

Two questions for Rebecca L. Breuer (AMFI/HvA) I posed during her [public PhD defense](#) of her thesis *Fashion Beyond Identity-The Three Ecologies of Dress* at the University of Amsterdam on November 4, 2015 by Geert Lovink.

1. Let me first of all congratulate you with this interesting and very accessible theory exercise that successfully provides us with the tools to disconnect fashion from the limiting, if not repressive representations of identity.

I came across the very possibility to question 'identity as such' for the first time through Michel Foucault in the mid eighties. You have chosen to further carve out this road using the works of Gilles Deleuze, and this is what my question will focus upon.

I wonder if your 'affect' reading of Deleuze has much meaning if we want to re-instate fashion's ability to become a subversive power in society that leads change (and now merely expresses this or that tendency in other fields).

Why sing alone with the canon of joy, flow and movement? Why preach connectivity in age where disruption has become the mainstream business strategy? I wonder if your choice for the 'positive' Deleuze fits your aims. We need the force of negativity, necessary to effectively attack—and ultimately destroy the rigid system of identity.

Instead of the productivist Deleuze, as advocated by, for instance, Rosi Braidotti, Andrew Culp proposes a fierce pessimism that shatters the cosmos—in this case, the world of fashion. And the contemporary figure he designed to fulfill such a task he coined 'Dark Deleuze'. You probably know [his blog](#). According to Culp "there is revolutionary negativity in a world characterised by compulsive happiness, decentralised control and overexposure."

Along with Andrew Culp—and Dark Deleuze—we could, for instance, ask the question: what's the false in fashion. What could be a philosophy of the imagination that supersedes the philosophy of the senses? Is positivism the right approach in order to understand why "we lack resistance to the present," as Culp puts it.

Instead of calls to create conceptions, Culp urges us to destroy worlds. Contrary to building assemblages we can practice un-becoming. He urges us

to rebel against the mystifying cult of complexity, and apply asymmetry in our designs. Not acceleration but escape. No more molecular strategies but cataclysmic events. This could be in line with planetary developments such as global warming, rising income inequality and financial crises.

In short: your intention in this thesis is to upgrade fashion theory, but don't you think, in order to do so, it is also necessary to upgrade our interpretation of Deleuze?

2. Normcore is all about finding the fashion in anti-fashion. It's about investing in well-tailored, beautifully made basics that anyone, from your suburban mom to your substitute teacher to your girly pre-teen sister, can wear. As about foregoing the need for individualism and, as the famous [K-Hole report](#) on normcore puts it, "finding liberation in being nothing special and realizing that adaptability leads to belonging."

The [Urban Dictionary](#) defines normcore as "a subculture based on conscious, artificial adoption of things that are in widespread use, proven to be acceptable, or otherwise inoffensive. Ultra-conformists."

Your reflections on jeans fit into the normcore strategy. I am fascinated by the normcore category. Could we describe as a voluntary limitation of difference? Mass conformism, not as an identity but as a protective layer? Fifty shades of grey that will mislead the ordinary passers-by what we wear underneath, and show off at night. What do you make of such an interpretation of normcore as a mask, as camouflage?