

Book Review: *Glitterati, on the Fringe*

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Niche Fashion Magazines: Changing the Shape of Fashion. Ane Lyng-Jorlen. I.B. Tauris & Co. 2017. 220 pp. \$99.00 hardback.

She has been a model, a freelance fashion writer, and editor and cofounder of *Dansk*—“the world’s most independent fashion magazine,” by its own description. She is on a first-name basis with some of fashion’s most famous designers, models, and photographers. And she is an unapologetic advocate for what seems to be magazine media’s most elite and most elitist genre: niche fashion magazines.

She is Ane Lyng-Jorlen, whose first book, based on her doctoral dissertation at the London College of Fashion, celebrates the phenomenon of niche publications as a form of art. Part memoir and part ethnographic study, much of the book reflects the author’s own experience at *Dansk* magazine, which is based in Copenhagen, Denmark, but published in English and internationally distributed. References to other niche fashion magazines from across Europe (i.e., *Purple* and *Self-Service* in France; *Fantastic Man* in the Netherlands) also crop up across Lyng-Jorlen’s work, which highlights the many ways in which the genre fuses art, poetry, writing, and architecture.

Central to Lyng-Jorlen’s take on these unique publications is the notion of exclusivity, which she vaguely problematizes at times but mostly condones: “... niche fashion magazines are elitist inasmuch as they restrict access to outsiders, edgy as they innovate fashion mediation, and exclusive as they are expensive to make and buy.” There is a rhyme and reason to the snobbishness, she argues. Each niche fashion magazine strives for a unique visual environment, often reflecting national or regional culture, as a way to contribute new symbolic elements to fashion and recharge the industry’s potential for identity creation. It is this exclusivity, according to Lyng-Jorlen, that allows niche magazines to serve as both fashion’s “playground” and “the haute couture of the fashion press.”

Like art in general, niche fashion magazines tend to emphasize artistic appeal over utility. Their goal is not to suggest new fashionable outfits, but rather to encourage readers’ self-reflection and identity exploration. Clothing and accessories featured in such publications are always mere puzzle pieces within a bigger picture. Although contemporary fashion designs do influence niche magazines’ themes, Lyng-Jorlen ardently emphasizes the value of expressive writing and photography over the ubiquity of seasonal trends.

Compared to mass-market cousins, such as *Vogue* and *Elle*, niche fashion magazines have tiny circulations but boast high-fashion-literate audiences—described by Lyng-Jorlen as “the movers and doyennes of the art and fashion world.” Editors flaunt their often-exclusive relationships with the industry’s players, thus serving as “cultural intermediaries” for less-connected readers. Poor but proud—because elite sources and audiences do not easily translate into revenues—niche publications do, however, practice their own style of

inclusivity by showcasing the designs of little-known fashion innovators and the work of both neophyte and established photographers.

Although Lynne-Jorlen's analysis demonstrates her passion for the niche fashion genre, it also serves as a reminder that haute couture, especially when mediated via print, is neither widely accessible nor universally enjoyable. The book contributes to magazine scholarship by reminding researchers and fashion enthusiasts that innovation is almost never possible within the mainstream. The title can also serve as a complementary reading in undergraduate fashion journalism courses or in graduate seminars tackling issues of culture and identity construction.