

Exhibitions and Interpretation: Proceedings of the ICOM Costume Committee Annual Meeting, Toronto, 8-13 September 2015.

The following papers were also presented at the meeting in Toronto. They appear in alphabetical order of the presenter's last name.

Dress Codes: Revealing the Jewish Wardrobe: New Approaches to the Costume Collection of the Israel Museum

Efrat Assaf-Shapira, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

The exhibition "Dress Codes: Revealing the Jewish Wardrobe" opened on March 2014 in the Israel Museum and has been the first comprehensive exhibitions of its kind in the museum, bringing together an array of traditional apparel from the eighteenth-twentieth centuries from the Museum's world-renowned collection of Jewish dress. While preceding exhibitions featuring Jewish dress focused on the immediate geographical, religious and cultural context of the object, this exhibition, deriving from the idea that the clothes worn by Jews were similar or even identical to those worn by their non-Jewish neighbours, offers a cross-cultural and universal interpretation of the history of Jewish dress and the ways in which traditional clothing has stimulated fashion design throughout history and continues to inspire the styles of today.

The exhibition invited viewers to consider different facets of the language of clothing. Though this language can disclose gender, age, background, or custom, some important meanings may remain vague and fluid. It may accentuate, but it may also hide; it may be transitory, but it may also be ageless and universal. In my paper I'll present the different curatorial phases and dilemmas in the making of the exhibition, questions such as those related to concept, design and accompanying events.

Fashion For Thought : An Exhibition And A Workshop At Once

Ninke Bloemberg, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, The Netherlands

In recent years Centraal Museum devoted much effort to developing a new form of public participation, known as 'the workplace method'. By setting up a workshop in large, temporary exhibitions, visitors are encouraged to actively engage with the theme or content of the exhibition. In this way, the public can discover new ways of experiencing art. Taking on a contemporary approach to reach out and inspire its public, this is a modern organization that appeals to a wide audience. Many exhibitions will understandably still operate under the 'Do not touch' motto. The museum wants also to challenge visitors to a more hands-on experience though. Hence the idea for The Studio was born.

The Studio is a temporary art studio linked to a specific exhibitions, which invites visitors to create something themselves, but always relevant to that specific exposition. This form of public participation has two goals. It is a nice way for the museum to explore new areas and open its doors even further, but also a way for visitors to 'see through their hands'. The idea being that the experience of drawing, building, or designing something yourself places the work on display in a new perspective. In other words: by stepping in the footsteps of the professional artist, the amateur acquires a better understanding of the history and development of the art, but also a greater appreciation of its workmanship.

The first experiment with this concept was during the exhibition *Fashion for thought*. Since that moment more workshops were integrated within the main exhibitions of the Centraal Museum. The concept has now been tried and tested, and appears to be a great success. I'll share the experiences we have up till now.

Fiercely Independent – Fashion In An Art School

Gillion Carrara, Fashion Resource Center, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, United States

As educators and fervent observers of fashion's avant-garde on the runway, fitted on a classroom dress form, or in an art installation, my colleagues and I are committed to design and construction innovation. We agree that critical study of fashion's ideology and culture cannot be comprehensive without access to the material objects that document the visual life of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. These singular material objects enliven our intellectual curiosity and awareness, assigning us visual direction. This presentation will evaluate and discuss our methods of collecting, organizing, documenting, installing and disseminating materials contained in the Fashion Resource Center's distinctive, uncommon collection where creative stimulation is a prominent focus.

As one of the four Special Collections at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, since 1987 the Fashion Resource Center has supported the curricula where trans-disciplinary studies prevail, as a hands-on site for ongoing investigation. The FRC is a destination for visitors outside our institution as well. The collection's policy includes access to 1,500 current and out-of-print publications on all aspects of dress, 500 designer garments, 800 hundred fashion videos, fifteen magazine subscriptions, a collection of European trade-show textile samples, vintage material fragments, innovative new materials, and files with published interviews and biographies on emerging and established talent.

For faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, fashion is an art form. It resonates with distinction and contemporaneity. Modern fashion represents the confluence of our physical form, mind and spirit. To examine this nexus, we must acquire defining examples and present them in an engaging and captivating way. Our community recognizes the intimate relationship between clothing and the arts, and values this Special Collection as a comprehensive reference center.

In addition to defining images, we will explore the preparation, installation and presentations during the 2012 Art Institute's exhibition, *Material Translations*. The exhibit featured Japanese garments selected from the collection and installed in the Tadao Ando Gallery, and included a publication, tours and a public lecture.

During conference discussions, I hope that the awareness of this particular collection will evoke stimulating and advisory inquiries and responses. Of particular concern is initiating the design and creation of a nomenclature and an online digital reference, accessible to the SAIC community and the public.

The Conservation Treatment of Maud Allen's Vision of Salome Costume

Brenna Cook, Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton, Canada

This paper will tell the story of the conservation treatment of Canadian Dancer Maud Allen's Vision of Salome costume. Dating to 1906, Maud Allen sparked a global "Salomania" craze with her dance and the pictures of her wearing this costume. The image of the glittering, exotic dancer from the Orient that Allen created made a permanent mark on popular culture that continues to this day. Conservation of the multiple elements of this costume was undertaken at the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) from 2013-2015 with the goal of strengthening the costume so that it could be displayed on a mannequin. The costume consisted of several pieces; a skirt, a bodice, two headdresses, and a collection of fragments. Each piece presented different challenges to conservation. The corrosion on the metal braid on the bodice and the damage caused by the weight of the metal and glass decoration fastened to delicate, sheer, and aging silk were both major facets of the conservation treatment. Ethical debates arose surrounding the most appropriate use of the loose fragments and how best to conserve them within the historical context of this object. With expertise from staff, conservators and scientists at CCI, this costume was returned to

the client in early 2015 ready for public display on a mannequin that would show off this costume with all the drama of Allen's original theatrical performance.

This costume is part of the collection of Dance Collection Danse, based at 301-149 Church Street, Toronto.

Artful Dressing: Exhibiting the Fashions of Agnes Etherington

Carolyn Dowdell, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Agnes McCausland Etherington (1880-1955) is best remembered at Queen's University and by the city of Kingston, Ontario, Canada for her passionate patronage of art. However, among family and friends she was also known for her passion for fine clothing. A collection of approximately twenty-five items and ensembles from Etherington's personal wardrobe spanning the first half of the twentieth century is housed at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre on Queen's University campus. Examination of these items allows a personal, even intimate, glimpse of a passionate and dedicated woman vital to her community.

This collection provided a unique opportunity to illuminate a side of Agnes Etherington seldom seen or remembered today, within the walls of her namesake institution. This culminated in the exhibition "Artful Dressing: The Fashions of Agnes Etherington" at the Art Centre, which ran from June 21 – November 5, 2014. As a member of the locally prominent Richardson family Etherington was part of Kingston's social elite. She also actively participated in women's organizations both locally and at the national level in addition to her tireless efforts supporting arts programming at Queen's. With the many inevitable social and philanthropic obligations that followed from her activities Etherington must have felt significant concern for her sartorial self-representation. The diversity of the pieces reveals the various aspects and contexts of Etherington's life over her most productive periods. Together, they paint a portrait of a vibrant and creative woman. Conveying this conviction was the primary goal of the exhibition, in addition to shedding some light on the workings of early twentieth-century Kingston society. This presentation details a case study of both exhibiting and interpreting a locally significant historic dress collection, with the unique challenges and possibilities offered therein.

Savage Dressing: Costume Mounting for an Alexander McQueen Exhibition

Lara Flecker, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom and Joyce Fung, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty was first put on at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2011. Four years later the exhibition was staged at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Although there are differences, both versions of this retrospective remain similar both in design and content. This has given rise to an unusual situation where two separate institutions from different countries have worked to the same brief, creating the identical show. Both museums were presented with a similar exhibition design, the same team of external people to work with, the same extraordinary garments to display and the same mannequins on which the clothes had to be dressed.

It was the selection of this mannequin that posed one of the biggest challenges for the dressing teams at both museums. Chosen for its imposing height and androgynous appearance, the Bonaveri mannequin from the FMC08 collection is sculpted with generous proportions. This meant that the majority of McQueen's outfits were significantly too small to fit onto the figure.

This then was the Alexander McQueen dressing challenge: How to reduce the size of around 80 fiberglass mannequins so that they were a perfect fit and did justice to the breath-taking outfits destined to appear in the exhibition. This paper is a unique opportunity to

examine the way in which two different museums approached the same challenge. By taking the clothes off the mannequins and revealing what went on underneath, it is possible to have an in depth look at the different techniques and strategies employed by both institutions to overcome these dressing difficulties.

Textile conservation and the display of historical costumes

Caterina Florio, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Canada

We live in a time when bright colors, glossy magazines and period-style movies are the common reference when viewing costumes and textile artifacts. Today's culture presents goods as disposable and easily replaced. In addition, these things must always appear in pristine condition. These circumstances raise ethical issues related to costume conservation methodology and the degree of intervention required during treatment. This paper explores the role that conservators, curators and museumgoers play in determining conservation strategies and treatment of historical costumes and their display. Traditionally, the weight given to the museumgoers' experience of displayed artifacts and their perception of that object played a limited role in the economy of those strategies and treatment decisions. With the analysis of three case studies from the Queen's University Collection of Canadian Dress and the Canadian Museum of History Costume Collection, I will illustrate that the participation of the museumgoer in this process, at this moment in the history of things, is indeed much more relevant and diversified. This conclusion is the product of interviews with conservators and curators working with costume collections, published literature on the topic and a specific questionnaire designed to assess museumgoers' perceptions. Relevant among which are the contexts in which the costumes are displayed, the type of artifacts and the subject of the exhibition, the resources available to the institution and public programming associated with the exhibition.

A version of this paper has appeared as an article "Textile conservation and the museum public" in *The public face of conservation*, ed. E. Williams, Archetype Publications, 2014

Displaying and Interpreting Dress: an Exhibition of Shanghai Modern

Jillian Li, Shanghai Museum of Textile and Costume, China

We held an exhibition of "Shanghai Modern: Fashion History of Shanghai Style" in 2014. I'd like to share my experience in exhibiting and displaying dress. We had about 100 exhibits during the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. In this period, great changes had taken place in Shanghai, from a small town to an international big city, and became the top fashion centre in China. We wanted to show the changes, not only to fashion but also to Shanghai people's life. We divided the exhibits (most of them were costume and textile) into four parts: Dynasty Wear, New Civilization, QiPao Mood, and Chic Flow. We built some frame houses to display the new civilization. We simulated a street to show the Qipao mood. We did this to display the social and historical function of dress in peoples' lives. But not only that, the exhibition contained seven parts in two galleries. We used a projective video as the beginning part: Fashion Memory. We printed old images as another part to show fashion idols and tell the stories about fashion. In this way, we combined old photo and objects, information and stories. Furthermore, we made a special video and showed it on a circle video gallery. The video is fifty-two minutes. Some experts were interviewed to say their points on Fashion history of Shanghai style. Several parts of old movies were integrated with our collections. It was a hard work but it was interesting and significant. I learned and grew up while working on the exhibition.

Magnets and Textile Mounting Systems at the Royal Ontario Museum

Kristiina Lahde and Karla Livingston, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

The Royal Ontario Museum houses a collection of over 50,000 textiles and costumes representing cultures from around the world, dating from ancient times to present. At any given time there are over 300 textile and costume artefacts on display in up to eight galleries in the Museum. The primary venue is the Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume located in Level Four of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal that opened in 2008. The 5000+ square foot gallery was designed with cases and open platforms. This combination of open display and casework presents its own challenges for conservation, display, and design. In their roles as collection technicians for the Textile and Costume section, Kristiina Lahde and Karla Livingston work with the pressures of limited time, resources, and a high volume of materials in order to defy gravity

The complexity of displaying these diverse costume and textile collections is challenging. These limp and shapeless objects need to be carefully animated, and brought to life within a static museum display, so that the visitor can clearly see their materials and forms. We have standardized a range of display systems as well as developed a toolbox of mounting techniques that help to economize our resources and time. We have established museum-wide textile and costume display systems to maximize flexibility and efficiency, employing standardized gallery colours, display fabrics, display stands and bases, magnetic display panels, and textile hanging systems. Our toolbox of techniques can be drawn upon and customized with each individual textile or costume.

This paper will present and discuss the context and scale in which we work, and how this has influenced the development and use of standardized display systems. We will discuss both two and three dimensional innovative mounting solutions developed in response to the constraints and challenges posed by the objects themselves, conservation requirements, and curatorial research and interpretation for display. Highlighted will be our use of magnets in mounting textiles, costume, and accessories for the Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume.

Introduction to Royal Ontario Museum Collections

Alexandra Palmer, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

Textiles and costume were collected by the ROM's founding director Charles Trick Currelly from its inception over 100 years ago. Today, the collection holds over 50,000 objects from around the world and across time. A brief overview of the textile collection will be presented with emphasis on strength in key areas, including painted and printed cottons, Chinese costume, eighteenth century costume, and haute couture.

Costume Art and Research at Critical Costume 2015: Curatorial Approaches and New Practices in Exhibiting Contemporary Performance Costume

Sofia Pantouvaki, Aalto University, Finland

The exhibition *Critical Costume 2015: New Costume Practices and Performances* held at Aalto University, Helsinki, in March 2015 presented new artistic research from the field of costume, namely contemporary costume practices and performances by thirty-two artists-researchers from three continents and various artistic backgrounds. The works that were exhibited examine the performative qualities of material and form in costume - whether physical, digital or virtual. These artworks stimulated the audience's thinking in reconsidering the role of costume in contemporary performance by proposing new modes of representation as well as new artistic processes. Moreover, the selected works explored how the scenographic body is constructed today on a spatial, temporal and embodied design. This paper will present the main curatorial concepts proposed for further enquiry: Is the life of a costume only as long as the performance-run? How does costume evolve

together with, through and beyond the performer's body? What does material mean for the creative practice of costume design today? In what ways can costume be a creative methodological tool for research? And, how can performance costume be (re-) presented in a new performative environment in dialogue with a new audience within the context of an exhibition? To answer these questions, I will address the thematic sections of the exhibition and analyse selected artistic works that were presented. Special focus will be put on the concepts of *mediated* costume and *projected* costume as paradigms indicating the emergence of new approaches and innovations in the field of costume. Based on the selected examples, I will analyse curatorial decisions and exhibition design solutions that were researched, developed and tested during the *Critical Costume 2015* exhibition aiming at making a contribution to the discourse of curating and exhibiting contemporary performance costume.

WHAT'S A CONSERVATOR TO DO? Costume Exhibition Issues

Chris Paulocik, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

In my career as a Conservator beginning at CCI (Canadian Conservation Institute), followed by twenty-two years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and most recently at the Royal Ontario Museum, I have seen costume exhibitions morph from simple presentations to spectacles complete with flying mannequins. Installations have continually pushed the envelope to be bigger, better and more animated in order to engage the public. I will share my perspective as a conservator who has worked on many of these complex shows and outline how they were achieved.

The Conservator is faced with many issues in this new world of the fashion blockbuster. Time, money, manpower or mannequins to name a few. Any exhibition from conception to execution involves a large group of people sometimes with conflicting priorities. Each phase of the process can be challenging with issues and input from curators, conservators, designers or lighting specialists. This process involves careful choreography to make it all work. I will discuss the challenges facing conservators working in large institutions with heavy exhibition schedules and the demands that they are confronted when staging costume shows.

We have come a long way from the static historic house interpretations of costume to over the top extravaganzas that draw in the public. Presentation has become a major focus that many museums are striving to achieve. Mannequins are often a major component of a show but can pose one of the greatest challenges attempting to evoke character and animation to static figures. Although period prints, drawings and paintings may provide the inspiration, it can be complex to present figures in a dynamic way as represented in pictorial images. This paper will review the range of options available for costume presentation from mannequins to mounts and wigs to footwear. I will share my experience with the evolution of mounting techniques and installation methods developed for these blockbusters.

A Step Ahead: Moving Fashion History Forward through Researching and Exhibiting Footwear

Elizabeth Semmelhack, Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

Clothing embodies the histories of the diverse individuals and groups who have contributed to its production, distribution, consumption, and social meaning. These histories span socio-economic strata, international borders, and gender divides. Museums have traditionally been seen as institutions that emphasize the stories of elite culture at the expense of inclusiveness but exploring the history of dress in thoughtful ways can counter these assumptions.

Embodied in each garment, each shoe, is a wide range of histories from makers and marketers to servants and repairers, not to mention the histories of the wearers, both original and subsequent, if the article of clothing has entered into the second-hand market. In addition, the histories these objects accrue as they enter collections provide insight in collecting interests in relation to concepts about the past. Each of these histories offers unique and potentially nuanced and engaging entries into fashion history. Using the specialized collection and exhibition practices of the Bata Shoe Museum, this paper will focus on the collecting, study and exhibition of dress that seek to explore the multiple histories of dress.

Twenty-first century Mannequins

Paul Sohi, Royal College of Art/Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom

The museum mannequin is an ever-changing fluid representation of the human form. However, in the twenty-first century and for as far back as museum mannequins have existed in the context of historical preservation and exhibition, the methodology of manufacture for mannequins has remained unchanged. This has put museums and in particular, their conservators in a strained position of constantly producing custom mannequins derived from standard display mannequins. This slows down the entire production process of exhibits, requiring conservators and an expanded team to chop, butcher, and adjust these mannequins intended for a different purpose to fit historical dress or custom fashion house pieces for display. I propose a new method of using modern manufacturing techniques, concentrating primarily on parametric modelling and additive manufacturing to streamline this process and create the new “21st Century Mannequin.”

Using a process of parametric inputs a conservator or museum staff member can input the variables required for a custom mannequin, which is then calculated through an algorithm to produce a totally unique and custom mannequin for the specific item required. This is then fed through to an additive manufacturing machine which produces the mannequin automatically and with no additional input required from the conservators ready for use! This new mannequin thus sits in the virtual space as all bodies, forms and ergonomics throughout history, adjusting itself to be brought out into the physical world to fit the requirements of the Museum.

An exhibition on tour: Mythos Chanel

Maria Spitz, Draiflessen Collection, Mettingen, Germany

Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel is one of the most important fashion designers of the twentieth century. To this day, fashion icons like the “Little Black Dress” or the Chanel suit, the perfume Chanel No. 5, opulent costume jewellery or the quilted handbag are associated – even if they are not original – with the couturier.

The exhibition *The Chanel Legend*, shown in Germany under the title *Mythos Chanel* and in the Netherlands under *Chanel, de legende* in 2013–2014, addressed the question why Coco Chanel as a person and the brand she created attracts that much attention even today. To explore this, her fashion icons were placed at the centre. The biography of the fashion designer and the image she created of herself are brought into the focus as well as the ingenious way Karl Lagerfeld connects this heritage since 1983 with the trends of the zeitgeist. Besides more than seventy original Chanel creations – inter alia loans of the Marlene Dietrich Collection of the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, the Musée Galliera in Paris or the Royal Ontario Museum Toronto – numerous adaptations of Chanel’s fashion icons were presented for the first time, making *The Chanel Legend* perceptible in an entirely unique way.

This paper is dedicated to the question of what happens when an exhibition that is created by a museum is also shown in other houses. For many museums, cooperation and taking-

over of exhibitions are already for a long time part of everyday business. For this purpose, the three different presentations of the exhibition *The Chanel Legend* in the Draiflessen Collection Mettingen, in the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag and in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg are going to be analysed by focussing the different spatial situations in their relevance for the narrative structure and the arrangement of the exhibits, as well as the curatorial and scenographic handwriting. In doing so, each of the three presentations retained its individuality and offered the visitors – despite the same concept and mostly the same objects – different ways of approaching *The Chanel Legend*.

Jacques Doucet: The Complex Case of the Libbey Dolls

Marissa Stevenson, Toledo Museum of Art, United States

At the early onset of Haute Couture, Jacques Doucet was an integral force in cultivating the relationship between art and fashion that is evident today. As a well-known art connoisseur and patron, Doucet's relationship with artists, collectors, actresses, and writers were significant in establishing this correlation. Showcasing this passion for art, literature and historical fashion, Doucet created a unique collection of seventy-eight costume dolls portraying historical French luminaries, actresses, and French fashion come to life. Referenced from *Modes et Costume Historiques*, the dolls depict figures from works of art and fashion publications by famous French artists like Moreau, Lancret and Debucourt, representing a culmination of influences and interests by their maker.

Constructed from elegant fabric remnants and surplus materials from the Limoges and Sevres porcelain factories, the dolls exhibit the same degree of detail and finesse as Doucet's full-scale garments. As such the collection is comprised of complex materials including flesh fabricated from wax lined with plaster, human hair wigs, and clothing embellished with feathers, glass, early plastic, metal, leather, fur, paper and paint that require a multi-faceted approach to long term care and treatment.

Purchased in 1916 by the Toledo Museum founder, industrial glass pioneer, Edward Drummond Libbey, the figures were nicknamed the "Libbey Dolls" and became an immediate patron favourite. As beloved objects, the "Libbey Dolls" were continuously displayed from their acquisition in 1917 until the late 1970s. The objects were adversely affected by the damaging environmental effects from light, early casework design, mounts, and fluctuating environmental conditions common to museums in the early to mid-twentieth century. Light damage in particular has resulted in fading, embrittlement, and fracturing of the wax flesh, textiles, and accoutrements. This paper focuses on a brief history of the collection, the complex conservation issues due to the history of display, and the treatment plan for display and storage.

Refashioning the Fashion Exhibit at the Oakville Museum

Jennifer Triemstra-Johnston, Oakville Museum, Canada

By redesigning and recycling exhibits, the Oakville Museum not only fully utilizes its resources but fulfills its mandate of sharing local history and culture with a diverse community. Using *Children's Wear: Can You Imagine?* as a case study, this paper chronicles the lifespan of a temporary dress exhibit as it was designed and later modified to suit three different venues and appeal to three distinct audiences.

Oakville Museum is first and foremost a community museum. It is funded and administered by the Town of Oakville and charges no admission to its guests. The bulk of the museum's collection is comprised of donations from the community; primarily local commercial artefacts, household items, and articles of dress. Inspired by artefacts and photographs from the Oakville Museum's collection, *Can You Imagine?* was curated to intrigue and inform audiences of the social practices pertaining to historical children's fashions. The exhibit was

not chronological but thematic in nature with cases and walls dedicated to specific concepts that begged the question *Can You Imagine?*

This paper presents the process of creating the original exhibit design for a large public gallery at a community and cultural centre and the subsequent downsizing of the exhibit for a historical room at the museum and finally as a small outreach program display. It discusses the physical parameters of each unique exhibition space while also taking into consideration the needs and expectations of the audience at each venue. Finally, the paper suggests that dress artefacts are ideal objects for integrating into touring exhibits. Not only are these artefacts accessible to a diverse public, by providing narratives reflecting local historical figures, social practices and aspects of daily life, but they can be thematically curated and easily reworked for exhibits of various sizes.