



# CLOTHING THE PANDEMIC CONFERENCE

Resiliency, Community & Unity Expressed Through an  
International Collaboration of the Covid-19 Facemask Project

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

1 DECEMBER 2021

**M COSTUME** ICOM  
international committee  
for the museums and collections  
of costume, fashion and textiles

**M ICOM-CC** ICOM  
international council  
of museums – committee  
for conservation

**M ICME** ICOM  
international committee  
for museums and collections  
of ethnography

**ICOM** conseil  
international  
des musées  
Canada

Facemasks have become the iconic object and symbol of the pandemic representing humanity's resilience, community and unity during this global tragedy. The project will connect international museums and curators working on this topic, and connect their collections virtually to a global public. This international conference convenes experts from all fields of Linguistic, History, Art History, Sociology and Museology.

Free online event upon registration only.

See full description of the project :  
<http://costume.mini.icom.museum/clothing-the-pandemic/>.

*"I used the mask as a performative object I made the invisible, visible. Our breath, our life-force and – in 2020 – the transporter of our most feared opponent, COVID-19."*

*Breath, by Threadstories (2021)*

# PROGRAMME

## SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

## INTO ICOM LANGUAGES

## FRENCH, ENGLISH AND SPANISH

## PARIS TIME SCHEDULE

### 1 DECEMBER 2021

Moderated by **Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset**, Chair of the International Committee for the museums and collections of Costume, Fashion and Textiles. Clothing the Pandemic Project leader.

- 2:00 PM** Clothing the Pandemic an ICOM Solidarity Project 2021  
**Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset** - Versailles Palace
- 2:10 PM** Words for a worldwide pandemic: how to dress them up linguistically?  
**Maria Teresa Zanola** - Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Milan
- 2:30 PM** Death in Florence: coping with plague in an early modern city  
**John Hendersson** - Birkbek University of London
- 2:50 PM** Corona's Ancestors: Masks and Epidemics at the Vienna Court 1500–1918. *Exhibition at the Imperial Carriage Museum Vienna, 18.12.2020-24.04.2021.*  
**Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner** - Schönbrunn Palace Vienna
- 3:10 PM** Veiled Faces: Jewish "masks" for fragile times, past to present  
**Efrat Assaf-Shapira** - The Israel Museum Jérusalem
- 3:30 PM** Religious, occasional, political - social functions of anti-virus masks in Poland in 2020  
**Joanna Regina Kowalska** - The National Museum Krakow
- 3:50 PM** Contaminated objects – collecting and exhibiting facemasks during COVID-19  
**Andrew Groves & Danielle Sprecher** - Westminster Menswear Archive London
- 4:10 PM** "Living in the time of the lockdown" collection by the Mucem (April-May 2020): first feedback  
**Émilie Girard** - Mucem Marseille
- 4:30 PM** Collecting COVID: Materiality in Masks  
**Sarah Fee, Alexandra Palmer & Fahmida Suleman** - Royal Ontario Museum Toronto
- 4:50 PM** Q&A

Free online event

**[REGISTER NOW !](#)**

Contact : [clothingthepandemic@gmail.com](mailto:clothingthepandemic@gmail.com)

# ABSTRACTS

## INTRODUCTION TO CLOTHING THE PANDEMIC AN ICOM SOLIDARITY PROJECT 2021

Resiliency, Community & Unity Expressed Through an International Collaboration of the Covid-19 Facemask Project



## Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset

The stories of COVID-19 will be recorded in all the world's history books. In a similar way, this project intends to preserve and explore the iconic object of this challenging pandemic since its very beginnings: the facemask. These facemasks are implicated in a wide range of facets of society, from health, fashion, and art, to politics, identity, and sustainability. It is important for museums and the public to have a broader understanding of textile and dress collecting relating to the pandemic.

Image credit : Elene Usdin, Série Dessins sur papier toilette, La Joconde, photographie numérique, 2020 © Mucem

## WORDS FOR A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC: HOW TO DRESS THEM UP LINGUISTICALLY?



## Maria Teresa Zanola

Language detects social changes and keeps a record of them: when defining a new concept, language reacts to make it explicit, thus influencing our understanding and our way of perceiving reality. The interchange between language, reality and society is an interesting process to analyse in words that were born and used during the pandemic crisis.

Image credit : Les mots nouveaux, ou tombés aux oubliettes, que le coronavirus est en train de mettre ou remettre en service. ©Getty. Source <https://www.franceinter.fr/societe/desinfox-nationalisations-distanciation-les-mots-nouveaux-de-la-pandemie-de-coronavirus>

## DEATH IN FLORENCE: COPING WITH PLAGUE IN AN EARLY MODERN CITY



## John Hendersson

This paper examines how one of the major cities of early modern Europe coped with plague, both from the perspective of the government and of the governed. While outlining the basic strategies adopted by the Florentine state to deal with this emergency, the main focus will be on how official measures impacted on the day-to-day life of the ordinary population and the strategies they adopted to cope with living through the epidemic.

Image credit : A physician wearing a 17th century plague preventive. Welcome Collection ©Public Domain Mark. Source: <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/vexvy3g3/images?id=wxgtpxz7>

## CORONA'S ANCESTORS: MASKS AND EPIDEMICS AT THE VIENNA COURT 1500–1918

Exhibition at the Imperial Carriage Museum  
Vienna, 18.12.2020-24.04.2021



### Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner

For most people the Corona pandemic is a phenomenon as incomprehensible as it was unexpected. This is largely because the major epidemics with which our ancestors had to live for centuries have long since disappeared from collective memory. Time and again, the world has been afflicted with terrible diseases such as the plague, smallpox, cholera and Spanish flu. The strategies developed to combat them seem surprisingly familiar: even in the Early Modern Age, borders and entertainment venues were closed, trade restrictions were introduced, large crowds were banned and travellers, the sick and those they had come into contact with were required to quarantine. This exhibition aims to help us process the shock of the current pandemic by taking a look at the past. To make this possible at all, we needed to do things differently. Since the exhibition had to be put together quickly, only a few weeks passed between the idea and its realization. In order to save costs in a time of crisis, only existing exhibition aids and almost exclusively objects owned by the KHM Museum Association were included; supplementary documents from other institutions are presented virtually in exhibition videos.

Image credit : Austria and Cholera, Leopold Bucher 1835 Austria and Cholera, Leopold Bucher 1835. Belvedere, Wien © Foto: Johannes Stoll

## VEILED FACES: JEWISH "MASKS" FOR FRAGILE TIMES, PAST TO PRESENT



### Efrat Assaf-Shapira

The collection of Jewish costumes in the Israel Museum is one of the most comprehensive and unique collections of traditional dress worldwide and includes a splendid array of more than 10,000 items of Jewish clothing. Efrat's talk will focus on one facet of these collections, related to Jewish dress in times of distress. Looking at whole garments as well as details exploring their practical as well as hidden and symbolic meanings for protection, good health, longevity, and prosperity.

Image credit : Jewish woman's wrap (izar) and face veil (khiliyye), Baghdad, Iraq, late 19th – early 20th century. Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Helene Simon and Hanina Shasha, New York, in memory of their mother, Louise Zilka née Bashi, Gift of Mazli Nawi, Ramat Gan. Photo: © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Mauro Magliani

## RELIGIOUS, OCCASIONAL, POLITICAL - SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF ANTI-VIRUS MASKS IN POLAND IN 2020



### Joanna Regina Kowalska

The first year of the pandemic made everyone wear anti-covid masks. It quickly turned out that the can be used to express socio-political views. As the pandemic broke out in the spring, there was a need for masks to be used during religious ceremonies, church weddings and First Holy Communion. On the other hand, in the autumn, protests known as the "women's strike" broke out in Poland - for both: the demonstrators and counter-demonstrators, the anti-covid mask turned out to be an even better carrier of ideological content than the T-shirt.

Image credit : First Holy Communion anti-covid mask, National Museum in Kraków. Photograph T. Markowski

## CONTAMINATED OBJECTS – COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING FACEMASKS DURING COVID-19



### Andrew Groves and Danielle Sprecher

The online exhibition *Undercover*. From necessity to luxury: The evolution of face coverings during COVID-19 opened on 11 May 2021, one year on from when the United Kingdom government first advised people to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces.

The exhibition, which drew exclusively from the Westminster Menswear Archive, featured 52 unique face covers arranged chronologically to demonstrate how these everyday objects evolved from a utilitarian PPE item in scarce supply, to an everyday item worn by millions, to finally become a highly desirable fashion accessory manufactured by companies ranging from Burberry, Balenciaga, and Louis Vuitton.

This presentation discusses some of the challenges experienced by the curators while conducting rapid reaction collection in a commercial setting and presenting fashion items that were still available for purchase but exhibited within a distinctly different contextual narrative.

The curators will also reflect on how, over the course of the 12-month research period, facemasks went from being viewed as a symbol of the fashion industry's rapid response to assist in times of crisis to becoming a highly contested object that could result in contamination of the environment in which luxury fashion operates.

Image credit : More Joy Face Mask, Christopher Kane, July 2020.

## "LIVING IN THE TIME OF THE LOCKDOWN" COLLECTION BY THE MUCEM (APRIL-MAY 2020): FIRST FEEDBACK



### Émilie Girard

In April 2020, the Mucem launched a participatory collection, "Living in the time of the lockdown", which intended to collect from volunteers the material testimonies of this exceptional and unprecedented period of life. More than 600 responses (donation proposals accompanied by short texts explaining the reasons for the proposal) have been received and are still being analysed to this day. What lessons can be drawn from this urgently launched experience, in terms of collection methodology, involvement of the public and museum contributors in the act of enriching the collections and social representativeness of the products of the collection?

Crédit photo : Sébastien Dufeu, Sans titre, tirage photographique, 2020. © Mucem

## COLLECTING COVID: MATERIALITY IN MASKS



### Sarah Fee, Alexandra Palmer and Fahmida Suleman

During lockdown three curators at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) began documenting and collecting pandemic masks. Operating together and apart virtually from home they assembled over 300 masks from over 20 countries, documenting stories of making, makers and cultural meaning. Discussed will be the communal resonances, challenges and solidarities in the collection, which resulted in a display of 100 masks in a free exhibition, *Unmasking the Pandemic: From Personal Protection to Personal Expression* (Sept 2021–March 2022). The speakers will also touch upon how the physical exhibition inspired them in their conceptualization of the ICOM's virtual exhibition and discuss the future of exhibitions in a post-pandemic world.

Left to right: Piña mask by Beatriz 'Patis' Pamintuan Tesoro, San Pablo City, Laguna, Philippines; Tentmakers' geometric mask, Artist (name unrecorded) for The Art of Khayamiyya, Cairo, Egypt; and embroidered 'Tulip and Teapot' mask by Dilyara Kaipova, Urgut, Samarkand Region, Uzbekistan. Photo: © Royal Ontario Museum/Paul Eekhoff.

# SPEAKERS

**Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset** is a research associate at the palace of Versailles. Her work focuses on fashion culture and international relations. At Versailles, she contributed to the major exhibition on court dress and convened the related international conference "Royal Wardrobes: visual culture, material culture" in 2009. In 2010-13, she was recruited by the Victoria and Albert museum in London (Fashion and Textile Department) for a 3-year international research project led by Evelyn Welch "Fashioning the Early Modern: Creativity and Innovation in Europe 1500-1800" funded by the Humanities in the Research Area from the EU Commission. In 2015, her project "Dressing the New World: The Trade and Culture of Clothing in the New Spanish Colonies 1600-1800" was awarded the Marie Curie Fellowship (Horizon 2020) at the Centre for textile Research in Copenhagen (Denmark). In 2017 she was Research fellow at the Bard Graduate Centre NYC (USA). She is the author of "L'Esprit des modes au Grand Siècle" (Paris CTHS 2010) and the research blog "DRESSING THE NEW WORLD". She is the founder of the association "ART & LUXE" which organizes workshops on the history of fashion makers and artisans of luxury in Paris. ICOM Costume Chair since 2019.

**Maria Teresa Zanola** is professor of French linguistics at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan (Italy) and she is the director of the Observatory of Terminologies and Language Policies. She is Officier de l'Ordre français des Arts et Lettres and author of essays and books about terminology, fashion language and multilingual communication. Her research concerns specialised languages through a diachronic perspective. Professor Maria Teresa Zanola is President of the Conseil Européen pour les Langues/European Language Council and President of the network of neolatin terminologies REALITER.

**John Henderson** is Professor of Italian Renaissance History at Birkbeck, University of London and Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Cambridge. His most recent books: *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City* (2019); *Plague and the City*, edited with Lukás Engelmann and Christos Lynteris (2019); and *Representing Infirmary. Diseased Bodies in Renaissance Italy*, edited with Fredrika Jacobs and Jonathan Nelson (2021).

**Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner** studied history and art history in Vienna and Rome. She is member of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research (IfÖG) and was a lecturer for gender history at

Vienna University for many years. In 1993 she started to work at Kunsthistorisches Museum where she was appointed director of *Imperial Carriage Museum and Court Wardrobe* in 2001.

**Efrat Assaf-Shapira** has worked in the Jewish Art and Life Wing of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, since 2006, in the fields of Jewish costumes, textiles, and life rituals. Among her projects she has co-curated the renewed permanent exhibitions of The Israel Museum (2010) – *The Rhythm of Life*, displaying Jewish life-cycle events, and Matters of Identity, displaying costumes and jewelry from Jewish communities worldwide. Efrat wrote contributions for the collection book *The Jewish Wardrobe*, curating the exhibition it accompanied, *Dress Codes: Revealing the Jewish Wardrobe* (The Israel Museum, 2014); travelling to The Jewish Museum, New York and the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, 2017-2018). Most recently, she co-curated the exhibition *Fashion Statements: Decoding Israeli Dress* (The Israel Museum, 2018) and participated as writer in its accompanying publication. Efrat has also contributed to online projects such as *Europeanafashion* and "We wear Culture" in google Arts&culture project.

**Joanna Regina Kowalska** is Textiles, Curator at the National Museum in Kraków. She holds two Master's degrees, in History and Art History, as well as a diploma in Museology from the Jagiellonian University. She completed Technical Courses at the Centre International d'Étude des Textiles, Lyon, in 2013–14. She is the Vice Chair of the ICOM Costume Committee, and has authored many publications and curated numerous exhibitions on the history of fashion.

**Professor Andrew Groves** is Professor of Fashion Design at the University of Westminster and Director of the Westminster Menswear Archive, which he founded in 2016. It is the world's only publicly accessible menswear archive, containing over 2000 examples of some of the most important and menswear garments covering the last 120 years.

**Dr Danielle Sprecher** is the curator of the Westminster Menswear Archive at the University of Westminster. Her PhD investigated the design and making of British menswear by the Leeds tailoring industry and its relationship with men's fashion between the 1940s and 1980. Her research explores everyday men's dress with a focus on object-based research. She has worked as a curator of historic dress and textile collections for several museums in the United Kingdom.

**Émilie Girard** is Scientific Director of the Mucem. She joined the museum team in 2006. In 2008, she became head of the museum's collections department, where she led, among other things, the building site that enabled the transfer from Paris to Marseille of the entire collections and funds kept, and the establishment of the Mucem Conservation and Resource Centre. From 2013 et 2020, she was also in charge of the "Beliefs and Religions" section of the museum, in connection with her initial training in Christian archaeology and Coptic language. For several years, she has been organizing professional training courses, particularly on religious heritage. She is also a regular curator of exhibitions at Mucem (such as the Galerie de la Méditerranée in 2013, Food in 2014, A genius without a pedestal, Picasso and the arts and popular traditions in 2016, Let's dance in 2019, Jeff Koons Mucem in 2021).

**Dr. Sarah Fee** is Senior Curator of Global Fashion & Textiles at the ROM and stewards the museum's renowned collection of ca. 15,000 textile objects that come from Asia and Africa. Most recently she was lead curator for the ROM-original exhibition *Cloth that Changed the World: India's Painted and Printed Textiles* and editor for the companion publication (ROM/Yale University Press, 2020) that was shortlisted for the Textile Society of America's 2020 Shep Book Prize.

**Dr. Alexandra Palmer** is the Nora E. Vaughan Senior Curator of Global Fashion & Textiles for the ROM's European and North American collection of over 44,000 objects. She is an affiliated faculty member and lecturer in Art History at the University of Toronto and an award-winning author of several books including *Christian Dior: History and Modernity, 1947-1957* (ROM/Hirmer Publishers, 2018) which won the Costume Society of America's Millia Davenport Publication Award in 2020.

**Dr. Fahmida Suleman** is Curator of the Islamic World collections at the ROM and was previously the Phyllis Bishop Curator for the Modern Middle East at the British Museum for ten years. She is the lead curator of the ROM's exhibition, *Unmasking the Pandemic*, a project she worked on with her colleagues, Dr. Alexandra Palmer and Dr. Sarah Fee. Fahmida is an affiliated faculty member and lecturer at the University of Toronto and author of *Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia: The Fabric of Life* (BM/Thames and Hudson, 2017).