The Chaos of Control
VOTE, U CHUMP! GO TRUMP!

#!? WTF2016

YES, I CAN I AM*

*really? the greatest dictator the world has ever seen?
“Can you send us some pictures of military vehicles we could add to the parade?” (Oppenheim) And that was how the Presidential Inaugural Committee introduced themselves to the Pentagon. Aside from the ridiculous aspect of having a parade, a joyous celebration, encumbered by military tanks, as the world’s most powerful country, shouldn’t we be more concerned that this is the first impression Donald Trump wanted to make? From a personal perspective, global civilisation would be verging on ignorance to conclude that Trump is a purely American problem. “Will Trump withdraw the US from NATO? What will he do about ISIS and climate change? Will there be a post-Brexit Anglo American trade deal? His answers to these questions will affect us all” (Ricket).

Ignoring Trump’s heinous character would be easy compared to the “the blunt-force racism and nativism of his electoral appeals;” (Ricket) misogynistic views; the escalating violence that has ensued at his rallies; and “the terrifying strain of white supremacist resentment activated in his constitu- ents.” (Ricket) These are all elements that parallel a bygone time. World War II. Perhaps if enough steps had been taken by the general global population in 1933, Hitler would never have risen to power. When there are so many correlations between the two, it is not unreasonable to question whether or not society is heading towards another impulse driven world war, with more advancements in weaponry that could obliterate cultures, populations, Earth and life as we know it. For example, both Hitler and Trump used racial exclusion to rise to power; proposed mass deportation; used the same slogans to make their country “great again;” have anti-Jew/Muslim Fascist views; blame immigration problems for the state of the country; and think Jews/Muslims should wear special ID’s (England).

With fashion being a public platform it is an expressionistic avenue for raising awareness of issues pertaining to a more serious nature.

According to ID magazine, “Teen Vogue is more political than it’s ever been” (Darton) compared to a few years ago when it ran a gushing profile on Asma Al-Assad. “It is legitimate then to ask whether the brands and designers are doing enough to address the very real concerns of ‘the people’ (the early adopters, the influencers, the customers)” (Darton). For these reasons, a target audience of those aged between fifteen and twenty-five have been selected for this graduation collection as “young millennials and Generation Z want to be meaningfully engaged” (Sherman). Although many of them are not eligible to vote, their influence reigns supreme, in the fashion world, particularly when considering the rate at which social media platforms such as Instagram have churned out instant celebrities of this age demographic. For example Tavi Gevinson now aged 21, rose to fame at the age of 12 as an internet, fashion blogging sensation. Her insights on fashion, photography and political issues caught the attention of designers such as Rei Kawakubo (Commes de Garcon) and Kate and Laura Mulleavy at Rodarte, who continued to support Gevinson in an effort to popularise her opinions. Continuing to engage the youth culture in critical world issues through channels such a fashion can be seen as a valuable tool, particularly in terms of stimulating informed opinions to ensure that true democracy prevails (“The Five Best Things We Just Learned About Tavi Gevinson”).

This AMFI Graduation collection entitled, The Chaos of Control is a political expression that places Donald Trump in a line up of dictators to raise the question “does he have the capacity to be?” The title, The Chaos of Control, refers to the notion that dictators are chaotic figures striving for control and in turn create social, economic and racial discord through these controlling efforts. By placing Trump alongside recognisable elements of Gaddafi, Hitler, Kim Jong-Un and Stalin the intention is for the general public to reflect more seriously on Trump’s position of power.
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Although there are very few visual similarities that link each dictator, aside from generally being dressed from neck to ankle, their iconic and consistent way of dressing can be recognised and translated into a cohesive fashion collection. This is done by amalgamating elements of their style, the use of typography and symbols of power. What visually identifies the essence of a dictator are not necessarily the silhouettes but rather the medal adornments, military aspects, accessories such as hats, repetitive and unique grooming.

Simultaneously, the dictators are clashed with cheerleaders, in order to provide an all-American feeling on a subversive level, with graphics, fabrics and textures that ensure Trump is the central focus. Trump’s intent to instil national pride through propaganda, lies and deceit are all in an effort to support the image of a classic America. From a derogatory point of view, the embodiment of American culture lies within cultural activities that pinpoint an obsolete type of behaviour. Personally, there is no greater stereotype than that of a cheerleader to convey the essence of a seemingly daft and vacuous culture where Trump is at the forefront.

Commonality existing between dictators and cheerleaders is also underpinned by their penchant for winning and coercing a congregation of people into believing that what they are verbalising is true, regardless of whether it is in relation to winning a football match or finding ISIS. The difference between the two perpetuations of an unknown fact is that one remains seemingly arbitrary in terms of consequences and the other has the potential to cause monumental destruction on a global level. This dichotomy plays an important role in creating intrigue via entertainment whilst subjugating these political figures. It is a quintessential element in order to embroil Trump and the dictators in an atmosphere of ridiculousness.

Although not an official dictator, Trump’s actions and words seemingly echo the aforementioned history, steeped in brutality and negligent decision making, fuelled by extremist views. In order to be considered an official dictator one must be a ruler with total power over a country, obtained by force that operates in an autocratic way (“The Definition Of Dictator”). Despite being democratically voted in as President of the United States of America, Trump’s autocratic way of operating does cause concern for a potential dictatorship and the possibility of World War III. For instance, during the 2016 election campaign, Trump declared that he would not become involved with the Syrian Civil War. Since the establishment of a new National Security Council, Trump now appears to not only favour changing the regime in Syria, but also entering into a direct confrontation with North Korea, despite neither of these being policies of his electoral campaign; and the reasons the public voted for him.

According to The Conversation, a not-for-profit knowledge sharing platform from the world’s best universities, “the hundredth day of an American president’s term traditionally marks the end of the honeymoon period” (Landman). It is a time for reflection on new legislation and early accomplishments whilst revealing the new direction in government. However, Trump’s first hundred days appear to be little more than an abysmal performance that is opprobrium with autocratic behaviour and in theory should warrant impeachment, based on the laws of the American Constitution (Silverstein).

Rather than make a political statement that Donald Trump is a dictator in the making, modern psychology suggests that greater influence can be obtained through the use of cognitive psychology and leading questions (Neisser). One way of influencing is through the use of a deliberate question designed to make the receiver actively think in a certain way (Straker).
“Leading questions either include the answer, point the listener in the right direction or include some form of carrot stick to send them to the ‘right’ answer” (Straker). The use of cognitive psychology acts as a subtle manipulation in order to encourage the viewer to affirm the question: does Donald Trump have the capacity to be a dictator?

From the perspective of creating a politically motivated fashion collection, the intention is to visually achieve this. For example, laser-cut graphics that are a combination of Propaganda and all-American varsity typography simply state the word believe, whilst the three middle letters, L-I-E are alternatively coloured in Cobalt Blue. This ensures that both a cheerleader and dictator are visually present, whilst allowing the observer to contemplate the double meaning of this graphic in relation to dictators.

In terms of collection cohesion and layout, the Chaos of Control is a three-part illustrated collection made up of thirty outfits with three final looks, one from each section, realised. The core focus of this collection is on fabrics, prints and embellishments in order to achieve a balance between dictator and cheerleader. Laser cut details that are laden with satire are present throughout along with a typographical style that is a mixture between the playfulness of varsity lettering and the aggressive structure of 1940s propaganda fonts. The three parts are crassly entitled: Glamour Bitch; Business Bitch; and Casual Bitch in order to evoke a nasty and cheap feeling that is compounded with the different ways in which dictators portray themselves to the public. The tackiness throughout the collection is visually representative of the ingenue and disreputable nature of the dictator that is intended to create feelings of distrust and uneasiness.

Glamour Bitch, is a section that takes inspiration from the military dress uniform worn by malevolent characters such as Gaddafi during ceremonial events and the golden facade of Trump Towers. It is a sub-sector that takes inspiration from the ridiculous display of wealth, status and the over-use of medallions and sashes. These elements allude to the idea of honour, valour and noble qualities. From a personal perspective, the idea of pinning medals of valour on Donald Trump is equivocal to that of “pin the tail on the donkey.” Therefore this section aims to mock through an over-use of golden, glittery fabrics and medallions that have no meaning what so ever. For example, Gaddafi’s signature, ribboned badge, appears in the form of an overtly decadent patchwork made out of gaudy trims to enhance the absurdity of this appendage. Furthermore, laser cut gold sequins in the square paneling shape of Trump Towers decorate an already gold spangled, polyester jersey, whilst displaying an array of words such as money, greed, power and fear. The base fabrics for this segment of the collection include white and black crepe wool; tufted maroon polyester; cotton lawn; red and gold polyester jersey. Laser cut trims and flock printing add to a false kind of luxury, whilst a rich colour palette of maroon, cobalt blue, coal black, stark white and mirrored gold sensationalise this aesthetic. In terms of shape, silhouettes maintain an air of austerity, alternating between short a-line skirts and tailored evening pieces that are finished with heavy leather buckles. The presence of mandarin collars adds a conservative and restrictive feeling that offsets the sense of whimsy provided by occasional knife pleats and youthful graphics.
From evening wear, the collection moves to a mid-tier sub-sector known as Business Bitch. This segment of the collection has a much harder appeal almost like that of the Gestapo as it is a reflection of Donald Trump’s aggressive style of negotiation and how dictators interact with each other during global conferences. Rather than focussing on Trump’s former entrepreneurial engagements, this section imagines political campaigns as a business. Furthermore, the role of a democratic governance system is to provide a service (Hurst). However, with Trump’s recent 2016 Presidential Election Campaign, the veraciousness at which Trump undermined political opponents during debate implored the use of what appeared to be veiled blackmail. For example, publicly promising Hilary Clinton to have her investigated for the disappearance of 33 000 emails in the event that Trump would win the presidential election and guaranteeing $5M USD to go towards a charity of Barack Obama’s choice if he released his birth certificate maintained an air of brutality present in business.

This combined with his endless self-promotion regarding his award winning book, The Art of the Deal (Trump and Schwartz) seemed less concerned with maintaining the air of a public servant as real issues pertaining to the best interests of the general population appeared to be overlooked (Sellers).

In conjunction with this, Business Bitch also sees the introduction of quite possibly the most well-branded dictator of all time, Adolf Hitler, who is purposely introduced in this section along with Trump due to his power of persuasion. The initial growth of the Nazi Party was largely due to the financial backing of businessmen who were convinced of Hitler’s course of action (Boss). His oratory skills enabled him to instil fear of a potential Communist regime that would in turn destroy their wealth (Macias). This is akin to the way in which Trump also dismantles opponents, whether it be oratory or his bombardment of tweets to the public through social media platform, Twitter (Holloway).

All silhouettes in this segment of the collection are sharply constructed suits with angular shoulders and box pleated skirts to create a ruthless type of character. Gaberdine, heavily interface wool suit ing, cotton lawn and sturdy leather accessories create an overall feeling of the uncompromising businessman in an array of muddied greys and stark black accents. Conversely, the presence of embellishments in the form of Hitler’s moustache in conjunction with red, gold and blue nylon stripes add humour and maintain the essence of the all-American cheerleader. Furthermore, laser cut brooches using the Twitter logo, complete with Trump’s orange hair, are re-titled, “Twitler.” Graphics also repeat in a similar way twisting Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again” into “Make America Hate Again” whilst mimicking the colours and shape of a swastika in an effort to visually encourage the viewer to consider the similarities between Trump and Hitler and the potential for history repeating itself.
Slogans and typography further dominate in the section entitled Casual Bitch in order to enhance the feeling of a streetwear orientated segment, whilst maintaining tailored silhouettes in a classic American colour palette of Stark White, Cobalt Blue and Republican Red. Inspiration for the Casual Bitch is derived from the attempts of pro-media surrounding dictators in an effort to humanise them. For example, Kim Jong-Un is often photographed over-seeing agricultural produce whilst North Koreans remain in a state of starvation to give the impression that not only is he doing something in regards to the food shortage, but also that he cares (Universe and Planet). In conjunction with this Kim Jong-Un’s plastered smile during activities such as monitoring the 25 regulation hair cuts, despite sporting an illegal hair cut himself, has the population largely convinced in his vested interest of the common man. Similarly, Trump’s constant declaration of being a “nice guy” (The Telegraph) and family-orientated persona, combined with reality TV stardom from his former career as the host of The Apprentice are all aspects that endear his public to believe that he is relatable (Lawler). What the general public fail to recognise throughout these portrayals is that Trump has been married three times, whilst his children were raised by nannies; sexual assault claims were made against Trump during the filming of his reality TV Show, The Apprentice (Lawler); and nice guys would most likely not initiate an executive order that causes pandemonium when an immediate travel ban is placed on predominantly Muslim-orientated countries (Rothwell and Krol).

Print design throughout the Casual Bitch segment of the collection present a pop-art graphic style to project the feeling of friendliness whilst simultaneously using savage aspects such as Trump’s famous slogan from The Apprentice, “You’re Fired!” The impact on the viewer should feel as though they are being lulled into a false sense of security. In order to continue the friendly aesthetic, sports fabrics such as neoprene, mesh and patch-worked heavy weight jersey enable the tailored jackets to soften and depict a more approachable aesthetic. Furthermore, godet mini-skirts, popularised by cheerleading in the 1950s, enhances this relaxed appeal along with baggier styles of dress inspired by Kim Jong-Un’s suit. In conjunction with this, laser cut badges continue the adornment of the overall collection acting as an award of merit for undertakings such as tax evasion, pertaining to Trump’s refusal to release his tax return whilst reassuring the public that there is nothing untoward about it (Holloway).

From beginning to end, this 2017 AMFI graduation collection entitled the Chaos of Control, is laden with mockery and controversy in an attempt to raise the question: Does Donald Trump have the capacity to be a dictator? Although a leading question, and imploring the use of cognitive psychology, it is a quintessential strategy in order to effectively use fashion design as a platform to embolden informed, political choice of the youth market. By placing Trump in a lineup of dictators and clashing this aesthetic with the stereotype of an all-American cheerleader, this collection brings the central focus back to Trump and his seemingly antiquated view of a classic America. Simultaneously, representations of notable dictators including the likes of Adolf Hitler, Kim Jong-Un and Muammar Gaddafi throughout the collection act as a reminder of how rapidly power can escalate out of control. In a juxtaposition of Trump graphics and fabrics pertaining to all facets of his lifestyle, this enhances the serious undertones of the collection. From a global standpoint, when we allow a politician with potentially damaging, extremist views to hold the most powerful position in the world, we surrender to the whims of the chaos of control.
Bibliography


