Extravagant Imagination: Spectacle through the Eyes of John Galliano and Martin Margiela

[Background music plays throughout the video.]

[The Bloomsbury Fashion Video Archive (BFVA) logo appears on screen, followed by the Yoox Net-a-Porter Group logo.]

[The title *Extravagant Imagination: Spectacle through the Eyes of John Galliano and Martin Margiela* fades in.]

[The video transitions to a montage of runway shows featuring fashion presentations by Galliano and Margiela.]

Narration begins:

Historically, catwalk shows have long been considered as important as the collections themselves. As Nathalie Khan argues, the fashion show has one purpose only: to make an impact. Clothes themselves are often not enough to grasp the necessary media attention, leading designers to turn their attention to the show itself.

[The video cuts to footage of grand runway productions from various designers, highlighting theatrical performances.]

This is supported by fashion historian Caroline Evans, who explained how "couture clothing will never appear in the shops," making its appearance to us phantasmagoric. However, other fashion academics, such as Olga Dritsopoulou, argue that over time, and with the prevalence of social media, the role of the fashion show has changed with its increasing public visibility.

[Runway footage continues, featuring avant-garde presentations.]

In French, the word *spectacle* means "theatrical presentation," and the concept of a fashion show is undoubtedly a theatrical production, "transform[ing] commercial enterprise into a dazzling display, aestheticizing everyday life." In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord describes the fashion show as a "spectacle unto itself… sealed in the show space of the runway, with its attendant protocols and hierarchies."

[The video transitions to footage from the mid-1990s, showcasing runway shows by Martin Margiela, John Galliano, Yohji Yamamoto, and Alexander McQueen.]

In the mid-1990s, a range of fashion shows indicated that catwalk presentations had evolved into performances. The fashion press, including *Vogue, Harper's Bazaar*, and *W Magazine*, played a significant role in shaping the trends and attitudes of the time. Young London designers recognized the value of shock and spectacle to attract press, backers, and buyers—arguably, none more so than John Galliano.

[The video features dramatic runway moments from Galliano's shows, including elaborate set designs and theatrical storytelling.]

Similarly, the shows of Belgian-born designer Martin Margiela resembled fine art installations. Eschewing the conventional glitz of the catwalk, his presentations were often held in derelict urban spaces. Margiela used locations associated with the imagery of the 19th-century ragpicker—a figure identified as an index of modernity, revitalizing discarded materials and repurposing them into fashion.

[Footage of Margiela's unconventional runway presentations appears on screen, showcasing models walking in unexpected locations.]

Debord's notion of *détournement* (turning the spectacle back on itself and reversing its normal ideological function) comes to life through the work of Margiela. He subverted traditional fashion show norms by staging his presentations in everyday settings, having models walk alongside passers-by, or using technicians and sandwich-board men to showcase his designs.

[The video highlights key moments from Margiela's shows, emphasizing his use of repurposed materials and unconventional staging.]

While Margiela's shows expanded the repertoire of urban spectacle and fashion, John Galliano took a different approach—embracing high drama and opulence in his runway productions.

[The video transitions to Galliano's *Spring 1998* show, *A Poetic Tribute to Marchesa Casati*, held at the Opera Garnier in Paris.]

Galliano's *Spring 1998* show was an extravagant spectacle, blending elements of romanticism and drama. Set designer Michael Howells transformed the grandeur of the Opera house into a palatial setting reminiscent of Casati's opulent residence. Models, dressed in decadent hoop skirts and fairytale-inspired attire, wandered through the audience, creating an immersive experience that blurred the line between performance and runway.

[Footage of models engaging with the audience and each other enhances the theatricality of Galliano's vision.]

In contrast, Margiela's *Spring/Summer 1996* collection utilized remnant fabrics to construct masks for his models. As they walked down a runway made from upcycled wooden tables, the audience's focus shifted to the garments—featuring *trompe l'oeil* prints that played with the perception of materiality and form.

[The video presents eerie footage of Margiela's masked models, reinforcing the designer's avant-garde approach.]

The *Autumn/Winter 1997* collection took theatricality to a new level as models rode buses between three different show locations in Paris, accompanied by a 35-member brass band. This spectacle challenged conventional expectations of a runway show, blending performance, transportation, and fashion into one dynamic event.

[The video cuts between Galliano's grand theatrical presentations and Margiela's experimental performances, juxtaposing their different approaches to spectacle.]

For Margiela and Galliano, the spectacular moments in fashion that they created were meant to be experienced live, seen only by the audience in the performance space. In that sense, the contemporary spectacle is synonymous with social media. The industry has shifted from exclusive, "had-to-be-there" events to digitally shared moments. However, modern catwalks still prioritize the in-person experience, as seen in shows like *Balenciaga Spring/Summer 2023* and *Coperni Spring/Summer 2023*, which continue to push the boundaries of spectacle.

[The narration ends, and the runway footage fades out.]

[The video transitions to the final scene, showcasing the Bloomsbury Fashion Central homepage and navigating to *Further Reading* options.]

[The cursor selects *Bloomsbury Fashion Video Archives*, leading to the landing page of the collection.]

[The user clicks *Explore Videos*, demonstrating how to browse the collection of runway shows within BFVA.]

[The video ends with video essay credits rolling, displaying the Bloomsbury Fashion Central logo, followed by the Bloomsbury Digital Resources logo.]

[End of Video]