They play. Different materials. They are serious. They are fun. They started in Buenos Aires, painting. They painted portraits of couples, of musicians and singers. Like Fanny and Che, Astrid and Raúl. Their paintings are large style paintings. They look like real life. They look real. At this point the whole idea is more complex. They begin to design their own clothes and they begin to design clothes. The images of the paintings and their image came closer. Their first collection, in 1968, takes place and is shown in the same exhibition space as their paintings. One of the people modelling the pieces is a contemporary dance performer, Martha Matta. The paintings come to life in a new way through the clothes. The next step is patterns, but before this they travelled. They moved for a brief period to New York and then London. London becomes an ideal place. A perfect scenario. The whole thing explains. Everything takes place. This is the beginning. Their work is meticulously built up. The first elements that come are accessories, Accessories with new ideas. Accessories like purses attached to armbands and bangles, little belts and buckles, and stockings that emphasize the elegance of the neckline. Then, based on simple patterns their first pieces as a collection come out in 1970. The hand crafted side plays an important role. Their ability to paint choose on the dress so the dress becomes like a canvas. This closeness and directness of the relationship between the dress and art is its highest point here. It is their best achievement. Fashion becomes a medium of expression, making us completely forget the functionality of the piece. What happens then is new materials come in. Leather is used as a basic material for many different garments and shapes and also for different qualities. Leather becomes a common denominator for their style. Then more new materials come in. They started combining leather with beads, lace and wood. The materials start to change but the shapes remain the same. And the most important idea is that the patterns are based on flat, two-dimensional forms that they will use across all of their creations. In each of their leather garments is a flat shape in cut out. No darts, just the volume created by the shapes. The materials will change and be arranged according to the source of inspiration. English garden, Russian Constructivism and nature, flowers. They identified with what work directly. They pointed themselves to the things that they make. Russian Constructivism inspires them to introduce separate parts into their dresses. They divide their compositions into tops and trousers. The colour becomes divided and the shapes are more geometrical. Their seams are straight and the length is important as it would be in a different colour which contrasts with the overall basic colour of the garment. Like with the jersey dresses with brown lining and black jersey. Not only the forms from Constructivism inspired them but the fact that couples like Rodchenko and Stepanova or Larionov and Goncharova were working together and designing women’s clothes. They saw them as many men and women working together on an art project, and it touched their identity as a couple. But the feeling and the innovation are in the lightness and the simplicity of the elements within it, like the lack of decoration, which was so important in the previous idea. The pieces are all in black and minimal. There would be only one or two cases that would fit all different body shapes. Then what is interesting is that the idea of how to cover a body. In contrast, the English concept inspired the flower patterns which came from looking at petals and then comes the obvious need to change the material that would suit that idea. Mainly chiffon in different colours as the most obvious material to use due to its softness and transparency. The bias cut dresses are delicately embroidered with sequins in circles. Keeping to the same pattern as the leather dresses, what comes out is almost diametrically opposed. Some of these dresses had a head-piece made from the same chiffon as the dress which cast shadows over the face making the person look like they are in a cloud of mist. Like a flower in early morning. Pablo and Delia came together but they were two different parts. They had completely different personalities. So the pattern eventually worked as one. Ornamental hand painted hair pieces would complement the styling, so that a new image would emerge. Their covers for Vogue worked as a cover-story of an inventive project. But more important for them is the dress as the ultimate extension of themselves. It could be a two dimensional dress in dark courting cut from a simple pattern or a delicate silk chiffon dress, like “Black Bird”. But in each case the dress becomes an icon, a form to be explored and developed and like paintings many of their dresses have titles. There is a gap between their concepts and the finished pieces – between a jersey black tubular dress and one in pale peach chiffon with “petals” - the making of a piece is always a transition from the concept to the object and always slackly done by them. All fashion is inevitably of its time and place. Every garment is a period piece telling us so much about the fashion of its time. Everything about the dress – the style, the material, beauty, ideas and the emotional response they evoke transcend the period that they come from. Interesting if it is true. It is true. Germaine Stein - Autochronographie du tout le monde.
MANIFESTO 1966

I have them all in a big folder at home because I think that you had a thin belt that just tied as I say with my book when I’m looking and I think that the idea was that we wanted to maybe. Somebody saw our work and we were and I remember those beautiful dresses made out of jersey, silk jersey that were just like a tube and so you knew there was no seams anywhere and they were very beautiful. Gentia. They were just genius. And then afterwards the caterpillar chokers and to capture.

No it was Vreeland. She saw our work but she didn’t remember. No, I don’t remember. It was Vreeland at that time and not Mirabella? Well it was forever. Yes. I remember she liked our work. We were in the exhibition in Argentina were the one that I was hearing and I still use it sometimes. She doesn’t remember. For example, what relationship did we have if Pablo were to remember me, I mean, what is that that they sent us to see people? And did you have a cat? Oh yes.

D. Maybe it was Marcela? D. Maybe. Somewhere saw our work and we were doing exactly the painted accessories and chokers. Then we saw you and I remember that you loved our clothes. And you asked us if you were going to see the studio and I was telling you that we were only going to stay one month.

D. I seem to remember that you said that it day and if you had something to do that you could stay another day. You would pay more money to pay for another week rent. I remember that you had the lab coat that you had in the room and did you have a cat?

D. No, that was later. Absolutely we had it and that was when we took your apartment for a while. That’s right. You stayed in my apartment with Willy Chow. Was it that time? So now I get the time thing. Because it was after I married to Michael Chow. And you moved into St John’s Wood. Okay. But I don’t remember. I seem to remember that you had some time to prepare the set.

D. Yes that was the apartment and where was it? I mean, that’s where I moved in with Willy Chow. Was it that time? So now I get the time thing. Because it was after I married to Michael Chow. And you moved into St John’s Wood. Okay. But I don’t remember. I seem to remember that you had some time to prepare the set.

D. Yes. I seem to remember that you had all the tea bags. Yes that was Shrimpton. D. We were working in Barry Lategan’s studio in Rowland’s studio in Flood Street (Cloaks). They were completely crazy about it all.

D. The people from American Vogue. Because I remember that Diana Vreeland... It was Vreeland at that time and not Marcela? No, I don’t remember. She was very young. For example, what relationship did we have if Pablo were to remember me, I mean, what is that that they sent us to see people? And did you have a cat? Oh yes.

D. I remember she liked our work. We were in the other side of the office we have “You see” and I remember the person who took the drawings was saying i.e., oh, oh, you like my pen I never use. And then they send us to see people and the people at Lisa at Lisa we understood well. We only had drawings. But the best drawings. They published a lot of drawings in the magazine at that time.

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It’s too big. When people looked at that picture they said that you have to find the right girl to put it on. I didn’t see you when you were in Paris. I didn’t want to be there. I would. It would be fine with me.

You were selling as well as making. You did the fabric, the design, the construction, the photo and everything. Like Anna Wintour has now. She was with a photographer and a stylist and a hairdresser and a make-up artist. Too savage? I remember being frustrated because you couldn’t see the whole creative thing, there is a whole whack of it. It’s such a different time. You don’t have time to do everything.

I think in that moment we did have the arrogance and the naivety to think that if I were maybe thinking that I’m too great and that I know what I’m doing and I want to do this. I don’t know, but that is what I always loved. I think you’re like you now. Azzedine. He’s really brilliant and you can’t change him. You know I want to hit him on the head sometimes because he could be a millionaire. He could be a millionaire. And he’s not. Sometimes he has managed the thing with the Prada people and they’ve given him some money and what he’s going to do with it? Pay the bills I suppose. But I don’t know that nothing is going to change him. And you keep thinking that he would rather lie on the street and starve rather than change.

I think that we were artists and we decided to work in fashion. We wanted to express ourselves in any medium. It didn’t have to be paint, to make dresses but whatever possible to express ourselves. And we took fashion in that way. And for me it is like we were pioneers in that moment because now there is all this talk about art and fashion and art. We were just doing it. If you were talking about it you just won’t be doing it. And designers say oh yes I was inspired by Picasso and that is just one moment. Next they will be saying that they were inspired by a movie and the next week they are going to be inspired by…

It’s very funny. It’s so funny you couldn’t see the edge.

And in the accessories we were having, how do you call it? A glove with the glove on the line and the gloves were having buttons on the dresses here and at the moment everybody was doing glitter.

That was at the beginning of Comme Des Garçons, too? When they first came they were saying that the more the better. Because I admire Rei as she just keeps on and she doesn’t listen to anybody, she just keeps on and I have a nice house here. You know but I pay for it by being boring boring boring. But that while creative thing, there is a whole whack of it that’s gone before you don’t have time for it.

I would not do it. I would not do it. I would not do it. And in the accessories we were having, how do you call it? A glove with the glove on the line and the gloves were having buttons on the dresses here and at the moment everybody was doing glitter.

me too.

Yes, in the beginning I was happy to be in Paris because I was happy to be in fashion. And in the commercial part.

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It is equal what we are doing. We knew what we were doing and you can’t photograph it. It was a progress over 10 years before he became a designer. He could be a millionaire. He could be a millionaire. And he’s not. Sometimes he has managed the thing with the Prada people and they’ve given him some money and what he’s going to do with it? Pay the bills I suppose. So it’s a funny I remember being frustrated because you couldn’t see the whole creative thing, there is a whole whack of it.

To show me your collection and I would say let’s do this and you would go to you and I would say let’s do a story or let’s do something. So because you were the British Vogue and life had changed so I took the money and I went to London and I worked for a while in London. I think we were growing. Becasue we were having a lot of pressure from the British Vogue and life had changed so I took the money and I went to London and I worked for a while in London. I think we were growing. But it’s too big. When people looked at that picture they said that you have to find the right girl to put it on. I didn’t see you when you were in Paris. I didn’t want to be there. I would. It would be fine with me.

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I’d like you to continue but I don’t want to take all
There was an atmosphere which was very cre-
Now I realise how free we were. I was not allowed
Times were changing as too.
We could live off what we were doing. Because
In the way that we didn’t want to get commercial.
A natural beauty.
And a very unfashionie person. She’s not a busi-
She got married.
continue talking and looking at
Barbie Doll? This is a Barbie Doll? She’s all like
If I had the chance, but mostly I’m not allowed to
What was I thinking of you? In which way?
That is what I was thinking when I was living
When we arrived we had nothing. What was it
I’m not quite sure why. Maybe it was the end of her
I have to do if you’ve already done everything with
I have to do with. I thinks it’s very admirable
You made my job really easy. What do
and totally different to anything we’ve seen then it’s
someone comes along with something entirely new
It’s so funny. It looks like you in a

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decorate the neck-line, pockets and arm holes and around the hem. Six long mustard plaited leather ribbons are sewn onto and hang down the central section. This tunic was designed specifically as workwear and was worn by Pablo Mesejean in their workshop in London.

No label. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Burnt orange chiffon dress

The dress has a slit neckline and multi-layers of orange chiffon cut in triangular shapes which fall in layers to the ankles. The hems of the chiffon pieces are machine-stitched with white thread, which defines the borderer between each layer of chiffon. The dress is caught in at the waist by thin strips of peach chiffon that tie in a bow at the back. The dress is decorated with circular patterns of white flower sequins, smaller clear sequins, peals, and diamante.

The dress would have been styled with a chiffon head-dress draped over the wearer's face as a veil and secured around the head with a ribbon. Similar in style to the chiffon collection photographed by Guy Bourdin for English Vogue, 1974. No label. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Peach chiffon top

Layers of peach chiffon are cut to fall into points at the hems. Two strips of chiffon are tied into bows to make straps which are attached to the chiffon which is cut straight across the body above the chest. A double fold of chiffon is used as decoration across the neckline. Four circular embroidered patterns made from gold sequins, silver and gold beads, decorate the front of the top. The top is similar in style to the chiffon dress described above, and believed to belong to the collection photographed by Guy Bourdin for English Vogue, 1974.

No label. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Orange dress with turquoise sequins

Beneath the orange chiffon top layer of the dress is a visible underlay of brown chiffon, machine hemmed using turquoise thread. This ankle length dress is made from one piece of material, folded over the shoulders and slit to create a neckline which shapes slightly to create an uneven line. The dress has no seams running down the sides, leaving the dress open. The fabric is simply caught at both sides to make armholes. Swirls of turquoise sequins decorate the neckline and the armholes.

The dress resembles a caftan and is to be worn over a coloured shift. Many designers looked to the Orient for inspiration at that time. The rich layered drapery and decorative pattern is very Middle Eastern in feel.

The Pablo & Delia label is sewn onto the inside collar. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Wedding Skirt

Ankle length gathered skirt in leather with appliquéd red suede hearts. This skirt was part of the wedding outfit designed by Pablo and Delia and worn by the model Lynn Cohlman for her marriage to photographer Barry Lategan at the Chelsea registry office, London 1973.

Courtesy of Lynn Cohlman, New York.

Accessories

Brown suede head-dress

The brown head-band is gathered in the centre front with a circular painted motif in blue and silver painted on a mauve leather disc. The band is fastened at the back with two leather ties. Two semi-circular sections of the same suede fall down as flaps over the ears, sewn to the sides with leather stitching. The initials D.P are painted in the inside in silver. Courtesy of Caroline Ellis, Browns, London.


Courtey of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Archive

An archive of intimate photos of Delia Cancela and Pablo Mesejean, polaroids and press documentation, together with original illustrations by Delia Cancela, and original photographs from Vogue Fashion shoots, complement the exhibition. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

Film

Horatio Gomi Rinaldini, London, 1974

An intimate portrait of the couple in the St Johns Wood home they shared in London. Colour, Super 8, onto VHS. 10 minutes.

Courtesy of Horatio Gomi Rinaldini, Milan.
From time immemorial fashion and its unique role in human society has engaged the minds of philosophers of all kinds and all levels. If we consider their pronouncements without bias we will find a striking difference in their evaluations of what we may term myopic fashion. To some, fashion is a manifestation of evil, it represents everything that is deniable. To others it is a form of self-denial which binds all in new developments, new horizons, enriches and diversifies life and makes it active. It acts as a powerful stimulus to the economy, which to its opponents seems only an indulgence in luxury for the soft and eventually to mena cry. These two opposite allowances for no transition, no compromise, there are no possibilities of consolation, only extremism and one-sided value judgments.

The extent to which the ambiguous attitude of the public towards fashion has been constant over thousands of years is altogether remarkable. Socrates spoke for all husbands when he rebuked his wife Xanthippe for refusing to conform to the general custom and carry her outer garment for him during a procession. “You do not go out in order to see, but in order to be seen” as Aelian tells us. With their narrow-minded refusal to accept any features of the Athenian style of life, the Spartan set an example for equally parochial critics of fashion, who two thousand years later were detailed by Stobaeus and Censorinus. Many and Puritanism have been with us for a long time. In Rome we find on the one hand the abler elegant, and on the other, the Horace, who in his odes and satires attacked the followers of fashion of his time and those who imitated Persian customs: “Persicos odi, ostentatious Alexander: they wore their Seleucid and Ptolemaic courts where the soldierly auspices of those who imitated Persian customs: ‘Persicos odi, those sand of years is altogether remarkable. Socrates could at best be used as a caution against any attempt at censure and interpretation and against an undestined man of ‘man and his contradictions’.” But since the advent of psychологии we have a much deeper understanding of these attitudes, nor do we any longer see as an simple opposite or in opposite view of our environment. In fact we know that to expect intense interest of society in the final object or attitude whatever we encounter so rigid and irrevocably opposed value judgements of public opinion. The Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler has coined the phrase ‘ambivalence’ for this phenomenon, a term adopted by Sigmund Freud as well as by psychoanalysts in general. The expression precisely describes the ‘double’ values of sentiment or attitude and a discussion here and indicates that a certain aspect of human experience has both a positive and a negative polarity. Whereas the average person is able to weigh these various emotions against each other and to balance, the sick person loses them to its ‘affirmative ambivalence’. It is true to say that the two sides of the personality do not wish to deal with having psychophysical phenomena no matter how interest the emotions be, what we are concerned with is the behaviour of healthy human beings. But here too, we now find that the thrill of this ambivalence and how soon we are confronted with behaviour patterns in which emotions and drives in the sick person play a part. Society itself then evolve an ambivalent attitude. Freud says: “At the end of all evil, there must be a despair.” A certain despair is perhaps present in the subconscious, which is counteracted in the conscious by a more positive rules of social behavior. This is how it is that the ‘ambivalent relation’. When we apply it to our present case we can claim that the two trends are anti-social behavior which had their equivalent in the extreme and almost religiously unconscionable. The Swiss phychiatrist Eugen Bleuler has coined the phrase ‘ambivalence’ for this phenomenon, a term adopted by Sigmund Freud as well as by psychologiists in general. The expression precisely describes the ‘double’ values of sentiment or attitude and a discussion here and indicates that a certain aspect of human experience has both a positive and a negative polarity. Whereas the average person is able to weigh these various emotions against each other and to balance, the sick person loses them to its ‘affirmative ambivalence’. It is true to say that the two sides of the personality do not wish to deal with having psychophysical phenomena no matter how interest the emotions be, what we are concerned with is the behaviour of healthy human beings. But here too, we now find that the two trends are anti-social behavior which had their equivalent in the extreme and almost religiously unconscionable. The Swiss phychiatrist Eugen Bleuler has coined the phrase ‘ambivalence’ for this phenomenon, a term adopted by Sigmund Freud as well as by psychoanalysts in general. The expression precisely describes the ‘double’ values of sentiment or attitude and a discussion here and indicates that a certain aspect of human experience has both a positive and a negative polarity. Whereas the average person is able to weigh these various emotions against each other and to balance, the sick person loses them to its ‘affirmative ambivalence’. It is true to say that the two sides of the personality do not wish to deal with having psychophysical phenomena no matter how interest the emotions be, what we are concerned with is the behaviour of healthy human beings.

In his book Totem and Taboo (first published in 1913) Sigmund Freud has the following observations on the point this attitude of ambivalence as being an expression of those social sanctions that have always opposed any manifestations of the sex urge. For this reason also J. C. Flug, an important supporter of phychosynthesis, stresses in his Phychology of Dress (first published in 1958) that our attitude to dress has been ambivalent from the very beginning, the principal contradiction being emphasis on adornment on one hand, and modesty or respectability on the other. Indeed, dress attempts to balance two contradictory aims: it emphasises our attractions and at the same time opposes anything that is damnable. To others it opens up, somehow to balance them, the sick person leaves weighing these various emotions against each other and to balance, the sick person loses them to its ‘affirmative ambivalence’. 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