



**2st HERA Workshop
9-11 March 2011, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Helsinki
Report.**

The second HERA workshop focused on the theme of *Social groups and the circulation of fashion*. During the two-day event, we explored how fashions moved across social groups in Europe in the early modern period, at what speed and with what impact, focusing particularly on issues such as artisan clothing, second-hand markets, and fashion transmission across social groups in the early modern period. We were also trying to answer the larger question of whether creativity and innovation operated in similar ways in rural as well as urban environments, and in different social circumstances. Participants included archeologists, cultural historians, art historians, historians, museum curators, conservators and students from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, France and UK.

The workshop started with a visit to the Porvoo museum. We looked at the museum's textiles and clothing collections, mainly Finnish and Swedish clothes and accessories from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The variety of items on display, from humble everyday dresses to elaborate festive clothes allowed us to elaborate on the questions of how dress and fashion were transmitted between social groups. The collection also raised important questions about trade and transport especially during the winter months, and the movement of goods across geographical areas. Later that day, we spent fascinating two hours at the Marimekko headquarters in Helsinki. Guided by the head of PR, Tiina Alahuhta-Kasko, and the creative director Minna Kemell-Kutvonen, we had the chance to see both the products as well as the actual textile printing process. We were particularly interested to learn about Marimekko's design policies regarding, for example, questions such as who the products are designed for and what contemporary Marimekko designers think about movement of fashion both nationally and internationally.

The second day of the meeting, held at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, was dedicated for presentations. John Styles from the University of Hertfordshire opened the session by raising questions about the definition of fashion. Highlighting particularly the differences between understanding fashion in terms of identity, on the one hand, and in terms of change, on the other, his paper left us with the challenge: how should we approach the study of fashion, innovation and novelty?

Marta Ajmar from the V&A started the discussion by looking at textiles and clothing within the early modern Italian domestic environment. Showing how particularly textiles and dress items connected with the bed and the bedroom negotiate and challenge the boundaries between ideas of wellbeing and aesthetic concerns in the early modern home, her paper reminded us that there were multiple concerns behind fashion, such as issues of health. Paula Hohti from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies took the discussion to the second theme of how fashionable goods circulated between different social groups. Her paper was concerned with artisan groups in early modern Italy, focusing on the question of what groups lower down the social scale considered both fashionable and affordable. This paper showed that it was surprisingly common that fashionable clothing designs and sets of accessories were disseminated further down the social scale. As such, it highlighted the fact that the relationship between social class, clothing, fashion and innovation was an extremely complex issue that needs to be further explored. Mikkel Venborg Pedersen from the National Museum of Denmark continued on the theme, looking at the interplay between elite and popular culture, continuity and change in regard of fashion in Early Modernity. Drawing examples both from peasant and bourgeois groups in the 18th-century Denmark, his paper showed, interestingly, that the general population in early modern Denmark was at times in fact much more adaptive and swift in taking up new trends than elite groups who were often constrained by norms of rank and status.

The second section of the meeting centered on fashion in the context of early modern Finland and Sweden, providing an opportunity both for early career researchers at different stages of their PhD or postdoctoral work as well as for established scholars to present new work. Lena Dahren, a Ph.D. student from the University of Uppsala, discussed trading connections between Sweden and the continent, looking especially at the movement of expensive fabrics and fashion items such as silk, velvet and bobbin-made borders. Tiina Kuokkanen, a doctoral student from the University of Oulu, investigated the question of what material culture - especially personal items such as buckles, buttons and pins- can tell us about the city's social structure in the 17th- and 18th-century Oulu, while the postdoctoral researcher Liisa Lagerstam from the University of Turku presented her preliminary research on the creation of a noble male identity by means of material culture and clothing in 17th-century Sweden. The session ended with Anu Lahtinen from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Her presentation on the distribution of gift items in social networks in late medieval and early modern Sweden took the discussion back to the transmission of goods between social classes, showing the extent to which, for example, an embroidered dress that was given by an aristocrat male to a female relative living in the countryside as a special gift for a property transfer can give some insights into the social dynamics of the time.

The two day workshop was closed by a discussion, led by Marta Ajmar and Mikkel Vengorg, with the closing words by John Styles.