

KINGSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN HISTORY
BA (Hons) History of Art, Architecture & Design
Semester A, Level 2
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FASHIONING GENDER & IDENTITY

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Fashioning Gender & Identity

“It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible” - *Oscar Wilde*

Introduction to unit

This module considers the conditioning of the body and body image. In doing so it engages various discourses regarding the construction, performance and representation of gendered, ethnic and sexual identities. The representation of appearance and its projection through media and cultural production is a key theme of the module and provides the opportunity to engage different modes of representation such as film, advertising, fashion photography, texts, and magazines. In doing so the module focuses upon deployment of strategies of distinction and conformity in the performance identity.

Learning Outcomes

- Express an appreciation of the role appearance has played in both previous and contemporary society with reference to changing modes of production and consumption.
- Demonstrate an awareness of how critical theories of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and art history have been used to explain and account for personal and group identities.
- Convey a knowledge of how ideologies of appearance and ‘beauty’ circulate through cultural and media production.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the complex relationship of the ‘self’ to ‘society’ and some of the ways this has been explained.

Assessment

There are two formal assessment requirements for this module: a group presentation in weeks 7 & 8 (you are required to hand in your presentation notes) and an essay submission in week 12. Attendance, class preparation and participation also play an important part in the assessment process.

Course outline

Keywords refer to concepts, which will be introduced in the session and which by the end of the module you should be familiar with, and are able to employ in the understanding of fashion.

Week 1 Introduction to course

Fashion & costume history; cultural studies & popular culture - why take fashion seriously?

Keywords: Representation; Gender; Identity – structure and agency.

Key Texts

J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000

J. Finkelstein, *After a Fashion*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996

S. Hall (ed.), 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representation & Signifying Practices*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997, pp13-74

Week 2 Corsets

Keywords: the fashionable silhouette; feminism; fetishism; the gaze.

Outlining the main arguments in the “corset controversy”. How corsetry changed from being a mainstream fashionable garment, a symbol of respectability, to entering the fetish scene.

Key Texts

J. Entwistle, 'The Corset Controversy', in *The Fashioned Body*, London: Polity Press, 2000, pp 195-200

B. Fontanel, *Support & Seduction: A History of Corsets & Bras*, New York: Abradale Press, 1992 (English translation 1997)

V. Steele, 'The Corset', in *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 57-89

L. Summers, *Bound To Please: A History of the Victorian Corset*, London: Berg, 2001

Week 3 The Great Masculine Renunciation

Keywords: GMR; Men's Dress Reform Party (MDRP); Public and private spheres.

A historical overview of men's fashion since c.1800, including J C Flugel's theory of the Great Masculine Renunciation.

Key Texts

C. Breward, *The Hidden Consumer*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999

B. Burman & M. Leventon, 'The Men's Dress Reform Party 1929-1937', *Costume*, no.21, 1987

B. Burman, 'Better and Brighter Clothes: The Men's Dress Reform Party 1929-1940', in *Journal of Design History*, 1995, Vol.8. no.4, pp 275-290

J. Bourke, 'The Great Male Renunciation: Men's Dress Reform in Inter-War Britain', in *Journal of Design History*, 1996, Vol.9. no.1, pp 23-33

J.C. Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, London: Hogarth Press, 1930

Week 4 Subcultural identity: The Edwardian Suit & the Zoot Suit

Keywords: Class; group identities.

An introductory session to the post war period and the beginnings of youth culture and sub-cultural style. This session will begin with the Edwardian suit worn by the teddy boys in the 1950s and the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), Birmingham University and look at the development of research into subcultures including work on the Zoot Suiters.

Key Texts

S. Cosgrove, 'The Zoot suit and Style Warfare', in A. McRobbie (ed.), *Zoot Suits and Second Hand Dresses*, 1989

T. Jefferson, 'Cultural Responses of the Teds: The Defence of Space and Status', in S. Hall & T. Jefferson (ed.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, London: Hutchinson University Library, 1976, pp 81-86

A. Haye & C. Dingwall, *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads and Skaters: Subcultural Style from the Forties to the Nineties*, London: V&A Publications, 1996

Week 5 The New Man

Keywords: Homosocial; The 'Homospectorial Look'.

Has the Great Masculine Renunciation been renounced? A discussion of men's fashion and magazines since the 1980s.

Key Texts

R. Chapman & J. Rutherford, *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988, pp 193-225

A. Easthope, *What A Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture*, 1990

T. Edwards, *Men in the Mirror: Men's Fashion, Masculinity and the Consumer Society*, London: Cassell, 1997

P. Jobling, *Fashion Spreads: Word and Image in Fashion Photography Since 1980*, Oxford: Berg, 1999

F. Mort (ed.), 'Boy's Own? Masculinity, Style & Popular Culture', 1988

F. Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth Century Britain*, London: Routledge, 1996

S. Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, the Visual and Practices of Consumption*, London: UCL Press, 1996

Week 6 Reading Week

Week 7 Student Presentations

Week 8 Student Presentations

Week 9

Writing your essay – a discussion of the essay questions and how to write your essay. It is essential you have spent time in advance looking at the questions and you should bring a plan and your ideas with you.

Week 10 Asian Dress & Identity

Keywords: Ethnicity; 'Other'

This session will be an introduction to a complex and emotive subject of 'Asian Identity'. Cohn's chapter uses the changing meaning of the turban to illustrate the symbolic nature of garments, whilst Khan's piece describes the British Asian identity as being fraught with complex issues, for example the meaning of the Sari.

Key Texts

Alexandru Balasescu, 'Tehran Chic', in *Fashion Theory*, vol 7, issue 1 pp 39-56

B. Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century', in Wiener & Schneider (ed.), *Cloth and Human Experience*, 1991, pp 303-354

L. Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, London: Virago Editions, 1993, 2001

P. Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An introduction to cultural geography*, London: Routledge, 1989

N. Khan, Chapter 'Asian Women's Dress: From Burquah to Bloggs - Changing clothes for changing times', in J. Ash & E. Wilson (ed.), *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*. London: Pandora Press, 1992

N. Puwar, 'Multicultural fashion... Stirrings of another sense of aesthetics and memory', in *Feminist Review*, No. 71, 2002, pp 63-87

Video: *A Brimful of Asia*, Ch.4, 1998

Video: *Faith in Fashion*, BBC1, 2002

Week 11 Gay and Lesbian Identities

Keywords: stereotypes; performativity; commercialisation

An introduction to the representation and stereotypes of gay and lesbian identities, including how clothing has been used to indicate sexual identity.

Key Texts

- R. Ainley, *What Is She Like? Lesbian Identities from the 1950's to the 1990's*, London: Cassell, 1995
- S. Cole, 'Macho Man: Clones and the Development of a Masculine Stereotype', in *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2000a, pp 125-140
- S. Cole, *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel*, London: Berg, 2000b
- D. Harris, *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997
- K. Jivani, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian & Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century*, London: Michael O'Mara Books by arrangement with the BBC, 1997
- E.L. Kennedy & M.D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, Middlesex: Penguin
- R. Lewis, 'Looking Good: The Lesbian Gaze and Fashion Imagery', in *Feminist Review*, No. 55, Spring, London: Routledge, 1997, pp 92-109
- K. Rolley, 'Love, Desire and the pursuit of the Whole', in J. Ash & E. Wilson, *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, London: Pandora Press, 1992, pp 30-39
- M. Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*, London: Cassell, 1994
- E. Wilson, 'Deviant Dress', in *Feminist Review*, No. 35, Summer, 1990, pp 67-74
- G. Woods (ed.), 'We're Here, we're Queer and we're not going Catalogue Shopping', in P. Burston & C. Richardson, *A Queer Romance*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp 117-163

Week 12 Postmodernism and fashion

This session introduces the impact of postmodernism on fashion.

Keywords: postmodernism; multiple fashion systems.

Key Texts

- M. Barnard, 'Fashion, Clothing and Postmodernity', in M. Barnard, *Fashion as Communication*, London: Routledge, 1996
- P. Braham, 'Fashion: unpacking a cultural production', in P. du Gay (ed.), *Production of Culture / Cultures of Production*, London: Sage, 1997
- F. Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992
- C. Kratz & B. Reimer, 'Fashion in the Face of Postmodernity', in A. A. Berger (ed.), *The Postmodern Presence: Readings on Postmodernism in American Culture & Society*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998
- D. Muggleton, *Inside Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Oxford: Berg, 2000
- E. Wilson, 'Fashion and the Postmodern Body', in J. Ash & E. Wilson, *Chic Thrills*, London: Pandora, 1992

Assessment Requirements

There are two assessment requirements this semester. The first is a group seminar presentation, which accounts for 20% of your mark, to be presented in weeks 7 & 8 (Presentation notes to be submitted). The second is an essay, which accounts for 80% of your mark.

Seminar Presentation

The seminar presentation for this module should reflect and address the issues considered during the sessions. Therefore they provide a possible starting point for thinking about your presentations. Working in groups of 4, you are required to discuss a personality / celebrity, the name of which you will be issued with. You will be required to discuss the image your celebrity / personality presents, how they have manipulated and how they have fashioned their gender and identity. You are not to present a straightforward biography of their life and work! You should select some images which you will be required to discuss as well as a biography that includes theoretical texts / frameworks you have used rather than just magazine articles and internet sites. Presentation notes must be submitted.

Essay Brief

You are required to an essay, presented in an academic format, of 2,000-2,500 words answering one of the following questions:

1. "Women are fashionable but men are not".
(J. Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, London: Routledge, 1994, p 176)
Discuss with reference to men's fashion and / or magazines since the 1980s.
2. "Very little seems to have been written about the role of girls in youth cultural groupings... When girls do appear, it is either in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women ... or else they are fleetingly and marginally represented"
(A. McRobbie & J. Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures', in S. Hall & T. Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals*, London: Hutchinson, 1976 pp 209, or in A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture*, Hampshire: MacMillan Press, 1991, p 1) Do you agree? Discuss with reference to one subculture.
3. "Fashion has been seen as a device for confining women to an inferior social order"
(J. Finklestein, *After a Fashion*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996 p 56)
Discuss with reference to specific examples.
4. "Dress is clearly neither culturally nor politically neutral. It is loaded with significance.

Clothes are stuff that 'speaks' volumes". (W.J.F. Keenan, 'Dress Freedom: the Personal and the Political', in Keenan (ed.), *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part*, London: Berg, 2001, p 181)

How does clothing 'fashion' gender and identity? Discuss this statement with reference to specific examples.

Bibliography (In addition to texts cited on the week-by-week course outline)

- J. Ash & E. Wilson, *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, London: Pandora Press, 1992
- J. Attfield & P. Kirkham (eds.), *A View From The Interior*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- J. Attfield, *Wild Things: The material culture of everyday life*, London: Berg, 2000
- M. Barnard, *Fashion as Communication*, London: Routledge, 1996
- Q. Bell, *On Human Finery*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1976
- C. Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995
- J. Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, London: Routledge, 1994
- D. Crane, *Fashion and It's Social Agendas: Class, Gender & Identity in Clothing*, London: University of Chicago Press, 2000
- F. Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992
- A. De la Haye & E. Wilson, *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*, Manchester: MUP, 1999
- F. El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy & Resistance*, London: Berg, 1999
- S. Hall & T. Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, Hutchinson: London, 1976
- D. Hebdige, *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, 1979
- A. Hollander, *Sex & Suits*, New York: Kodansha International, 1994
- A. Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, London: Bloomsbury, 1990
- E. Rouse, *Understanding Fashion*, Oxford: Blackwells, 1989
- A. McRobbie (ed.), *Zootsuits and Second Hand Dresses*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989
- A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991
- V. Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996
- L. Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001
- L. Taylor & E. Wilson, *Through The Looking Glass*, London: BBC Books, 1989
- A. Tomlinson (ed.), *Consumption, Style & Identity*, London: Routledge, 1990
- T. Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Classes*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1899, republished 1970
- Wiener & Schneider (eds.), *Cloth and Human Experience*, Smithsonian Institution Press:

Washington & London, 1991

E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, London: Virago, 1985