

# **DATS**

**Dress and Textile Specialists**



**Journal  
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Caption: Detail image of Balenciaga evening gown, 1953-4, from *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London, 1947 – 1957*  
Photograph courtesy of the V&A Museum

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## Conference 2007

The 2007 DATS conference was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November at the V&A. The theme was 'Identifying, Collecting and Caring for the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Collection'. A highlight was a visit to the wonderful exhibition, *The Golden Age of Couture, Paris and London, 1947 – 1957* following an introduction by curators, Claire Wilcox and Eleri Lyn.

Following on from the decision last year to reproduce the conference papers in the spring journal, we have managed to include versions of most of them and thanks are due to all the speakers for supplying texts and imagery to do this. In order to cut down expenditure on postage and to promote the DATS website as a resource tool, the decision has been taken to post the journal on the website and alert members via the email circulation list. Hard copies will be sent out to those members without access to email and the internet.

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***IDENTIFYING AND CARING FOR PLASTICS*** – Susan Mossman, The Science Museum, London

### Overview of plastics

When beginning to identify plastics it is helpful to have an idea of what plastics were available when.

Natural plastics have been used from antiquity, from at least as early as 3000BC. Examples include bitumen, amber, tortoiseshell, horn, natural rubber, gutta percha, p apier mach e, shellac, and Bois durci.

Semi-synthetic plastics were developed from the mid-nineteenth century. They include vulcanised rubber, cellulose nitrate<sup>1</sup>, casein, viscose rayon<sup>2</sup>, and cellulose acetate

The first truly synthetic plastic was developed in 1907 with the advent of Bakelite. Bakelite was swiftly succeeded by a range of synthetic plastics, including thiourea and urea formaldehyde, melamines, and in the 1930s and 1940s by the polys: polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyethene, polymethyl methacrylate (acrylic), polyamide (nylon), polystyrene, polyurethane, and polyester.

Now there are many more types of plastics available. Some are modified versions of older plastics such as high density polyethene (HDPE) and high molecular weight polyethene (UHMWPE). Aramid fibres (Kevlar®, Twaron®) were developed in 1966, and are from the polyamide (nylon) family of polymers. They are used in bullet proof vests and motor cycle suits.

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<sup>1</sup> Chardonnet silk, developed in 1884, is made from cellulose nitrate

<sup>2</sup> Viscose rayon, developed 1892, was originally made from cellulose xanthate and later from regenerated cellulose acetate

Others are copolymers where blocks of different polymers are joined together. For example in acrylonitrilebutadiene styrene, a synthetic rubber is combined with a styrene. Another example is high impact polystyrene (HIPS). In textiles an example of such a copolymeric material is Lycra®. Where more than one type of polymer is linked together, a new material is made with properties which are now modified/better than those of the original component parts.

In the 1970s, melded fibres were developed by ICI. These are fibres with an inner core and other sheath which melts at a lower temperature than the core. With heat treatment, a mesh of these fibres melts together, producing a felt-like material which is used for applications such as car carpets.

Composite materials are also an important area of modern plastics. In composites, a plastic is combined with another material such as glass, metal or natural fibre. Examples include glass fibre made from glass fibres embedded in polyester resin and used to make furniture, car bodies and boat hulls. There are also new high tech composites which have to meet very demanding specifications. In particular those based on carbon fibre mixed with a polymer resin which may be polyester, epoxy or PEEK (polyetheretherketone). Carbon fibre composites appear in high-tech aerospace applications such as aircraft nose cones and for top end sports equipment, including tennis racquets as well as in hard bodied suit cases, and in artificial prosthetic legs for paraOlympians. Natural materials such as Kenaf fibres are being combined with lignin, a natural polymer found in wood to make a composite material for concept car bodies.

There is now a multi-million dollar industry dedicated to producing engineered fibres designed with specific internal structures to give specific properties, such as breathability in clothing. Certain polyester fibres have been designed with inner channels to wick moisture away from the skin, keeping the wearer dry. Other fabrics have been designed with a surface nano-layer to repel stains or with in-built "thermocules®" (a phase changing material) embedded in the fabric weave, an off shoot of work done by NASA on developing space suit materials to keep astronauts comfortable whether it be hot or cold.

New health monitoring and more sun protective fabrics are being developed as well as anti-bacterial fabrics. Fabrics may be impregnated with vitamins or aromatherapy products, for example a fabric that is embedded with tourmaline to promote relaxation, lower blood pressure, and improve circulation.

With the modern emphasis on sustainability there is also a new class of biopolymers made from crops such as corn and sugar. These materials can biodegrade, but there are ethical considerations about using food crops as the feedstock for plastics.

Products made of recycled or reused plastics are increasing, with new items such as jewellery and even fleece fabrics made using recycled or reused plastics. Some are made from one polymer, others from mixtures.

### **What to look for to identify plastics**

When identifying plastics, clues to look for include:

- colour

- transparency
- date
- design
- function
- manufacturing process

### **Identification tests**

There are various tests that may be used to identify plastics. These include:

- burn tests (not recommended for museum collections)
- chemical spot tests (which are not 100% reliable)
- smell
- feel
- density
- analytical techniques such as infrared spectroscopy (FTIR)

### **Caring for plastics**

The main enemies of plastics are:

- too much light, in particular UV
- moisture
- heat

Other hazards for long term care of plastics include:

- oxygen
- ozone
- exhaustion of various stabilisers (eg. migrating plasticisers)
- air pollutants

All these factors lead to physical and /or chemical degradation.

### **Physical damage**

Physical damage may lead to:

- shrinkage or expansion
- cracking or tearing
- loss of flexibility
- change in rigidity

### **Chemical damage**

With chemical damage visible signs may be:

- discoloration or dullness
- cracking & brittleness
- bloom
- leaching of liquids
- crazing
- crumbling

The surface of the plastic may feel tacky and this may attract dirt. Discernible odours might include camphor (for cellulose nitrate), vinegar for cellulose acetate, or vomit (cellulose butyrate, cellulose acetate butyrate).

## Plastics most at risk

These are:

- natural rubber
- cellulose nitrate
- cellulose acetate
- PVC
- polyurethane

## Mechanical damage

Visible mechanical damage to plastics may be:

- surface scratches
- wear
- breaks/cracks / chips

## Prioritised tips for caring for plastics

- store in stable temperature and humidity (recommended levels are 2-5°C and 20-30 RH for cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate; 5-25°C and 50-60 RH for casein and other plastics<sup>3</sup>)<sup>4</sup>
- store in dark
- remove unnecessary light in galleries (safe levels vary from 50-150 lux dependent on type of plastic and length of display)<sup>5</sup>
- use UV filters on cases/windows
- separate plastics by type
- give plastic collections good ventilation
- wear gloves when handling as this stops acid burns and fingerprints
- store on/in acid free/inert materials such as Plastazote® (polyethene foam)
- check your collections every six months

## Adsorbents commonly used to inhibit degradation

- activated charcoal - this is used for organic pollutants/water vapour; it can also be used in air filters to remove pollutants.
- molecular sieves (Zeolites)
- oxygen scavengers (Ageless™)
- silica gel to remove moisture

## Danger signs to watch for

Separate and isolate an object if:

- the object smells of camphor, vinegar or other acid
- cellulosic objects show signs of degradation: such as cracks, weeping, crystallisation.
- acid free wrapping shows burn marks!

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<sup>3</sup> Information courtesy of Dr Brenda Keneghan.

<sup>4</sup> Consult a plastics conservator before varying the environment of a vulnerable plastic as a dramatic and swift temperature change, such as freezing, may be very harmful and cause permanent damage.

<sup>5</sup> Light damage is cumulative.

## **Further information**

### **Books and articles**

*Early Plastics: Perspectives 1850-1950*, ed. by Susan Mossman, Leicester University Press 1997, (paperback edition, 2000).

*The Development of Plastics*, ed. by S. Mossman and P. Morris, Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, 1994.

*Plastics - Collecting & Conserving*. Edited by Anita Quye & Colin Williamson, NMS Publishing Ltd, 1999.

*Simple methods for the identification of plastics*, Braun, M. D., Carl Hanser Verlag, Munchen Wien, 1982.

*Material characterisation tests for objects of art & archaeology*, N. Odegaard, S. Carroll, and W.S. Zimmt, Archetype Publications, London, 2000.

*Saving Celluloid - The Plastics Collection at the Science Museum and its Preservation, Diversity into the Next Century*, Proceedings of the 27th SAMPE Technical Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico (with E Then), Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering, Covina, California, 1995, pp.1118-1124

*Plastics in the Science Museum, London - A Curator's View*, Saving the Twentieth Century: The Conservation of Modern Materials, ed. by David W Grattan, Canadian Conservation Institute, Ottawa, 1993, pp.25-35

*The problems of synthetic fibres*, *Polymer Preprints*, The Division of Polymer Chemistry, Inc., American Chemical Society, Washington, D.C., Volume 33, Number 2, August, 1992, pp.662-663

### **Web**

*Canadian Council of Archives* [[www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RB](http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RB). ] (for film/negatives)

*Canadian Conservation Institute* [[http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/main\\_e.aspx](http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/main_e.aspx)]

*Cellulose Acetate Project* [<http://www.nla.gov.au/anica/>] (for film/negatives)

*ICOM: Modern Materials and contemporary art* [<http://icom-cc.icom.museum/WG/ModernMaterials/>]

*Plastics Historical Society* [<http://www.plastiquarian.com>]

*Plastics subject specialist network*

[[http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/find\\_a\\_network/subject\\_specialists/plastics](http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/find_a_network/subject_specialists/plastics)]

### **Hand-on resources**

*Plastics touch & learn* (Back to basics). Polymer Training Ltd, 1999  
[[www.polymertraining.uk](http://www.polymertraining.uk)].

### **Acknowledgements**

My thanks to Dr Brenda Keneghan of the V&A and Dr Yvonne Shashoua, from the National Museum of Denmark.

## **NEW TECHNOLOGIES/NEW TEXTILES** - Sarah E. Braddock Clarke

In the last two decades there have been huge advances in the area of materials. Not only in ultra sophisticated synthetics but also in 'techno naturals' where natural fibres/fabrics are enhanced in various ways. The result is a new range of 'flexibles' with their own aesthetic and unique properties. From seemingly delicate papers to tough stainless steel, the world of textiles has expanded its vocabulary to touch on new fields. New aesthetics and ways of working are emerging and advanced technologies in recent years have enabled this to happen. The result is an exciting combination of textile and non-textile materials to create a new aesthetic and tactile experience. The question is - what do we know about such unusual mixes - how do we look after and conserve them?

*Notes – emphasis is given to techno textiles and their applications to fashion – combinations of textiles with non-textiles and traditional craft with sophisticated technologies (e.g. wool/silk in combination with new synthetics/microfibres or finishing treatments); heat-treating thermoplastic materials and borrowing from other disciplines (e.g. sports shoe manufacturing); heat-moulding resins; microfibres and high-performance textiles originally developed for space/defence/sports industries and breathable, waterproof, synthetic membranes adapted from architecture. Metals - stainless steel and polyurethane for a stretch metal; stainless steel spattering for a thin, fluid metallic textile; linked metal for a new flexible; gold leaf printing on wool; organic mark-making on silk; moulding nonwovens; spraying a mist of cotton fibre in layers to create a fabric; laminating with an ultra-fine polyurethane film; printing with the rubber solution Expandex on the reverse side to create a subtle effect; laser-cutting leather, laser-cutting synthetics to create intricate forms; recycling - mixing old and new; recycling industrial waste - immersing in plastic to make secure and create a new substrate; recycling various materials - in the future maybe there will be no more manufacturing?*

### **SYNTHETICS/MICROFIBRES**

**SAMPLE 1** "Jelly Fish" - designed by Reiko Sudo for Nuno Corporation. An industrial vinyl polychloride fabric with a preset 50% heat-shrinkage ratio, developed for such uses as car seat covers, is layered onto a polyester organdie - but only partially fixed - using a special adhesive screen-printed in a checkerboard pattern - before receiving a flash heat treatment. This causes the polyester organdie to shrivel where adhered and, being a thermoplastic fabric, it retains these crinkles even after the vinyl polychloride is peeled away.

**SLIDE 1** Yoshiki Hishinuma - Autumn/Winter 2002/03 – this collection uses the thermoplastic properties of synthetics to create relief and three-dimensional effects for an 'otherworldly' look.

**SLIDE 2** Issey Miyake by Naoki Takizawa - S/S 2004 - inspired by high-tech sports-shoe styling and manufacturing technology a multi-coloured thermoplastic resin mesh was created that moulded to the form of the human body.

**SLIDE 3** Junya Watanabe – "Function and Practicality" collection - S/S 2000 - high-tech, ultra-lightweight and water-resistant microfibre is used to create a collection that is entirely waterproof (sponsored by Toray).

SLIDE 4 Shelley Fox - A/W 2000/01 - wool and A. Proctor Group specialist architectural synthetic membrane.

## **METALS**

SAMPLE 2 “Stainless Matt” - designed by Reiko Sudo for Nuno Corporation. A woven polyester base is very finely spattered with stainless steel (chrome, nickel and iron powdered metals). The technique was adapted from the Japanese car industry.

SAMPLE 3 “Copper Cloth” - designed by Reiko Sudo for Nuno Corporation. A Promix (Japanese fibre made from Australian milk casein powder and acrylonitrile) warp (16%) and copper weft (84%). Copper has anti-bacterial and anti-allergenic properties and has uses in the medical and sports worlds. The copper is given a very fine coating of polyurethane to prevent the metal from turning green and becoming brittle through oxidation. MOMA NYC collection.

SLIDE 5 “Stainless Steel Sparklers”- designed by Reiko Sudo for Nuno Corporation. Stainless steel, cotton, polyamide and polyurethane. The stainless steel was developed by a Japanese tyre manufacturer to increase the strength and durability of their product. Woven with cotton and polyamide a soft and flexible cloth is created while the small polyurethane content enables a stretch textile.

SLIDE 6 Yoshiki Hishinuma - Spring/Summer 1991 - using stainless steel spattered polyester for a fluid, real metallic textile.

SLIDE 7 Paco Rabanne - Autumn/Winter 2004/05 - Paco Rabanne is an innovative fashion designer who became famous in the 1960s for his use of new materials and ways of constructing garments. He worked with metals, plastics and papers and the collections still demonstrate the use of non-traditional materials.

SLIDE 8 Mulligan -A/W 1998/99 - felt coat with gold leaf print - textile by Eley Kishimoto.

SLIDE 9 Hussein Chalayan - buried silk dress with rust markings. 1995.

## **NONWOVENS/PAPERS/RUBBERS**

SAMPLE 4 “Patched Paper” - designed by Reiko Sudo for Nuno Corporation. To create this lightweight fabric, strips of *Mino washi* handmade paper are woven into a sheer polyester organdie base. This paper is one of the strongest in Japan and traditionally used for shoji sliding screens. A soft lustre is imparted to the resulting cloth with a finishing treatment given by a metal foil brocade specialist weaver. Included in the Design Collection of MOMA, NYC.

SAMPLE 5 “Tyvek” by DuPont. A nonwoven material made of very finely spun bonded olefin fibre. It is strong, lightweight and resistant to chemicals, water and abrasion.

SLIDE 10 Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons - Spring/Summer 1997. A synthetic top that has been heat-treated to create a relief surface – it looks like a contemporary version of *shibori*.

SLIDE 11 Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons - Spring/Summer 1997. The designer Nathalie Hambro wears Comme des Garçons brown paper skirt with Vivienne Westwood wedges.

SLIDE 12 Savithri Bartlett/Boudicca - "Leave" collection - Spring/Summer 1998. "Silicone Line Bodice" - moulded nonwoven. Fashion designers - Boudicca - Zowie Broach and Brian Kirkby. Mould maker - Keese van der Graaf. Textile designer - Savithri Bartlett. The fabric is the result of MPhil research carried out at the RCA by Savithri Bartlett. She worked with nonwoven fibres using a bicomponent thermoplastic polyester fibre called Wellbond manufactured by Wellman International. This fibre combines a low melting temperature with high fibre strength. Boudicca created a seamless, moulded bodice that reflected the silhouette of the contemporary woman. They collaborated with a Harley Street plastic surgeon and his client in taking a cast of her silicone breast implants. The bodice uses a deep indigo blue dye using CIBA dyes and chemicals.

SLIDE 13 Manel Torres - 'Fabrican' - a fine mist of coloured cotton fibre that builds up layers. Once a fibre layer is established, it can remain as a second skin or be peeled back to create volume and drape. Fabrican can also be used to keep additional fabric in place by spraying over the top - so decoration can be added.

SLIDE 14 Yoshiki Hishinuma. 2000. Polyester taffeta laminated with polyurethane film.

SAMPLE 6 Nigel Atkinson - Expandex printed on various fabrics.

SLIDE 15 Nigel Atkinson - Expandex printed on velvet. "Sea Anemone" bomber jacket.

#### **LASER-CUTTING**

SLIDE 16 Savithri Bartlett/Manel Torres collaboration - laser cutting on nonwoven fabric; laser cutting leather top and hood - the new 21st Century 'lace'.

SLIDE 17 & 18 Jun Takahashi for Undercover - S/S 2007 - laser cutting. An elegant silk organdie dress made of what, from a distance looks like flower petal motifs but which is actually skull and cross-bone shapes made using laser cutting.

#### **RECYCLING**

SLIDE 19 Jessica Ogden with the singer Neneh Cherry.

SAMPLE 7 Luisa Cevese – a bag using recycled textile waste which is immersed in plastic.

SLIDE 20 Luisa Cevese - Riedizioni bags as accessories.

SAMPLE 8 Technogel - many of the new gel materials were developed for medical applications. Technogel by Technogel Italia feels wonderful to touch as it yields under pressure but distributes stress evenly; it is thick, soft and pliable and will conform to fit many shapes, such as the human form. This gel will not harden over time as it contains no plasticisers. Technogel can be injected directly into a mould

using an advanced vacuum system that allows it to be covered by a variety of materials. It is a high-performance material with an attractive look and handle.

## **& THE FUTURE**

SLIDE 21 Mark Dion and J. Morgan Puett in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum. 2003. From the exhibition "RN: The Past, Present and Future of the Nurses' Uniform". The "Post Apocalyptic Nurse" (c. 2130) is one of four proposed futuristic uniforms. Materials used here include the architectural fabric, polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) that has been salvaged and used for its abrasion-resistance and protective qualities against acid rain, ultraviolet radiation and environmental pollution. Additional fabrics are Tenara woven with expanded PTFE fabric supplied by Gore; nonwoven fibres; aramids in thermoplastic film by Honeywell Performance Polymers and a synthetic latex by Scott Materials Group Inc. This artwork shows that in a time of anarchy everything has to be recycled as nothing is being produced. The uniform itself is vitally important as it becomes a nomadic hospital offering comfort, protection and medical aid to those in need.

Conservation is generally based on known materials and the future of the new textiles is less clear. Materials like latex are very problematic - over time they can take the form of whatever they are on or placed next to. Latex often ages badly too and becomes yellow and brittle. As for new materials, the very latest microfibres and finishing treatments - ways of keeping them stable and conserving them are being established. Even techno naturals where a natural fabric is enhanced through finishing technology can be difficult to assess. We are moving into uncertain territory and only time will truly tell.

Many of the references used here have come from the 2000 – 2002 touring exhibition, *Fabric of Fashion* co-curated by Sarah E. Braddock Clarke and Marie O'Mahony for the British Council; and from the book *Techno Textiles 2: Revolutionary Fabrics for Fashion and Design* by Sarah E. Braddock Clarke and Marie O'Mahony, (Thames & Hudson, 2005)

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**DRESS, TEXTILES AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS** – Naomi Korn,  
Copyright Consultant

This short paper is based upon a presentation given at the DATS Conference held at the V&A in November 2008. Whilst it should not be taken as legal advice, and legal advice should always be sought from a legally trained professional, it does, however, outline some best practice advice and opinions.

Intellectual Property Rights protect creations of the mind, and are in essence the reward that is afforded to the authors, designers and creators of new innovations, endeavours and creations. Intellectual Property Rights can be broadly broken down into rights, such as copyright, which arise automatically upon the creation of an original creative work, and other rights such as patents and trade marks. These latter types of rights require registration, and by such investment, provide for a complete monopoly against any kind of use (even if use is made in ignorance of the existence of such protection).

Dress and textiles are likely to be protected by several different types of rights, many of which exist simultaneously in any one piece and effectively forming layers of rights. It is important that these rights are understood, so that risks of infringement can be minimised and possible exploitation opportunities realised.

### **Copyright**

Copyright protects the skill and effort invested in creating specific types of works, such as works of artistic craftsmanship (protected under the category of “Artistic Works”). This is likely to include textile designs and any surface decoration on garments etc. This means that even if a garment or textile is owned, unless rights have been assigned or permission to use them has been granted, permission will need to be sought from the rights holder. The duration of copyright in these works will vary according to a number of factors such as what it is and when it was created. Unlike patents, copyright is granted automatically and does not involve an application process. Although there are a few defences to copyright (so called “fair dealing” exceptions), these are somewhat limited.

### **Design Rights**

Design Rights protect the form, rather than the function of an object etc, such as the form of garments – but not any surface design. Different requirements must be met in order to register a design. However, due to the amendments introduced to comply with the European Directive, the definition of designs that can be registered, has in some respects been expanded. Registered design right subsists for five years from the date of application (which is deemed to be the date of registration if registration is granted), and may be extended for up to five periods of five years.

### **Trade marks**

These fall into two types – Registered and Unregistered. Trade Marks are typically a symbol, image or word associated with particular goods or services provided by the owner, such as clothing brand names and “designer labels”. Both types of Mark can last indefinitely so long as the owner still actively uses them and in the case of a Registered Trade Mark the fees are paid. The owner of a Registered Trade Mark has the right to take legal action to prevent third parties from using its Mark (or something deceptively similar) in the course of trade.

In the world of fashion, dress design and textiles, Intellectual Property Rights are often passionately enforced. They are the means that designers and clothing producers can use to protect the fruits of their hard work from imitation. However, although imitation can be said to be the highest form of flattery, when livelihoods, reputation and credibility are at stake, most designers and their subsequent rights holders are likely to actively enforce these rights. It is therefore vital that if textiles and designs are copied, the various layers of rights are identified, and measures put in place to ensure that the various rights holders’ permission is sought.

As copyright, in particular, protects a broad range of creative works and it is important to remember that a number of rights, mainly copyright, may also exist in ephemera associated with textiles and dresses, such as booklets, photographs, letters, drawings and sound recordings. This means that not only will permission need to be sought from third parties for the reproduction of any of these works, but also, there is

a possibility that collections will own the copyright items of this type that are created by staff and other third parties (as long as permission has been sought).

So, what is the best way to deal with Intellectual Property Rights arising in textiles and garments?

- Identify the rights that exist and ensure that enough time is put aside to get the permissions that are needed
- Understand that sometimes there maybe more than one type of right that will require clearance from third parties
- If you are charged for using someone else's items, make your case and negotiate
- Be prepared not to use items.....or find alternatives
- Read the small print of any licence agreements
- Remember that you are likely to be creating works yourselves and your rights should be protected and their value fully realised!

If you want to find out more:

Visit Collections Link [www.collectionslink.org.uk](http://www.collectionslink.org.uk) – the UK's National Advisory Service for Collections

UK Intellectual Property Office [www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)

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### ***MRS TINNE'S WARDROBE: A LIVERPOOL LADY'S CLOTHES, 1900-1940***

Pauline Rushton, Curator of Costume and Textiles, Department of Decorative Arts, National Museums of Liverpool

Between April and July 2006, Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery staged its first ever costume exhibition, *A Passion for Fashion, A Liverpool Lady's Clothes, 1900-1940*, featuring garments from the wardrobe of local doctor's wife, Emily Margaret Tinne (1886-1966). This turned out to be the Walker's most popular temporary exhibition to date, with over 74,000 visitors during its three month run, an average of 800 visitors per day. I curated the exhibition and the garments were conserved and mounted by my colleague Anne-Marie Hughes, our Textile Conservator.

The after-effects of the show are still being felt in that I continue to receive requests for us to re-run the show or to tour it. Such positive public reaction to the exhibition, together with a demand to see more such material, has been beneficial for me in that I'm now being asked by my managers to put forward ideas for future costume exhibitions. I'm currently working on proposals for new shows but I also plan to re-display some of the Tinne Collection, on a smaller scale, at one of our recently-refurbished venues, Sudley House, from Spring 2009 onwards.

The Tinne Collection was donated to the National Museums Liverpool, of which the Walker is a part, in three separate groups, in 1967, 2001 and 2003. It was the gift of

Mrs Tinne's youngest daughter, Alexine Tinne, and the entire collection numbers more than 700 items, making it likely to be the largest collection of clothing belonging to one individual in the UK. It represents Mrs Tinne's daywear, evening wear, outdoor garments, underwear, swimwear, shoes, hats, gloves, stockings, jewellery and other accessories, as well as the clothes of her six children and her servants. There are also household soft furnishings such as lace curtains and bedding. As such, it provides a snap-shot of the lifestyle of an upper middle-class woman in a major British city between the two World Wars. Whilst the garments in the Collection are often typical of what the middle classes bought then (and, to be truthful, are not necessarily that fashionable), they are atypical in terms of their number. Most other middle class women of that time would not have had around 1,000 items in their wardrobes, as Mrs Tinne probably had.

How and why did Mrs Tinne manage to acquire so many clothes? The simple answer is that she married into money. Her husband, Philip Frederic Tinne, whom she married in 1910, was a GP but also a member of a seriously-wealthy family of sugar merchants of Dutch origin, who had settled in Liverpool during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. They ran a thriving sugar business and shipping fleet between Liverpool and Demerara in Guyana. Tinne family money allowed Emily Tinne to indulge her 'passion for fashion', whereas the wife of an ordinary doctor in the 1920s and 1930s would never have been able to afford so many clothes, some of them obviously very expensive. Added to the availability of money was the fact that Emily Tinne had time on her hands. Before her marriage she had been a domestic science teacher but social convention of the times meant that, once married, a female teacher was forced to resign. Emily had servants to help her look after her growing family and consequently needed something to help her fill her days. Shopping became almost like her hobby and so led to the accumulation of numerous garments. She appears to have suffered from a mixture of boredom and frustration at not being able to work, but found a creative out-let in shopping and in performing 'good works' for local charities.

There is another aspect to her continual buying. Emily came from a strict Scottish Presbyterian background. Born in Calcutta to missionary parents who did not believe in wasting money unnecessarily on 'fripperies', she had had a rather spartan upbringing. Marriage and access to money allowed her to indulge in her love of nice clothes. Nevertheless, there is the suggestion of the 'shopoholic' about her due to the sheer volume of material she amassed. This is further emphasised by the fact that she often bought the same garment in a number of different colour-ways and that many of them were left unworn, still retaining their original price labels.

Where did Emily Tinne keep all these clothes? According to her daughter Alexine, they were first stored in an en-suite bathroom, then later in the dis-used servants' quarters, a cottage in the grounds of her home, Clayton Lodge, and finally, upon the outbreak of War in 1939, Emily packed them all into tea chests in the cellar. And there they stayed until 1967 when Alexine began to clear the house before moving to a smaller home. Emily had died the previous year and Alexine could no longer afford the up-keep of a large house on her own, her siblings having married and moved out by that time.

Where did Emily acquire her clothes? Many were made for her by a local dressmaker, Mrs Taylor, a chauffeur's wife who lived near Clayton Lodge, the Tinne family home. Some of the original paper dress patterns used by Mrs Taylor, by makers such as Weldon's, still survive in the Collection. These patterns reveal a number of things; they give some indication of Emily's taste in styles since she has marked some designs with a cross, and they also reveal her changing physical shape over time. With repeated pregnancies, she appears to have grown from the equivalent of a size 10 to a size 16, in a period when anyone over 40 years of age was routinely referred to as a 'matron'. Advertising for such matronly and 'outsize' fashions was much more bluntly-worded than that of today and is reflected in the patterns themselves, with titles such as *Smart Fashions for Wider Hips*.

Emily also bought clothes from Liverpool's department stores and high class ladies' outfitters, many of them located in the city's main thoroughfare, Church Street, and in its prestigious fashion district, Bold Street. We know exactly where Emily shopped and in many cases how much she paid for individual items because the unworn examples still retain their labels with the retailer's name and the price on them. Her taste in daywear was for understated styles in muted shades of grey, blue, red, green, black and brown, and a range of florals. The changing styles of the period through which she lived can be seen in her wardrobe, together with flashes of high fashion in particular garments. She wore a range of fabrics, including natural fibres like cottons, silks and wools as well as the new man-made fibres such as rayon and rayon mixtures.



Images courtesy National Museums of Liverpool

Some of Emily's maternity wear still exists in the Collection, in the form of two dresses and a maternity corset of about 1920. These are relatively rare survivors, quite surprisingly so for a woman who went through seven pregnancies – one of her children died of whooping cough while still an infant, although the other six grew to adulthood. Many of the original Tinne family photographs, supplied by Alexine for use in the exhibition and accompanying catalogue, depict the children from babyhood onwards. In some of them, their mother appears in garments that are still in the Collection, which can therefore be dated quite accurately from the age of the child.

In terms of evening wear, Emily evidently favoured black dresses predominantly, with occasional flashes of colour, which must also have had a slimming and flattering effect on her figure. She had numerous evening dresses, in a range of popular fabrics, which seems all the more strange when one learns that she and Philip Tinne rarely socialised or went out, mainly because he ran an evening surgery for his patients. They may, of course, have dressed for dinner in that more formal age, although their daughter Alexine does not remember them ever doing so. Emily had evening dresses in all of the main contemporary materials, including many beaded and sequined examples imported from France, and others in silk crepe, silk velvet devoré and machine-made lace. She also had a number of very glamorous evening gowns in bias-cut satin-backed crepe, more suitable perhaps for a Hollywood movie star than a middle-aged middle-class woman in a provincial city. These she may never have worn at all as she may not have fitted into them by the time they were bought and, in any case, they reveal rather a lot of flesh; too much, Alexine feels, for her father's taste. She believes he would have disapproved of such styles on his wife.

Emily Tinne also owned a great deal of outdoor wear. Most of her coats were either made of or trimmed with fur, ranging in size of animal from moles up to antelope, and including everything in between; rabbit, squirrel, sable, mink, fox, beaver, seal, nutria (coypu) and Persian lamb. In all, she had around 20 fur coats, many more than most people would ever have needed even in that period when fur was ubiquitous. Once again, there is an element of obsession about her buying habits because Alexine recalls never having seen her mother wearing a fur coat. She believes that Emily bought so many fur coats, which were often expensive, of course, because it was a way for her to help the very poorly-paid shop assistants win some much-needed commission on the sale, in a period of economic Depression.

In terms of accessories, Emily Tinne had very definite tastes in some areas. Rather disappointingly, her surviving shoes are quite mundane and workaday, although of excellent quality. There are no examples of gold or silver kid or metallic brocades, as one might expect, to match her wonderful evening dresses. Alexine believes that her mother was not especially interested in dressy shoes. Rather, she was a very enthusiastic buyer of hats and had well over a hundred examples in her wardrobe, ranging from natural straws, through large silk velour examples to close-fitting cloches and smaller cocktail hats in horsehair. Her other accessories also ran into the hundreds originally, especially gloves, although not all of them were collected by the Museum.

Emily was forced to stop collecting clothes when War broke out in 1939 and, subsequently, clothes rationing was imposed. By the time the War ended in 1945 she was nearly 60 and, one supposes, had lost the urge to shop on such a massive scale. Money may well have been in shorter supply, even in such a wealthy family, in that time of post-War austerity. Neither was social convention in her favour; buying clothes in the same way as she had done before the War would have seemed inappropriate when so many people lacked even the basics in life.

In the last few years of her life, as seen in family photographs, Emily appears dressed just like any other grandmother of the early 1960s, in a range of cotton or

synthetic dresses and blouses and hand-knitted cardigans. In these images she appears to have entered our modern world and is no longer a figure from the past.

But her wonderful wardrobe of clothes lay waiting to be re-discovered in the cellar of Clayton Lodge. Whatever her reasons for acquiring so much 'stuff', we'll never know what really motivated Emily's shopping mania. We can only be thankful that her shopping sprees were so extensive and covered such a long period of time, some thirty years, leaving us with such a complete and varied collection and a testament to one woman's taste.

The accompanying catalogue, *Mrs Tinne's Wardrobe, A Liverpool Lady's Clothes, 1900-1940*, by Pauline Rushton, costs £15-99 plus p&p. Copies can be ordered by emailing Ed Plent, National Museums of Liverpool Publications Stockroom Manager, [eddie.plent@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](mailto:eddie.plent@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

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### ***THE GOLDEN AGE OF COUTURE: PARIS AND LONDON 1947 - 1957***

Eleri Lynn: Curator Virtual Fashion, Dept. of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion, Victoria and Albert Museum.

*The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-1957* was last autumn's major exhibition at the V&A, curated by Claire Wilcox. During the Dress and Textiles Specialists conference held at the museum in November, delegates visited the exhibition following an introductory talk from the Curators.

The exhibition celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of Christian Dior's New Look, which marked the beginning of a momentous decade in fashion history, one that Dior himself called the 'golden age'. Shown alongside Parisian designs were examples of British couture from the same period, detailing the status of London's fashion industry and the interchange of ideas and expertise between the two capitals. Paris attracted world-wide attention for lavish and romantic collections but London was renowned for its more reserved formal state gowns and impeccable tailoring.

100 dresses were displayed with accessories and ephemera such as sketches, charts, samples, tools, materials and magazines. The V&A's collection provided 95% of the exhibits, supplemented by a few special loans, notably from the Fashion Museum in Bath, the Dior Archives, and the Lesage embroidery house in Paris. The predominance of V&A objects allowed us to research the pieces thoroughly, with long-term benefits for the collection. Previously unseen archive film was shown throughout, alongside statistics conveying the social and economic importance of couture at this time, for example in 1954 Dior remarkably accounted for 5% of French export revenue alone.

The intention of the exhibition was to convey the glamour and sumptuousness of 1950s couture, with decadent and atmospheric surroundings communicating a sense of that rarified social world. It was also, importantly, to present the craft and structure of the couture industry – exploring the skill of the seamstresses and embroiderers, the construction of the garments, the hierarchy and formality of the houses, and the emerging empires of the boutiques and prêt-à-porter ranges.

Some of the highlights of the exhibition were the Théâtre de la Mode dolls of 1946, Dior's iconic 1947 'Bar' suit, the 1954 'Miss Lachasse' couture doll (Fashion Museum, Bath), Balenciaga evening dresses, and Hartnell's state gowns for Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. One of the biggest highlights was Dior's 1954 H-line dress, 'Zemire', which the V&A Conservation Studio spent 8 months conserving after it was found dirty and water-damaged in a cellar under the Seine. Research shows that it was made as a special commission for the wife of Miki Sekers, the British-based textile manufacturer who collaborated closely with Dior and other couturiers. It was commissioned in a bright red synthetic Sekers textile, as opposed to the grey silk of the original design, in order to act as an advertisement for the company.

Accompanying the exhibition was a major publication edited by Claire Wilcox with contributions from leading fashion historians, and a two-day international conference. (We hope to post the conference papers on the website in the near future). The exhibition website is still live, with object highlights and activities, at [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk) under 'Past Exhibitions'.

The exhibition will now tour to international museums in Australia, the US, Canada and possibly Asia.

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***HEAVILY BEADED TO SMOOTH AND CLINGY: PERILS, PITFALLS AND SOLUTIONS TO MOUNTING 20s AND 30s DRESSES FOR DISPLAY -***

Grace Evans, Keeper of Costume, Chertsey Museum

The Olive Matthews Collection forms part of Chertsey Museum in Surrey. The Collection contains over 6,000 pieces of men's, women's and children's dress and accessories dating from around 1600 to the present day. We still collect key fashion examples from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, and it is important that the 1920s & '30s are represented.

There are currently 25 1920s and '30s dresses in the collection. They range from floaty chiffon pieces with uneven hems to heavily beaded dresses weighing several pounds to clingy '30s garments as well as plainer daywear. Many of these pieces have been donated. Several in the last few years.

2007 was an extremely busy one as we completely refurbished our fashion gallery. We wanted to produce an exhibition which would be complemented by the features of our newly refurbished gallery, and which would be very popular with visitors of all interest levels, and felt that the 1920s and '30s would be a good choice as the era tends to capture people's imaginations and produced some very striking garments. We knew we had a good collection of potential exhibits, both evening and day wear, and we could produce an attractive exhibition which was reasonably comprehensive and representative of the era without borrowing from other institutions. We've been pleased with the way that the gallery re-design has turned out, and also the impact of the garments on display, which is enhanced by the use of mirrors behind the pieces – no room to hide any imperfections in the garments though!

I now want to discuss the challenges we faced with displaying these items, and I'll look at several different types of garment in turn.

I'll start with the 1920s beaded dresses. These dresses look fantastic on display, and absolutely epitomise the glamour and innovation of 1920s design. They capture the imagination of visitors and they glitter beautifully in the light. However, they present particular challenges to fashion curators. The beads used in these dresses are almost always glass, and in order for the dresses to swing gracefully as the wearer moved, they were usually stitched to very thin, fragile fabrics such as, in this case, silk georgette. Glass beads, as anyone who has these types of dresses in their collection will know, are very heavy. They cause problems for the silk georgette at the points of greatest stress, which is almost always the shoulders. We knew that we wanted to put beaded dresses on display, and for a year. We had to think through various options. The safest and cheapest way to display a 1920s beaded dress is to display it flat, or almost flat. It is necessary to create a padded form, using plastizote, polyester wadding and unbleached cotton jersey. The plastizote is cut to size, and polyester wadding cut and laid over the top. Cotton jersey is stitched over the top to make a soft form with no sharp angles which will support the garment. The dressed form is laid flat or at a very slight angle and the weight of the beadwork is evenly distributed so that no stress is caused to any part of the piece. It may be possible to discuss with a conservator about the possibility of displaying a beaded dress that is in very good condition on a mannequin for a very short period. This will depend on individual pieces. Always check the shoulders.

We felt that flat display was not an option for us on this occasion. Firstly, there was not enough space in the cases, and secondly, we felt that the impact of the dresses would be reduced. We wanted, if possible to display the dresses on mannequins, so that visitors could gain a full appreciation of the garments as they would have been worn. We decided to discuss this with our Conservator, and it was felt that the insides could be reinforced to strengthen them enough to be able to display on mannequins. I must stress that even with this reinforcement, we were aware that every dress is different, and that we were taking some form of calculated risk. We have to be constantly vigilant to look out for any evidence of strain on the garments. However, we felt that the benefits outweighed the risks and we decided to go ahead with the work.

I thought that you would find it useful if I told you the cost of this conservation work. Do bear in mind that there was some other conservation work to be done to repair the damaged shoulders and some of the beadwork needed to be secured back into place. There was also an under dress that needed conservation work too. The total cost for all of this work, including materials, was: £2,743.00. Not a small sum of money, but the work is permanent, and will be of long-term benefit for the survival and display of the dress.

We also decided to have another dress treated in the same way. This dress is almost completely covered in beads stitched to a slightly stronger gauze fabric which is probably cotton. I felt that as well as the reinforcement done through conservation, it was also necessary to provide some extra support through the mounting of the dress.

At Chertsey Museum we tend to use 'Proportion' workroom busts which we cover with unbleached cotton jersey, herringbone stitching it down the sides. We then stitch polyester wadding to the jersey cover in order to create the right shape for the garment. This is ultimately dictated by the measurements of the dress, but also by research into the fashion silhouette of the day and the underwear that was worn. I learnt this skill at a course entitled 'Perfect Support' which was run by Janet Wood for Historic Royal Palaces. In this instance, the dress would originally have hung on the body rather than clung to it. However, we felt that it was important to provide a little more support for the weight of the dress while it was displayed on the mannequin. The figure was therefore padded to be slightly plumper than the person would have been, particularly around the bust, bottom and hips. Since the dress is mostly black, it was not too noticeable that the figure was slightly fatter than she should have been. The compromise meant that this, the heaviest of our dresses, was further supported whilst on display.

It might interest you to know that we have another 1920s beaded dress which is quite different from the ones I've already talked about. This dress is made from a much stronger fabric: silk velvet. The bodice is lined with pink silk crepe de chine and the waist is gathered onto a petersham ribbon band fastening with poppers and hooks and eyes. The beading is a mixture of glass beads and celluloid ones. Because the silk velvet of this dress is stronger than the normal silk georgette, we felt quite confident in showing it on a mannequin for a year in 2004. But our conservator did do one thing which probably helped with the weight. She stitched cotton tapes to the waistband to carry the weight of the skirt, thus halving the stress to the shoulders. These can be tied around the mannequin through an existing opening at hip level.

I now want to move on to the 1930s and the particular display problems that we encountered with these dresses. As you probably know, many 1930s dresses are cut on the bias. This causes storage problems as it is necessary to keep them in boxes rather than hanging – the bias element makes them hang all out of shape. It also causes quite a few problems with mounting.

The bias cut is so flattering to the figure (if it's a really good figure) because it skims some parts of the body and clings in all the right places. They were often made in very slinky material in order to emphasise the clingy nature of the cut. When it comes to mounting 1930s bias cut dresses, it is necessary to make the mannequin form very smooth because any lumps and bumps are extremely obvious when garments are on display. As I have said earlier, instead of purchasing extremely expensive made to measure mannequins, we tend to purchase workroom busts from 'Proportion' (which cost around £220.00 each), and we pad them up to the size required for the garments as discussed earlier.

I wanted to discuss the process for padding a mannequin for a pink bias cut dress. This dress was particularly challenging because it is made of a very smooth, clingy viscose rayon which has a satin underside to make it slide smoothly over the body. The bias cutting is quite complicated with lots of different panels stitched together at angles. It had been necessary to patch in a few sections where there had been holes (possibly due to the viscose breaking down). and these have been very skilfully stitched in place so that they are almost invisible from the outside. It is necessary to finish with a very smooth line so that the wadding does not show when the dress is

mounted, and this line had to follow the contours of the dress as well as the fashionable silhouette of the time, which was created by the underwear of the period. We covered the mannequin with unbleached cotton jersey and then added a petticoat which was a copy of the skirt of the dress in a slightly stiffer fabric to hold the skirt a little way away from the pole so that it didn't cling inwards. This dress has sleeves, so it was also necessary to add arms. These had to be added after the dress was mounted on the figure. It is sometimes possible to go up through the sleeve to stitch these in place, but in this case it had to be done by carefully levering the dress down so that the arms could be stitched in place on the shoulders, once again as invisibly as possible.

There are other problems associated with garments from the 1930s. They often have very few fastenings, if any. They are designed to be pulled over the head and wriggled into, with the bias cut offering some give and stretch as the wearer gets into it. One of our dresses only has a fastening at the neck opening, which leaves very little room to manoeuvre. Mannequins are not generally squashy and wriggly like the human body. So some, even though they have the right measurements in the bust, waist and hips, may not work with the garments because the waist measurement may be too small to fit over the shoulders and bust. The last thing you want to be doing is stretching and tugging at a fragile 1930s dress in order to get it onto the mannequin you've carefully ordered at what you thought was the right size. The way around this is to measure the narrowest point of the dress (the waist) and the widest point of the mannequin (usually the bust, but sometimes the shoulder and top of the arm section). Make sure that you have a mannequin that is small enough up top to slip the narrow waist over. When dealing with the newly feminine '30s form, it may be tempting to pad out the bust to fit as snugly and authentically as possible, but again, you need to make sure that you will still be able to get the dress on and off. It may not be possible to have the mannequin as padded as you would like, but you can usually make it look presentable. If you have short sleeves on a garment and wide arm holes, it may be possible to pad the stand after the garment has been put on, but always make a note of this since you do not want to forget and be tugging away at the dress when you come to take it off display. A silk slip may also help to ease the fabric as it slides over the mannequin.

A really fragile dress without fastenings may require a toile to work with during mannequin padding rather than risking damaging the original object by over-handling. This is quite a difficult process where you have to take an extremely accurate pattern of the bodice and make up a copy in a fabric of similar weight.

So even if the dress does not seem particularly clingy, or heavily beaded, the lack of fastenings compounded by unstable fabrics can raise all sorts of issues with mounting dress from this era.

Don't be fooled with what look like quite modern, simple garments. 1920s and '30s pieces have a whole set of problems which are all their own and require specific approaches and a great deal of careful planning. However, most of these problems can be overcome in one way or another, and I have found that one of the key things is not being afraid to seek professional assistance from conservators and/or the DATS email group, since many colleagues will have come across or overcome similar issues in the past.

## ***RETURN TO THE HOLES, AN ARTIST'S WORK IN A MUSEUM CONTEXT***

Alistair O'Neill, Research Fellow, London College of Fashion, discusses the work of designer Shelley Fox, Senior Research Fellow at Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

I remember having a conversation with Shelley Fox where she spoke about her first visit to the Costume Court at the Victoria & Albert Museum. She said that as soon as she saw the jumper with holes in by Rei Kawakubo for Commes des Garçons she saw nothing else. There's a great tradition of this experience for British fashion designers, such as Ossie Clark seeing Madame Vionnet's bias cut for the first time, but what has always interested me about Fox's story is that it wasn't the craftsmanship of the dropped stitch knitting that hit her first, or the imperfect beauty of it- it was the holes. By this I mean that it was what wasn't there, it was what was missing.

The poetry of loss is a strong characteristic of her work- a collection inspired by the abandoning of Morse code as an internationally recognised form of communication, a collection based on reversed portraits of unknown people on plate glass negatives found in a flea market- but the expression of absence is equally important. This kind of absence is often taken to be an indicator of the relative poverty of small scale, artisan produced clothing made by many London fashion designers of Fox's generation; it's an absence that tends to separate the things they make from the global market for fashion, an absence that brands them as slightly peculiar and different. In Fox's case, the separation she has experienced across her career is not because her clothes aren't commercial, but because they resist the idea of fashion as a seasonal purchase of perfection.

Rather than expressing that everything is right, her clothes are often about what is wrong. This isn't because they are badly designed or made, but because they reflect upon the wider condition of Fox's position within the fashion system. When asked why she was using a quote by Nietzsche for a collection she replied, 'it was a way we were feeling about things, that whatever you do, it's wrong.' It's the kind of utterance rarely heard in fashion, and because of this Fox rubs against the very nature of fashion and its temporal structure: it's the kind of rub that the Situationists were also interested in when they had the idea of making the dust jackets for their books out of sandpaper.

But this absence also has a reference in minimalism, funnily enough also concerned with rubbing, but in this case a rubbing away through reductiveness. And while Fox happily draws from this principle in her own practice, she is uninterested in the purity of form that minimalism seeks as an end point; rather, she seeks a core of impurity by rubbing away until all that's left is a trace, or perhaps even a stain of something that used to be there.

The reason for this is because what Fox begins with in her design process is not an accumulation of the present, but an accumulation of the past. Her use of the past, or more precisely the material culture of the past is curious as it serves as an investigation into the production of new things. They're things she rescues from oblivion- generally small collections of objects once meaningful to someone, but now meaningless in their detachment from them. And, as she salvages these cast-off things from being lost, she translates them into clothing that somehow conveys the expectation of being found.

The bittersweet quality of this transformation often burnishes the designs with a patina that produces its own index of the past, but a patina that isn't always evident on the surface. A good example of this is a technique Fox developed where multiple layers of a single garment were directly translated from a stack of odd vintage paper patterns cut out by another hand that she bought from Ridley Road Market in East London. So, the design of the new garment is an actual replica of a collection of things that sediment a once personal history of dressmaking in London. The beautiful irregularity of the stack's lay traces a record of abandoned attempts at making clothes which tinges Fox's translation with a failing persistence that is very human.

What I think propels Fox to draw these two worlds together is that they are both defined by the marking of time: so just as the things she saves serve as an index to moments past, so the discipline she works in structures an index for the present. By continually privileging the former over the latter, Fox situates herself in resistance to the marking of time by commerce by embracing the marking of time by lives lived. The appeal of Shelley Fox's work is that this common thread is in its very weave.

In 2000 Fox was invited by the Victoria & Albert Museum to stage a Fashion in Motion presentation of her work. I remember arriving mid afternoon in the entrance hall as the autumnal light was beginning to fade and as the models slowly appeared to the strains of 'Are You Lonesome Tonight?' There was no catwalk and no seating, and as the models slowly mingled amongst the crowd, their glances far in the distance, the busy hum of the space started to fade. The clothes had an old index of glamour - twin sets, sequins, stage shoes and the like - except that the surfaces of them had been exquisitely blowtorched.

As Presley rang out 'Does your memory stray to a bright summer day' and the shimmer of the sequins started to slide, the sense of what we were watching ebbed away. It was only when the music died and the sound of the models heels drifted away into the Sculpture Court did it seem that the quality of the light returned to normal, as your eyes might readjust to the light of a room after walking in to it on a bright summer's day. The memory of that particular afternoon in the V&A reminds me that Fox always returns us to what is missing in her work, to the things that her clothes are unable to contain. It's a return to the holes.

*Many thanks to Alistair O'Neill for permission to use this piece.*

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**THE ULSTER MUSEUM'S CONTEMPORARY FASHION COLLECTION** – Elizabeth McCrum, ex-Keeper of Applied Art, Ulster Museum

In 1976 the Ulster Museum lost almost its entire collection of dress and textiles in the fire following the bombing of the building in which it was then stored. When rebuilding the collection, primarily of mainstream fashionable dress, after this catastrophe, the historic section took shape again relatively quickly. This was thanks to the then relatively cheap auction price of historic dress, and the generosity and sympathy of donors and dealers. The contemporary end, however, progressed less satisfactorily. A lack of appreciation of cheap present day fashion, people's

disinclination to store bulky clothing, and the wearing of separates rather than one key item of dress were some of the factors which meant that this aspect of the collection was piecemeal and not as representative as we would have liked. This coincided with the refinement of the museum's collecting policy, aimed at producing a collection which would be distinctive in Ireland and hopefully elsewhere. In common with other areas of applied art in the Ulster Museum, it was decided actively to develop the contemporary end of fashion. At that time this was not much collected systematically outside the large specialist institutions.

Initially there were two areas of collection. Each season, since 1983, the museum has bought an International Designer outfit and a High Street outfit. The international designer outfit illustrates one of the most important of that season's trends, and a designer whose work is particularly directional is chosen. The Autumn/Winter collections are more innovative, and so for Spring/Summer there is a tendency to choose designers who have a more established house style but who nevertheless should be represented in the collection. The High Street outfits come from a variety of retailers, so show a range of the dress actually worn in Belfast by women of different ages and tastes. Again, a retailer whose designs are particularly praised that season is chosen, but there is also an attempt at balance in the type of dress which can be anything from Jaegar to New Look. The styles can complement the International Designer outfit, showing the locally worn and usually much cheaper versions, or can provide an alternative seasonal look. The crucial factor in both outfits is that they should contain elements specific to their particular season.

From the late 1980s a seasonal purchase of an Irish Designer outfit was also made, so six outfits per year were added to the collection. This has built up over the years to a very significant and invaluable resource which is by far the most popular area of the collection for student use. Most designers of note are represented, as are some of the most iconic pieces of late twentieth century fashion. The collection has its own momentum - purchases self evidently have to be made early in the season while the 'hot' outfits are still available. Proactive acquisition is a most satisfactory means of producing a representative collection - and when it involves scouring London's fashion emporia, it is by no means the least pleasant of curatorial tasks.

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*Street Style: A photographic record of fashionable and everyday clothing in Norwich 1985-2005* - Ruth Battersby Tooke, Curator of Costume and Textiles, Carrow House Costume and Textile Study Centre, Norwich

The Street Style Archive was set up in 1985 with the primary aim of 'recording today's fashion for tomorrow'. The photographs are a very space efficient way of collecting information about contemporary clothing that will help us to identify and date current popular trends and inform future collecting of garments or accessories. The archive is also invaluable for gathering information about non-mainstream fashions that people don't think to pass on to a museum collection. There are ways to collect this material through events and press appeals but having the documentary evidence provided by these photographs helps to focus collecting and gives context

to the items that you do collect. In the context of the resource holdings at the Costume and Textile Study Centre the Street Style Archive is an extension to the collection of group and single portraits dating from the 1860's.

The archive is currently stored in folders with the original photographs mounted to sheets with information about the subject of the photograph. Sometimes the form used by the recorder is also filed behind the image.

The information gathered by the previous recorders has varied from year to year. This makes it difficult to use the archive to make a comparative study of, for example, what a student's outfits cost in 1995 compared to 1985; we have the costs of the outfit but in 1995 the occupation of subjects was not recorded. This does mean, however, that over the course of the project many different types of information have been gathered so that any future recording can tally up with the useful questions that have been used and ensure that there can be a good comparison.

The Street Style archive is a result of random sampling. The recorder, whether they were a curator or volunteer set the boundaries on who they were going to include and what they were looking for, as well as what was considered to be 'today's fashion'. What would be useful when consulting the archive is a statement of intent for each year, i.e. what the recorder was looking for and how they went about it.

To find out more about methods of getting a robust sample I discussed the project with our Evaluation Officer and explored different ways of applying the principles of structured sampling to the Street Style Archive. This would involve setting out to record the outfits of a certain number of people in an age range for example 5 of each sex under 25, 5 of each between 25-50 and 5 of each over 50. The recorder would then approach anyone passing a certain landmark in a street, fitting that description. This method alone would not fulfil all the needs of the Street Style Archive. In order to capture the celebrity inspired looks, fleeting youth oriented fashions and any non-mainstream clothing we will need to carry out quota sampling. A good example of this technique is the V&A Days of Record, which capture certain trends and sub-cultures like tattoos and Goth fashions. To carry out quota sampling we need to have a clear idea and written statement of intent to accompany the resulting photographs.

Whatever type of sampling is employed a key future aim is to collect the same information from the people that are photographed to ensure we can make comparisons and I think it would be an interesting development to add in an open question so that there is an opportunity to let the subject's character come through. This could be as simple as the question posed in the book Gothic and Lolita published by Thames and Hudson in which the photographer asks the subjects 'What is your current obsession?'



Consent for the use of photographs is a very important issue when planning projects such as this. In the absence of written consent forms from 1985-2005 we have to assume that as people are posing for the images they are aware of how the image will be used. However for future projects we will have a form for subjects to sign to make it clear that by agreeing to have their pictures put into the archive, they are also agreeing to images being published on the web as part of the online catalogue of collections and possible use in advocacy documents such as this one.

Image: 1985 Street Style Archive

Another potential use of this method of collecting is to provide a contemporary context for some of our more specialised collections like ecclesiastical dress, occupational dress and sportswear. I am also keen to record some of the shop fronts and portraits of staff in independent fashion shops in Norwich as another form of quota sampling of fashion sub-groups like skate shops

We are currently scanning in the photographs and creating a searchable database for use online as well as in the Study Centre. When we know how long this process of digitisation will take we can begin to plan the implication in terms of staff and volunteer time. Each year we are hoping for 2 rounds of structured sampling and one quota sample.

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### ***PUTTING ON THE GLITZ: MEMORIES OF MAKING AND WEARING CLOTHES FOR COURT*** - Deirdre Murphy, Curator of Collections, Historic Royal Palaces

For the past few years I have been making sound and video recordings of people's memories through a project at Kensington Palace titled *Memories Of*. The aim of the project is to record people's memories of working in the royal and ceremonial dress trades, of wearing court dress, and of living and working at Kensington Palace. As the days of wearing ceremonial uniform and formal court dress become fewer and fewer, we need to record these stories before they are lost forever.

This short paper explored the varied uses of oral history recordings in recent exhibitions at Kensington Palace. In 2003, *The Queen's Working Wardrobe* exhibition included 14 memorable outfits, which Queen Elizabeth II has worn to some very public events. The oral history recordings we used in the exhibition made these objects inseparable from the occasions on which they were worn and truly enriched the story of each object. Two years later, we displayed a single Norman Hartnell dress, which The Queen had worn during a state visit to France in 1957. We filmed interviews with people who had a strong connection to the object, either through making it or through the events at which it was worn. In doing this, we assembled a

“community” of people who were connected to one another through the object but who otherwise had very little in common.

The most recent phase of this project is ongoing, in preparation for our forthcoming exhibition called *The last debutantes*. It has been 50 years since the last presentations of debutantes at Court. In order to mark this anniversary we will display dresses alongside interviews with debutantes who had a range of experiences in 1958: from those people who loved every minute of “coming out” and the associated London Season of cocktail parties, dinners and extravagant dances, to the girls who refused to take part in it at all.

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**PEER GROUP CLOTHING: COLLECTION SUBCULTURES** – Eleanor Thompson, Curator, Brighton and Hove Museum

Brighton & Hove Museums’ costume collection contains a unique archive of over 200 items of clothing and accessories, around 70 oral histories, photographs and ephemeral items belonging to individuals who have identified themselves as belonging to a sub-cultural group.

The collecting subcultures project grew from the Heritage Lottery Funded redevelopment of Brighton Museum between 1999-2002. During this period the museum’s collecting policy was reassessed with the aim of developing more inclusive collections, reflecting the city’s diverse population.

Brighton has long had a close relationship with sub-cultural groups. Amy de la Haye, having previously worked on the V&A’s Street Style exhibition suggested to the museum that they would be ideally placed to develop a permanent collection of their material culture. The collection spans the obvious Mods, Rockers and Teddy Boys but also incorporates the city’s transient travelling community and lesser-known groups such as Queer-Techno-Fetish-Punks.

The project team, led by Angela Charles, were proactive in targeting groups. Appeals were put out in the museum, local press, newsletters and fanzines. These didn’t elicit responses in great numbers and a personal approach was found to be most effective. Angela visited shops, nightclubs and events such as Ride with Rockers and a Teddy Boy weekender in Norfolk. To begin with it was difficult to collect material, some groups, those with well established networks and an comfortable relationship with mainstream society were easier to reach, but once a route into each group was established collecting gained momentum.

Where possible Angela tried to acquire complete ‘genuine’ outfits that represented an individual and their personal association with a particular group. The approach was to stress the importance of the wearer and their perspectives rather than make sweeping surveys of groups that relied on academic or curatorial definitions. For each outfit several oral histories from other people would be collected to put the garments into context, show the diversity in each group and avoid stereotyping.

The largest problem in acquiring clothing was that garments no longer existed because people had ended their allegiance to a group and had discarded them or

they had such emotional value and cultural significance people were unwilling to part with them. This is particularly true for Rockers who are generally 'womb-to-tomb' and give the impression that they would like to be buried in their jackets. Some people were willing to lend rather than donate items.

A display of 14 sub-cultural outfits in the Fashion & Style Gallery was developed from the collecting subcultures project, this is supported by a computer interactive. Renaissance funding has ensured that all items and oral histories in the archive have been digitised and are accessible on our collections web pages:

<http://www.virtualmuseum.info/collections/objectList.asp?stats=y&searchText=renege>

Proactively collecting from sub-cultural communities is time and labour intensive; the original approach couldn't be sustained when staff priorities and funding were diverted to new projects. We still continue to collect but individuals and acquisitions usually come to us rather than the other way around. The sub-cultural dress display is one of the most popular in the museum; with the displays in need of rotation a return to pro-active collecting looks to be the way forward.

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### ***FABRIC OF A NATION: TEXTILES AND IDENTITY IN MODERN GHANA***

Helen Wolfe, Textile Collections Manager, Department of Africa, Oceania and America, The British Museum

#### **Introduction**

This exhibition at The British Museum marked the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence on 6 March 2007, focusing on an important aspect of life and culture in modern Ghana – printed cloth.

People in Ghana express themselves through the designs they wear, which cut across ethnic and language differences. This exhibition explored the huge variety of prints, the history of the trade and the cultural significance of the designs.

The exhibition was produced in partnership with the Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana at Legon with a 'sister' exhibition to 'Fabric of a Nation' opening in Ghana at the Department of Archaeology's Museum at Legon on 2 March 2007.

#### **Wax-printed cloths: a trade linking three continents**

The technique of wax-printing is inspired by the Indonesian art of batik. Both methods use wax and dye to form designs on cotton cloth. Batik was probably brought to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the mid-1800s by soldiers who had been serving in the Dutch army in Java.

In 1893, an enterprising Scottish trader, Ebenezer Brown Fleming, began importing wax-printed cloth inspired by batik from the Netherlands to the Gold Coast. The product became very popular and spread throughout West and Central Africa through trade companies and missionaries.

Wax prints were produced across Europe and exported to Africa, with African customers driving the trade. Since the 1960s factories have been established in Ghana and other African countries from Senegal to the Congo.

## **Printed cloths: techniques and design**

Wax prints: Top quality wax prints are prestigious cloths with a high cultural value that play an important role in many social and political events, including marriage, funerals, coronations and festivals.

Wax prints are resist-dyed cloths. The design is applied on both sides of the plain cotton fabric with resin (which replaced wax), using engraved copper rollers. Once the resin is dry the cloth is crinkled, forming cracks which make lines called 'crackles'. The cloths are usually dyed indigo. The resin is then removed, leaving undyed areas on a blue background. Other colours may be added using wooden stamp blocks or by printing.

Fancy prints: 'Fancy prints' are produced using a different process to wax prints; they are printed on one side only by engraved rollers or printing screens. These cloths are cheaper to produce and buy, but their designs often imitate the wax prints. They often feature photographic images, making them a popular choice for commemorating or promoting important social, political or cultural events.

Examples in the exhibition included *Kwame Nkrumah, Ghanaian independence, 1957*, a rare piece from the British Museum's collections which was produced to celebrate the independence of the Gold Coast and the founding of Ghana in 1956.

Culture and proverbs: The designs on the wax-printed textiles are diverse and cover many topics. Some are derived from the traditional Indian and Indonesian designs of the 1800s such as plants, birds, insects, fish and other animals.

Once produced, the consumers who buy the designs reinterpret them, usually perceiving them differently from the manufacturer's initial intention. The most popular designs are given a name but the name may not necessarily reflect the design; it often refers to contemporary events or the current interests of the customers.

The names of these designs may refer to popular wisdom and proverbs, or to social relationships, ethical standards, or the traditional sources of power. The most popular designs have been reused over time in different variations, some dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Wax prints are prestigious cloths with high social value which comes from the meanings they are given by consumers. Worn by men and women, they play an important role in daily life and in ceremonies. The choice of design reveals a lot about the wearer – their social status, wealth or relationships. They play an important role in people's lives and are often used as a means of communicating personal or public messages. An example is a popular wax print cloth associated with a well-known proverb 'Your eyes can see, but your mouth cannot say', which reminds us that not all issues are suitable for public discussion.

Trade in wax-printed textiles involves a dense network of wholesalers and retailers in urban and rural areas, with female traders playing a central role.

Politics: Printed cloths are widely used in Ghana as a means of mass communication, cutting across ethnic, linguistic and social boundaries. The fancy cloths are most often used for this purpose, as they can feature photographs of politicians and other figures.

Rulers: Printed cloths, mostly fancy prints, are also made to celebrate the crowning of paramount chiefs and other rulers. They are bought and worn by people attending the ceremony to express respect and participation.

Specific cloths are also printed for the funerals of paramount chiefs, queen mothers, traditional rulers and famous personalities. They have a distinctive red, dark brown or white background with designs featuring heraldic symbols, often with a portrait of the dead person. The cloths are produced and distributed in advance as an announcement of funerals. They are worn as an expression of mourning by people attending the funeral.

Religion: Missionaries and churches have used printed cloths, both wax and fancy prints, as a means of communicating with wide audiences in Ghana. Printed cloths are often produced to convey religious messages to their followers or to celebrate important national or international religious events, such as anniversaries or visits by the Pope.

### Education

Some of the oldest and most popular wax print designs, still among the bestsellers today, were made to promote literacy. Ghanaian schools, colleges and universities widely advertise themselves through fancy prints. They are used to celebrate anniversaries or to make uniforms worn by their pupils or students such as seen here on children at the University of Legon Primary School.

Health and recreation: Printed cloths are commonly used by the Ghanaian government to encourage awareness of health, social and development schemes. They may also be made to celebrate and promote major events in the country. Private and public businesses and organisations also make printed cloths to publicise their image and activities.

### **Mounting the Exhibition**

The British Museum now has a collection of over 200 pieces of wax and fancy print cloth. In the exhibition we wanted to show as many examples as possible and because the majority are new it was decided to put them on open display and even encourage visitors to touch them.

The textiles were displayed on a series of frames fixed round the walls hung over aluminium poles. They were secured in position by a Velcro strip sewn to a calico lining. Loose luggage type labels were sewn to each piece giving information about the name and design. Images printed on cloth added context. Even though the gallery was quite small over 120 textiles were shown.

Historical sample books and stamps from the ABC archive were displayed under glass.

### **Future Programmes**

Following the success of the exhibitions in London and Ghana plans are underway to develop a British Museum UK Partnership tour for 2008. *Fabric of a Nation* will open at the Shipley Museum in Gateshead in the summer travelling to other regional partner museums in Bradford and Hampshire afterwards.

**BILL GIBB** - Christine Rew, Art Gallery and Museums Manager, Aberdeen City Council

The Collections at Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums contain a comprehensive archive of work by the 70s fashion designer Bill Gibb - around 100 individual garments and accessories, over 2000 original design sketches, associated ephemera, patterns and fabric swatches and 22 cuttings books, which were kept throughout his business years.

Bill spent his formative years on a farm near Aberdeen, one of a large family. At a fairly early age it became obvious that he was not going to follow the family tradition of farming; he loved to sketch and draw, particularly historical themes. Whilst attending Fraserburgh Academy his drawing matured and he was persuaded to apply for St Martin's School of Art in London. Gibb excelled at the design aspects of the course but found that making up the garments was fraught with difficulties, and he nearly gave up. However, the Dean, Muriel Pemberton, convinced him to stay, confident that given perseverance with the construction process, he would succeed. Her confidence was justified and he went on to complete the course and gain a scholarship to the Royal College of Art.

In 1968, along with three friends he started a boutique, *Alice Paul*, in Kensington with 3 friends; Bill designed the clothes and his partners took care of construction and marketing. Designs of this time are fairly typical of young fashion of the period: minimalist, clean cut and in blocks of single colour. At this time he also met the painter Kaffe Fassett, quickly forming a close and influential friendship.

A year later Gibb joined Monty Black at *Baccarat* as a designer. He was given a certain amount of freedom and soon began to produce his signature pattern on pattern mixes, with Fassett designing knitwear to complement the garments. The 1969 collection reflected strongly his Scottish roots and the tartan mills of his childhood. Tartan plaids, in muted shades, were teamed with floral prints and intarsia patterned knits. The collection established his name: it was photographed by Patrick Hunt for *The Sunday Times*, he was awarded Designer of the Year by *Vogue* and Bea Miller chose an outfit as Dress of the Year for the collection at Bath.

In 1972 Gibb left Baccarat to join forces with Kate Franklin, who became his business partner and mentor for the rest of his life. Together they formed Bill Gibb Ltd and launched his first solo collection at the Oriental Club, London. Gibb took up a new theme – fantasy creations based on leather, animal skins and feathers. This exotic, bizarre collection captured the imagination and high-spirited mood of the time; Bill's business was now firmly established and throughout the 70s he continued to surprise, entertain and delight. He was applauded by the fashion press and magazines – it seemed that hardly an issue of *Vogue* magazine appeared without a Bill Gibb gown.

Bill's drawing skill was one of his great strengths, although he found designing a collection a pleasurable, if daunting undertaking. He commented that it was "3 months solid graft. Picking the fabrics, making 200 rough sketches and boiling them

down and then turning them into reality". He invariably worked on A4 loose leaf paper pads, purchased from the newsagent and drew with black pentel pens. He started by working through concepts by drawing a series of small figures were drawn across the page; as the collection theme progressed design elements were adjusted, improved or discarded. From the multi sheet around 50 complete ensembles were chosen in conjunction with his business partner Kate Franklin. These were worked up to full design sketches. The finished sketch was a remarkably complete study from which his pattern cutters worked direct.

Each sketch had a front view with all the details of fastenings, trimmings, pocket flaps, tassels and beadwork clearly evident. A back view was usually included in the top right corner. Swatches of fabric were attached along with Gibb's own notes.

He always maintained that women required layered knits for daywear with patterns, which could be mixed together, and subtle colour combinations. The shapes were variations on a basic square – tabards, cardigan jackets, loose blanket wraps, ponchos. Kaffe Fassett took the shapes and added patterns and colours echoing the fabrics and inspirational theme behind the collection.

The Autumn/Winter 1975 collection *Moon and Buddha* was one of their most successful. It was inspired by a bag which the weaver Richard Womersley wove for Kaffe Fassett and a postcard of tiny Buddhas. Fassett picked out the colours of the bag and played with them until a pleasing effect was achieved – rows of tiny multicoloured Buddhas were combined with large striped moons on either an olive bronze or grey ground.

Although each of his collections had a theme – one theme continued throughout his career – the bee. It started as a round bumble bee, designed by Kaffe Fassett in the early 1970s but soon the bee found its way into everything Gibb designed, from small enamelled buttons to beadwork and embroidered panels.

A combination of poor financial management, an economic downturn and changes in the fashion industry led to Gibb's business going into receivership in 1979. It was a difficult time for him, but he trimmed his overheads to a minimum and continued to design a couture range for individual clients and shops. In 1985 he launched the Bronze Age collection, utilizing block weave Scottish wools, silk tweeds and Celtic-inspired chiffons for evening. Gibb was optimistic that this harder-edged collection would launch his comeback; but it did not attract orders.

Bill Gibb had a meteoric rise to fame but his story illustrates the fickleness of the fashion world. An entertainer who had captured the heady optimism of the early 1970s his designs were out of place by the end of the decade in a world facing recession and where women seeking equal rights with men wanted to wear clothes that were taken seriously. Gibb was trapped by his own image, and although he proved that he could design smart tailoring the press wasn't interested. He struggled to keep his name to the forefront in the 1980s and his early successes were never repeated. Gibb put his all into designing a collection, but failed to have the secure financial backing and management he required when it was most needed and became disillusioned.

## **News**

### **Autumn Conference 2008**

Details of the 2008 conference have to be confirmed, but it will be based in Birmingham, with proposed dates of 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November.

Talks/papers on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> will be held in the AV room at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, from 10am – 5pm, and will focus on using stored collections and outreach.

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> the venue will be the Museums Collections Centre and talks will focus on materials and objects, identification, dating, etc. The day will begin with the AGM at 10am, talks from 11am – 4pm

There will be an informal dinner in a local restaurant on the Thursday evening.

A full programme will be circulated in the summer.

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### **DATS/V&A 'Back to Basics' workshops**

DATS in collaboration with the V&A were granted £6000 by the Renaissance Subject Specialist Network Grant Programme to develop and deliver a series of three one-day workshops on the theme of 'Back to Basics'. The purpose of the workshops was to enable participants to improve the documentation and interpretation of collections and make them accessible to the widest audience. These were held during late 2007/early 2008 and proved to be very successful with useful feedback provided by delegates. Three booklets were produced as a means of sharing the knowledge communicated in the workshops with colleagues and the public, and all three can be downloaded from the DATS website, [www.dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk](http://www.dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk)

1. *IDENTIFYING PRINTED TEXTILES IN DRESS 1740 – 1890*, by Dr. Philip Sykas
2. *IDENTIFYING TEXTILE TYPES AND WEAVES 1750 – 1950*, by Sue Kerry
3. *IDENTIFYING LACE AND WHITEWORK*, by Jeremy Farrell

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### **Temporary closure of The Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester**

The Gallery of Costume will remain closed until September 2008 to facilitate necessary building works. While these are being carried out, the gallery has taken the opportunity to implement improvements to facilities to provide: a small temporary exhibition space; a ground floor education room with capacity for an average class of 30-40 children; and a small creative workshop to enable the gallery to deliver creative workshops in textiles and fashion for schools and adult education.

### Temporary exhibition gallery

The small temporary exhibition gallery with screens and equipment will enable the Gallery to stage small temporary exhibitions for the first time. The aim is to deliver 4 exhibitions a year which engage the collection with creative practitioners in fashion and textiles in higher education and the creative industries. Other exhibitions will be drawn from the Galleries' collections, for example selections from the 21,000 19th century photographic portraits. A grant of US\$75,000 from the Getty Foundation has been received to research and document this collection, which will form the basis for one of the first exhibitions.

### Monument Trust Scheme

The Gallery of Costume has also received a grant from the Museums Association Monument Fellowship scheme to enable Anthea Jarvis, who retired in 2006, to return to train three junior Gallery Assistants. Training for a total of 50 days during 2007-8 will provide a strong grounding in costume history, library and archive material, and mounting and storing dress collections.

### New Acquisitions 2008

The Gallery of Costume has just acquired two Couture outfits from the early 1950s at auction, a Balmain day ensemble in figured silk brocaded with rosebuds - with a very large 'New Look' skirt; and a striking pink silk ensemble by Hartnell, again with fitted waist and full skirts.



Images courtesy of The Gallery of Costume

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## Exhibitions and Events

### London

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**Victoria and Albert Museum**, Cromwell Road, London SW7, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)  
Tel. 020 7942 2000

*CHINA DESIGN NOW* – 15<sup>th</sup> March to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008

The exhibition explores the recent explosion of new design from China, from the 2008 Olympic Stadium to the most interesting fashion and graphics. During the last twenty years the Chinese have rediscovered their pre-socialist past and begun to combine their own traditions with global influences to produce a cultural rebirth.

*THE STORY OF THE SUPREMES FROM THE MARY WILSON COLLECTION* – 13<sup>TH</sup> May to 19<sup>TH</sup> October 2008

An exhibition of performance costumes worn by The Supremes, one of the most successful groups of the sixties, showing their changing image from the early days to the glamorous Hollywood designs worn at the height of their fame.

**Barbican Art Gallery**, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London, EC2Y 8DS  
[www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery](http://www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery)

*THE HOUSE OF VIKTOR & ROLF* – 18<sup>TH</sup> June to 14<sup>TH</sup> September 2008

A new exhibition showcasing the work of radical Dutch fashion designers Viktor & Rolf, the first time in the U.K. that an exhibition has been devoted to this highly influential duo.

**Embankment Galleries, Somerset House**, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA,  
[www.sommersethouse.org.uk](http://www.sommersethouse.org.uk) Tel. 020 7845 4600

*SKIN + BONES: PARALLEL PRACTICES IN FASHION AND ARCHITECTURE* – 24<sup>TH</sup> April to 10<sup>TH</sup> August 2008

In the last 25 years the separate worlds of architecture and fashion have become increasingly intertwined, creating intriguing connections. Sharing of materials, design methods and fabrication has inspired radical developments in both fields. The exhibition looks at how clothing and architecture perform similar functions: providing shelter and promoting identity.

**Kensington Palace State Apartments, Kensington Gardens, London W8 4PX**

*THE LAST DEBUTANTES - 1958 A SEASON OF CHANGE* – opens 11<sup>TH</sup> June 2008

A new temporary exhibition marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last court presentations will take visitors on a journey into the glamorous and alluring world of the debutante. Fashionable afternoon dresses and ball gowns, including stunning examples of couture by Christian Dior and Pierre Balmain, as well as accessories worn by some of the 'debs' during the final season of 1958 will be displayed in this multimedia exhibition, which tell their stories against the backdrop of dramatic social change that heralded the arrival of the swinging sixties.

Contact: Vikki Wood, Historic Royal Palaces Press Office, [vikki.wood@hrp.org.uk](mailto:vikki.wood@hrp.org.uk), or tel. 020 3166 6166, or visit [www.hrp.org.uk](http://www.hrp.org.uk)

## North of England

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**World Museum Liverpool**, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN,  
[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk) Tel. 0151 478 4393

*THE BEAT GOES ON* - 12<sup>th</sup> July 2008 until 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009

The exhibition explores Liverpool's rich musical heritage, its success and its continuing evolution. It will feature a range of costumes from the 1950s to the present day which helped to define the city's musical tastes and genres, such as the Beatles' famous collarless stage suits of 1963 and a Caroline Charles dress worn by Cilla Black on an early edition of Ready Steady Go! A wide range of styles is included, from clothes worn by local punks at Liverpool's famous Eric's club between 1977 and 1980 to clothes worn in promotional videos by local bands, the Zutons and Clinic, something for everybody!

**Urbis**, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester, M4 3BG, [www.urbis.org.uk](http://www.urbis.org.uk) Tel: 0161 605 8200

*MATTHEW WILLIAMSON: TEN YEARS IN FASHION* – 27<sup>th</sup> March to 21<sup>st</sup> September

A retrospective of the Manchester born designer looking at the patterns prints and colours which define his work. Williamson's sketchbooks will be on display and red carpet dresses worn by Kylie Minogue and Sienna Miller.

**Silk Museum**, Park Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 6TJ

*MECHANICAL DRAWING: THE SCHIFFLI PROJECT EXHIBITION* – 5<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2008

The School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University houses the last working Schiffli machine in the U.K. 15 contemporary artists have used the machine's pantograph embroidery technique to create individual works.

A series of talks and workshops organized by Macclesfield Silk Museums will begin on 24<sup>th</sup> April with 'Ribbon Fancies', an opportunity to investigate the Victorian craft of ribbon embroidery. They will take place at the **Heritage Centre**, Roe Street Macclesfield, SK11 6UT, booking essential. For further details contact The Silk Museum, [www.macclesfield.silk.museum](http://www.macclesfield.silk.museum)  
Tel. 01625 612 045

**Prescot Museum**, Prescot, Knowsley, Merseyside, L34 3LA Tel: 0151 430 7787

*OFF THE RACK* – 29<sup>th</sup> April to 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Come and see the finest examples of clothing and costume, all from Prescot Museum's own collection. This exhibition gives visitors a chance to see items rarely on view to the public from the 18<sup>th</sup> century right through to the 1960's.

**York Castle Museum**, The Eye of York, York, YO1 9RY Tel: 01904 687 687

*THE SIXTIES* - 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008 to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012

The brand new 1960s experience at York Castle Museum will change your perspective on one of the most explosive decades in recent times. The gallery will bring the spirit of the decade back to life, looking at the iconic images but also offering alternative viewpoints in an exciting and interactive way. Rare items from a range of collections across the Trust - social history, art, fashion and textiles, militaria, astronomy and decorative art – will all be included together with sound, light, moving images and innovative design.

**Grosvenor Museum**, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester, CH1 2DD Tel: 01244 402008

*FASHIONING FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE: CLOTHES INSPIRED BY GARDENS* – 1<sup>st</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008

The beautiful colours, intricate patterns and vibrant spirit of nature provide fertile ground in which fashion inspiration can blossom and grow. This exhibition brings together an array of clothing that transforms gardens into glamorous gowns.

**Leeds Costume Collection**, Lotherton Hall, Lotherton Lane, Abeford, Leeds, LS25 3EB Tel: 0113 281 3259

*CHINESE TREASURES* - 7<sup>th</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008



Chinese costume and textiles are on display as part of this year's Chinese Treasures exhibition. Star items include a tasselled banner with appliqued Taoist figures, an umbrella with tiers of calligraphy ribbons, dragon robes, an opera robe, lucky red robes for women including one embroidered with lots of flying cranes, and animal faced slippers for children.

Children's shoes with tiger faces, 1900 – 1905

**Abbey House Museum**, Abbey Walk, Kirkstall, Leeds, LS5 3EH, Tel: 0113 230 5492

*WEDDINGS* – 26<sup>th</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008

An exhibition all about the celebration of getting married. On display will be a selection of dresses and accessories representing wedding fashions from the past and also different cultures. The nation's love of a good Royal Wedding will be shown by an array of souvenirs and memorabilia, including a dress designed by Zandra Rhodes for HRH Princess Anne.

## Southeast of England

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Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Royal Pavilion Gardens, Brighton  
[www.brighton.virtualmuseum.info/exhibitions](http://www.brighton.virtualmuseum.info/exhibitions) Tel: 01273 290 900

*LITTLE BLACK DRESS* – until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008

Brighton Museum celebrates the contribution of the Little Black Dress to women's lives with an exhibition charting this iconic garment. The appeal of the Little Black Dress is its timeless glamour: from Coco Chanel to Audrey Hepburn to Elizabeth Hurley, it has the power to make all women feel special.

The exhibition will travel to the **Fashion and Textile Museum** in London, where it opens on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

**Chertsey Museum**, 33 Windsor Street, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8AT, Tel. 01932 565764.

*FASION ACCESSORIES GALLERY*

Featuring shoes, fans, hats, bags, parasols, lace, shoe buckles and jewellery with items from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

*BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS* - until 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008

In our newly re-furnished fashion gallery: an exhibition of beautiful garments from the 1920s and 30s, featuring gorgeous beaded flapper dresses, hats, shoes, menswear, outerwear and stunning figure-hugging bias cut gowns from the 1930s.

Admission to the above exhibitions is FREE.

For further information contact Grace Evans, Keeper of Costume on 01932 575 373.

## Southwest of England

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**Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum**, Russell-Cotes Road, East Cliff, Bournemouth, BH1 3AA, [www.russell-cotes.bournemouth.gov.uk](http://www.russell-cotes.bournemouth.gov.uk)  
Tel. 01202 451 858

*FLOCKAGE: THE FLOCK PHENOMENON* – until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008

A unique exhibition exploring flock's fascinating forms and functions. It showcases flock's use and status within design through a rich and colourful array of historical and contemporary examples and perspectives brought together for the first time.

**Fashion Museum**, Assembly Rooms, Bennett Street, Bath, BA1 2QH,  
[www.fashionmuseum.co.uk](http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk) Tel. 01225 477 173

*DRESSES FROM HISTORY* – opened February 2008

A display of some of the oldest dresses in the museum collection, this selection of 13 women's dresses from the Georgian, Regency and Victorian period have been

chosen for their decorative qualities and because they were the height of fashion at the time.

*17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY GLOVES* – ongoing in 2008

A selection of the most spectacular and glittering early 17<sup>th</sup> century gloves, on loan from The Gloves' Collection Trust, a special body set up by the Worshipful Company of Glovers of London.

1977 - Until December 2008

The first in a series of displays which portrays fashion through images, '1977' looks at the fashion of the era through photographs printed in the music press of the day, and how the photographers helped to disseminate new ideas about dressing and behaving as well as capturing the edgy cultural explosion known as punk.

## Wales and Midlands

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**The Fashion Gallery**, Snibston Discovery Park, Coalville, Leicestershire,  
[www.leics.gov.uk/museums/snibston](http://www.leics.gov.uk/museums/snibston) Tel. 01530 278 444

*SCARF HOARDER* – until 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008

An exhibition of over 200 classic design pieces that represent a part of the Siddons Scarf Collection. This collection of over 1,500 headsquares, handkerchiefs and scarves, was put together by local Leicestershire resident, Brenda Barnard, and donated to the County Council's Museum Service in 2002.

**Hereford Museum**, Broad Street, Hereford, HR4 9AU,  
[www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure/museums\\_galleries](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure/museums_galleries) Tel. 01432 260 692

*QUILTING ACROSS BORDERS* – 5<sup>TH</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008

An exhibition of antique and modern quilts from Ceredigion Museum, Hereford Museum and the Quilters Guild.

A programme of related workshops and lectures will be held at the **Museum Learning and Resource Centre**, Friar Street, Hereford, HR4 0AS.

Saturday lectures, 11.00 – 12.00, beginning 5<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Wednesday workshops, 10.00 – 1.00, beginning 9<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Telephone 01432 383383 for further details and booking

## Scotland

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**National Museum of Costume**, Shambellie House, New Abbey, Dumfries DG2 8HQ, [www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk) Tel: 01387 850 375

*HIP KNITS* – 21<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008

Hip Knits brings together a collection from Fair Isle sweaters to cutting edge creations reflecting Scotland's international reputation for its beautifully designed knitwear.

**Collins Gallery**, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow G1 1XQ,  
[www.strath.ac.uk/collinsgallery](http://www.strath.ac.uk/collinsgallery) Tel. 0141 548 2558

*FELT NATION: CONTEMPORARY MONGOLIAN TEXTILE ART* – 10<sup>th</sup> May to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2008 (closed 26<sup>th</sup> May)

Inspired by exchange visits between the Scottish Feltmakers, the Collins Gallery and Mongolian Felters, 'Felt Nation' maps the traditions, cultural significance and development of feltmaking in Mongolia from its discovery 2000 years ago to the present day.

A programme of related events includes a full day symposium on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May, master classes, demonstrations and workshops on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May. For further information and booking forms contact the Collins Gallery, email: [collinsgallery@strath.ac.uk](mailto:collinsgallery@strath.ac.uk)

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## Ireland

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**National Museum of Ireland - Country Life**, Turlough Park House, Turlough, Co. Mayo, Ireland, [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie) Tel: 00 353 1 6777 444

*ROMANTIC STITCHES AND REALIST SKETCHES* - 9<sup>th</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

In the 1960s the Irish artist Seán Keating was commissioned to produce a series of charcoal drawings to be used in an advertising campaign selling Aran knitwear in the United States and Europe. Not one of the sketches shows an Aran islander wearing the traditional knitwear. By featuring Keating's sketches alongside a selection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Aran knitwear, the exhibition will focus on this unique marketing story and the reality behind "countless generations" of Aran island women knitting jumpers for their "menfolk".

**National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History**, Collins Barracks, Benburb St., Dublin 7, Ireland, [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie)  
Tel: 00 353 1 6777 444

*NEILLÍ MULCAHY - IRISH HAUTE COUTURE OF THE 50s AND 60s* – continues until October 2009

The exhibition looks at the work of the Irish fashion designer, Neillí Mulcahy. She was known for her innovative use of Irish tweeds collaborating with hand weavers to produce fabrics in lightweight weaves and vibrant colours. The exhibition includes a selection of outfits for day and evening wear supported by contemporary fashion photography and illustrations. Neillí's use of fabrics, the presentation of her annual collection, and her success in America are some of the themes explored.

## Recent Publications

*The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England*, by John Styles, Yale University Press, £25

Reviewed in the Guardian by Veronica Horwell, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008

*Madame Grès: Sphinx of Fashion*, by Patricia Mears, Yale University Press, £35.00, published to coincide with a temporary exhibition of the same name at the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. The exhibition ends 19<sup>th</sup> April 2008, an online version can be seen on [www.fitnyc.edu/museum](http://www.fitnyc.edu/museum)

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## Mairéad Dunlevy, 1941 - 2008

Mairéad Dunlevy, former Keeper of the Art and Industrial Division of the National Museum of Ireland, died on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008 following a long illness. She joined the staff of the National Museum in 1970 as an assistant keeper and was given responsibility for the glass, ceramics and textiles collections. Mairéad's knowledge of Irish cultural history was immense and she published and lectured on a wide range of topics relating to Ireland's decorative arts and material culture. She was most keenly interested in the Irish clothing and textiles industries, particularly in Irish lace making.

Appointed as the first director of the Hunt Museum in Limerick in 1992 Mairéad played a key role in transferring the Hunt collection from the city's university to a permanent home and its entire redisplay. Returning to the National Museum, she was closely involved in establishing the Art and Industrial Division at its new home in Collins Barracks and in the planning and installation of several of the inaugural exhibitions there. She was curator of *The Way We Wore: 250 Years of Irish Clothing and Jewellery*, the National Museum's first permanent costume gallery, which opened in 2000 and her book, *Dress in Ireland; A History* (B.T. Batsford, 1989), a chronological study of dress in all strata of Irish society, remains the definitive work on this subject. Her latest book, on the history of Ireland's silk industry, is currently with Yale University Press, and sadly will now be published posthumously.