

# Rei Kawakubo

*Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body*



By Yasmin Pang

# Background: Rei Kawakubo

- Based in Paris and Tokyo
- Founder of:
  - *Comme de Garçons* – Japanese fashion label
  - *Dover Street Market* – retail store that carries high fashion and streetwear brands
- Known for reinventing fashion and going against conventions



# Key Elements in Kawakubo's Design



- Designed not to flatter the female form but to allow for open interpretation
- The color black as “color of refusal” (The New Yorker)
- No size
- Challenging proportions
- Clothing is a form of identity

# Notable Collections



Spring/Summer 2012



Spring/Summer 2015



Fall/Winter 2016

# Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body

- Comme de Garçons Spring/Summer 1997
- “Lumps and bumps” show
- Pieces featured padding all over the bodies in unconventional ways
  - “Rethinking the body” – Kawakubo
- Referenced the domestication of women and a childlike femininity



## Analysis (1/3)



*Physical representation of burdens*  
Silhouettes of bags, pregnancy bumps,  
and other traits deemed unattractive

## Analysis (2/3)

*Bodies are not limitations*

Instead of restricting the body, the body is distorted and extended



## Analysis (3/3)



*Playful colors + patterns*

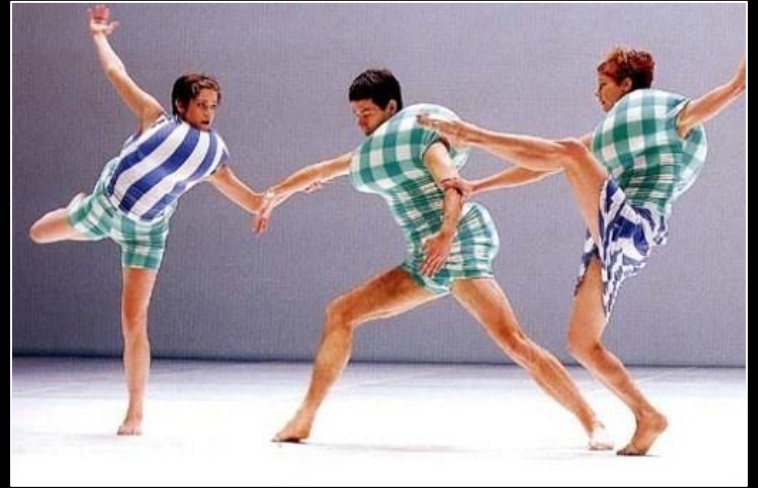
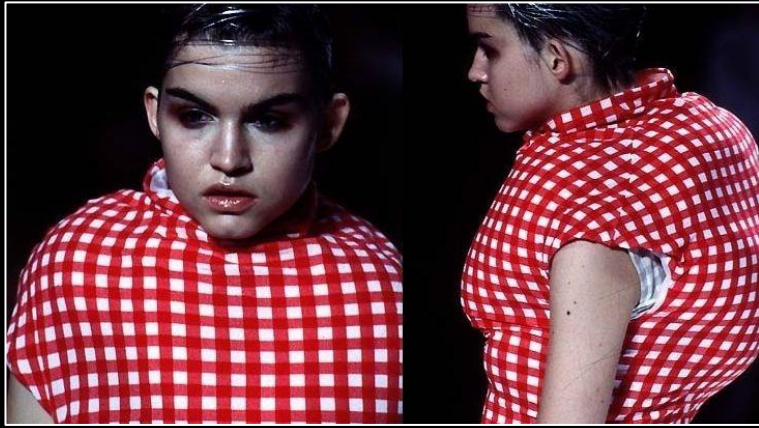
Bright colors – burdens hiding behind  
a happy front

Gingham pattern – reminds viewers of  
stereotypical 1950's housewife



## Conclusion

Much of Kawakubo's work including *Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body* encompasses concepts that leave viewers questioning



Challenged social constructs and norms of beauty and fashion at the time

*“The clothes could be the body and the body could be the clothes”* – Rei Kawakubo

# Sources

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