

Remembering Paris 1968: Fashion Theatre of Protest

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REMEMBERING PARIS 1968: FASHION THEATRE OF PROTEST

ELENA SIEMENS

The contributors to this creative portfolio comment in images and words on the high-fashion brands' campaigns commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Paris 1968 student protests. Young scholars themselves, many participants charge Dior, Gucci, Sonia Rykiel, YSL, and others with pursuing their covetous commercial interests.



Elena Siemens, "Dior's Window" (Vancouver 2018)

“My collage is primarily a response to the Gucci Dans Les Rues campaign that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Paris 1968 protests in a way that is glamorized and hypocritical,” Sam Beethan states. Similarly, Maria Andrade points out that “it is important to question Gucci’s motives.” She adds: “However, the campaign takes direct inspiration from a historical event and it references the youthful energy in a way that is not looking past the horrific events, but commemorating them.” Gillian Herbert’s contribution “brings across the message of commodification and commercialization that appears to have taken place within the Dior campaign.”



Elena Siemens, “Street Vendors on Granville” (Vancouver 2018)

Several contributions address the representation of space in the 1968 inspired advertising campaigns. Corissa Tymafichuk’s emphasizes “an emotional disconnect between the protestors in the photos of May ’68 and the actors used in *Gucci Dans Les Rues*.” She comments that the “real riots took place in the streets, with protestors digging up *pavé* to use as weapons and overturning cars to barricade police.” Whereas Gucci, Tymafichuk continues, chooses to use “a mix of in-

door and outdoor spaces ... in a completely staged interpretation of May '68." In Natalya Boiko's collage, her hand-made cardboard cobblestones "point to the importance of space in the overall atmosphere and meaning of the Youthquake." In particular, Boiko comments on Sonia Rykiel's anniversary campaign that "turns the symbol of violent rebellion" into a high-priced handbag, and how this alters the meaning of "the once revolutionary space of the street."



Elena Siemens, "Street Vendors on Granville" (Vancouver 2018)

Many contributors seek to connect the past and the present in a more meaningful way. Alida Radke's collage "puts black-and-white photographs of real '68 protesters alongside colour photographs of models acting as protesters from Gucci's *Dans Les Rues* campaign and Dior's Fall 2018 collection." Radke writes: "I made half of the background in black and white and half in colour to better put the past in conversation with the present." In Parul Kanwar's collage, "ruggedly painted words 'Egalité! Liberté! Sexualité!' pay homage" to the 1968 riots, as well as "referencing Gucci's advertisement in which a girl can be seen writing this slogan on a washroom wall." Designed "in the

form of a protest sign,” Jillian Harbin’s contribution combines personal photography and images “of the actual Youthquake movement.” Harbin places “the 1968 photos on the edges of the collage, as a nod to how these students pushed the boundaries and limitations initially placed upon them.”

Standing somewhat apart, Thomas Wier’s contribution foregrounds the present. Wier focuses on the young French designer Marine Serre and her sustainable fashion. He explains: “Serre channels the mindset of the ’68 protesters, but in a way that feels very contemporary and aware of the issues that now impact young people in 2018.”



Elena Siemens, “Tiffany’s Window” (Brussels 2018)

My set of images accompanying this introduction also suggests that sometimes a loose association makes a greater impact than a more literal one. A case in point is Tiffany’s flamboyant window display in Brussels. With its cutout of a hooded graffiti artist spray-painting the brand’s name over the storefront, Tiffany’s communicates more revolutionary energy than the neat pile of red cobblestones in Sonia Rykiel’s thoughtful but overstated window display next door. Sim-

ilarly, the street vendors' takeover of Granville Street in Vancouver evokes the spirit of 1968 with a greater force than Dior's hybrid mise-en-scène of high fashion and graffiti on the neighbouring West Georgia Street.



Elena Siemens, "Harvey Nichols Window" (London 2018)

In London, the Harvey Nichols department store displayed heaps of newspapers featuring provocative headlines. Designed to promote a new menu at the store's restaurant, the campaign's tagline "Veg Out!" read like a Situationist slogan (albeit re-commercialized and reabsorbed for consumerist society). An inspiration behind the 1968 protests, the Situationist International and its spiritual leader Guy Debord encouraged people to paint cities with statements such as "Never Work" and "It's Forbidden To Forbid" (Lewisohn 75).

When asked about the famous Odessa step sequence in his film classic *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Sergei Eisenstein replied that it was the result of a purely "spontaneous encounter" (173). A fierce advocate of the "collision montage," he offered this explanation: "Chance

brings a sharper, more powerful resolution” than any “preliminary outline” (Eisenstein qtd. in Siemens 24).



Elena Siemens, “Harvey Nichols Window” (London 2018)

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2018 marks five decades since the French Protests of May 1968. The events of '68 challenged Conservative values, both economic and social. The youth of France demonstrated, rioted, and adopted dress that subverted the attitudes and appearance of those in power. The influence of the events of '68 can still be seen in contemporary society today. Looking to Paris Fashion Week 2018, designers can be seen channelling both the mindset and the styles of the protesters. A rebellious yet functional stylishness can be observed in the work of the young designer, Marine Serre. Serre's style references issues within Fashion and the world at large. Her sustainable approach to design also battles issues associated with climate change and fast fashion. Throughout her work, Serre channels the mindset of the '68 protesters, but in a way that feels very contemporary and aware of the issues that now impact young people in 2018.

Thomas Wier



Using the Boulevard Saint Germain (one of the sites of the 1968 riots) as a background, my collage puts black-and-white photographs of real '68 protesters alongside colour photographs of models acting as protesters from Gucci's Dans Les Rues campaign and Dior's Fall 2018 collection. In addition, I made half of the background in black and white and half in colour to better put the past in conversation with the present. I paid special attention to the facial expressions of both the rioters and the models, as the group of six protesters in the middle display emotions of anger and pain appropriate to a riot, whereas the models show little to no emotional investment at all. The actual protesters in the lower right corner appear injured, as many were during the riots, something often left out of nostalgic portrayals, as images of bloody, injured rioters would not help sell a superficial image of '68 to future generations.

Alida Radke



My collage is primarily a response to the Gucci Dans Les Rues campaign that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Paris 1968 protests in a way that is glamorized and hypocritical. In particular, I saw a dissonance between how Gucci positions itself as an exclusive, high-priced designer clothing brand and the reality of the Paris 1968 events. My collage is composed of three primary sources designed to highlight the stark contrast between Gucci and the protests: partial images of the promotional material for Gucci Dans Les Rues campaign, signs created by the protesters, and images of the actual protests that depict the violence of the events. In so doing, I aim to emphasize exactly why I think Gucci's use of this monumental event is disingenuous. What struck me most about the Gucci campaign was how fun the scenes of protest seemed. I have crossed out "Egalité" in the storefront scene, placing the price of the "Re(belle) leather backpack" beside it, to highlight the disconnect between the equality the rioters fought for and the high-class distinctions associated with the Gucci brand.

Sam Beethan



“Soyez Réalistes, Demandez l’Impossible!” (Be realistic, demand the impossible!) is the title I chose for my creative piece, drawing from a slogan used by Parisian youth protesters during the May ’68 riots in France. My collage transitions from the Paris riots on Rive Gauche, portrayed in black and white, to the bright fashion transformation of Youthquake in the 60s, finishing with 2018 fashion campaigns that commemorate the 50th anniversary of both revolutions. The performance space affects the public perception of both May ’68 and *Gucci Dans Les Rues*. There is an emotional disconnect between the protesters in the photos of May ’68 and the actors used in *Gucci Dans Les Rues*. May ’68 photos show hurt, bleeding, and exhausted people. The Gucci campaign shows a student protest that looks fun. The difference is due to the performance space of both events. The real riots took place on the streets, with protesters digging up *pavé* to use as weapons and overturning cars to barricade police. The Gucci campaign uses a mix of indoor and outdoor spaces, such as a classroom or an alleyway, in a completely staged interpretation of May ’68. The intention is different, as Gucci’s campaign is designed to sell designer products.

Corissa Tymafichuk



#GucciDansLesRues commemorates the period marked by youthful disgust and revolt. The youth would not stop until “liberty, equality, and sexuality” were fully embraced. This fashion campaign was shot by Glen Luchford and is filled with glamorous, youthful, anarchic rage intertwined with liberating sexuality. Gucci has been criticized for romanticising the 1968 riots and using the youths’ anti-institution slogans to create profit. I believe it is important to question Gucci’s motives. However, the campaign takes direct inspiration from a historical event and it references the youthful energy in a way that is not looking past the horrific events, but commemorating them. In my collage, I compare the #GucciDansLesRues campaign with the May 1968 protests by including images from Luchford’s short film on the left side and the archival images of the riots on the right side. I include as well the slogans that were put up by the French youth: “BE YOUNG AND SHUT UP” and “THE BEAUTY IN REVOLUTION.” In the centre I have added a picture of myself dressed in an all-red attire in a pant suit and sneakers with the words “Essential Revolution” emblazoned across the page. I chose to include this image of myself because the everyday person holds power to create change even when everyone is telling them that they cannot.

Maria Andrade



High fashion brands such as Dior and Gucci have referenced the Youthquake in their 2018 anniversary campaigns. I have recorded this in my collage, which incorporates, among other things, references to Dior and its peace symbol. The collage also portrays several distinct fashion styles, such as the shift dress associated with the revolutionary attitude of the times. In addition, I included an image of the Eiffel Tower collapsing, several archival images of the 1968 riots, and a picture of a girl holding a red banner. The students took over the Bourse, the Paris Stock Exchange, and plastered landmarks with red revolutionary flags.

Dan Waissi



My collage aims to emulate the Dior Fall/Winter 2018 Fashion Week. For their backdrop, Dior incorporated many layered words and magazine covers. I took inspiration from this. I cut out different magazine and newspaper headlines and advertisements to create a similar look. My objective was to bring across the message of commodification and commercialization that appears to have taken place with the Dior campaign. I have added a hashtag to Dior's iconic NON branding as a way to emphasize its modernity and to make this movement "trendy." The way this major brand enveloped a youth movement and turned it into something commercial suggests that the famous subculture theorist Dick Hebdige may have underestimated mainstream culture's ability to hybridize and commercialize subcultures and their style. The absorption and adoption of this youth movement by Dior undermines the struggle and actual experience of the students who were involved in the protest, by taking the personal and political issues which were important to them and then repackaging and marketing them to Dior's high-end clientele. This commercialization of protest distances what was intended as an homage from the actual issues the Youthquake movement represented.

Gillian Herbert



Paved streets of Paris, which once indicated a prosperous society, became a weapon during the 1968 revolts. My collage further incorporates the revolt's slogan "sous les pavés, la plage" ("under the cobblestones, the beach"). This Situationist slogan refers to students' desire to escape controlling institutions. The cobblestones in my collage point to the importance of space in the overall atmosphere and meaning of the Youthquake. The fashion campaigns from 2018 also incorporate references to cobblestones, as in Sonia Rykiel's totes. Rykiel turns the symbol of violent rebellion into a harmless handbag that costs over \$900, altering the overall meaning of the once revolutionary space of the street.

Natalya Boiko



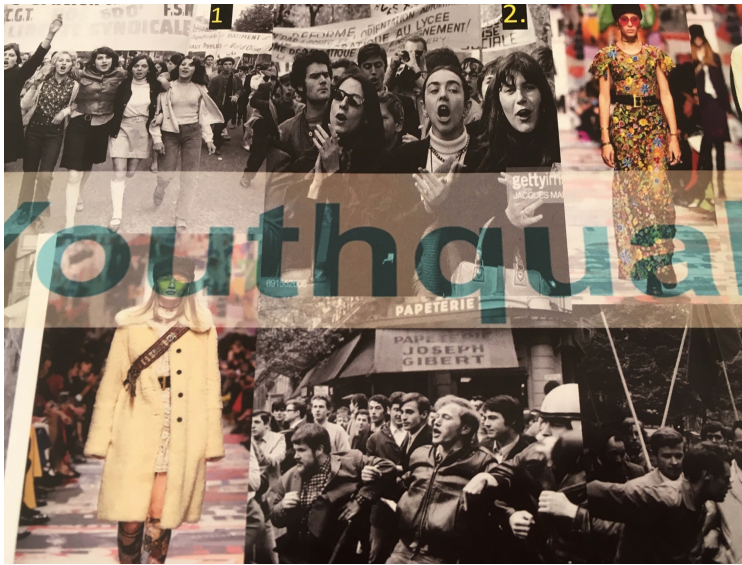
This collage is made up of several components. I have placed the outline of France at the centre of the collage and colour on the edges, making the entire page resemble the French flag. I also bring attention to the connection between the original 1968 Paris riots and the 2018 anniversary fashion campaigns. The riots resulted from student and worker dissatisfaction with capitalism and capitalist culture. These fashion campaigns, however, are inherently part of the capitalist system, as they advertise products for sale. In my collage, this contradiction is symbolized by the cracked and broken borders of the colours, and the juxtaposition of images from the riots and the 2018 fashion campaigns.

Hope Jubenvill



As Susan Sontag once said, "the problems of this world are only truly solved in two ways: by extinction or duplication". Gucci's Dans Les Rues campaign (2018) focuses on the recreation of the problems that continue to plague the world in the present. My collage represents the union of the two events, past and present, different worlds apart brought together through their political substance. The use of see-through film represents the desire for transparency, and the red and black cross-section symbolises the constraints placed on the youth whose pictures are stationed behind the cage-like structure. Lastly, ruggedly painted words "Egalité! Liberté! Sexualité!" pay homage to one of the most popular slogans used during 1968 riots while also referencing Gucci's advertisement in which a girl can be seen writing this slogan on a public washroom wall. My collage conveys the convergence of Youthquake of 1968 and the present day as represented by Gucci. The youth of today play a critical role in shaping the political dimension, much as Youthquake did in the 60s. Hence, this is an opportunity for Gucci to not only ignite rebellious political strains, but also capitalise on them.

Parul Kanwar



In my collage, the black and white images represent young college protesters in 1968 Paris. Turtleneck sweaters, denim jackets and trench coats were popular fashion items at the time. The colour pictures depict contemporary runway models wearing Dior's 2018 collection inspired by the Youthquake. Dior's turtleneck sweater is inscribed with "NON, NON, NON"—a sentiment French students shared with regard to the injustice prevailing in the 1960s. Despite pursuing commercial interests and being staged in theatrical settings, these fashion shows still succeed in commemorating the important Youthquake anniversary.

Sampati Kohli



I designed my collage in the form of a protest sign, much like one that might have been in 1968 in Paris. The base layer of the collage is made of pictures I took of some of my own “street wear” clothing. I took close-up, fragmentary shots to show the distinct fabrics, colours, and patterns of the items. As a university student myself, these are items I’d wear on an everyday basis. The items themselves aren’t anything elaborate or spectacular. These items would never be considered high fashion or of any special design, and therefore don’t assert themselves as the important element of the collage. The key pictures are the ones of the actual Youthquake movement. I decided to give each protest picture a border to make them stand out, thus playing on the idea that the message of the protest and the physical act of marching down the street is the important overall theme. As well, I placed the 1968 photos on the edges of the collage, as a nod to how these students pushed the boundaries and limitations initially placed upon them.

Jill Harbin



The Youthquake of 1968 in Paris was referenced in 2018 fashion campaigns to commemorate its 50th anniversary. Campaigns such as Gucci Dans les rues, YSL Rive Gauche, and DIOR 's 2018-2019 ready-to-wear collection referenced this protest and used it as a means of selling ideologically loaded garments. The 1968 Youthquake is regarded as the most successful cultural revolution in France's recent history. I believe the protests were a performance of resistance and an outcry directed at administrative bodies to force them to acknowledge the disparity between the interests of students and workers and the bosses and the government. Student protests against capitalism and consumerism in May of '68 resulted in the shut down of Nanterre campus of the University of Paris. Within days, 20,000 students, teachers, and supporters of the movement occupied the Sorbonne campus. The protests spread to the Left Bank (Rive Gauche) of la Seine and nearby factories, which were also occupied. The occupation of these spaces helped the protesting students and workers reclaim them as their own. In my collage, I attempt to demonstrate that the performance aspect of protest makes the proximity to issues being protested important, especially in the case of movements that seek to occupy and reclaim spaces.

Zeinab Abugrga



Gucci Dans Les Rues ads (Pre-Fall 2018) do not immediately announce their connection to the 1968 student protests in Paris. These crowded images of young models marching in the streets or populating campus-like environments celebrate camaraderie and exuberant fashion. In one of the ads, the models are gathered on a balcony, their attention directed at the street below them. The viewer cannot see what it is. My collage incorporates several cutouts from Gucci's ads, including the balcony one. In addition to Gucci, I was inspired by William Klein's remarkable photographs of Paris, his adopted home. Klein's "Armistice Day, Paris, 1968" foregrounds a young man and a woman, their faces express both devastation and resolve. The protests are suppressed; it is a day of mourning. Designed initially for a pop-up exhibit *Hotel Metropole*, (Intermedia Research Studio, University of Alberta, Fall 2018), my collage addresses the theme of today's congested world, a world on the move, its citizens in pursuit of places to discover, and places to call their home. A world as a hotel.

Elena Siemens