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East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon: The construction of national identity in norwegian fashion photography

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East o' the sun and west o' the moon:

The construction of National identity in Norwegian fashion photography



By Anne-Britt Kjoensberg

Bachelor of Communications Honours

This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Communications Photomedia (Honours)

Faculty of Education and Arts

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

This exegesis compliments my photographic project which was to produce a body of work that explores Norwegian identity through fashion using myths and iconography to communicate Norwegian-ness, and depicts the Norwegian lifestyle in a surprising and humorous way. My aim has been to find out if there is any distinctive aesthetic approach/style that constructs, defines and reproduces Norwegian identity, and if Norwegian fashion photography is being influenced by the resurgence of interest in Norwegian style.

I have looked at how humans use fashion as a technique to construct various identities rather than a mask that covers the self and how fashion is communicated and mediated by photography. The consumer reconstructs the rules and codes of fashion in their social environment and culture. These rules reflect place and identity, including national identity, which in turn is often associated with nature/landscape and language. Images of idealised landscape can work to construct/reinforce identity in fashion photography if it can be read as uniquely symbolising the nation, e.g fjords, mountains and alpine forests.

In connection with national identity and fashion I have looked at the ethnic dress especially *bunaden* (Norwegian national costume) which is used to communicate geographical associations. *Bunaden* and knitting have become a big part of the Norwegian fashion industry. The bunad represents a national treasure, it has become popular for females and males to own a *bunad* that tells where they come from, and is used as a type of garment that reflects the wearer's identity and geographical affiliation. Knitting is a very old Norwegian folk tradition used as a national symbol of solidarity, and it has become fashionable for Norwegians, but also a signifier of Nordic style to others. Both the *bunad* and knitting are today used as fashion, and Norwegian designers are influenced by them, using the patterns and outline/constructions.

Fashion in Norway is influenced by various myths about Norwegian-ness. The literature reveals that there is a distinctive aesthetic approach/style that constructs national identity, using myths about old Norwegian traditions, lifestyle and landscape, and also urban culture. This style has also been combined with international trends which makes it an effect of globalization.

I have taken fashion images using elements from the Norwegian lifestyle, myths and beliefs and combined them with modern trends. I have also used landscape that can be read as uniquely symbolising the nation, e.g mountains, alpine forests and elements from nature that are typical of Norway, like the elk dog, and plants like *mose*. I have also used clothes made by Norwegian fashion designers who are influenced by the Norwegian style and national costume: Moods of Norway and Ann Kristin Dahle.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person expect where due reference is made in the text; or*
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Introduction

Glaciers. Vikings. Walrus. Norway is like some ancient saga come to life. Norway is a ruggedly beautiful country of mountains, fjords and glaciers. The 'Land of the Midnight Sun' has delightfully long summer days, pleasantly low-key cities, unspoiled fishing villages and rich historic sites that include Viking ships and medieval stave churches. Norway prizes its stunning natural wonders and retains a robust frontier character unusual in Europe. It's not all frozen tundra, either. The temperate south includes rolling farmlands, enchanted forests and sunny beaches as well as the dramatic Western Fjords

(Lonely Planet, n.d).

Norway was under Danish rule until 1814, and under Swedish rule until 1905, so it is a fairly new country. After this period the rise of the Norwegian romantic nationalism movement in art and culture emerged, as the Norwegians sought to define and express a distinct national character (Erikson, 1993, p. 9). Norway is a very small country, and the need to maintain old traditions and its natural heritage is very important for Norwegians because the world we live in today is becoming more and more globalized. In the face of globalisation the desire to show where we come from using signs has increased.

The aim of this project was to produce a body of photographic work that explores Norwegian identity through fashion images using myths and iconography to communicate Norwegian-ness, and depict the Norwegian lifestyle in a surprising and humorous way. A secondary aim was to find out if there is any distinctive aesthetic approach/style that constructs, defines and reproduces Norwegian identity, and if Norwegian fashion photography is being influenced by the resurgence of interest in Norwegian style.

There's been a great deal of work done on identity in the visual arts (in my case photography). Many studies have been written on nationalist political movements, the sense of nationality and the personal and cultural feeling of belonging to a nation (Anderson, 1991). There has also been much written about Norwegian style and traditions, but little if any on Norwegian fashion photography. I will also state that fashion photography in general is a topic about which little theoretical work has been written.

Although there is a growing interest in images which use a traditional style in Norwegian fashion magazines, my research has not uncovered any theoretical studies done in this area, which makes my research project significant. I have come to be interested in this topic as a result of looking at "the Norwegian style" in design and after living in Australia for three years,

the interest in maintaining Norwegian traditions and Norwegian identity has become more important to me.

This exegesis focuses on aspects I needed to consider to inform my photographic project: What fashion's function is; how humans use fashion; how fashion is communicated and mediated by photography; Norwegian identity and how it is expressed in myths, iconography and fashion.

In order to examine how national identity can be constructed in fashion images, I have divided the exegesis into three theoretical areas of study: fashion and fashion photography; Norwegian identity, language, landscape/nature and national dress; and how Norwegian fashion reproduces and mythologises Norwegian-ness.

I begin by reviewing the literature on fashion, in particular using Jennifer Craik's book *The Face of Fashion* (1994) as a main source. In this section I will look at some of the clothes I have used in my images and see how they work with Craik's arguments that fashion is a technique used to construct various identities.

Secondly, I will look at literature on national identity, specifically using Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) as a starting point. National identity is often associated with nature and landscape, so I will examine the literature on landscape as national identity and how we picture place. I will examine the literature to find out how images of idealised landscape can work to construct/reinforce Norwegian identity in fashion photography.

Then I will examine literature on the ethnic and national dress, and how world fashion has been influenced by national dress and vice versa. I will look closely at *bunaden* (the traditional folk dress in Norway) and how *bunaden* is used to communicate national identity and geographical associations. Furthermore, I will examine how *bunaden* is used today as a fashion statement.

Finally, I will examine literature on Norwegian-ness and Norwegian fashion, and how fashion in Norway is influenced by the Norwegian style. This is in order to determine if Norwegian fashion photography has a distinctive aesthetic approach/style that constructs and reproduces national identity. I have not found any literature on Norwegian fashion photography so I can see now that my work will fit in and fill this gap.

For my creative project I have taken fashion images using elements from the Norwegian lifestyle and beliefs (for example taking images of someone who is presented as *hulderfolket* - invisible creatures who lived inside mountains and were believed to capture adults and steal babies -and other characters from Norwegian folk-tales and legends). I have also used landscape

that can be read as uniquely symbolising the nation, e.g mountains, alpine forests and elements from nature that are typical of Norway, like the elk dog, and plants like “mose”. I have also used clothes made by Norwegian fashion designers who are influenced by the Norwegian style and national costume: Moods of Norway and Ann Kristin Dahle.

Fashion as a technology of the self

Clothes have been used as a form of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, sexual availability, and locality, class, wealth and group connection for many centuries (Craik, 1994, p. 5).

Craik (1994) suggests that fashion is often seen as a superficial gloss. She refutes this claim that fashion is a mask that covers the self. Instead, she examines the idea of clothes as a technology to construct the body, which is seen as symbolically coded rather than a natural “given”.

Fashion constitutes the arrangement of clothes and the adornment of the body to display certain body techniques and to highlight relations between the body and its social habitus. The body is not a given, but actively constructed through how it is used and projected. Clothes are an index of codes of display, restraint, self-control and affect-transformation

(Elias cited in Craik, 1994, p.10).

Craik uses notions of habitus and disposition (second nature) to explain fashion as a technology of the body- a mark of the ‘civilized’ body which must emit signs. In this case, habitus refers to the everyday, the situation, actions, procedures, demands, practices which go along with a certain kind of life, and the ways in which an individual is positioned within the social world (gender, class, race, nation etc). Rather than masking the body and identity, fashion pronounces gender, class, ethnicity and of more relevance to my case; national geographical affiliations.

In my images I have used clothes that emit signs about Norway. For example all Moods of Norway embroideries and prints are influenced by Norwegian history and traditions. This could be a 17th century rose painting on the collar of a shirt or a replica of an antique Norwegian wooden carving. They have also focused on telling a story with their clothes. “Like a girls bathroom at prom, the moods of Norway superwear is filled with good stories for all to share” (Moods of Norway, n.d). For example, all Moods of Norway suit jackets come with two separate buttons on the right front pocket. “This is part of the old Kautokeino Laplander’s tradition, where the buttons reflect marital status. The square button indicates that you are married, while the circle button indicates that you are willing and able” (Moods of Norway, n.d).

As cited, Craik argues that clothes construct a personal or social habitus. “Fashion behaviour invokes rules and codes of dress, adornment and gesture to articulate attributes of the social body” (Craik, 1994, p. 225). We only understand the meaning of a circular button by belonging to the culture in which it is used as a signifier. The dress codes enable people to use fashion as a

means to signify clearly the various identities they play. "Our habitus of clothing creates a 'face' which positively constructs an identity rather than disguising a 'natural' body or 'real' identity" (Craig, 1994, p. 5). For example people dress in clothes that are associated with sport to signal that they are 'sporty' or, in connection to national identity, people dress in the Norwegian national costume to signal geographical association, nationality and national pride.

I consider that one of the reasons that Moods Of Norway has become so popular is that it gives people the opportunity to signal Norwegian identity, because national identity is more important during a time of increased globalisation. The underlying concept of the brand has been to create different design wear for people's different moods. For the clothing collection, there are four different moods. The "street moods of Norway" is inspired by the fashion for board sports and happy festival living. Clear colors and clean prints which are influenced by traditional Norwegian living, tell tales from Norwegian inventions to farm animals. The clothes are mostly meant for young people, but because they use elements from old Norwegian traditions, they get attention from the older generation as well. I would say that Craig's arguments that fashion is used to signal various identities fits with what Moods of Norway is trying to do; to give people the opportunity to signal Norwegian-ness.

"The 'life' of the body is played out through the technical arrangement of clothes, adornment and gesture"(Craig, 1994, p.1). Women wear their bodies through their clothes; the body is a canvas, and the clothes are like body paint. Fashion is a technology of civility, that is, sanctioned codes of conduct in practices of self-formation and self-presentation (Craig, 1994, p. 5). Fashion statements appear to mark a moment, but the fashioned body is never secure or fixed. The body is constantly re-clothed and re-fashioned in accordance with changing arrangements of the self.

Fashion can be considered as an elaborate body technique through which a range of personal and social statements can be articulated. The AnnK label exemplifies that the fashioned body is never secure or fixed. In her all-black collection she has created associations with Goth rock, punk and Norwegian national costumes. I consider that the collection caught many eyes because she is influenced by the national costumes, which are at the moment very popular garments to own. She gives people the opportunity to wear the national costume as a fashion instead of a tradition or to "perform" nationality using fashionable clothes.

Judith Butler (1993) suggests that:

the sexualising of the body, and as a result the production of identity, occurs through what she calls 'the reiteration of norms'. This means that bodies don't come to mean naturally; rather they are produced as meaningful by discourses

which divide them up and evaluate them (female breasts are sexualised in a particular way, as are men's stomach muscles, for instance). At the same time people respond to these discourses by 'performing' their bodies 'in time' with these discourses

(Cited in Shiratos & Yell, 2000, p. 100).

We perform or mis-perform our gender, and therefore we can say that we perform our identity with clothes to signal what we want people to believe we are. In connection to my topic you can say that we not only perform gender, but nationality is performed. You can say that people perform the good citizen by wearing the national costume or performing loyalty to the nation. "The effect of the combination of discursive evaluations and imperatives produces what we might call performances of subjectivity" (Shiratos & Yell, 2000, p. 100). In other words, rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender should be seen as a fluid variable which shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times. Gender is a performance; it's what you do at particular times, rather than an essential quality. I consider that national identity can be seen as a performance as well.

Photographing the fashionable body

Fashion photography is devoted to displaying clothing and other fashion items.

Ramamurthy (2004) argues convincingly that fashion photography is influenced by all other genres in photography, in its attempts to always find something new, different, glamorous and often exotic. In my images I have tried to present Norway as 'exotic' for non-Norwegians.

The fashion design industry changes so fast that as a fashion photographer you have to come up with new ideas to present the product, and the photographer can get away with images which are excessively violent, pornographic and outrageous (Ramamurthy, 2004, p.221). One of the main arguments is that: "We live in a world dominated by lifestyle culture, whose conventions are neither fixed nor purposeful" (Craik, cited in Ramamurthy, 2004, p.223). In other words, fashion is always changing, and therefore the conventions of fashion photography have to change. I have tried to use conventions of national identity, more specifically Norwegian identity. I have combined traditional and modern instead of showing traditional versus modern.

Ramamurthy examines the representation of gender in images, which in fashion photography has been particularly targeted with regard to discussions on the construction of femininity and gender representation. Women have been presented as sex objects, and men objects of desire and subjects of fashion photography. As Berger states: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (cited in Ramamurthy, 2004, p.223). I agree with this, but it is worth mentioning that it has changed, and we can also say that: women look at men, and men watch themselves being looked at. In my images I have treated men as objects of desire as well as the women to underline that gender representations are changing.

Fashion photography is a language of signs, symbols and iconography that non-verbally communicates meanings and invokes desires in individuals and groups. "Fashion photography provokes viewers and consumers into confirming their own identity through structures of desire" (Craik, 1994, p. 114). In my images non-Norwegians may see something they want, but Norwegians would see their culturally constructed selves. I consider that my images tell stories that connote Norwegian traditions, lifestyle and inventions, that Norwegians easily understand because it's a part of our daily life. For example having a Barbie using the one-time-use bbq, serving *Grandiosa* [Norwegian pre-made pizza], eating brown cheese, making wool and the paper clip which is a Norwegian invention. I think that for non-Norwegians these signs are not so clear and therefore the clothes get more important.

Craik (1994, p.7) also states that Western fashion turns around the concept of newness or

nowness. Western fashion is deemed to be instilled with the aesthetic expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society. Moods of Norway play with ideas, desires and beliefs that are old and make them new. Success in fashion depends on the ability to recognise and translate 'the incipient and inarticulate tastes which are taking shape in the fashion consuming public' (Craik, 1994, p.) First, fashion is approved by others, then copied because of competition. Finally it is replaced as it becomes commonplace and has ceased to fulfill its function of being distinctive. Western fashion designers make regular pronouncements of new styles, few of which are popularised; the promotion of a new style is a huge gamble that frequently is rejected by consumers. A style is radically modified either by high street manufactures or by consumers themselves through the media or our social circle. We can see this in fashionable variations of the bunaden, which can be seen as a technique for keeping traditions alive.

Sturken and Cartwright (2001) talk about the meanings of advertising images, arguing that the meaning does not exist within images, but is produced at the moment that they are consumed by and circulated among viewers. It's the social environment that creates the codes.

It is the participants in a culture who gives meaning to people, objects, and events... It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them—how we represent them---that we give them a meaning

(Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p.4).

In my images I have produced moments that can signal Norwegian-ness, but it is worth mentioning that for non-Norwegians they will have other meanings. If viewers don't know that the brown-cheese is Norwegian, they would not understand what I am trying to express. My intention has been to make Norwegian viewers see that I have constructed Norwegian identity rather than informing non-Norwegian about the Norwegian identity.

Rosetta Brooks (1992) argues that "the mass circulation of photographic images emphasises our awareness of self-image, and establishes a relationship between the particular and the typical" (Brookes, 1992, p.18). When we look at images we establish who we are and most importantly who we are not. "Fashion advertising, in particular, is seen as negating the purity of the photographic image. We see the typical instead of the unique moment or event" (Brookes, 1992, p.17). I don't agree with this statement. In my images I have tried to show the lifestyle and everyday life as a unique moment instead of representing aspects of Norwegian-ness as typical. I have used the typical but presented it in a novel way, because fashion photography has to be novel (Ramamurthy, 2004, p. 223). I have made new slants on old stories.

Richard Avedon, one of the most well-known fashion photographers showed models full of emotion, smiling, laughing, and, many times, in action. Avedon became well known for his stylistically innovative fashion work, often set in vivid and surprising locales with interesting, often humorous poses or 'stories'. He did not conform to the standard technique of taking fashion photographs, where models stood emotionless and seemingly indifferent to the camera. In my images I have tried to capture something similar, creating an 'action scene' that depicts the Norwegian lifestyle in a surprising and humorous way to engage viewers, like the farm boy and girl driving a tractor, the couple having a bbq with the one-time-use Barbie, and the Viking.

Norwegian language and imagined identity

The following definitions give a starting point to understand what we imagine as Norwegian identity, which is relevant to my project. This is to develop an understanding of national identity, and the influence that nationalism has had on the Norwegian society.

Anderson (1991) examines the creation and global spread of the imagined communities of nationality, and gives a historical background for the emergence of nationalism, its development, evolution, and reception.

Anderson's definition of the nation is:

It is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow- members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion

(Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

Anderson defines nation as an imagined community, and therefore national identity embraces myths and beliefs about this community.

In Ross Poole's essay 'National identity and citizenship', he gives an overview of the debates about nationalism and national identity. Poole's main argument is that national identity is constituted through language and culture.

We discover our nation- as we discover ourselves- in the bed time stories we are told, the songs which put us to sleep, the games we play as children, the heroes we are taught to admire and the enemies we come to tear and detest. As we learn to speak, we find ourselves spoken for

(Poole, 2003, p. 275).

Poole suggests that we make sense of our world from the stories we are told. From these stories we construct a sense of who we are and, more importantly, who we are not.

By contrast, Anderson argues that imagining the nation started with the script-language, and the print-language, which created new forms of imagined communities. When people could exchange and communicate, they became aware of the millions of people who spoke the same language as them, which connected them together and formed a nation. Both Poole and Anderson argue that the language is central to the construction of national identity, but Anderson focuses on the written language and Poole on oral language.

By looking at Norway's history we can see that the language is a major part of how Norwegians became aware of identity, and folk-tales have played an important role in forming the nation. Most of the folk stories are not true, but they tell us a great deal about beliefs, values, lifestyle, and also clothing, like the national dress. An example of this is the book *Samlede Eventyr* [Collected adventures] (1953) where the authors Asbjørnsen and Moe went around the Norwegian countryside, collecting and recording tales from "the common man". Old fairy tales were plentiful, but serious writers and "literate people" had little interest in them until the national romantic period in the first half of the 19th century. Asbjørnsen and Moe put much emphasis on recording Norwegian tales, which is important, because Norway was under Danish rule until 1814, and then under Swedish rule until 1905. Thus, they wanted to find the "Norwegian people's spirit". This is why they would use a lot of old Norwegian words and phrases in their writing. (The official written language in Norway at the time was Danish). Likewise the book *Scandinavian legends and folk-tales* (1966) gives examples of folk-tales and legends that are typically Scandinavian, and it tells an enormous amount about the lifestyle and land. Both these books have used illustrations that reflect the stories, and show examples of what people thought the characters from the folk stories looked like.

The main characters that are typical of the Norwegian folk-tales are: *trolls*, *tusser* (small creatures often called gnomes), *nøken* (the supernatural beings inhabiting waterfalls and rivers), *huldefolket* (invisible creatures who lived inside mountains and were believed to capture adults and steal babies), *haugfolk* (mound people), and *bergfolk* (hill people). When photographing Ann Kristin Dahle's clothes I have created an atmosphere that recalls the darker side of the Norwegian folk-tales. Her clothes are inspired by the national dress and gothic style so they are very dark and elegant. I have therefore presented the models as characters from the Norwegian folk-tales, beliefs and legends.

Today we still use elements taken the characters in folk-tales in images and advertisements, like cultural stereotypes/archetypes. An example of that is an image from an article in Norwegian magazine *Det Nye* (2005). The article is an interview with a female Norwegian sports-commentator. She has long blonde hair and blue eyes, and is dressed up as a princess from the Norwegian fairy-tales, to represent her as clean, beautiful, feminine and almost untouched. This illustrates Butler's notion that we perform different identities, and in this case the sports-commentator is performing a princess. This is done to reflect her personality and lifestyle. She says in the interview that she likes beautiful and traditional things and that she is a romantic. In my work I have tried to express Norwegian identity using the folk-tales as a central motif in the images in order to construct images that indicate the aspects of Norwegian-ness. I have used elements that can be associated with songs, art and characters from folk-tales. For example,

pastiche of Munch’s *Scream*, polar-bears, Vikings, heroes from Norwegian fairy-tails and music that can be seen as ‘national treasures’.

Picturing the land

Poole and Anderson talk a lot about the language and culture of lifestyle, but not that much about landscape and nature. The landscape is a part of the culture and nation and therefore a part of what we identify ourselves with. This is relevant to my topic where I will look at the popularity of using Norwegian traditional style in fashion photography, which in turn uses the landscape, nature and culture as signifieds of Norway; as part of a Norwegian iconography. Illustrations that are central to the Norwegian iconography, are paintings made during the national romantic period 1800-1850 in Norway. My intentions was to mix landscape and fashion, but the clothes some how had to be the main element in my images.

Jager (2003) examines the role of photographs of landscape and monuments in symbolizing, strengthening or sustaining the cohesion/unity of a nation, and how landscape images gain ideological significance. He argues convincingly that: "photographic images of landscape and monuments serve to communicate patriotic and nationalistic ideas if the subject represented could be deciphered as symbols of the nation" (Jager, 2003, p. 137). In Norway nature has been seen as representing the essence of Norwegian character. Through images of the Norwegian landscape, we remember and imagine the place as picturesque, referring to history and traditions. I agree with Jager's statement that photographs of landscape can be seen as a way of communicating nationalism if the landscape can be read as uniquely symbolic of the nation, e.g fjords, mountains and alpine forests. In some of my images I have used the landscape and nature to signal Norwegian-ness with intention; but almost all my images that are in landscape format and shot outside can show signifiers of Norway that I was not aware of because it's my country or second nature. When I started on the photographic production I decided to have at least one element that can be read as typical Norwegian, but I also picked a location that can communicate that the image was taken in Norway. For example I have used a lot of old buildings, fences made in a particular way, plants that only grow in Norway. I went to the national museum, botanic garden, and old farms that exemplified old traditions and lifestyle. One such place is where my father lives and where he has carried on the old tradition of farming from the 18th century.

From *bunaden* to *prêt-à-porter*

Eicher and Sumberg (1999) analyse ethnic dress and inquire as to whether ethnic and traditional always mean the same thing. They investigate if ethnic dress is disappearing and being replaced by world fashion as everyday dress. They assert that dress is often a significant visible mark of ethnicity, used to communicate identity of a group or individual among interacting groups of people. World fashion, garments, hairstyle and cosmetics allow people to convey to others that they are not members of an esoteric group and consequently open to communication with others. Some groups may insist on differentiating themselves visually through dress in order to communicate their actual or desired autonomy. "Wardrobes in many places contain both world fashion (jeans, t-shirts) and ethnic dress, allowing them [subjects] to adapt with ease to communicate effectively with others and establish their desired image as any given situation demands" (Eicher & Sumberg, 1999, p. 305).

To illustrate, I have looked at literature on the jewellery and metal used as accessories on the Norwegian national dress. The metal used is very important as part of the national dress today, but was originally used to protect the wearer from evil spirits through its reflective properties. This metal has become a fashionable item for many Norwegians, and is especially used by women to communicate signs of nationalism and cultural identity. An example of this is this quotation about Norwegian women who immigrated to America during the 19th century. "Immigrant women wanted to look like American women, but they also liked to wear a memento of home" (Gilbertson, 1999, p. 208). This is relevant to my topic because the world we live in today is becoming more and more globalized. The desire to show where we come from, using signs like clothing and jewellery, has increased. People want to 'perform' loyalty to the nation by wearing a memento of home.

Eicher and Sumberg state: "The terms "traditional" and "ethnic" imply non-fashionable-dress, dress that reflects the past, with slow change and few modernizing influences" (Eicher & Sumberg, 1999, p. 301). I do not agree with this statement, as ethnic dress has become a fashion in many countries. For example, *bunaden* (Norwegian national dress) has become a big part of the Norwegian fashion industry. The *bunads* of Norway represent a national treasure, and for most people the national dress is a type of garment that reflects the wearer's identity. Even though a number of people may choose a particular *bunad* for its appearance, I find after reading about it that most people want to wear a folk costume with which they have a geographical association. It is also worth mentioning that *bunaden* is connecting past to present, because it has been a major part of the history.

Because *bunaden* has become a fashion item, I use elements from the folk costume in my images to try to construct national identity. Therefore I have looked at some of the most well-known fashion designers in Norway at the moment, who has used the *bunad* as an inspiration. One of these designers is Ann Kristin Dahle whose clothes I have photographed. Her designs are inspired by the old traditional styles from Norway, where she uses a mix of the national costumes and the black, gothic style. Her design clearly shares symbols with the *bunad*, in the fabric she has used but also the construction. For example, she has designed a shirt that has the same form/outline as the shirts on the folk costumes.

To illustrate that *bunaden* has become a fashion item I have looked at an article from a Norwegian magazine, entitled '*Over stakk og stein*' [over dress and stone] (2005). In the article the journalist discusses the popularity of the national dress in Norway that has emerged over the last few years. The journalist interviewed 5 celebrities about their opinion on the national dress as a fashion item. What I found interesting in this article is that all the people who were interviewed say that they like the idea and appearance of the national dress, and even if they find it uncomfortable, they wear it because it gives a feeling of national identity. They also state that they want to wear the *bunad* that belongs to the place they come from, even if they actually don't like the appearance of that particular *bunad*. In the images they are all wearing national dresses from different states in Norway, and the background is from paintings of the Norwegian landscape with typical Norwegian animals e.g elk-dog, lynx etc.

Looking at Norwegian identity, knitting and the folk costumes are both symbols of Norwegian-ness. In the book *Nordic knitting* (1991), Susanne Pagodh talks about the history of knitting in Norway and examines the most famous knitting patterns. Knitting has a very old folk tradition in Norway and has been used as a national symbol of solidarity. For example, the red caps became a political statement during World War 2 used as a protest against the Germans. Today the old patterns have become fashionable for Norwegians but also seem exotic to others. This is a pertinent example of how national identity has been constructed through fashion or signifiers of Norwegian-ness used in fashion.

A princess on a polar bear: Norwegian-ness in fashion photography

Globalisation means that the borders between countries, nations and culture is being erased. Culture is converging from the different lands, and we can see a 'world culture' where many millions of people all over the world are connected to the same global symbolic systems, even though the local differences continue to be important (Eriksen, 1993).

In the article '*Globalisering og norsk identitet*' [Globalisation and Norwegian identity], Thomas Eriksen (2000) examines what is typically Norwegian in a multicultural world. He argues convincingly that because Norway is a very small country, Norwegian identity is becoming more and more important to Norwegians. He states that the symbols used to identify Norwegian identity are no longer typical of Norwegian-ness. Norway has traditionally been characterised by, nature, the old farmer and fishermen encapsulate Norwegian-ness, but this is no longer a fact. Norway has a very short history of urban culture, and people living in cities need to be a part of the Norwegian identity and therefore move the countryside ideals to the city. This is also related to the idea that if a country is less 'together' therefore it is more important for the people belonging to the nation to insist that the community has a lot in common.

Another reason for the interest in national identity or belonging to a nation is the fact that the world has become a smaller place because the population has increased. This can also be seen a chronic problem where our community is changing faster than the borders/map.

Erikson (2000) indicates that the only symbols that make Norwegian identity today are the language and being born in Norway. I do not agree with Eriksen's statement that these are the only symbols, arguing that visual iconography is central to recognition of national identity.

To explore a contrasting view to Eriksen I have looked at the book '*Grandiosa land*' which was made in connection with the celebration of 100 years of Norwegian independence. The book is a collection of articles written by celebrities, foreigners and ordinary Norwegians. It shows Norway from a different point of view, looking at today's myths about Norwegian lifestyle and Norwegians, using a humorous approach. Where other books define nature, history, folk-tales, Grieg and other national treasures as encapsulating Norwegian identity, '*Grandiosa land*' looks at what Norwegians would say characterises Norwegian-ness in 2005, such as drinking habits, looks, social behaviour and so on. In my images I have tried to show both the traditional but and the modern signs that communicate Norwegian-ness. I have mixed fashionable garments with old traditions; for example I have used rose painting which is originally a very old pattern used in furniture and kitchen wear as make-up.

What I find interesting is that most of the topics being discussed in 'Grandiosa land' involve products that don't have particularly Norwegian connotations. For example, in one of the articles the author talks about a frozen pre-made pizza (Grandiosa, as in the name of the book) that is produced in Norway and is very popular among young people. The pizza is seen as a typically Norwegian product, even if pizza originally comes from Italy. In contrast to Thomas Erikson's article, this book looks at lifestyle as Norwegian identity. In some of my images I have tried to show elements from the Norwegian lifestyle, like the pre-made pizza, the one-time-use bbq and parklife which is a big part of what Norwegians living in cities do during summer, get together with friends and sit in parks talking.

Erikson also argues that the national costume is no longer a way of expressing national identity, because a national dress should be a dress that is popular and often used. Therefore he means that jeans are more suited to be a national dress than the *bunaden* (Norwegian national costume). He wrote this article in 2000 and we can now see that this is happening. For example, Moods of Norway combine international trends with traditional Norwegian design and traditions. One of their designs are jeans with the word *Ola* written on the back. (In Norwegian, jeans are *Ola bukse* or *Ola* trousers). Moods of Norway are at the moment one of the most well-known fashion design companies in Norway, and they have been launching clothes all over the world. They use elements from the Norwegian national costumes to design everyday fashion. The company is based in the urban highlands of Norway. Different clothes for different moods is the underlying philosophy. All products are made by combining international trends with traditional Norwegian design and traditions. All products from Moods of Norway tell a story from Norway. They have also used things signaling Norwegian-ness in their images, using location where you see fjords, mountains and glaciers as background. They have also used models who have blonde hair and blue eyes, which is often associated with Norwegians, and the poses tell the viewer/consumer that something has happened or is about to happen. The stories that are told can connote Norwegian traditions and lifestyle. For example, one image is of someone chopping wood, which is a normal thing for Norwegians to do.

Arne&Carlos and Moods of Norway are the two most well known fashion design companies at the moment, and they have given Norwegian fashion design a lot of attention around the world.

They are inspired by the traditions of Scandinavian arts and crafts and the passion for knitting also shines through in their design. Drawing on their traditional Scandinavian influences and natural environment, they create visually striking designs infused with kitsch, humour and femininity

(Arne&Carlos, n.d).

In the images on their website taken by Bent Rene Synnevåg, they have used the Norwegian winter landscape as location and objects that are typically Norwegian, such as the kicksled. The

images tell a lot about the Norwegian lifestyle and landscape and, I argue construct a Norwegian identity that draws upon the past but presents a contemporary feel in a globalised world.

In my creative project I have done something similar to both Arne&Carlos and Moods of Norway, using Norwegian nature as location and elements that are associated with Norway, using kitsch and humour as themes. After this experience I have found out that it is easier to take images that use kitsch and humour using elements that are signifiers of Norwegian-ness that combine international with traditional. The reason for this is because we see the product as Norwegian, but understand that it is originally international. The glocalised elements (e.g pre-made pizza) is more humorous than the traditional "picture postcard" iconography.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have established in this exegesis that in order to construct national identity in fashion photography, the role of fashion behaviour and how images of fashion make meanings are important fields of investigation. Humans use fashion as a technique to construct various identities rather than a mask that covers the self and fashion is communicated and mediated by photography. The consumer reconstructs the rules and codes of fashion in their social environment and culture. Fashion is a technology of the body, which must emit signs.

These rules and codes of fashion also reflect place and identity, including national identity, which in turn is often associated with nature/landscape and language. The spoken and written language, landscape and national dress all have important roles in how we identify ourselves with the nation, and as the nation is an imagined community, therefore national identity constructs myths about this community.

I have looked at literature to find out how images of idealised landscape work to construct/reinforce national identity in fashion photography. I discovered that scenery could be associated with national identity if the photographs of landscape can be seen as a way of communicating nationalism and can be read as uniquely symbolising the nation, e.g fjords, mountains and alpine forests.

In connection with national identity and fashion I have looked the ethnic dress especially *bunaden* (Norwegian national costume) which is used to communicate geographical associations. I have examined literature on ethnic and national dress and found that dress is often a significant visible mark of ethnicity, used to communicate identity of a group or individual among interacting groups of people. Some groups may insist on differentiating themselves visually through dress in order to communicate their actual or desired autonomy. To illustrate this I found out from the literature that *bunaden* (Norwegian national dress) and knitting have become a big part of the Norwegian fashion industry. The *bunad* represents a national treasure. It has become popular for females and males to own a *bunad* that tells where they come from, and it is used as a type of garment that reflects the wearer's identity and geographical affiliation. Knitting is a very old Norwegian folk tradition used as a national symbol of solidarity, and it has become fashionable for Norwegians, but also seems exotic to others. Both the *bunad* and knitting are today used as fashion.

Finally, I have examined Norwegian identity, Norwegian fashion and fashion photography, and established that fashion in Norway is influenced by the Norwegian style through various myths

about Norwegian-ness. The literature reveals that there is a distinctive aesthetic approach/style that constructs national identity, using myths about old Norwegian traditions, lifestyle and landscape, and also urban culture. This style has also been combined with international trends which makes it an effect of globalization. In my photographic work I have combined traditional and international trends to communicate Norwegian identity using myths, iconography and lifestyle. I have used clothes from Moods of Norway and Ann Kristin Dahle which both clearly share symbols of the Norwegian style. I have also used elements that emit signs about Norway, and that can be reconstructed by the consumer as codes of Norwegian identity. These signs have been myths about Norwegians and the Norwegian lifestyle, but also landscape/nature are signs I have used to communicate Norwegian-ness.

When photographing Ann Kristin Dahle's clothes I have created an atmosphere that recalls the darker side of the Norwegian folk-tales. I have done this because the clothes emit signs about the Gothic world, but also because they share symbols with the fabric and outline/construction of national dress. I choose to use elements that can be associated with what we see as national dress to communicate national identity, instead of using elements that are associated with the modern world. In contrast I have used myths of Norwegian-ness to construct national identity when photographing Moods of Norway. I have done this because their clothes are more colourful and they are inspired by the old Norwegian traditions in their use of patterns and prints and not in the outline. The outline/construction they have used are a part of international fashion; they combine international trends with traditional Norwegian design and traditions. For these images I have adopted a humorous approach using myths about the Norwegian lifestyle where I have combined traditional with modern instead of traditional versus modern. I have done this as a technique to keep traditions alive.

Evaluating the photographic production, I have experienced some difficulties through this project. I have had problems with models and stylists who haven't turned up and weather that has made it difficult, but money has played the biggest part. My intention was to travel around in Norway and use the landscape as a signifier of Norwegian identity. But it was very difficult to get models and stylists who worked for free to come with me. So I mostly travelled to where they lived which was Oslo. But I found good locations in parks, museums and the botanical garden which made things a lot easier for me.

If there's anything with the photographic production I would have done over again, I would say that if I had more time and had known more about make-up I would have used the stylists more effectively. They were all students who needed pictures for their portfolios, so we were all fairly new to this, and we had different thoughts about what it was going to look like. But I am very satisfied with how my images turned out at the end, and are looking forward to starting working

as a professional fashion photographer after this experience.

Through the whole project I have learned that being a fashion photographer is so much more than just taking pictures. All the different aspects like clothes, location, models, stylists, and photographer work together as a theme where communication is very important, but also planning.

This project has also made me learn more about my national identity, and made me see feel the importance of holding on to our traditions and natural heritage. It is also worth mentioning that working with this project has not only taught me about fashion photography and Norwegian identity, but it has also taught me more about me and where I stand as a (hopefully) upcoming Norwegian fashion photographer.

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