese designers who appeared on the Paris fashion scene in the second half of the 20th century. Kenzo Takada and Hanae Mori adapted to the European canons, introducing an aura of exoticism. It was only the emergence of such avant-garde designers as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, and Yohji Yamamoto, that was a turning point in fashion. It involved a confrontation between the Western aesthetics and the Japanese concept of beauty. The Japanese designers proposed a style completely different from what Europe was accustomed to. It featured asymmetrical, loose, often monochromatic clothing, sometimes without traditional trimmings, frayed. In time, the initial shock they provoked turned into a shift in the understanding of what clothing can be.

Keywords: Japanese fashion, Issey Miyake, Yohij Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, fashion deconstruction, wabi-sabi, japonism

The title of the paper makes a reference to the well-known quote by Oscar Wilde: “Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.”[1] While not contesting the motivation for the changes in fashion

[1] Quoted from the essay “The Philosophy of Dress” published in *The New-York Tribune* in 1885. The essay was discovered in 2012 and first published in book form in 2013 by John Cooper.

suggested by the famous dandy, we must admit that they are its essence. Changeability is the crux of fashion, its nature and its very substance. It is virtually impossible to present all the sartorial revolutions that took place over the past centuries in such a short text. Undoubtedly, one of the most influential figures in the history of fashion was Charles Frederick Worth. The legendary tailor of Empress Eugénie and the royal courts dominated the second half of the 19th century. He transformed the craft of dressmaking, turning it into an art of creating individual items of clothing signed with the author's name.[2] This would not have been possible if not for the emergence of the Parisian *haute couture* – luxury tailoring, creating hand-finished clothes sewn of expensive fabrics. The designs conceived by the *haute couture* tailors were imitated throughout the world. Thus, fashion became synonymous with the French.

The dominance of the French capital in the world of fashion dates back to the 17th century, when the court of Louis XIV became the arbiter of style, and the French finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert supported fashion as an important sector of the economy. The creation of *haute couture* in 1858 sealed the position of Paris as the capital of fashion. That is why the Japanese designers who pursued international careers in the 20th century had to confront the French fashion scene. Kenzo Takada and Issey Miyake showed their collections there for the first time in the 1970s. Yohij Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo debuted in Paris in 1981. Miyake, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto were hailed as the Japanese avant-garde, and their designs were considered "a revolution in the Western understanding of body and clothing."[3] In this paper, I will present the history of the Japanese influences on the European fashion, from the often superficial borrowings from the Orient in the 19th century, through the revolutionary change of the female figure in the early 20th century, until the breakthrough confrontation between the Western aesthetics and the Japanese concept of beauty in the 1980s. At that time, both cultures had a chance to look at each other as if in a mirror, and the effects of that scrutiny generated an impetus for fashion for the next decade.

***

European history knows several cases of the fascination with the Orient and the exotic. In the 18th century, Chinese themes were popular at the royal courts. In the 1880s, a new trend emerged, known as Japonism. In 1854, after more than

---

2 Charles Frederick Worth was the first designer to attach labels with his name to the clothes he made.

3 G. Lehnert, *A History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, Konemann, Köln 2000, p. 88.

two centuries of isolation, Japan was forced under the pressure from the military to establish diplomatic relations with America and Europe, and the establishment of commercial and cultural relations soon followed. The Europeans had the opportunity to admire the artworks and the achievements of Japanese craftsmen at the international exhibitions in London in 1862 and in Paris in 1867. China, woodcuts, textiles, and lacquerware became goods sought-after by collectors and a source of inspiration for the European artists and designers of the period. The influence of that distant Asian country also became apparent in the field of fashion. Miki Iwagami, a lecturer at the Sugino Fashion College, points out that "The Japanese kimono itself was worn as an exotic at-home gown, and the kimono fabric was used in the making of western dresses. (...) Japanese motifs were also adapted and applied to European textiles."[4] These motifs included flowers, particularly chrysanthemums, as well as birds, fish, and even Japanese family crests. Charles Frederick Worth introduced asymmetric arrangement of patterns on dresses, unprecedented in our culture.

Thus, Japonism in 19th century fashion was limited to the use of decorative motifs, but the form of official clothing remained unchanged. This resulted from the centuries-old tradition of European women's clothing, favouring a close fit of the upper part of the garment to the body. The waist had to be pinched tight by a corset contrasting with the voluminous skirt. It was only the clothing reform initiated in the early 20th century and the rejection of corsets that allowed for the introduction of forms somewhat reminiscent of the Japanese kimono.

In 1909, guest performances of the Ballets Russes electrified Paris, causing an Oriental fever. The term “Orient” was used in different eras as a reference to the countries of the Middle and Far East, North Africa, or the Caucasus. The fascination with the Orient did not always involve any profound knowledge of the distant countries. Rather, it had to do with the European fantasies triggered by the foreign, the distant, and the mysterious. The fad for all things Oriental in the early 20th century inspired the eclectic style of Paul Poiret, who introduced harem trousers, tunics, kimono, and turbans into European dress. They were costumes from different geographical areas. The designer combined various inspirations to create "his own Orient," at the same time revolutionizing fashion. His innovation lies in the fact that he created a completely new line of clothing – he did not accentuate the waist and he definitively rejected the corset. The new line alluded to either the Empire style (the dress cut under the bust line) or the Japanese kimono. Allusions to the kimono form had been present in his

---

[4] Ed. A. Fukai, *Fashion: The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute: a History from the 18th to the 20th Century*, Taschen, Köln 2002, p. 155.

designs since 1903. It was thanks to him that loose coats and capes with wide sleeves became the typical attire on Parisian streets. The designer himself did not quite understand the construction of the kimono, as the fashion historian, director of the Fashion Institute in Kyoto, Akiko Fukai observes: "when Poiret used the word 'kimono' in his autobiography, he did not necessarily grasp the distinction between Japanese and Chinese culture and clothes. In any case he seems to have used the word in its most general sense, to indicate something influenced by East Asia or Japan. The most important point was the rectangular cut that followed the warp and weft of the fabric and the unconfined garment that resulted form it."[5]

Poiret's designs are characterized by splendid embroidery, vivid colours, and rich patterns. Madeleine Vionnet, who also alluded to the traditional Japanese costume, chose minimalism. It was in that minimalism that fashion historians see the influence of Japanese kimonos. Vionnet shunned patterned fabrics and embroidery. The only decorative elements on her geometrical designs were folds of soft, naturally draped, bias-cut fabric. The bias cut, a trademark of the designer, may be regarded as "inspired as much by the principle of minimizing fabric waste as with the kimono. Vionnet's bias-cut dresses valued the materiality and the form of the two-dimensional fabric."[6]

It is evident that at the beginning of the 20th century, the feminine silhouette changed fundamentally. The designers turned toward naturalness and comfort. Stripped of the corset, the body was wrapped in fabrics. The clothes were no longer suspended on the waist, but on the shoulders. The relationship between the body and the garment began to resemble that which we find in the Japanese kimono. However, in the 1920s, Japan lost its novelty. The western designers returned to emphasizing the waist and the curves of the female body. The next meeting of the two cultures did not occur until the 1970s.

***

Kenzo Takada was the first Asian fashion designer in Paris. He organized his debut fashion show in his small boutique *Jungle Jap* in 1970. The designer stood out because he was from outside the continent, the European tradition, and the fashion system. As it turned out, this was his strength, which – combined with his diligence – made him successful. From the very beginning, his style was characterized by a bold merger of prints, colours, and folklore motifs. The

---

5 A. Fukai, Japonism in Fashion, http://www.kci.or.jp/research/dresstudy/pdf/e_Fukai_Japonism_in_Fashion.pdf (29 July 2015).

6 T.S. Milhaupt, Kimono: *A Modern History*, Reaktion Books, London 2014, p. 168.

designer effortlessly combined elements from Africa, the Orient, Scandinavia, or South America. This was not revolutionary, but it fit within the oriental-folk trend of that era. Yuniya Kawamura, Professor of Sociology at the Fashion Institute of Technology at the State University of New York, writes somewhat caustically: "I locate Kenzo's unprecedented success as a Japanese designer and as an enterprise in his attempt to assimilate completely into the French fashion community. He is often described as the least Japanese and most Parisian of all Japanese designers who live and become successful in Paris as if to compensate the loss of his Japanese identity."[7]

A similar strategy of adapting to the current conventions of fashion can be noticed in Hanae Mori, who in 1977 was the first Asian woman admitted to the federation of *haute couture* designers. Her designs introduced a little orientality into Paris fashion. However, as professor of literature Barbara Vinken wrote about her, "to be more Parisian than the Parisians was her secret ideal."[8]

Kenzo and Mori taught Paris that there are designers outside of Europe. Their success paved the way for other Japanese who did not conform to the Western standards and canons of beauty. Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo "deconstructed existing rules of clothing and reconstructed their own interpretation of what fashion is and what fashion can be."[9] Before they arrived in Paris, they had set up their own businesses and achieved success in their home country.

***

Issey Miyake presented his work in Paris in 1973. He was the first Japanese designer who promoted the silhouette completely divergent from the tastes and conventions to which Europe was accustomed. Throughout his career, the recurring theme is the idea referred to as "a piece of cloth". It is one piece of fabric which could cover or wrap up the whole figure. This concept stems from the construction of the kimono. This traditional Japanese attire is wrapped around the body. It is made with simple geometric forms, without cuts fitting it to the body. "In Western fashion," Barbara Vinken explains, "fabric is cut and pinned on the body size. A perfect dress fits like a glove."[10]

---

7 Y. Kawamura, *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Bloomsburg Academic, New York 2003, p. 118.

8 B. Vinken, "The Empire Designs Back" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty. 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, London 2010, p. 34.

9 Y. Kawamura, op. cit., p. 92.

10 B. Vinken, "The Empire Designs" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty...*, op. cit., p. 27.

Unlike Western clothes, the kimono allows some loose fit, some extra space for the body. Fashion critics point out the difference in the Japanese designers' approach to the relationship between the body and the clothes. The space between them, called *ma*, is not a meaningless void. For Miyake, the design was associated not only with the awareness of what is visible on the outside, but what is felt inside the clothes. For him, designing started already at the stage of manufacturing the fabric, which is why he collaborated with technologists and fabric designers, and experimented with unconventional materials that had never been used in the world of fashion, such as paper, rattan, plastic, or bamboo.

In the late 1980s, the main subjects of the designer's experiments were synthetic fibre and pleating. Historically, the technique of pleating dates back to ancient Egypt. It was revived in the late 19th and early 20th century in the work of the Italian designer Mariano Fortuna, who created silk dresses inspired by the Greek *chiton*. Miyake, on the other hand, developed a technique for producing garments with finely pleated polyester. Instead of the conventional method of shaping the texture of the fabric and then cutting it, he reversed the sequence of actions. It is the finished garment that is pleated. The forms are first cut in a size two and a half to three times larger than usual, as the form is reduced during the process of pleating.

Bonnie English, the historian of art and design, justifies the experiments with the fabrics characteristic of Japanese designers with philosophical considerations. She observes that "In Japan, fashion designers are closely aligned to the textiles that inspire their work, collaborating closely with textile designers to create new fabrics which develop from technological processes that subtly imitate the essence of individualized handcrafted surface. The Japanese have heightened respect for materials, whether natural or synthetic, partly based on Japan's indigenous Shinto religion, which centres on worship of, and communion with, the spirits of nature."[11]

The permanently creased polyester has become a trademark of the designer. This lightweight material created many aesthetic opportunities. Along the stitching, it forms an edge or a bulge, lending to the garment geometric and sculptural shapes that provoked some to compare Miyake's designs to analytical Cubism and African sculpture.[12]

In 1996-1999, Miyake collaborated with many visual artists, developing the prints on the pleated clothes. The images of the human body from their works

---

11 B. English, *Japanese Fashion Designers: The Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2011, p. 3.

12 Based on H. Koda, *Extreme Body: The Body Transformed*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2001, p. 92

were printed in different ways. Nobuyoshi Araki's photographic self-portrait was printed on a creased dress. Once the dress is put on, the material stretches, creating cracks and distortions in the image. The image of a woman on another dress by the same author was printed before pleating the flat knitwear. Therefore, the printed image appears only when the dress is worn. The images of the magnified dolls' eyes in Tim Hawkinson's sculpture printed on a pleated jumpsuit seem alive, "shrinking" and "expanding" with the wearer's movements.

Experiments with synthetic fabric yielded more than just interesting visual effects. In 1993, the designer launched the line "Pleats Please". These are simple pleated forms which can be machine washed, which do not crease in suitcases, and which adapt to the user's body. This is universal fashion that transcends age, gender, and the characteristics of the user's figure.

The idea of "a piece of cloth" appeared in the work of Miyake in the late 1970s. An extension of this idea is A-POC – an innovative technology and a clothing line, which he developed together with the textile engineer Dai Fujiwara in 1999. This is a new method for constructing clothing without using thread and needle. Susannah Frankel describes this technology as follows: "A-POC, in its first incarnation, consisted of long tubes of double-knit fabric with yarns linked in fine mesh of chain stitches, all produced on computer-controlled loom. The shape of a dress or skirt, for example, was embedded into fabric, leaving the wearer to remove their clothes from the tube by cutting along the marked lines (...) When the garments were cut free, the bottom, stretchier layer of mesh would shrink and stop the fabric from unravelling."[13] In this way, the designer gives the buyer an opportunity to participate in the creative process.

Miyake combined contradictory elements: the versatility and functionality of the clothes and artistic aspirations. Western culture believes in the superiority of fine art over decorative or functional art. For the Japanese, such hierarchy does not exist; as art historian Patricia Mears points out, "seemingly insignificant objects can be imbued with high levels of intellectual and spiritual importance."[14] For this reason, the practical fashion created by Miyake also works as contemporary art. For example, the A-POC clothing line was presented in museums as an installation. The clothes emerged from tubes of fabric hanging from the ceiling, partly cut out of knitted forms, enveloping mannequins. Pleated colourful clothes laid flat on the floor or hung on walls resembled abstract geometric paintings.

---

13 S. Frankel "Flatness" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty...*, op. cit., p. 81.

14 P. Mears, "Formalism and Revolution" [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion Now*, Yale University Press, New York 2010, p. 152.

***

Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo had an established position in Japan when they decided to debut in Paris in 1981. The fashion they proposed was different from European standards. Their clothes were monochromatic, asymmetrical, spacious, giving the impression of being worn and faded. Today, ripped jeans or faded t-shits are available in shops, but in the early 1980s such style caused shock. "Most designers of that time proposed only stilettos, lacquered leather, and stuffed shoulders,"[15] wrote Yann Kerlau, a long-time employee of Yves Saint Laurent and Gucci. The clothes presented on the catwalks were carefully finished, colourful and sexy, emphasizing the feminine figure. The models in the fashion shows by Kawakubo and Yamamoto, with no make-up, or with deathly pale faces and shaved heads, wearing "mourning" dresses, seemed to be an insult to the western canons of fashion. The reviewers did not have the vocabulary to describe the new phenomenon. Japan was associated with the explosion of the atomic bomb, therefore, such phrases as "Hiroshima chic," "post-atomic ragged look," or "somehow apocalyptic" were used.[16] Some sensed the possibility of a refreshing change. Patricia Mears wrote: "Kawakubo and Yamamoto were presenting a new kind of fashion that, while not conventional, was nonetheless worth of commentary."[17] However, the interpretation of the otherness of the aesthetics proposed by the Japanese designers required the knowledge of the traditions from which they hailed.

Yamamoto and Kawakubo initiated the "beggar look" in fashion. Their frayed, ripped clothes "were seen as shaking the very foundations of European fashion." Similar visual effects had already appeared in the 1970s, worn by the London punks. The style of that youth movement was associated with the rebellion against the establishment. In contrast to punk rockers, however, Yamamoto and Kawakubo's clothes "were as carefully made and beautifully executed as any high-end ready-to-wear object in the West."[18] Besides, the apparent wear-and-tear of the clothes promoted by the Japanese designers has a different provenance than the costumes of the British rebellious youth. It does not result from the rejection of the consumer culture, but rather from the eastern philosophical tradition. In Japan, the concept of beauty is combined with the awareness of transience and ephemerality. Describing this attitude, Krystyna Wilkoszewska points out that "The basis of Japanese beauty is not finished perfection, but instability manifested in the phases of growth and

---

15 Y. Kerlau, *Sekrety mody*, Bukowy Las, Wrocław 2014, p. 271.

16 I. Loschek, *When Clothes Become Fashion: Design and Innovation Systems*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York 2009, p. 104.

17 P. Mears, *Formalism and Revolution*, [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion*..., op. cit., p. 159.

18 Ibid. p. 188.

phases of disappearance, each of which is incomplete in nature. The condition of beauty is not immortalising it, but rather suggesting its fragility and transience."[19] Interpreting the sophisticated beauty of the designs by Yamamoto and Kawakubo, the fashion critics refer to the concept of *wabi-sabi* from Zen philosophy. It is beauty tinged with sadness and melancholy, stemming from the awareness of transience. *Wabi-sabi* ideas can be seen in the paraphernalia used in the tea ceremony, and in the rooms designed for this purpose. They are expected to be modest, devoid of any ostentation, coated with a patina, old and imperfect. This is the essence of refined beauty.

The designer most radical in challenging the idea of beauty recognized in the West seems to be Rei Kawakubo. The often-quoted statement by the designer, "what is beautiful does not have to be pretty,"[20] may be considered the credo of her work. Ever since her legendary 1982 black sweater, which seemed to have been eaten by moths, each of her collections has been a challenge to the canons of beauty and the principles of garment construction. The designer does not have any education in tailoring, which is important, as her creative freedom is not hampered by any learned rules. In 1997, her collection "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body", alluding to padded garments well known from the history of European fashion, consisted of clothes surprisingly deforming the body. In past centuries, padding and wires mounted inside the clothes served to emphasize sexual attributes. Thus, in women's garments, hips or buttocks were accentuated by padding and sophisticated structures. Exaggerating the sartorial oddities from previous centuries, Kawakubo put padding in unusual places. In her designs, grotesque bumps and growths appear on the backs, bellies and necks of the models.

Explaining her concept, the designer talked about her anger with the boring clothes available on the market. “This led me to design bodies this time, instead of clothes.”[21] This is the characteristic approach of the three avant-garde Japanese designers to the body/costume relationship. Their designs create a volume around the body, sometimes taking surprising forms. They create cocoon shapes, optically enlarging the person’s bulk. This is due to the previously described approach to the construction of clothes. “Western dressmaking took the natural shape of the human body as a given, and its objective was to produce a solution to the challenge of contouring a three-dimensional form using two-dimensional fabric. By contrast, Japanese designers’ creations shrouded the body: they used huge swathes of fabric to wrap and envelop the human form (...) Their garments concealed the curvaceous bosom, narrow waist and natural

---

19 K. Wilkoszewska, *Estetyka japońska*, Universitas, Kraków 2003, p. 10.

20 G. France, *Comme Des Garçons*, Universe/Vendome, New York 1998, p. 3.

21 V. Steele, “Is Japan still the Future?” op. cit., [in:] V. Steele (ed.), *Japan Fashion*, p. 163.

proportions of the female shape."[22] These clothes do not accentuate the sexual attributes of the body. The kimono referenced by the Japanese designers does not emphasize the bust, the waist is hidden by the *obi* belt, and the feminine figure has a tapered form. The men's kimono is structurally similar to that of the women; they differ in colour and ornaments. It is, therefore, in tradition that we should seek the Japanese penchant for androgenic ideals that challenge the European canons. Yuniya Kawamura observes that in Europe, "clothing is a major symbol of gender that allows other people to immediately discover the individual's biological sex. The three Japanese designers challenged the normative gender specificity characteristic of the western clothes,"[23] Designing for women, Yamamoto and Kawakubo often incorporate elements of men's clothing. Yamamoto often invites female models to present his collection of men's fashion. The name of the brand of Rei Kawakubo – *Comme des Garçons* [like boys] – is sometimes interpreted as a kind of feminist manifesto. It can be concluded that Japanese fashion reflects the turn in social life, the change in the position of women, who have become independent, freed from the need to be sexy for men.

Japanese aesthetics inspired artists and designers in Europe in the 19th century, without interfering with the conventions developed over the centuries in our culture. In the second half of the 20th century, there was a much more important turn in contemporary fashion. Referring to their own cultural tradition and technological innovation, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo presented a different way of thinking about the dress, the body, and sexuality. This shook the fashion system whose centre was Paris. The new emerging important fashion centres included Tokyo.

In the late 1980s, the aesthetics developed by Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto found followers in Antwerp. Young Belgian designers, such as Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, or Martin Margiela, showed unfinished, crude edges of the fabrics and unconventional design solutions, revealing the usually hidden structure of the clothes. These elements had been known from the works of the Japanese designers, but in the 1990s people began to link them with the concept of deconstruction, attributing the introduction of this strategy in fashion to Margiela. Deconstruction has become a widely used method of dressmaking, both in the case of *pręt-à-porter* clothes and *haute couture*. Currently, it is an indispensable element of the language of fashion of the twenty first century. We do not always remember that we owe it to the Japanese avant-garde.

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

---

22 S. Frankel "Flatness" [in:] A. Fukai (ed.), *Future Beauty*..., op. cit., p. 63.
23 Y. Kawamura, op. cit., p. 132.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Bonnie (2011) *Japanese Fashion Designers: The Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Grand France (1998) *Comme Des Garçons*, New York: Universe/Vendome.

Fukai Akiko (2002) *Fashion: The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute: a History from the 18th to the 20th Century*, Köln: Taschen.

Fukai Akiko (2010) *Future Beauty. 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, London: Barbican Center.

Fukai Akiko, "Japonism in Fashion", http://www.kci.or.jp/research/dresstudy/pdf/e_Fukai_Japonism_in_Fashion.pdf

Kawamura Yuniya (2003) *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Kerlau Yann (2014) *Sekrety mody*, Wrocław: Bukowy Las.

Koda Harold (2001) *Extreme Body: The Body Transformed*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Lehnert Gertrud (2000) *A History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, Köln: Könemann.

Loschek Ingrid (2009) *When Clothes Become Fashion: Design and Innovation Systems*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Milhaupt Terry Satsuki (2014) *Kimono: a Modern History*, London: Reaktion Books.

Steele Valerie (2010) *Japan Fashion Now*, New York: Yale University Press.

Wilkoszewska Krystyna (2003) *Estetyka japońska*, Kraków: Universitas.

ZWROT W MODZIE EUROPEJSKIEJ JAKO REZULTAT KONFRONTACJI Z ESTETYKĄ JAPOŃSKĄ

Tekst dotyczy wpływu estetyki japońskiej na modę europejską. W pierwszej części przedstawiam szkicowo trend japonizmu w modzie XIX wieku. Nie nastąpiły wówczas znaczące zmiany. Projektanci ograniczyli się do wprowadzania elementów dekoracyjnych zaczerpniętych z Japonii lub wykorzystania tkanin sprowadzanych z Azji. Na przełomie wieków pod wpływem reform ubioru oraz inspiracji japońskim kimonem sylwetka kobieca uległa radykalnej modyfikacji. W latach 20. XX wieku zarzucono te innowacje. Zasadnicza część tekstu dotyczy japońskich projektantów, którzy pojawili się na paryskiej scenie mody w drugiej połowie XX wieku. Kenzo Takada i Hanae Mori dostosowali się do obowiązujących w Europie kanonów wprowadzając aurę egzotyzmu. Dopiero pojawienie się awangardowych projektantów Isseya Miyake, Rei Kawakubo i Yohji Yamamoto stało się punktem zwrotnym w modzie. Nastąpiła wówczas konfrontacja este-

tyki Zachodu z japońską koncepcją piękna. Japończycy zaproponowali styl całkowicie odmienny od tego, do jakiego przyzwyczajona była Europa. Były to ubiory asymetryczne, luźne, często monochromatyczne, czasem pozbawione tradycyjnych wykończeń, strzępiące się. Początkowy szok jaki wywołały z czasem przerodził się w zwrot w rozumieniu tego, czym może być ubiór.

Słowa kluczowe: moda japońska, Issey Miyake, Yohij Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, dekonstrukcja mody, wabi-sabi, japonizm