



1st HERA Workshop

11-12 November 2010

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Presenters' Abstracts

What is Innovation in Fashion?

Evelyn Welch, Queen Mary, University of London

This short introduction to 'Fashioning the Early Modern: Creativity and Innovation in Fashion, 1500-1800' outlines the broad parameters of the HERA research project. It asks how we define innovation today and whether the term is a useful one for the early modern period. Certainly, complaints about non-stop change in clothing, the importation of exotic, foreign goods and the emphasis on wasteful luxury have a long history that dates well before the early modern period. At the same time, systems that encouraged new product development (patent protection, the encouragement of migration and prizes for new inventions or import substitutes) were also in place. How then, did governments, producers and consumers decide when something was 'new' and desirable? Did the question of novelty and a desire for new goods impact on items such as knitted garments as well as more exotic imports? Were these attitudes limited to larger urban environments or can we see innovation and fashion as something that is highly contingent, defined primarily by small groups in different European environments?

Buttoned Up: Male Dress Accessories in Renaissance England

Natasha Awais-Dean, Queen Mary, University of London

My doctoral research is focussed on men and jewellery in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, with the aim to provide a social context for this aspect of material culture that is often reduced to notions of portable cash. While it is impossible to deny that items of jewellery were valuable commodities, I wish to present alternative narratives that transcend this rather crude interpretation. Jewels had the potential to signal a man's identity within a community, not just demonstrating his wealth and magnificence, but also marking out the relationships that he had forged throughout his life. One area of my research deals with those jewels that were used as embellishments to dress. Most often these buttons, hooks, clasps and other dress fastenings are discussed in works on dress history and are neglected by jewellery historians. I believe that these need a place within a work on jewellery and are no less important than the hat badge, which for the greater part of the sixteenth century was exclusively a male fashion accessory within Europe. How and why this particular object grew in popularity, to its eventual demise at the end of the sixteenth century will be the concluding theme of my presentation.

Veil, Veiling and Veil merchant in the Early Modern Medici Court

Chia-hua Yeh, Queen Mary, University of London

This paper aims to discuss fashion of veil and veil consumption in the consumption of textile in the Florentine court, based on a study on a surviving account book of the Donati Family from 1619 to 1626, from the archival collection, Libri di Commercio et di Famiglia in Archivio di Stato di Firenze. The Florentine veil (*velo*) was extremely popular in the late sixteenth century and was applied as a textile decoration, as hair dressing accessory, as head wear and even as mosquito netting. As traders in this lucrative industry, veil merchants have been studied in the field of 16th century and early seventeenth century textile history, but little has been written on the details of their profession and their influence on dress fashion. The Donati family was one of the principal textile suppliers to the Florentine court. Therefore, detailed analysis of the Donati accounts and other recorded business activities will not only provide an insight into veil trading to the Florentine court, but will also explore how the Medici reacted to trivial but fashionable dress accessories and light textiles in early seventeenth century Florence.

'Economies of quality' and the Material Renaissance. Clothing and the Forgotten Consumer Revolution of the Low Countries in the 'Long Sixteenth Century' (1450-1650)

Isis Sturtewagen, University of Antwerp

My research is part of a broader research project that wants to offer the first systematic analysis of the fundamental transformations of the material culture of the Low Countries during the 'long sixteenth century'. The project will focus on three exemplar clusters of products: tableware, furniture/interior decorations and clothing. The ambition is 1) to examine the complete product cycle; 2) to relate the choices of both producers and consumers to evolving cultural and mental frameworks.

My research line within this project will focus on textiles and clothing. Attire had traditionally been of key importance in constructing the identity of citizens. We have hardly any information about the clothes that were worn in this area, let alone the way these clothes were used and mentally appropriated. In the sixteenth century new relationships between design and textiles provoked major economic and social changes. The changing 'culture of appearances' and 'bodily display' seem to have challenged the existing social values and structures.

17th century origins of Chinoiserie

Juliet Claxton, Queen Mary, University of London

The fashion for Chinoiserie and its associated displays of massed porcelain have traditionally been linked with the eighteenth century, when the fashion for porcelain collecting in Europe was at its height. Yet, from its introduction to Europe in the early 14th century porcelain has been widely used in both Italy and Northern Europe in interior decorative schemes, and the Chinese patterns and figures that decorated its translucent glazes rapidly entered the European lexicon of design. My research seeks to investigate the origins of the incorporation of Chinese motif into the wider European aesthetic, and in particular tracing the early use of Chinese devices in fabrics, embroidery and the decorative arts.

Function and Fashion: Tartan in the Eighteenth Century

Sally Tuckett, University of Edinburgh

Tartan is an iconic symbol of modern Scottish identity. Its history has not been simple, however. As a result of turbulent events in the eighteenth century – the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and the subsequent proscription against Highland dress - tartan has been subject to varied and ambiguous interpretations, often being seen as a relic of an idealised, romanticised Scotland. Such connotations

and associations are important to the history of tartan as a cultural symbol and they cannot be completely ignored. Nevertheless, they can obscure the importance of tartan as a basic commodity with practical and aesthetic qualities – both of which contributed to its fashionable status. The nineteenth century is traditionally seen as a watershed in the use of tartan, where the lines between function and fashion were irrevocably blurred. It will be proposed here, however, that this process began much earlier and that the practicality and versatility of tartan would have made it a useful and desirable commodity throughout the eighteenth century.

Women's Fashionable Dress in Scotland circa 1760-1815: the stylistic connections with France and England

Emily Taylor, University of Glasgow

The presentation will provide an overview of the above PhD research project. The project aims to examine the question of how women's fashions in Scotland compared or differed to those being worn in France and England, whether Scottish fashions were closer to French modes than English, as Edward Topham's comparisons of Scottish and French habits in his *Letters* (1774-1775) may suggest. The comparison with French and English modes concentrates on the fashions of Paris and London as the centres of stylistic trade, addressing the question of whether dress in Scotland was the same, out-dated or had a distinct appearance. Research is object based, working outwards from a detailed visual examination of surviving garments in attempting to understand the complexities of personal choices, trade, national and international relations behind what was worn. The presentation will highlight a few objects of interest from collections in Scotland.

A short knitting history: the Danish perspective

Maj Ringgaard, National Museum of Denmark

It is assumed that the craft of knitting was introduced into Europe by the Arabs in Spain. Knitting appears to have become established in several northern European countries in the middle ages. Some of the oldest finds of knitting in northern Europe are a knitted fragment of unknown use from year 1150 found in Schleswig and fragments of a pair of mittens in red blue and red from year 1300 found in Estonia.

At the end of the 16th century knitting seems well-established and is used for hats, stockings, sleeves and vests. In the 17th century there is an immense trade of these goods that are produced in several countries: silk-sockings from Italy, France and England, woollen stockings from Faroe Islands, Island and England.

Most of the knitted items preserved today are fashionable work of silk, gold and silver yarn, but the everyday items for the common man can be found in archaeological finds in landfills of the cities or in the graves of the whalers on Spitsbergen.

Between court and city: The Spirit of Fashion in Paris at the 17th century

Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset

It is between the court at Versailles and the city of Paris that the French industry fashion has been built.

I developed my interest in French and European Fashion history through my research studies on the early modern court history. My first piece of research in this field was an essay written for the exhibition catalogue "Fastes de cour et cérémonies royales. Le costume de cour en Europe 1650-1800."¹ The short essay entitled "Le service de la garde-robe une création de Louis XIV"² was

supposed to be the first step in an unexplored field of French modern History. This essay framed my research in French fashion history among the state archives.

My doctoral research on royal Gifts giving (connected to political affairs) led me also to the study of royal wardrobe as the jewels and gifts were recorded in a section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and administrated by the royal wardrobe³.

The second aspect of my research is based on the following written sources: the "Mercure galant" and the Memoirs of the time. As I was using this material in my thesis on Gifts giving during Louis XIV's reign, I started to collect information on royal appearance in court events. This work resulted in the publication of "L'Esprit des modes au Grand Siècle" (by C.T.H.S) in which are compiled all of the Mercure galant's fashion articles in the 17th century, with a glossary, fabrics and merchants indexes.

¹ "Courts' Splendours and Royal Ceremonies. The court dress in Europe 1650-1800", Versailles, 2009.

² "Le service de la garde-robe: une creation de Louis XIV", in Fastes de cour et cérémonies royales. Le costume de cour en Europe 1650-1800, Versailles 2009, p. 28-33.

³C. Thépaut-Cabasset, "Les présents du Roi : An archive at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris", in Decorative Arts, XV n°1, fall-winter 2007-2008, p. 4-18.

Presentation of the Gallery 1600-1800 Project: Europe 1600-1800

Lesley Miller, Victoria and Albert Museum

The V&A's research contribution to the HERA project will contribute to a major museum project - the refurbishment of the galleries that display art and design used in Europe between 1600-1800. This presentation will introduce this project, offering an insight into the overall vision for the galleries and also an introduction to some of the objects from the textile and fashion collections that may be incorporated into the gallery narrative. The aim is to offer an overview of the museum context for the research.