

# KUNSTHALLE BERN

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Passageways: On Fashion's Runway***

13 October – 2 December 2018

Opening: Friday, 12 October, 6 pm

**Guided tour for press: Friday, 12 October, 11 am with Valérie Knoll, Director Kunsthalle Bern**

Curated by Matthew Linde

This exhibition takes place in the lower level.

Parallel exhibition: *Independence*, 22 September – 2 December 2018

The origins of the fashion show reveal a constellation where the body, commerce and modernity converge. Described as a theatre without narrative, fashion's runway illuminates the paradox of irrational mutability and mechanical standardisation. The "first" runway could be understood as the practice of couturiers sending living mannequins (what we now call models) into the public boulevard sporting new designs, eliciting shock and photographic dissemination. This animation of bodies performing novelty in urban life foregrounded the format we know today: models passing along a strip flanked by their consuming onlookers. Runways express the formaldehyde of a culture in flux. While technological treatments of the runway have modified since its emergence at the turn of the 19th century, its underlying edifice has remained largely intact. Despite this ongoing scenographic sameness, various designers have explored the runway as a discursive site to interrogate the mechanics of fashion's circulation. These runway experiments reconfigure the relations between audiences, arrangements of space, the carnivalesque body and the haunting of its commodity form. Leaping from Paul Poiret's epic 1911 "A Thousand and Second Night", the designers exhibited at Kunsthalle Bern have approached the runway-as-medium, using it twofold to extend and challenge the ideas within their own practice as well as the fashion system at large.

Just as these designers have tested the fashion show, runways themselves test the uncanny allegory for the passage of history as labyrinthine time that folds back onto itself. As a style of dress vanishes into the exiled *démodé*, our willingness to be sartorial requires revising. But in this "revising", fashion always arrives with quotations of its prior selves. Motifs and themes of previous periods are recycled from the refuse of progress and made proximate to each other. This discontinuous upheaval of the past into the present expresses our eternal reworking of history. Fashion-time then is not simply a series of chronological temporalities, but an audacious conception of a history of ideas that breaches the continuum. Hence it is the task of the fashion runway to embark on a speculative future in order to recover the now.

*Passageways* curates over thirty videos of runway shows by designers that have reimagined the catwalk as an exploratory performative tool to produce fashion. Also exhibited are specific outfits by six of those fashion designers alongside a series of commissioned replicas that rewrite new histories of the runway as a suspension of fashion-time.

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Öffnungszeiten: Di–Fr 11–18 Uhr, Sa–So 10–18 Uhr