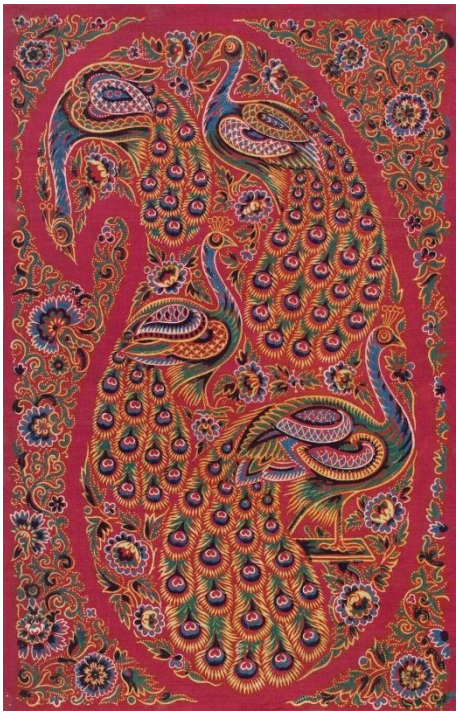
DATS

Dress and Textile Specialists

DATS Conference 2026 at The Harris

PATTERN



A.1962.1266.1.80 A © National Museums Scotland

A.1904.10 © National Museums Scotland

Counterpart: Series One, ©Hannah Sabapathy, 20/20 Residency, The Harris

https://buytickets.at/dressandtextilespecialists/2349267

Schedule

Thursday 8 October

10:00 Arrive / teas & coffees

10:30 – 12:00 Session 1 (15-minute presentations). Chair: Emily Taylor

- *The C19th Fancy Trade in Huddersfield, as seen through 2 pattern books*
  Katina Bill, Kirklees Museums and Galleries
- *Patterns of Cultural Exchange: A Japanese Taireifuku and Community Co-creation*
  Matthew Storey, Curator (Collections), Historic Royal Palaces
- *The Red Bedroom Project. Conserving and interpreting the historic colour & pattern of a showroom*
  Ellen Askey James, Scotney Castle

12:00 – 12:15 Short break

12:15 – 12:45 Session 2 (Pecha Kucha). Chair: Scott Schiavone

- *Batik history through cotton-printers sample-books*
  Sabine Bolk, Artist & Researcher
- *Pattern as Print, Pattern as Cut: A Study of Zandra Rhodes' Design Process through Practice Research*
  Lucie Shilton, De Montfort University

12:45 – 13:00 Introduction to Horrockses Fashion with Scott Schiavone

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 14:45 Keynote: Rose Sinclair

Short break

14:50 – 15:30 Invited speaker: Kerri Akiwowo

Invited speaker: Hannah Sabapathy

15:30 – 16:15 Questions and discussion with Rose, Kerri & Hannah. Chair: Lisa Mason

16:15 – 16:45 Refreshment break

16:45+ Gallery & Exhibition visit (The Harris is open to the public until 21:00)

18:30 Conference dinner (pre-booked option), Argento Lounge

Friday 9 October

10:00 – 11:00 DATS Annual General Meeting (or free time)

10:30 + Refreshments (available through the morning)

11:00 – 11:45 Group 1: The Harris dress and textiles store visit

Group 2: free time to visit exhibition and displays

12:00 – 12:45 Group 1: free time to visit exhibition and displays

Group 2: The Harris dress and textiles store visit

12:45 – 13:45 Lunch

13:45 + Refreshments available through Session 3

13:45 – 15:45 Session 3 (15-minute presentations). Chair: Keren Protheroe

- *Tailored Bodies: a sensory object-based analysis of late 19th century frock coat cutting*
  Viktor Heegaard, University of Copenhagen
- *The Power of Pattern: Reimagining Textile Fragments for New Audiences*
  Natalie Raw and Rathi Tamilselvan, Leeds Museums and Galleries
- *Conserving the Surreal and the Novel: Pattern in Charles James's 1930s Daywear*
  Eleanor Aitken and Lily Morgan, Birr Castle Textile Archive
- *A Museum of Uncollected Things: Patterns of Absence in Fashion Collections*
  Professor Ellen Sampson and Dr Cyana Madsen, University of the West of England

15:45 – 16:00 Closing remarks: Lisa Mason

16:00 Depart

Abstracts in schedule order

The C19th Fancy Trade in Huddersfield, as seen through 2 pattern books

Katina Bill, Kirklees Museums and Galleries

Huddersfield was central to the fancy trade in quiltings and worsted for vestings in the 19th century.

I propose to briefly explain rise and impact of the trade. Technical developments, from standard handloom to Jacquard, via the witch, saw the development of patterns go from a coloured spot to a flower, and eventually full foliage or even a complete garden.

This led to the rise of the designer as a distinct job or profession, and as named individuals, in the West Riding textile trade, and the growing importance of secrecy, which eventually lead to the decline of the cloth halls.

Tolson Brothers were typical of this development, and two pattern books illustrate the trade:

- Became established using witch, but forced to adopt jacquard in order to continue competing with other local firms
- John Beaumont joined Tolson bros about 1849 as designer of figured goods
- Company won medals at Great Exhibitions 1851 and 1862
- 2 sample books cover 1851-1864, including samples sent to the Great Exhibition, plus some samples from c1813

Biography:

Curatorial manager at Kirklees Museums and Galleries with over 25 years in a curatorial role and with particular responsibility for the textile collections. Former secretary of the Textile Society, BA in Design and the Visual Arts, 1990 and MA in Museum Studies.

Patterns of Cultural Exchange: A Japanese Taireifuku and Community Co-creation

Matthew Storey, Curator (Collections), Historic Royal Palaces

In the 2025 *Dress* Codes exhibition at Kensington Palace patterns of tailoring and embellishment carried the meaning of a historic Japanese uniform, or *taireifuku*, and two responses to it created by teenage young producers. The ambitious community co-creation project unlocked the garment and its history, showing how it powerfully communicates to the next generation.

The majority of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection is men's ceremonial uniforms, their patterns of tailoring and embroidery regulated to show status. Under-researched and un-displayed, they fall outside narratives of fashionable dress and royal clothing. The *taireifuku* was acquired in 2012, but never displayed. *Dress Codes* redressed this imbalance.

Taireifuku were created after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, as Japan rapidly westernised, adopting western-style court dress. Combining patterns of European tailoring with embroidered symbols of Japanese government, they physically and symbolically combine two cultures.
The young producers responded to this dialogue with Alex creating a video about cultural exchange and Mimi looking to her own dual heritage to create an outfit that combined design elements from two cultures.

This paper will present this project, including a trip to Japan, and how the patterns of the *taireifuku* were key to sharing meaning and relevance with young people and visitors.

Biography:

Matthew Storey is the curator of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection at Historic Royal Palaces. He works on royal and court dress and LGBTQ+ inclusive museum practice. He curated *Royal Style in the Making* (2021), featuring the wedding dress of Diana, Princess of Wales, and *Dress Codes* (2025), at Kensington Palace.

The Red Bedroom Project. Conserving and interpreting the historic colour & pattern of a showroom

Ellen Askey James, Scotney Castle

At a castle in Kent, a grand master bedroom, furnished with once vibrant early 20th-century red, floral-patterned fabric and ruby moreen and velvet curtains from the 1830's, has lain prone to the damage from sunlight, water, and pest activity over the years of use by the Hussey family.

The fabrics now faded, torn, nibbled and disassociated, belie the true impact of this beautiful room. As the last showroom on the visitor route, it had become more shabby than chic; it had lost its WOW!

The Red Bedroom project piloted a new engagement approach that brought together curators, conservators, and house teams with Scotney Castle House volunteers and a local textile community group to decide how to conserve and present this showroom.

I set up sessions to workshop ideas and review archival research, and I worked with the National Trust Textile Conservation Studio to assess the fabrics. A plan was formed through conservation guidance and principles, as well as audience-led work, resulted in the sensitive replication of the colour, texture, and pattern of some fabrics through digital print and speciality woven fabrics.

Keeping the historic patterns in place preserves the authenticity of the space, which was important to all involved in the project.

Biography:

Ellen Askey James BA(Hons) AMA. House & Collection Officer. Scotney Castle.

I am a museum professional working in collections care and preventative conservation at Scontey Castle, a National Trust property and accredited museum. My project work reflects my special interest in costume and textiles, shaped by years of experience in the textile print industry for interior and fashion houses across the UK.

Photo: National Trust Images/Ellen Askey James.

Batik history through cotton-printers sample-books

Sabine Bolk, Artist & Researcher

Since 2018 I have been using sample-books from cotton-printing compagnies in the Netherlands, to retell the history of Javanese Batik. Cotton-printing companies such as the Leidsche Katoenmaatschappij (1756-1936), Kralingsche Katoenmaatschappij (1720-1931) and Ankersmit (1799-1965) collected real handmade batik samples, next to samples from their competitors, to examine the Southeast-Asian markets and make the right patterned imitations for these markets. These companies started with making imitations of Indian Chintz for the European market, continued with imitating Javanese Batik for the Southeast Asian market and are now best known for their Wax Prints for West-Africa. The imitations were often one-to-one copies.

Batiks in museum collection often lack provenance. These sample-books are dated and often have information on where a certain pattern was being shipped to, they give important insight on what kind of batik was actual being made and worn. It also shows how patterns change over time. Even motif names are often written down. It would be great to show these changes in patterns in the PechaKucha style, showing how we can use these sample books to see the fashion development within batik sarongs.

Biography:

Sabine Bolk (1984) is a Dutch artist and batik researcher. Since 2009 Sabine frequently travels to Southeast Asia. From 2019 till 2021 she was a Research Associate at the Research Center for Material Culture in Leiden (NL) to research the batik collections in Dutch museums & archives. At the moment she is working on a Batik exhibition and research at the Kunstmuseum in The Hague (NL).

Image credits:
Left: Photo of sample book at the Vlisco archive in 2019
Right: Undated studio photo from the Wereldmuseum collection, the young man on the left wears the same pattern as found in the sample book. Inventory number: TM-60039706

Pattern as Print, Pattern as Cut: A Study of Zandra Rhodes' Design Process through Practice Research

Lucie Shilton, De Montfort University

The word pattern occupies a unique position within fashion, referring both to the surface of a textile and the template from which a garment is constructed. This presentation explores the relationship between these two meanings through the work of British fashion and textile designer Zandra Rhodes.

Drawing on practice-based PhD research, it argues that Rhodes' expressive hand-drawn textile designs cannot be understood independently of her approach to pattern cutting. Rather than treating print as decoration applied to an existing silhouette, Rhodes develops garments in response to the shape, scale and rhythm of her printed textiles. Textile design and garment construction evolve together, creating a dialogue between the two- and three-dimensional meanings of pattern.

Using archival research at Zandra Rhodes Studio and De Montfort University Special Collections, alongside interviews, and physical and digital reconstruction of Rhodes' early screen-printing methods, this research investigates how tacit design knowledge can be recovered through making. Retracing Rhodes' production processes reveals design decisions rarely documented in archives, demonstrating how print informs garment construction and pattern cutting shapes print. It proposes new digital interpretations of Rhodes' design methodology, demonstrating the value of practice research for understanding the relationship between print, pattern cutting and fashion design.

Biography:

Lucie Shilton is a pattern cutter, lecturer and practice-based PhD researcher investigating the design methodology of British fashion designer Zandra Rhodes. Her research combines archival investigation with digital reconstruction to explore the relationship between textile print, pattern cutting and design knowledge in archival fashion collections.

Keynote with Rose Sinclair MBE

Goldsmiths, University of London

Rose Sinclair's research interests act across textiles and design education, bringing together the histories of Black Caribbean women and their textiles craft practices, through groups such as the Dorcas Clubs. Rose takes a creative practice-based approach to discussing history from the perspectives of migration, identity, and settlement.

https://www.gold.ac.uk/design/people/sinclair/

@dorcasstories

Identity and Culture: Amplifying Diverse Voices in Textiles Higher Education and Practice-based Research

Dr Kerri Akiwowo, Loughborough University

This research explores regenerative decolonial methodologies for learning, teaching and designing within textiles higher education and design research contexts. As a Black British female textile scholar of African descent, investigation templates Ugandan bark cloth and the ancient craft of bark cloth making as a symbol of cultural reclamation, indigenous significance, ancestral knowledge, ecological esteem and innovation. Lived experience of diasporic dilemmas such as continuing culture, sense of belonging and place, together with the notion that women play a significant part in continuing heritage through their craft and roles in society underpins this work. A materials-led approach considers critical ways that regenerate and reenvision natural materials, as well as people and environments by probing the social and ecological benefit of using Ugandan bark cloth as an intelligent system for thinking and making.

Colonial and Eurocentric frameworks have historically dismissed indigenous knowledge and practices. This is evident in design and education contexts, particularly in the West where power structures and discrimination have negated global perspectives. Diverse Voices in Textiles, established in 2020 at Loughborough University is a collaborative research framework for broadening understanding of the subject and practicing equity in teaching and research through advocacy, inclusivity, representation and in response to data.

Biography:

Dr Kerri Akiwowo is a Senior Lecturer in Textiles at Loughborough University, School of Design and Creative Arts, UK. Her research focuses on intersections between textile design futures and heritage craft examined through sociocultural praxis. Interdisciplinary expertise includes empirical studies in natural and synthetic materials with a focus textile design, coloration and patterning techniques.

Patterns of Behaviour: An interrogation, through practice, of British methods of copying South Asian textile designs in the mid-nineteenth century

Hannah Sabapathy, University of Leeds

This paper is centred around a practice-based response that uses creative methods in archives. The focus is on *The Textile Manufactures of India* and *The Collection of Specimens of the Textiles Manufactures of India* both by John Forbes Watson, the former was gifted to Preston and has been digitised by The Harris, Preston. By reenacting the copying an understanding emerges of the volumes use by British manufacturers to extract pattern for their own designs in the mid nineteenth century. Methods of classification will be touched upon and how the compilation of textiles into books can impact what and how you copy. This includes a consideration of cutting up textiles to make the volumes. Combining archival research alongside drawings done in collections, processes of extracting information are explored as well as the concept of a copy. Methods of drawing and tracing expand ways of taking designs out of collections, moving beyond creating a copy. Examples from The National Archive of registered designs provide evidence of copying by British manufactures. The discussion will move onto how a creative response such as the 20/20 residency with The Harris, can articulate the complexities of patterned textile histories to broader audiences.

Biography:

Hannah Sabapathy is a researcher and artist. She is currently Leeds Opportunity Scholar with the School of Design, University of Leeds undertaking a practice-based PhD. Her research centres on British copies of South Asian textile patterns in the nineteenth century and uses studio practice to reevaluate design history. Hannah has undertaken artists residencies at Cove Park, The Harris, Preston and with UNESCO City of Design, Whanganui, Aotearoa. Her work has been acquired by The Harris is on display in the newly opened museum.

Image credits:

Top: Counterpart: Series One, ©Hannah Sabapathy, 20/20 Residency at The Harris

Bottom: Counterpart: Series Two, ©Hannah Sabapathy, 20/20 Residency at The Harris

Tailored Bodies: a sensory object-based analysis of late 19th century frock coat cutting

Viktor Heegaard, University of Copenhagen

The late 19th century has been characterized as a stagnant and uniform period of men's fashion in the UK, especially for the bourgeoise, but this uniformity cannot be assumed as being the result of an industrialized ready-to-wear industry, nor simple masculine disinterest in fashion; to appear uniform across a class of men requires the work of tailor. Through looking at original frock coats from the period, this project investigates the effort and skill that it took to turn individual bodies into what appears a naturally uniform mode of fashion.

To investigate how the cut of fashion was made to fit bodies, and how these bodies experienced the uniform menswear of the period, four original frock coats from 1890-1910 were investigated through a sensory object-based analysis. Through this careful use of the historian's own sensory impressions, the experience of the absent bodies in the material can be read and shows how the men were not merely shaped in silhouette, but also in their actions; how they moved, how they carried themselves, and which actions were permissible.

Biography:

Viktor Heegaard is a recently graduated master's student from Aarhus University in history and part of the Fashioning Sudan project at the Centre for Textile Research at the University of Copenhagen, who is interested in the intersections of science, the male body and tailoring at the turn of the century.

The Power of Pattern: Reimagining Textile Fragments for New Audiences

Natalie Raw and Rathi Tamilselvan, Leeds Museums and Galleries

Temple Newsam, Leeds, houses an extensive textile collection that documents 500 years of pattern design in European fashion and interior decoration. Originally assembled as a research archive to support curators in the accurate reconstruction of historic interiors, the collection is largely composed of small fragments or 'scraps' of pattern.

This paper focuses on an ongoing project aimed at bringing these largely hidden collections out from the stores. With partnership working central to the project, we will discuss how we plan to improve access with an emphasis on fostering deeper audience engagement with historic pattern design.

We will explore how textile collections function as dynamic, living records that connect diverse communities. Building on sustained relationships with both established and new partners, this work highlights how textiles act as catalysts for co-production, relevance, and shared ownership through ongoing dialogue. Through exhibitions and resources developed collaboratively, local communities play an active role in shaping meaning and representation. We will examine how an evolving programme, of access-led activities, co-curated interpretation, and creative workshops support inclusion, wellbeing, creativity, and belonging. While reflections on the impact and challenges of this kind of working will offer insights into developing participatory and responsive heritage spaces through collaboration.

Biographies:

Natalie Raw is Curator of Dress and Textiles at Leeds Museums and Galleries, with over 25 years' experience working with collections. Rathi Tamilselvan is Assistant Community Curator at Temple Newsam House, and they frequently collaborate on projects focused on collections engagement.

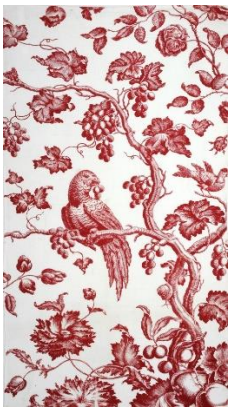


Image credits:
Left: LEEAG.2004.40 Part of a dress bodice, brocaded damask, silk, 1740 - 1760 © Leeds Museums and Galleries
Centre: LEEAG.2007.71.8 Grape Gatherers, linen, 1600 – 1800 © Leeds Museums and Galleries
Right: LEEAG.2007.71.122 Printed cotton, 1780 – 1800 © Leeds Museums and Galleries

Conserving the Surreal and the Novel: Pattern in Charles James's 1930s Daywear

Eleanor Aitken and Lily Morgan, Birr Castle Textile Archive

This presentation explores the conservation and interpretation of avant-garde and pop-culture patterns through two rare 1930s day dresses by Charles James, worn by his friend and patron Anne, Countess of Rosse. Drawing on the textile archive at Birr Castle, County Offaly, this talk utilises the family's archive of photographs and oral histories to reveal undocumented intersections between the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the avant-garde.

The first dress is a recently discovered and undocumented c.1938 day dress featuring a surrealist pattern designed by Jean Cocteau. This piece serves as an example of the 1930s collaboration between modern art and fashion, featuring moulded belt clasps possibly made by Oliver Messel. The talk will analyse the queer legacies embedded in this collaboration between James, Cocteau, and Messel.

The second is a c.1938 novelty print dress depicting Disney's Snow White, an early example of transatlantic film-inspired textile design possibly linked to the animation team at Disney. While the Cocteau dress exhibits James's signature complex construction, the Snow White dress offers a different approach to pattern-cutting, suggesting a possibly collaborative assembly. Both garments are currently being preserved under an Irish Heritage funding scheme, and this talk discusses how these distinct patterns captured the era's shifting aesthetic landscape.

Biography:

Eleanor Aitken and Lily Morgan are fashion curators, researchers and archivists specialising in the narrative-led history of dress, identity and memory. Having met at Central Saint Martins on Fashion Histories and Theories, their work translates histories and scholarly research into spatial and sensory experiences, utilising material objects as access points into broader social, cultural and political contexts.

Image credits:
Left: Full-length view of the Cocteau dress by Charles James, Birr Castle Fashion and Textile Archive
Centre: Detail of the Snow White dress, Birr Castle Fashion and Textile Archive
Right: Image of Anne, Countess of Rosse wearing the Snow White dress at Birr at Easter, 1938, Birr Castle Paper Archive

A Museum of Uncollected Things: Patterns of Absence in Fashion Collections

Professor Ellen Sampson and Dr Cyana Madsen,
University of the West of England

As what belongs in museum fashion collections is increasingly scrutinised and debated, our project *A Museum of Uncollected Things* explores not what these collections contain, but what is absent from them: what is missing, lost, or was never acquired. Museums are increasingly working to broaden and decolonise their collections through revised collecting policies, and pre-20th century fashion presents a particular challenge, because the fragile and disposable nature of clothing means that uncollected garments often do not survive. Our project does not seek to recreate or replace absent garments but instead asks how making visible what cannot and never will be collected, can help us to tell different clothing stories.

This presentation will address the first phase of this project, including the context and aims of the research. Specifically, it will explore the methodology for developing creative visualisations as a tool for identifying absences in London Museum's pre-20th-century dress & textile collection.

By applying iterative methods of 'research thinking through visualisation' (Hinrichs, 2018) to create a series of exploratory digital and nondigital prototypes which reveal patterns and gaps within and across the data sources, we propose innovative ways of thinking about how absence shapes fashion collections and the benefits to museums and audiences of making visible what is absent from them.

Biographies:

Professor Ellen Sampson is an artist and material culture researcher whose work explores the relationships between clothing and bodily experience, both in museums and archives and in everyday life. Sampson has a PhD from the Royal College of Art, London and she is Professor of Design Practices at University of the West of England Bristol.

Dr Cyana Madsen is a curator whose research focuses on critical curatorial practice and authorship of history through institutional practice. She has a PhD from London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London, is Course Leader of MA Fashion Curation and Cultural Programming at LCF and is Research Fellow at Northumbria University.