

# DATS

Dress and Textile Specialists

## Conference 2024

### *Power and Representation*

at V&A Dundee, 10-11 October



Image: George Saunders outside his shop, Birmingham Civic Society

# Schedule

## Thursday 10 October

### V&A Dundee Juniper Auditorium

**10:00 Doors open**

**10:10 Welcome and introductions**

**10:20-11:20 Textile Revelations**

- *The first and last home of the body: life-cycle, biography and memory in National Trust collections*  
Emma Slocombe & Helen Antrobus, National Trust
- *Textile testimonies from the Workhouse: Lorina Bulwer's embroidered letters*  
Ruth Battersby, Norfolk Museums Service
- *Textile Visibilities and Invisibilities*  
Katharina Sand, Parsons Paris (The New School) & Louise Pelletier, Université du Québec à Montréal

**11:20-11:40 Q&A discussion**

**11:40-12:10 Refreshment break**

**12:10-13:10 Exhibiting Influence**

- *NAOMI: In Fashion at the V&A*  
Sonnet Stanfill, Rachael Lee, V&A London & Elisabeth Murray, Fashion Museum Bath
- *The Drag Show*  
Ciara Phipps & Vittorio Ricchetti, Southend Museums
- *Exhibiting Fashion: exhibiting collaboration*  
Jeffrey Horsley, London College of Fashion & Angela Piccini, University of Plymouth

**13:10-13:30 Q&A discussion**

**13:30-14:15 Lunch**

**14:15-14:30 Verdant Works, The McManus or Scottish Design Galleries curator guided visits**

c. 15:30 Return to V&A Dundee (DATS Committee AGM set up)

**15:50-16:40 Annual General Meeting at Juniper Auditorium**

**16:45-18:00 Introduction to & viewing of Kimono exhibition at V&A Dundee**

18:00+ Opportunity to visit Dundee Contemporary Arts exhibitions (open until 19:00)

**18:45-20:15 Conference dinner (pre-booked, meal at own expense) at**

Dundee Contemporary Arts Jute Cafe Bar

# Schedule

## Friday 11 October

### 10:15-11:15 Collaborative Decisions

- *Curatorial Interruption: The impact of working environment on dress and fashion curatorial practice*  
Cyana Madsen, London College of Fashion
- *(Re)Dressing American Fashion: On “Wear as Witness” and “Exhibition Worthiness”*  
Emma McClendon, St. John's University & Lauren Downing Peters, Columbia College Chicago
- *Baldric, I Have a Cunning Plan: Displaying a 17th Century Sword Belt with a Replica Costume Mount*  
Stephanie Howell, V&A

### 11:15-11:35 Discussion

### 11:35-11:55 Refreshments

### 12:00-13:00 Keynote

Andrew Ibi

*The Missing Thread*

*Untold Stories of Black British Fashion*

*Somerset House, London, September 2023 – January 2024 (Sponsored by Morgan Stanley).*

### 13:00-13:45 Lunch

### 13:45-15:05 Defying Territories

- *From Britain to Japan, transnational feature of homespun by Zenzo Oikawa*  
Anika Shaik, University of Brighton
- *Soft power and soft furnishings in the post-war interior*  
Lisa Mason & Carys Wilkins, National Museums Scotland
- *The Subdued Power of Indian Crochet*  
Pragya Sharma, University of Brighton
- *Tailored Resistance: West Indian Migrants and the Power of Dress in Post-1948 Britain*  
Elli Michaela Young, Middlesex University

### 15:05-15:30 Discussion & closing remarks

### 15:30-16:00 Refreshments & depart \*There is a direct train from Dundee to London at 16:10\*

# Abstracts & biographies in schedule order

## Textile Revelations

### ***The first and last home of the body: life-cycle, biography and memory in National Trust collections***

*Emma Slocombe & Helen Antrobus, National Trust*

The great strengths of the National Trust dress collection are its scale and quality. Containing approximately 28,000 items, it includes objects of national significance across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with narratives of individuals of note and peoples unknown. As well as representing a spectrum of trends, innovation, and fashion over a 500-year period, the collection offers something more intimate than just material survival; it is a repository of the life traces of tens of thousands of people.

Made for the body, clothes often carry the physical imprint of the people that wore them and in a country house setting, they often survive within or close to the places particular individuals lived or worked, private or public association ensuring their preservation over time. In this way, clothing becomes layered with meaning, holding memories that are physically contained within their structure or projected on to them by acts of multigenerational cultural remembrance. This paper explores the remarkable capacity of historic clothing to convey the human life cycle from birth, through life events to death at its most intimate and personal, marking the physical space an individual once occupied in place and time and speaking to wider cultural, social or political narratives.

Our dress collections are now at the end of their life cycle. As we now face the challenges of conservation and preservation, we must consider how to respond to the memory, biography and life stories stored within, appraising cultural significance, and unlocking the potential of dress to create new narratives within the historic house.

#### Biographies:

Helen Antrobus is Assistant National Curator at the National Trust. She was co-curator of Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and previously curated Represent! Voices 100 Years On at the People's History Museum (2018). Her first book, *First in the Fight: Twenty Women Who Made Manchester* was published in Autumn 2019.

Emma Slocombe is Senior National Curator (Dress and Textiles) at the National Trust. She is currently leading a diverse range of projects that explore the manufacture, exchange and repurposing of a broad range of dress and textiles including medieval church vestments and recently published 'Textile Transmissions: Repurposing church vestments in the Reformation' (National Trust Cultural Heritage Magazine, Autumn 2023) with Professor James Clarke (Exeter University). She also co-leads research into 'Histories of Childhood' with Professor Sian Pooley (Oxford University) and authored 'Fashion at Play: An 18th century doll at Dudmaston Hall', (National Trust Cultural Heritage Magazine, Spring 2024).

Helen Antrobus and Emma Slocombe are co-authors of *100 Things to Wear: Fashion from the National Trust collections*, part of the collection's series produced by National Trust Cultural Heritage Publishing and scheduled for publication in September 2025.

## ***Textile testimonies from the Workhouse: Lorina Bulwer's embroidered letters***

*Ruth Battersby, Norfolk Museums Service*

At the turn of the 20th century, Lorina Bulwer (1838-1912), a middle-class woman in her early 60s, entered Great Yarmouth Workhouse as a resident of the 'Lunatic Ward', where she created a series of extraordinary textile testimonies. They are constructed of two layers of patchwork held together using embroidered text as a form of wholecloth quilting. Five surviving works in the collections of Norfolk Museums Service span 6.6 linear metres and contain over 7,000 words of stream-of-consciousness narrative. The contents articulate Bulwer's inner monologue including childhood memories, stitched pen portraits of family members and neighbours, accusations of wrongdoing, demands for justice, and self-assertion.

Addressed to wealthy and influential men, Bulwer's texts comment on events both close to home and on the broader global stage, covering topics as diverse as taxation, land enclosures, high profile scandals and family grievances.

This presentation will introduce and place Lorina Bulwer's embroidered testimonies in the context of textile practices in the late 19th century and consider the use of textile texts as a medium for personal and political commentary through an examination of three case studies drawn from Bulwer's embroideries.

### Biography:

Ruth Battersby is Senior Curator - Costume and Textiles at Norfolk Museums Service. Ruth has curated several exhibitions including 'Frayed: Textiles on the Edge' which explored the history of therapeutic textiles and is currently undertaking a part-time PhD practice by curation developing an exhibition of Lorina Bulwer's embroideries.



Image: Embroidered text, by Lorina Bulwer, made in Great Yarmouth Workhouse c.1897-1910. Accession number 1987.166. Courtesy of Norfolk Museums Service.

## ***Textile Visibilities and Invisibilities***

*Katharina Sand, Parsons Paris (The New School) & Louise Pelletier, Université du Québec à Montréal*

The exhibition "Textile Design Now" at the Centre de design in Montreal, featured the work of 23 women designers from 14 countries. The aim was to increase the visibility of the contributions of women to design history, including innovative approaches such as bacteria-dyed fibres, responsive textiles, artificial organs produced with silk worms, techniques such as 3D printing, and indigenous practices.

The presentation uses the exhibition and its catalogue as a case study for curatorial choices, discourse, and design decisions, when communicating the work of women in the field. How can an exhibition in a university environment empower both designers and visitors? How may we encourage and sustain inclusive and diverse design practices and dialogues?

Decisions ranged from the title to the creation of a historical section, featuring both images and a library contextualizing the visibility and invisibilities of women in textile work. The pedagogy of transmission further included the "Textile Beyond Craft" conference, which accompanied the exhibition and offered a platform for exchanges among designers, scholars, and enthusiasts. The forthcoming catalogue documents not only the groundbreaking work of the designers presented, but also emphasizes the importance of women's roles in the design domain.

### Biographies:

Katharina Sand is a fashion curator and researcher. Part of the Parsons Paris (The New School) faculty, she was previously professor at UQAM and SCAD, and visiting professor in Austria and Germany. She obtained her BA at Goldsmiths, MA at Université Paris 8, and PhD at Università della Svizzera italiana

Louise Pelletier trained as an architect. She has been Professor at the UQAM School of Design in Montreal since 2006, where she was also Director of the UQAM Centre de design. She has curated and designed several exhibitions in Montreal, Japan, Brazil and Norway, including Textile Design Now (2023-2024) in collaboration with Katharina Sand and Fabienne Münch.

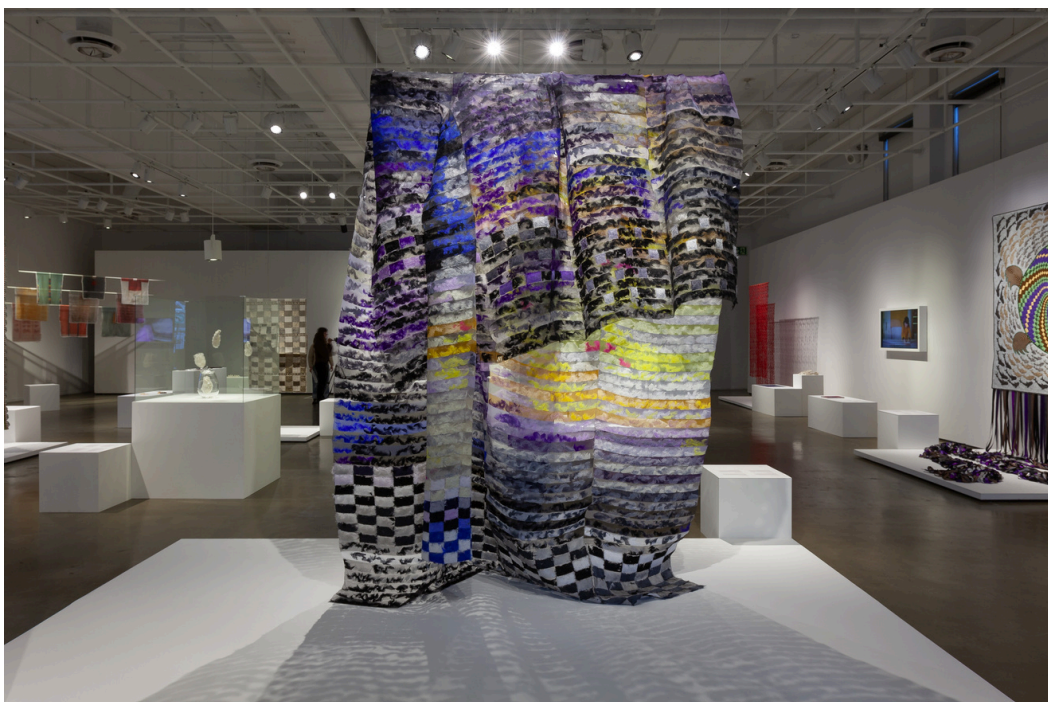


Image: Cape de Gray Jay by Cécile Feilchenfeldt, Textile Design Now Exhibition, Centre de design, season 23-24, photo credit Michel Brunelle

# Exhibiting Influence

## **NAOMI: In Fashion at the V&A**

*Sonnet Stanfill, Rachael Lee, Elisabeth Murray, co-authored with Lilia Prier Tisdall, V&A*

NAOMI: In Fashion opened at the V&A in June 2024 and explores the career and cultural impact of Naomi Campbell, the trailblazing model who has transcended and challenged the fashion industry for more than four decades.

Campbell's journey is one of personal success against systems of engrained prejudice. It also speaks to the global revolution in fashion production, consumption, and representation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

It is the first major exhibition to explore the impact of a model in fashion and the first V&A exhibition to focus on a Black woman. This paper unpacks the genesis of the exhibition and the methodologies drawn upon when working with a living celebrity to foreground Campbell's voice and perspective whilst curating a scholarly rigorous show. Areas will include object selection, oral histories, and industry consultation. We will discuss the challenges and benefits associated with including a significant quantity of audio-visual content and moving image. We will also explore the mannequin development, which was a critical element of the exhibition interpretation and design.

### Biographies:

Sonnet Stanfill, Senior Curator of Fashion in the Department of Performance, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the V&A and Lead Curator of NAOMI: In Fashion. Her exhibition projects include Ossie Clark, New York Fashion Now, Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 and the major exhibition and The Glamour of Italian Fashion. She is the author of corresponding exhibition publications and has lectured widely on the subject of fashion since 1900.

Rachael Lee is a Senior Costume Mounting Specialist at the V&A. Her work is wide-ranging and includes the development of new mannequins and bespoke mount-making for fashion exhibitions. Rachael has worked with several museums in the UK, including the British Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum designing and making mounts for ethnographic costume. Her recent projects include Gabrielle Chanel Fashion Manifesto (V&A) and Ashish: Fall in Love and Be More Tender (William Morris Gallery)

Lilia Prier Tisdall is a Textile Display Conservator at the V&A and was the lead costume mounter for NAOMI: In Fashion. Lilia has worked on some of the museum's most innovative exhibitions including Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2015), Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear (2016), Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams (2019) and Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear (2022). She is co-author of the book Pattern Cutting Templates for Skirts and Dresses and is co-founder of sewing pattern company Alice & Co Patterns.

Elisabeth Murray, Senior Curator, Fashion Museum Bath, was Project Curator for NAOMI: In Fashion. Elisabeth is a specialist in 20th century and contemporary fashion and was previously Project Curator for the V&A's Africa Fashion exhibition. Before the V&A Elisabeth worked in the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection at Kensington Palace



Image: NAOMI : In Fashion at the V&A, London © Victoria and Albert Museum



## ***The Drag Show***

*Ciara Phipps, co-authored with Vittorio Ricchetti, Southend Museum*

'The Drag Show' is the first exhibition of its kind platforming Drag in all its forms, celebrating the artform in an exciting, dynamic and visually engaging way. Utilising a variety of display methods and exhibition making techniques, this exhibition leans into the materials and textures commonly associated with the places and spaces in which drag is performed, developed and prepared for. From back of house preparatory spaces, to the front facing stage and performance spaces, this exhibition explores the different facets of drag, how it came to be and how the practice has evolved. Drag clothing, make up and performance is often used as a means to communicate messages, whether personal self-expression, or dialogue about social or political contexts. The art of, and practice of drag is designed to make statements about the world around us. Through individual garment case studies, and a deep dive into the materials, layouts and thought processes utilised to create this 'spectacle', this paper aims to untangle some of the inherent yet valuable creative chaos associated with the artform, the process of curating an exhibition of this nature, and how this creative chaos informed the display in a meaningful way.

### Biographies:

Ciara Phipps is the Director of Southend Museums and the Treasurer for the Dress and Textiles Specialists network. Developing and delivering Southend Museums strategic vision, Ciara also leads on the care and interpretation of Southend Museums collections and historic properties, alongside a multi-site exhibition programme.

Vittorio Ricchetti is the Senior Curator of Collections and Buildings at Southend Museums focusing on collection management and documentation, community involvement and contemporary collectin



Image credit: Gaz De Vere

## ***Exhibiting Fashion: exhibiting collaboration***

*Jeffrey Horsley, London College of Fashion & Angela Piccini, University of Plymouth*

Exhibitions are increasingly seen as opportunities for 'co-production'. This paper will discuss collaborative processes embedded in the AHRC-funded project Exhibiting Fashion. It will detail how (through the work of Dr Piccini, Dr Horsley and collaborating curators) these processes generated, and were incorporated into, exhibition content and subsequent public response to the display of curatorial process.

The AHRC has approved a major funding award to Dr Jeffrey Horsley (Centre for Fashion Curation, London College of Fashion) towards a project investigating fashion exhibition-making in UK museums. The collaborative, practice-based research aims to develop a 'toolkit' that will support non-specialist curators in small and mid-sized museums to create accessible and innovative fashion displays following a 'low-impact resourcing' model. Curatorial staff at Manchester Art Gallery (Manchester), the Beecroft Art Gallery (Southend) and Bankfield Museum (Halifax) are collaborating partners on the project.

Co-Investigator Dr Angela Piccini (University of Plymouth) is working alongside Dr Horsley, using participant-focused film-making techniques, to document live the practices of exhibition-maker and curators. The project supports production of fashion exhibitions at each partner's venue and runs from winter 2021 until summer 2024. Content for the toolkit is being developed from analysis and reflection on Dr Piccini's observation and recordings.

### Biographies:

Dr Jeffrey Horsley trained in theatre design before establishing a practice as an exhibition-maker, holding posts including: Curator: Design (Manchester Art Gallery); Head of Exhibitions, Manchester Museum; Senior Lecturer and Research Fellow, London College of Fashion. As a practitioner-researcher, innovative strategies for encounters with objects are central to Jeff's work.

Dr Angela Piccini is Programme Lead for the BA Fine Art, University of Plymouth. Angela has specific interests in contested urban spaces and spatial practice, cocreation, and practice-as-research. Her practice is centred on interdisciplinary, intermedial and cross-sector research through peer-reviewed scholarship and through social practice, performance and the moving image.

# Collaborative Decisions

## ***Curatorial Interruption: The impact of working environment on dress and fashion curatorial practice***

*Cyana Madsen, London College of Fashion*

This presentation discusses data gathered in an original and foundational survey of the field, which studied the demographics and working environments of practitioners analysing garments held in UK public collections. This survey was part of my doctoral research addressing an under-explored area in dress and fashion curatorship: the factors informing curatorial bias, and the impact of this bias on the interpretation of wearer and object biography.

My research contributed to growing scholarship focusing on object biography and underrepresented histories in the field through examination of, and advocacy for, better understanding of the experts charged with analysing, interpreting, and documenting these biographies and histories.

Framed by an overview of my doctoral research project, this presentation discusses the investigation of sources of individual subjectivity and the discipline-wide factors which, I argue, inform decision-making during object analysis. Supported by the survey data and theories drawn from ethnography, neuroscience, and material culture studies, this research constructed a new understanding of practitioner experience when analysing and interpreting worn clothing objects.

This presentation argues that precarious working environments impact curatorial practice, and this has material ramifications on whose histories are documented in collections.

### Biography:

Dr Cyana Madsen is a researcher exploring garments, biography, and curatorial practice. She has worked on exhibitions and with clothing collections including Museum of London, Contemporary Wardrobe Collection, Fashion and Textile Museum, and Savile Row tailoring house Huntsman. She is course leader of MA Fashion Curation and Cultural Programming at London College of Fashion

## ***(Re)Dressing American Fashion: On “Wear as Witness” and “Exhibition Worthiness”***

*Emma McClendon, St. John's University & Lauren Downing Peters, Columbia College Chicago*

Since America's founding, clothing has been employed to naturalize and assimilate the bodies of the citizenry. Indeed, the body is a frontier on which questions of citizenship and normalcy are negotiated every day. Yet, within the museum, fashion objects are often considered in relation to designers rather than ordinary Americans with an emphasis placed on “pristine” pieces. The Bard Graduate Center Gallery exhibition (Re)Dressing American Fashion: Wear as Witness (February-June 2025) challenges these curatorial conventions through fifteen case study objects that bear traces of the abject realities of use and wear. The exhibition thus reconsiders the arc of American fashion while also redefining what is considered “exhibition worthy.” Unlike past, designer-focused exhibitions of American fashion, (Re)Dressing American Fashion centers wear (as both practice and narrative) as it explores how dress objects mediate and pay witness to the American experience. In this paper, the curators discuss their tactics for re-dressing the American fashion canon, their approaches to re-centering personal testimony in fashion exhibition design, and their reflections on the materiality of “exhibition worthy” fashion objects. Questions to be answered include, what can be learned from stains, tears, and mends, and how do these clues expand and trouble the category of American fashion?

### Biographies:

Emma McClendon is Assistant Professor of Fashion Studies at St. John's University in New York and a Ph.D. Candidate at the Bard Graduate Center. While on the curatorial team at The Museum at FIT from 2011-2020, McClendon curated several fashion exhibitions including *Denim: Fashion's Frontier* (2015) and *The Body: Fashion and Physique* (2017).

Lauren Downing Peters, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Fashion Studies and Director of the Fashion Study Collection at Columbia College Chicago. She holds a Ph.D. in fashion studies from Stockholm University and is the author of *Fashion Before Plus-Size: Bodies, Bias, and the Birth of an Industry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).



Image: Jeans, circa 1860, found in an abandoned North Carolina Farm, probably worn by an African American sharecropper. Private Collection of Dean Hashimoto. Photography by Bruce M. White. Courtesy of the Bard Graduate Center.

## ***Baldric, I Have a Cunning Plan: Displaying a 17th Century Sword Belt with a Replica Costume Mount***

*Stephanie Howell, V&A*

This presentation will explore the display decisions and mounting processes taken for exhibiting an extant embroidered leather sword belt - or baldric - (c.1640) in the British Galleries of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. This type of object is often displayed flat which can result in a loss of visual impact and become difficult to interpret as a fashionable accessory. To help the museum visitor better understand how the baldric was worn, the decision was made to display it three-dimensionally on a torso with a replica buff coat. The colour, cut and contour of the replica buff coat was carefully considered in order to underpin the curatorial narrative of swords as fashionable objects. This display methodology also provided context for the baldric without distracting from the accompanying objects in the showcase that are part of the collective display.

This project was a collaboration between the curator, textile conservator, costume mounter, and technician. The focus of the presentation will be on the practical processes such as research, pattern drafting, choice of materials, construction techniques and costume mounting.

### Biography:

Stephanie Howell is a Costume Display Conservator at the V&A. She has mounted costumes for notable fashion exhibitions in London that include Dior: Designer of Dreams (V&A 2019); Chintz: Cotton in Bloom (Fashion & Textile Museum 2021), Amy Winehouse: Beyond the Stage (Design Museum 2021), Fashion City (Museum of London 2023), and Chanel: Fashion Manifesto (V&A 2023).



Image: Buff coat and baldric, British Galleries, V&A London. Courtesy of Stephanie Howell.

# Keynote

## *The Missing Thread*

### *Untold Stories of Black British Fashion*

*Somerset House, London, September 2023 – January 2024 (Sponsored by Morgan Stanley).*

*Andrew Ibi*

Curated by Andrew Ibi, Jason Jules & Harris Elliott - the Black Orientated Legacy Development Agency (BOLD), *The Missing Thread* was a major fashion and arts exhibition opening in September 2023 and concluding in January 2024. Spanning from the 1970s to the present day, the exhibition set out to chart the shifting landscape of Black British culture and the unique contribution it has made to Britain's rich design history.

The exhibition examined how the cultural, counter-cultural, political and socio-economic backdrop of the 20th and 21st centuries shaped the identity of Black style and in turn mainstream fashion culture. Extending far beyond the realm of the catwalk, the exhibition spotlighted and contextualised the profound impact of Black creativity through music, photography, art and design, inserting lost, misplaced or missing narratives back into limited and non-representational perspectives. The exhibition's focus on inter-generational and inter-disciplinary conversations introduced new collaborations and commissions, reflecting on lived experiences whilst speculating future perspectives.

Black creativity has had a profound influence on British culture and continues to be referenced to great effect, often without acknowledgement. The exhibition observed and addressed a systemic climate of discrimination and racism, often denying Black creatives access to the fashion industry, resulting in imagined, invented and culturally appropriated narratives.

*The Missing Thread* centred on redressing this, celebrating the unique visions and impact of an often unseen generation of trailblazing Black creatives, who despite achieving great success, had their contributions misrepresented or excluded from the story of British fashion. *The Missing Thread* told a story about the unwavering desire for self-definition and self-expression. It's the story of consecutive generations who helped to develop the languages, styles and movements which inform today's generation of brilliant Black British designers. The most compelling of these creatives was Joe Casely-Hayford OBE, who holds an honoured place in Fashion history. *The Missing Thread* explored his legacy, brilliance, generosity and lucid elegance with the first, conclusive presentation and retrospective of his work in the UK, covering four decades of creative practice and commercial output.



Image: *The Missing Thread* exhibition posters in situ. The Morgan Stanley Exhibition. Courtesy of Chill create & Andrew Ibi

# Defying Territories

## ***From Britain to Japan, transnational feature of homespun by Zenzo Oikawa***

*Anika Shaik, University of Brighton*

Zenzo Oikawa (1892~1985), a male craftsperson in Japan, contributed to establishing the technique of homespun in Iwate Prefecture and its trade today. With unsuitableness of weather to foster sheep and scarcity of woollen fabric in the country, homespun was unpopular but introduced by following the British manner. From the late 19th century, wool products were demanded due to the Westernization of clothes and, under the WW1, as Britain prohibited the export to Japan, there was a growing demand to produce woollen fabric. Suggested and led by Soetsu Yanagi, a major figure in the Mingei Movement, Oikawa succeeded in dyeing woollen fabric with vegetables and established his homespun in Iwate Prefecture around the 1930s. Yanagi was initially attracted to homespun by encountering the works of Ethel Mairet, a British woman craftsperson who revived hand spinning, vegetable dyeing and handweaving in Ditchling. Mairet's textiles were imported to Japan being exhibited and purchased within the country. Yanagi's desire to introduce the same technique to Japanese textiles resulted in Oikawa's textiles with similarity to Mairet's. The presentation explores the transnational history of Oikawa's homespun by investigating the movement of textile and its practice through individual stories and textile works.

### Biography:

Anika Shaikh is a Ph.D. student at the University of Brighton. Her research interest covers design history and material culture in the 19th and 20th centuries in Britain with a special focus on transnational and postcolonial histories of crafts and designs.

## ***Soft power and soft furnishings in the post-war interior***

*Lisa Mason and Carys Wilkins, National Museums Scotland*

In 1971 an exhibition opened at the Design Centre in London entitled 'Kaleidoscope: Diversity by Design'. The exhibition launched a novel interior design scheme, funded by the Department of the Environment, and designed by Bernat Klein (1922 – 2014). The scheme was deceptively simple in its aims: via a series of three volumes, consumers could choose colour co-ordinating fabrics to create a harmonious interior. The guide was intended for use within government offices, embassies, hospitals, universities, museums, and accommodation for the armed forces.

At this point in time, the UK government was the largest single purchaser of furniture and furnishings; with an annual spend of £35 million, which equated to 2.5 million meters of furnishing fabrics. The launch of the Bernat Klein designed scheme was intended to standardise this process, whilst at the same time providing a degree of flexibility. The textiles were all manufactured in Britain and a secondary stated aim was to 'promote good design on a large scale'.

Taking as its starting point the Bernat Klein collection at National Museums Scotland and the Council of Industrial Design archive at Brighton University, this paper will explore the ways in which the British government used progressive textile design to project a carefully crafted image onto the world stage in the context of the Cold War. It will also consider how exhibitions were used as tools of both entertainment and propaganda in post-war Britain.

### Biographies:

Lisa Mason is Assistant Curator of Modern & Contemporary Design at National Museums Scotland. Recent exhibitions include Archie Brennan: Tapestry Goes Pop!, at Dovecot Studios (co-curated with Kate Grenyer) and Bernat Klein: Design in Colour, at National Museums Scotland. She is Chair of the Dress & Textile Specialists.

Carys Wilkins has been Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Design at National Museums Scotland since 2017, where she works with the post-1850 British and European decorative arts and design collection. At NMS, she has worked on the centenary exhibition Bernat Klein: Design in Colour, and more recently Beyond the Little Black Dress



Image: Department of the Environment model room setting - a living room for residential Ministry of Defence accommodation. 1971, © Bernat Klein; © Crown copyright. Licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v 3.0; Image: © National Museums Scotland



## ***The Subdued Power of Indian Crochet***

*Pragya Sharma, University of Brighton*

Crochet, as a domestic craft in India, has long held connotations of a craft taken for granted and one that every woman should know by virtue of their gender and position. The display of a newly-wed bride's trousseau in North India would signal her virtuosity with homemaking skills, emblematic of an ideal, genteel housewife. This, although a prevalent practice in late twentieth-century middle-class households, is still observed in many semi-urban and rural areas. The trousseau, generally comprising of crochet coverings for household objects and appliances, comes folded and jumbled up – the intricacy of the crochet covering only gets activated once it is draped on the intended object. The display in domestic spaces thus transforms the textile's materiality, from flimsy to flamboyant and yet it is invisible in its visibility.

In twentieth-century India, particularly the second decade onwards (2010s – present), such crochet coverings have been increasingly used in Bollywood media, across films, TV shows and advertisements to convey a middle-class aesthetic. With this as the backdrop, using media as an alternative display of textiles I want to argue how the stereotyped domestic nature of crochet is representative of the subdued power that middle-class women hold. In bringing to light these media representations, I am subverting the long-held views of how an Indian crochet textile is purported to be – latent, inactive and invisible. From a design history perspective, the representations also convey what objects were covered, in what contexts and what were the predominant designs.

### Biography:

Pragya Sharma is an AHRC Technē-funded PhD researcher in the History of Design (2023-27) at the University of Brighton (UK). She is working on unravelling stories of knitting from the Indian subcontinent while teasing out the finer concepts of domesticity, gender and labour within the craft practice. She was previously engaged as a design academic for over six years while pursuing various research projects that entailed fieldwork, working with artisans and ethnographic writing and documentation



Image: An assemblage of crochet pieces. Made by Daleshwary Sharma, 2023. Courtesy of Pragya Sharma

## ***Tailored Resistance: West Indian Migrants and the Power of Dress in Post-1948 Britain***

*Elli Michaela Young, Middlesex University*

When the wave of stylish men and women from the West Indies disembarked HMS Windrush in June 1948, they introduced Britain to unexpected array of vibrant clothing styles. British people not only struggled to comprehend their fashion choices, but they also failed to understand the significance that these migrants place on the style-fashion-dress (Tulloch, 2010). This paper explores how these migrants, particularly men, used their clothing as a means of standing out and resisting the racism they encountered in their new environment. By embracing the style practices they developed at home, they asserted their identities, challenged prevailing stereotypes, and set themselves apart. Drawing on oral histories, archival research and visual analysis, this presentation will consider how these men utilised West Indian styling practices to craft to communicate resistance, pride, and resilience. The study highlights the broader implications of material culture in the context of migration and the ways in which dress can serve as a powerful form of personal and political expression.

### Biography:

Elli Michaela Young is s a lecturer in Fashion and Visual Cultures at Middlesex University and is currently the Grants and Awards Officer for Design History Society and a founding member of the Caribbean Fashion and Design Research Network. Her research explores Caribbean fashion and textile production and Caribbean diaspora style-fashion-dress.

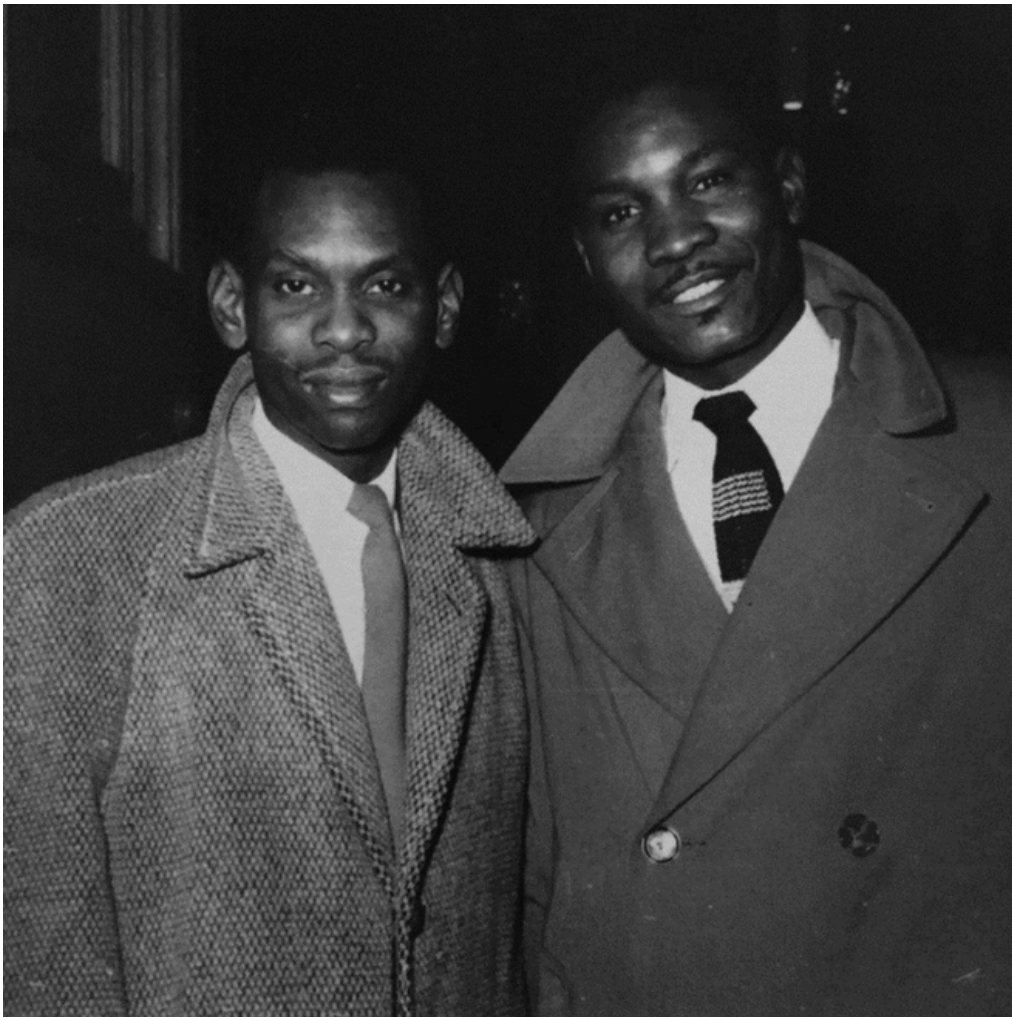


Image: Jerry Hoyt (Trinidad) and Barrington Young, Manchester, UK , circa 1950s.  
Courtesy of Elli Michaela Young.



## Venues & travel:

For more information on the conference venues, their accessibility and locations, please click the hyperlinks in the programme schedule (above).

The V&A Dundee is situated directly across a main road from Dundee railway station.

Verdant Works Museum is approximately 20 minutes walk from the V&A Dundee (5 minute taxi)

The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum is approximately 15 minutes walk from the V&A Dundee (5 minute taxi)

Dundee Contemporary Arts is approximately 10 minutes walk from the V&A Dundee (2 minute taxi)

## Attendance bursaries:

If you are a DATS member and UK and Ireland resident and require financial assistance to attend the conference, please email DATS Chair Lisa Mason with a short note about yourself, why attendance is important and what help you may need: [L.Mason@nms.ac.uk](mailto:L.Mason@nms.ac.uk).

Please note DATS are offering four bursaries this year. Precedence will be given to presenters.