

Chanel shoes, but no salary: how one woman exposed the scandal of the French fashion industry

Notes & Cues:	Article: <p>Giulia Mensitieri, an alumnus of one of France's elite universities, takes little to no personal interest in clothes. So it is likely to have been an ugly surprise to the French fashion industry that her PhD – now a book entitled <i>The Most Beautiful Job in the World</i> – has opened up its secretive profession in such a dramatically public way.</p> <p>The reality of fashion was illustrated by Mensitieri's chance introduction to her subject matter. She met "Mia", a successful Italian stylist who had moved to Paris: "She was wearing Chanel shoes and being flown across the world in business class." But Mia couldn't afford to rent a room, so she was couch surfing at a friend's house. "She was eating McDonald's every day. She never knew when she would be paid for a job and how much she would get. For a week's work, a very big luxury brand gave her a voucher for £4, 500 to spend in their boutique."</p> <p>True, Mia could have sold it. But Mensitieri points out that working in fashion means being seen in a constantly updated uniform of beautiful, expensive clothes and accessories – paid for by vouchers instead of a salary.</p> <p>"The message is, you don't have to be paid because you are lucky to be there at all. Working in fashion is hyper socially validating, even if you're unpaid. Fashion presents itself as something exceptional, a world outside the ordinary, " she says.</p> <p>"To me, fashion is the very centre of contemporary capitalism – it upholds the old forms of exploitation and the new, very modern forms which are more a kind of self-exploitation, a blurring of the line between your work and everything you are outside of work."</p>
Summary:	