DISPLAYING DRESS: NEW METHODOLOGIES FOR HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

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Abstract

At the beginning of the twenty-first century British costume museums were failing to attract audiences; consequently, all but the Gallery of Costume, Manchester and the Fashion Museum, Bath were closed to the public. This thesis has sought to examine the traditional display methodologies of historic costume museums, using the Gallery of Costume as its primary case study of practice. This investigation problematises the theoretical assumptions upon which the gallery's display methodologies are founded and compares its approaches to those taken in contemporary displays of historic dress. The findings of this investigation have been used to propose new approaches to the display of historic dress that aim to engage contemporary audiences.

Using the research methods of participant observation, interviews and archival research the first chapter of this thesis outlines the development of the Gallery of Costume's display methodologies, highlighting the agency of individual curators. The next two chapters explore the ways in which curators of dress reconstruct the bodies and personalities that give form to worn dress in the museum. The thesis moves on to examine both the methods by which the Gallery of Costume's constructed history in its displays of history and the theoretical assumptions underlying its historiography. This chapter is followed by an exploration of the performance of fashion within the museum, attending to the way in which exhibitions can express dress as 'living' concept within accepted conservation guidelines. Finally, this thesis outlines a framework upon which reflexive exhibitions of historic dress can be built.

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Acknowledgments

Dedication

Dedicated to my children: Theodore and Evelyn, for whom I will never stop trying and who make all the hard work worthwhile.

Introduction

In 1949, less than two years after Manchester's Gallery of Costume opened in Platt Hall, its curator, Anne Buck, presented a lecture to the Museum Assistants Group in which she outlined possible approaches for displaying dress in museums. At that time, the Gallery of Costume was the only specialist museum of dress in Britain, and Buck's pioneering methodologies would set standards for the display of historic dress both nationally and internationally.[1] Buck began her lecture by posing this question to the group:

> How by display can we use costume so that not only does the visitor
> enjoy the sight of the object itself, but through it discover something
> of the artistic, the social, the human qualities of earlier periods?[2]

This question formed the basis for Buck's display methodologies that were, as she acknowledged, undergoing a continuous process of development. This lecture provided an opportunity for her to pause and reflect upon her evolving practices. Nearly sixty years later, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) for a PhD student who would be based jointly at the University of Manchester and at the Gallery of Costume to further such a reflexive enquiry into the museum's display methodologies.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to investigate the Gallery of Costume's display practices and the theoretical assumptions they were built upon. I intend to use the findings of this research to propose a reflexive approach to displaying historic dress at the Gallery of Costume and elsewhere. The starting point for this project is the question that Buck asked in 1949. I have broadly interpreted this question as: How

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[1] The Gallery of Costume's visitor book reveals that curators from museums all over the world visited the gallery to view Buck's methodologies during the 1950s and 1960s.

[2] Anne Buck, *Costume in the Museum*, unpublished transcript of a lecture delivered to the Museum Assistants Group, Norwich, May 1949. Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

might the costume museum's display methodologies express the specificity of historic dress so that dress engages the interests and perspectives of contemporary museum visitors? In the years since Buck addressed this question, the field of costume curation is quite different from the one in which she operated; indeed, one could assert that the field has diverged, perhaps artificially, into two distinct areas: fashion curation and costume curation. I begin the present chapter by introducing the context for this collaborative research project.

Context

From 2008 to 2010, the Manchester City Council undertook a major redevelopment project of the Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall. The council spent £1.3 million on structural repairs to the building. The redevelopment also provided an opportunity to improve the gallery's facilities by creating additional display space for temporary exhibitions and updating its permanent displays. This project was to be the first comprehensive revision of the museum since it had first been installed according to Buck's specifications. The period that led up to this substantial piece of work was an opportune moment to reflect upon both the physical and conceptual structures that frame the museum's displays, whose relevance was now being called into question. In the years prior to the redevelopment, the numbers of visitors to the Gallery of Costume and to other museums of historic dress in Britain had declined sharply.[3] Some observers from within the field of curatorial practice correlated this situation with these museums' traditional display and interpretation methodologies. Sarah Levitt, head of Leicester's Museum Service and previously Assistant Curator at the Gallery of Costume, summarised this view:

> Traditionally presented costume museums, all more or less
> based on the original Platt Hall concept of 1947, have been

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[3] In the 1960s and 1970s the Gallery of Costume's visitor figures averaged 60,000-70,000 per year. In 2003, they reached their lowest level—13,000. However, this is not a fair comparison, as during the 2000s the gallery's opening hours were significantly reduced from those of the 1960s and 1970s.

declining… [I am convinced] that specialist museums,

especially ones in very small, inaccessible, inappropriate

historic buildings, with very traditional interpretation, capable

only of very small visitor numbers are not a good way of

making very important subjects like costume accessible to the

widest possible audience. If wide audiences are not

experiencing them, truly reflecting the local communities to

whom all publicly funded museums are accountable then they

will not be considered important enough by key decision

makers to be worth continued funding.[4]

Levitt rightly warned of the consequences of failing to attract audiences. By 2013, all of Britain's specialist museums of historic dress, with the exception of Manchester's Gallery of Costume and Bath's Fashion Museum (formerly the Costume Museum), had closed following local government rationalisation and benchmarking exercises.[5] This situation confirmed that which Eilean Hooper-Greenhill had predicated in 1995: 'If museums are not seen and felt to be part of the daily life of society, they will not survive'.[6] Hooper-Greenhill's words reflected museums' anxieties at the end of the twentieth century, prompted by changing government agendas and a concurrent reduction in funding. 'The New Museology', as it was termed by Peter Vergo in his 1989 anthology, called for museums to move forward by embracing critical reflection of their practices.[7] In the 1990s and the decades that followed, most disciplines engaged in a reflexive turn that drew together insights from academia (notably from cultural and media studies and

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[4] Sarah Levitt, unpublished document produced for the Costume Society Extraordinary General Meeting, 2003. Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[5] Costume Museums closed at Castle Howard, North Yorkshire in 1993; Wygston House, Leicester in 2000; Nottingham Castle in 2003; Shambellie House, Scotland January 2013.

[6] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum, Media, Message* (London: Routledge, 1995) 2.

[7] Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

ethnography) with the practical work of museums.[8] This influx of ideas radically refocused museological debate towards a consideration of what museums are (and should be) in order to remain relevant in the twenty-first century. It, should, however, be acknowledged that much of this debate occurred primarily within academia (rather than within museums).

The precarious position of British costume museums in the first decade of the new millennium indicated that their practices were ripe for exposure to the same critique that other disciplines had subjected themselves to. This process may have begun at the Costume Society's 2003 Extraordinary General Meeting, convened to discuss many curators' concerns about the future of British costume museums. Levitt's statement presented at the meeting begged some difficult questions that ultimately went unanswered, one of which was: Why were costume museums failing to attract and engage audiences in the twenty-first century? While Levitt indicated that museums' 'traditional presentation' and 'traditional interpretation' were no longer relevant, she did not elaborate on why this should be so, or indeed specify in depth what constituted traditional practice (although she did point to the model of practice that Buck had developed at the Gallery of Costume). If the Gallery of Costume's methodologies were no longer as innovative as they had been in the previous century, what direction could costume curation take in the future? Rather than asking these questions, which would have focused attention on the costume museum's methodologies, many of the Costume Society members made a somewhat reductive association between the apparent decline in public interest in historic dress

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[8] See, for example Mary Bouquet, ed., *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: Back to the Future* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001); Charles W. Hauxthausen, ed., *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University* (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2002); Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, eds., *Exhibition Experiments* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Ivan Clark and Steven D. Levine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Politics and Poetics of Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1991).

and the surging popularity of fashion exhibitions.[9] They implied that these exhibitions had diverted audiences from costume museums.

During the 1990s and 2000s, as Fiona Anderson and Valerie Steele have both acknowledged, fashion exhibitions proliferated, attracting record numbers of visitors to such diverse locations as the Imperial War Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts.[10] Some members of the Costume Society dismissed many of these exhibitions as 'glitzy spectacles' of contemporary celebrity fashion that were devoid of academic content,[11] the likes of which historic costume museums neither could nor should replicate.[12] In the early 2000s, fashion theorists and curators began to pay critical attention to the phenomenon of the fashion exhibition. In 2000, Anderson published a seminal essay entitled 'Museums as Fashion Media' that examined how these exhibitions engaged with and contributed to the contemporary fashion system. Anderson's essay was followed in 2008 (the year I commenced work on this thesis) with *Fashion Theory*'s special edition on exhibiting fashion. In that volume, fashion theorists and curators (notably Steele, Christopher Breward, Peter McNeil and Alexandra Palmer) began to explore the distinctive qualities of fashion exhibitions, similar to Buck's 1949 survey of the costume museum. Their nascent and open-ended enquiry rebutted some of the claims made by the Costume Society by highlighting the cultural and academic importance of fashion exhibitions. Many contributors drew attention to *AngloMania*: *Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006) and *Spectres*: *When Fashion Turns Back* (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005), two exhibitions that combined contemporary and historic dress in innovative settings. Their critical and popular success underlined the futility of the Costume Society's dialectic of difference.

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[9] Costume Society Extraordinary General Meeting minutes, 2003, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[10] Fiona Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, eds., *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2000) 371; Valerie Steele, "Letter from the Editor," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 5.

[11] Costume Society Extraordinary General Meeting minutes, 2003.

[12] Costume Society Extraordinary General Meeting minutes, 2003.

Setting fashion exhibitions and the historic costume museum in opposition to one another, I would argue, was merely a distraction from the challenging task of achieving sustainable renewal for the costume museum by developing new paradigms of display and interpretation. This task, the New Museology indicated, begins with sustained and concentrated attention upon traditional practice, as Anthony Shelton has argued: 'Exhibition strategies must begin with the excavation of the schemes underlying conventional museum representations'.[13] It was thus with the intention of gaining insights into the practical and theoretical intricacies of the Gallery of Costume's traditional methodologies that I took up a position there as an embedded researcher.

In the next section of this introduction I will outline my research methodology, beginning with an account of the nature of embedded research, reflecting on its advantages and complications. Following these general points, I will then discuss the structure of my research and how my research questions developed from the specific research methods I employed while working at the Gallery of Costume. This part of the chapter establishes the importance of reflexivity for this research project.

Embedded Research

Embedded research describes a mutually beneficial arrangement in which a researcher joins an (often non-academic) organisation in order to conduct research. In recent years, the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme has demonstrated the reciprocal benefits of museums collaborating with PhD students. One of the ways in which this has occurred has been in the development of exhibitions. In this partnership the researcher brings his or her specialist knowledge

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[13] Anthony Shelton, "Unsettling the Meaning: Critical Museology, Art and Anthropological Discourses," Mary Bouquet, ed., *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: Back to the Future* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 150.

of a particular subject to the planning of an exhibition.[14] In turn, the collaborative process of developing an exhibition can stimulate the research process by generating new knowledge, challenging preconceptions, crystallising ideas and suggesting, through the interchange of textual and material sources, different epistemological approaches to the researcher's study.

Christopher Breward outlined the benefits of the 'open marriage of the university academic and curator/scholar'[15] for fashion theory and practice in his article 'Between the Museum and the Academy: Fashion Research and Its Constituencies', published in *Fashion Theory* in 2008. The nature of this relationship—as Breward's experiences as an external curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) and the Museum of London appear to confirm—customarily conforms to a model in which the academic contributes to the construction of the exhibition's narrative and content. The academic might suggest the arrangement and juxtaposition of objects and contextual material—images, film and audio—and then write the exhibition's text; the museum's exhibition designers, interpretation specialists and conservators will usually work out, in collaboration with the academic, the presentation of this narrative. The nature of this collaborative PhD is different (and arguably more challenging) than this established model, in that it blurs these defined roles and specialties.

As a researcher based at the Gallery of Costume, I was engaged to critique the museum's methods of presenting objects and knowledge: the very area in which the *museum* in these collaborative projects is ordinarily assumed to be the specialist. In this unusual situation I was to be given free access to the gallery's resources and

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[14] For examples of exhibition to result from CDA research projects see: Laura Humphries, ed., *Research on Display: A Guide to Collaborative Exhibitions for Academics* (London: Queen Mary University, 2015). <https://www.academia.edu/11390311/Digital_Collaborations_Students_Working_with_Museums>. 3 January 2016.

[15] Christopher Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy: Fashion Research and Its Constituencies," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 93.

archives, allowed to observe practices, listen informally to conversations and undertake structured interviews, and then critically engage with this evidence. This endeavour had the potential to be intrusive and perhaps even unpleasant. My own experiences as a curator had made me acutely aware of how uncomfortable and exposing it can be to have one's practice picked apart (especially by someone who is distanced from the realities in which one operates), only for that person to then suggest that you should be doing things differently. James Duggan, who undertook a methodologically similar piece of embedded research, gathering information on a local authority initiative in order to inform its future development, captured something of the unease I felt going into the project:

> Research is a strange thing: not listening to someone as they talk
> is impolite; listening to someone intently and responding
> appropriately is polite; listening to someone intently and then…
> reading extensively to critically engage with what they were
> saying seems to be a particular form of malice.[16]

Of course I did not intend for my research to cause personal offense. Quite the opposite: I aimed for it to provoke a productive re-evaluation and renewal of the gallery's methodologies. Nonetheless, on numerous occasions Miles Lambert, the gallery's current curator, expressed his opinion that my research felt disconcertingly personal to him: practices or exhibitions in which he had been deeply invested, but from which he was now separated by time or location, were being brought into the critical spotlight of the present. Lambert acknowledges that it can be difficult to reflect dispassionately on one's own practices.[17] Nonetheless, Lambert showed willing to critically engage with his past exhibitions and the practices of his predecessors and peers. At times, however, his reaction surprised me—I had not

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[16] James R. Duggan, "Embedded Research: Contextualising Managerialization in a Local Authority," Helen M. Gunter, David Hall and Colin Mills, eds., *Education Policy Research: Design and Practice at a Time of Rapid Reform* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 17.

[17] Miles Lambert, Personal Correspondence, 21 January 2016.

realised the depth of his connection to a museum, exhibition or person. Over the past three decades, various ethnographic discourses have highlighted the potential productivity of the awkwardness produced by the embedded research process.[18] In this instance, Lambert's discomfort reinforced the importance of reflexivity in my research project: the requirement to acknowledge the tangle of relationships that run through this field of practice, and my own identity within it.

As the field of ethnography now acknowledges, researchers and their experiences are intrinsic to embedded research.[19] Several ethnographers have observed that it is not always possible to maintain an ethical level of detachment from personal ties in the research context.[20] It is essential for researchers to consider their role in the research process, however, in order 'to be conscious of the ways we are involved in and engaged with our research participants and to find strategies for ethically managing that engagement', to quote Val Colic-Peiske.[21] In this project, I heeded Jennifer Mason's advice by subjecting my own role in the process 'to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of [my] data'.[22] I hoped that this awareness would prevent me from extrapolating too liberally from my own experience and would stop me from accepting my biases as 'objective' truth.

I should now pause to draw attention to my professional status, and I should suggest the possible implications of my identity for this study. I entered this study as a professional insider, albeit one who was relatively new to the field (in comparison with those whose practices I would be critiquing). Nonetheless, I came equipped

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[18] See: Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, eds., *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[19] Harrell-Bond (1976) and Gow (2002), cited in Val Colic-Peiske, "Doing Ethnography in 'One's Own Ethnic Community': The Experience of an Awkward Insider," Lynne Hume, Jane Mulcock, eds., *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 84.

[20] Hume and Mulcock, eds., *Anthropologists in the Field*, 2014.

[21] Colic-Peiske, "Doing Ethnography in 'One's Own Ethnic Community,'" 2014, 85.

[22] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage, 1996) 6.

with knowledge, experience and ideas about costume curation. Prior to this research project, I was Curator of Dress at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery from 2003 – 2008. This was my second professional position after completing a master's degree in Museum Studies (my first post had been Assistant Curator of Education at the New Art Gallery Walsall). I identify as a member of the generation of dress curators Breward described in 'Between the Museum and Academy': we are equally at ease with the post-modern museum's policy-based access and inclusion initiatives and the 'cultural turn' that has transformed fashion research over the past twenty-five years.[23] My familiarity with this field of practice could be compared to ethnographic research where, as H. Russell Bernard puts it, 'you already speak the native language and have already picked up the nuances of etiquette from previous experience. Participant observation would help you intellectualise what you already know'.[24] In this instance, I had visited some of the exhibitions I would be discussing; I had even curated one of them. Those I had not seen, I nevertheless had knowledge and opinions of that I had gathered through discussions with colleagues and exhibition reviews. I could usually infer the reviewers' opinions and stances when I read reviews, even if they were not directly expressed by their words. I had an existing network of contacts: I knew or knew of some of the people whom I would later interview. These curators had been colleagues, friends, people whose work I admired from afar or whose practice had been set up in opposition to my own.

While my familiarity with the field provided me with a running start on my research, it also had the potential to colour my perspective. My professional experience—in particular that related to the first exhibition I curated in 2005—had undoubtedly influenced the conceptual position from which I embarked on this study. In 2005 I had co-curated my first dress exhibition, *Fashion and Fancy Dress: The Messel Family Dress Collection 1865–2005*, with Amy de la Haye and Lou Taylor, who had formerly been my undergraduate teacher. The exhibition, as Breward noted, was a

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[23] Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy," 2008, 84.

[24] H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Third Edition (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: 2002) 350.

model of material culture research.[25] The exhibition's narrative was drawn directly from our sustained and detailed research of the garments and the lives of the women who had worn them. Our chosen display frames—invisible mannequins; coloured backdrops matched to the women's preferences, expressed by their clothing; and large-scale photographs of the women, whenever possible wearing the garment that was displayed behind them—emphasised the objects and thus reinforced their importance as the material testimony of our research. In the same year, *Spectres*, a very different type of exhibition, opened at the V&A. Curated by Judith Clark, *Spectres* was 'impressionistic'[26] rather than didactic. It seemed to prioritise ideas and settings over objects. Unsurprisingly, the differences in our methodologies became a nexus for debate at the Fashion Institute of Technology's conference titled *Museum Quality: Collecting and Exhibiting Fashion and Textiles*, which took place the following year. (Part of the conference proceedings were published in *Fashion Theory*'s 2008 special edition on fashion exhibitions.)

In her presentation at this conference, Taylor argued that Clark's staging of *Spectres* disavowed the concerns of material culture research: 'There was a lack of respect here for the selected clothes, for the work of key, innovative designers and for the generations of makers and wearers of these garments'.[27] She implied that Clark's methodology, diametrically opposed to our own, was a detrimental development for the practice of dress curation. Observers may have assumed that Taylor spoke for all three of the *Fashion and Fancy Dress* curators. Although we had all equally advocated an object-centric approach, Taylor did not represent my opinions. At that time, I was ambivalent about *Spectres*—I had been intrigued but baffled by its staging and lack of narrative (I would later realise that this had been Clark's intention). It did indeed seem to me to be a 'paradigm-breaking' exhibition, as the

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[25] Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy," 2008, 91.

[26] Peter McNeill, "'We're Not in the Fashion Business': Fashion in the Museum and the Academy," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 68.

[27] Lou Taylor, "*Spectres*: When Fashion Turns Back," *The Art Book* 13.1 (2006) 17.

conference's convener, Steele, had asserted, but in which way I was not sure.[28] Despite my lack of clarity and defined position about this exhibition, Taylor's controversial remarks connecting *Spectres* to my own methodologies demonstrated that I was personally involved with the critical debates that will be found throughout this thesis.

The close proximity of researchers to their texts led ethnographer Sara Delamont to suggest that reflexivity is the 'most important characteristic of fieldwork, and of analysis'.[29] In order to effectively critique the Gallery of Costume's methodologies and place them within a wider field of practice, I would have to confront my presumptions and find a critical language to address the uncertainties and ambiguities I had previously been unable to articulate. Throughout this project, I was constantly observing and theorising aspects of my own experience in ways I had hitherto been unaware of. Like many of my peers, I found I had little time when curating exhibitions to stand back and examine my own methods. The value of embedded reflection, Michael Duijn asserts, is that 'it can lift practitioners out of the swamp of day-to-day practices by evaluating them with the aid of theoretical concepts'.[30]

At the start of this study, I quickly realised that historic dress curators lacked what might be termed a 'theoretical tool-kit'—a considered set of theoretical concepts with which to analyse their display methodologies. One could argue that this was one reason for the Costume Society's difficulty in accurately determining the problems associated with costume museums' traditional display methodologies, and their inability to adequately identify why and how those methodologies were

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[28] Steele, "Letter from the Editor," 2008, 6.

[29] Sara Delamont, "Ethnography and Participant Observation," C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium and D. Silverman, eds., *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004) 226.

[30] Michael Duijn, *Embedded Reflection on Public Policy Innovation: A Relativist / Pragmatist Inquiry into the Practice of Innovation and Knowledge Transfer in the WaterINNovation Program* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2009) 338.

inconsistent with the fashion exhibitions that were securing large audiences. In 'Between the Museum and the Academy', Breward noted that many of the newer generation of dress curators were *au fait* with contemporary fashion theory.[31] In general, this sector of the profession appeared to understand how the concerns of the 'new' fashion history and the New Museology intersected.[32] The cross-fertilisation of these areas, as Anderson discussed in 'Museums as Fashion Media', resulted in innovative approaches to the display of contemporary dress that were focused on the representation of the fashionable body and the reconceptualisation of dress as the 'living' phenomenon of fashion.[33] The younger generation of dress curators' understanding of theory, as Breward stated, is 'in stark contrast to the sense of alienation sometimes felt by their senior colleagues, put off by what they perceive as obscurantist jargon and a seemingly careless disregard of empirical foundations for superficial theoretical supposition'.[34] Breward clearly indicated that the practice of the older generation of costume curators was out of touch with the academy. In light of Anderson's conclusions about the positive influence of theory upon contemporary dress exhibitions, it would be fair to argue that in the absence of new ideas and theory, traditional costume displays had conceptually stagnated.

In this thesis I will draw upon a range of theoretical approaches that have been appropriated from contemporary dress studies and the New Museology to inform my critique of the display of historic dress. It is my intention to demonstrate that a theoretically framed study of display practices can inform the creation of reflexive exhibitions, thus bringing the historic costume museum into closer alignment with contemporary academic studies and fashion curation. This proposition is supported by Duijn's research confirming that embedded research can contribute to the

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[31] Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy," 2008, 84.

[32] Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," 2000, 375-76, 388.

[33] Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," 2000, 371-388.

[34] Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy," 2008, 84.

development of reflexive practices. In turn, he writes that reflective practice 'can support professionals to keep… their project in tune with the contextual dynamics'.[35]

Having discussed embedded research in general terms, the next section of this chapter outlines the structure of my research project and discusses in more detail the specific research methods I used: participant observation, archival research and interviews.

The Structure of this Research Project

When my supervisor at the university put together the project proposal for the CDA, she outlined the scope of the research project and suggested a timetable for this work. The cornerstone of Professor Rees Leahy's proposition was the development of two temporary experimental displays at the end of Year 2 and the start of Year 3. She anticipated that research conducted in Year 1 into past and present practice at the Gallery of Costume and an analysis of new, innovative practice developed by museums in Britain and abroad would inform the proposals for these temporary displays at Platt Hall. Visitors' and stakeholders' responses to these displays would then be evaluated by Manchester City Galleries in Year 3 and would feed into my proposals for the development of the Gallery of Costume's future practices. The ideas and structure that the proposal first outlined have since been revisited and revised, as should be expected from a research project investigating evolving practice. (Fig. 0.1 outlines my final timetable of research and writing).

By the time I began my research in 2008, Lambert had filled the museum's programme of temporary exhibitions for the duration of my research project; he had also planned out the majority of the new permanent displays. Exhibition schedules finalised a minimum of two years in advance is a common practice; museums need to allocate their resources efficiently and allow sufficient time for research and

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[35] http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/conf/olkc/archive/olkc5/papers/118_duijn _abstract_ embedded _reflection_on_public_policy_innovation.pdf

object preparation. In December of 2009, however, Lambert created an opportunity for me to curate the permanent display of nineteenth-century dress in time for the gallery's reopening in March 2010. This was not to be a fully experimental piece of practice, however; it had to follow the same overarching aims as the rest of the museum's permanent chronological displays. Going by Lambert's brief, this gallery was to demonstrate the development of style in the period of the 1820s to the 1890s; it was to include garments constructed from a variety of textiles; and, following his preferred mounting style, it was to include two garments dressed on full-bodied mannequins manufactured by Derek Ryman (Fig. 0.2). It is important to acknowledge that very few research projects operate within ideal conditions, and that most research projects are a compromise. Similarly, from my own curatorial experience, I was familiar with the compromises and limitations placed on the practices of local authority museums that are accountable to their funders and local communities. This is the reality in which most dress curators work, and it was thus appropriate that this project should adapt in order to take those constraints into account. Mason stresses that research should be flexible so that it may account for the changing context in which it takes place.[36] The ability to adapt was crucial for this project, not least because of my own changing personal circumstances, discussed below, which significantly disrupted the timeline that my supervisors' research outline had proposed.

My research was interrupted three times: on two separate occasions for maternity leave of over a year each (2010–2011 and 2014–2015) following which I returned to my studies part-time, and once for six weeks (June–July 2012) while I relocated with my family to the United States. Clearly, moving so far away from the gallery would have significant and potentially detrimental implications for this embedded research. Nonetheless, the enforced distancing from the museum also had some benefits for this study in the end. Much of the literature on embedded research methods stresses the importance of maintaining a self-conscious balance between intimacy with (and

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[36] Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 1996, 10.

intellectual distance from) one's subject.[37] Distance, as Lynn Humme and Jane Mulcock put it, is crucial if researchers are to undertake a critical analysis of the practices in which they participate.[38] My move away from the gallery occurred during my third year of study, after I had already conducted much of my research; it was thus an appropriate time to step back and reflect on the knowledge and experiences I had gathered there. During the final two years of this project, I returned twice to the gallery in person to experience the changes that had occurred in my absence. Switching from daily to yearly personal contact with the gallery effected a productive change of perspective that enabled me to critically engage with my body of research. Returning to the gallery after a long period of absence, however, also made it clear that I had become increasingly disconnected from the developments that had occurred at Platt Hall between 2012-2014.

Although many changes were made to the structure of the proposal, Rees Leahy's original outline was instrumental in allowing me to begin my fieldwork almost instantaneously. As per the research proposal, the first year was spent at the Gallery of Costume full-time, working on an account of the gallery's past and present practices and identifying innovative exhibitions to be analysed as examples of comparative practice. This research employed a variety of approaches to access different aspects of what Mason has called the 'intellectual puzzles' of my subject.[39] The research I conducted during this year was foundational: my research questions evolved organically from the processes of observing participants, consulting the gallery's archives and conducting formal, recorded interviews. My approach followed that recommended by David Silverman, who citied George Psathas in advising that it is more useful to begin research with 'unmotivated looking' and

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[37] Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, "Introduction: Awkward Spaces, Productive Places," Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, eds., *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xi.

[38] Hume and Mulcock, "Introduction," xii.

[39] Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 1996, 14.

from there establish a series of discussions, rather than working to one hypothesis.[40] This advice was reassuring when I was faced with the daunting challenge of embarking on a substantial piece of research that aimed to address an identified problem, but without a hypothesis about either the specific cause of that problem or its solution.

In maintaining an open and flexible approach to my study, I was able to reflect on some of the developments that had occurred over the course of what turned out to be the extended duration of this research. I was thus able to include innovative historic dress displays that had opened during the later phases of my research within my discussions. The cut-off for this study was 2014, a date that was chosen to acknowledge two texts that were published that year: Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye's *Fashion Exhibitions: Before and After 1972* and Marie Riegels Melchior and Birgitta Svensson's edited compilation of essays, *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice*. Both studies were developed in parallel to my own, and were published in the late stages of my writing process. Not to make reference to them in this thesis, however, would have meant denying the dynamic and evolving nature of my chosen area of study.

Having outlined the structure of my research, I will now analyse my key research methods (participant observation, interviews and the use of archives) in a more in-depth discussion.

Research Methods

I relied heavily on participant observation during Year 1. The majority of the methodological literature views participant observation to be more than a mere method; it is, in Silverman's encapsulation, a 'basic resource of all social

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[40] David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, Fourth Edition (London: Sage, 2013) 37.

research'[41]: in order to understand the world one is attempting to study, one must be part of it. Participant observation thus describes a mode of 'being there' in which the researcher uses his or her social self to conduct primary research. In more straightforward terms, participant observation requires researchers to simultaneously observe and participate in both the routine and extraordinary activities they document. Working alongside Lambert, the gallery assistants, the digitisation officers and the gallery volunteers, I undertook a variety of tasks, notably conducting an audit of the gallery's stock of mannequins and digitising the entire archive of installation images, covering nearly all of the gallery's past displays. I occasionally attended meetings and was often privy to conversations about the redevelopment that was taking place around me.

During the second year, in the weeks prior to the gallery reopening, I assisted in any way I was needed in preparing for the reopening. While some of these mundane activities at times felt professionally regressive, the individual tasks themselves were not always what was important: simply 'being there' and taking part in the gallery's life over an extended period of time resulted in enculturation. These activities cumulatively contributed to my explicit understanding of both the gallery's daily practices and the work involved in the redevelopment process. Perhaps more importantly, enculturation also helped me develop an understanding of the tacit aspects of the gallery's culture, which Kathleen and Billie DeWalt recognise cannot easily be 'articulated or recorded but that can be mobilised in subsequent analysis'.[42] The social experiences I had during the first year were central to the shape of my study of the gallery. There were times during that year when I was treated by some staff members more like a peer than an external researcher. I am aware of the need to be sensitive about including information that is offered up in 'unanticipated self-disclosure' situations.[43] Casual conversations with staff and volunteers, however,

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[41] David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, Fifth Edition (London: Sage, 2015) 235.

[42] Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, Second Edition (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira, 2011) 4-5.

[43] Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 1996, 166.

conveyed much tacit information about how the gallery operated and was internally perceived. Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson note that this 'natural' story is different from narratives that are gleaned from more formal interview scenarios.[44] For example, one off-hand comment that a staff member made about the value of a fresh coat of paint as a group of staff painted the gallery shop a day before the opening was more incisive than many of the official comments made to me about the redevelopment from managerial-level staff. This perceptive remark, implying that these newly painted walls wouldn't fundamentally change the gallery, cut to the core of this study. The comment raised a question that runs throughout this thesis: What is more important in developing practices—physical changes to the display environment, or attitudes? If, as the commenter implied, the latter is more important, how can ingrained attitudes be affected to incite deep structural change of practices?

At this point I will turn from the value of informal discussion to the role of formal interviews. During the first year, I conducted interviews with as many of the gallery's staff, past and present, as I was able to reach (ten people in total).[45] Through interviews with Lambert and later the gallery's current director, Maria Balshaw, I gained insight into the strategic aims of the redevelopment. Interviews with conservators, assistants and past curators gave me a more in-depth understanding of how the gallery's display methodologies evolved: how each curator negotiated the structures of the gallery, and the wider field in which he or she operated. Their individual narratives, however, often challenged one another's. Sandra Jovchelovitch and Martin Bauer suggest that the 'difference in perspectives may establish a different configuration in the selection of events'.[46] This poly-vocality, however, as Jovchelovitch and Bauer state, is one reason that interviews

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[44] Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, *Making Sense of Qualitative Data* (London: Sage, 1996) 56.

[45] Maria Balshaw; Irene Bobkiewi; Vanda Foster; Chrystal Hart; Anthea Jarvis; Miles Lambert, Sarah Levitt; Philip Sykas; Jane Tozer; Christina Walkley.

[46] S. Jovchelovitch and M. Bauer, "Narrative Interviewing," M. Bauer and G. Gaskell, eds., *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound* (London: Sage, 2000) 67.

are such a good resource for studying specific events.[47] This is a clear feature of my research: the multiple points of view of the Gallery of Costume's staff converged into a nuanced portrait of the development of the gallery's practices.

In Year 2, during a research trip to New York City, I conducted interviews with Harold Koda, Chief Curator at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Steele, Director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). This trip was the first opportunity to step back from the Gallery of Costume and to view its practices within a broader international context. At this time, I had not yet finalised my choice of comparative exhibitions. Both the direction and content of these interviews were thus wide open; I aimed to gather information on three general points. Firstly, I wanted to develop a sense of the broad issues and ideas that had shaped these curators' display practices. Secondly, I wanted to discover their perceptions about both the problems that faced historic costume curation and the potential future direction of the field. Finally, I hoped to ascertain their opinions about which forms innovative display practices were taking place at the time. In Year 3, I carried out more focused interviews with curators about the specific exhibitions that would then form the comparative case studies of practice.

All of these interviews followed Keith Punch's description of the unstructured interview: a non-standardised discussion that is both in-depth and open-ended.[48] Using alternately narrow and open-ended questions is an effective way to achieve both breadth and detail in an interview. I thus followed Uwe Flick's advice by beginning with a 'generative narrative question'.[49] For example, I frequently opened interviews with Gallery of Costume staff with "Could you tell me about when you started working at Platt Hall?" The Year 2 interviews usually began: "Could you tell

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[47] Jovchelovitch and Bauer, "Narrative Interviewing," 2000, 67.

[48] Keith Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches,* second edition (London: Sage, 2005) 172.

[49] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 1998) 99.

me about the exhibition programme of your museum?" Following this initial content-mapping question, I could then pick up on elements of the interviewees' responses when I asked them questions that were more closely directed towards my thematic agenda. The narrow interview questions arose from my research into the Gallery of Costume's archives and readings of texts written by curators about their practices. For example, *Keeper's Reports* at the Gallery of Costume provided detailed vignettes of curators' ambitions for the upcoming years; referring to specific points in these reports, I asked how the curators' ideas were received by the gallery's management and put into practice.

From this point about the value of textual sources in directing interview questions, I now move the discussion to the use of archives. The Gallery of Costume's archives contains curators' annual reports from the opening of the gallery in 1947 up until the mid-1980s; meeting minutes; internal and external correspondence; Buck's lecture notes; notes she took at conferences she had attended and on a research trip to Scandinavia she had undertaken; exhibition and collection research notes; drafts of articles written by curators; and pre-publication book manuscripts. Manchester Art Gallery's archives housed higher-level correspondence, such as directors' memos and correspondence, and strategic documents such as funding bids and planning documents. Altogether, this historical evidence provided a comprehensive overview of how particular curators had operated: what they did, why they did it and in what conditions they did it. The Gallery of Costume's archives in particular provided a rich source of information for my research and prompted, along with my experiences at the gallery, my research questions and hypothesis. While many of these documents offered insight into the views and ideas of past curators and how they approached curating exhibitions, the archive also presented many unanswered questions. For example, the archives contain a file of correspondence between Buck and Dr Cunnington, who at that time was an advisor to the gallery. Many of their letters were written during the period in which Buck was forming the gallery's first displays; she often wrote to Cunnington with questions about the collection that sometimes went unanswered, or whose answers are not saved. Other parts of the

organisation's archive were similarly vague or incomplete. MAG houses a large quantity of documents related to the plans to find new premises for the Gallery of Costume in the 1990s. It appears it was an issue on which many people had an opinion. These documents, however, are not categorised in any particular order, so it was very difficult to piece together a complete and cohesive narrative of this episode in the gallery's life.

I will now turn to the structure of this thesis and outline each chapter, and will discuss how the contents arose from my research process.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis is comprised of five thematic chapters, each of which explores a distinct but interrelated aspect of the physical and conceptual structures on which historic dress is exhibited. In my discussion and analysis, I aim to draw out the specific issues that underlie the costume museum's methodologies in relation to contemporary display practices. The purpose of each chapter is to propose a critical perspective on my archival research and my experiences—both tacit and explicit— that I accumulated while embedded at Platt Hall. The starting point of each chapter is a specific episode or text uncovered during my time at the Gallery of Costume. These episodes or texts introduce the broad theme of each chapter, each of which then draws on a range of key texts, theoretical concepts and related examples of exhibitions in museums, primarily in Britain, but also those in North America and Japan, to probe this issue in greater depth. The scope of this project does not permit the inclusion of every exhibition that has taken place at the Gallery of Costume; the comparative exhibitions included here are likewise deliberately selective. In response to any potential criticism of omission, I have chosen examples that I consider to be either representative, in the sense that they exemplify the specific issue discussed in each chapter, or significant, in that they provide a new approach or perspective on the issue. While the comparative exhibitions I have chosen to

discuss encompass a wide timespan, all fall within the period in which the gallery has operated.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for this study with a historical account of the development of the Gallery of Costume's display methodologies. The chapter unfolds chronologically, describing and analysing the practices of each successive curator, from Buck to Lambert. The chapter has two foci. The first attends to the agency of these individuals within the institution; the discussion explores how these curators negotiated the fixed and fluid, manifest and intangible boundaries that surrounded their practices, such as the collection, the building's internal spaces, the legacy of their forebears and the political agendas that directed their practice. The second aim of the chapter is to contextualise these curators' methodologies within the wider field of practice. I thus discuss their exhibitions in relation to museological agendas, the evolving academic discipline of dress history, and key exhibitions in Britain, Japan and the United States.

Chapters 2 and 3 form a pair, providing complementary explorations of how dress curators can give form to the bodies and personalities associated with dress. The questions that shape the structure of Chapter 2 were prompted by the audit of the gallery's mannequins I had conducted during Year 1. This exercise uncovered a variety of corporeal simulacra, ranging from fully lifelike human figures to dressmakers' bust forms. The mannequins, viewed in light of the photographic evidence of how they were adapted and used in the gallery's display, provoked a series of questions. Firstly, why, over the past seventy or so years, have curators employed so many different types of reconstructed human bodies at the Gallery of Costume? The variety of forms stored at Platt Hall clearly indicates that mannequins, much like the clothing they display, are subject to fashionable trends. What do the changes to the form of these body types indicate about curatorial attitudes? The modifications that various curators have made to lifelike mannequins suggest a particular dissatisfaction with this type of form. I made an eerie discovery during this audit: a box of realistic wax heads that Buck had removed from

commercial mannequins. This discovery raised more questions: Why are mimetic mannequins so apparently problematic to certain curators? It also raised another question related to this one: What is the effect of lifelike mannequins, or at least their effect as curators perceive it? If the effect of these wax heads on me was so disconcerting, how could I then explain and theorise my emotive reaction to them?

In attempting to answer these questions, Chapter 2 problematises the evolution of the museum mannequin and examines how the use of mannequins was made to act out curators' ideas about the relationship between dress and the body. This investigation relates curators' propositions about mannequins to various cultural and philosophical debates that have framed the fashionable body. Because no one theory or idea adequately explains the attitudes of curators towards body substitutes, I have drawn upon a range of theories to illuminate and probe curators' perspectives. These theories include Sigmund Freud and Ernst Jentsch's interpretation of the 'uncanny', Michel Foucault's ideas about the culturally constructed body and Walter Benjamin's writings on the commoditised body.

Chapter 3 extends Chapter 2's conclusions about audiences' imaginative relationship with body simulacra into an exploration of curators' strategies for imaginatively animating the lives that are associated with worn dress. The chapter opens with an analysis of the Gallery of Costume's redisplayed twentieth-century gallery titled *From Suffragettes to Supermodels*, which Lambert curated for the reopening of the gallery in 2010. The display related a chronological overview of twentieth-century dress to individual women of style and invented archetypal figures. Lambert's curation of the display raised the question of how sartorial identities and biographies are reconstructed (by curators) and received (by audiences) within exhibitions of dress. Drawing on museological theory about the relationship between memory and materiality, and recent fashion studies on the construction of women's sartorial identities, the chapter theorises the interactions that occur between curator, audience and exhibit that reconstruct the characters, both real and imagined, that are associated with worn dress. I relate these theoretical hypotheses to examples of

'wardrobe' exhibitions, in which persona and biography are presented either as a fluid concept or in which they are contextualised objectively and accurately. Arguing that the personalities associated with dress are mediated by audiences' imaginative engagement with exhibits, I argue that the ability of the display to summon the characters associated with dress depends upon curators' acknowledgement and facilitation of this process.

Chapter 4 addresses the Gallery of Costume's construction of history. This discussion was initially instigated by an intervention staged at the Gallery of Costume in 2012. *An Age of Elegance?*, curated by the *More than Fashion* collective, aimed to challenge the primary narrative of the eighteenth-century display of luxury dress by endowing a fictive voice to those historic personages that were marginalised in this account of the period. Extending the previous chapter's argument that all historical narratives to some degree are mediated and authored reconstructions, Chapter 4 deconstructs traditional costume museums' displays' claims of historical certainty and objectivity. I begin by contrasting Buck's chronological displays with her peer Doris Langley Moore's tableaux. I will argue that although their methodologies differed, both curators were united in their desire for historical coherence and authenticity. The concept that exhibitions can be and should be authentic was upset by *Spectres*. Thus, I examine this exhibition and the challenges it poses for more mainstream costume curation. In the final part of this chapter, I will investigate recent costume exhibitions that have reflexively engaged with both traditional approaches to constructing history and the historiography that informed *Spectres*.

The final chapter steps back somewhat from the practices of the Gallery of Costume (in preparation for the concluding chapter) in order to consider what alternative methodologies might have been developed had the gallery evolved according to Dr Cunnington's original ambitions. In 1937, Cunnington outlined his vision for a costume museum that would function as a 'centre of living art, not a mausoleum of

old clothes'.[50] The suggestion that the traditional costume museum is in opposition to the phenomenon of fashion has been reiterated most recently by Steele, who stated: 'If fashion is a "living" phenomenon—contemporary, constantly changing, etc.—then a museum of fashion is *ipso facto* a cemetery of dead clothes'.[51] This dialectic, central to the display of dress, requires further explanation. In the final chapter I thus aim to address three questions: What does it mean to recover a living experience of fashion? How can exhibitions of dress express fashion's lived experience? And how can the display practices of the fashion industry influence the museum, and vice versa? In order to probe these questions, Chapter 5 explores experimental display practices that attempt to revive dress as a living concept of fashion. The second half of the chapter explores the other side of Cunnington's dialectic: practice that seemingly reconciles the living experience of fashion with the museum's perceived role as a memorialising medium.

In the conclusion, I propose a framework upon which reflexive exhibitions of dress could be built. This framework draws together the themes of this thesis and represents the issues that frame dress exhibitions in the twenty-first century. It takes the form of a series of overlapping statements that are intentionally open to interpretation and which could be translated into practice in numerous ways. I present my insights into these statements (which have been drawn from my research findings) and close this thesis by building these statements into a theoretical exhibition for the Gallery of Costume.

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[50] C. W. Cunnington, "Letter to the Editor," *Times* (26 November, 1937), Cunnington Scrapbooks, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[51] Valerie Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More than a Clothes Bag," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998) 334.

Chapter 1: The Historical Development of the Gallery of Costume's Display Methodologies

'The treatment of costume as a subject for exhibition will vary according to the character of the museum and the size and range of the collection, and, of course, the ideas of the curator.'
—Anne Buck, 1951

Methodologies for displaying dress are, as Buck, the gallery's first curator, implied in 1951, dependent upon on the mission, the strategic aims, and the collection of the particular type of the museum, but, as Buck recognised, curators' ideas are central to the shape of museums' display methodologies. This chapter outlines the development of the Gallery of Costume's display methodologies by addressing how each curator negotiated the boundaries identified by Buck—'the character of the museum' and the 'size and scope' of its collection—when implementing their ideas about the display of dress. This chapter thus attends to the agency of the curator. This historical account of the development of the gallery of Costume's display methodologies progresses chronologically. It will describe and analyse the display practices and legacy of each successive curator, starting with Buck and ending in 2014 with Miles Lambert, the gallery's current curator. Having established how and why each curator displayed the collection as they did, this chapter will contextualise these curators' methodologies within the wider field of practice. I thus discuss their exhibitions in relation to museological agendas, the evolving academic discipline of dress history, and key dress exhibitions in Britain, Japan and the United States.

It is unsurprising that Buck highlighted the centrality of curatorial ideas in the development of institutional display methodologies—she had strongly held ideas about how dress should be displayed that she implemented at the Gallery of Costume. Under Buck's direction, the gallery developed into what Chrystal Hart,

her assistant from 1963-1965, termed Buck's 'fiefdom'.[52] I begin by briefly examining the significance of Hart's statement by outlining the Gallery of Costume's place within the hierarchy of Manchester City Galleries.

The Organisational Structure of the Gallery of Costume

The Gallery of Costume is located in Platt Hall—a Palladian-style house built in 1762-64 in Rusholme, a Manchester suburb (Fig.1.1). The gallery is part of the organisation known as Manchester City Galleries (MCG) which comprises the Manchester Art Gallery (MAG), the Gallery of Costume and the Conservation Studio in Queens Park. MCG is part of the Manchester City Council and thus they draw their core funding from the council. Under Buck's direction the gallery operated largely independently. Hart has compared Buck's management of the gallery to that of a chatelaine of an eighteenth-century house.[53] Hart made this assertion in deference to Buck's forceful authority over the gallery. David Baxendall, Director of MAG until 1952 entrusted Buck to develop and direct the gallery with complete independence.[54] However, as Anthea Jarvis, the gallery's curator from 1986-2006 notes, 'Buck was so active at making things happen, it set a precedent that maybe wasn't positive down the years.'[55] She recalls that 'if we wanted things done, we had to do it ourselves'.[56]

Buck worked her way up into a position of influence within the hierarchy of Manchester's cultural services. By the time of her retirement in 1972 she held the position of Deputy Director of Manchester Art Gallery. In this role, she secured a prominent, but independent, status for the Gallery of English Costume. While this

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[52] Chrystal Hart, *Personal Interview*, 30 July 2009.

[53] Hart, *Interview*, 2009.

[54] Buck submitted yearly keeper's reports to the Art Gallery Committee and attended weekly meetings at the City Gallery, but planned exhibitions and alterations to Platt Hall without intervention from Baxendall or his successor Loraine Conran.

[55] Jarvis, *Personal Interview*, 27 August 2009.

[56] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

allowed her to operate with a high degree of independence, her positioning of the Gallery left it in a somewhat precarious position following her retirement. None of Buck's successors held the same high-level managerial position as she had. Without Buck acting as an advocate for the gallery at a directorial level, the gallery became disconnected from the MCG's strategic priorities and resources—such as access to technicians and funding. All the past curators that I have interviewed have drawn attention to their lack of access to the funding necessary to produce displays. Jarvis summarises their views: 'One thing that was always really difficult was money, one was ingrained into the attitude that everything had to be scrounged and recycled and done with the least possible expenditure.'[57]

Director Maria Balshaw addressed the dislocation of the Gallery of Costume from MAG when she took up the post in 2011 with a number of initiatives, notably 'single programming'. Single programming ensures that exhibitions of a single subject, artist or designer take place simultaneously in both galleries, and in so doing aims to more equally distribute resources across the organisation. Balshaw has also implemented a more structured approach to exhibition planning: Programme Planning meetings take place three times a year in which curators propose their ideas for exhibitions to Balshaw, who makes the final decision as to which are approved or rejected.[58] Clearly, as consequence of Programme Planning, the curator of the Gallery of Costume now has less creative control over the gallery than his predecessors had, although this is offset by greater access to MCG's resources and budgets. Since 2014, the Gallery of Costume has had a dedicated budget of £10,000 per annum for its temporary exhibitions. One could argue that there is little benefit in having completely free reign over an exhibition programme unless you have the money or resources to stage the exhibitions you want to put on.

With Balshaw's appointment, Manchester City Galleries partnered with the Whitworth Art Gallery and Manchester Museums, who are both part of the

[57] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[58] Miles Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 20 January 2016.

University of Manchester, to share funding, resources and staff—notably Balshaw, who is director of both MCG and the Whitworth. The staffing structure of the Gallery of Costume has fluctuated over the years. In 1947, Buck was the gallery's sole member of staff; three years later she was joined by an assistant curator, a secretary and a conservator. Over the years these support positions were gradually reduced.[59] The only consistent staff member at the Gallery of Costume has been its curator, who organises the gallery's permanent and temporary displays.[60] He or she is supported in this endeavour by MCG staff and resources, notably by the conservation team who are based at Queen's Park. Since 2014, the conservation studio has employed a Costume Mounting Assistant, Sarah Walton, who prepares exhibits for the dress displays at the Gallery of Costume and MAG.[61] Since 2013, the Whitworth's Textile Conservator Ann French has been seconded to give advice to the gallery and oversee the mounting of exhibits. Having outlined in broad terms how the gallery operates and is funded, I turn my attention to the gallery's collection.

1930 – 1947: The Cunnington Costume Collection

The Gallery of Costume's opening displays were drawn primarily from the collection of dress assembled by Drs Cecil Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington that the Manchester Corporation was in the process of acquiring in 1947. The previous year, part of the Cunningtons' collection had gone on display at the Manchester Art Gallery as a way of highlighting the city's ambition to purchase and permanently display the collection. The foreword to the exhibition catalogue, 'The Cunnington Costume Collection and Its Future', stated that 'the collection is

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[59] When Lambert was promoted from Assistant Curator to Curator, in 2006, the assistant position went unfilled. Following Conservator Philip Sykas departure in 1994 the post was deleted. In 2016, two members of staff are based at the Gallery of Costume: Lambert and Gallery Development Officer Rosie Gnatiuk.

[60] The Curator of Costume, in 2014, is managed by the Senior Curator.

[61] The position was made permanent in 2015.

well known as the most comprehensive and remarkable of its kind. That such a collection could ever be formed again is most improbable'.[62] The collection contained roughly 3,500 items of clothing, mainly women's dress of the nineteenth century, and a large archive of research materials: 15,000 photographs; fashion plates; journals; catalogues and books. While the collection was undoubtedly larger than other private collections, it was unbalanced in its content, and it represented questionable theories that were bound to early twentieth-century attitudes. When Buck developed her display methodologies, she had to take into account not only the type of material in the collection, but also the collection's conceptual legacy. In the next part of this chapter, I will thus examine in-depth the formation of the Cunnington collection and the ideas it represented. This investigation will address firstly, the question of how and why the collection evolved as it did? And, secondly, the implication of Cunnington's collecting policies, and the theories he attached to the collection, for the gallery's future displays.

The Cunningtons began collecting in 1930 with the aim of establishing dress as a serious, academic subject. General practitioners by profession, both were avid collectors and amateur dress historians. While dress scholars have acknowledged Phillis Cunnington's important contribution to dress history research,[63] it was her husband who was primarily responsible for shaping the content and scope of the collection. The collection was formulated to represent his particular ideas about the development of dress history. The Cunningtons' stimulus to collect was the Victoria & Albert Museum's (V&A's) perceived lack of interest in fashionable dress. After purchasing a nineteenth-century dress from an antique shop, the pair took the dress to the V&A for assessment, but, according to Cecil Cunnington, the museum's

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[62] "Foreword: The Cunnington Costume Collection and Its Future," *The Catalogue of English Costumes from the Cunnington Collection.* Exhibition at Manchester City Art Gallery (1946).

[63] See Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Jane Tozer, "The Cunningtons' Interpretation of Dress," *Costume* 20 (1986) 1-17; and Anthea Jarvis, "An Agreeable Change from Ordinary Medical Diagnosis: The Costume Collection of Drs C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington," *Costume* 33 (1999) 1-11.

experts merely provided an approximate date for the dress.[64] The Cunningtons thus set about tracing the development of fashion. They collected large numbers of garments and contextual sources that they closely studied in order to track and describe the stylistic development of dress over the course of the nineteenth century.

Cunnington's research, however, did not end with descriptive period histories. In his own words, his objective was to discover 'why changes in popular taste should have taken place'.[65] He believed dress to be a form of psychological and social evidence. This was a novel idea for the period, during which, as Lou Taylor notes, academia and museums mostly dismissed dress as a feminine frivolity.[66] The few museums that did collect dress—notably the V&A and the London Museum—valued dress for its artistic qualities and fine craftsmanship, or for its associations with notable historic personalities. Cunnington criticised the limitations of both approaches.[67] He theorised that the changing shape of women's dress reflected what he termed 'Feminine Attitudes… those unconscious postures of mind and body'.[68] (Capitalisation retained from the original.) For example, he inferred an 'Attitude of Maternal Craving' in the bustles of 1880s dresses, the dragging draperies symbolising a small child.[69] A woman's subconscious sexual instincts were central to Cunnington's theories as the driver of changes in fashion.

Cunnington was not alone in his search for the meaning of fashion. Starting in the 1890s, psychologists began to seek explanations for the changing style of women's dress.[70] Sigmund Freud, G. S. Hall, W. I. Thomas, H. C. Sanborn and J. C. Flügel

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[64] C. W. Cunnington, *Looking over My Shoulder* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961) 129.

[65] C. W. Cunnington, *Looking over My Shoulder*, 1961, 131.

[66] Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 2004, 61.

[67] C. W. Cunnington, "The Scientific Approach to Period Costumes," *Museums Journal* 47.7 (October 1947) 125.

[68] C. W. Cunnington, *Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Heinemann, 1935) 254.

[69] Cunnington, *Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century*, 1935, Chapter IX.

[70] See: Kim K. P. Johnson, J. Torntore and Joanne B. Eicher, eds., *Fashion Foundations: Early Writings on Fashion and Dress* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

were the first to ascribe psycho-sexual interpretations to different forms of dress.[71] Cunnington considered himself to be a maverick who was in the forefront of academic research, although he did acknowledge that the growing body of psychologically grounded literature on fashion bestowed academic credibility upon his own theories and collection.[72] His peer James Laver confirmed that Cunnington's theories were 'a valuable contribution to social history, even to that new science of socio-psychology or psycho-sociology which is only just beginning to take shape and mark out its territories'.[73] Laver's 1948 review of Cunnington's catalogue of texts acknowledged that his 'startling' and 'provocative' studies caught the attention of both the academic community and the public.[74] Laver shared Cunnington's belief that sexual instincts were the motivation for women's consumption of fashion. In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist dress historians, notably Elizabeth Wilson and Jane Tozer criticised what they believed to be Cunnington's objectification and trivialisation of women.[75] At the same time, they also recognised the fact that his ideas reflected the preoccupations of most male fashion historians during the interwar period.

Cunnington built his theories upon a collective view of society. His ideas aligned with a growing body of innovative research that was shaped by Freudian methods of interpreting communal behaviour.[76] Echoing Freud, Cunnington asserted that

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[71] See: J. C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930); G. S. Hall, "Early Sense of Self," *American Journal of Psychology* 9 (1897–1898) 351-395; for a discussion of how Freud's theories illuminate fashion behaviour, see Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: The Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); W. I. Thomas, "The Psychology and Modesty of Clothing," *American Journal of Sociology* 5 (1899) 246-262.

[72] C. W. Cunnington, *Looking over My Shoulder*, 1961, 110.

[73] James Laver, "Cunnington on Clothes," *Time and Tide* (23 October 1948). Cunnington Scrapbooks, Gallery of Costume Archive, Platt Hall.

[74] Laver, "Cunnington on Clothes," 1948.

[75] Jane Tozer, "Cunnington's Interpretation of Dress," 1986, Elizabeth Wilson, ed., *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1985).

[76] For example, the Mass Observation project, set up in 1937. In 1922, Freud published his influential essay *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* [*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*]. See

'[fashion] reflects the idiosyncrasies of a community, that is to say, its tastes, prejudices, and ideas'.[77] His commitment to the principles of collective psychology spurred him on to a relentless search for what he termed the typical 'clothing worn by ordinary folk'.[78] 'Ordinary folk', in his definition, were middle-class and upper-middle class Victorian women. He excluded the working classes (male and female), middle-class and upper-class men and children of all classes, who together comprised the mass of society during the nineteenth century. Cunnington deliberately collected large quantities of similar garments of the same type and date that showed slight variations, from which he aimed to establish the type of dress worn by his chosen segment of society. His collecting policy set the Gallery of Costume apart from those of other museums that were collecting dress at the time, which led, in Tozer's view, to the gallery's 'special position … as a museum of the social history of English dress … rather than a museum of the art of fashion'.[79]

Unlike the V&A's or the London Museum's collections of unique, couture and court dress, the Gallery of Costume's founding collection was almost exclusively composed of standard dress, which Cunnington described as being 'fairly typical of the middle and upper classes without being ultra-fashionable'.[80] Valuing typicality above individuality, Cunnington deliberately discarded all of the biographical details about the objects he collected. In not recording the details of the makers and wearers of these garments, a considerable quantity of source material was lost, but in his view, the personal histories of period costumes added nothing to the pursuit of knowledge:

It is, no doubt, of some sentimental interest to know that a

Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1981).

[77] C. W. Cunnington, "The Scientific Approach to Period Costumes," 1947, 126-128.

[78] C. W. Cunnington, *Looking over My Shoulder*, 1961, 131.

[79] Jane Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1979, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[80] C. W. Cunnington, *Letter to Anne Buck*, 6 February 1938, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

particular pair of stays was once worn by Queen Anne, but unless

we know that she was a typical woman of her epoch and not

exceptional, her stays will tell us very little about the general run

of stays and even less about the general run of women of that

time.[81]

By denuding objects of their biographies, Cunnington was able to reconstruct them into archetypes of Victorian women of his own creation. In 1948, he published *The Perfect Lady*, the culmination of the hypothesis he had been refining since the early 1930s. For each decade, he tied examples of the fashionable silhouette found in his collection to a 'pen-portrait' that described the psychological development of the middle-class woman.

Although Cunnington's theories have been roundly criticised and discredited by modern scholarship, most dress historians do acknowledge his contribution to raising the profile of dress history.[82] He tirelessly promoted his collection and theories during the early 1930s, but by 1937 he would regretfully note that 'costume is not yet considered of sufficient importance in this country to have a museum dedicated to its study'.[83] He set himself the task of rectifying this situation, and by 1945 he had finally managed to secure a home for his collection. On 13 October of that year, Lawrence Haward, Director of Manchester Art Gallery, wrote to Cunnington, 'We would readily devote whole of Platt Hall … to your dress collection if it were offered to us'.[84]

The task of developing the new gallery fell to Buck, appointed Keeper of the Gallery

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[81] C. W. Cunnington, "The Scientific Approach to Period Costumes," 1947, 125.

[82] Cunnington, "The Scientific Approach to Period Costumes," 1947, 125

[83] Anne Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester," *Costume* 6 (1972) 72; Buck quoted C. W. Cunnington, *Englishwomen's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*.

[84] Lawrence Haward, *Telegram to C.W. Cunnington*, 13 October 1945, The Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall. Cunnington sold the collection to Manchester Art Gallery for £7,000.

of Costume in 1947, overseen by Cunnington, who acted as honorary advisor.

For twenty-five years, Buck guided the gallery with a confident, unwavering hand, developing it into an internationally acclaimed museum that transformed the public and academic perception of historic dress. The gallery's reputation and influence spread through Buck's authoritative lectures and writings on the curation of dress, and via the curators whom she mentored, many of whom went on to work in museums around the country. In the eyes of her contemporaries, Platt Hall is synonymous with Buck; Taylor remarked that the 1997 Costume Society conference, *Dress in History: Studies and Approaches*, organised to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the gallery, was equally a celebration of Buck's career.[85] In the first year of the gallery's life, however, Cunnington and his theories were still a significant presence.

Three high-profile events visually reinforced the relationship between Cunnington's theories and the Gallery of Costume. In 1947, the gallery was inaugurated by a visit from the delegates to the Museum Associations Conference. Cunnington set the context for the new gallery with a lecture titled 'The Scientific Study of Period Costumes'. He began the lecture with a visual demonstration of his research methods, followed by several proposals for how his approach could be translated into museum display methodologies.[86] He published *The Perfect Lady* the following year, illustrated with photographs staged in Platt Hall that featured contemporary models dressed in items from the collection, styled and posed to represent his exaggerated archetypes and their 'Feminine Attitudes'. In the same year, a newsreel called *Pathé Pictorials Looks at the Fashions of the Passing Years* (which was filmed in Platt Hall) did not promote the newly opened Gallery of English Costume, as one might expect, but rather "the famous Cunnington Collection preserved at Platt

[85] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 73.

[86] The lecture was published as an essay in *Museums Journal*. C. W. Cunnington, "The Scientific Approach to Period Costumes," 1947.

Hall".[87] While Cunnington appears to have hovered over his collection during the inception of the gallery, his ideas would turn out to be merely the starting point for the gallery's eventual growth and transformation.

In the next section of this chapter, I will explore the ways in which Buck managed Cunnington's theoretical legacy whilst creating the conceptual foundation for the new gallery. The section continues with an exploration of the methodologies that Buck developed for interpreting and displaying dress within Platt Hall; this discussion will focus upon how she negotiated the physical boundaries of the building.

1947 – 1972: Anne Buck

Buck brought several contemporary ideas about the purpose of museological displays to Manchester. The pioneering methodologies she developed at the Gallery of English Costume united the most advanced conservation and display techniques of the time (which she had observed at various Scandinavian museums during a research trip in 1939) with pedagogical and museological theory that had been developed during the late 1930s.[88] *The Markham Report*, published in 1938, had a profound influence on Buck's perspective and practices.[89] The report promoted the democratic role that museums could play in contemporary society. In light of the report's conclusions, Buck stated that a museum had to be 'a people's museum',[90]

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[87] British Pathé, *Pathé Pictorial Looks at the Passing Years* (London, 14 July 1947).

[88] The Gallery of Costume was the first British museum to arrange its displays according to the textile conservation standards that had been commonplace in Scandinavia since the 1930s. Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume,*"* 1972, 75.

[89] S.F. Markham, *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles* (Other than the National Museums) (Edinburgh, Carnegie Trustees, 1938). Markham's report to the Carnegie Trust outlined the progress of regional museums in the ten years since the *Miers Report* had been published.

[90] Catherine Pearson, *Interview with Anne Buck*, 16 May 2000. See: Anne Buck, "Textiles in Scandinavian Museums: Their Treatment and Methods of Display (Report of a tour made in Denmark

although she qualified her commitment to visitors with the belief that 'the object and the human being looking at it are factors of equal importance, but we, as curators, fulfill our duty to the person, by first taking thought and care for the thing'.[91] Objects were Buck's first priority, and so she shared Cunnington's commitment to establishing a museum that would raise the academic status of dress history through the close study of objects. Echoing Cunnington, in 1949 she stated:

> Recognition for the value of costume as an historical document
> has come only within the last generation. As an object of museum
> collection, preservation and study, it is comparatively new. When
> surviving specimens of costume are studied in the same way as
> other material evidence of civilisation, costume takes its place as
> part of the fabric of English history. It is as a centre for study that
> the Gallery of English Costume has been founded.[92]

Although Buck shared Cunnington's certainty of the value of dress as a historical and sociological document, she was not convinced by his psycho-sexual interpretations of fashion. She forcefully yet tactfully steered the gallery away from the theories and practices that had shaped his collection. While respecting Cunnington's emphasis on typicality, Buck broadened the collection's narrow focus on middle-class, nineteenth-century women's dress; she defined the new gallery's collecting policy thus:

> The principles on which Dr Cunnington had assembled his
> collection have been maintained, the collecting of the normal and

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and Sweden under the Carnegie Trustees Travel Grant)," *Museums Journal*, Supplement 40 (1940) 25-44.

[91] Anne Buck, *Presidential Address to the North Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries*, Central Library, Altringham, 25 February 1957, transcript circulated February 1958, 12.

[92] Anne Buck, *Costume in the Museum*, abstract of a lecture delivered to the Museums Assistants Group in Norwich (18 May 1949), Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

the typical, as well as fine examples, evidence of social and technical change, expressed by the dress of all levels of society.[93]

The 'typical' English dress that Buck collected included menswear, children's clothing and work wear of the specialised trades, in addition to fashionable silk dresses. Passionate about exploiting the gallery's regional and local position, she sought out several items before they became obsolete: shepherds' smocks, the shawls of Lancashire Mill girls and red woollen country cloaks. Following Buck's policy, the collection grew by gradual, planned acquisitions.

Unlike Cunnington, Buck understood the importance of collecting individuals' testimony alongside the garments, and she committed herself to researching the significance of how and why people consumed dress.[94] Buck was concerned with evidence, however, and not speculation. In 1958 she remarked, 'I am inclined to think that costume can be made to carry too much psychological and political significance'.[95] She firmly grounded her ideas about how and why fashion changes within the material world; her object-based research supported her opinion that fashion unfolds from one form to another, 'not as a matter of sudden willful change, but as a slowly evolving pattern'.[96]

Although Cunnington had been appointed as advisor to the gallery, surviving correspondence between the pair reveals that while she kept him up to date with activities at the gallery, his replies offered little in the way of advice or suggestions, despite his firmly held ideas about the presentation and interpretation of dress. The young curator was thus free to develop the gallery according to her own ideas.[97]

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[93] Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume," 1972, 72.

[94] Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume," 1972, 72.

[95] Anne Buck, *History in Costume*, lecture presented to the National Trust, 1958, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[96] Anne Buck, "History in Costume," *Journal of the Textile Institute* 1.5 (May 1951) 215.

[97] Anne Buck and C. W. Cunnington Correspondence files, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

She began her position under challenging circumstances: a collection with only the most basic documentation, mostly still in its packing cases; no staff; an insufficient budget; and a battered, empty building wholly lacking in proper display and storage spaces. In this next part of this chapter I will examine the ways in which Buck developed her display methodologies.

When Haward offered a home for Cunnington's collection, Platt Hall had only recently been released from wartime requisitioning.[98] The Manchester Corporation had purchased the house from the Worsley family in 1907. Shortly before it ceased to be a private residence, the family had stripped out many of the building's original features. By 1945, the house betrayed its former domestic function solely by the scale of its interior spaces. Only the dining room (Fig. 1.2) and the central stairway (Fig. 1.3 and Fig. 1.4) retained the house's rococo decorative scheme, the last remaining traces of the building's past life as an elegant Georgian home. Buck was sensitive to Platt Hall's domestic past and appreciated its home-like qualities. In 1955 she told BBC Woman's Hour:

> As we enter the house we feel at once its eighteenth-century grace;
> it is a house to live in; and although no longer a home in the usual
> sense of the word, it has become the home of the most personal of
> all human records, the garments once worn by the living bodies of
> the past.[99]

Buck deliberately chose not to highlight the domestic context of the building, however. In 1947, her primary concern related to the practicalities of converting an old house into a museum. From these inauspicious beginnings, Buck nurtured

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[98] Before the outbreak of war, Platt Hall was used an exhibition space for eighteenth-century furniture, art and costume from Manchester Art Gallery's collection.

[99] Anne Buck, "Fashions of the Centuries," *Woman's Hour*, BBC Radio 4, London, 14 October 1955. Transcript held in the Gallery of Costume Archive, Platt Hall.

the gallery into a 'beacon of excellence',[100] characterised by professional standards of research, storage, conservation and presentation. At Platt Hall, Buck pioneered the concept and practices of a modern costume museum.[101] The Gallery of English Costume aimed to elevate the academic stature of dress history. To this end, Buck adopted an evolutionary taxonomic display methodology, which was the dominant system of ordering knowledge in the museum at the time. This approach affiliated dress with the established disciplines of natural history and art history. In adopting this approach, Buck disassociated the gallery from the tableaux scenes that were associated with the spectacular popular displays of dress found in early twentieth-century world's fairs, waxwork museums and department stores.[102]

The assumption that underlies taxonomy, according to Susan Pearce, is that objects contain inherent knowledge that can be exposed through observation and arrangement.[103] Buck subscribed unreservedly to this opinion.[104] The function of display, in her analysis, was solely to direct visitors towards seeing and apprehending the 'essential quality' of the object for themselves. She was resolute in her opinion that 'display is a means, not an end in itself'.[105] Buck adopted the display techniques of the Nordiska Museum in Stockholm: headless mannequins; unobtrusive, neutral-coloured backgrounds; strong overhead lighting; and clear,

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[100] Zillah Halls, "Obituary, Mary Anne Buck, OBE 14 May 1910–12 May 2005," *Costume* 40 (2006) 124.

[101] Buck's displays were distinct from earlier museological dress displays in Britain—notably the V&A's and London Museum's displays—with their underlying, if unconscious, nineteenth-century imperialist agendas. See: Julia Petrov, "The Habit of their Age: English Genre Painters, Dress Collecting and Museums, 1910–1914," *Journal of the History of Collections* (2008) 1-15.

[102] See: Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford, University of California Press, 1982); Caroline Evans, "John Galliano: Modernity and Spectacle, 2002."

[103] Susan Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995) 111.

[104] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[105] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 12.

succinct labelling (Fig. 1.5). These interpretative frames placed the emphasis squarely upon the object, and thus, Buck believed, removed as far as possible 'the moving hand and the explaining mind of the curator'.[106] In her view, this display methodology allowed for an unmediated relationship between the visitor and the exhibit,[107] but her display frames, which drew upon the vocabulary of the art museum, regulated a particular, aesthetic mode of viewing objects. Though Buck believed her approach allowed objects to 'speak' directly to visitors, she recognised that the objects would be heard only if, as Pierre Bourdieu writes, visitors were culturally conditioned to be able to 'read' the displays.[108] Buck noted that 'behind the people who look at objects are all the people who do not look'.[109]

There are, Buck noted, many different ways exhibits can be arranged. She chose to organise the collection into a permanent display that would explicate a 'straightforward historical narrative' supporting her assertion that fashion changes in a gradual, orderly pattern (Fig. 1.6).[110] Buck had to reconcile her taxonomic methodology with Platt Hall's fixed boundaries. In order to create logical and coherent exhibition galleries, she physically exerted her conceptual frames upon Platt Hall's internal spaces, albeit with due respect for the eighteenth-century house's architecture. Between 1948 and 1965, she installed state-of-the-art display cases that were modelled upon those developed by the Nordiska Museum (Fig. 1.7). Buck attempted to naturalise these large cases within Platt Hall's interior spaces. On the ground floor, the cases appeared to be built into the wall cavities. False walls brought down from the ceiling flush to the top of the cases created this illusion (Fig. 1.8). In the first floor galleries, dado rails continued from the walls across the cases as a seemingly natural extension of Platt Hall's architecture (Fig. 1.9). Reflecting

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[106] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[107] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[108] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 1984).

[109] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 11.

[110] Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume," 1972, 75.

upon the renovations of Platt Hall at the end of her tenure in 1972, Buck
acknowledged the building's delicate ontological balance:

> … with its small but beautiful stairway and landing and decorated
> drawing room at the head of the stairs, [Platt Hall] makes a
> gracious background for such a collection, and in its use as a
> museum care and thought has been taken so that the demands of
> the museum display and storage do not intrude too discourteously
> into the pattern of the eighteenth-century house.[111]

It is clear, however, that the structures of the museum obscured the domestic
spatial rhythm of the building; Buck's cases dominated Platt Hall's interior
spaces. Vanda Foster, curator of the gallery from 1978-1979, remarked that the
cases were so big and formal that "there was not really a great feeling of the
house, apart from the beautiful staircase".[112] Buck's placement of the cases
within Platt Hall arranged the building's internal spaces into an organised
itinerary through an evolutionary, chronological sequence. Although she tried to
keep her knowledge implicit, in the act of selecting, placing and describing
objects she revealed her culturally and historically prescribed beliefs. Barbara
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that linear narrative displays allow space for only
one point of view: that of the curator.[113] Buck's assistants, Hart and Christina
Walkley, both recall that Buck rarely relinquished control of the displays, and
described her as being 'possessive' of the gallery.[114] Walkley recalls that on only
one occasion did Buck permit her to rearrange the contents of a case; this
occurred in Buck's absence, and she 'insisted on changing most of it when she

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[111] Anne Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester," first draft of an article
published in *Costume* 6 (1972), Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[112] Vanda Foster, *Personal Interview*, 12 June 2009.

[113] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1998) 21.

[114] Hart, *Interview*, 2009; Christina Walkley, *Email Interview*, 4 August 2009.

[115] Walkley, *Interview*, 2009.

got back'.[115] Buck's chronological narrative, concurrent with the historical frames established in the nineteenth century, supported a narrow evolutionary ideology of 'an authenticated past… as a series of stages leading to the present'.[116] This narrative excluded those garments that deviated from this path or whose evolutionary path ran in a different direction. It is with echoes of Cunnington's search for the 'typical' that Hart explains these displays to have been an exercise in representative fashion.[117] Thus, the red cloak, shepherds' smocks and mill workers' shawls that Buck had diligently collected found no place in the gallery's main displays. Recognising the limitations of her chronology, Buck organised temporary thematic displays that explored in detail a garment type, period or style. The majority of these displays focused upon middle-class women's fashion; only *The Countryman's Smock* (1962) developed her passion for working dress.

Some of Buck's best-remembered displays are those in which she addressed the social and cultural context of Victorian women's dress, replacing Cunnington's theories with more pragmatic interpretations; for example, *Fashions of One Lifetime* (1950), Buck's first temporary thematic exhibition, was a counter to Cunnington's *The Perfect Lady*. The exhibition covers the period 1800–1875, which Cunnington divided into four distinct epochs in his book, each characterised by a different style of dress that was representative of the aforementioned 'Feminine Attitude' that he ascribed to different types of women. Buck inverted Cunnington's proposition by displaying seven dresses that represented the clothes worn by just one hypothetical woman over the course of her lifetime (Fig. 1.10); her personalisation of Cunnington's specimens contradicted his archetypes.

In the 1950s and 1960s, museum professionals from all over the world came to study Buck's display techniques. In 1958, the Museums Association's *Handbook for*

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[116] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995) 75.

[117] Hart, *Interview*, 2009.

Museum Curators formalised Buck's approach as the professional standard.[118] Buck's purist, object-based approach had won the acceptance of dress as a historical document, and had succeeded in creating an authoritative voice for costume museums. Buck maintained a steadfast commitment to her methodologies, forged from pre-war concepts; in the latter part of her career she ignored the changing perceptions and expectations of museums that had been building in society since the early 1960s.

Like many museums in the post war period, the Gallery of Costume appeared to stand apart from popular culture. By the mid 1960s the museum profession recognised that this was an issue. In 1965, exhibition designer James Gardiner stated: 'Museums stand back in silent dignity, with blind windows, as places apart - for the separate occasion.'[119] His criticism was apposite for the gallery, whose newly installed black out blinds blocked Manchester's changing cultural geography from Buck's view. The government responded to the failure of museums to integrate into contemporary society with two policy reports: *The Rosse Report*, published in 1963, and Jenny Lee's white paper *A Policy for the Arts—The First Steps*, from 1965.*[120]* The Earl of Rosse and Lee both noted the general public's disengagement with museums' traditional, authoritarian identities. In Lee's view, museums retained 'a cheerless unwelcoming air that alienates all but the specialist and the dedicated.'[121] Lee urged the 'static museum' to transform into 'the living centre of a community.'[122] Both she and Rosse suggested that museums could achieve this position by embracing a broader role as entertainment and leisure facilities. In light of Rosse's and Lee's recommendations, the Museums Association entreated museums throughout Britain

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[118] Anne Buck, *Handbook for Museum Curators. Part D, Section 3: Costume* (London: The Museums Association, 1958).

[119] James Gardiner, "Communicating Ideas," *Museums Journal* 65. 1 (June 1965) 131.

[120] Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries* (London:HMSO, 1963); Cmnd. 2601, A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps (London: HMSO, Feb. 1965).

[121] Jenny Lee, "Government and the Arts," *Museums Journal* 66.2 (September 1966) 96.

[122] Lee, "Government and the Arts," 1966, 96.

to regenerate their displays so that they would appeal to the broader, general public. They called upon architects, professional designers and public relations experts for guidance; these specialists in contemporary culture highlighted what they perceived to be the problem of passive, object-based displays, which bore little relevance to people's experiences of everyday cultural representations.[123] It was no longer enough to simply present neatly packaged chunks of historical material before the public; instead, discovery and curiosity should become the objectives of display practice. Buck was aware of these developments and debates, which implied a reversal of the methodology she had dedicated much thought and effort into constructing. At this late stage in her career she was not to be convinced by new approaches. In an interview with Catherine Pearson, she expressed her disdain for these developments:

> In the 1950s, things were looking better, and then we had the educationalists wanting to take over, then… we had the display people hogging it, and that was all-important… we had a display consultant in, and they felt they ought to do research—well, what was the curator for? The museum profession was too, sort of, weak really, to fight all this, all these more showy professions coming into it.[124]

Buck would not heed Gardiner's advice to adjust her point of view and to 'become something of a showman'.[125] Instead, new costume museums accepted the challenge to develop methodologies that *did* respond to the cultural demands of the 1960s. In 1963, for example, Doris Langley Moore found a permanent home for the Museum of Costume in Bath's Assembly Rooms. Langley Moore's display approach aligned with the Museums Association's recommendations: 'My attitude… had more in common with that of an impresario at work on a

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[123] Gardiner, "Communicating Ideas," 1965, 131.

[124] Pearson, *Interview*, 2000.

[125] Gardiner, "Communicating Ideas," 1965, 132.

production than a pedagogue devising an academic course'.[126] Similarly, in 1964, Cecille Hummel created the Costume Galleries at Castle Howard, a stately home and major visitor attraction, to engage visitors who had no prior knowledge of (or interest in) dress.[127]

Whilst this activity took place around her in the first half of the 1960s, Buck carried on exactly as she always had, producing one thematic display per year. The gallery continued to attract visitors, averaging between 60,000 and 70,000 annually. However, in 1965 Gardiner suggested that museums' visitor figures remained stable because of the increase in the population, but that percentage of the population visiting museums decreased in this period.[128] In 1965, Buck took a four-year hiatus from producing temporary displays. She accounted for this situation by the prolonged absence (due to illness) of her conservator Miss Kay,[129] whose role it was to prepare garments for display. Walkley, however, recalls that, by this date, Buck 'was not particularly interested in changing the displays.'[130] Buck retired from her post in 1972, but not before she had appointed a successor to whom she could entrust her sacrosanct methodologies. Buck chose Walkley, her young assistant, who was relatively inexperienced but was well versed in the gallery's methodologies. Buck's template of curatorial practice thus passed down through Walkley, (curator from 1972 to 1977) to Walkley's assistant and successor Foster.

1972 – 1978: Vanda Foster & Christina Walkley

Buck's choice of successor ensured that her methodologies would remain more or less intact for nearly ten more years after her retirement. Overawed by their mentor and her legacy, the young curators established themselves as caretakers of

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[126] Doris Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," *Museums Journal* 60.1 (1961) 276.

[127] Cecille Hummel, "Castle Howard: A Costume Museum in a Stately Home," *Costume* (1968) 44.

[128] Gardiner, "Communicating Ideas," 1965, 131.

[129] Anne Buck, *Keeper's Report*, 1969, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall, Manchester.

[130] Walkley, *Interview*, 2009.

Buck's displays.[131] According to Foster, "it was very difficult to change or do anything. I think the further you got away from Anne Buck, the freer you got".[132] The permanent chronological displays remained in place and the exhibits rotated infrequently. Temporary displays continued to explore the historical development of fashion and garment types. As had been the case in Buck's time, many of Foster and Walkley's most distinctive exhibitions were those that critiqued the social and cultural issues surrounding Victorian dress. For example, *Ours the Needle* (1974) that uncovered the social, economic and class issues underlying Victorian dressmaking (Fig. 1.11).

Inevitably, many of the subjects that Walkley and Foster chose for their displays replicated those that Buck had explored fifteen to twenty-five years earlier. Buck had found fresh subject matter for every new display she had produced; her prodigious output and originality left her successors feeling that there was little room for any further innovation. Foster confirms this assertion: 'When I did get the job as Keeper, there was a part of me that thought "oh no, there's nowhere left to go"'.[133] Between 1972 and 1978, the gallery's temporary exhibitions were primarily restricted to a narrow and repetitive range of middle-class, female-orientated subjects.

During the 1970s and 1980s other costume museums took the lead in developing display methodologies. Taylor has outlined in detail the founding of new costume museums, and significant exhibitions in this period.[134] Rather than repeat her findings, I mention two key exhibitions as a comparative reference to the Gallery of Costume display methodologies. The first major exhibition of the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), opened in 1978, *Fashion in Evolution 1835–1895* (1980) combined

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[131] Walkley, *Interview*, 2009.

[132] Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

[133] Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

[134] See: Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 2004); 143,161-164, 189; Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 43-47.

rigorous scholarship with a dynamic style of presentation. The KCI collaborated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the creation of a new style of mannequin for this exhibition. The KCI mannequins, modeled after the fashionable body shapes of this period, had articulated joints that enabled them to be posed expressively, heads with stylised facial features, and paper wigs (Fig. 1.12). They were a completely different form of mannequin to Buck's headless bodies. Similarly, the V&A developed a new mannequin for the redeveloped Costume Court that opened with the exhibition *Four Hundred Years of Fashion* in 1983. The semi-realistic figures, loosely based on members of the Royal Family, were a departure from the mannequins previously used by the museum to display dress—headless dressmaker's busts—similar to Buck's forms. The introduction of (semi) lifelike mannequins in these institutions marked a development from Buck's displays approaches and signaled a change in curatorial attitudes towards the representation of the fashionable historic body in the museum. In Chapter 2, I will explore these mannequin forms in depth and the curatorial ideas and attitudes they represented.

In addition to the developments in the display of historic dress, the 1970s also witnessed the emergence of the spectacular contemporary fashion exhibition. In 1971, designer Cecil Beaton guest-curated *Fashion: An Anthology* at the V&A; a year later, the Metropolitan Museum of Art appointed former *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland to be the special consultant to its Costume Institute. Beaton and Vreeland cast aside Buck's reverence for the historical object, and they curated from their positions as creative fashion industry professionals. Both interpreted museum pieces by using the visual language of contemporary fashion styling. Their approaches broke down linear chronological narratives in order to celebrate the personal biographies of garments. One could well argue that they placed as much emphasis upon the staging of objects as on the objects themselves (Fig. 1.13).

The new genre of fashion exhibition changed the way that dress was exhibited and consumed. Over 90,000 people visited *Fashion: An Anthology*, making it one of the

most highly attended exhibitions ever staged by the V&A.[135] The gallery's attendance figures declined to an average of 36,000 visitors per year in the 1970s (although it should be noted that because Manchester cannot hope to match the numbers of visitors to more heavily visited London or New York, visitor figures may not be comparable). The attendance figures of the Museum of Costume, Bath— a museum whose displays were by no means as spectacular as Beaton's or Vreeland's exhibitions, but were nonetheless committed to directly engaging the general public—attracted over four times as many visitors as the Gallery of Costume during the same period[136] (similarly, it should be acknowledged that the Assembly Rooms, in which the museum was located, is a major tourist attraction). Newer costume museums and innovative dress displays alike overshadowed the Gallery of English Costume, which had neither the money nor the resources to compete. Loraine Conran, Director of MAG from 1962-1976 and his successor Timothy Clifford, who held the position from 1978-1984, displayed little interest in the gallery and offered no direction or extra funding to the curators, further enforcing Walkley and Foster's reliance upon old displays and approaches.[137]

During the 1970s, the gallery became increasingly isolated within both its local and national contexts. Whereas Buck had kept herself informed of any curatorial developments, Walkley and Foster were only distantly aware of contemporary display practice.[138] Foster states that a feeling of geographical isolation hampered their engagement with any new approaches.[139] It is also fair to say, however, that neither curator seemed to make an effort to reach beyond the physical and conceptual safety of the gallery and Buck's legacy. Some elements of Buck's display methodology were so firmly embedded that neither felt they could be

[135] Amy de la Haye, "*Vogue* and V&A Vitrine," *Fashion Theory*, 10.1/2 (2006) 129.

[136] In 1971–72, the Museum of Costume, Bath recorded 135,204 visitors; this figure rose to 151,442 in 1972–73. Figures quoted in Madeleine Ginsburg, "The Mounting and Display of Fashion and Dress," *Museums Journal*, 73.2 (1973) 54.

[137] Walkley, *Interview*, 2009; Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

[138] Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

[139] Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

challenged. Foster related that Buck's mannequins continued to be used because: "you did not put heads on dummies, that was just way you did it."[140] Both curators, however, cautiously diverted from Buck's purist aesthetic and developed simple tableaux. Headless forms were posed alongside pieces of furniture that were arranged to suggest room settings. The figures were jarring within these narrative scenes, however; decapitated bodies sat bolt upright in four-poster beds, and handless 'spectres' operated sewing machines (Fig. 1.11 & Fig. 1.14). Walkley's and Foster's experiments were an uneasy compromise between Buck's austerity and the dramatic approaches that were finding favour elsewhere at the time. Their tableaux displays can be read as a metaphor for the uncertainty that hung over the gallery in the 1970s, stuck as it was between the methods of the past and those gaining prominence in the present. At the end of the decade, Jane Tozer succeeded as curator; her first act was to reappraise the gallery's displays and suggest a radically different approach. The next section of this chapter examines Tozer's displays within the economic and academic context in which they were developed. This discussion aims to probe and explain the difference between her ideas and practice.

1979 – 1985: Jane Tozer

In 1979, her first year on the job, Tozer wrote an unflinchingly honest evaluation of the gallery. Her *Keeper's Report* of 1979 argued that the gallery's core chronological displays were 'bland and unchallenging', lacking a coherent and cohesive structure.[141] She concluded that an extensive renovation of both the building and the gallery's narratives would be necessary to attract the audience figures it should be capable of reaching.[142] Tozer's ambitious display proposal called for the disparate spaces of the gallery to be linked by ideas, themes and colours. She suggested that Buck's display methodologies be replaced with livelier forms of

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[140] Foster, *Interview*, 2009.

[141] Tozer, *Quarterly Report,* 1979.

[142] Tozer, *Quarterly Report,* 1979.

presentation.[143] In 1979, she embarked on talks with a London manufacturer in order to develop an adaptable, full-bodied mannequin that could be used to create tableaux. The arrival of an economic recession in 1980 halted Tozer's ambitions: with funds lacking, she did as her predecessors had done and modified Buck's display template without the aid of the technicians and designers she had requested.

Tozer rearranged all of the gallery's permanent chronological displays and explored the styles of certain periods within a thematic framework (Fig. 1.15); *Chic: 1920–1940* (1982) exemplifies Tozer's new methodology (Fig. 1.16). The display explored the social and cultural issues related to dress (of a broader social spectrum than was included in previous displays) over three decades. For this display, Tozer repainted the gallery's neutral walls bright orange and green. She experimented with labels that were written in a conversational tone and she positioned commercial retail mannequins (that she covered with thick black stockinette) into tableaux arranged like stages within the gallery's existing cases. But despite Tozer's best efforts— which involved the creation of painted backdrops and evocative props—it is evident that Buck's cases constrained Tozer's attempts at theatricality. Tozer made significant improvements to the gallery's visual presentation, but due to lack of resources, her displays were far from the polished practice of costume museums in London, New York, Paris and Kyoto.

Under Tozer's direction, the gallery continued to focus primarily on dress's relationship to social history, but with a stronger political and feminist emphasis than had been the case under her predecessors. Taylor recalls that Tozer was a progressive voice in the debates that emerged in the 1980s that called for more rigorous methodologies for interpreting dress.[144] She, like others, argued for the unity of traditional museums' object-based approaches with analytical academic interpretations. Tozer aligned the gallery with feminist interpretations of material culture, encouraged by the establishment of Women in Heritage and Museums

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[143] Tozer, *Quarterly Report,* 1979.

[144] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 68.

(WHAM) in 1984. She was part of a wave of feminist historians who challenged Cunnington and his contemporaries' anachronistic ideas—in 1984 she publically criticised the methods and philosophy behind the gallery's founding collection.[145] Her own collecting policy aimed to counterbalance Cunnington's focus on Victorian femininity. To encompass a broader definition of typicality Tozer collected prolifically—between 1970-1985 she acquired over 2,500 items. Her acquisitions included: work-wear; cheap, mass-produced separates; contemporary youth styles; unsold shop stock with the price labels still attached; and garments that were quickly becoming obsolete, such as elastic sanitary belts. Ironically, many of these were the 'ugly' and 'utilitarian' garments that Cunnington had urged museums to display forty years earlier.[146] Justifying her rapid expansion of the collection she stated: 'When 'typical' is collected, the curators job is to gather as much information— material, documentary, pictorial, oral —as possible for future reconstruction and reevaluation.'[147] Most of these acquisitions, however, remained in storage and Tozer's displays relied primarily on the objects that were collected by her predecessors.

A survey of the gallery's temporary displays between 1979 and 1985 reveals disparities between Tozer's feminist academic interpretations of the collections and the subject of her displays. While Tozer was researching the gallery's collection of nineteenth-century photographs depicting female workers, for example, the 'Wig Pit Brow girls' who controversially, for the period, wore trousers, she was exhibiting ballet costumes and wedding dresses worn by minor celebrities.[148] She justified

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[145] Her lecture to the Costume Society was published in *Costume*: Tozer, *Cunnington's Interpretation of Dress*, 1986.

[146] *Evening News* (4 June 1932), Cunnington Scrapbook 1932, Gallery of Costume Archive, Platt Hall.

[147] Jane Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall, Manchester.

[148] See: Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770-1870* (Powys, Wales: Laura Ashley, 1983) 121-140. The exhibitions were called *Dance into the Limelight* (1981); *Dresses to Remember* 1984.

these displays on the grounds that 'theatrical glitter and frivolity' maintained visitor figures in quieter months and cemented links with local businesses.[149] Throughout her tenure Tozer negotiated challenging economic conditions. The financial recession that occurred in Britain during the early 1980s put pressure on publicly funded institutions. When public funding for museums leveled off in this period, the *Museums Journal* encouraged museums to become more self-sustaining by forming partnerships with businesses and securing corporate sponsorship, and to channel their resources into crowd-pleasing exhibitions.[150] Tozer's displays reflected both the Museum Association's recommendations and the interests of academic community in which she was heavily involved. Tozer's exhibitions can be divided into two categories: those that employ a critical methodology, and those driven by commercial concerns. This latter type of exhibition, usually the result of a partnership with a local business, celebrated popular and light-hearted subjects, such as by the Arndale Centre sponsored display of Easter Bonnets in 1984.

The Fabric of Society, a collaborative project with British retailer Laura Ashley in 1983, was the gallery's most successful union of commercial concerns and scholarship; however, this project also communicated a disparity between the strong feminist voice Tozer projected in her writing and the narrative of her displays. In return for access to the collection, the retailer funded and printed a publication of essays titled *A Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770–1870*, written by Tozer and her assistant Sarah Levitt. The essays focused on garments from the gallery's collection, explored the production and consumption of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dress. The display of the same name did not reflect the complex, feminist interpretations of the book. Where the publication redressed the perception of female dress in its exploration of working women's

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[149] Jane Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1981, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[150] See: I Robertson, "Financing Museums: The View of a Professional," Museums Journal 85.3 (1985) 119-24; R. Wilding, "Financing Museums: Current and Future Trends," Museums Journal 85.3 (1985) 119-24.

clothing and bathing costumes, the display—a selection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century printed dresses and their contemporary replicas, created by Laura Ashley—told a singular narrative of middle- and upper-middle-class fashion (Fig. 1.17 & Fig. 1.18). The display (which was also funded by Laura Ashley) reflected the retailer's commercial interests. However, it was also typical of Tozer's temporary displays, which despite her passion for working class and regional dress, focused exclusively upon middle-class and upper-class female fashion.

The exact reason Tozer restricted her displays to such narrow subject mater is unclear, especially given the range of objects she collected. Tozer alludes to the constrictive nature of Platt Hall, and it is possible that the gallery's physical space did indeed constrict her curatorial vision. As early as 1979, Tozer suggested to Clifford that the gallery reach beyond the boundaries of Platt Hall with overspill exhibition spaces in the city.[151] In 1985, she had come to the conclusion that the gallery had outgrown Platt Hall.[152] In her *Keeper's Report* of that year, she stated that the galleries were too small to allow even a comprehensive historical overview of the development of mainstream fashion.[153] Thus, without disrupting this chronology, there was no way to explore in greater depth subjects outside of this narrative.[154] There was no real reason, however, why Tozer could not have trialed new display narratives within Platt Hall. Although space was limited, ultimately the decision as to how she used that space—what went into each case—was hers. Displays and interventions that took place at the gallery in the 2010s, discussed later in this chapter, demonstrate the potential to insert alternative narratives, of the type Tozer was interested in— political and social stories associated with Manchester's history as a textile production centre—into the gallery's display spaces, alongside its permanent narratives. Tozer's ideas, however, remained theoretical; her final strategic act

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[151] Tozer, *Keeper's Report*, 1979.

[152] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

[153] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

[154] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

before leaving her post in 1985 was to propose that the gallery should find new premises that would be able to accommodate broader social and political interpretations of the collection.[155]

Tozer proposed that the Gallery of Costume should become a 'Rag Trade Museum' or a 'Manchester Museum of Clothing and Textiles': museums that would explore Manchester's heritage as a 'Cottonopolis'.[156] She identified the Victoria and Albert Warehouse in the Castlefield Urban Heritage Park as a suitable site for such a place.[157] Julian Spalding, who replaced Clifford as Director of MAG in 1985, enthusiastically adopted Tozer's proposal. The move was thwarted, however, when the owner of the warehouse declined to lease the building.[158] Tozer left the gallery in 1985 (she left the profession of dress curation entirely to take up creative writing), in her absence the search for new premises petered out. Levitt presents an idealized picture of Tozer's achievements, asserting that she enacted a complete shift from the methodologies of the past.[159] Although Tozer was the gallery's first curator not to have been directly schooled by Buck, the latter's model of practice was so extensive that Tozer acknowledges that it was her primary reference.[160] I suggest that Tozer's practice represented a development from Buck's methods, rather than being a decisive break from the past. In 1986, Jarvis succeeded Tozer. The next section of this chapter explores how her display methodologies developed in line with the agendas of the New Museology and the 'new' fashion history. This investigation is interspersed with an examination of proposals that occurred in 1990 and 1999 for the Gallery of Costume to move out of Platt Hall and become a new form of fashion museum.

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[155] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

[156] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

[157] Tozer, *Quarterly Keeper's Report*, 1985.

[158] Julian Spalding, *Interdepartmental memo to the Director of Land and Property*, 12 February 1985. Manchester City Art Gallery Archives.

[159] Levitt, *Telephone Interview*, 13 June 2009.

[160] Jane Tozer, *Email Interview*, 26 July 2009.

1986 – 2006: Anthea Jarvis

During the first three years of her tenure Jarvis returned the gallery to its traditional practices, evidenced by displays such as *The Needle's Excellency* (1988) and *The Age of Elegance* (1988), both of which presented the stylistic development of dress and textiles within a chronological framework. In the next decade, however, the revival, and subsequent decline, of the idea to move the gallery out of Platt Hall encouraged Jarvis to reconsider the purpose of the gallery's displays. In 1990, Manchester City Council resurrected the search for new premises for the gallery. The *Museums Journal* reported that Platt Hall, which required a £2 million renovation and consumed around £100,000 a year in running costs, meant that the council had identified the building as a disposable asset.[161] Jarvis supported a move out of Platt Hall. Echoing Tozer, Jarvis states that the small size and scale of the building's internal spaces and its domestic associations physically and conceptually constrained her displays and limited the expectations of the museum's audiences.[162] In her words 'you can not do anything extraordinary, exciting and mind-blowing in this sort of environment.'[163]

Under considerable pressure from the council's leader to vacate Platt Hall, MAG Director Richard Gray considered alternative sites in the Castle Quay Development, a new retail and leisure complex that was marketed as a 'Fashion Forum'; Heaton Hall; and numerous convertible properties in the city centre. Gray also suggested an extension that would connect the art gallery to the Athenaeum.[164] All of these sites had practical issues that were weighed up in discussions between Gray and the

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[161] Lynda Murdin, "Poll Tax Hits Brighton and Manchester," *Museums Journal* 90.2 (February 1990).

[162] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[163] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[164] Richard Gray, Interdepartmental memo to the Director of Land and Property, 30 August 1991, Manchester City Art Gallery Archives.

council's Director of Land and Property.[165] Jarvis had strongly held views on the suitability of the proposed locations for the new museum (particularly Heaton Hall, another former domestic residence in which she saw Platt Hall's spatial problems "writ large").[166] However, she recalls that she was disconnected from the discussions that took place at directorial level.[167] Gray and the Director of Land and Property gave little consideration to how the physical and conceptual contexts of the different buildings they were considering would frame a new museum of dress. In 1996, however, the council abandoned the idea of moving the gallery. Platt Hall had failed to attract a buyer and, that year, the IRA detonated a bomb that devastated Manchester city centre: consequently, the council's priorities were diverted to the reconstruction of the city.

With no immediate prospect of moving out of Platt Hall, Jarvis refocused her attention on the Gallery of Costume's image and identity. In 1995, she conducted the gallery's first ever audience evaluation exercise. She used the information she gathered to propose, in 1997, a small-scale redevelopment aimed at making the building more visible and accessible. The following year (1998), Jarvis began a programme of small thematic exhibitions directed at particular demographics of the gallery's audience and its local community. The first of these exhibitions, titled *Cover Up* aimed to appeal to primary school children—who composed, at that time, the largest group in the gallery's audience. This display revealed the shortcomings of Buck's display structures (and arguably the attitudes of the curator who had installed them). Jarvis was unable to use smaller cases on the ground floor (Fig. 1.8), as their 'windows' were above a child's eyelevel.[168] It is Jarvis' opinion that the cases' design reflected Buck's lack of interest in younger school children.[169] The

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[165] The Castle Quay developers were only interested in leasing space for display. Splitting the storage and display functions of the museum was an unacceptable compromise in Jarvis' view. Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[166] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[167] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[168] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[169] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

exhibitions *Living Colour* (1996) and *Asia and Manchester Woven Together* (2002) were developed in collaboration with local community groups—in part, as a response to the council's mandate to engage with Rusholme's Asian community but equally, Jarvis acknowledges, because she was interested in Indian textiles.[170] These three displays were broadly in line with the New Museology—the theory and practices that had been developing since the late 1980s.[171] The New Museology called for museums to become sites of discourse and critical reflection, to embrace diverse viewpoints and share power (in constructing the meanings of objects) with their audiences. While Jarvis states that museological theory did not directly influence her perspective or actions, her evolving practice in the 1990s nevertheless reflects the period's discussions about the role of the postmodern museum.[172] Jarvis was, however, directly involved in debates that occurred across museums and academia, in the 1990s, about new approaches to studying dress history that had implications for the museological display of dress.

In this decade, dress studies developed a theoretical framework drawing on approaches from art history, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalytic studies, linguistics, cultural and media studies, consumption and economic studies and feminist theory.[173] These academic developments were, in part, prompted by the debates of the early-mid 1980s, in which the Gallery of Costume was, under Tozer's direction, a leading force. The 'new' fashion history moved away from the

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[170] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[171] Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

[172] Jarvis, *Interview*, 2009.

[173] The development of these approaches has been covered in some depth. See: Fiona Anderson, "Museum as Fashion Media," Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, eds., *Fashion Cultures: Theories Explorations and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2000) 374-376; Alexandra Palmer, "New Directions: Fashion History Studies and Research in North America and England," *Fashion Theory* 1.3 (1996) 297-312; Valerie Steele, "A Museum of Fashion is More Than a Clothes Bag," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998) Naomi Tarrant, *The Development of Costume* (London: Routledge, 1996); Lou Taylor, "Doing the Laundry? A Reassessment of Object-Based Dress History," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998) Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 72-85.

traditional descriptive histories of dress, typified by Buck's empirical studies based on the gallery's collection.[174] The value of the 'new' dress history in relation to 'old' dress history was debated at the 1997 *Dress in History: Approaches* conference held at the Gallery of Costume. Some of the papers presented at this conference were published in a special 'Methodology' issue of *Fashion Theory* that Jarvis edited.[175] In this volume, Jarvis aligned the Gallery of Costume with the 'new' fashion history. She stated: 'The methodologies of fifty years ago are no longer adequate structures for modern approaches.'[176] Key to these new approaches, as Fiona Anderson notes in 'Museums as Fashion Media', was an 'increased focus on the representation and the body and a shift of emphasis from production to consumption.'[177] Anderson relates how the approaches of the 'new fashion history' impacted the display of dress. I will not repeat her points, other than to note their implications for the Gallery of Costume's display practices.

Anderson believes that some curators' willingness to take on board the approaches of the 'new' fashion history in their displays was due to their familiarity with the New Museology, which was likewise focused on more sophisticated analytical approaches.[178] While I concur that the theoretical concerns of the New Museology and the 'new' fashion overlapped, I am wary of plotting causality between the two that directly attributes museological acceptance of the 'new' fashion history to the New Museology. The Gallery of Costume's developing practices contradict this causation. As previously stated, although Jarvis' displays reflected the concerns of the New Museology she acknowledged no knowledge of, or particular interest in the New Museology. It seems more likely that her concern with developing the

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[174] See: The Gallery of English Picture Book series published between 1948-1963; Anne Buck, *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* (London: Jenkins, 1961).

[175] *Fashion Theory*, Methodology Issue 2.4 (1998)

[176] Anderson, "Museum as Fashion Media," 2000, 374.

[177] Anderson, "Museum as Fashion Media," 2000, 374.

[178] Anderson, "Museum as Fashion Media," 2000, 375.

approaches of the 'new' fashion history at the Gallery of Costume was the reason why her displays aligned with the New Museology.

Following the approach of the 'new' fashion history, Jarvis steered the gallery's permanent displays away from stylistic evolutionary histories towards cultural explorations of dress, as exemplified by *New Woman: New Look* (1997) and *A Suit of Her Own* (2000). These displays examined the ways in which women expressed their growing independence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through their consumption of fashionable dress (Fig. 1.19). The displays united object-based study (that Buck had advocated) with critical analysis. Jarvis' methods of display, however, were much the same as her predecessors—the displays featured garments mounted on mannequins (the same type developed in 1983 by the V&A with manufacturer Derek Ryman). Like Tozer, Jarvis stated that the size and structure of cases installed by Buck prohibited more innovative approaches to expressing her displays' narratives. Experiments translating the 'new' fashion history's theoretical interpretations of dress into display structures were being developed in the late 1990s by the self-proclaimed 'second-generation' of fashion curators.

'Second-generation' fashion curators set their practice, focused on ideas and imagery, in opposition to object-based displays. Characterising the development of this form of practice, its key proponent Judith Clark stated that fashion curation had 'shifted from something rooted in practice (in our case the museum) to a more theoretical position both inside and outside the institution.'[179] Fiona Anderson has analysed Clark's practice at her eponymous gallery, founded in 1998, alongside two other examples: The V&A's Fashion in Motion programme, described by Claire Wilcox, who devised it as 'a monthly event that bridges the gap between live catwalk shows

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[179] *Fashion Theory* 12.2 (2008) 325. Clark cites the impact on her perspective and approach of fashion/art installations such as the 1996 *Florence Fashion Biennale*. See: Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," 2000, 381.

and static museum displays'[180]; and Hussein Chalayan's 1999 *Echo Form* exhibition exploring the designer's work on the body via the medium of moving and static imagery. The common thread of these three displays was their approach to the representation of the body. Their dynamic display methodologies, be it the introduction of 'live' bodies into the gallery space at the V&A, mannequins tailor-made for each of Clark's exhibitions or Chalayan's box painted with surreal images of the body, all attempted to translate fashion's engagement with the body. These experiments were in contrast to Jarvis' traditional use of mannequins. Indeed, the particular forms she adopted from the V&A were, in 2000, arguably already out-dated (a year later the V&A began to phase them out of the Costume Court). Of course, as Anderson notes Clark's experiments with mannequins were beyond the budgets of most museums,[181] certainly the Gallery of Costume's.

A lack of funds and space stymied Jarvis' ambitions to develop her display methodologies.[182] However, in 1999, an opportunity arose that had the potential to develop the gallery's display methodologies in radically new directions. In this year, the council's Creative Industries Development Service, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Embroiders' Guild proposed developing an International Centre of Excellence for Fashion and Textiles (ICEFT) in Manchester. This collaborative organisation, drawing on the resources of all the partners and subsuming the gallery's collection, was to be based in the city's Northern Quarter (an area branded at that date by various involved parties as the home of the city's creative industries).[183] Antwerp's ModeNatie, opened in 2002 (which had been in

[180] Cited in Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," 2000, 377.

[181] Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," 2000, 377.

[182] For a detailed account of how ModeNatie developed, its strategic aims, and how it fitted into political and economic agendas to use fashion to develop tourism and the city's 'cultural economy' see: Vincent Pandolfi, *Fashion and the City: The Role of the 'Cultural economy' in the Development Strategies of Three Western Cities* (Delft: Eburon, 2015) 43-65.

[183] Manchester City Council's economic strategy to develop the city as a 'Knowledge Capital' stimulated the project. The council aspired to advance the cultural and creative economy of the city by attracting and retaining fashion graduates.

development since 1999) would provide a compelling model of such a collaborative organisation. This building housed: the Flanders Fashion Institute (a commerce oriented organisation that promoted Antwerp fashion); the editorial offices of *A, Magazine* (a fashion magazine that explores in each issue the creative practice of a different designer); the fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts; and the ModeMuseum (MoMu) (a fashion museum with a permanent collection and library). MoMu was (and is) a key player in the development of 'second generation' curating. Rather than create a permanent gallery exploring the history of fashion, its director Linda Loppa decided to stage thematic exhibitions that changed twice yearly. Under Loppa's direction from 2002-2006 and from 2009 that of Kaat Debo, MoMu aims to produce thought provoking explorations of fashion that are 'created around a total narrative in which not only articles of clothing are displayed, but a complete context is presented.'[184] In other words, the exhibition's narrative is progressed through the relationship of objects and scenography. *Malign Muses* curated by Clark in 2004 (redesigned for the V&A as *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* in 2005 and discussed in depth in Chapter 4) exemplified this approach. In 2003, Howard Smith, Head of Curatorial Services at MAG, aligned the planned ICETF with Modenatie: 'The International Centre of Excellence for Textiles and Fashion… would be a first for the UK, putting Manchester on a par with cities such as Antwerp, Lyon and New York.'[185]

Similar to Modenatie, plans for the ICEFT included a collections resource, incubator workshops, business support, postgraduate programmes, catwalk facilities and a Textile, Embroidery and Fashion Gallery hosting an innovative temporary exhibition programme exploring historic, contemporary and multicultural fashion. Additionally, the centre would offer exhibition space for contemporary designers. As

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[184] ModeMuseum.

<http://www.momu.be/en/over-het-momu/momu-in-het-kort.html>.11 January 2016.

[185] Howard Smith, *Letter to Valerie Cumming, Chairman of the Costume Society*, October 23, 2003, Costume Society Archives.

part of the ICEFT, the gallery would have access to a wider range of resources with which to develop its methodologies.

While plans for the ICEFT slowly progressed, 'second generation practice' was securing critical acclaim and increasingly large audiences.[186] In the same period, the numbers of visitors attending the Gallery of Costume decreased. I do not, however, argue, as some members of the Costume Society did, that fashion displays diverted audiences from historic costume museums.[187] Rather, I highlight that their innovative methodologies were in contrast to the Gallery of Costume's. In a political and economic climate of 'best value', a museum failing to attract visitors was financially unviable.[188] When the Gallery of Costume's attendance figures reached their lowest level ever, merely 13,000 in 2003,[189] MAG director Virginia Tandy closed the Gallery of Costume to the general public. Meanwhile, the Embroiders' Guild pulled out of the ICEFT consortium and instead moved their conservation studies to Hampton Court Palace. Without this key partner, plans for the ICEFT collapsed. In 2006, Jarvis retired and was succeeded by her assistant Lambert. With no other immediate options, the Gallery of Costume remained in Platt Hall, open by appointment to researchers. Tandy began planning a renovation of the Gallery of Costume that would enable the building to reopen to the public with new facilities and some new displays.

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[186] See: *Fashion Theory: Exhibitions Issue*, 12.1 (2008); Peter McNeil, "We're Not in the Fashion Business: Fashion in the Museum and the Academy," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 65-81; Alistair O'Neill, "Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back and Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back," *Fashion Theory* 12.2 (2008) 253-259; Alexandra Palmer, "Judith Clark Costume, London, UK," *Fashion Theory* 7.2 (2003) 213–22; Elizabeth Wilson, "Costuming Clio," *History Workshop Journal* 60.1(2005) 229–32.

[187] Costume Society Extraordinary General Meeting Minutes, 2003, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[188] This was Levitt's view, now Head of Service at Leicester Museums. Sarah Levitt, *Untitled Document*, October 2003, Gallery of Costume Archive, Platt Hall.

[189] The gallery was open to the public Tuesday – Friday.

2006 – 2014: Miles Lambert

Manchester City Council committed £1.3 million for long overdue structural repairs and redecoration of Platt Hall. The funding enabled the gallery to reshape some of its interior spaces to make room for a tearoom, a multi-purpose lecture/learning space and a temporary exhibition gallery. The project, overseen by Lambert and Moira Stevenson, the Head of the Manchester Art Gallery, was funded entirely by a council maintenance budget that, Lambert relates, could only be used for essential building work.[190] The funding could not, therefore, be used to improve the gallery's standards of display. According to Lambert, expenditures such as textile conservation, guest curators, research trips or training in costume display techniques for the gallery assistants who, at that time, mounted the majority of the new displays were expressly denied by this budget.[191] Only by pushing for change at a higher level and reusing existing display structures were Lambert and Stevenson able to reconfigure the ground floor displays.[192] Most of Buck's cases remained in place, limiting Lambert to a minimalist display aesthetic. Lambert reused the gallery's stock of Rootstein mannequins for his new display and purchased new retail-inspired headless mannequins in a neutral pale grey. The redevelopment continued and returned to many old practices and perspectives, not least the historical frames developed by Buck and the actual historical narratives created by Jarvis. Lambert returned to a familiar approach: Buck's evolutionary chronological framework. *Suffragettes to Supermodels*—Lambert's ground floor display—charts, in reverse, the stylistic progression of fashion during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Fig. 1.20). Unlike the gallery's previous chronologies, Lambert's display references the personal style of individuals, and thus reflects a subtle shift in focus from Buck's methodologies. In the first floor galleries, Lambert maintained Jarvis' eighteenth-century display *An Age of Elegance* and updated the *Needle's Excellency* (Haan

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[190] Lambert, *Personal Interview*, 12 August 2012.

[191] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

[192] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

showcases inherited from MAG's defunct Manchester Gallery were installed in the seventeenth-century gallery).

Inserted into *Suffragettes to Supermodels* was an alternative narrative created by a group of artists collectively known as *Tea* (Peter Hatton, Val Murray and Lynn Pilling). Their intervention, a film titled *Spinning a Yarn*, projected onto the back of a display case, drew upon the gallery's collections of cotton clothing (and the Whitworth Art Gallery's textile collection) and Platt Hall's prior identity as the home of an eighteenth century textile merchant to make comment on the decline of Manchester's textile industry. *Spinning a Yarn* initiated of a new form practice for the gallery: interventions and temporary displays disrupting its traditional historical frames. With the appointment of Kate Day as Community Development Officer in 2010 the gallery reached out to new audiences, extending an invitation to partake in the production of its exhibition narratives. The intervention, *Age of Elegance? Remix* (2012), curated by a group of young people (designers, poets, writers and filmmakers), overseen by Day, challenged the primary narrative of the eighteenth century display with the insertion of alternative, imagined, historical voices (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4). The creation of a new temporary gallery brought with it the opportunity for a programme of frequently changing exhibitions. Since 2011, exhibitions have reflected both Lambert's interests in twentieth century fashion history and the concerns of the gallery's current director Maria Balshaw.[193]

Lambert states Balshaw is the first director, during his career at the Gallery of Costume, to be actively, creatively and strategically engaged with the gallery and its exhibition programme.[194] The single programme initiative she implemented has

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[193] From 2010 to 2014 the exhibitions changed on average three times a year. Since 2014, exhibitions have changed annually. Lambert states that exhibitions are rotating more infrequently due to three issues: staff cuts; reductions in budgets; and changes to his position. Lambert noted in 2016 that he has greater involvement at exhibitions at MAG and consequently is based at Platt Hall for 2 days a week. Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 20 January 2016.

[194] Lambert joined the gallery in 1985. Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

resulted in MAG and the Gallery of Costume jointly hosting exhibitions including *The First Cut* (2012-13) and *We Face Forward: Art From West Africa* (2012). Realising Balshaw would be closely involved with the Gallery of Costume's exhibitions Lambert altered his approach to the content of his temporary exhibitions.[195] Responding to Balshaw's interest in international, contemporary fashion, Lambert developed the concept of 'designer in focus' exhibitions: *Yves Saint Laurent* in 2011 was followed by *Dior* in 2013-2014 (Fig.1.21 and Fig. 1.22) and *Ossie Clarke* in 2014. Lambert notes that it can be difficult to relate the "bulk of the collection, which is mass-clothing" to this exhibition model.[196] However, Lambert has strengthened the gallery's holdings of couture and high-end designer fashion from 1945 to the present day. This was an undeveloped area for the gallery, one Lambert recognises is particularly attractive to contemporary museum audiences and requested by students and researchers. Lambert's policy is to collect the work of "cutting edge designers in capsule collections*"* that will enable the gallery to focus upon exhibitions of either an individual designer or a specific design influences.[197] Lambert also collects with future exhibition planning in mind. For example, he has recently acquired pieces by contemporary Japanese designers including Issey Miyake and Kenzo to exhibit in *Modern Japanese Design*, an exhibition at MAG (2015–2017). Between 2006–2014, Lambert secured, often at auction, over 800 items, including important late Schiaparelli dresses as well as garments by Chanel, Christian Dior, Cristóbal Balenciaga and Alexander McQueen. Where possible, Lambert collects garments with known biographies, such as a 1967 Givenchy dress owned by Audrey Hepburn. This dress formed the focal point of the new displays when the gallery reopened in 2010. Such acquisitions are a radical departure from the gallery's traditional focus upon 'typical' middle-class dress. However, Lambert explains his policy as an appropriate continuation of the gallery's traditional collecting practices. High-end fashion, Lambert states, directs the mass

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[195] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

[196] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

[197] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

market and the clothing worn by the 'average' person.[198] The challenge Lambert sets himself is to relate designer fashion to the mass-market in his displays, and thus he collects and displays high street fashion alongside couture pieces.[199]

Under Balshaw's direction, fashion is being afforded greater visibility in Manchester Art Galleries' permanent displays. Balshaw recognises the popularity of fashion exhibitions and for this reason has included them within the Art Gallery's exhibition programme. She is, however, clear that these exhibitions 'supplement, rather than alter in any way, the role of the Gallery of Costume.'[200] In 2012, she called for an eighteenth-century dress and (her own) Vivienne Westwood eighteenth-century-styled wedding dress to be installed in the eighteenth-century painting gallery. The inclusion of fashion within this traditional fine art space was, in Lambert's view, "a provocative statement, and an intellectual push to Platt Hall."[201] Seeing potential in these installations for raising the profile of historic dress and directing visitors towards the gallery, Lambert installed in the Victorian art gallery, 2013, a Mariano Fortuny dress and a tea gown, both represent late nineteenth-century artistic dress. In 2014, MAG hosted *Cotton Couture*, an exhibition of 20 cotton garments designed by leading British and French designers that were commissioned by the Manchester-based Cotton Board to promote the use of cotton in fashion (Fig. 1.23). This was a representative sample of the Cotton Board collection held at the Gallery of Costume. For this exhibition, garments were, on the advice of textile conservator Ann French's advice, mounted upon headless dressmakers' forms, based on the same model employed by the V&A in their Fashion Gallery since 2012. This was a departure for Lambert from his preferred (realistic) style of mannequins, but he acknowledges that these forms align the gallery with contemporary conservation recommendations and display practices.[202]

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[198] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

[199] Lambert, *Personal Interview*, 12 July 2009.

[200] *Email Correspondence*, 21 January 2014.

[201] Lambert, *Interview*, 2012.

[202] Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 19 January 2016.

Since reopening, the Gallery of Costume's visitor figures have risen from 18,585 in 2012 to 23,275 in 2014.[203] This rise can be attributed, in part, to the longer opening hours (the gallery is now open to the public Thursday-Sunday) that allows for a busy programme of public talks, workshops and events for patrons and friends but not least to Lambert's exhibitions. However, the future of the gallery is far from certain: Balshaw states that 'long-term plans for the Gallery of Costume are not settled… In a context of much reduced public funding we cannot say any more than that'.[204] I draw this chapter to a close by briefly reflecting on what this chapter's exploration of the development of the gallery's display methodologies has revealed.

Conclusion

This chapter's investigation of the Gallery of Costume's displays has, to my mind, demonstrated that each Gallery of Costume curator has felt responsible for maintaining the legacy of Britain's first subject specialist museum of dress—all drew upon the founding mission of the gallery to present the social history of dress, although they have, in their displays and exhibitions, interpreted that aim in diverse ways. While each generation of curator has tried to differentiate their displays, albeit by subtle or significant ways, from their predecessors, they have all, to a degree, sustained or reinterpreted some element of past methodologies. As well as reflecting the practices of their predecessors, the displays of each individual curator are also grounded in the period in which they operated—reflecting contemporary perspectives, ideas and scholarship. Balshaw's uncertain future plans for the Gallery of Costume leaves an open question of whether Lambert (and potential future curators) will develop their display methodologies within the context of Platt Hall, continuing or reinterpreting the methodologies and ideas of their predecessors; or, whether they will develop entirely new methodologies within a context disconnected from the physical and conceptual structures which their predecessors negotiated.

Chapter 2: The Body in the Museum

> Costume has an important difference from other antiquities. A house,
> a chair, a wineglass appear to us exactly today as they did in their
> own time, but a garment once worn on the living human form of a
> particular period has lost something essential when it survives
> without that form.[205]

> —Anne Buck, 1958

In the 1950s, Buck was one of the first costume curators to explore the relationship of dress to the body. She was also one of the first to articulate the issues related to exhibiting dress as a three-dimensional form without the aid of a living human body. Buck's ideas and associated display methodologies are the starting point for this chapter's exploration of the body and its substitute, the mannequin, within the museum. The central question addressed in this chapter is: How have curators harnessed the form of the mannequin to act out ideas about the relationship of dress to the fashionable body? It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive overview of physical development of mannequins at the Gallery of Costume and elsewhere. Rather, I aim to review the key issues surrounding the various types of mannequins employed at Platt Hall from its opening in 1947 to 2014 and to relate the form of these mannequins to practices and debates occurring in the wider field of dress curation. This investigation follows on from Chapter 1's conclusion that changes made to the form of mannequins at the Gallery of Costume signaled the emergence of new curatorial attitudes.

In her lecture to the National Trust in 1958, Buck suggested an inherent tension in the relationship between dress and the body in the museum. It was Buck's opinion that worn dress is dependent upon the individual body that wore it for its unique

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[205] Anne Buck, *History in Costume,* lecture presented to the National Trust, 1958, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

significance; the absence of this living body in the museum rendered garments inert. She later wrote: 'a dress or suit, lacking the human body which wore it is the husk of its former self.'[206] I intend to extend this concept by arguing that within the costume museum, the relationship between dress and the body is dialectical, framed by the oppositions of presence and absence, life and death, human and inhuman, attraction and alienation. My discussion will reference examples of practice in which I have discerned these dichotomies played out in the development of specific mannequin forms. Mannequins created by the Chicago Historical Society, Kensington Palace (London), the Museum of London, the Museum of Costume Bath, the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A, London), The Fashion Institute of Technology (New York), and the McCord Museum (Montreal) represent a broad spectrum of international practice.

The central argument of this chapter is that mannequins are essential in restoring the form and meaning of clothing, yet replica bodies in the museum often have an unnerving lifelessness that can draw attention to the absence of the fleshy human form. In *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, Elizabeth Wilson articulated this paradox:

> The living observer moves with a sense of mounting panic, a
> world of the dead… we experience a sense of the uncanny when
> we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human
> beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much a
> part of our living, moving selves, that frozen on display in the
> mausoleum of culture, they hint at something only half
> understood, sinister, threatening, the atrophy of the body, and the
> evanescence of life.[207]

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[206] Anne Buck, *The Changing Shapes of Fashion*, unpublished transcript of a lecture given in Bradford, 1961, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[207] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985) 1.

Wilson is referring here to the complex relay that dress exhibitions can create between dress and the body, life and death. I draw upon the concept of 'Das Unheimlich', translated as 'The Uncanny', set forth by Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud,[208] to flesh out the troublesome associations of death and inhumanity that circulate the body in the museum. Jentsch first discussed the concept of the uncanny regarding body substitutes in his paper *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen* (*On The Psychology of the Uncanny*) written in 1906.[209] Jentsch described the concept of uncanny as an uncomfortably strange feeling arising from the commingling of the familiar and the foreign. Freud developed Jentsch's observations into an exploration of body doubles and deathliness in his 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche* (*The Uncanny*). Freud's discussion of doppelgangers connects to the ideas articulated by Walter Benjamin in *Das Passagen-Werk* about the dehumanisation of the fashionable body in consumer culture. The ideas in this text form the second theoretical strand of this chapter.

Das Passagen-Werk (Arcades project), written by Benjamin between 1927 and 1940, makes reference to the commercial fashion mannequin and its connection to the living female body.[210] Benjamin's notes propose an inherently negative relationship between women and their mass-produced artificial counterpart, the fashion mannequin. The fashionable body discussed in the Arcades project is, according to Benjamin, the 'dialectical switching station between woman and commodity desire and dead body.'[211] Benjamin's assertion, I will argue, is refracted in the attitudes expressed by some dress curators towards commercial body substitutes.

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[208] Ernst Jentsch, "On the Psychology of the Uncanny, " trans. Roy Sellars *Angelaki* 2.1 (1995) 7-16. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin, 2003).

[209] "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" was originally published in the *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8.22 (25 August 1906) 195-98 and 8.23 (1 September 1906) 203-205.

[210] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[211] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cited in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1989) 101.

Having outlined the scope and theoretical framework of this chapter, I move this chapter onto a detailed discussion of the evolution of the different types of mannequin employed in museums.

Lou Taylor has already outlined the evolution of museum mannequins in *The Study of Dress History*.[212] Taylor's study details the various approaches and solutions adopted by major museums internationally. It touches upon Buck's ideas about the relationship between dress and the body to reference the challenge that curators face in animating dress within static displays. Taylor's study is a valuable foundation upon which to build my investigation. However, my intention is to go deeper, to the core of why the reconstructed fashionable body in the museum can be so problematic for curators. I aim to connect the practical concerns outlined by Taylor to the underlying cultural and philosophical issues framing the fashionable body and its status in the museum. The debates surrounding the search for an appropriate museum mannequin will be related to broader 'effigy culture', to appropriate Mark Sandberg's term. Substitute bodies designed for the purpose of displaying clothing in museums are a manifestation of an effigy culture that dates back to the 1400s.[213]

Sandberg's text, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity*,[214] is one of the few to analyse the cultural significance of mannequins in museums. His discussion focuses upon late nineteenth and early twentieth century Scandinavian waxwork and folk museums. Emerging from Sandberg's work is a nuanced picture of audiences' interactions with bodily forms at a specific historical

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[212] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 24-47.

[213] For discussion of the historical development of different forms of effigies, see Antony Harvey and Richard Mortimer, eds., *The Funeral Effigies of Westminster Abbey* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1994), Roberta Panzanelli, ed., *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1996), and Jane Munro, *Silent Partners: Artists and Mannequin from Function to Fetish* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014).

[214] Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 3.

moment. Sandberg's research serves as an important comparative reference. His ideas, in particular, the notion of 'missing person display', offer a theoretical framework for thinking about the practices of the costume museum in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, whereas Sandberg focuses on audiences' modes of viewing human simulacra, I am primarily concerned with curatorial intentions.

I begin my discussion of the evolution of mannequins by outlining the various forms employed at the Gallery of Costume. The first mannequins to used at the gallery were the headless forms that Buck developed in the late 1940s. She advocated these mannequins, that came to be known colloquially as 'Platt bodies', for the duration of her twenty-five year career at the gallery. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, her successors did not adhere to her minimalist approach. Platt Hall preserves a material archive of their attempts to reconstruct the fleshy human body. In Year 1 of this research project, I conducted an audit of the gallery's mannequins that revealed a variety of body substitutes stored throughout Platt Hall. This audit prompted the question of why the gallery has so many alternative reconstructions of the body, which instigated this chapter's investigation. Over the course of its life, the gallery accumulated Buck's headless forms (Fig. 2.1 and Fig. 2.2) along with temporary, hastily built solutions constructed upon similar principles (Fig. 2.3), dressmaker's busts, realistic commercial mannequins dating from the 1920s – 2000s (Fig. 2.4 and Fig. 2.5), and finally specialist museum mannequins developed by the V&A in collaboration with the mannequin manufacturer Derek Ryman and the KCI with technical support from the Nanansai Corporation (Fig. 2.6 and Fig. 2.7).[215] The gallery's archive represents the combination of custom-made experiments, adaptations of commercial forms, and specialist mannequins, which most museums have used to display dress.[216] Viewed en masse, the archive indicated that

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[215] The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum advised on the development of these mannequins that are sold by the Wacoal Corporation.

[216] See: Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 24-47.

mannequins are subject to trends, like the clothing they display. In the discussion that follows, I address the question of what causes changes to occur to both the form of mannequins and the ideas they represent.

Museum mannequins were developed in an ad hoc manner, in response to the needs of individual institutions. Historically, museums adopted and adapted pre-existing effigy forms, namely waxwork figures and commercial fashion mannequins. It was not until 1958, with the publication of the Museums Association's *Handbook for Costume Curators* written by Buck, that the profession systematically addressed the available methodologies for displaying garments.[217] In the handbook and her lectures upon display methodologies, Buck outlined the two prevalent styles of display forms: realistic and stylised.[218] Buck, unsurprisingly, advocated the latter, arguing that verisimilitude can effect an unwelcome and unscholarly distraction from the garments on display. Realistic heads, she stated, unless they bear 'that authentic but indefinable sense of period that the most meticulous accuracy cannot always capture, will be obtrusive and jarring.'[219]

Buck attempted to create objective representations of fashionable dress by eliminating all representative parts of the body. In her opinion, the soft headless forms she developed at Platt Hall were a neutral mass, restoring the original line and form of historical garments.[220] The Platt bodies reflected Buck's nuanced ideas about the relationship between the body and historic dress. Buck believed that it was impossible to replicate exactly the original bodies that gave form to worn historic dress. In her address to the National Trust in 1958, Buck pre-empted the ideas that Michel Foucault would later articulate about the historical and cultural specificity of the body. Foucault conceives of the human body as a cultural rather than merely a

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[217] Buck, *Handbook for Museum Curators*, 1958, 21-24.

[218] Anne Buck, *Costume in the Museum*, abstract of a lecture given to the Museums Assistants' Group in Norwich (May 18, 1949), Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[219] Buck, *Handbook for Costume Curators*, 1958, 24.

[220] Buck, *Handbook for Costume Curators*, 1958, 21.

biological construct, moulded by societal pressures and constantly changing over time.[221] Similarly, Buck stated that the fashionable ideal of the body, as represented by dress is historically specific: There is, she said, in the garments of the past 'something which belongs to their own time which we cannot restore. In the costume of each period is left the impression of the ideal form of its time.'[222] Buck's acknowledgement of the impossibility of accurately reconstructing this ideal in the present day undoubtedly contributed to her rejection of mimetic display forms. At the Gallery of Costume, she thus attempted only the faithful reconstruction of historical garments, restoring them to their original three dimensions without a lifelike body substitute.

It is possible that Buck perceived another issue with the fashionable body that motivated her to eliminate representative human simulacra from her displays. In the next section of this chapter I will argue that while Buck was developing and advocating the Platt bodies in the late 1940s and 1950s, the fashionable female body laboured under negative moral associations in the wider cultural arena. It is not unreasonable to assume that Buck wished to distance her displays that, as discussed in the previous chapter, aimed to elevate the academic status of dress history from the associations of superficiality and sexuality that circulated the fashionable body in this period.

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[221] Michel Foucault, trans. R. Hurley, *The History of Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), Michel Foucault, "Body/Power," C. Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 55-62.

[222] Buck, *History in Costume*, 1958. In the Museums Association's *Handbook for Museum Curators*, Buck highlighted the issues of conservation and historical accuracy posed by wearing historical dress. Anne Buck, *Handbook for Museum Curators. Part D Section 3 Costume* (London: The Museums Association, 1958) 28. By 1990, the official guidelines issued by the International Committee of Museums adhered to by most museum professionals prohibited the wearing of garments in museum collections. Anne Buck, "ICOM Costume Committee Guidelines for Costume Collections," *Costume* 24 (1990) 128.

Fiona Anderson, in her essay *Museums as Fashion Media*, asserts that fashion's intrinsic relationship to the body 'solidly damned it as linked to the base and the sexual.'[223] Anderson draws evidence to support her assertion from Paul Greenhalgh's essay *Education, Entertainment and Politics*. In his exploration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Great Exhibitions as sites of education and entertainment, Greenhalgh outlines the contemporaneous association of the lower pleasures with base functions including sexual activity. Anderson is correct in that the perception of the body as base, sensual, and superficial is deeply historically entrenched, but I suggest that this view originates further back than the nineteenth century. It can be found in the philosophical dichotomies of mind and body, prioritising the rational and mental over the sensual and spiritual.[224]

Certain strands of the Western philosophical canon, notably Cartesian dualism, measured the real person in metaphysical terms while dismissing the physicality of the body as inconsequential and irrational.[225] Thus, anything pertaining to the body and appearance, such as dress, was written off as transient and false. Sophie Woodwood argues that this ontological separation had, by the Post-Enlightenment, become 'tied to the moralizing debates surrounding the rise of consumer society in inextricably gendered ways.'[226] Gendered debates positing the fashionable female body as fickle, sexualised, and ephemeral exerted an influence well into the twentieth century. Benjamin's notes in the Arcades project underline the relationship between consumption, dress, and sexual debasement.[227]

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[223] Anderson, *Museums as Fashion Media*, 2000, 373.

[224] Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 5. See also: Kate Soper, "Dress Needs: Reflections on the Clothed Body, Selfhood and Consumption," Entwistle and Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing*, 2001, 13-32.

[225] For a full consideration of the neglect of a philosophy of dress in the Western tradition see Kate Soper, "Dress Needs: Reflections on the Clothed Body, Selfhood and Consumption," 2001, 13-32.

[226] Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford: Berg, 2007) 16.

[227] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cited in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 1989, 101.

Male costume historians of the early twentieth century heavily stressed the sexualised nature of the fashionable female body. Cunnington stated that fashion created the erotic female body 'from a monstrous pink lollipop.'[228] Clearly Cunnington's theories were flawed—subjugating the female body to a controlling male gaze while ignoring women's active role in the process of self-construction. Despite their obvious limitations, some of Cunnington's pyscho-sexual interpretations found credence amongst certain of his fellow male dress historians. Female dress curators of the earlier twentieth century, however, shied away from directly addressing the controversial ideas of their male colleagues, although as discussed in Chapter 1, Buck believed that their theories were overstated. Buck's lectures *History in Costume* (1958) and *The Changing Shapes of Fashion* (1961) demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the culturally fashioned body than that articulated by Cunnington. In these lectures, Buck argued that fashion and the body make and remake the form of one another. However, her exhibitions at the Gallery of Costume in no way reflected the complex ideas she articulated about the fashionable body in her lectures. Buck interpreted dress within an art historical paradigm. Her mode of display prioritised the object, rather than the wearing of it. Clothing was assumed to speak for itself, literally so at Platt Hall, where exhibits stood without the aid of an identifiably human support. Some high-profile museums mirrored Buck's approach in this period—notably, as outlined in Chapter 1, Scandinavian museums, from which Buck had adopted and adapted her display methodologies, and, in Britain, the V&A.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the V&A used headless dressmaker-type stands similar to Buck's forms (Fig. 2.8). Peter Thornton, the V&A curator who led the redevelopment of the museum's Costume Court from 1958 – 1962, told the *Museums Journal*:

> We decided to show our costume dummies without heads. We
> made this decision reluctantly because, ideally, historic costume

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[228] C. Willett Cunnington, *Why Women Wear Clothes* (London: Faber & Faber,1941) 52.

ought to be seen complete with heads, hair and headgear – all of which played so important a role in imparting the general effect. However, we have never seen any really satisfactory heads on museum dummies, although we have visited a large number of costume museums and studied photographs of many others; nor did we feel there was time to try and evolve anything better in this respect.'[229]

In Britain, Doris Langley Moore took the lead in advocating and developing realistic mannequins during these decades. She set out her position in the article 'The Display of Costume', published in the *Museums Journal* in 1961:

There is no doubt at all that the public prefers dummies to look as human as possible, and I, with certain reservations, am in agreement with them. The relationship between a hat and a head, a décolletage and a bosom, a ruffle and a wrist, is so inalienable that it is a loss to be obliged to leave it to the imagination.[230]

Langley Moore continued her article by detailing the successes and failures of her experiments to create figures as 'lifelike and as brilliantly executed as those to be seen in the crypt at Westminster Abbey.'[231] Given his comments in the *Museums Journal* a year later, Thornton, it seems, was not convinced by her efforts.[232] However, as Taylor notes, many international museums displaying fashionable European dress followed Langley Moore's neo-realist policy.[233]

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[229] Peter Thornton, "The New Arrangement of the Costume Court in the Victoria and Albert Museum," *Museums Journal* 62.1 (1962) 326–32.

[230] Doris Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," *Museums Journal* 60.1 (February 1961) 277.

[231] Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," 1961, 277-78.

[232] Thornton, "The New Arrangement of the Costume Court," 1962, 326–32.

[233] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 43.

Realism versus stylisation continues to dominate curatorial discussions about mannequins.[234] However, over the past three decades, practice has mostly aligned with Buck's approach (although this does not necessarily mean that curators adopted her specific mannequin forms).[235] Since the 1980s, museum mannequins have become increasingly minimal, bleached of mimetic characteristics to the point where the corporeal has seemly vanished from the gallery space. The introduction of 'invisible mannequins' in the late 1990s apparently enabled garments to float free of the fashionable body's problematic associations. Sarah Levitt, formerly Assistant Curator at the Gallery of Costume, credits Buck with being the first to release the costume museum from the spectre of the shop display.[236] However, I argue, Buck merely hid that spectre in the subterranean spaces of the building.

In the 1980s, Phillip Sykas, the Gallery of Costume's costume conservator from 1985 to 1994, discovered a group of disembodied wax heads hidden in Platt Hall's basement (Fig. 2.9 and Fig. 2.10). He believes that Buck decapitated a group of commercial mannequins, many manufactured by the elite firm of Pierre Imans in the 1920s and 1930s, for use in the gallery's displays during the 1950s.[237] Headless mannequin bodies also preserved in Platt Hall (Fig. 2.11) correspond to these heads and appear to corroborate Sykas' assertion. It seems highly likely that Buck would have viewed these heads, independently from the body, as historical objects and kept them for that reason. After three decades stored in the basement, the remaining heads were disintegrating and discoloured. Sykas subsequently restored some of the heads and reunited them with their torsos, so that they could be used to display 1930s fashions (Fig. 1.15). One can draw an analogy between Buck's decapitation of the Gallery of Costume's retail mannequins and her conceptual treatment of the

[234] See: Amy de la Haye and Rebecca Quinton, "New Gallery Review: 'What Happened to all Those Lovely Costumes?'" *Fashion Theory* 8.3 (2004) 339–50, Langley Moore 275-281, Thornton 326-332, Taylor, *The Study of Dress History,* 2002, 42-47.

[235] Taylor questions whether this is due to funding shortages or defined curatorial philosophies. Taylor, *The Study of Dress History,* 2002, 42-47.

[236] Sarah Levitt, "Obituary, Anne Buck, OBE, 14 May 1910-12 May 2005," *Costume* 40 (2006) 12.

[237] Philip Sykas, *Personal Interview,* 30 July 2009.

fashionable body within the museum. I suggest that Buck intellectually banished the troublesome associations of the body substitutes into the darker recesses of the curatorial sub-consciousness.

Buck's *Handbook for Costume Curators* established the protocol for a pragmatic consideration of mannequins. However, the museum mannequin, being directly related to its forebears in the waxwork museum and the shop window, inherits their problematic cultural legacy. Although the museum profession is willing to accept that there is no perfect body on which to display historical dress, their analysis of the issues surrounding human substitutes rarely strays from practical, financial, and conservation considerations.[238] In the discussion that follows, I aim to locate the conceptual intersection of museum mannequins, waxwork figures, and commercial fashion mannequins. The material and abstract associations of body substitutes will be theorised in the context of museum display practices. The realism versus stylisation debate, which has preoccupied curatorial debate, will also structure this discussion. My intention is to relate these arguments to the effect of verisimilitude and in so doing probe the issue of authenticity and the uncanny ambivalence of body substitutes. I begin by analysing the relationship of Madame Tussaud's waxwork figures and funereal waxwork effigies to museum mannequins depicting real women. It should be acknowledged that waxwork museums were a popular form of entertainment long before Tussauds became a household name.[239] Tussaud's figures,

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[238] See: Langley Moore, Thornton, Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 42-47. The majority of the talks given at the Museum of London's conference, *The Body in the Museum*, 17 March 2012, explored the development of new mannequin forms from a practical, financial, and conservation perspective. My research in the V&A archives reveals that discussion of mannequin choices for the Costume Court is based upon cost and conservation. V&A curator Susan North confirms that practical concerns and budgetary restrictions were paramount in directing their choice of figures for the Costume Court redevelopments in 2005 and 2012. Susan North, *Personal Interview,* 13 August 2013. Similarly, Kensington Palace Curator Joanna Marschner states that an exhibition's premise governs their selection of mannequins, but that conservation requirements are an also an important consideration. Joanna Marschner, *Personal Interview*, 8 March 2014.

[239] Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*, 1996, 102.

however, due to their heightened realism are exemplary of their type.[240] Thus, they were the point of reference for many curators' criticisms of the form, and it is for this reason that my discussion concentrates on Tussauds to the exclusion of other examples.

Life and Death: Madame Tussauds Waxwork Figures, Funereal Effigies and the Recreation of Lifelike Bodies in the Museum

In 1957, Martin Holmes made one of the first published references to the significance of the waxwork effigy for museum displays of dress. The thoughts and questions he outlined in his article 'Personalia', published in the Museums Association's *Handbook for Archeology, Ethnology and Folk Life Curators*, point to the conceptual issues underlying realistic mannequins. Holmes, at the time Assistant Keeper at the London Museum, asked whether it is appropriate when displaying dress, to 'recreate the appearance of the celebrity?'[241] He concluded 'well done, they [representational forms] distract attention from the exhibit by the natural fact that a man is, and should be, more interesting than his clothes. Badly done, they distract it even more by arousing feelings of ridicule or distaste.'[242] Holmes suggested that museum mannequins should only draw attention to the garments they display. He wrote, in a disapproving tone, that Madame Tussauds Waxwork Museum reverses his recommendations. In this major tourist attraction, vestimentary relics serve to authenticate three-dimensional portraits of royalty and celebrities.[243] Holmes believed that it was the responsibility of social history museums to display objects,

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[240] Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*, 1996, 103.

[241] Martin Holmes, "Personalia," *Handbook for Museum Curators, 1958, Part C: Archaeology, Ethnology and Folk Life, Section B* (London: The Museums Association, 1957) 21.

[242] Holmes, "Personalia," 1957, 21.

[243] According to Taylor, fashionably dressed waxwork figures were exhibited to the general public as early as 1688, Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 37. For a more complete history of Tussaud's, see: Uta Kornmeier, "Almost Alive: The Spectacle of Verisimilitude in Madame Tussaud's Waxworks," Roberta Panzanelli, ed., *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008) 67 – 72.

not the 'lineaments of celebrity.'[244] His remarks betrayed a disparaging attitude towards the spectacle of popular entertainment associated with waxworks that still appears to linger within dress curation. At the time Holmes wrote his article, Buck's practices at the Gallery of Costume were distancing museum displays of dress from the inferences of popular dress displays. As discussed in Chapter 1, Buck carefully selected mannequins to support the pedagogic function of her exhibits. The purpose and aims of museological exhibitions of dress have subsequently moved so far from their popular antecedents that there is now an overt rejection of Tussaud's practices. In *The Study of Dress History*, Taylor remarks that 'Tussaud's mannequins aim to entertain, confuse and deceive the public through the strength of their animated realism.'[245] Dress displays in museums, Taylor continues, 'are certainly also aimed to entertain the public but, rather than deception through reproduction, educational and conservation aims are their goals'.[246] The apparently disingenuous nature of waxwork mannequins bears further investigation. In the next section of this chapter, I aim to address the question of why the appearance of living reality provokes a scornful and distrustful response from some dress curators.

The audience for Madame Tussaud's museum highly valued the lifelike appearance of its exhibits. According to Kornmeier, having one's perception of reality challenged at Tussaud's was considered both pleasurable and the mark of a successful experience. [247] The verisimilitude of Tussaud's figures conflated the portrait and the depicted; more than a mere illustration of a person, they strived to appear as another version of that individual. The purpose of verisimilitude at Tussaud's was to break down perceptual distance and effect an intimacy between subject and viewer. It is, therefore, understandable that Holmes and Buck viewed realistic mannequins as a distraction, drawing the focus away from the object onto the body. However, this argument does not adequately address the curatorial

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[244] Holmes, "Personalia," 1957, 21.

[245] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 40.

[246] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 40.

[247] Kornmeier, "Almost Alive," 2008, 68.

antipathy directed towards the representative body. In seeking a nuanced answer, one must look beyond simplistic dichotomies of deceitfulness and truthfulness. The deceptive lifelikeness of the waxwork claims to possess an authentic truth through its materiality. However, this assertion breaks down on closer examination. Just because a representation looks so real that it speaks to the viewer, it need not follow that what it says is the objective truth. For some people, the slippage between reality and representation creates a pleasurable frisson. For others, as Freud articulated in *Das Unheimliche*, bodily ambiguity is deeply disquieting. Quoting Jentsch, Freud ascribes the uncanny experience of waxworks to the 'doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate.'[248] The dissimilar emotive reactions provoked by the waxwork and its unstable claims of authenticity both originate with the contradictions and tensions inherent in the materiality of the medium.

The striking corporeal presence of Tussaud's waxworks is indebted to the materiality of wax. Its physical qualities of smoothness, softness, and suppleness are a simulacrum of living human flesh. However, the imitative character of wax is ambiguous. Although wax closely resembles living skin, for Freud to a disturbing degree, in its cold, hard, and immobile state it carries powerful associations of death and decay.[249] Fig. 2.9 illustrating a decapitated head in the Gallery of Costume's collection testifies that wax can eerily mimic the sheen of embalmed flesh. It is also vulnerable to change and deterioration in ways that echo the decomposing human body, as another of the gallery's wax heads demonstrates (Fig 2.10). When warmed, this malleable fleshy material imprinted upon the body creates an unmediated cast. Waxwork figures cast directly from the body, as some funereal effigies were, are a material and visual trace, a negative of the original positive. The indexicality of wax purported to offer an objective mode of representation. Castings of faces and hands taken directly from a corpse, along with their hair and clothing outfitting the effigy, metonymically authenticated the deceased. In *Living Pictures,*

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[248] Jentsch,"On the Psychology of the Uncanny," cited in Freud, *The Uncanny* , 2003,135.

[249] For this reason, it was frequently used for anatomical models.

Missing Persons, Sandberg asserts that waxworks 'held promise as an imagined durable bodily trace that would survive past death, close to the discourse of embalming.'[250] The effigy preserved and resurrected the dead temporally and spatially. Similarly, Tussaud's figures, sometimes dressed in the actual clothing worn by the subject, are in Kornmeier's assessment 'souvenir portraits' connecting the audience with a reality separated from them by time and space.[251]

One might assume that the physical closeness of the waxwork to past lives and, therefore, its apparent authenticity would appeal to curators, and in some circumstances, it does. Emulating the construction of waxwork figures, a process of casting directly from the body was used to create plaster mannequins for the Chicago Historical Society's exhibition *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920* (1994). The exhibition explored the role of clothing in the assimilation of Jewish women into American society. The real-life experiences of women were central to the exhibition's narrative. Oral histories and objects demonstrated the generational differences between older Jewish women from Eastern Europe and their daughters who grew up in the New World of New York. It was clear to the exhibition's curator, Barbara Schreier, that 'the conventionally elegant retailed-styled faces and bodies' of standardised fashion mannequins would have undermined the concept of the show.[252] The exhibition's designer Donna Shudel adapted commercial figures so that they more accurately represented the physicality of Jewish women. Mimetic representations of both generations were created from facial plaster casts of women from the local Jewish community. These casts were then grafted onto mass-produced mannequins (Fig. 2.12 and Fig. 2.13). The casts, retaining the memory of real bodies, physically connected to and commemorated absent lives, albeit it two or more generations

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[250] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 42.

[251] Kornmeier, "Almost Alive," 2008, 74.

[252] Barbara Schreier, *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920* (Chicago: The Chicago Historical Society, 1994) x-xi. Cited in Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 46.

removed. However, unlike the waxwork, the plaster casts did not pose as an extension of the absent body. Plaster does not bear the same mimetic characteristics as wax, and the designer did not attempt to impose a lifelike appearance upon the medium. Instead, she covered the casts with a layer of tinted Japanese tissue paper in a uniform pale skin tone and left the facial features, eyes and mouths, unpainted. Thus, the casts appeared as an alternative, somewhat spectral version of their human counterparts. There is no doubt as to their material reality; as explicitly inanimate objects, these mannequins bypassed the uncanny ambiguity that surrounds the waxwork. Curators of royal collections of dress, notably those displayed at the Museum of London, Kensington Palace, and Buckingham Palace, also utilise the commemorative power of lifelike figures. Similarly, they tread a fine line between authenticity, representation, and dissimulation.

The history of realistic museum mannequins displaying royal dress is entwined with that of funereal effigies. Taylor points out that Westminster Abbey's display of effigies immortalising dead monarchs was the first public museum of fashionably dressed figures.[253] Like Tussaud's waxworks and funereal effigies, realistic figures exhibiting royal dress in museums during the twentieth century transported subjects no longer alive into the present. In the next section of this chapter I explore the connections between waxworks figures and museum mannequins depicting royalty. I draw upon two contrasting examples: The hyper-realistic mannequins displayed in Kensington Palace's 1990 exhibition of royal wedding dresses and the abstracted mannequins depicting Princess Charlotte and Queen Victoria created for an exhibition of these women's clothing at the Museum of London in 1997.

In 1990, Joanna Marschner, Senior Curator at Kensington Place, commissioned mannequins of Queen Victoria, Queen Alexandra, and Queen Mary, as well as Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, and Queen Elizabeth II (Figs. 2.14 and

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[253] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 37.

2.15).[254] Unlike Tussaud's waxworks and funereal effigies, these mannequins did not claim to be a direct physical link to the figures they depicted. Rather, they were representations based upon frequently reproduced portraits and the general public's perceptions of that character. These mannequins were made of conservation-grade synthetic materials instead of wax, which is prone to deterioration.[255] One might suggest that Kensington Palace's figures are less objective than waxworks as they lack a direct connection to a real body. However, the issue of authenticity is complicated when one probes the waxwork's claim to be a trace of the body. Kornmeier's research reveals that Tussaud's figures derived their authenticity from the possibility of bodily contact, rather than genuine physical contact.[256] Historic relics left in the exhibition space reinforced the myth that Tussaud and her figures had touched the individuals that they represented. In reality, verisimilitude was the outcome of the modeller's sculptural skills and artistic imagination, and not the result of direct casting. A significant difference between Tussaud's figures and those created for royal displays in the twentieth century is that the latter are transparently a second-hand representation, physically and temporally removed from the original subject.

The faces of Kensington Palace's mannequins, described by Marschner as 'slightly stylised' but still naturalistic (Fig. 2.15), were based on paintings and photographs of the royal brides created at the time of their weddings.[257] Like the official royal portrait, these mannequins present an idealised image of these historic figures, arrested at a particular moment in time. As a realistic representation lacking a foundation in bodily reality, they can be framed by Umberto Eco's conceptualisation of hyperreality. [258] The concept of hyperreality was advanced most notably by Eco

[254] The mannequins were reused in Kensington Palace's 2002 exhibition *A Century Of Queens' Wedding Dresses 1840-1947*.

[255] Elizabeth-Ann Haldane, *The Search for the Perfect Body* (RCA/V&A Joint Masters in Conservation unpublished thesis, 1999) 19.

[256] Kornmeier, "Almost Alive," 2008, 76.

[257] Marschner, *Personal Interview*, 2014.

[258] Umberto Eco, *Travels In Hyperreality* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

in *Travels in Hyperreality* (1986) and Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). Baudrillard's interpretation of hyperreality is discussed further in the following chapter. Hyperreality, in Eco's reading, refers to a sensibility in contemporary American society associated with the effects of mass culture reproduction. In *Travels in Hyperreality*, Eco writes that the public 'imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake'.[259] Marschner's mannequins are an intensified reproduction, which the curator suggested are preferable to the public than reality because they aligned more directly with their imaginative perceptions of that individual. In her own words: 'We were aware that many visitors would come to the exhibition with some prior knowledge of the items and we believed this display choice would serve to set up the items to best advantage, and supply the magic and memory that the audience would expect.'[260] Thus, she believed that the mannequins' heightened verisimilitude worked to effect an emotional intimacy between the exhibits and the audience through a process similar to that at work in Madame Tussauds Museum. However, at Kensington Palace, Tussaud's hierarchy of real object and copied body was reversed: the fake body was intended to be at the service of authentic objects.

The mannequins, as an artificially enhanced image of royalty, furthered the premise of the exhibition that royal weddings were packaged for the consumption of the general public. The portraits that informed the creation of the mannequins were central to the exhibition's thesis. Therefore, Marschner displayed them alongside the mannequins.[261] In the context of this show, representative mannequins, rather than distract attention from the objects on display, worked with them to stimulate a discussion about the relationship of dress, image, and identity. Marschner's stylised depictions of royalty, when contextualised within the exhibition space as the public persona of individuals, are arguably more 'authentic' than Tussaud's representations masquerading as unmediated facsimiles of the body. Hyperreal objects, as postulated by Eco, do not attempt to supplant or erase the real original.[262]

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[259] Eco, *Travels In Hyperreality*, 1986, 6.

[260] Marschner, *Personal Interview*, 2014.

[261] Marschner, *Personal Interview*, 2014.

In contrast to the hyper-realistic mannequins adopted at Kensington Palace, the Museum of London created abstracted effigies memorialising the lives of Princess Charlotte and Queen Victoria. *In Royal Fashion: The Clothes of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Queen Victoria 1796-1901* (1997) explored the sartorial biographies of these two women. Examination of their surviving clothing, preserved in the museum's collection, revealed previously untold stories about their changing bodies and tastes. Curator Kay Staniland's research often contradicted the visual representations of Queen Victoria and Princess Charlotte that fed popular perceptions.[263] Rather than immortalise these women in the image in which the public imagination fixes them, Staniland commissioned a series of abstracted figures.[264] These mannequins represented the women's bodies at different dates over the course of their adult lives (Figs. 2.16 and 2.17).[265] Their white fabric-covered heads lacked naturalistic features. Instead, they were lightly sculpted to suggest the changing shape of the women's faces. The verisimilitude of the mannequins relied upon a physical connection to the bodies they depicted, rather than upon mimetic representation. Staniland acknowledged the clothing of Queen Victoria and Princess Charlotte as an 'outer skin… strongly associated and permeated with the bodily characteristics of that personality.'[266] Thus, she drew clues as to the evolving appearance of the women from their extant clothing and preserved relics of their bodies, such as locks of hair found in mourning jewellery. Unlike official court portraits, these objects revealed the precise and objective reality of Queen Victoria's expanding waistline, diminishing height, mobility problems, and hair colour. Using this information, the curator developed mannequins depicting Queen Victoria at the age of 18 (Fig. 2.16) and at age 60 (Fig. 2.17). These figures demonstrated the specific ways in which Queen Victoria's face and body aged: a double chin and

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[262] Eco, *Travels In Hyperreality*, 1986, 43.

[263] Kay Staniland, *In Royal Fashion: The Clothes of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Queen Victoria 1796-1901* (London: The Museum of London, 1997) 10-19.

[264] Staniland had been assistant curator at the Gallery of Costume from 1968-1971, during which time she had been schooled in Buck's display methodologies and ideas.

[265] The H&H Group manufactured the mannequins.

[266] Staniland, *In Royal Fashion*, 1997, 13.

drooping jowls, stooped shoulders, and a receding hairline. These features were frequently retouched in photographic portraits, as in those produced by Alexander Bassano (Figs. 2.18). Bassano's portraits artificially depict Victoria with the regal hauteur and statuesque bearing of a queen and empress. In contrast, the Museum of London's mannequins reflected the reality that physically she was no different from many of her elderly female subjects.

The Museum of London's mannequins depicting Queen Victoria and Princess Charlotte are materially grounded reconstructions drawn from information gathered from items that directly touched the bodies they depict. As such, they can be understood as a link in a 'metonymic chain of authentication', to appropriate Sandberg's term.[267] In this process, the body shapes an individual's clothing. The worn garment is used to construct a substitute for the absent body. The body double then provides form and context for the garment. The mannequins, as was Holmes' recommendation, are of secondary importance to the exhibit that the figure displays. This symbiotic relationship of body, garment, and mannequin reverses Tussaud's practices. At Madame Tussauds Museum historic clothing was merely as a prop. As previously discussed Tussaud's used historic individuals' clothing to authenticate their effigies; those effigies otherwise bore no direct connection to the original bodies they depicted. Sandberg and Hillel Schwartz both argue that verisimilitude and the feeling of authenticity are reliant upon a physical link between effigy and body. In their opinion, the absence of this connection causes the effigy's uncanny ambivalence.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the indexical link between the body and its waxwork effigy had become tenuous. No longer appreciated for their apparent power to halt the decay of the mortal body, the waxwork was redolent of death. In fixing changeable bodies into a stable and still form, the realistic body substitute attested to the passing of time and mortality. As Freud observed, 'once an assurance

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[267] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 59.

of immortality it [the waxwork] becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.'[268] The acme of the uncanny that Freud asserts is related to anything having to do with death. Schwartz draws a comparison between the corpse and the effigy. Although recognisably human, both are 'evacuated of their soul'.[269] Sandberg relates that by the 1920s, the waxwork had to be surrounded by layers of representational cushioning, a complex system of clothing, lighting, and scenery to support an appearance of living reality.[270] However, regardless of how dressed up the waxwork became, it remained haunted by the spectre of the corpse.[271] Elizabeth Willson's response to the installation of the V&A's 1991 Pierre Cardin exhibition indicates that the same associations circulate the commercial fashion mannequin employed within the museum. In *Fashion and the Postmodern Body*, she wrote that the clothes exhibition 'seemed 'suspended in a kind of rigor mortis,' displayed on 'dead white, sightless mannequins staring fixedly ahead, turned as if to stone.'[272] In the discussion that follows, I aim to explore why realistic commercial fashion mannequins elicit reactions akin to those directed at waxworks. I will begin by outlining curatorial criticism of their form in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s before attempting to determine the critical issues underlying this debate. Following this discussion, I will analyse the influence of these debates on the development of specialist museum mannequins during the 1980s. This study focuses on the archetypes of these semi-realistic forms—the V&A/Derek Ryman mannequins and the KCI mannequins.

Death and Desire: The Commercial Fashion Mannequin and the Museum

Commentary on the (in)appropriateness of using commercial fashion mannequins for museological display hovers around their materiality, their attempts at

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[268] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 2003,142.

[269] Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*, 1996, 16.

[270] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 42.

[271] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 42.

[272] Elizabeth Wilson, "Fashion and the Postmodern Body," Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson eds., *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993) 15.

verisimilitude, their assumed inauthenticity and their commercial associations. Curators who oppose this form question their historical veracity; as Taylor summarises it: 'How can plastic models with artificial hair, faces and hands ever be 'authentic.'[273] What authentic means in this context Taylor does not elaborate. But like Wilson, she hints here at the tension between living body and inanimate stand-in. The suggestion is that the obviously synthetic nature of this form is a poor substitute for the diversity and culturally specific nature of the historical body it is attempting to mimic. A clearer argument can be mounted that a standardised retail mannequin redeployed in the museum for historical costumes overpowers garments with the fashionable paradigms of its own time. In 1959, curator Zillah Halls reported in the *Museums Journal* her observations of dress exhibited at the Musée Municipal du Costume, Paris.[274] She noted that the museum displayed eighteenth and nineteenth century garments upon contemporary figures manufactured by Siégel. These mannequins, Halls implied, were only successful in the museum's displays when by happenstance their aesthetic matched the fashionable spirit of another age.[275] Halls discerned a successful union of a Siégel mannequin with an 1830s dress (Fig. 2.19). She believed that the pairing worked because 'the fashionable effect' of the clothing of this period depended upon a 'daintiness of stance and elaboration of coiffure as much as on the actual dress.'[276] The posture and styling of the mannequin in Halls' view adequately compensated for the missing historical body. However, comparing the Musée Municipal du Costume's exhibit (Fig. 2.19) with a fashion advertisement dating from 1959 (Fig. 2.20), it is clear that the fashionable aesthetic of the late 1950s infused the 1830s dress. The mannequin's facial features, notably its upturned nose, slanted doe eyes, and fixed smile presented an image of overtly feminine beauty, an ideal located in the mid-twentieth century.

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[273] Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 2002, 41.

[274] Zillah Halls, "Textile Collections in France," *Museums Association Journal* 58 (February 1959) 254-255.

[275] Halls, "Textile Collections in France," 1959, 254-255.

[276] Halls, "Textile Collections in France," 1959, 254-255.

Langley Moore, the leading proponent of realism in dress displays in this decade, agreed with Halls that the physiognomy of contemporary mannequins was discordant with the dress of earlier periods. When she began designing, on a tight budget, the displays for the costume museum she was to open in Bath in 1963, she adapted contemporary mannequins donated by commercial manufacturers. The 'stylised faces and unnatural postures' of these figures, Langley Moore stated, were 'not suited for period dress.'[277] To combat this problem, she attempted to efface the mannequins' countenances with a 'neutral' mask.[278] Langley Moore commissioned an artist to craft a generic historical face according to her specifications that would fit her assorted mannequins. Moore's research led her to the British Museum, which gave the curator permission to make casts from the faces of their collection of Roman sculptures. Possibly Langley Moore saw in the proportions of these sculptures, as other classical art scholars have, a timeless and unchanging ideal.[279] As Langley Moore did not elaborate her reasons for casting her mannequins' faces from Roman heads, one can only speculate on her intentions. More revealing than unfounded conjecture is Langley Moore's criticism of the sculptor's efforts. Langley Moore dismissed his prototype face as a 'doll-like' 'mask.'[280] Its apparent lack of humanity led her to conclude that 'there must be a human character, even in faces which are only intended to assist our notions about clothes.'[281] Again, a discussion of authenticity leads back to the ambiguity of body doubles. As Langley Moore implies, her attempts at realism uncomfortably blurred the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate.

Langley Moore's criticisms resonate with Freud's interpretation of the uncanny. In *Das Unheimliche*, Freud relates Jentsch's discussion of the blurry humanoid status

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[277] Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," 1961, 275.

[278] Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," 1961, 275

[279] Jennifer Trimble, *Women and Visual Replication in Roman Imperial Art and Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 201.

[280] Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," 1961, 276.

[281] Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," 1961, 275.

of dolls to E. T. A. Hoffman's short story *Der Sandmann* ('The Sandman'). In Hoffman's story, the character Olympia's eyes are removed, exposing her as an automaton, merely an animated doll. Freud played down the significance of the uncanny nature of human simulacra in favour of a psycho-sexual analysis of the fear of losing one's eyes, which he ascribed to the threat of castration.[282] However, the tale reveals the significance of eyes in betraying the uniquely human trait of emotion. With working eyes, Olympia passes for a desirable woman, the object of a man's passionate affection. Denied her eyes and her gaze, Olympia is nothing more than an object. The decapitated heads of the 1920 fashion mannequins, hidden behind the scenes of the Gallery of Costume, speak of the discomfort felt by Buck and certain of her contemporaries, towards these approximations of living women. The commercial fashion mannequin occupies a liminal space somewhere between fleshy and artificial, human and object. Their blank, glass eyes, however, betray their liminal status (Figs. 2.9 and 2.10).

Freud elaborates on the theme of doubling to conclude that the doppelganger returns as a challenge to human individuality.[283] His insights about dolls and doubling assist our understanding of why the mass-produced fashion mannequin invokes cultural anxiety. Drawing on Freud's concept of the uncanny, I will argue that these uniformly repetitive and idealised forms of femininity provoked ambivalent reactions. The consumer's willingness to transfer upon these inanimate forms human emotions and dreams suggested to nineteenth and early twentieth century cultural critics that commodity fetishism threatened to overwhelm the individual.[284]

The dehumanisation and commodification of the female body through its standardised replica has preoccupied observers of cultural life since the mid-

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[282] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 2003, 135, 140.

[283] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 2003.143.

[284] Caroline Evans analyses this situation in the context of contemporary fashion. Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003) 171-176.

nineteenth century. The birth of the department store in this period propelled fashionably dressed mannequins into the public consciousness. The opening pages of Emile Zola's novel *The Ladies' Paradise* describe the seduction of a young country girl by a Parisian shop window full of fashionably dressed dummies. Reflected ad infinitum in the mirrored shop windows, these figures appeared to fill the street with 'beautiful women for sale with huge price tags where their head should have been.'[285] Similarly, Benjamin's Arcades project is scattered with elusive references to the impact of the growing fashion economy upon the body. According to Esther Leslie, Benjamin's notes drawing upon Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* propose the idea that capitalism fragments and fractures the body, remaking it as a prostituted, dehumanised commodity.[286] In *fin de siècle* France, mannequin manufacturers commoditised the dissected body; each separate component of the mannequin from head to foot was priced for sale. The mannequin was designed to elicit consumer desire, to draw the distracted gaze of urban spectators. To this end, it evolved, over the course of the nineteenth century, into an increasingly lifelike and characterised figure, who played the starring role in the shop window. Vanessa Osborne relates in her article, *The Logic of the Mannequin: Shop Windows and the Realist Novel*, how visual merchandisers created elaborate scenes composed of strategically arranged goods and posed mannequins, designed to entice the passing consumer in a reverie of desire.[287] These carefully composed tableaux encouraged viewers to identify with the bodies on display and their associated range of consumer goods (Fig. 2.21). It would be simplistic to assume that consumers were passively duped into conflating the mannequin with a fleshy body. The fashion mannequin is an idealised version of femininity, the features of which often defy human anatomy. It seems likely that consumers actively participated in the window dresser's illusion through their suspension of disbelief.

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[285] Emile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise*, trans. Brian Nelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 6.

[286] Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2007) 10.

[287] Vanessa Osbourne, "The Logic of the Mannequin: Shop Windows and the Realist Novel," John Potvin, ed., *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007* (London: Routledge, 2009) 190.

The dual terms used to describe the figures that display fashion—dummy and mannequin suggest the tension underlying these forms. The original term dummy clearly indicated that these forms were impassive and characterless human substitutes subservient to the whims of those that employed them. In the twentieth century the term mannequin, used to describe a living model, also began to be used to designate inanimate human stand-ins.[288] This linguistic switch suggested the animation of a passive form, the assimilation of the model by its copy, and the mannequin's change of status from inferior copy to superior reproduction. Images juxtaposing living and static mannequins, such as a 1939 jewellery spread in Paris *Vogue*, featuring a Siégel mannequin opposite a live model both draped in expensive jewels, question the relationship between model and mannequin, original and replica. The photograph presents the female body as both subject and object to elicit consumer desire. For the critical observer, this image's conflation of the female body and its mass-produced substitute evokes Freud's warning that the doppelganger returns as a threat to individuality. In the Arcades projects, Benjamin relates Freud's statement to the commercial fashion mannequin. In his analysis, the mannequin as the representation of the fashionable body describes the destructive impact of capitalism upon the individual. The fashionable body is symbolic of death, a 'gaily decked out corpse' that attempts to emulate the mannequin; he writes that both enter history as a 'dead object'.[289] In *Fashion at the Edge*, Caroline Evans interprets Benjamin's discussion of death as a 'metaphor for alienation… the death of the spirit under capitalism.'[290]

Evans' text argues for the relevance of Freud's and Benjamin's ideas in explaining contemporary cultural anxieties circulating the fashioned body. However, one must look hard to find an acknowledgment of these ideas in curatorial discussions of the fashionable body in the museum. In 1980, Costume Institute Curator Stella Blum

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[288] Munroe outlines the 'etymological terrain' around the term mannequin. See: Monroe, *Silent Partners*, 2014, 3-4.

[289] Benjamin, *The Arcades project*, cited in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing,* 1989, 101.

[290] Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 2003, 187.

made a rare reference to the commoditised body in an interview with the *New York Times*. Blum unwittingly drew Freud's ideas into a museological context. While engaged as Consultant Curator to the KCI's exhibition *Fashion in Evolution 1835– 1895* (1980), Blum advised on the development of new mannequins on which to display dress of this period. In the article, the curator stated that 'The concept [of the mannequin] is abstract. We want people to look at the clothes, not at eyes. Department store customers want to see faces and features; they want to identify with the mannequin.'[291] Blum's analysis suggests that the narrative outlined above is at least partially responsible for the growing popularity of museum mannequins with abstracted facial features during the late twentieth century. The process of abstraction necessarily entails a process of dehumanisation and in-animation, and thus revokes the commodity fetishism enacted by the realistic mannequin.

Under the direction of Blum and her colleagues, the KCI mannequins were cast in smooth white plastic and given elongated necks, delicate unpainted facial features, blank eyes, and bald heads, covered by white paper wigs (Fig. 2.22).[292] These characteristics were developed to eradicate the effect of verisimilitude that Blum observed in retail display contexts. Blum attempted to create a distinction between human observer and lifeless counterpart by undermining the commercial mannequin's conflation of subject and object. The design of the KCI mannequin, lacking the commercial mannequin's pretence at realism, eliminated ambiguity as to its status. Without lifelike eyes, the mannequin, like the doppelganger Olympia, was clearly an object. Its role was reduced to that of an inert support for the garments upon display.

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[291] Press clipping, *New York Times*, 3 December 1980. Exhibition File: An American Choice, The Muriel Kallis Steinberg Newman Collection, May 21-September 27, 1981, 746469057, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

[292] The mannequins were developed by Blum along with Liz Lawrence, her colleague at the Metropolitan. They were sculpted by Takai Hidetsugu of the Nanansai Corporation, a mannequin manufacturing firm. The wigs were styled by Robert Currie, a window-dresser who worked for the department store Henri Bendel, New York.

Blum's remarks about the significance of eyes provide a critical context for curatorial practices dating back to the 1950s. Since Buck first suggested that if heads are used they 'be much formalized with the features only slightly suggested', curators began a process of abstracting the mimetic quality of mannequins.[293] One of the earliest instances of the trend occurred at the Musée Municipal du Costume during the 1950s. Halls reported that the only difference between the Siégel mannequins 'in the museum and those used in the shops is that in the museum the features are uncoloured and the eyes are not glass but moulded in the same substance as the rest of the figure.'[294] By the 1980s, full-bodied mannequins with generalised features, most notably blank eyes, were a popular museological trend. In 1985, the KCI supplemented their prototype nineteenth century mannequin with three other figures featuring body types sculpted according to the fashionable silhouette of three periods: The eighteenth century, the Empire (1800-1820), and the Belle Epoque (1895-1910). Blum's advocacy of semi-realistic forms was possibly influenced by Costume Institute Consultant Diana Vreeland's early experiments with abstraction during the 1970s.

Upon assuming her post at the Costume Institute in 1972, Vreeland added her distinctive voice to those arguing against the use of realistic mannequins in the museum. In that year, she wrote to her colleague Blum:

> As you know, one of my great worries is the whole mannequin
> situation, as we don't want to look like Saks or Galleries Lafayette
> or the department store in any town or city in the world which is,
> of course, the great worry with all so-called life-like mannequins.
> Most life-like mannequins are rather creepy and distract the look of
> the dress.[295]

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[293] Buck, *Handbook for Museum Curators*, 1958, 24.

[294] Halls, "Textile Collections in France," 1959, 255.

[295] Diana Vreeland, Memo to Stella Blum. 25 September 1972. Diana Vreeland Papers, Series 1: Professional Correspondence, MssCol 5980, New York Public Library.

Vreeland viewed the problems associated with human simulacra from her particular perspective as a stylist and editor, rather than as a curator. The solutions she developed at the Costume Institute were characteristically creative. One of her first actions as Consultant was to commission a new head to fit the bodies of the museum's existing mannequins. Her instructions to the sculptor Masahiro Suda reveal her idiosyncratic vision:

> We want something abstract, perhaps like a wonderful baroque
> pearl with no trace of hair or features but with a definite expression
> in the carriage of the neck, the tilt of the head… There must be a
> sense of art and color in the heads because, in order to change the
> mannequins we already have here, it has to be far, far better.[296]

Vreeland discerned in abstraction the opportunity to creatively edit the mannequin. Her intentions in releasing this body substitute from the inferences of representation were radically distinct from her curatorial colleague. Whereas Blum sought objectivity in a stylised reconstruction of the body, Vreeland's abstracted mannequins freed up a subjective, ahistorical fantasy. The mannequin was central to Vreeland's editorial production of an exhibition as a whole. According to Costume Institute Curator Harold Koda, in her exhibitionary practice, as in her magazine work, Vreeland insisted upon establishing 'the transfigured moment, the ordinary rendered extraordinary.'[297] Mannequins sprayed red, black, gold, and pink presented garments outside of the quotidian, and outside of a historically calibrated ideal. Vreeland frequently veiled her mannequins' heads in sheer black stockings or net tied at the top with a knot (Fig. 2.23). She employed this device to engage her audience imaginatively. Koda asserts that fabric-obscured faces rendered the

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[296] Diana Vreeland, Letter Mr Masahiro Suda. 15 December 1972. Diana Vreeland Papers, Series 1: Professional Correspondence, MssCol 5980, New York Public Library.

[297] Richard Martin and Harold Koda, *Diana Vreeland: Immoderate Style* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993) 13.

mannequin into a 'tabula rasa… onto which the viewer could project herself (or himself), thus allowing another level of fantasy to occur within the exhibition.'[298] In this regard, Vreeland's intentions were closer to the window dresser than to the curator. Evidently, abstraction was not an attempt to block an imaginative relationship between human and body double, as it was in Blum's practice. Rather, Vreeland appears to have understood the limitations of realistic simulacra. According to the hypothesis of the Uncanny Valley, developed by the Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970, objects exhibiting human-like qualities provoke an empathetic response to a point where they become repulsive.[299] At this point, dubbed the Uncanny Valley, the intense realism of human simulacra stands in contrast to their deficit of human vitality.[300] Koda argues that Vreeland's veiled head of indeterminate personality 'softens the relationship between mannequin and simulacrum of the real.'[301]

Vreeland's curatorial peers did not share her nuanced understanding of the reconstructed body. Though other museums adopted her practice of veiling heads, they misconstrued Vreeland's creative intent. Covering realistic mannequins in fabric was a practical and frugal solution for coordinating historical garments and body substitutes. During the 1980s, curator Jane Tozer encased the Gallery of Costume's retail mannequins, dating from the 1920s-1950s, in a mask of thick black stockinette (Fig. 2.24). These covers unified the disparate assemblage of figures by eliminating signs of their historical specificity—facial features, hairstyles, and makeup. Tozer's display methodology, in common with the majority of her peers, sought accurate historical simulation and re-creation. As discussed in Chapter 1, during the 1980s a wave of curators, which included Tozer, continued Buck's campaign to gain academic acceptance for dress history. This group forged rigorous

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[298] Martin and Koda, *Diana Vreeland*, 1993, 13.

[299] Masahiro Mori, "The Uncanny Valley," *IEEE Robotics & Automation*, trans. K. F. MacDorman and N. Kageki 19.2 (June 2012) 98–100.

[300] Mori, "The Uncanny Valley," 2002, 98-100.

[301] Martin and Koda, *Diana Vreeland*, 1993, 13.

methodologies for interpreting dress within its particular historical and cultural context. They criticised the time-altered perspective of history Vreeland articulated in her exhibitions for its prioritisation of narrative spectacle over the historically specific details of an object's biography.[302] The instantly recognisable aesthetic of Vreeland's mannequins became synonymous with her controversial interpretation of historical dress. Thus, the V&A's semi-realistic mannequin founded upon historically grounded representations of the human body demonstrate the museum's commitment to the academic consolidation of dress history in this period.

V&A curators Madeline Ginsburg, Avril Hart, and Valerie Mendes collaborated with the commercial fashion mannequin manufacturer Derek Ryman to develop stylised figures based on real historic figures. These mannequins were created for the exhibition *Four Hundred Years of Fashion* in 1983. In their press release for the opening, the museum stressed that this, the first major redisplay of the Costume Court in just over twenty years, epitomised 'their new seriousness of approach to dress.'[303] The V&A's Senior Conservator Elizabeth-Ann Haldane confirms that the mannequins reflected the curators' intention to acknowledge dress as an academic subject.[304] From Ryman's catalogue, the curators chose simplistic cream-coloured fibreglass figures. Their faces were loosely modelled upon Princess Alexandra (1878-1942), Prince Albert (1864-1892), and Prince Rupert (1907 –1928), members of the British royalty who lived during the same period as the exhibits the mannequins were used to display (Figs. 2.25, Fig 2.26 and Fig. 2.27). Rather than highlight the character of these figures with life-like colour and detail, the mannequins' faces were painted with a wash of neutral shades that merely suggested

[302] See Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (London: Costume & Fashion Press, 2004) 71-72, Aileen Ribeiro, 'The Eighteenth Century Woman. An Exhibition at the Costume Institute, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York from 12 December 1981 to 5 September 1982," *Costume* 17 (1983) 154-157; Valerie Steele, "Museum Quality: The Rise of the Fashion Exhibition," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 7-30.

[303] Press Release, "Dress Collection Opens June 8th," cited in Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) 122.

[304] Elizabeth-Ann Haldane, *Personal Interview*, 26 February 2014.

features. This apparent 'softening' of the relationship between mannequin and simulacrum intentionally created the opposite effect of Vreeland's veils. *Costume* Editor Anne Saunders stated that the mannequins appeared 'mockingly anonymous.'[305] Her statement implies that the mannequins appeared to repudiate the spectator's attempts to identify or emotionally engage with them (Saunders was a supporter of Langley Moore's tableaux[306] that encouraged an empathetic response to mannequins). The V&A curators' treatment of the mannequins clearly prioritised the object they were to display over the simulacrum. It was their opinion that the pale ground and understated features were a foil allowing the garments to come to the fore.[307] The purpose of the Ryman figures' realistic elements, namely their hair meticulously arranged in period styles, was to anchor the garments in a historical period. Saunders notes that the V&A's approach was 'doggedly uncompromising.'[308] These minimal figures were set in bare vitrines stripped of the tableau scenes that often accompanied realistic figures in other costume museums, notably the Costume Museum at Bath. Thus arranged, Sauders writes, 'clothing is treated as an art form in its own right… it is up to us to have the intelligence to try to comprehend what has been laid so… painstakingly before us.'[309]

The V&A's Ryman mannequins and KCI mannequins became recognisable, but aesthetically distinct, cultural forms, both identifiable with the curatorial practices of the 1980s and 1990s. While consolidating its academic position, dress history attended to the design of clothing, rather than the wearing of it. Thus, until the mid-1990s museums primarily focused on the stylistic and technical development of dress and were only just beginning to explore the individual, fashionable body. The KCI and V&A's semi-realistic mannequins presented the fashionable body as a

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[305] Anne Saunders, "The V&A Dress Collection Refurbished," *London Journal* 10.2 (1984), cited in Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* 122.

[306] Miles Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 26 August, 2015.

[307] Haldane.

[308] Saunders cited in Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 2004, 122.

[309] Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 2004, 122.

generic archetype that translated academic attitudes. Sociologist Paul Sweetman, writing in 2000, observed that academia denied the body in fashion its agency; it was 'simply a mannequin or window dummy.'[310] The KCI's mannequins were used for all of their major touring exhibitions of historical dress in this period, including *The Undercover Story* (1982-1983) and *Fashion in Revolution* 1715-1815 (1989). The forms have been exported through the Wacoal Corporation to costume museums internationally. The Costume Institute frequently used KCI mannequins for temporary exhibitions during the 1990s. Koda has stated that it is the Costume Institute's policy to style garments according to the fashion illustration rather than the carte de visite.[311] Thus, the museum's displays attempt to reconstruct a fashionable ideal, in preference to demonstrating how fashions translate to the bodies of individuals. The KCI mannequins assisted Koda in presenting fashion in this way. Installed in minimal vitrines, these anonymous figures highlighted the design of the garments. Where the fashionable body was central to the narrative of the exhibition as in *Two by Two* (1996), an exploration of gendered fashion, the mannequins presented an idealised fashion plate version of the body, rather than the bodies of 'real' people. The Gallery of Costume also employs the KCI mannequin. Currently, they are used to exhibit eighteenth century dress in the display *An Age of Elegance*.

Along with the KCI forms, British museums adopted the V&A mannequins. Anthea Jarvis used these figures at the Gallery of Costume for the displays, *New Woman: New Look* (1997) and *A Suit of Her Own* (2002). Miles Lambert continues to advocate their use at the Gallery of Costume. Consequently, they were included, as compromise, in one case of the display, *A Perfect Lady,* that I curated at the Gallery of Costume in 2010. I had resisted using these mannequins as their aesthetic, in my view, is somewhat dated. I had first seen these mannequins on a visit to the V&A as a child, but as a curator, following the practices and ideas I had been schooled in, I had only ever used invisible mannequins or headless dressmaker's forms. In 2014,

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[310] Paul Sweetman, "Shop-Window Dummies? Fashion, the Body and Emergent Socialities," Entwistle and Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing*, 2001, 59.

[311] Harold Koda, *Personal Interview*, 22 June 2010.

Lambert switched to using simple dressmaker's busts for temporary exhibitions at the Gallery of Costume and Manchester Art Gallery and concedes that they are more in keeping with current curatorial thinking and conservation practices (particularly the practices advocated by the V&A). Figure 2.28 illustrates Lambert's debut of these forms in the exhibition *Cotton Couture*. With the evolution of the V&A's curatorial practices, the museum set aside the Ryman figures in favour of more simplistic figures.[312]

V&A Curator Susan North explains that numerous factors contributed to the rejection of the Ryman figures.[313] Foremost were issues of conservation and cost. However, North acknowledges that there was an agreement amongst V&A curators that the Ryman mannequins 'had had their twenty years in the spotlight and that a more abstract, 'invisible' mannequin was in keeping with other "fashions" in museum display.'[314] For the 2005 redisplay of the Costume Court, North and her colleagues Sonnet Stanfill and Lucy Johnson returned to the style of headless dressmaker forms adopted by Thornton in 1962 and the simple full-bodied figures used for temporary displays since the 1990s.[315] The most recent redevelopment of the court in 2010-2012 continued this combination of headless forms, plastic mannequins in uniform shades of a single colour without heads,[316] and mannequins

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[312] The Ryman figures began to be removed from display in 2001, when approximately half of the *Four Hundred Years of Fashion* display was taken down in order to expand the temporary display area. In 2003, the remainder of the 1982 display *Four Hundred Years of Fashion* was removed.

[313] The Ryman figures proved to have numerous design flaws that made them unsuitable for long-term display: the top-heavy male figures began to lean backwards over time. A hole in the female figure, necessary for height adjustment, caused the fibreglass to off-gas, which stained numerous garments. Had the figures been sturdy enough for reuse, North says that they would still not have been able to afford to refit them for the new display. The budget for the 2005 and 2012 redisplay of the Costume Court was significantly less than that for the 1982 display. North, *Personal Interview*, 2013.

[314] North, *Personal Interview*, 2013.

[315] Stockman and Lindsay B manufactured the mannequins. North, *Personal Interview*, 2013.

[316] The colour of the mannequins designates their place in the chronological schematic of the gallery.

with bald heads and anonymous facial features that abandoned any pretence that these simulacra had an individual character (Fig. 2.29 and Fig. 2.30).

The abstract mannequins advocated by the V&A are unambiguous in their status as inert objects. However, abstracted forms, rather than distancing the museum from the associations of mimetic mannequins, have returned it to the familiar rhetoric of the uncanny corpse. It was this type of figure, used in the Pierre Cardin exhibition, that Wilson criticised in *Fashion and the Post Modern Body*.[317] Whether entirely mimetic or diluted to the limit of human likeness, representational mannequins cannot escape the criticism that surrounds effigy culture. Thus, the complete eradication of heads, faces, and any part of the visible body was perhaps the logical conclusion of the process of abstracting the museum mannequin. In the final section of this chapter, I will analyse the invisible mannequin and the ideas they embody, drawing on examples of exhibitions where they have been employed to tell contrasting narratives about the relationship of dress to the body.

Presence and Absence: The Invisible Mannequin

Haldane credits the invention of invisible mannequins, so called because they are cut to mirror the exact outline of garments, to Shirley Eng, conservator at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology New York.[318] In its most extreme form, invisible mannequin made of transparent acrylic, such as those currently used in the Bowes Museum's Fashion & Textile Gallery, enable visitors to see both the inside and outside of garments (Fig. 2.31). The form of the invisible mannequin, which focuses attention on the material qualities of dress and its metonymic trace of the body, I argue, owes an intellectual debt to Buck's ideas outlined at the start of this chapter. The Guggenheim's controversial *Giorgio Armani* exhibition in 2000 brought these mannequins international attention (Fig. 2.32). In the following two decades, they have been adopted by fine art, decorative art, and social history museums

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[317] Wilson, "Fashion and the Postmodern Body," 1993, 15.

[318] Haldane, *The Search for the Perfect Body*,1999, 3.

internationally.[319] In the different interpretative contexts of these museums, invisible mannequins operate at opposite ends of the spectrum of presence and absence. They can appear to absent the body from narratives of fashion. Or, conversely, they can enable curators to create exhibitions focusing on the personal significance of dress worn by an individual, though now absent, body. The exhibitions *Form Follows Fashion* (Museum at FIT, 2004) and *Reveal and Conceal* (McCord Museum, 2009) represent these two different approaches.

In the exhibition *Form Follows Fashion* curator Valerie Steele presented fashion as an abstract art form. Spot-lit dresses displayed upon invisible mannequins appeared to stand on their own as 'self-sufficient sculpture.' [320] (Fig. 2.33) Invisibility was the trope of the exhibition; the installation mirrored the exhibition's absence of a narrative thread. Without linear, predefined paths or themes to follow, visitors were free to take circuitous routes through the exhibits, creating any number of open-ended stories about the form, shape, and construction of fashion. It is the opinion of *Guardian* newspaper journalist Barbara Brownie that contemporary audiences are accustomed to viewing dress in contexts other than those related to the body; for example, in retail settings where clothing is often displayed hung from racks or folded.[321] Brownie disagrees with Buck's assertion that dress is dependent upon the body. This position informs her article *Fashion Nobodies: How Clothes Look Different on Display,* in which she states:

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[319] Invisible mannequins have notably been used by the Museum at FIT, the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, the American Textile History Museum Massachusetts, the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, the Museum of London, Kensington Palace and the Bowes Museum – who worked with exhibition designers Blue to develop a clear acrylic mannequin for their new permanent Fashion & Textile Gallery that opened in 2010.

[320] Eugenia Paulicelli, "Exhibition Review: Form Follows Fashion," *Fashion Theory* 11.1 (2007) 110.

[321] Barbara Brownie, "Fashion Nobodies: How Clothes Look Different On Display," *Guardian* (9 July 2013). <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/costume-and-culture/2013/jul/09/fashion-nobodies-clothes-different-display?CMP=twt_gu.>.10 July 2015.

When we see a garment on a model or mannequin, it is understood
that it's communicating the identity of a person. An outfit on a
body suggests a certain lifestyle or role. In rigged displays, clothes
are removed from the context of being worn. We are forced to see
them for their own merits… Only by separating the identities of
the wearer and the garment can we appreciate clothing for its own
merits.[322]

Following Brownie's argument, the invisible mannequin employed within *Form Follows Function* is another form of bodiless display enabling dress as an object to replace the body as the subject. Eugenia Paulicelli celebrates this approach, writing in her review of *Form Follows Fashion* for *Fashion Theory* that, freed from a visible body substitute, the exhibits 'reveal their soul.'[323] However, Joanne Entwistle argues that this form of museum display, in which 'dress is pulled apart from the body/self… makes the garment into a fetish.'[324] It is undeniable that invisible mannequins can support the production of narratives other than those focused on dress/body/identity. However, I argue that invisible mannequins are not a bodiless form of display, as both Paulicelli and Entwistle might assume. Even when the formal and stylistic qualities of garments are the focus of an exhibition's narrative, the body is still present when displayed upon an invisible mannequin. In this context, it is the foundation upon which the sculptural form of the garment is built (albeit the form of the garment might externally disguise or distort the natural lines of body). In both *Form Follows Fashion* and my next case study, *Reveal and Conceal*, the invisible mannequin bridges a complex intersection of absence and presence. Here, I briefly return to Buck's writings to explain this statement. Buck understood that dress is the material representation of absent bodies. In 1958 she stated:

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[322] Barbara Brownie, "Fashion Nobodies," 2013.

[323] Paulicelli, "Form Follows Fashion," 2007, 114.

[324] Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 2000, 10.

The costumes of past generations were fashioned, not only
from the materials which remain, but also by a living body,
which subject to the ideal form of the period in which it
was worn, carried itself in a particular way and was often
moulded and emphasized at certain points by imposed
structures of bone, wood or metal. Costume displayed in
museums often appears dull and lifeless because this is not
sufficiently realized and studied.[325]

The 'Platt bodies' physically manifested Buck's ideas; these headless forms
reinstated the body into the garments. Furthermore, I suggest that without any
representational parts of the body visible in the gallery space, body and garment are
conflated. Likewise, Paulicelli has noted that garments displayed upon invisible
mannequins appear as 'bodies in themselves.'[326] Invisible mannequins can function
as a positive imprint of the missing body. Forms, such as those created by curator
Dennita Sewell for the exhibition *Woman: Mother, Muse, Goddess* (Pheonix Art
Museum, 2000), represent the distinct bodies of individual women. Sewell wrapped
wet buckram, a pliable cotton fabric, around dressmakers' forms padded to fit the
proportions of the exhibits, distended by years of wear. The resulting cast accurately
and authentically replicated the real bodies that had given life and meaning to the
exhibits. In turn, the materiality of the exhibits reinforced or challenged the
archetypes and stereotypes explored in the exhibition's narrative. The corporeal
traces of the absent bodies in these garments pointed evocatively to the abstract
conceptualisation of women as mother, muse, and goddess.

The space vacated by corporeal representations can in certain exhibitionary
conditions, summon the absent living body more evocatively than the presence of an
uncannily corpse-like effigy. Display techniques designed to make the missing body

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[325] Buck, *Handbook for Museum Curators*, 1958, 21.

[326] Paulicelli, "Form Follows Fashion," 2007, 114.

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appear in Sandberg's words as 'substantial in absentia'[327] rely on the powerful corporeal trace inherent in the historical fragment. Sandberg's research on the ethnographic museum project to recover the lost folk body at the turn of the last century describes a form of the practice remarkably close to the invisible mannequin, certainly as it is employed in exhibitions such as *Woman* and *Reveal or Conceal*. At these Scandinavian museums, the arrangement of ethnographic fragments in immersive room settings evoked an elusive body. As Sandberg summarises, 'the gap created by the missing body could spur on the spectator fantasy to create personal pictures which would be much more imaginative than an actual representation and recovery of the lost body.'[328] Similarly, curators including Sewell and Cynthia Cooper work from the assertion that the invisible mannequin acts as a spatial effigy demanding the imaginary participation of the viewer. The missing body is conjured up by the 'empty shells' of their extant dress (as Buck once described worn historic dress).[329]

Reveal or Conceal, curated by Cooper at the McCord Museum in 2009, explored the ways in which fashion covers or conceals the body and in so doing creates the sexualised female body as a socially constituted object. Cooper recognised that an exhibition of the ways in which dress articulates human corporeality presented an opportunity to address how the museum profession could actively contribute towards the critical framing of the fashionable body. She took as her starting point Wilson's articulation of how the very absence of the body brings its presence into sharp relief. In this statement, Cooper discerned profound implications for the ways in which museums exhibit clothing.[330] Thus, she began planning her exhibition by posing a

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[327] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 4.

[328] Mark B. Sandberg, "Effigy and Narrative: Looking into the Nineteenth Century Folk Museum," Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995) 344.

[329] Buck, *History in Costume*, 1958.

[330] Cynthia Cooper, *Reveal or Conceal: Addressing the Body in a Museum Exhibition*, unpublished transcript of a presentation given to the Costume Society of America national symposium, May 2010, McCord Museum Archives.

set of questions. How might a museum exhibition of clothing foreground the absent body? How might objects be put to use in an exhibition that takes the body as its main focus? Whose body is being represented?[331] This latter question was crucial to formulating the exhibition's narrative. Culturally constructed ideas around the exposure and modesty embodied in fashion affect the mass population. However, ideas about what constitutes the typically fashionable body explain away dissonance, creating a flat, homogenous ideal.[332] Recognising the limitations of typicality, Cooper aimed to construct a collective experience consisting of multiple and diverse bodies. The exhibition opened with a text panel acknowledging the ways in which fashion functions to normalise the body. It continued by staking out the exhibition's aim to represent historical subjects as they were in reality, rather than as society's idealised form. Within the exhibition, this aim was achieved quite simply by juxtaposing photographs of a variety of women taken on the same date. Exhibits larger and smaller than the fashionable ideal and exhibits bearing the physical testimony of their relationship to the body reiterated bodily diversity.

Cooper's mannequin selection was central to the construction of the body in *Reveal or Conceal*. The white museum mannequin that the McCord Museum had used in previous temporary fashion exhibitions were, Cooper believed, unsuitable for this show.[333] The assumed neutrality and rigidity of these hard fiberglass figures undermined the sense of the body as a culturally and physically malleable form. Expressing the body's slippery cultural margins, she believed, could better be achieved through the device of the invisible mannequin.[334] Into these forms, the exhibition designers placed LED lights covered with a coloured gel (Fig. 2.34). The reddish glow the lights shed highlighted the mannequin's internal void and thus the missing body. Cooper hoped that by leaving the body ambiguous it would leave the

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[331] *Reveal and Conceal, exhibition planning document*, nd, McCord Museum Archives.

[332] See Cunnington's ideas discussed in Chapter 1.

[333] Cynthia Cooper, *Personal Interview*, 29 June 2010.

[334] Cooper, *Personal Interview*, 2010.

visitor free to imagine the form that had once filled the empty garments.[335] This
process was aided by the use of large-scale images of segmented body parts, cropped
of faces, and identifying characteristics, which Cooper hoped would encourage the
empathetic imagination of viewers (Fig. 2.34).[336] Personal testimony also provided
embodied context for the exhibits. Stories told in the labels linked objects with
generic cultural attitudes to the body. They accounted for the ways in which
individuals physically experienced these cultural debates through their bodies.[337]

Reveal or Conceal reflects the paradigm shift in attitudes towards the fashionable
body that had occurred in both academia and museums by the end of the twentieth
century. From the late 1970s, the body was rewritten into critical theory as
philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians concerned themselves
with the social processes that create and shape the body. Foucault's *Discipline and
Punish* (1975) brought critical attention to the body in social life by examining the
ways in which the institutions and disciplines of modernity control and manipulate
bodies. Following Foucault, fashion theory eventually developed a more
sophisticated approach to analysing the ability of the fashionable body to perform
and articulate identity, gender, and class. Wilson's comments in *Fashion and The
Post Modern Body* (1992), highlighting the centrality of the living body to fashion
studies, opened up the possibilities of corporeal engagement in displays of fashion.
The 1990s witnessed the emergence of 'body exhibitions,' notably those curated by
Koda and Richard Martin at the Costume Institute in the Metropolitan Museum
between 1993-1996.[338] Koda and Martin drew upon Foucault's model of the body as
an instrument of culture to flesh out their manifesto that 'dress bears culture and
bares culture.'[339] However, criticism of Foucault's framework, and of exhibitions

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[335] Cooper, *Personal Interview*, 2010.

[336] Cooper, *Personal Interview*, 2010.

[337] Cooper, *Personal Interview*, 2010.

[338] *Infra-Apparel* (1993), *Waist Not: The Migration of the Waist 1800-1960* (1994) and *Two by Two*
(1996).

[339] Richard Martin and Harold Koda, *Infra-Apparel* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
1993) 11.

relying heavily upon it, noted that they offer up the body as a passive entity to be acted upon by social forces.[340] These texts and exhibitions lacked an in-depth consideration of the agency of individuals or the materiality of the body.[341]Addressing this deficit, contemporary fashion theorists drew upon the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to take into account the embodied nature of fashion.[342] Entwistle has stated that a phenomenological framework applied to dress acknowledges 'the way in which dress works on the body and mediates the experience of self.'[343] Such an approach, therefore, focuses on the experiential dimensions of being located in the body and attends to the ways in which dress works on the body's surface. Museums bound by conservation guidelines prohibiting the wearing of historical dress must seek alternative methodologies for relating dress as a situated bodily practice in exhibitions. Invisible mannequins, such as those employed by Sewell and Cooper in *Woman* and *Reveal and Conceal,* are a curatorial device for engaging an embodied understanding of dress. In these exhibitions, the audience is implicitly invited to inhabit the void created by the absent body and imagine their body's fit to the garment. The invisible mannequin's invitation to the audience to cross the imaginary divide of the display and be simultaneously inside and outside of their own bodies signifies a change in curatorial attitudes towards the mannequin in museological practice since the 1950s whence this study commenced. Therefore, an appropriate way to begin concluding this chapter is in drawing some comparisons between Cooper's intentions in using the invisible mannequin and Buck's handling of the 'Platt body' at the Gallery of Costume.

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[340] Valerie Steele, "Exhibition Review: Two by Two," *Fashion Theory* 1.1 (1997) 105–10.

[341] Sweetman, "Shop-Window Dummies?" 2001, 66.

[342] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Illinois*:* Northwestern University Press, 1976) and Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 2000.

[343] Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," *Fashion Theory* 4.3 (2000) 327.

Conclusion

The invisible mannequin in *Reveal or Conceal* acts out the same assertions about the relationship of dress to the body as those articulated by Buck in the 1950s. Cooper acknowledges, as Buck did, that absent bodies physically and culturally shape worn dress. Platt bodies solidified that absence by filling out the garment with three-dimensional mass. In Buck's displays, the mannequin and the garment converged as a positive cast of the missing body. The restored body was an assumed presence at the Gallery of Costume. Thus, the curator developed the museum's chronological narrative without making direct reference to the physicality of the fashionable body with its troubling associations of sexuality, commerce, and death. Buck's display apparatus presented dress as a subject worthy of academic study. Her headless mannequins serially arranged behind glass in clean minimal vitrines were ontologically separate from the audience. It was a display context deliberately distinct from the immersive tableaux of the waxwork museum and the shop window with their dissolving fourth wall. Arranged thus, Buck's displays were to be considered as cerebrally and seriously as one might view natural history or archaeology. Conversely, invisible mannequins in *Reveal or Conceal* make a virtue of negative space; their physical void intended to prompt an imaginative reconstruction of the body. An interesting binary opposition emerges from the comparison of Buck's and Cooper's exhibitions. In Buck's displays, where there is a presence, in the shape of her solid forms, there is an absence—a missing dialogue about the fashionable body. In Cooper's exhibition, where there ought to be absence, the void left by the missing body, there is presence—the imaginative reconstruction of the multiple bodies of real women. This reversal of presence and absence is explained by the evolving academic discourse around the fashionable body in the museum that has resulted in the body moving from the margins to the centre of dress history.

At this point I return to the questions posed by my experiences undertaking the mannequin audit that prompted this chapter's investigation. First, why does the Gallery of Costume contain so many attempts to frame the body? The broad answer

is that the museum's three-dimensional representations of the body existing on a scale from realistic to abstracted reflect the fluid status of the fashionable body in dress history. Of course, they were also chosen for a host of practical and financial reasons and are indicative of changing curatorial preferences and tastes. However, bringing an awareness of the current theoretical state of the fashionable body to their practice will hopefully enable curators to act with a greater degree of reflexivity when selecting human simulacra. Second, how could I account for the unease I felt in the presence of the Gallery of Costume's body substitutes, particularly the disembodied wax heads? This question can be answered with recourse to Gordon Beam's explanation of the binary opposition of presence and absence. Beam writes that 'the absence of what ought to be present is eerie, the presence of what ought to be absent is uncanny.'[344] Following this prescription, Buck's displays of headless forms, denying an embodied account of dress, might be considered eerie.[345] In contrast, the waxwork or the realistic fashion mannequin are uncanny. The uncomfortable presence of death, decay, and commodity fetishism lingers around these approximations of the living human body.

Fashion historian Rebecca Arnold states that curators 'wish for presence, desire embodiment but fear the absence that haunts the museum.'[346] By probing more deeply into the binary oppositions that underscore the museum mannequin, curators may develop a more nuanced understanding of how human simulacra operate. I draw this chapter to a close by providing examples of experimental exhibitionary practice consciously engaging with the dialectical framing of the body and its copy

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[344] Gordon C. F. Beam, "Wittgenstein and the Uncanny," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 76.1 (1993) 33.

[345] On July 22 2011, The *Daily Mail* reported that Queen Elizabeth II remarked that the Duchess of Cambridge's wedding dress displayed upon a headless dressmaker's form at Buckingham Palace was 'made to look very creepy.'
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2017716/Duchess-Cambridge-Kate-Middleton-Queen-view-royal-wedding-dress.html>. 4 August 2015.

[346] Rebecca Arnold, "Refused Presences," *Artangel 500s* (9 June 2010)
<http://www.artangel.org.uk/500s/rebecca_arnold>. 11 August 2015.

in the museum.

The Concise Dictionary of Dress curated by Judith Clark in 2010 at Blythe House,
the V&A's collection store, confronted the absences that haunt museum display
practices. In this installation, roller racking normally used for storage was pulled
back to reveal a row of dresses suspended on mannequins. Clark mounted the
dresses on the museum's white headless forms hung from metal hooks (Fig. 2.35).
Opposite each dress, she placed a wax mould sculpted in the shape the garment
might have assumed when worn on the body. It appeared as though the racks had
closed, leaving the imprint of garments upon the wax. Like waxwork figures, these
moulds resonated with the materiality of the medium. Their plasticity recalled the
warm flesh of the body that once inhabited the garments. However, sitting opposite
the hard, headless mannequins, the moulds whispered of the waxworks' antithetical
associations, the missing body and absence of life. The installation behaved as a
physical manifestation of a Freudian traumatic memory – 'a mnemonic symbol'.[347]
Archaeologist Jennifer Wallace writes that, to Freud, these symbols were 'an imprint
of the original trace, a further development upon the original form.'[348] Clark's
installation asks the audience to act like the analyst whose task 'is to interpret the
distortion, to try to imagine the original experience from the painful imprint which it
had left.'[349] To describe these imprints as painful is perhaps an overstatement.
However, they do suggest the memory of the garment as it was originally worn
before it assumed its life as a stored museum object. Beyond that, they hint at
troubling aspects of human simulacra that curators have yet to confront fully.
Clark's installations recall the bodies associated with archived museum pieces
through the imaginative participation of her audience. She summarises this process

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[347] Karin Saunders, *Bodies in the Bog and the Archeological Imagination* (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 2009) 55.

[348] Jennifer Wallace, *Digging the Dirt: The Archeological Imagination* (London: Duckworth, 2004)
95, cited by Saunders 55.

[349] Wallace, *Digging the Dirt*, 2004, 55.

with the phrase 'anthropomorphic imagination makes clothes magical.'[350] Similarly, artist Charles LeDray's installation *Men's Suits* (Artangel in 2009) constructed bodies in the imagination of the audience.

LeDray composed his installation from a vast quantity of miniature, apparently second-hand menswear. He arranged the garments into three Lilliputian-sized scenes from the world of vintage clothing - a sparse tailor's showroom, the chaotic backroom of a charity shop, and the sales room of a second-hand clothes shop (Fig. 2.36). In each scene, the human players are assumed to be off-stage. All of the items of clothing carried a feeling of having had a life, of having once dressed somebody. In the installation, they waited for another body to reactivate their life. In the sorting room of the charity shop, bulging bags of clothes were dumped on pallets (Fig. 2.37), and in the sales room, it appeared that a recently departed customer had rifled through a pile of disheveled jumpers (Fig. 2.38). The poignancy of these objects lay in their implied proximity to the body. Although LeDray's 'garments' had never been worn on a real human body, they nevertheless acted as memento mori, holding the memory of an absent person. Paradoxically, they were more powerful because they had been released from representative bodies. *Domus'* reviewer Michele Robecchi, summarised: 'In the absence of a human presence… they are transformed into attitudes.'[351]

The transformation of scale in LeDray's installation created an intensely symbolic atmosphere that intensified the implied human vulnerability of the garments. Curator and art historian Suzanne Ramljak has noted the effect of diminished scale on the stance a viewer takes vis-a-vis an object. Small objects require us to get close 'like peering into a peephole we must gather ourselves around a point and focus with

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[350] Judith Clark, *Statement VI*, unpublished essay, nd.
<http://www.judithclarkcostme.com/publications/essays_05.php>. 16 June 2012.

[351] Michele Robecchi, *Domus* (April 2009).
<http://www.artangel.org.uk//projects/2009/mens_suits/press_coverage/press_coverage.> 4 August 2013.

intent; we must become fixated.'[352] Indeed, in *Men's Suits*, the process of looking involved bending over and peering into the installation. The physical proximity demanded by this mode of looking invited the viewer to get lost in the complexity of the material details of LeDray's imaginary world. Through intense concentration, the miniscule can seem monumental. In this context, the garments took on significance beyond the bounds of their material constraints. Intimate experiences are, as the word implies, inwardly directed. The intimacy fostered by LeDray in *Men's Suits* enabled viewers to move beyond the sensory constraints of museum display and engage with dress on a phenomenological level. Kate Kellaway's review in the *Observer* captured her emotive response to the installation. Kellaway's imagination filled in the scenes' sensory blanks: she felt what it might have been like to 'rifle through the tiny racks' and smell the 'stale sweat' of the 'grubby used clothes.'[353] LeDray's play of scale and his arrangement of objects constructed an embodied experience of dress. The installation prompted the viewer to go beyond merely imagining a body to considering the life and biography of that person. It is to biography that I turn my attention in Chapter 3. The starting point for this chapter is Clark's assertion that 'anthropomorphic imagination makes clothes magical.'[354] This statement will be deconstructed in order to theorise the interactions that occur in the museum between objects, curators, and visitors when reconstructing the lives associated with dress.

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[352] Suzanne Ramljak, "Intimate Matters: Objects and Subjectivity," Anna Fariello and Paula Owen, eds., *Objects & Meaning: New Perspectives* (Lanham MD, Scarecrow Press, 2004) 191.

[353] Kate Kellaway, "Savile Row Meets the Borrowers," *Observer* (12 July 2009).

[354] Judith Clark, *Statement VI*, unpublished essay, nd.
<http://www.judithclarkcostme.com/publications/essays_05.php>. October 8, 2010.

Chapter 3: Animating Biography and Personality in the Museum

In March 2010, the Gallery of Costume reopened with a new display titled *From Suffragettes to Supermodels*. Similar to Buck's permanent displays, this one charted sartorial developments from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. However, Miles Lambert deviated from Buck's approach by relating fashion's chronology to individual women of style, and to archetypal figures. In this chapter, I aim to address the question: How can exhibitions of dress animate biography and personality and to what effect?

A key exhibit in Lambert's display is an outfit representing an archetypal suffragette, composed of a mauve serge dress circa 1910 made by the elite dressmaker Mascotte, paired with an original 'Votes for Women' sash (Fig. 3.1). The exhibit label informed the viewer that this smart and fashionable dress was typical of the type of outfit worn by a young middle-class suffragette for public meetings and events. However, no such woman ever wore this dress. Instead, it belonged to Heather Firbank, the daughter of the affluent, upper-class Conservative MP, Sir Thomas Firbank. Miss Firbank's life and interests were entirely aligned with the activities of a woman of her class and social circle. She had no known connection to the militant political campaigning of the suffrage movement to which Lambert had linked her dress.

Lambert confirms that he had speculated a connection between these two disparate garments because the gallery's collection includes no complete outfits that are known to have been worn by a suffragette.[355] The museum has significant holdings of middle-class dress of this period collected by Cunnington, who had deliberately separated these garments from their provenance. As discussed in Chapter 1, he was convinced that focusing on the individuals associated with garments added nothing to the discipline of fashion history beyond the personal and sentimental. However, contemporary fashion theory has convincingly argued for the agency of individuals

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[355] Miles Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 14 March 2012.

in the construction, performance, and contestation of sartorial identity.[356] Fashion is not merely the outcome of the system of production; it can also be the expression of a person's specific place in the world. Thus, bringing attention to the individuals who wore, or might have worn, garments can broaden the narratives that exhibitions of dress can tell. However, Lambert's interpretation of Firbank's dress raised pertinent questions about how curators represent the details of a person's life. Most obviously, in this instance, was it appropriate to posthumously attach Firbank's name and extant dress to a political cause with which she had no affiliation? Was Lambert misleading the audience by conflating an individual with a stereotype? In this chapter, I aim to probe the differences between exhibitions that represent the historical specificities of a person's biography and persona in contrast to those that present biography and persona as a fluid concept subject to both the curator's and visitors' imaginative interpretations of objects.

Fashion theorist Peter McNeil and experimental fashion curator Judith Clark suggest that specific biographic information is not of primary interest to most non-specialist visitors to dress exhibitions. McNeil's 2008 analysis of recent developments in fashion exhibitions suggested that audiences filter biographies through their contemporary experiences and feelings.[357] By contrast, Clark's curatorial manifesto, *Statement VI*, declared that dress is made meaningful through the imaginative construction of characters. In her thesis, 'anthropomorphic imagination makes clothes magical.'[358] She concludes that 'we dream and imagine stories that are inhabited by clothed people. The stories are powerful because of their associations,

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[356] Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London: Routledge, 1994); Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Efrat Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life* (London: Sage, 1995); Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

[357] Peter McNeil, ""We're Not in the Fashion Business: Fashion in the Museum and the Academy," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 65-82.

[358] Judith Clark, *Statement VI.* Unpublished Essay, n.d. <http://www.judithclarkcostume.com/publications/essays_05.php>.16 June 2011.

not factual accuracy.'[359] Following Clark's logic, Lambert's curation of Firbank's dress might be considered a valid curatorial strategy. However, more traditional curators, notably Alexandra Palmer, are strident in their criticism of exhibitions that divorce garments from their unique personal, cultural, and social contexts.[360]

Clearly, biography is a complex interpretive tool, but despite having become an increasingly popular strategy for interpreting clothing, fashion museology has paid it scant critical consideration. The British press, on the other hand, has roundly criticised exhibitions featuring celebrity wardrobes.[361] However, journalists' reviews reveal more about their attitudes towards celebrity than about curatorial practices. To redress the deficit of museological critique, I intend to theorise the interactions that occur between curator, audience, and objects through which characters, real and imagined are constructed in dress exhibitions. My analysis will focus primarily on curatorial processes, rather than audience evaluation. I will adopt the approach of Mary Bouquet and Nuno Porto in *Science, Magic and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic.* Following their example, I will consider how the agency of the curator intersects with the agency of the visiting public when interacting with objects in the museum.[362] My intention is to deconstruct Clark's ambiguous assertion that 'anthropomorphic imagination makes clothes magical.' Neither Clark nor Anne Hollander, who has also written of fashion's 'ghostly

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[359] Clark, *Statement VI.* n.d.

[360] Alexandra Palmer, "Untouchable: Creating Desire and Knowledge in Museum Costume and Textile Exhibitions," *Fashion Theory*, 12. 1 (2008) 55.

[361] Annalisa Barbieri, "The Remains of Grace," *New Statesman* (1 May 2010). 25 August 2015. <http://www.newstatesman.com/film/2010/05/grace-kelly-clothes-dress>. 25 August 2015; Ros Drinkwater, "Divine Versace Creations at Victoria and Albert," *The Post.ie* (October 20, 2002); Rachel Cooke, "When is an Art Show Not an Art Show? When It's Just a Fashion Ad," *The Observer* (June 22, 2008); Tim Teeman, "Kylie at V&A," *Times* (February 7, 2007) <http://timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/visual_arts/article1341366.ece.>. 25 August 2015; Vanessa Thorpe, "V&A Under Fire Over Kylie Show" Observer (4 February, 2007). <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/feb/04/pop.arts>. 25 August 2015.

[362] Mary Bouquet and Nuno Porto, eds., *Science, Magic and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005).

magic'[363], qualify their use of the word by explaining how magic is performed within the museum space. Indeed, their application of the term implies a mystical, instinctive process. However, *magic* is a term loaded with anthropological connotations and is applied as such to the context of exhibitions by Bouquet in her essay in *Science, Magic and Religion*.[364] Bouquet's work makes it clear that magic in the museum is a construction involving the cooperative participation of curators and audiences. In her words, enchantment is 'actively constituted by both producers and consumers through the repertoire of objects, images and places they have at their disposal.'[365] Thus, anthropomorphic magic is not a passive concept but rather a deliberate process that can bring dress to life in the minds of visitors and curators.

This chapter begins by examining the ways in which visitors and curators engage with the lives associated with dress in exhibitions. In this discussion, I will speculate on why, how, and to what effect garments can evocatively recall past lives. To this end, I draw on fashion theory exploring the materiality of dress and the construction of sartorial identity,[366] museological research into memory and materiality,[367] and

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[363] Anne Hollander, "Masters of Fashion," *Connoisseur* 218: 912 (Jan 1998), 53.

[364] Bouquet draws upon the work of social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. See: Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (London: Souvenir Press, 1948).

[365] Bouquet and Porto, *Science, Magic and Religion*, 2005, 21.

[366] Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, 1994; Entwistle and Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing*, 2001; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 2000; Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity,* 1995.

[367] Fiona Candlin, "Touch, and the Limits of the Rational Museum *or* Can Matter Think?" *Sense and Society* 3.3 (2008) 277-97; Jeffrey David Feldman, "Contact Points: Museums and the Lost Body Problem," Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, Ruth Bliss Philips, eds., *Sensible Objects: Colonalism, Museums and Material Culture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006) 245-68; Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Susan M. Pearce, *Collecting in Contemporary Practice* (London: Sage, 1998).

the discipline referred to as the 'anthropology of the senses'[368]. This body of work collectively points to the sensual and physiological nature of memory embedded in objects, particularly those directly related to the body. Thus, I shall argue that the close physical proximity of dress to the body can open up a powerful imaginative relationship between object and viewer within the museum.[369] This assertion prompts a question that I aim to address in this chapter: How can curators facilitate this relationship to encourage visitors to imagine the lives associated with dress in the museum? I will relate these ideas and concepts, in the second half of this chapter, to four exhibitions that aimed to engage visitors with the sartorial biographies of 'real' women: Iris Barrel Apfel (*Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection,* Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met), 2005-2006); Jill Ritblat (*Getting Dressed: One Woman's Wardrobe,* V&A, 1998), Kylie Minogue (*Kylie*, V&A, 2007); and *Grace Kelly: Style Icon* (V&A, 2010). Wardrobe exhibitions that display the clothing of individuals, both famous and 'ordinary' women, have developed over the past three decades into the blockbuster genre of dress exhibitions. The 271,000 visitors who attended the V&A's *Kylie* exhibition are indicative of the large audiences this type of show attracts.[370] In the next part of this chapter, I will examine how and why audiences and curators engage with the lives and personalities associated with worn dress.

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[368] Constance Classen, *The Book of Touch* (Oxford: Berg, 2005) 277-278; Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993); Constance Classen and David Howes, ed., *The Variety of Sensory Experience. A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1991), Michael Bull and Jon P Mitchell, eds., *Ritual, Performance and the Senses* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4, 13; David Howes and Anthony Synnott, eds., *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994); Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth Bliss Philips, eds., *Sensible Objects: Colonalism, Museums and Material Culture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006).

[369] This argument follows on from Chapter 2's conclusion about the imaginative relationship of dress to the body.

[370] Number of recorded visits for the exhibition's duration (8 February – 10 June 2007). HC859, *Victoria and Albert Museum Annual Report and Accounts 2006-2007* (London, 23 July 2007) <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/250620/0859.pdf> 11 January 2007.

Memory and Materiality: Engaging with the Lives Associated with Dress

Reporting on the V&A's 1913 exhibition of historical dress collected by the artist Talbot Hughes, the *Times* wrote: 'There is about clothes, as a mere subject for exhibition, an attractiveness, which nothing else so strongly offers, because nothing else is quite so intimately connected with humanity.'[371] The *Times* continued their review by noting the audiences' imaginative responses to dress displayed in the exhibition:

> The ordinary visitor finds them fascinating because his mind (or hers) proves obstinately romantic in contemplating them and imagines into each female dress some "dear, dead woman" when the actual wearer may have been exceedingly disagreeable and ugly, into each male dress some great and handsome man (when the actual wearer may have been a very mean scoundrel and almost certainly had very unpleasant personal habits). At any rate, the shoes of children are irresistible (even when the children are alive and troublesome)… There is another good game too, that of thinking into each dress some hero or heroine of real life or fiction. Beatrix Esmond would have looked well in this; Emma wore that at Box Hill; Clara Middleton "stopped to a buttercup" over those billows.[372]

An exhibition that took place at the Museum of London two years earlier, also of historical costumes purchased from another genre painter John Seymour Lucas, was reported in much the same manner. Lucas, like Talbot Hughes, strove towards historical accuracy in his depictions of episodes in English history by clothing his

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[371] "Historical Costumes for the Nation," *Times* (November 22, 1913), Talbot Hughes Exhibition File, MA/1/M3222, V&A Archives.

[372] "Historical Costumes for the Nation," 1913.

models in the 'actual garments of the day'.[373] It was the connections, real or imagined, between these garments and heroic, historic figures represented in Lucas' *Armada* series of paintings[374] that the press seized upon:

> In the three Armada scenes… the artist was able to employ the
> very dress that [Sir Francis] Drake wore. Here we see the great
> sea-rover in his habit as he lived, and this will be one of the
> many costumes … which will be valued for actual personal
> contact and associations. It reawakens other times and other
> manners.[375]

The historical objects displayed in these early dress exhibitions existed as fragments of their original context. Displayed in the museum, these fragments evoked an imagined, distant context. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett confirms that 'historic museum exhibits stimulate the viewer to imagine their cultural heritage from the viewpoint of their present; the fragment is inflected with contemporary longings and fantasies.'[376] The process of creating museum magic is, Bouquet suggests, 'connected to contemporary social processes of identity formulation'.[377] She states:

> Museum magic, is… a way of reflecting upon the world -
> things, ourselves by creating a framework that is both
> orderly yet more than that: it uses special effects, such as
> lighting, which resemble the Trobrianders' magical prisms.

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[373] Press clipping, *Daily Telegraph* (September 5, 1911), John Seymour Lucas Exhibition File, Museum of London Archives.

[374] *The Armada in Sight*, (1880), *Preparing for the Voyage* (1885), *The Surrender of De Valdes aboard the Revenge during the Armada* (1889), and *News of the Spanish Armada* (1893).

[375] "Sartor Historicus," *Pall Mall Gazette* (September 5, 1911), John Seymour Lucas Exhibition File, Museum of London Archives.

[376] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998) 18.

[377] Bouquet and Porto, *Science Magic and Religion*, 2005, 21.

It is magic in that it subjects only part – a small but

significant part – of that world to such reflection in some

ideal historically and socially situated manner.'[378]

The anthropomorphic magic played out in the early twentieth century exhibitions of genre painters discussed earlier was a conduit for contemporary audiences to understand their world and themselves. Julia Petrov believes these exhibitions reinforced a unified sense of British heritage during a period of political instability.[379] On the eve of the First World War, these displays offered the British public a tangible connection to the past. In the case of Lucas' exhibition, the public was imaginatively engaged with an episode in British history in which the nation successfully overcame a political threat—the attempted invasion of Spanish Armada in 1588 and Drake's capture of a Spanish ship. The anthropomorphic magic woven around the exhibits imaginatively associated with Drake (although not actually worn by him[380]) enabled the public's imaginary projection into a glorified reconstruction of British history.[381] Thus, there appears to be an element of nostalgia in audiences' imaginative reconstruction of past lives. Nostalgia conforms to historian Raphael Samuel's configuration of memory as the province of subjective feeling.[382] Nostalgia's defining quality, Wilson suggests, is the feelings produced at the intersection of an imagined past with present-day sensibilities.[383] Rather than being a

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[378] Bouquet and Porto, *Science Magic and Religion*, 2005, 21.

[379] Julia Petrov, *The Habit of Their Age: Genre Painers, Dress Collecting and Museums, 1910-1914*, Unpublished Dissertation, Master of Decorative Art History, University of Brighton (2006).

[380] Beatrice Behlen, *Personal Interview*, 26 October 2012.

[381] Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker explain that "Philip II attempted to invade England, but his plans miscarried, partly because of his own mismanagement, and partly because the defensive efforts of the English and their Dutch allies prevailed." Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker, The Spanish Armada, revised ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 5.

[382] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994) ix.

[383] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) 101.

longing for a faraway past, nostalgia seeks to recreate the past that never was. Idealising the past in this way, Wilson notes, can enable past events to become part of an individual's accepted contemporary identity.[384]

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's conceptualisation of museum exhibits as historic fragments and Wilson's framing of nostalgia both attest to a process of identification that appears to be central to fashion's anthropomorphic magic. However, neither accounts for the material engagement of exhibits of dress with the body (discussed in Chapter 2). Here, I turn to contemporary fashion theory for insights into the relationship between dress and the body in the creation of an individual's fashionable identity. Theoretically grounded studies of fashion led by Christopher Breward, Jennifer Craik, Entwistle, Efrat Tseëlon and Wilson[385] demonstrate that the materiality of dress and its relationship to the body is key to the construction of personal narratives and identity. Entwistle states:

> Dress lies at the margins of the body and marks the boundary
> between self and other, individual and society... our dress forms
> the visible envelope of the self and, as Davis puts it, comes "to
> serve as a kind of visual metaphor for identity".[386]

The act of dressing, Sophie Woodward has demonstrated, is a practice of identity construction, and the question of 'who am I' is realised in the daily ritual of selecting

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[384] Wilson, *The Contradictions of Culture*, 2001, 101.

[385] Breward, *The Culture of Fashion*, 1995), Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, 1994; Donald Clay Johnson and Helen Bradley Foster, eds., *Dress Sense: Emotional and Sensory Experiences of the Body and Clothes* (Berg, Oxford, 2007); Entwistle and Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing*, 2001; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 2000; Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, 1995.

[386] Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," *Fashion Theory* 4.3 (2000) 327.

clothing and putting it upon the body.[387] The tactility and sensuality of fabric on skin carry forward memories of former selves, the materiality of dress, Woodward writes, enables women to remember and resituate themselves in the past.[388] Materiality thus conflates past and present selves. As Woodward so convincingly argues for the vivifying effect of fashion's materiality, can we suppose that the material relationship of dress to the body is also implicated in the reanimation of exhibits of dress in the imagination of museum visitors?

Renee Baert states that 'few objects have the mnemonic force and bodily aura of clothing.'[389] Every worn garment bears witness to a unique body. Distorted fabric that echoes a body's contours and lingering secretions of personal scent are but two of the myriad ways an individual's physicality imprints their garments. Thus, Wilson argues that because of its intimate proximity to the body dress can be totemic of individuals and the occasions on which it was worn.[390] Consequently, garments live on in the museum as concrete symbols of a person's biography. Contemporary curatorial practice, informed by material culture methdologies such as Jules Prown's object-focused approach to interpretation[391] and Igor Kopytoff's concept of 'object biographies'[392] respects the materality of garments as a witness of absent lives and

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[387] Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear,* 2007, 12.

[388] Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, 2007, 12.

[389] Renee Baert, cited in Janis Jefferies and Sue Rowley, *Gender and Identity* (Winchester: Telos, 2001) 1.

[390] Elizabeth Wilson, "Magic Fashion," *Fashion Theory* 8.4 (2004) 378-80.

[391] Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio: A Journal of American Material Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring, 1982) 1-19.

[392] Igor Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process." Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 64–91.

events.[393] In the words of Linda Baumgartan, curator of Colonial Williamburg's 2004 exhibition *The Language of Clothes*:

> Twenty-first century curators… are more likely to value an
> artifact's continuing history, evidence of age and alterations, rather
> than demand pristine, unchanged quality… who knows maybe the
> skin cells, fingernail clippings and perspiration on a garment will
> someday lead to important analytical findings about the original
> wearer.[394]

Even curators of the designer retrospective, a genre that frequently celebrates pristine clothes as an art form, have come to value the insights offered by unique worn garments tailor-made for individuals.[395] For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2007 exploration of designer Paul Poiret's oeuvre was prompted by the museum's acquisition of rare, modern pieces created by the designer for his wife and muse Denise. The primary narrative of *Poiret: King of Fashion* was the familiar story of the designer as a genius, in this instance as a modernist hero. However, the inclusion of the clothes Poiret designed for Denise signaled her influence on the designer's creativity. Caroline Evans noted in the catalogue for the exhibition the effect of these garments upon the exhibition's curators:

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[393] See: Valerie Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More than a Clothes Bag," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998); Lou Taylor, "Doing the laundry? A reassessment of object-based dress history," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998).

[394] Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002).

[395] Early examples of this trend occurred at Brooklyn Museum. Its costume collection formed from the wardrobes of many wealthy American socialites was well-suited to exhibitions demonstrating the process of creating couture for an individual client. *Dresses Made by Worth for Mrs W A Perry* (1927) and a *Decade of Design for Millicent H Rogers by Charles James* (1948) explored the work of each designer through the personal wardrobes of these two women.

Denise Poiret's ghost was raised in the objects that carried a trace
of her physical presence across the decades—the dresses with silk
linings that had once registered the imprint of her body like a
mould... there is little evidence to determine her precise role in the
Maison Paul Poiret, and in many ways she remains a mystery. The
photographs and dresses provide a unique link because they are
indexical objects that connect directly to that time, that body, that
place.[396]

In Susan Stewart's terms Denise Poiret's dresses are 'totems of the dead… by which
we carry forward a memory of the dead.'[397] In Jeffrey David Feldman's reading,
such objects are 'contact points'. His concept of contact points describes the
relationship between the human body, objects, and the museum. In his words contact
points are 'a category of [museum] object that has resulted from physical contact
with the body, and then the subsequent removal… of that body... [they] stand for the
relations between persons and objects.'[398] These types of objects, Feldman notes,
stand-in for the physical, sensory experience of the body that it represents.[399] At this
point, I pause to reflect upon how these theoretical insights informed my own
approach to exhibiting the lives associated with dress in the exhibition *Fashion &
Fancy Dress: The Messel Dress Collection 1865-2005* (Brighton Museum and Art
Gallery, 2005).

When my co-curators Amy de la Haye, Lou Taylor and I began researching the
collection of dress worn and kept by six generations of the Messel family we
uncovered a letter written by Anne, Countess of Rosse that demonstrated her

[396] Caroline Evans, "Denise Poiret: Muse or Mannequin?" Andrew Bolton, Harold Koda and Nancy
Troy, eds., *Poiret : King of Fashion* (New York: Metropolitan Museum Publications, 2007) 27.

[397] Susan Stewart, "Prologue: From the Museum of Touch," Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and
Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999) 28.

[398] Feldman, "Contact Points," 2006, 245.

[399] Feldman, "Contact Points," 2006, 245.

understanding of the significance of objects that have directly touched the body. Her words echoed that which Stewart and Feldman would later articulate. In passing over her dress collection to Brighton Museum in 1981, she wrote to the director:

> All period dresses, if they have that meaning of being worn, if only once, become frail. Think what Mary Queen of Scots' be-heading dress would be like – it would have meaning… Their frailty is in itself their magic don't you think?[400]

The Countess's insight into the corporeal associations of dress encouraged de la Haye, Taylor and I to celebrate the worn and decayed objects in the Messel Collection as evidence of the lives of the women who kept and cherished their family clothing as material, maternal keepsakes of familial biographies. In the exhibition, the materiality of the garments was noted quite simply. Rather than hiding or disguising stains we explained their presence and significance in the accompanying text panels and object labels. Many of the early twentieth century silk garments in the collection were irreparably decayed; their fragility precluded the use of mannequins. Rather than exclude these difficult-to-display objects we made the decision to create a narrative focal point of a single 'ruined' garment, a pale pink silk Peter Russell dress from 1933. The dress, perished beyond repair, was laid flat in a tomb-like glass-covered case surrounded by notes written by the Countess of Rosse which she had placed in the storage boxes containing her dress. The colour and fragility of this dress eerily echoed decaying flesh (Fig. 3.2). In spite of, or perhaps because of, the absence of a body, real, or implied in the form of a mannequin, the display drew attention to the memory of the woman who had once inhabited the dress—Anne, Countess of Rosse. In this context, the dress functioned as memento mori, a tribute and reminder of a person no longer present. It existed in the exhibition space as both an object and as a memory of a subject.

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[400] Anne, Countess of Rosse, *Letter to John Morley*, April 1981, Messel Collection Exhibition File, Brighton Museum &Art Gallery Archives.

Marius Kwint and Stewart have articulated the processes by which memories are stored in and retrieved from material objects. Referencing Marcel Proust and Karl Marx, they argue that the materiality of objects evokes memories and feelings through engagement with the senses. [401] Kwint stresses the physicality of recollection; the sensuous and open dialogue between object and the entire body resurrects memories.[402] Following Kwint's argument, it holds that the intimate relationship of dress to the body makes us particularly susceptible to forming strong memories associated with clothing. Museological research on memory dovetails with the emergence of an epistemological approach known as the anthropology of the senses.[403] Both disciplines relate a person's engagement with the materiality of objects to the recollection of experience. Touch within the anthropology of the senses is understood as transformative. As Stewart phrases it, 'touch has the capacity to cross the threshold between the inanimate and the animate, the tomb and the flesh, the dead and the living'.[404] Likewise, Feldman, Constance Classen, and Fiona Candlin all note that direct contact with objects that have touched the body can collapse time and space, and establish an imaginative intimacy with their former owners.[405] Susan Pearce notes in *Collecting in Contemporary Practice* that the appeal of touching and dressing up in the clothing from the past is in taking on the persona of the garments' original owner.[406]

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[401] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time,* trans. C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright, 6 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992); Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* Dirk J. Struick, ed., Martin Milligan, trans. (New York, 1964), cited in Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley, *Material Memories.*

[402] Kwint, "Introduction: The Physical Past," 1999, 3.

[403] This discipline was developed in the 1990s. See: Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, 1993; Classen, *The Book of Touch*, Classen, Howes and Synnott, eds*., Aroma*, 1994.

[404] Stewart, *Prologue*, 1999, 35.

[405] Feldman, "Contact Points," 2006, 245-267; Classen, *The Book of Touch*, 2005, 277-278; Candlin, "Touch, and the Limits of the Rational Museum," 2008, 288.

[406] Pearce, *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*, 1998, 168.

Conservation guidelines that prohibit the touching of museum exhibits imply a barrier to the communion with objects that can stimulate anthropomorphic magic.[407] The assumption of Classen and Howes is that exhibits 'trapped' in glass display cases are detached from the web of sensual, intuitive responses triggered by touch.[408] By this logic, museum objects would be frozen, or 'caught', in Stewart's terms, between life and death. Feldman asserts that museums' traditional mode of presentation 'limits the ability or dulls the will of museum visitors to perform the 'memory work' necessary for comprehending them [contact points as embodied memories].'[409] However, given the responses to the V&A's and Museum of London's dress exhibitions in 1913 and 1911, it appears that visitors are adept at refitting lives back into historical exhibits. The imagination, activated by sight, and the memory of touching and smelling fabric, can close the experiential gap between those individuals who experienced clothing as a sensory object and the spectators who view it as a museum object. Stewart and Mark Sandberg have insights into how this process might work.

Despite being physically disconnected from visitors by glass cases, those lives associated with museum objects are materialised through a complex, imaginative process described by Sharon MacDonald as 'enchanted looking'.[410] As discussed in Chapter 2, Sandberg notes in his study of Scandinavian folk museums that curators implicitly invited audiences to imaginatively insert their bodies into the casts of bodies implied by the exhibits. In doing so, they 'dressed' themselves in the clothing and, by extension, the experience of the former owners.[411] Stewart's theorisation of

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[407] Feldman, "Contact Points," 2006, 247, Classen and Howes, *The Museum as Sensescape* 200.

[408] Classen and Howes, *The Museum as Sensescape* 200.

[409] Feldman, "Contact Points," 2006, 247.

[410] Sharon MacDonald, "Enchantment and Its Dilemmas: The Museum As a Ritual Site," Mary Bouquet and Nuno Porto eds., *Science, Magic and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005) 224.

[411] Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 1.

what she terms 'the sympathetic magic of visual representation'[412] explains the metaphysical interaction described by Sandberg. Stewart believes that the 'museum organises seeing into looking, and so organises a passive into an active relation— one capable of transforming the motion of the spectator into an emotional response.'[413] With the desire to touch an object suppressed, the imagination in Stewart's reading 'is forced to overcome the single sense to which art is usually delivered by the almost synaesthetic process of evocation.'[414]. Stewart's assertion prompts the question: how curators can engage visitors' emotional and sensory responses to objects (through sight alone) in order evoke 'anthropomorphic imagination'? With this question, I move my discussion on to specific examples of exhibitionary practice.

The Imaginative Recreation of Biography and Persona in the Wardrobe Exhibition

Having examined and theorised the ways in which exhibitions of dress can engage with the lives associated with dress, I will now explore these ideas in greater depth in relation to four exhibitions exploring the wardrobes of individual women: *Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection,* Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005-2006; *Getting Dressed: One Woman's Wardrobe,* V&A, 1998; *Kylie*, V&A, 2007 and *Grace Kelly: Style Icon*, V&A, 2010.

Wardrobe collections contain the clothes worn by one individual over a period, thus these garments represent their personal style, identity and biographical events. The development of the genre of wardrobe exhibition has coincided with the development of critical literature theorising the wardrobe and the act of dressing in

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[412] Stewart, "Prologue," 1999, 30.

[413] Stewart, "Prologue," 1999, 28.

[414] Kwint, "Introduction: The Physical Past," 1998, 6.

the creation of women's personal biographies.[415] Referring to this body of theoretical literature, I will analyse the presentation of wardrobe collections in museums. The wardrobe, Saulo B. Cwerner has written in his article *Clothes at Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe*, is:

> A depository of the signs and images that have largely defined the self throughout the years, constituting a kind of sartorial biography. As the bedrock of intimacy, identity, and memory…(it is) an alter ego of modern personae.[416]

Defining the subject, her persona, her style, her taste, and the context that shaped her choice of dress has become the raison d'etre of the wardrobe genre. The four exhibitions I discuss represent two different approaches to biography and personality. One approach presents the historically accurate, verifiable narrative of the individuals' life: objects are arranged to tell a story about that the significance of a person's sartorial identity in their social, personal and professional lives. Text panels and photographs of the individual wearing these clothes at specific events or occasions reinforce this narrative. The second approach is more fluid than the first. Objects are arranged, sometimes into the form of a tableau, to create a visual impression of that individual and their sartorial identity. Supporting material like personal photographs or text panels with biographical information is frequently not included, and thus, it is left to the audiences' imagination to create an image of that person. My discussion aims to explore the effect on audiences of these two different approaches.

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[415] Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear,* Ali Guy, Eileen Green and Maura Banim, *Through the Wardrobe: Women's Relationships with Their Clothes* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), Saulo B Cwerner, "Clothes at Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe," *Fashion Theory* 5.2 (2001) 79-82. Jenny Lister curator of Grace Kelly Liter believes that the academic credibility secured by the approach of new fashion history was partially responsible for the V&A's acceptance of exhibitions addressing fashion on an individual level. Jenny Lister, Personal Interview, 11 August, 2010.
[416] Cwerner, "Clothes at Rest," 2001, 87.

The subjects of the first two 'wardrobe exhibitions' I define as 'personalities'. My interpretation of the term *personality* draws on two of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definitions of personality: 'A person who is well known by virtue of having a strong or unusual character'[417], and a person 'considered as the possessor of individual characteristics or qualities'.[418] Apfel and Ritblat are notable but very different characters recognised in their specific social, cultural, and professional contexts. However, at the time the exhibitions of their dress were staged they were relatively unknown to the general public.[419] Both women carefully crafted their external personae as a reflection of their personalities through their selection of dress. Consequently, both women are recognised for their distinctive style. Indeed, it is because of their memorable personal aesthetic that these two national museums of art and design selected these women to be the subject of an exhibition.

Grace Kelly and Kylie Minogue, the subjects of the final two case studies, are 'achieved celebrities',[420] to appropriate Samuel Smiles' term, having secured broad public recognition on the strength of their acting and musical careers. Their fame and public image have largely been negotiated through the mass media. This process involved external agents—stylists, costume designers, film studio and record company marketing executives—who orchestrated the presentation of Kelly's and Minogue's public personae. It is largely, but not exclusively, this curated image of

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[417] "Personality, 3.b," *Oxford English Dictionary*.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141486?redirectedFrom=personality#eid> 11 January 2016.

[418] "Personality, 3.a," *Oxford English Dictionary*.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141486?redirectedFrom=personality#eid> 11 January 2016

[419] See: Palmer, "Untouchable," 2008, 55. Since 2005, Apfel has become a recognisable public figure. In 2013, the *Guardian* listed her as one of the fifty 'best-dressed over 50s.' Jess *Cartner-Morley, Helen Mirren, Arianna Huffington, Valerie Amos, "The 50 Best-dressed Over 50s," Guardian (28 March 2013).* In 2014, she was the subject of documentary film, *Iris*, by Albert Maysles that went into theatrical distribution in 2015. In 2015, the Museum of Lifestyle and Fashion History in Florida were planning a permanent gallery of her wardrobe.

[420] Samuel Smiles, *Self Help* (London, 1859), cited in Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 117.

the individual that the V&A presents in its exhibitions, perhaps leading the *Times* Art Editor Tim Teeman to dismiss *Kylie* as 'sheer vacuity.'[421] Teeman's words expose his bias against the cult of celebrity and his disapproval of the museum's engagement with popular culture. However, his focus on the superficiality of the celebrity wardrobe exhibition suggests another reason for his objection to this type of exhibition. Teeman's phrasing suggests that he felt the exhibition denied him 'real' insight to the celebrity's 'true' personality. Similarly, reviews of *Grace Kelly* expressed frustration at the exhibition's inability to summon a convincing mental image of the celebrity from the objects on display.[422] That the garments on display did not accord with the reviewer's expectations and perceptions of Kelly was a repeated criticism of this exhibition.[423] In Clark's terms, the displays failed to evoke the anthropomorphic imagination that makes clothes magical. Exhibitions displaying the dress of 'personalities' as opposed to 'celebrities' have not been criticised in these terms; this is an interesting point of divergence that bears further investigation. The framing and construction of celebrity is key to understanding how exhibitions of famous people's dress perform. Chris Rojek's text *Celebrity* offers theoretical insights for explaining the disconnection between the narratives that curators intend to construct around celebrities' biographies, and audiences' images and perceptions of those individuals. Before addressing these ideas in depth, I begin my discussion by exploring the wardrobe exhibitions of 'ordinary' women noted for their personal style. My discussion of the exhibition displaying Apfel's wardrobe focuses on curator Stéphane Houy-Towner's strategies for imaginatively engaging the audience with Apfel's construction of sartorial identity.

Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection evoked its subject, Apfel, in a series of themed vignettes that illustrated her eclectic and visually striking personal style (Fig. 3.3). Houy-Towner, the exhibition's curator,[424] presented Apfel

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[421] Teeman, "Kylie at the V&A," 2007.

[422] Barbieri, "The Remains of Grace," 2010; Conrad, "Grace Kelly," 2010.

[423] Barbieri, "The Remains of Grace," 2010; Conrad, "Grace Kelly, 2010.

[424] Overseen by Harold Koda.

as a living sculpture with a surface composed of an idiosyncratic layering of colour, texture, and pattern. Apfel styled the exhibits herself according to the very specific manner in which she combined and wore garments and accessories. Houy-Towner mounted the exhibits upon simplified, white fibreglass mannequins. Bearing no physiological similarity to Apfel's body, the mannequins were, in effect, blank canvasses for the multiple visions of herself that she had created over the past four decades. The curator united these disparate versions of Apfel with a single visual cue, a pair of oversized round spectacles: her trademark accessory (Fig. 3.4). The glasses acted as shorthand for her unique identity and thus signaled to the audience that all of the figures in the exhibitions represented one individual.

Houy-Towner made no attempt to locate Apfel within a cultural, social, or personal context. In Palmer's analysis, this was seriously negligent. She wrote in her essay *Untouchable: Creating Desire and Knowledge in the Museum*:

> Absent were questions, answers, photographs or insights into the meaning of clothing in her life. Where or how did she shop, wear and store such a large … wardrobe spanning so many years, or why indeed were all these items kept?… Until the exhibition, Iris Barrel Apfel was not an internationally recognised celebrity or socialite. She was previously unknown to the general public.[425]

The exhibition, Palmer surmised, presented Apfel's 'wardrobe estranged from the woman herself and her world'.[426] For fashion historians like Palmer, historically, socially, and culturally grounded biographical details are essential to understanding the significance of wardrobe collections. But do visitors need to locate Apfel's biography in a concrete social and cultural context to resurrect her persona in the exhibition space? Arguably not, for what is interesting about Apfel, and thus what the exhibition chose to highlight, is her fluid and creative creation of persona

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[425] Palmer, "Untouchable," 2008, 55.

[426] Palmer, Untouchable," 2008, 55.

through her selection and styling of dress. Both she and Houy-Towner appeared to understand, which Wilson has articulated, that 'the fluidity of style… offers an alternative to the stagnant fixity of "old fashioned" ideas of personality and "core identity".'[427] Thus, who Apfel is, in Palmer's terms, her profession, her social circle, even her photographic image was perhaps irrelevant in the context of this exhibition.

Cwerner offers a compelling justification for wardrobe exhibitions that demonstrate the role of clothing in the construction of personal identity through imaginative strategies, rather than through the didactic presentation of context sources and information. Cwerner writes that the wardrobe is a site of imagination—it is the place where as individuals we experiment with the creation of 'packages for body and self'.[428] Houy-Towner's installation effectively translated the performative aspects of Apfel's stylistic identity. Fantastical scenes, for example one in which 'Apfel' emerged from an igloo on her hands and knees wrapped up in a hooded fur coat (Fig. 3.5), simulated the imaginative process of identity formulation that Apfel engaged in. The scene invited the audiences' participation in Apfel's imaginative vision of herself. Unlike *Rara Avis,* the V&A's exhibition *Getting Dressed: One Woman's Wardrobe,* curated by de la Haye, explicated the materially grounded biographical details of its subject.

De la Haye explained that Ritblat's gift to the V&A of over 300 outfits purchased and worn over a period of 35 years (1960s – mid 1990s) presented the museum an opportunity to explore the ways in which dress can 'individualise the self'.[429] The exhibition, curated in close collaboration with Ritblat, framed the subject's wardrobe as the distillation of her various selves. For example, de la Haye displayed Ritblat's

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[427] Elizabeth Wilson, "Fashion and the Post Modern Body," Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader* (London: Pandora, 1992) 9.

[428] Cwerner, "Clothes at Rest," 2001, 89.

[429] Amy de la Haye, "Vogue and the V&A Vitrine: An exploration of how British *Vogue* has Responded to Fashion Exhibitions at the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1971 to 2004, with Specific Reference to the Exhibition "Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton: and Garments That Have Been Imprinted With Wear," *Fashion Theory* 10.1/2 (March/June 2006) 145-146.

clothing by radical, innovative designers such as Alexander Queen, that reflected her *avant-guard* tastes, alongside a selection of classic designs that Ritblat wore on formal occasions, often when she accompanied her husband to professional events. This juxtaposition demonstrated that Ritblat acted out multiple personae, amongst them professional corporate wife and, independent of her husband, cultural ambassador. By overseeing the selection of exhibits, Ritblat was able to demonstrate, in a way that the curator could only have made informed speculations about, how she juxtaposed her clothing and thus 'curated' her personal style. In this modest single-case display,[430] de la Haye clustered Ritblat's different identities into groups. She mounted the garments upon dressmakers' forms topped with simple wire head shaped forms. Interestingly, on Ritblat's insistence, de la Haye excluded all photographs of Ritblat. The curator speculates that Ritblat's decision was motivated, in part, by "a certain modesty".[431] However, I suggest that Ritblat also understood that her clothes could stand alone as emblems of her persona. Or, to use Feldman's terms, disconnected from her body, and in this exhibition disconnected from a photographic representation of her body, Ritblat's clothes acted as powerful 'contact points'. Faced with these contact points, the audience was required to refit Ritblat into them imaginatively.

Close examination of the exhibition's catalogue points to Ritblat's nuanced understanding of the process by which the presentation of biography can effect imaginative and cerebral responses. According to de la Haye, Ritblat funded and directed the production of a limited edition catalogue to her exacting specifications.[432] Ritblat commissioned Wilson and *Observer* Fashion Editor Sally Brampton to write short essays about her collection. Her selection of a respected academic and a high-profile fashion journalist suggests that Ritblat consciously delineated the value of her dress collection as a representation of her biography and fashionable identity. The foreword, written by de la Haye, further explained the

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[430] The V&A picture library do not have any installation images of this exhibition.

[431] Amy de la Haye, *Personal Interview*, 4 February 2012.

[432] de la Haye, *Interview*, 2012.

museological importance of Ritblat's donation. Ritblat concluded the catalogue with 'a personal note' reflecting on the significance of these garments to her personal narrative. All four texts extensively referenced the details of Ritblat's biography. This information addressed the types of questions that Palmer believed Houy-Towner should have asked of Apfel. The authors covered aspects of how dress functioned in Ritblat's personal and professional life. They discussed Ritblat's training as a barrister, her positions on the boards of contemporary art museums, and her marriages and divorce. In these narratives, the authors stressed the significance of Ritblat's selection of designers for particular social and professional engagements. Ritblat's voice came through strongly in her essay. However, her photographic image was absent from the catalogue. In place of personal images showing the exhibits worn on her body, Ritblat's clothing was photographed lain flat or hanging from wire or plastic hangers (Fig. 3.6). These hangers were of the types commonly found in domestic wardrobes. The styling of these images was undoubtedly a considered strategy. An abbreviated quote from Brampton's essay filling the first page of text in the catalogue provides an indication of Ritblat's intentions. In large black capital letters, the quote reads: 'there is a picture in our head' (Fig. 3.7). Thus, Ritblat appeared to understand that without photographic evidence, the audience must reconstruct a picture of her in their minds. Their image would be formed according to their perceptions drawn from the exhibits, the photographic images of her dress in the catalogue, and the words written about her and by her. This imaginative process is arguably made easier because Ritblat is not a recognisable figure for people outside of her social and professional spheres. Unlike the celebrities who will be discussed in the following exhibitions, there is no obvious contention in the public's imagination between the exhibits as a material trace of her personality and her public persona.

Celebrity wardrobe exhibitions further complicate the issue of anthropomorphic imagination in the museum. If, as the examples already discussed indicate, knowing the identity of the exhibits' original owner is not a prerequisite for imagining into garments a life and personality, what is the effect of exhibitions in which the identity

of the owner is not only well known and but is often a composite concept formed externally by marketing strategists and stylists? How does this image accord with the general public's subjective fantasies of this individual? Rojek's exploration of celebrity makes it clear that there is a gulf between the public façade of celebrities and their veridical selves. The celebrity/fan relationship is mediated, Rojek writes, through stage, screen, audio, and print representation. Therefore, celebrity culture presupposes distance between the celebrity and their audience. Celebrity culture is one of surface relations; the public face of the star intentionally shields their private inner persona.[433]

The staging of *Grace Kelly* and *Kylie* reinforced the division between the celebrities' public and private personae, in the first example unwittingly and in the second deliberately. The public façade of the star was the primary focus of both exhibitions. The exhibition's curator Jenny Lister divided the *Grace Kelly* exhibits into themes: 'The Actress', 'The Bride', 'The Princess' (Fig. 3.8), and 'Enduring Icon'. These themes attempted to unfold a narrative of Kelly's transformation from American screen idol to European princess and her enduring appeal following her early death. Janine Berrand, the curator of *Kylie*, also organised this exhibition into themes: 'Music and Video', 'On Tour', 'On Stage', 'Image', and 'Icon'. Berrand's arrangement aimed to deconstruct Minogue's stylistic transitions and investigate the performer's stage outfits as the surviving material symbols of her self-expression. However, critical responses to both exhibitions suggest the curators' inability to reconcile the public personae of these celebrities with their 'cast off shells',[434] which effected an imaginative void. *New Statesman* journalist Annalisa Barbieri summarised the frustration of those who could not relate their personal image of Grace Kelly with the garments displayed in the V&A's exhibition:

> Like so many other people, I love Grace Kelly… It's easy to
> linger over pictures of her, - that beautiful face, the kind, sweet

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[433] Rojek, *Celebrity*, 2001, 44-6.

[434] Hollander, "Masters of Fashion," 1998, 53.

eyes, the ever-inspirational outfits... So I bounded in to the "Grace Kelly: Style Icon" exhibition…feeling eager as a puppy to soak up that Kelly magic. Except, it didn't quite go to plan. In the first case was a dress with huge flowers and a waist sash [Fig. 3.9]. It was hideous, so frumpy-looking that I wanted to back away from it, shielding my eyes. I sought out the notes at the bottom of the dress. Had Kelly really worn this? Sure enough she had, for her first meeting with the man who would become her husband: Prince Rainier of Monaco. There was also a photo and, on her, the dress looked fabulous.[435]

In the public imagination, Kelly represented the archetypal fairytale princess, but Lister was clear that the exhibition was not "promoting it [Kelly's biography] as a fairytale because it was a personal story."[436] She stated that "we didn't want to be seen as promoting the specific interests of anyone, we're just saying here's the clothes, this is what happened and this is all the attention that it got at the time."[437] Lister's concern with presenting a 'neutral' narrative, however, failed to account for the imaginative construction of Kelly in the public imagination that her film studio encouraged with their marketing strategies. It is no coincidence that MGM presented Kelly with her wardrobe from *The Swan* as a trousseau. The gift was a marketing ploy—dressed in these garments, including a Grecian styled bathing robe, sartorial shorthand for the goddess she played, Kelly conveyed a façade of coherent lifestyle values and aspirations. Publicly dressed in her screen wardrobe, she became an object of consumption. Celebrities like Kelly are, Rojek states, 'the pre-eminent, radioactive resources for emulation'.[438] The 'Grace Kelly look' was dissected in the public press and widely copied by clothing manufacturers. Kelly's aesthetic was deliberately low-key, because, as she stated, 'when I wear anything dramatic I get

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[435] Barbieri, The Remains of Grace," 2010.

[436] Lister, *Interview*, 2010.

[437] Lister, *Interview*, 2010.

[438] Rojek, *Celebrity*, 2001, 192.

lost'.[439] By wearing clothes that did not attract attention themselves, Kelly's physical presence was more noticeable. As a consequence, disconnected from her body in the museum, Kelly's clothing made her absence acute in the minds of the visitors.

The curatorial strategy enacted by Berrand in *Kylie* privileged the materiality of the exhibits in order to 'get behind the scenes of the magic' and make 'someone and something that was essentially ephemeral… tangible'.[440] Kylie herself acknowledged the power of her clothes as 'contact points' when she stated: 'What I imagine people will want to see is the wear and tear, the ingrained make-up after 50 shows… these are the things that, to me, bring costumes to life'.[441] However, it is questionable whether the materiality of the exhibits in this context triggered anthropomorphic imagination. The exhibition's attention to the materiality of Kylie's costumes brought the physicality of the singer's body into focus, but not necessarily her persona. Kylie is, as the exhibition's catalogue recognised, a conceptual construct as much as she is a physical character.[442] The exhibition's spotlight on materiality arguably could not animate the concept that is Kylie, nor attest to the way that the public experience her as a fantastical creation mediated through her music videos or album covers. Berrand appeared to acknowledge the problem of reconciling Kylie's public image with the exhibits. In her conclusion, 'the show is not Minogue's; it's her costumes'.[443] Berrand's words indicate the exhibition's lack of anthropomorphic magic, without which there is no character, only clothes.

Kylie is most clearly evoked in the exhibition in the one installation defined by her absence. In this installation, the audience was invited into Kylie's *Showgirl* tour

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[439] Object label, *Grace Kelly: Style Icon,* V&A.

[440] Cited in Kathleen Fisher, "Behind the Magic," *Artlook* (June 2005), Kylie Exhibition File TMM12/35/6, V&A Archives.

[441] Kylie Exhibition Label, Kylie Exhibition File TMM12/35/6, V&A Archives.

[442] Kylie Minogue, preface, William Baker, intro, Baz Luhrmann and Barry Humphries, foreword, *Kylie* (London: V&A Publications in association with the Arts Centre, Melbourne, 2007)

[443] Fisher, "Behind the Magic, 2005.

dressing room (Fig. 3.10) and given tacit permission to imagine her private moments backstage. The space, was an 'authentic' recreation, pieced together from Kylie's original costumes, personal objects, and ephemera, which V&A Theatre and Performance Curator Victoria Broackes had requested the star save.[444] In keeping with the curator's aims, it appeared as though Kylie had just departed the room to go on stage, leaving behind the detritus of her pre-show preparations. Drawers and wardrobes overflowed with sparkly bodices, shoes, and wigs, make-up lay strewn across her dressing table, and handwritten notes addressed to 'Min' from friends and family wished the performer luck. Key 'props' hinted at the star's post-performance transformation from Kylie the performer back to Kylie the woman. A pair of comfortable Ugg boots and a simple white Chloe dress, a stark contrast to her exuberant stage costumes, hung ready and waiting for Kylie to change into upon her return from the stage. The installation demonstrated without didactic explanation Kylie's public and private personae activated by her wardrobe; the implied act of selecting costumes and getting dressed surfaced and presented disparate aspects of herself. Thus, this installation testified to Cwerner's belief that the wardrobe, as a space where individuals orchestrate the dressing of their bodies, 'houses secrets and belongings that define who people are'.[445]

Kylie's dressing room was considered by Broackes and the press to be the main attraction of the exhibition because the installation represented a conduit to the star's veridical persona.[446] The installation, albeit a carefully controlled staging of her private space, created the illusion that the audience had a direct experiential insight into her unseen private moments. Arnaud Dechelle, the exhibition's designer, carefully choreographed the production of sympathetic magic through his

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[444] Victoria Broackes, *Email to Allison MacGregor and William Baker*, 12 August 2007. A request was made in the same email that the cleaners refrain from tidying Kylie's dressing room between her leaving it and the V&A staff and exhibition designers' visit in order that they could see it in its original state. V&A registered papers TMM12/35/6, V&A Archives.

[445] Cwerner, "Clothes at Rest," 2001, 87.

[446] Broakes, *Email to Allison MacGregor and William Baker*, 2007; Mark Smith, "Kylie: The Exhibition," *Time Out*. Kylie Exhibition File TMM12/35/6. V&A Archives.

arrangement of this scene. Dechelle insisted that that installation be a 'theatrical space' and argued that the scene should be cleared of mannequin forms to encourage the visitors to use their imaginations.[447] He maintained that a mannequin, being an obviously artificial approximation of the star, would break the delicate 'spell' created by the arrangement of her belongings. [448] Dechelle surmised that garments displayed on hangers would maintain the 'feeling of the real' that could not be sustained by a mannequin.[449] Thus, Dechelle recognised that which Sandberg has noted. The imaginary body created in the minds of the visitor from their perceptions of historic relics can be more evocative than the mimetic form of a mannequin.[450] Sandberg has deconstructed the type of viewing practices orchestrated by Dechelle's installation. He relates that a powerful context is created by the placement of objects in relation to a body, a scene, and a narrative.[451] In installations like Dechelle's, the body is not physically present, but traces of its presence are strongly felt by the arrangement of the scene. By removing the 'fourth wall' of the dressing room, Dechelle enabled the audience to adopt a vicarious position within the display. Free to 'assume invisible positions of observation',[452] they could imaginatively insert their bodies into the gap left by Kylie's.

Pearce has written that 'we only become other people by allowing ourselves to become objectified by the lifeless metonymic fragments of some past'.[453] Although Pearce refers to the act of physically dressing up in the clothing of the past, her words indicate the process of imaginative identification through which visitors

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[447] Arnaud Dechelle, *Email to Laura Shaw*, 14 December 2006, V&A registered papers TMM12/35/6, V&A Archives.

[448] Dechelle, Email to Laura Shaw, 2006.

[449] Dechelle, Email to Laura Shaw, 2006.

[450] Mark B. Sandberg, "Effigy and Narrative: Looking into the Nineteenth Century Folk Museum," Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995) 344.

[451] Sandberg, "Effigy and Narrative," 1995, 344.

[452] Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 2003, 72.

[453] Pearce, *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*, 1998, 168.

situate themselves in the lives they imagined once belonged to museum exhibits. Within the exhibition space, there is, in Sandberg's terms, 'a delicate ontological balance' that enables people to move from spectator to imaginer, both possessing and being possessed by the museum object.[454] Fantasy, imagination, emotions, and perception are core to the evocation of anthropomorphic magic, as is the agency of the curator who orchestrates its effects.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the ways in which curators engage visitors in imagining the lives and personalities associated with dress in the museum. This investigation has drawn on contemporary museological and fashion theory to demonstrate the centrality of the materiality of dress in the evocation of 'anthropomorphic imagination'. Worn dress in the museum can stand-in for the physical, sensory experience of the body and person that it represents. Although curators, in most instances, cannot stimulate embodied memory by allowing visitors to wear museum exhibits, they can adopt methodologies that engage visitors' emotions, memories and sensory encounters with dress and encourage them to imaginatively inhabit the garments on display. The materiality of museum exhibits can be harnessed in curatorial strategies to evoke the memory of person or an image of individual's sartorial identity. However, displays that highlight the materiality of dress are by no means guaranteed to evoke anthropomorphic imagination. My analysis of the wardrobe exhibitions *Grace Kelly* and *Kylie* demonstrated that the materiality of an object sometimes has the opposite effect and blocks visitors' imaginative identification with exhibits. In these examples, the constructed public image of these celebrities did not accord with the reality of their dress. Thus, these examples complicate museology's and fashion theory's focus on the power of objects that have touched the body, and encourage curators to consider not only the material tangible objects that stand-in for celebrities, but also the visual elements that contribute to their constructed identity. Thus far, my concluding thoughts have

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[454] Sandberg, "Effigy and Narrative," 1995, 344.

focused on audiences' imaginative interactions with museum objects. However, one of my stated aims at the start of this chapter was to consider how curators engage with objects when animating biography and persona in their displays.

It could be argued that when Lambert speculated a connection between a material object and a character where one did not exist, he was merely replicating visitors' imaginative engagement with exhibits. However, this point returns us to the questions with which I begun this chapter. Was it appropriate for Lambert to override this object's materially specific biography in his evocation of an archetype, given that this history was known to be at odds with the character he depicted? It is certainly Palmer's view that curators should respect the specific, verifiable histories of objects in their displays. I draw this chapter to a close by speculating on how historical knowledge can co-exist with fantasy and imagination in the reconstruction of biography and personality in the museum by drawing on the example of the display the *Pleasure Garden* (Fig. 3.11), that opened at the Museum of London in 2010.

The *Pleasure Garden* explores the popular outdoor social spaces on the edge of London in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[455] The display was conceived as an immersive space combining a film with a fictionalised narrative based on historical sources, mannequins dressed in historic clothing placed in glass cases, and figures dressed in replica historic costumes mingling with the audience outside of the cases. These elements and their relationship to each other will be analysed in greater depth in the following chapter. Museum of London Senior Curator of Fashion and Decorative Arts Beatrice Behlen states that upon entering the display the audience are supposed to feel that they have become part of the *Pleasure Garden* and are surrounded by the fashionable visitors to these spaces.[456] For the audience to suspend disbelief and engage in the scene, it had to be imaginatively convincing and complete. However, the museum's collection could not sustain a thorough narrative. Thus, Behlen was required to develop creative proxies for missing knowledge and

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[455] The display opened in 2010.

[456] Beatrice Behlen, *Personal Interview*, 26 October 2012.

objects. Though the curator knew from historical accounts the people who had attended pleasure gardens, their clothing had not survived.[457] Of the exhibits chosen to represent the type of clothing that would have been worn in this space, only two garments had known biographies.[458] Additionally, the remainder of the exhibits did not comprise full outfits, and thus needed to be supplemented with replica garments, if an appropriate historical alternative could not be sourced from the museum's collection. Behlen states that she "thought it would make it easier for us to find fitting pieces if all the figures had distinct characters. So Hilary (Curator, Fashion and Decorative Arts) and I made up one paragraph about them all".[459] The curators drew upon period fashion illustrations to inform the image of these characters. They gave each 'character' the name of a verified person who had lived in that period and a distinct personality.[460] Their personalities, Behlen confirms, were informed by their clothes and by their relationship to the other characters in the case.[461] Although Behlen intended her characterisations of these figures to be light- hearted, they nonetheless aided the process of creating historically credible figures.[462]

The *Pleasure Garden*, in both its content and narrative, was a balance of 'authentic' and 'simulated' historical knowledge and objects. Behlen, however, did not approach this combination as a necessary compromise; rather, she embraced the opportunity for experimental practice that it afforded. The display exposes its reconstructive nature that historian Hayden White asserts defines all historical narratives.[463] Rather than naturalise the fictitious elements of the display, Behlen

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[457] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[458] These garments were a 1780s-1790s muslin dress and an 1840s suit.

[459] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[460] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[461] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[462] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[463] See: Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2004) 22-35.

drew attention to their construction by writing about the process of creating replicas on the museum's blog.[464] Behlen's acknowledgment of the fictions of historical narratives will be further developed in the next chapter that investigates the construction of history in the costume museum.

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[464] Beatrice Behlen, "Vertically Striped Socks or How I Felt the Fear and did it Anyway," *Museum of London Blog* (4 February 2010). <http://blog.museumoflondon.org.uk/vertically-striped-socks-or-how-i-felt-the-fear-and-did-it-anyway/>; Beatrice Behlen, "Ooohhhhh," *Museum of London Blog* (27 January 2010). <http://blog.museumoflondon.org.uk/ooohhhhh/>. 15 August 2015.

Chapter 4: Constructing History in the Museum

In 2012, Miles Lambert gave a group of young creative practitioners (poets, filmmakers, designers and writers) collectively called *More than Fashion*, license to disrupt the gallery's representation of history. My analysis of the installation they produced, *The Age of Elegance?: A Remix by More than Fashion*, is the starting point for this chapter's exploration of the ways in which history is constructed in displays of dress. The objectives of this chapter are to problematise the Gallery of Costume's past and present methodologies, and examine contemporary displays of historic dress that suggest alternative approaches for structuring history.

The questions I aim to address in this chapter are: firstly, how has the Gallery of Costume constructed history in its displays and why? This investigation focuses primarily on the chronological approach Anne Buck developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While Chapter 1 made it clear that certain of Buck's successors challenged and altered her approach, the gallery has always maintained some chronological structure to its permanent displays. Indeed, the display that *More than Fashion* chose to disrupt largely follows Buck's model of a chronology. I will compare and contrast Buck's approach to that of her contemporary Doris Langley Moore, who developed tableaux displays at the Museum of Costume Bath in the early 1960s. In the course of my discussion I will analyse the similarities between Buck's and Langley Moore's attitudes towards historical authenticity —a concept both curators were actively engaged with when constructing their historical displays.

The second question asks: How can displays of dress construct history in light of historiographical developments, notably Michel Foucault's[465] and Walter

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[465] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, A. M. Sheridan Smith, trans. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); *Foucault, Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, 1984, 76-100; Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland & Kevin McLauchlin trans. (Cambridge, Mass. & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of

Benjamin's[466] conceptualisation of history? In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin singled out fashion as a uniquely historical force. Benjamin's suggested that fashion's form of historical quotation is a manifestation of discontinuity that challenges linear historicism. In his reading modern fashion wilfully appropriates stylistic references from the past in the pursuit of absolute novelty.[467] Each seasonal change is a revolution that marks a break with the past and activates—indeed at times revolutionises—past events for the present. He conceptualised fashion as leaping into the past to scavenge from the sourcebook of costume history, jumping back to the present with its historical spoils reborn in a form appropriate for contemporary cultural circumstances. Benjamin conjured up the image of the tiger's leap as a metaphor for fashion's construction of history:

> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now…. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past.[468]

The tiger's leap described modern fashion's transient and trans-historical character: the break that it enacts upon the historical continuum. Benjamin's metaphor enables curators to understand fashion as a historically structuring force, more than mere material objects affected by the flow of history. Ulrich Lehmann concluded that the tiger's leap conferred 'a new abstract perception of fashion viewed independently of

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History", Hannah Arendt, ed., Harry Zohn, trans.,: *Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1968) 253-264.

[466] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 1968, 253-264.

[467] Ulrich Lehmann states that the citation of past is a characteristic of fashion from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2000), xx.

[468] Benjamin, *On the Philosophy of History*, 1968, 261.

its material basis'.[469] In the past two decades, Benjamin's writings, in particular his metaphor of the 'tiger's leap' has had a profound influence on contemporary fashion theory[470] and has implications for the display of dress.

I will analyse the ways in which Judith Clark's controversial exhibition *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* (the Victoria & Albert Museum, V&A, 2012) translated Benjamin's ideas and metaphors into three-dimensional displays. My analysis will focus on the implications of Clark's methodologies for traditional curatorial practice, or at least the implications as Clark framed them. Following my analysis of *Spectres* I will examine the display *Behind the Scenes* curated by Rosemary Harden at the Fashion Museum Bath (formerly the Costume Museum). In this display Harden engaged reflexively with her predecessor's traditional tableaux while developing an alternative methodology for structuring history that appeared to draw on some aspects of Foucault's and Benjamin's historiography.

The final question addressed in this chapter is a development of the second question: If dress curators accept Benjamin's conceptualisation of the 'tiger's leap', how can their displays reflect fashion's trans-historical character as he articulated it? I will draw upon the example of the Museum of London's display the *Pleasure Garden* to probe this question. My discussion of this exhibition and Harden's display will draw on Hayden White thesis, *The Fictions of Factual Representation*,[471] which exposes the reconstructive nature of all historical narratives. However, I begin by describing and analysing the *Age of Elegance*, an intervention that problematised the Gallery of Costume's traditional chronological methodology.

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[469] Ulrich Lehmann, "Walter Benjamin," Valerie Steele, ed., *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 148.

[470] See: Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003; Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity*.

[471] Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2004) 22-35.

The Age of Elegance?: A Remix by More than Fashion, **2012**

In 2012, *More than Fashion* developed an installation responding to museum's display of eighteenth-century dress.[472] Anthea Jarvis had installed this display in 1986, and Lambert updated it during the 2008-2010 redevelopment by adding new labels and text panels. However, for thirty years the display has maintained a singular narrative outlining the evolutionary development of middle-class and upper-class fashion and textiles during the eighteenth century. *More than Fashion* questioned why the display did not represent alternative stories—in particular, those of the workers involved in the production of the cotton that was used to create some of the clothes worn by the fashionable elite displayed in the gallery. In the absence of objects related to these individuals, *More than Fashion* invented their presence in the display. Lambert states that *More than Fashion*'s intention was to create '"living" mannequins, which "spoke" the untold stories of the mill workers and slaves who historically have no voice'.[473] Thus, onto the blank faces of the KCI mannequins[474] the group projected film of heavily made-up 'talking masks' and spoken word poetry that they intended to represent the voices and 'faces' of these anonymous individuals (Fig. 4.1). The intervention was intentionally jarring; the use of sound and projected imagery interrupted (at the gallery's invitation) the display's established narrative and disrupted the gallery's calm, quiet atmosphere. These discordant elements forced visitors to reconsider both their expectations of the historic material they were viewing and the conventions of the gallery's traditional modes of display.[475]

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[472] The group were sponsored by the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad's *Stories of the World* programme.

[473] Miles Lambert, *Email Correspondence*, 11 September 2012.

[474] Chapter 2 analyses the form of these mannequins.

[475] Lambert reports that the museum received many complaints from their traditional audience base that the installation was too loud and interrupted their appreciation of the exhibits. Miles Lambert, *Personal Interview*, 12 July 2012.

More than Fashion's approach aligned more closely with the historiography of Foucault and Benjamin[476] than with the gallery's established methodologies. Buck and her successors championed an uncomplicated approach to historical development in which progress occurs 'with gradual and ordered movement'.[477] Foucault abandoned what the philosopher termed 'the formless unity of some great evolutionary process'.[478] He countered with the notion of progress through discontinuity and interruption. Similarly, Benjamin's concern was with dissipating, as he saw it, the illusion of continuity that posits historical progress as a kind of indefinite self-realisation determining the evolution of humanity.[479] *The Age of Elegance?*'s fragmentary and incomplete narratives intentionally opposed the authoritative, complete form of the display's primary narrative. Thus, the intervention echoed Benjamin's ideas about the historical shock.[480] Benjamin proposed that history 'shocks' itself forward by shattering that which was previously held to be true. *More than Fashion* appeared not to be concerned with the past, as previous curators had constructed it, but in how the past resonated in the group's contemporary experience.

The historical narrative in *Age of Elegance?* arose from the interests of young individuals living in the twenty-first century, as evidenced by their Tumblr blog.[481] The blog was a virtual collage of eclectic sources of inspiration. It included material collected during a research trip to Gujarat, India; historic images, such as photographs of Manchester cotton mill workers in the nineteenth century and prints of eighteenth-century African slaves; film of 1950s blues musicians; quotes from

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[476] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 2002; Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, 1984, 76-100; Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999); Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 1968, 253-264.

[477] Anne Buck, *History in Costume*, unpublished transcript of a lecture given at the National Trust, 1958, the Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[478] Michel Foucault, *The Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 230.

[479] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 1968, 253-264.

[480] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 1968, 253-264.

[481] *More than Fashion 2012*. <http://morethanfashion2012.tumblr.com>. 21 August 2012.

philosophers and historians; and images and film of contemporary fashion, art and culture. This tangled web of associations begged the question of the *Age of Elegance?*'s historical authenticity. Was it problematic that the intervention spoke more directly of the groups' contemporary preoccupations and interests than of the sensibilities of the distant historical lives with which the curators were attempting to connect? I would argue not, the group were transparent about the authorship of this intervention. Their Tumblr blog and the display's marketing materials were clear that the intervention was a 'contemporary version of the story of cotton'[482] and that the group's intention was to reflect on the nature of historical representation. The intervention posed the question of whether the Gallery of Costume historical narratives can be 'authentic', as Buck believed. Prompted by this open-ended question, I turn my attention to Buck's chronological structuring of history in relation to Langley Moore's tableaux.

The Construction of History in Buck's Chronology and Langley Moore's Tableaux

Buck's chronological displays and Langley Moore's tableaux although differentiated by their presentational techniques, both reflected these curators' shared objective to create coherent and 'authentic' representations of history. Both Buck and Langley Moore believed that the historic object could retain its individual authenticity while participating in an overall, reconstructive vision of the past. My comparison of these two approaches begins by examining why Buck adopted her chronological approach.

Buck's chronological displays at the Gallery of Costume arguably established the conceptual boundaries for the display of historic dress in Britain. As discussed in Chapter 1, Buck's displays were instrumental in validating dress history as an academic discipline. To this end, Buck co-opted long-standing disciplines' modes of sequencing and serialising artefacts: periodisation, stylistic evolution and the evolution of particular themes. Following the practices of the fine art and

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[482] *More than Fashion 2012*.

archeological museums, costume at Platt Hall was ordered into what Donald Preziosi calls an 'anamorphic perspective' on history.[483] In Buck's displays whole centuries of fashion history were laid out for visitors in an arrangement that allowed them to take in the evolution of dress in one sweeping gaze (Fig. 4.2).

Buck's appropriation of art history's and archaeology's historiography and interpretative structures, was part of her wider project of obtaining academic acceptance for dress history. It is clear from Buck's *Presidential Address to the North Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries* in 1957, that she believed only objective accounts of dress history could secure its position as a serious discipline.[484] That Buck should have thought this is not surprising, considering the subjective theories Cunnington attached to the gallery's founding collecting (which, as discussed in Chapter 1, she carefully steered the gallery away from).

Buck was resolute that the gallery's historical narrative, unlike Cunnington's, should be entirely neutral. In her *Presidential Address*, she stated: 'The curators work is … the foundation of objectivity'.[485] Thus, Buck aligned herself with positivist historiography's aim of displaying the past 'how it actually was'. It should be acknowledged, however, as White does in his study of Ranke's historical realism, that:

> 'Objectivity', 'critical study', the 'penetration of details' and the
> 'production of generalisations' out of the consideration of the 'primary
> facts' all *presuppose* conceptions of the nature of truth and reality on

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[483] E. Messer-Davidow, D.R. Shumway and D. J. Sylvan, eds., *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1993) 12.

[484] Anne Buck, *Presidential Address and Report of the Secretary-Treasurer 1957* (The North Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries, circulated February 1958) 14, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[485] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 14.

which the kind of 'larger conclusions' … can be justified.[486] (Emphasis in original.)

Objects, Buck believed, had an 'essential quality',[487] and it was the task of the curator to ensure that this quality 'was seen and apprehended'.[488] She advised a primary, unmediated relationship with the objects of the past: 'The knowledge and understanding of the curator must be implicit, and never appear as something apart from the object'.[489] This aim, she stated, could be achieved through 'the placing of object with object, so that each enhances, reveals and explains the others'.[490] Buck deduced from her empirical observations of the 'actual specimens and other records of past costume' that fashion develops in a slowly evolving pattern, not 'as a matter of sudden, wilful change, with changes coming in gradually and working themselves out full circle'.[491] The relationship between objects, in Buck's opinion, demonstrated the gradual and ordered development of fashionable style.

Buck translated her proposition about the nature of the development of fashion into a series of displays that portrayed the history of dress in a clear paradigmatic form from 1700 to the present day (Fig. 4.2). Buck's displays accorded with the materialist philosophy of history, in which progress is a unilinear, homogenous and continuous process of self-fulfillment. Buck stated that within this orderly and uncomplicated vision of the past, 'each style evolves from the one before it as one period of history merges into another'.[492] Thus, her displays carried the visitor smoothly through to her evolutionary conclusions. I suggest, however, that one

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[486] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973) 166.

[487] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[488] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[489] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[490] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[491] Buck, *Presidential Address*, 1957, 13.

[492] Anne Buck, "The Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester," unpublished draft of article published in *Costume*, 1972, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

unintended consequence of Buck's periodisation was that chronology fixed historic garments into a defined era in the near and far distant past, and thus styles appeared antiquated as soon as new ones supplanted them. With this point I turn my attention to theorising the effect of her displays on the audience.

The rigorous objectivity of Buck's displays—the plain neutral-coloured backdrops of her cases and the headless mannequins reinforced the 'objectness' of her exhibits. Thus, they appeared as examples of themselves; in Didier Maleuvre's terms, they acted as metaphors of costume.[493] The consequence of such an approach, Maleuvre asserts is to 'inflict a historically distanced look'[494] upon objects. Removed from the hustle of real life, and in the case of Buck's displays detached from a realistic representation of the bodies and lives that gave them meaning, objects become an image of what they are: 'The collection hypostatizes the image inherent in every object as what that object resembles, making it the very essence of the thing'.[495] The consequence of casting objects as metaphors is to enact a shift in the subject/object relationship between exhibits and viewers. In Maleuvre's words, if an object 'looks only like itself it seems to mean that it loses regard for me, for the uses I might make of it'.[496] Maleuvre concludes:

> To be an image is to resign from the present... To look like oneself, to be an image, is to withdraw into history. And history is where the subject cannot enter, the magic kingdom of the In-Itself where, at least fantastically, the subject cannot enter.[497]

To objectively historicise objects, as Buck's chronologies did, apparently condemned them to the unreachable past. In contrast to Buck, Langley Moore

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[493] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 70

[494] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 69.

[495] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 70.

[496] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 70.

[497] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 70.

appeared to recognise the public's desire to empathise with the personal experiences embodied by the objects of the past. Her displays of historic dress at the Museum of Costume, Bath can be viewed as an attempt to restore the personal connection that was severed in Buck's displays.

In May 1963, the Museum of Costume opened within the Bath Assembly Rooms.[498] The displays were the culmination of Langley Moore's sustained and determined effort to find a space to illustrate the evolution of fashion with the 'authentic costumes' of the past.[499]Although Langley Moore shared Buck's commitment to object-based dress history and, like her peer, understood it as a linear development, her curatorial practice was informed by a very different set of experiences. Prior to setting up the Museum of Costume, Langley Moore had been a costume designer, novelist and historical biographer. Langley Moore appeared to draw upon her past professional practice to create displays that attempted to recreate a sense of 'life' and character around objects. While planning the formative displays for the museum, Langley Moore wrote an article for the *Museums Journal* outlining her approach:

> My attitude, therefore, has more in common with that of an impresario at work on a production than a pedagogue devising an academic course. With a subject as costume, there is no incompatibility between instruction and entertainment, no need of any falsification or even exaggeration to create an effect. The drama, the amusement, the folly and the charm of human appearances—our own as well as our ancestors—are what provide the general appeal.… I humbly subject, in telling this story.[500]

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[498] Langley Moore opened her first Museum of Costume at Eridge Castle, Kent in 1955, three years later it transferred to the Royal Pavilion Brighton.

[499] Doris Langley Moore, *The Woman in Fashion* (London: Batsford, 1949) v. 1949. Langley Moore first wrote about her idea for a museum of costume in the preface to this book.

[500] Doris Langley Moore, "The Display of Costume," *Museums Journal* 60.1 (1961) 20.

With hindsight, Langley Moore's testimonial reads as a challenge to Buck's objective approach to the construction of history. In Langley Moore's view the presentation of history is an act of storytelling—with this point she preempted the themes of White's thesis. White argued that historical writing shares with literary writing a reliance on narrative, and thus, it is not possible to write truly objective accounts of history.[501] Langley Moore, however, did concur with Buck that historical representations—the 'story' of fashion, as she termed it—could and should be authentic.

The centrepiece of Langley Moore's new Museum of Costume was the *Panorama Room* (Fig. 4.3 and Fig. 4.4.),[502] a series of dioramas that depicted scenes of Bath life in internal room and external street settings. The objects in Langley Moore's tableaux purported to offer access to a historical milieu and 'real' stock historical figures. The tableau to appropriate Stephen Bann's phrase, 'derives its imaginative cogency from the myth of the resurrection of the past'.[503] Thus, the diorama strove to annihilate the distance between being there (in the past) and having been there. In *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, Anne Friedberg described the process by which this gap is mediated, using the concept of the 'mobilized "virtual" gaze'.[504] Friedberg writes that the mobilised virtual gaze arose from nineteenth-century innovations in popular entertainment—magic lanterns, dioramas and panoramas.[505] These forms of spectatorship, which drew on the science of photography and optics, dramatically altered concepts of the present and the real. They presented a form of received perception that was mediated through representation. A staple of the Parisian arcades, department stores and world fairs,

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[501] Hayden White, "Interpretation in History," *New Literary History* 4 (Winter 1973), 281–314.

[502] Langley Moore opened her first Museum of Costume at Eridge Castle, Kent in 1955; three years later it transferred to the Royal Pavilion Brighton.

[503] Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 74.

[504] Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, 1993: University of California Press, 1993) 2.

[505] Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 1993, 15-28.

these illusions had the power to transport the viewing public to exotic and faraway places while they remained comfortably seated. The phantasmagoric quality of the panorama, Susan Buck-Morss noted in *the Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, conditioned the public to look without touching and derive pleasure from the spectacle alone.[506]

Benjamin's critique of panoramas in the *Arcades Project* aligned the comforting, encompassing nature of the spectacle with the commoditisation of the myth of historical progressive.[507] In his thesis, the past was rolled out before the spectator in a seemingly natural progression. The panorama allowed the mind's eye to take in the scene in its entirety, roving around the image, up and down, back and forth; and thus history appeared seamless. Benjamin warned, however, that this effect was a deceptive totality; the historical presentation of the endlessly revolving panorama was one of repetition rather than change.[508]

Langley Moore must have been aware of the origins and effect of the panorama, which was the precursor to cinema. Harden believes the techniques of contemporary cinematic production directly influenced Langley Moore's display techniques. Harden has identified striking similarities between a still from the 1949 film *Miranda* featuring Googie Withers, who had modelled in Langley Moore's book *The Woman of Fashion*, published the same year, and the placing and blocking of figures in Langley Moore's tableaux.[509] Although the effects of her tableaux relied on imaginative participation, their historical referents had a firm basis in reality that anchored the scenes to a verisimilar world. As an object-based historian, Langley Moore had dedicated herself to the close study of objects to expose popular myths

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[506] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1989) 85.

[507] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 1989, 67.

[508] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 1989, 67.

[509] Rosemary Harden, *Doris Langley Moore: Collector and Presenter of 'Authentic Costumes'*, unpublished notes of lecture given at the University of Brighton (2011).

about historic dress.[510] She was, therefore, scrupulous in her attention to detail: she ensured that the styling of her mannequins was historically accurate, verifiable from archival sources such as period fashion plates. Langley Moore's panoramas could be said to be fiction in the original sense of the word. In the introduction to *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History / Literature Debat*e Kuisma Korhonen writes, the Latin word '*fictio* referred not to lies or poetic inventions but the molding and shaping of pre-existing material'.[511]

On the surface, it appears that Buck and Langley Moore took very different approaches to constructing history: one rigorously objective and depersonalised, the other a work of fiction engaging visitors with distant historic figures. Their approaches, however, were based on the same objective—to present history authentically and completely.[512] Their methodologies for presenting history also shared some similarities in the way that they operated—both worked to present history as a total entity that could be grasped by a panoramic gaze.

In 2005, Clark opposed the foundation of Buck's and Langley Moore's, by now firmly established methodologies, in the exhibition *Spectres*. Whereas the chronology and tableaux were visually and mentally comprehensive and comprehensible, Spectres' presentation of history was fragmented and distorted. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine Clark's approach and its relationship to Benjamin's conceptualisation of history. It should of course be acknowledged that Clark was by no means the first to challenge Buck and Langley Moore. Indeed, I have made reference, in Chapter 1, to the efforts of past Gallery of Costume curators to adapt Buck's chronology at the Gallery of Costume. *Spectres*, however, is hailed

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[510] In *The Woman in Fashion*, Langley Moore readdressed the inaccurate but widely held belief that the majority of Victorian women had seventeen-inch waists.

[511] Hayden White, "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing," Kuisma Korhonen, ed., *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History / Literature Debate* (New York: Rodopi, 2006) 25.

[512] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 1989, 67.

as a 'paradigm breaking' exhibition.[513] As such, it has become a focus for debates about how curators present historic dress.[514] It is not my intention to reiterate these debates that I have already made reference to in the introduction of this thesis. Rather, I aim to consider how to Clark's approach to constructing history could translate to the practices of more traditional museums that engage object-based material culture frameworks. I begin my analysis by briefly outlining and describing *Spectres*.

Rewriting History: *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*

Spectres, and its original manifestation at the ModeMuseum, Antwerp *Malign Muses* (18 September 2004–30 January 2005) ostensibly explored contemporary fashion's engagement with history. Clark built the exhibition upon the conceptual foundation of *Fashion at the Edge*,[515] Evans' study of the historical connections and genealogies that haunt contemporary fashion. The project's dual titles signaled Clark's intention of considering fashion's historicity while suggesting that this process would be intentionally disruptive.

Clark structured the exhibition with eight installations: 'Pepper's Ghost'; 'Reappearances: Getting Things Back'; 'Nostalgia'; 'Locking In and Out'; 'A New Distress'; 'Remixing it: The Past in Pieces'; 'Phantasmagoria: The Amazing Lost and Found'; and 'Curioser and Curioser'. These installations acted as three-dimensional puzzles that engaged the audience with a different facet of contemporary fashion's interaction with historical dress.[516] Little in Clark's

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[513] Valerie Steele, "Letter from the Editor," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 5.

[514] See: Alistair O'Neill, "Exhibition review: "*Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back* and *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*," *Fashion Theory*, 12.2 (2008) 253-259; Lou Taylor, "*Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*," *The Art Book* 13.1 (Feb 2006) 16-18; Elizabeth Wilson, "Costuming Clio," *History Workshop Journal*, 60.1 (2005) 229–32.

[515] Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 2003.

[516] O'Neill, *Exhibition review: Malign Muses*, 2008, 254.

installations, however, were quite as they seemed to be—they operated on another plane to expose and disrupt Buck and Langley Moore's construction of history.

Spectres' intentionally baffling framing devices confounded the traditional costume curator's expectations of historiography by exposing the distortions and fragmentation that are neutralised by totalising representations of history. History in *Spectres* was not neatly packaged as things from the past, reassuringly reconstructed in familiar guises. Rather, Clark drew on the etymology of the word 'spectres', outlined by Evans,[517] to present history as a ghostly vision hovering over the present, and fashion's historicity as a spectacle. *Spectres'* opening gambit, the installation 'Pepper's Ghost', named after the famous nineteenth-century optical illusion, presented Clark's manifesto for the exhibition. The installation projected the spectral form of a white, early twentieth-century christening robe against the solidity of a black, neo-Edwardian-styled Veronique Branquinho dress from Spring/Summer 1999 (Fig. 4.5). The ghostly apparition of the earlier garment juxtaposed uneasily against the tangible form of the latter. The child's robe appeared to be not only on, but also in, the very grain of the headless figure in black. Together, the two garments represented an opaque commingling of historical presence and absence. The web of connections stimulated by Clark's staging of these garments was intentionally open to interpretation. Thus, the installation conferred an invitation to audiences to set an individual course through Clark's maze of historical associations.[518]

Contravening traditional dress museology, Clark's exhibition dispensed with familiar historical narratives and cultural contextualisation—the anchors that tether museum artefacts to a recognisable vision of the past. In place of conventional forms of interpretation, Clark foregrounded the physical scaffolding upon which her historical narratives were constructed. For example, Clark deployed Victorian viewing devices—magnifying glasses, peepholes and magic lanterns—as a recurring display trope. The distorting world-view of this compendium of ocular machinery

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[517] Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 2003, 50.

[518] Judith Clark, *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* (London: V&A Publications, 2005) 9.

undermined the expected modes of apprehending objects in a museum setting. Objects, manipulated through the lens of these curatorial interventions, telescoped their proportions and scale. In this way, they were deformed, in Alistair O'Neill's words, 'into strange relics that disturb the conventions of viewing dress on display'.[519]

'Reappearances', for example, was composed of a large plywood structure and a variety of lenses that together shaped audiences' reception of a series of historic dresses. The all-white dresses from different periods were, on first sight, obscured behind a series of partitions (Fig. 4.6). Clark granted restricted visual access through peepholes inset at different heights, behind which optical devices enlarged, reduced, reflected, refracted, distanced, doubled and reversed the view of the exhibits (Fig.4.7). The altered and isolated views afforded by Clark's structure created a mode of looking at and apprehending the dresses that suggested fashion has a more complex evolutionary process to that suggested by Buck. Clark's optical experiments dislocated and distorted the details of the dresses, and in so doing disconnected the garments from their historical and physical context. The structure dictated that the garments be read solely through the lens of audiences' present-day perceptions. The effects produced by the installation were intended to mirror the illogical process by which fashion selects and edits the styles of the past from its present-day position.

By the time that Clark came to curate *Spectres*, her practice and research had led her to the conclusion that: 'Historical reference in dress have never been about evolution, continuity, other ways of plotting this. In dress surfaces float free of their histories'.[520] Benjamin provided Clark with the visual metaphors by which she was able represent her ideas. Benjamin's radical critique of historicism, his conceptualisation of historical time and his use of fashion as a structuring device,[521]

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[519] O'Neill, *Exhibition review: Malign Muses*, 2008, 255.

[520] Clark, *Spectres*, 2005, 11.

[521] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 1968, 253-264.

Clark and Evans realised, had the potential to redefine the methodology of both fashion research and exhibitions. Clark developed her curatorial language from Evans' text, in which Benjamin's ideas formed the core, critical thread. As they were applied to *Spectres*, Benjamin's ideas fractured traditional costume curators' unchanging reproductions of the past.

Clark extended her experiment to shape a non-linear experience of historicism in the installation 'Locking In and Out', illustrated in Fig. 4.8. Here, her concern was to show that the past and present do more than simply illuminate one and other by drawing on Benjamin's concept of dialectical images, the methodological cornerstone of the *Arcades Project*.[522] Simultaneously evocative and enigmatic, the dialectic image gave form to Benjamin's particular experience of historical time. In Benjamin's words, 'the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: [it] is not progression but image, suddenly emergent'.[523] Dialectical images are not simple comparisons; they emerge through the relay of past and present. Clark translated this process into the mechanism of three large cogs, whose incessant, lumbering motion brought together historic and contemporary garments in constellations of different themes.

Benjamin harnessed the image of the labyrinth to spatialise time and complicate the path of historical development. As the labyrinth's passages run in parallel, split and double back upon themselves, so historical time loops and diverges, pleating together, to paraphrase Evans, distant points in time at specific moments.[524] Inspired

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[522] Anthony Auberach states that the concept of the 'dialectical image' crystallised in conversations between Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno (born Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund), Gretel Adorno (born Margarete Karplus), Max Horkheimer and Asja Lacis at the end of the 1920s. More references appear in his unpublished texts, including the 1935 'Exposé' of the Arcades titled *Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, and in Benjamin's correspondence. Anthony Auberach, "Imagine no Metaphors: The dialectical image of Walter Benjamin," *Image [&] Narrative* 18 (2007). <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/auerbach.htm> 12 August 2015.

[523] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1999, 462.

[524] Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 10-11.

by the garden of forked paths devised by Jorge Luis Borges, the installation 'Reappearances: Getting Things Back' was constructed as a skeletal echo of Benjamin's labyrinth (Fig. 4.6). The optical illusions at the front of the installation gave way, upon turning the corner of the partition screen, to an unhindered view of ghostly white mannequins. A maze of crisscrossed black lines marked upon the floor linked the dresses (Fig. 4.4); this linear web mapped connections of different elements within this disparate group of garments. Far from clarifying the distortions created by the optical illusions at the front of the installation, its rear gave graphic form to the visual knot of associations created when past and present are telescoped.

The labyrinth, Evans pointed out, reminded Benjamin of a piece of embroidery: 'the clearer the pattern on the front of the piece, the larger the clumps of threads at the back'.[525] If *Spectres* is the messy back of the embroidery, then traditional dress displays are the tidy picture upon the front. The rough plywood used to construct *Spectres* betrayed its curatorial kin by turning the fabric of the fashion exhibition inside out. The structure exposed the normally carefully hidden 'threads' of exhibitions—the foundations of plinths and other display structures that are usually carefully covered. In deliberately neglecting to add a veneer to her structures, Clark exposed the act of exhibition-making to be a construction.

The labyrinth, in the context of *Spectres*, denoted the deliberate complication and corruption of curatorial routes and the renunciation of progressive, enclosed narratives. Clark was an animated presence who beckoned the audience through the displays—a puckish guide who led us on in order to get us lost—a role that in her hands enacted a refutation of Buck's curator as neutral, omniscient narrator. *Spectres*' lasting contribution to dress curation is the dialectic Clark set up between staging, narrativity and authenticity.

Spectres arguably proved so shocking because, in stripping away the veneer of historical reconstructions, it revealed the costume museums' image of the past (in all

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[525] Clark, *Spectres*, 2005, 9.

its forms) to be an illusion. O'Neill came to the same conclusion in his review of Clark's exhibition. Setting *Spectres* against traditional museological practice, he wrote:

> The cloak of authority that pervades the lifeless quality of museum dress displays is not a neutral foil of clarity and comprehension for all; for there are many who have caught its flicker in the subdued light as a phantasmagoria thick with discontent.[526]

Spectres did not present itself in a form that was directly replicable, nor some would argue (notably Lou Taylor) should it be.[527] The exhibition does, however, offer suggestions for the direction of future practice; although I acknowledge that *Spectres* was a temporary exhibition, and an experiment, whereas the displays that I have been discussing were (and are) permanent displays, and thus they serve a different function to this exhibition. In the next section of this chapter, I aim to consider how some of the key tenets of Clark's approach could be applied to more mainstream practice. I consider these key tenets to be: the recognition that exhibitions are authored, mediated, constructions and thus that curators take a reflexive approach to their structuring of history and secondly, that following Benjamin's and Foucault's historiography exhibitions could express the trans-historical character of fashion.

In the last section of this chapter, I will examine two examples of contemporary practice that, in seeking alternative methods of reconstructing history, have reflexively engaged with their structuring of the past. The first example is Harden's redisplay of Langley Moore's *Panorama Room*. The display titled *Behind the Scenes* can be interpreted as a response to the historiography of her predecessor's displays. It is a good example of how the costume museum can respectfully critique long-established, though now out-dated, methodologies, in the development of new structures of display. The second example is the *Pleasure Garden* at the Museum of

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[526] O'Neill, *Exhibition review: Malign Muses*, 2008, 259.

[527] See: Taylor, *Spectres*, 2006.

London. The *Pleasure Garden* is a new genre of tableaux, aligned to that developed by Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton at the Metropolitan Museum that makes clear its status as a work of contemporary fiction.[528] The *Pleasure Garden* disrupted the universalising form of this system of representations as Langley Moore had constructed it by drawing attention to its constructed nature and to the temporal experience of fashion.

Behind the Scenes

In 2010, nearly fifty years after Langley Moore installed her *Panorama Room* in the Museum of Costume, Harden arranged a temporary exhibition of nineteenth-century dress in this space, titled *Behind the Scenes*. The display presents a reconstructed costume archive (Fig. 4.9). On the surface, Harden's installation appears to obliterate, both physically and conceptually, the structuring of history put in place by the museum's founder. A closer analysis of the display, however, suggests a textured interplay between the approaches of the past and the present, providing evidence of Harden's subtle and respectful reinvention of Langley Moore's legacy. Harden tactfully avoids discussing the limitations of her predecessors' displays. She recognises that the *Panorama Room* is an important historical document in itself and has preserved it as a record of the museum's institutional history.[529] Harden's treatment of this space suggests tacit acknowledgment of the dated form of these tableaux, however, and the issues previously discussed related to its historiography.

Behind the Scenes concealed Langley Moore's painted backdrops behind tall stacks of costume storage boxes (Fig. 4.9). In place of realistic posed mannequins—once central to Langley Moore's tableaux—garments are mounted on headless white Stockman forms (Fig. 4.9). The garments are styled as if awaiting a research appointment—with the tag identifying their accession number hanging around the

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[528] See: *Dangerous Liasons: Furniture and Fashion in the Eighteenth Century*, 2004 and *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion*, 2006.

[529] Rosemary Harden, *Email Interview*, 14 September 2012.

mannequins' necks. Thus, it appears that Harden deliberately overwrote Langley Moore's narrative depiction of history with the apparently pre-narrative space of the archive. The archive presents itself as the precursor to the process of historicising. It contains objects in their raw state, identified as being of historical importance, but not yet reconstituted into the historical narratives of the museum's displays. The museum's separation of public, didactic display space and hidden storage space appears to confirm the epistemological distinction of the archival object as a trace of history and the displayed object as a document of history.

In bringing the archive into the public display space (and in so doing annulling Langley Moore's narrative scenes), it could be argued that Harden released objects from a historical narrative. The situation, however, is more complex than this simple assertion. First, the archive is not a neutral data bank. Information, as Paul Ricoeur noted in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, is processed at every stage of the research process.[530] To quote Ricoeur, 'no one consults an archive without some hypothesis for understanding'.[531] Thus, even at the earliest stage of compiling a historical text (or, in this case, an exhibition), the interplay between the factual and the fictive in historical discourse arises. Secondly, Harden self-consciously employed the concept of the archive as a narrative device. The gallery is not being used for extra storage space; it is a constructed display, presenting the illusion of a storeroom. *Behind the Scenes* has a narrative, which is, as Harden acknowledges, the stylistic development of nineteenth-century dress.[532]

Harden chronologically structured the exhibits in this fictional archive, as they are kept in storage proper. The staging devices of the tableaux overlay this chronological foundation. Harden stated that she carefully arranged storage boxes in

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[530] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 137.

[531] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 2004, 137.

[532] Rosemary Harden, "The Fashion Museum in Bath," Marie Riegels Melchior and Birgitta Svensson, eds., *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 134.

scenes in a way that replicated the blocking techniques Langley Moore employed in the original *Panorama Room* displays.[533] Only in *Behind the Scenes*, the characters are storage boxes and anonymous mannequins, rather than human characters. The impression Harden intended to create 'is of beautiful, historic pieces spilling out of acid-free museum boxes.... The visiting experience is somewhat voyeuristic, with a feeling that visitors are being given privileged access to something not normally seen'.[534] An empathetic experience is, as with the original dioramas, central to the conceit of *Behind the Scenes*. Unlike Langley Moore's scenes, however, Harden deliberately separated characters and objects. It appeared that the curator intended to disconnect fact and fiction by being overtly transparent about that which is literary narrative and that which is an 'authentic' historical object. The objects that carry the main narrative are mounted upon the mannequins; these she has kept deliberately anonymous.[535] The dehumanisation of the mannequins suggests that Harden attempted to suppress personal identification with the display context. Instead, she focused audiences' attention upon the garment as the nexus of empathetic responses. The human contexts for the historic garments are removed to the text panels. Here Harden quotes excerpts from nineteenth-century novels to stimulate the imaginative recreation of characters. For example, a pair of late nineteenth-century hobnail boots are presented on a pedestal alongside a quotation from Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The quote describes the milkmaid Tess, walking across the Wessex Downs in her sturdy boots, in a futile attempt to become better acquainted with her in-laws. Rather than presenting her audience with a complete reconstructive scheme, Harden leaves space for the audience's imagination to step in and recreate a sense of character. 'Real' human presence hovers over the exhibition in the form of a slideshow of *cartes des visites*. These images are, in Harden's words, 'a memento mori',[536] alluding to the real historic characters absented to fashion's memory. Thus,

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[533] Harden, *Doris Langley Moore*, 2011.

[534] Harden, *The Fashion Museum in Bath*, 2014, 134.

[535] Harden, *The Fashion Museum in Bath*, 2014, 134.

[536] Harden, *Doris Langley Moore*, 2011.

objects in *Behind the Scenes* are mobilised as Benjamin's 'fragments': traces from the past reverberating in the present.

Behind the Scenes can be interpreted as an attempt to reframe the Fashion Museum as an interactive space for the exchange of memory, knowledge and ideas. Harden stated that her long-term aim was to continue to break down traditional museum boundaries between stored collections and those on display.[537] She continued, 'the Fashion Museum collection will begin to be regarded as one entity, with the emphasis on presentation, not just on display, and in different experiential ways'.[538] Harden emphasised that this new approach aimed to be 'both personal and authoritative: curators will interact with and listen to visitors' own fashion stories as well as being able to answer their questions about fashion history'.[539] As Harden described it, the museum's combined storage/display space marks a radical change of direction, away from Langley Moore's unified, reconstructive history.

In 'Archi(ve)textures of Museology', Wolfgang Ernst argued the combined form of archive and display alters the museum's role from being the final preservation space of artifacts to a free-flowing 'transformer station'.[540] The 'transformer station' unfreezes the accumulation of objects in its repositories by making them accessible to the public.[541] The modular form of the archive opposes the apparently seamless form of the narrative tableaux. The spatial order of the archive/display recognises the fragmentary nature of museums, composed as they are by isolated objects, and demands that the audience visualise the fragmentation of the past, as Foucault and Benjamin have conceived of it. Thus, to navigate this space, both curator and visitor

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[537] Harden, *The Fashion Museum in Bath*, 2014, 137.

[538] Harden, *The Fashion Museum in Bath*, 2014, 137.

[539] Rosemary Harden, "The Fashion Museum in Bath," (10 May 2012), draft of a chapter written for *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice,* Marie Riegels Melchior and Birgitta Svensson, eds.

[540] Wolfgang Ernst, "Archi(ve)textures of Museology," Susan A. Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000) 25.

[541] Ernst, *Archi(ve)textures of Museology*, 2000, 25.

must behave as Benjamin's *ragpicker* sifting through the ruins of history.[542] The constructed nature of *Behind the Scenes*, however, is a salutary reminder that narrativized staging is unavoidable. Nonetheless, the narrative of display/archive does not blur the boundary between isolated objects and their previous context. Thus, in making this gap clear, the display/archive is obviously a space of representation.

The Pleasure Garden

I draw this chapter to a close with a discussion of the construction of the *Pleasure Garden*. This display, in common with *Behind the Scenes*, is overtly a space of representation. The *Pleasure Garden*, introduced in the previous chapter, was central to the Museum of London's dramatic re-representation of their Modern London Galleries. The curators of the new galleries sought to present London's history as 'moments of change'[543], rather than offering up a static illustration of how things had been in the city's past. One such moment of change was the emergence of pleasure gardens on the outskirts of London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The museum attempted a 'symbolic interpretation'[544] of these sites of pleasure and recreation that was neither straightforwardly restorative nor reconstructive. It was a process of re-making that intended to highlight the creativity of the activity; as such, it contrasted with the mimicry of traditional tableaux. The installation (Fig. 4.10) is composed of numerous elements. These include mannequins wearing historic garments from the museum's collection, displayed inside cases; replica costumes mounted on figures that mingle with the audience outside of the display cases; contemporary hats by the milliner Philip Treacy; metal

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[542] See: Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 2000, 11-14 and 249-250 for a full explanation of the figure of the 'ragpicker' in Benjamin's work.

[543] Ellie Miles, ""A Museum of Everything": Making the Pleasure Gardens inside the Museum of London," *The London Journal* 38.2 (July 2013).

[544] Miles, *A Museum of Everything*, 2013, 153.

stylised wigs by the sculptor Yasemen Hussein; and fibre-optic lighting and a narrative film projected life-size onto the gallery walls and case backs, so that it appears as an extension of the room. I will discuss the relationships of these elements to one another within the overall re-creative scheme of the gallery.

The *Pleasure Garden* was designed as an immersive experiential space. Senior Curator Beatrice Behlen explained that 'rather than telling someone what the pleasure gardens were about, we wanted you to experience what it was like to be there'. Ellie Miles, who worked as an embedded researcher for the development of the gallery, has written an emotive vignette of her experience as a visitor to this space. Miles' recollection confirmed that the installation successfully fulfilled Behlen's ambition for the gallery:

> The cases' glass fronts are decorated with painted leaves, and the backs are mirrors. These mirrors create kaleidoscopic corners, reflecting the room into itself again and again. The ambient sounds are of birdsong … and then a carriage pulling up on gravel which pauses with the noise of someone getting out. As the sound of the carriage pulls away the lights in the room dim a little, music begins and in the film the characters arrive for an afternoon in the gardens. The action continues on both walls throughout, although the sound alternatives between phases, like a piece of promenade theatre … the mirrors multiply the population, and looking into the case I momentarily glimpse myself reflected amongst the throng. The eerie effect is amplified when other visitors, standing still to watch the film, start to move around. In the dark they are stopped still like the mannequins, when they move there is a tiny moment when it seems the mannequins could have moved too.[545]

In order to evoke the character of pleasure gardens—their temporality and the experiences of their fashionable patrons—the curators took an artful approach to

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[545] Miles, *A Museum of Everything*, 2013, 155.

authenticity. The film, made by the museum in collaboration with Elbow Productions, recounts the experiences of several characters over the course of an afternoon and evening at a pleasure garden. Although the narrative was fictional, and the pleasure garden itself an imagined composite, both drew on 'authentic' accounts of these spaces from Georgian sources.[546] The combined staging of real historic artefacts and replica garments in the same space was a similarly considered commingling of fact and fiction.

The Museum of London's collection contains no garments worn by individuals known to have attended a pleasure garden. Thus, the display was pieced together from replica costumes representing characters depicted in period illustrations of pleasure gardens; for example 'the harlequin', 'the acrobat' and 'the Oriental' (Fig. 4.11). Alongside these replicas, the museum displayed historic garments selected from their collection to represent the variety of people who would have attended a pleasure garden. In the absence of historically grounded biographical histories for the exhibits, Behlen (as discussed in the previous chapter) invented a character for each complete outfit. Behlen encouraged the visitor to identify with these personalities through the process of anthropomorphic imagination discussed in the previous chapter. The curator recognised that this process was reliant on the staging of the garments. She advocated for the use of full-bodied, expressively posed mannequins. These mannequins, Behlen argued, would be more evocative in the immersive, theatrical space of the gallery than the invisible mannequins used elsewhere in the museum.[547] Following her recommendation, the museum selected abstracted yet personable mannequins from Proportion London. Behlen has noted the ontological balancing act that mimetic mannequins perform, discussed in Chapter 2, between appearing lifelike and artificial. She stated: 'I did not want anything too authentic.… I think if you go too Tussaud, the clothes start to look unreal, Disney-ish'.[548] Behlen eschewed mannequins in skin tones; white and black

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[546] Beatrice Behlen, *Personal Interview*, 26 October 2012.

[547] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[548] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

in favour of a grey-coloured finish. This colour, she believed, would help the figures 'go away', meaning that the physicality of the mannequins would not inhibit the visitor's imaginative identification with the figures.[549] Rather, her intention was for these shadowy grey figures to act as a *tabula rasa* onto which visitors could project their individual mental images of the characters.

To further soften the mannequins, Behlen proposed covering their faces with lace masks, in a similar fashion to Vreeland's veiled heads (discussed in Chapter 2). Contemporary sources provided Behlen with inspiration—Kirsten Dunst in Sofia Coppola's filmic portrayal of Marie Antoinette and Isabella Blow's lacquered lace mask, designed by Treacy. These references suggested to Behlen a bolder proposition—contemporary fashion and art standing in place of historic hats too fragile to display and lifelike reproduction wigs that were in her view too obviously artificial. Behlen commissioned Treacy and Hussein to create contemporary headpieces and sculptural wigs (Fig. 4.10 – Fig. 4.12). It was neither Behlen nor Treacy's intention to recreate historic headpieces: both were clear that, although inspired by the historic characters they outfitted, the hats were works of contemporary fashion.[550] The pairing of modern hats with historic costumes was in the service of recovering the original contemporary experience of the exhibits. The juxtaposition suggested to visitors that the 'costumes' 'were not just old', that they had once been new and fashionable.[551] The decision prompted concern from some people within the museum that the public would confuse 'fact' and 'fiction'.[552] As Behlen noted, however, 'putting in something "wrong", makes [the historic garments] more "right"'.[553] Treacy's hats' referring to the contemporary contexts for cutting-edge fashion suggests a related experience for the historic exhibits.

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[549] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[550] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[551] Behlen cited in Ellie Miles, *A Museum of Everything*, 2013, 159.

[552] Specifically from the Head of Conservation. Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

[553] Behlen, *Interview*, 2012.

Substitutes for 'real' objects allowed the museum to tell subjective narratives that would otherwise have been rendered invisible by the absence of the 'objective' historic artefacts. The staging of the *Pleasure Garden* supposes a nuanced understanding of authenticity as it relates to the construction of history. The positioning of historic garments inside cases and replicas outside the cases initially suggests the unequal status of *real* and *replica* objects. This balance is subtly redressed, however, in the 'conversation' between the two types of objects. For example, some actors in the film projected into the cases wear the replica costumes, and thus *real* and *replica* are integrated into the same narrative. In another instance, a child mannequin wearing a replica costume stretches out its hand playfully to its counterpart on the other side of the glass (Fig. 4.12).

The considered combination of historic objects, object reproductions, contemporary fashion, and display technologies (such as film and sounds) created a new model of engagement for visitors with historic fashion. This model, similarly to the hands-on displays in science museums that demonstrate scientific principles, engaged the visitors' bodies 'as a source of knowledge'.[554] In this context, the medium of the display stimulated emotive responses that transmitted the temporal experience of the pleasure gardens and the centrality of fashion in the excitement of the new. In uniting objects with technology, Behlen aimed to transform visitors' recognition of historic dress in the museum. Projected sound, light and movement shatters expectations of 'costume' displayed by otherwise traditional means—behind glass on immobile mannequins under low light levels. That which is old and static is enlivened, appearing—at least in Miles' perception—almost alive. The *Pleasure Garden* accords with Cunnington's ideal form of fashion museum, which he visualised as a 'centre of living art, not a mausoleum of old clothes'.[555] Cunnington

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[554] R. Silverston, "The Medium is the Museum: On Objects and Logics in Times and Spaces," R. S. Miles and R. Zavala, eds., *Towards the Museum of the Future: New European Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2002) 162; cited in Miles, *A Museum of Everything*, 158.

[555] C. W. Cunnington, "Letter to the Editor," *Times* (26 November, 1937), Cunnington Scrapbooks, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

wrote these words in 1937 to describe his proposed National Institute of Dress. In this period, he advocated an ambitious plan to create an institution in collaboration with the fashion industry that would express the performative nature of fashion. In the following chapter, I turn my attention to Cunnington's plans and subsequent efforts by curators and fashion industry professionals to create a display medium that expresses the specificity of fashion.

Conclusion

From its inception, the Gallery of Costume dedicated itself to a predominantly chronological structuring of dress history. While Buck's narrative presented itself as objective, inherently truthful, and certain in its assumption that fashion evolves in a gradual linear motion, the validity of her approach has diminished in response to three related developments. The first is the radical historiography proposed by Foucault and Benjamin that had, by the start of the twenty-first century, begun to influence the writing of dress history in academic texts and its three-dimensional construction in the museum. The second is Benjamin's articulation of modern fashion as a trans-historical force, through the metaphor of the tiger's leap. The third development is the revelation of the constructed-nature of all historical narratives.

It is not the intention of this critique to suggest that traditional approaches are not of value. Chronology and tableaux remain popular methods for structuring history. Lambert states that faced with the novelty and constant change of contemporary fashion, placing dress 'into a clear historical and cultural context can be very reassuring [to the audience]'.[556] While The Gallery of Costume, the V&A and the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology all currently maintain a 'permanent' chronological gallery of dress history, each has developed the form by incorporating a thematic approach that connects to contemporary academic dress history research. Since her appointment as chief curator at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in 1997, Valerie Steele has maintained a chronological *Fashion and*

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[556] Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 2012.

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Textile History gallery. The first display mounted in the gallery, *Fifty Years of Fashion: New Look to Now*, represented dress history as 'the relationship of forces'[557]— social, political and economic developments. It was, therefore, indicative of the emergence of theoretically informed approaches to dress history in the mid- to late- 1990s. Subsequent displays in the gallery were arranged in a linear chronology but took a thematic focus that made connections between garments across historical periods. This approach presents fashion's past synchronously, rather than strictly diachronically. Steele (or her assistant curators) selected themes from issues that are still pertinent to the present day. Past themes have included the relationship between fashion and politics (2009); eco fashion (2010); gender (2011); fashion and technology (2012–2013); sexuality and eroticism (2008–2009; 2014); and counterfeit fashion (2015). Updated annually, the gallery's history of fashion always appears current and relevant. Steele's displays construct history from the concerns of the present, and in this sense they are genealogical in nature. Thus, they interrupt the universalising form of this system of representation as Buck constructed it.

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[557] Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, 1984, 88.

Chapter 5: Performing Fashion in the Museum

In 1937, Cunnington launched a campaign to establish a National Institute of Dress, formed from his collection of historic dress. This was to be the first public space in Britain dedicated to the display of dress. He outlined his vision for the institute in a letter to the *Times*. Cunnington conceived of a hybrid museum and research laboratory managed by the fashion industry so that it would be a 'centre of living art, not a mausoleum of old clothes'.[558] In this quote, Cunnington dialectically framed the museum as a monument for the preservation of objects, in opposition to the living phenomenon of fashion. Cunnington's proposal for a new form of museum, in synchrony with the fashion industry, is the starting point for this chapter's exploration of experimental display practices that attempt to revive dress as a living concept of fashion.

Cunnington's proposal and its implications were, however, in 1937 somewhat ambiguous and raise three related questions that I aim to address in this chapter. First, what does it mean to recover a living experience of fashion? Second, is the costume museum by definition in opposition to the fashion industry? This was clearly the view of Valerie Steele in 1998 when she wrote 'If fashion is a "living" phenomenon—contemporary, constantly changing, etc.—then a museum of fashion is *ipso facto* a cemetery of dead clothes.'[559] The costume museum is charged with preserving its collections and this necessitates boundaries upon its display methodologies that prohibit it from employing some of the fashion industry's spectacular techniques for animating dress. Historic garments often need to be displayed behind glass and cannot be animated on living or moving bodies. This raises the third question: How, within these conservation constraints, can exhibitions of dress express fashion as a living experience?

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[558] C. W. Cunnington, "Letter to the Editor," *Times* (26 November, 1937), Cunnington Scrapbooks, Gallery of Costume Archives, Platt Hall.

[559] Valerie Steele, "A Museum of Fashion is More than a Clothes Bag," *Fashion Theory* 2.4 (1998) 334.

This investigation begins by plotting some of the characteristics of fashion in order to understand how exhibitions of dress might express fashion's lived experience. The framework for this discussion draws on the fashion theory of Caroline Evans, Ulrich Lehmann, Karen de Perthuis, and Elizabeth Wilson.[560] This discussion will probe the binary opposition of fashion as material objects and spectacle. Contemporary fashion theory's positioning of fashion as both literal things and things of the imagination challenges object-based curators to adapt their traditional display methodologies to account for the imaginative interplay between fashion's material and abstract states. Thus, in this chapter, I consider how the approaches of contemporary fashion designers and artists skilled in negotiating fashion's balance of object and image can positively influence museological presentations of dress. In so doing, this investigation problematises Cunnington's perceived dichotomy between the fashion industry and the museum.

In the first half of this chapter, I examine contemporary display practices that adapted the fashion industry's display media (new technologies and the catwalk show) to engage visitors' imaginations in the performance of dress. I begin by discussing the virtual performance created by digital artist Jane Harris titled *The Empress's New Clothes* (Museum of London, 2003), in relation to Musée de la Mode, Palais Galliera curator and director Olivier Saillard's performance featuring live models titled *Models at Work* (Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Victoria & Albert Museum [V&A], 2012). I draw upon Mikel Dufrenne's conceptualisation of

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[560] de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005; Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Caroline Evans, "John Galliano: Modernity and Spectacle," *SHOWstudio* (2 March 2002). <http://showstudio.com/project/past_present_couture/essay>. 9 October 2015; Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," Eugénie Shinkle, ed., *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion* (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2008) 17-28; Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2000); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985); Wilson, "Costuming Clio," *History Workshop Journal* 60. 1 (2005) 229-32.

aesthetic perception and aesthetic objects[561] and Gaston Bachelard's concept of 'material imagination,'[562] to examine the way imagination works on and through physical matter in these presentations of fashion in the museum.

The following two exhibitions that I will discuss—*The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (Montréal Museum of Art, 2011) and *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations* (Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012)—are, in common with Harris' and Saillard's performances, imaginative re-creations of fashion. I intend to examine the form of these exhibitions (both of which united material objects with new technologies) using Jean Baudrillard's theory of the simulacra and simulation [563] and the ideas that de Perthuis outlined in 'The Synthetic Ideal: The Fashion Model and Photographic Manipulation'.[564] Baudrillard's 'third order of simulation': a fantastical representation of reality that he termed the hyperreal offers a persuasive framework for understanding how these exhibitions operate simultaneously as artifice and reality. These exhibitions' combination of artifice and reality aligned their form to that of the synthetic ideal analysed by de Perthuis. The synthetic ideal, de Perthuis argues, is the manifestation of fashion's imaginary. Fashion's imaginary, in de Perthuis' summary, is a 'mode of being that has moulded the stuff of its world into a form that is continuously malleable'. In the discussion that follows I intend to explore in greater depth the significance of de Perthuis' ideas for the display of dress in the museum.

The final section of this chapter examines display practices that seemingly reconciled the living experience of fashion with the museum's perceived role as a

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[561] Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

[562] Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Edith R. Farell, trans. (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1999).

[563] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Sheila Faria Glaser, trans. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[564] de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 407-24; Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000.

memorialising medium: The retrospective exhibition of designers Viktor & Rolf (*The House of Viktor & Rolf*, the Barbican Art Gallery, 2008) and Saillard's performance *The Impossible Wardrobe* (Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2012). Both displays were constructed around structures associated with the capture and storage of material memories—a 'memory palace' and a museum storeroom, respectively. I intend to deconstruct the form of these structure with reference to Susan Stewart's writing on the miniature and the dollhouse in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*; Didier Maleuvre's development of Stewart's ideas about the dollhouse; and Frances Yates's work on memory palaces. My discussion of these displays focuses on how curators expressed the intangible spectacle of fashion via a material medium.

The exhibitions and performances examined throughout this chapter are a hybrid of objects, performance, image, reality and artifice. This combination mirrors the character of fashion, as contemporary fashion theorists have articulated it.[565] I will deconstruct the significance of contemporary fashion theory's framing of the fashionable spectacle for the display of dress in the museum. First, however, a distinction should first be acknowledged between modern fashion, as the product of a commercialised fashion industry that developed from the late eighteenth century, and historic fashion created before this period. Modern fashion is, in Christopher Breward's summary, 'the outcome of a precarious marriage between the processes of creative authorship, technological production and cultural dissemination,'[566] whereas fashion of the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries is the expression of complex, rigid sartorial codes governed by the ruling elite. The Gallery of Costume's collection, as discussed in Chapter 1, includes fashion from both periods. My discussion thus recognises the specificity of both modern and pre-modern fashion and seeks out their commonalities.

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[565] See: de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005; Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, 2003; Evans, "John Galliano, 2002; Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000; Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 1985.

[566] Christopher Breward, *Fashion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 17.

Fashion as Object and Spectacle

Fashion theory developed over the past two decades has framed fashion, of both the modern and pre-modern periods, as a complex intersection of tangible, material objects and spectacular image-making and performance. Evans recognised (with reference to Wilson's writing on fashion and modernity) that the qualities of novelty and artifice define modern fashion.[567] Similarly, Lehmann acknowledged that fashion's transitory and fragmentary nature is paradigmatic of modern culture.[568] Fashion, Lehmann wrote in *Tigersprung*, 'has to mark absolute novelty yet has already died when it appears in the physical world'.[569] He concluded 'that to discuss its impact and importance, always means to transform the fleeting and transitory into the statue-like and permanent'.[570] Lehmann's assertion presents an interesting challenge for those curators of costume museums who have historically exhibited the material realities and 'truths' of objects. Buck's 'objective' object-based methodologies, as discussed in the previous chapter, had the effect of fixing individual fashionable garments as the costumes of the past. Following Lehmann's argument, unless the museum can find methods of expressing fashion's constant transformation—the process of death and resurrection analysed in *Tigersprung*—then dress in the museum will atrophy.

Faced with the intangible synthesis of fantasy and reality that compromises the fashionable spectacle costume curators perhaps understandably feel on safer ground addressing the material qualities of dress. Valerie Steele justly urged curators not to dismiss the fashionable spectacle, however, for it plays a crucial role in conveying

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[567] Evans, "John Galliano," 2002.

[568] Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000, xii.

[569] Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000, xix.

[570] Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000, 4.

the experience of fashion.[571] The term *spectacle* derives, as Evans points out, from the Latin verb *specere*, 'to see'. In this context, the term denotes a sight or vision—specifically, the fashion designer's vision—which, by the end of the twentieth century, had become detached from the fashionable object and displaced into the medium of the catwalk show.[572] Evans has described in detail the form of the fashion show that emerged at the start of the twentieth century and developed into the fantastical spectacles of the late 1990s and 2000s.[573] It is not my intention to repeat Evans' historical analysis of the fashionable spectacle, but rather to consider how curators can translate this experience in the display of fashionable dress in the museum. Of key importance to my argument is the idea that the spectacular fashion show appears to takes its cue, to cite de Perthuis, from Charles Baudelaire's description of fashion as 'a sublime deformation of Nature, or rather, as a permanent attempt at her renewed reformation'.[574] Fashion, as de Perthuis noted, ignores corporeal reality in the pursuit of a constantly evolving form.[575]

De Perthuis and Ulrich Lehmann both proposed the idea that fashion and, by extension, the fashionable spectacle, constantly remakes the material world.[576] Fashion, in their view, is a transformative force engaging the interplay of objects and imagination. If the fashionable spectacle is neither natural nor mimetic, then to revive its experience therefore, does not mean that curators should strive to imitate or authentically re-create dress as it was originally presented or performed. Rather, in light of de Perthuis and Lehman's conceptualisation of fashion, the recovery of

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[571] Valerie Steele, "Museum Quality: The Rise of the Fashion Exhibition," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 12.

[572] Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 18.

[573] Caroline Evans, *The Mechanical Smile: Modernism and the First Fashion Shows in France and America, 1900–1929* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Caroline Evans, "The Enchanted Spectacle," *Fashion Theory* 5.3 (2001) 271-310; Evans, "John Galliano," 2002.

[574] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 2nd edn. (London: Phaiden, 1995) 33. Cited in de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 408.

[575] Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 407-24.

[576] Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 407-24; Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000.

fashion's living experience means more than merely resuscitating objects; they both imply a process of transformation. Following this argument I intend to argue that the concept of metamorphosis is core to the realisation of fashion in the museum. Here, I pause to reflect on the definition of the term *metamorphosis* and why I believe it to be the most appropriate for describing the practices of those curators who strive to revive the living experience of fashion in the museum.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines metamorphosis as 'the action or process of changing in form, shape or substance; especially, transformation by supernatural means'.[577] This definition connects fashion's transformation from material object to spectacle with the 'magical' force of imagination. In her article 'Magic Fashion', Wilson suggested the process by which fashion transforms from a physical into an imaginary state. Wilson's argument is directed at fashion as it exists in daily life, not as it is created by the contemporary fashionable spectacle. Nevertheless, her argument has useful insights into the process of transformation. Wilson described how garments take on significance outside their physical boundaries.[578] She noted that people forge intensely personal and symbolic associations around garments. These associations occur, as discussed in Chapter 3, because dress has an intimate relationship to the body. Because worn garments can take on the characteristics and qualities of the wearer—the residue of their scent and shape—they can thus be totemic of people and the occasions on which they were worn. Wilson believes that through the process of imaginative identification, objects become powerful fetishes.[579] The 'magic garment', in Wilson's view, transforms the individual's relationship to the world.[580] She thus concluded that 'fashion is at the junction of social and individual dreams, desires and lived reality.[581] Lehmann concurred that

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[577] "Metamorphosis," *Oxford English Dictionary*.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117313?redirectedFrom=metamorphosis#eid>. 9 October 2015.

[578] Elizabeth Wilson, "Magic Fashion," *Fashion Theory* 8.4 (2004) 378-379.

[579] Wilson, "Magic Fashion," 2004, 379-380.

[580] Wilson, "Magic Fashion," 2004, 383.

[581] Wilson, "Costuming Clio," 2005, 230.

'although the idea expressed by the word fashion differs greatly within different contexts, it always denotes the imaginary and nonexistent or sets the existing in contrast to an ideal'.[582] While Lehmann was writing specifically about modern fashion, his statement applies to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dress.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dress was perceived as both reality (as worn dress) and as *fanciful impulse*, to appropriate Aileen Ribeiro's term.[583] Fashions of this period were no less symbolic than modern fashion; they, too, embodied emotions and feelings, the real and the ideal. Ribeiro takes this assertion as the basis of *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England* (2005). In this seminal text, Ribeiro probed the objective and the imagined representation of seventeenth-century fashion—real examples of dress and the imaginative re-creation of fashion in literature and art. *Fashion and Fiction* was distinct from traditional object-based studies of historic dress, as exemplified by Anne Buck's texts. It suggested that the significance of seventeenth century dress cannot be explained solely by recourse to its material qualities, and thus encourages curators to broaden the ways in which they conceive of and represent historic fashion. Following *Fashion and Fiction*, I suggest that fashion of all periods exists as tangible objects and as imaginative re-creation.

Metamorphosis can thus describe the process of re-creation: the transformation of dress from its physical state into another form that expresses the intangible and imagined aspects of fashion. *The Empress's New Clothes* and *Models at Work* exemplified fashion's metamorphosis as Evans, Lehmann and Wilson have framed it. The performance, in the first instance, a computer generated animation of an eighteenth-century dress and, in the second example, a five act meditation on the catwalk show's construction of fashion, was the means by which the object became something other than its material self. Saillard's and Harris' performances were more conceptually sophisticated in their objectives than merely showing clothing

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[582] Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 2000, 284.

[583] Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

in movement. In this respect, they are a development upon earlier experiments to introduce moving bodies into the museum: for example, the Brooklyn Museum's *Moving Costume Theatre* (1972).[584] I will argue (with reference to Dufrenne's phenomenological philosophy) that *The Empress's New Clothes* and *Models at Work* enacted a metamorphosis of dress. Harris' and Saillard's display medium attempted to express the fashionable ideal in a form that did not directly reproduce material objects or the fashionable spectacle. Rather, these performances transformed objects into a phenomenological experience. *The Empress's New Clothes* and *Models at Work* are *performances* in the sense that Dufrenne used the term in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*;[585] they both strove towards a perceptible, sensuous account of fashion that existed in parallel with material objects. My analysis of how these displays enact metamorphosis draws on Dufrenne's theory of aesthetic perception and Gaston Bachelard's concept of 'material imagination.'

Material Imagination: *The Empress's New Clothes* and *Models at Work*

The Empress's New Clothes was a forty-second animation of an eighteenth-century, Spitalfields silk, sack-back-style dress, based on a real garment in the Museum of London's collection. The animation was a digital representation of how the dress would have looked and moved on a real body of the period (Fig. 5.1). Harris intended the animation to 'bring to life' a dress too fragile to be worn on a contemporary human body.[586] She re-created and reanimated the dress through a

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[584] The Brooklyn Museum's *Moving Costume Theatre*, opened in 1972, was the first museological experiment with moving presentations of dress. Fifty-eight mannequins arranged alongside period furniture on circular podiums were sent down a mechanised catwalk through a glassed-in stage, accompanied by a multimedia slideshow of music and images of historic personages, art, architecture and newsreel photographs.

[585] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 1973, 41.

[586] Jane Harris, "Empress's New Clothes," *Challenging Craft International Conference*, 8–10 September 2004, Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen. <http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/challengingcraft/ChallengingCraft/pdfs/janeharris.pdf>. 22 November 2014.

combination of three-dimensional computer graphic tooling (3D CG), optical motion-capture technology, and traditional object-based research.[587]

Harris' creative process was informed by curator Jenny Lister's knowledge of the garment and how it should be styled, and her historical research into etiquette manuals.[588] The manuals provided guidance on appropriately feminine posture and gesture in the eighteenth century. This information informed the performance of choreographer Ruth Gibson wearing eighteenth-century-style bucket hoops and a corset. Harris captured Gibson's movements with motion-sensing technology.[589] This information created a digital skeleton of a moving body, over which Harris reconstructed the 'skin' of the dress's fabric using two- and three-dimensional texture-mapping technology. The 'real' body that animated the garment was then digitally manipulated out of the performance, leaving a virtual cast of the garment set into choreographed motion.

The impression that the animation created was that of the dress performing without a visible human presence. The form of the animation was spectral: A ghostly vision of the 'real' garment. Harris is clear that her practice does not seek to re-create a 'virtual' image of the 'real' thing.[590] To her mind, the term *virtual* implies mimicking, whereas her intention is to play with the possibilities of the digital medium to create things that cannot be achieved in the physical world.[591] In her words, her practice seeks to 'inform us of an alternative world that is digitally constructed, one that looks beyond simulation of what we know and creatively

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[587] The piece was animated by 3D CG computer graphic operator Mike Dawson. Harris, "Empress's New Clothes," 2004.

[588] Jenny Lister, *Personal interview*, 11 August 2010.

[589] Harris, "Empress's New Clothes," 2004.

[590] Jane Harris and Bernard Walsh, "Sorcerers Apprentice: Reactive Digital Forms of Body and Cloth in Performance," *New Visions in Performance*, Gavin Carver and Colin Beardon, eds. (London: Routledge, 2005) 286.

[591] Harris and Walsh, "Sorcerers Apprentice," 2005, 290.

challenges our perception of what is "real"'.[592] The challenge to the perception of the 'real' came through the interplay of digital and material, object and body. The Museum of London displayed the animation next to the garment that inspired it. Harris confirmed that the two forms were intended to exist in parallel: '[the] believable visual experience … operates alongside the physical object [and] may function in the absence of dress'.[593] The play that Harris made between digital and actual object is one that contemporary fashion also makes in its structuring of image and object. In *The Empress's New Clothes*, a real garment holds the memory of its original lived performance in its materiality, but that performance is reenacted in a spectral form. As often occurs in contemporary fashion, the virtual image of a garment can 'live' on without its physical presence.

Saillard's *Models at Work* performances were similarly a spectral presentation of fashion. Saillard, however, inverted Harris' body/object dialectic. In his performance, Saillard absented 'real' fashionable objects in their entirety. *Models at Work* distilled the sensuous materiality of the haute couture show into a spectacle of gesture and pose. Saillard divided the show into five acts, during which live models performed in simple black and white garments. These props alluded to the backstage and front-of-house processes that create fashion as both object and spectacle. In Act One, *Black Sheaths*, the models wore replicas of the shrouds used in early twentieth-century fashion houses to protect garments (Fig. 5.2). Act Two, *The White Tunic*, saw the models performing in the simple wrap-around, full-sleeved 'tunics' worn by couture models between fittings (Fig. 5.3). The models reconfigured the tunics around their bodies in multiple ways, and in so transformed these utilitarian garments into aesthetic objects. In Act Three, *Catwalk without Clothes*, the models wore black body suits while miming dressing and undressing (Fig. 5.4). In this scene, the presentation of the fashionable object was inseparable from the body of the model. In Act Four, *Modelled in Calico*, the models wrapped and draped their bodies with swathes of calico—the fabric used for making toiles of couture

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[592] Harris and Walsh, "Sorcerers Apprentice," 2005, 290.

[593] Harris, "Empress's New Clothes," 2004.

garments—in an approximation of recognisable forms of dress (Fig. 5.5). In the final act, *Shadow Garments*, the models donned black garments (designed by Christian Lacroix), whose silhouettes were a re-creation of iconic designs by leading twentieth-century designers. In this act, the models' posturing explored the ways in which these forms affected their body language (Fig 5.6). Their performances questioned whether fashion is a material form or the performative gestures that it operates upon the body.

The staging of the show appeared to draw upon the performance of fashion during the 'golden age of couture' (1947–1957). During this period, fashion shows would be held in a designer's salon. Each designer had a house model whose physical presence and stance came to characterise the designer's aesthetic; thus, the performance of fashion was inseparable from the bodies of specific models.[594] In *Models at Work*, Saillard directed the renowned (and now retired) French models Axelle Doué, Claudia Huidobro, Anne Rohart, Violeta Sanchez and Amalia Vairell to re-present the poses and attitudes associated with fashion models in different periods (not just the 'golden age'). Saillard, whose career has spanned the spheres of performance and fashion curation, does not differentiate between his roles as a performer/choreographer and that of fashion curator. Discussing this performance, he stated that he curated women as he would clothes.[595]

Models at Work was an evolution of Saillard's earlier performances interrogating the gesture and attitude of the fashion model that took place in contemporary dance and photography contexts. In these locations, the models performed while wearing iconic fashion garments. Responding to the site of the museum as a repository for material memories, Saillard eliminated fashion in its physical form. In place of tangible garments, the performance, in his words, '[worked] on the body like a memory of

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[594] Evans, "The Enchanted Spectacle," 2002, 293.

[595] Victoria and Albert Museum Channel, *Fashion in Motion: Olivier Saillard, Behind the Scenes.* <http://www.vam.ac.uk/channel/happenings/fashion_in_motion/fashion_in_motion_olivier_saillard_behind_the_scenes/> 6 October 2012.

fashion'.[596] Saillard appeared to acknowledge that which Dufrenne has argued: that the spectator's aesthetic perception completes the aesthetic object.[597] Dufrenne's conceptualisation of aesthetic objects and aesthetic perception and Bachelard's concept of 'material imagination' can both be adapted to create a framework for theorising the process of metamorphosis in Harris' and Saillard's performances. These concepts, I believe, offer particular insights for explaining these experimental performances' inversion of museums' traditional focus on tangible material objects.

Dufrenne outlined the term *aesthetic objects* in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* to refer to works of art that have fluid boundaries. Such works of art exist initially in a virtual sense (for example, the musical score or the theatrical script), but are only truly made manifest and present upon their performance, or rather upon the reception of the performance. Clearly, there are significant differences between dress and Dufrenne's examples—the most obvious deviation being their physicality. The script and the score, unlike dress, are two-dimensional schemata dependent upon their performance to bring the work of art fully into being. Worn dress in the museum, by contrast, has already been performed, and its materiality bears witness to its life. Similarly, fantastical garments created specifically for the catwalk as an expression of the designer's vision (and not intended to go into production) have also been performed. Evans noted that following their performance on the catwalk, these one-off garments are archived and then circulate in the media as 'image and memory of a fleeting moment in the evanescent spectacle'.[598] Despite the differences between the form of dress and Dufrenne's examples, his conceptualisation of 'aesthetic objects' offers a way to frame fashion's mutability—its fluid status as object and spectacle, reality and imaginary, active and inactive

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[596] Victoria and Albert Museum Channel, *Fashion in Motion.*

[597] Victoria and Albert Museum Channel, *Fashion in Motion.*

[598] Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 18.

Dufrenne's ideas about the transformative power of perception present a persuasive argument for understanding how exhibitionary practice can metamorphose dress into the intangible aspects of fashion. Dress in the museum, in common with Dufrenne's examples, 'lives as a permanent possibility of sensation'.[599] Traditional displays of dress, such as Buck's, featuring static garments on rigid mannequins, are in Dufrenne's terms schemata of fashion. They communicate the material, stylistic qualities of fashion's development but are impoverished of the sensuous experience central to the performance of fashion, both in daily life and in the fashionable spectacle. These displays are literally a bloodless presence of fashion. The living experience of fashion is arguably only truly communicated in its performance. Saillard and Harris both performed the phenomenological experience of fashion through the imaginative fusion of body and object. *Models at Work* and *The Empress's New Clothes* are the negative and positive of what Anne Hollander described in *Seeing through Clothes* as an 'integrated vision of clothes and body'.[600] Although devoid of 'real' fashionable garments, both performances called up the powerful imaginative relationship between body and clothing described by Wilson.

I draw upon Gaston Bachelard's concept of 'material imagination' for insights into how imagination and memory act upon and through material objects. In *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Bachelard identified two different types of imagination: the formal and the material. While the former focusses on the visual perception of images, the latter, as he wrote in *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, consists of 'this amazing need for penetration which … thinks matter, dreams in it, lives in it, or, in other words, materialises the imaginary'.[601] The concept of material imagination, as Bachelard articulated the idea in this quote, resonates with Harris' and Saillard's performances. Bachelard

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[599] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 1973, 14.

[600] Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) 85-86.

[601] Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes. Essay sur l'Imaginations de Mouvement* (Paris: Jose Corti, 1943) 14. Cited in Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, Colette Gaudin, ed. and trans. (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, Inc., 1987) xlvi.

developed his concept of *material imagination* in relation to poetry and literature. I believe, however, that his concept translates into the context of museological performances that activate the imagination and memory of matter through a sensuous bodily presence. My point of departure from Bachelard is to describe *material imagination* as the imagination of matter that takes place as a result of a performative process. In this way, Saillard's and Harris' experimental performances engaged material imagination in order to activate the experience of fashion. Their practice absented tangible material objects, but in so doing encouraged the audience to imaginatively materialise their sensuous presence.

Material imagination evoked through the performance of *The Empress's New Clothes* and *Models at Work* reconfigured the human form into fashion itself. Harris' invisible body image emphasised the materiality of the garment. The absence of the tangible body rendered the presence of the fashionable ideal more acute. The body is so familiar that it is arguably never really absent; the imagination, to appropriate Bachelard's words, 'dreams in it, lives in it'.[602] In contrast, the physical, sensuous presence of the body in Saillard's performance materialised the concept of fashion. Both performances, through opposing approaches to the body, expressed fashion's active transformation of the sensuous materiality of dress.

I draw my discussion of Harris' and Saillard's performances to a close by considering how they dealt with the experience of the fashionable spectacle. On the surface, *Models at Work* more obviously meditated upon the contemporary fashionable spectacle than did *The Empress's New Clothes*. I suggest, however, that the form of both engaged with this spectacle. Harris' performance of the Museum of London's eighteenth-century dress used 3D CG not merely to simulate movement, but also (as previously noted) to create a vision that expressed the phenomenological experience of fashion. In this way, it created a relay between the material and the virtual in a way that evoked the contemporary fashionable spectacle. Harris noted that 3D CG has also been employed by cutting-edge contemporary fashion designers

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[602] Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes*, 1943, 14.

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(including Hussein Chalayan) to create 'screen-based works that achieve the extraordinary'[603]: for example, in Chalayan's 2001 *Ventriloquy* animation (Fig. 5.7), in which 3D CG wire-frame figures, wearing garments from his Spring/Summer 2001 collection, were deconstructed and reconstructed in ways that would in reality have been physically impossible. The film that played before the catwalk performance of the collection created a complex relay between the physical and digital worlds. In *Ventriloquy*, the actions of the digital figures prefigured those of the models, who acted out a narrative that harked back to the film. At the end of the catwalk show, the models smashed one another's resin dresses in a way that echoed—but could not reproduce—the film's deconstruction of the bodies of the 3D CG figures. Thus, Chalayan's digital world aligns to Harris', in that it creatively challenged our perception of reality.

Saillard's spectacle similarly evoked the duality of the term *vision*, being a vision of his ideas and a spectral presentation of fashion. In this way, his work echoed that of contemporary conceptual designers such as Chalayan. The performance of *Models at Work* at the V&A occurred just before London Fashion Week as part of the museum's *Fashion in Motion* programme. Fiona Anderson credited *Fashion and Motion* with the introduction of live bodies into the static space of the museum.[604] While this innovation was undeniably a radical development for the museological display of dress, I would argue that fashion set into motion on 'real' bodies does not necessarily revive the specificity of the fashionable spectacle. The majority of the performances that take place as part of the *Fashion in Motion* programme are a reproduction of the mainstream contemporary catwalk show. Reproductions, Dufrenne wrote, repeat without reworking.[605] *Fashion in Motion* performances (with the exception of *Models at Work*) mimic the staging and production of the professional fashion show—they centre upon a linear spot-lit catwalk along which

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[603] Harris, "Empress's New Clothes," 2004.

[604] Fiona Anderson, "Museums as Fashion Media," *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2000) 377.

[605] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 38.

models parade a 'best-of' selection from the designer's archive to the beat of a contemporary soundtrack. While such performances purport to represent the fashionable spectacle, in merely reproducing it, they absent fashion's metamorphosis: the constant, endless renewal of its form. In contrast, Saillard's performance developed the form of the catwalk show by deconstructing the fashionable spectacle. Asked about his motivations to organise a fashion show without clothes, Saillard stated there is 'Too much image, too many clothes in contemporary fashion'.[606] I suggest that *Models at Work* neither entirely subverted nor fully recuperated the fashionable spectacle, but was, to a degree, a reconciliation of both. Saillard apparently confirmed this assertion when he stated that the evolving aim of his performances is to 'reinvent the format of a fashion show without ever having to create clothes'.[607]

Models at Work and *The Empress's New Clothes* both reconfigured the material world: collapsing the organic and the concrete into the 'sign system' of fashion. de Perthuis has described the 'alchemic process' wherein fashion virtually cuts and stitches the material world into a form that reflects its ideals and aspirations with the term 'fashion's imaginary'.[608] I suggest that de Perthuis's concept of 'fashion's imaginary' can be applied to the exhibitions *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* and *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversation.* Both exhibitions employed virtual and obviously artificial 'living' speaking figures to interpret and display material garments. The introduction of simulated characters was not solely in the service of bringing the garments to life. Rather, these forms were, I will argue, a medium that embodied the designers' creative vision.

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[606] Victoria and Albert Museum Channel, *Fashion in Motion.*

[607] Susie Bubble, "The Impossible Wardrobe," *Dazed* (October 2012). <http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/14781/1/the-impossible-wardrobe>. 9 October 2015.

[608] de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 419-422.

Metamorphosing Reality into Hyperreality: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* **and** *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations*

The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier and *Impossible Conversations* both pioneered a new medium for museological displays of dress that juxtaposed material exhibits with theatrical *mise-en-scènes* animated by multimedia. I intend to deconstruct the form of these displays using the concepts of fashion's imaginary, outlined by de Perthuis in 'The Synthetic Ideal', in tandem with Baudrillard's theory of *Simulacra and Simulation*; but first I will begin by briefly describing the form of these multimedia displays.

Seemingly 'living' mannequins who winked, blinked, looked around, blew kisses, smiled, sang and soliloquised were a central feature of the first retrospective devoted to designer Jean Paul Gaultier. These figures, dressed in Gaultier's designs along with wigs and fantastical headpieces created by hairdresser Odile Gilbert, were animated by high-definition audio-visual projections of the faces of 'real' people of a variety of ages, sexes and ethnicities. The group included the designer himself (Fig. 5.8), as well as his muses, and models (Fig. 5.9). Together they reflected the diversity of people Gaultier is inspired by and employs in the production of his creative vision. The facial animations, developed by Denis Marleau and Stéphane Jasmine of the UBU theatre company, were projected onto heads cast directly from the people they represented. The first animated mannequin that the visitor encountered depicted the designer wearing his trademark *marinière*. This simulated Gaultier greeted visitors and engaged them directly in a monologue about his eclectic array of 'loves', interests and the inspirations for this collection, all of which the exhibition is structured around.

Visitors to *Impossible Conversations*, a comparison of the oeuvres of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973) and Miuccia Prada (b. 1949), were similarly greeted by the simulated presence of the designers who were the subjects of the exhibition. The designers' presence was made manifest by a large-scale video. This video, directed

by Baz Luhrmann, featured Schiaparelli (played by actress Judy Davis) and Prada (who played herself) seated at either end of a table, engaged in a dialogue about their lives, philosophies, ideas and inspirations (Fig. 5.10). The intention of exhibition curators Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton in orchestrating this contrived conversation was to create new readings of both designers' most iconic garments.[609] In each of the themed galleries, a short film extending the introductory dialogue into specific aspects of their design practice was projected onto the backs of the display cases behind the exhibits that were mounted on mannequins adorned with blank, effacing masks (Fig. 5.11). This arrangement of video and objects appeared to metaphorically project the designers' visions onto their creations. The final gallery, titled 'A Surreal Body', which explored the ways in which these designers' work remade the image of the female body through Surrealist devices, took this creative conceit even further. Film production designer Nathan Crowley created the gallery as a space-distorting hall-of-mirrors installation. The oversized animated image of the designers reflected and refracted off cube-shaped glass cases while their voices boomed around the room. The disorientating effect created by the sound and reflected imagery echoed the designers' surrealistic practices of displacement and play on scale that was evident in the garments displayed in the cases. (Fig. 5.12). The blurring of reality and illusion, natural and artificial created by Crowley's installation was reinforced by period fashion photographs mounted on the backs of the cases. Some of these images were animated in barely perceptible ways, such as one winking eye (Fig. 5.13). Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* offers a framework to explain both this exhibition's and *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier*'s play of image/object, reality/fantasy.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard identifies three orders of simulation. The first order is a representation of the real: something, like a painting, that is obviously what it portrays. The second order blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. To help explain this order, Baudrillard referred to Jorge Luis Borges'

[609] Metropolitan Museum of Art. *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations.* <http://www.metmuseum.org/impossibleconversations.>. 9 October 2015.

fable *On Exactitude in Science*, in which a map is created so detailed that it entirely covers the territory to which it refers. In this instance, Baudrillard argued that reality and representation are no longer indistinguishable: the map is as real as the reality to which it refers.[610] The third order is a simulation of the real taken to extremes—a fantastical representation of reality he calls the 'hyperreal'. The 'hyperreal' is a simulacrum that has no origin in reality.[611] Unlike the previous two orders, the distinction between reality and representation is irrelevant, because the hyperreal is completely detached from notions of mimesis and representation. In Baudrillard's words, 'The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true'.[612]

The form of traditional dress exhibitions are of Baudrillard's first two orders—their struggles with corporeal and historical representation are related to a reality principle that does not apply to third-order simulacra. For example, in attempting to mask the mannequin's essentially lifeless state, as discussed in Chapter 2, manufacturers strove towards increasingly realistic representations. The paradox of this situation revealed by the 'uncanny valley' principle is that the more successful mannequins are at feigning a lifelike appearance, the more the absence of life makes itself apparent. Dissimulation, Baudrillard argued, leaves reality intact, whereas the distinction between real and imaginary is irrelevant in the case of the simulacra.[613]

Gaultier's mannequins, on first appearance, lend themselves to a second-order simulation—they appear so real upon first sight as to affect a second take. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that they are an artificial simulation—their animated facial movements and the sounds to which they correlate are deliberately out of sync. Although cast directly from the faces of real people, and they 'speak' with their actual voices, these simulacra revel in their artificiality; they do not intend

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610 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 1-2.

611 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 2-3.

612 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 1.

613 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 3.

to refer primarily to the individuals they were based on. Instead, I suggest that they embody the performance of Gaultier's practice. The mannequins' faces appear, in many instances, intentionally ambiguous or androgynous (Fig. 5.14). Thus, they gave form to the designer's wilful play with gender and his fascination with liminal, fantastical creatures such as mermaids. It is thus possible to argue that Gaultier's mannequins are *hyperreal* representations—fabrications that refer only to themselves.

Similarly, we can position Luhrmann's film and Crowley's installation in *Impossible Conversations* as simulacra: artificial creations extinguishing any claim to a 'true' or 'false' state of affairs, offering up instead 'the play of illusion and phantasms'[614] identified by Baudrillard in the hyperreal model. The exchange between the two designers in Luhrmann's film has no precedent in reality; it is a 'sign' without an original that in its artifice collapsed notions of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic'. Curators Koda and Bolton took the idea of creating a fictional interchange between a deceased and living designer separated by generations from *Vanity Fair*'s 'Impossible Interviews' of the 1930s. This series constructed imagined conversations between incongruous public figures. Similarly, Luhrmann's film was constructed from the dramatisation of excerpts from Schiaparelli's autobiography, *Shocking Life*, and Prada's retorts to Schiaparelli's thoughts drawn from a separately filmed interview with the designer. *Impossible Conversations* does not purport to make 'truth-ful' claims. The film and objects reflect back on one another, creating an open-ended narrative of how, from very different vantage points, the work of each designer paralleled and diverged from each other. In this instance, as well as in *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier*, artifice and imagination coalesce with concrete museum objects to create a new form, enacting the metamorphosis that is the core of fashion's existence. In both exhibitions, the relationship between artificiality and reality, image and object is comparable to that of the 'synthetic ideal' of contemporary fashion photography, such as the image Nick Knight created

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[614] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 13.

for the invitation to Alexander McQueen's Autumn/Winter 1997/1998 collection, "It's a Jungle Out There" (Fig. 5.15).

Knight's image fused the model's body with animalistic horns and hooves; in this way, the model became a literal embodiment of the clothes McQueen showed on the catwalk (Fig. 5.16). The fusion of animated 'masks' onto static mannequins in the Gaultier exhibition (although the voices were deliberately out of sync), and the blending of two separate films into one without fault line in *Impossible Conversations*, mirrored the seamless unity with which Knight combined the body and the fashion garment in his photograph.[615] The simulacra and the synthetic ideal of the fashion photography both 'dissolve' and 'dissipate'[616] the material world to re-create it in its own image; they belong to themselves, rather than to a natural order. In 'The Synthetic Ideal', de Perthuis argued that digitally manipulated images represent the imaginary of fashion—the form that fashion can take when its reign over the organic world is absolute. Fashion's imaginary, de Perthuis makes clear (with reference to Dufrenne's thoughts on the subject), 'exists' not as a product of imagination, but as an active transformation of the material world.[617] I suggest that, similarly to the synthetic ideal, *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* and the *Impossible Conversations* made the material world malleable in the pursuit of expressing fashion imaginary: its 'supreme form', to appropriate de Perthuis' words.

The displays practices I have discussed thus far metamorphosed material objects into the intangible aspects of fashion. As fashion's imaginary, these exhibitions took a form that did not purport to be fixed and final, but rather was open to interpretation. In the last section of the chapter, I aim to explore practice that seemingly reversed the relationship of object and spectacle by metamorphosing fashion's 'evanescent moments'[618] into fixed physical structures and objects.

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[615] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1994, 2.

[616] de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 422.

[617] de Perthuis, "The Synthetic Ideal," 2005, 421.

[618] Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 21.

The final section of this chapter examines exhibits that reverse the interplay of fantastical image and object proposed in the previous examples. I will argue that the retrospective of Viktor & Rolf (*The House of Viktor & Rolf*, the Barbican Art Gallery, 2008) metamorphosed the 'evanescent moments'[619] of these conceptual designers' careers into physical structures. Similarly, the final example discussed in this chapter, Saillard's performance titled *The Impossible Wardrobe* (Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2012), harnessed the intangible spectacle of fashion to the space of the museum storeroom and real historic objects.

Reimagining Fashion's Past: *The House of Viktor & Rolf* and *The Impossible Wardrobe*

The House of Viktor & Rolf and *The Impossible Wardrobe* were both constructed around structures associated with the capture and storage of material memories—a 'memory palace' and a museum storeroom, respectively. Rather than atrophying fashion into a fixed and final form, I suggest that they opened up a nuanced interplay between the intangible fashionable spectacle and the role Cunnington ascribed to museums as a fixed space of memory.

The House of Viktor & Rolf, a retrospective of the Dutch design duo's work, had at its physical and conceptual centre a gigantic dollhouse containing all the collections the pair had produced over their fifteen-year career to date (Fig. 5.17). On first viewing, the house appeared to fix the performative and spectral quality of much of their work into a concrete, three-dimensional symbol. The meaning of the structure, however, was far from stable, as befitted designers who have been dubbed 'semiotic tacticians'.[620] I intend to deconstruct the form of this structure with reference to Susan Stewart's writing on the miniature and the dollhouse in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*; Didier

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[619] Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 18.

[620] Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 26-27.

Maleuvre's development of Stewart's ideas about the dollhouse; and Frances Yates's work on memory palaces.[621]

Before analysing the form of the exhibition, I begin by briefly characterising the nature of Viktor & Rolf's work displayed in it. Viktor & Rolf began their 'fashion' career creating conceptual installations that critiqued the fashion industry exhibited in art galleries. The pair successfully anticipated and staged their entry into the fashion scene proper with 'Launch', the pair's Spring/Summer 1997 collection. At the Torch Gallery, Amsterdam, Viktor & Rolf exhibited a series of maquettes that embodied their hopes for the future: a catwalk, a shop, a photography studio and an atelier (Fig. 5.18). Evans noted that their career trajectory reversed what was common to most designers, who typically engage in creative projects that span the spheres of art and fashion only once they have secured commercial success.[622] Viktor & Rolf's inversion of front-to-back, as Evans noted, was frequently reiterated in their design practice; for example, they put on catwalk shows that occurred in reverse, beginning with a designer's taking a finale bow and pieces created literally upside down, with sleeves as trousers.

The upside-down / back-to-front quality of their work also manifested in more diffuse ways: for example, in the distortion, repetition and exaggeration of the scale of familiar design features, such as collars, cuffs and bows (Fig. 5.19). Following 'Launch', Viktor & Rolf produced catwalk shows that Evans has argued simultaneously undercut, and knowingly placed themselves within, the spectacle of contemporary fashion.[623] Many of these shows were highly spectral, both in their staging and by the nature of the garments they produced. Their third couture show in

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[621] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1984); Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Art, Technology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Random House, 1992).

[622] Evan Caroline Evans and Susannah Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf* (London and New York: Mewel, 2008) 15.

[623] Cited in Evans and Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, 2008, 13.

1999, for example, made entirely in black and white, was shown twice: first in black light that highlighted the white elements of the clothes (such as a frill or skeleton bones), and then again in white light that revealed all the clothes to be variations on black tuxedos (Fig. 5.20). The collection, as Evans noted, evoked the double meaning of the term *vision*, being both spectral and a spectacle. In spite of their materiality on the catwalk, their clothes barely existed in the 'real' world. *Black + White Magazine* reported in 2000 that the duo deliberately produced an extremely limited number of their clothes, and many of those now exist in archived museum collections.[624]

When given the opportunity to reflect upon their career to date, the designers interestingly chose to represent their highly conceptual and spectral collections in a different, tangible medium. In their own words, they wanted to create something new:

> We were thinking, 'How can we address a fashion exhibition in a different way? How can we show all our work but sort of bind everything together into something that is new, show it like one entity?'[625]

The concept they arrived at was a six-metre-high, three-storey dollhouse designed by Dutch architect Siebe Tettero that appeared to return their practice full circle to the maquettes that launched their career.[626] Constructed without external walls, the house offered up an unobstructed view of each room, in which different collections were staged upon dolls. Located in The Barbican's double-storied atrium, the house

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[624] The conceptual nature of their work, however, did not preclude their immense success in the ready-to-wear mass market.

[625] Penny Martin, *Interview with Viktor & Rolf*, The Barbican Art Gallery, London, 24 October 2008. <http://showstudio.com/project/inside_the_house_of_viktor_rolf/interview_transcript>. 21 October 2012.

[626] Evans and Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, 2008, 14.

was the physical centre of the exhibition from which the other galleries radiated. Occupying a space within an enclosed space, the dollhouse is analogous (in Susan Stewart's view) to a 'locket or the secret recesses of the heart: centre within centre, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialised secret'.[627] Viktor & Rolf's dollhouse appeared to materialise the spectacle of their work. Its spatial structure conceptually aligned with the elaborate mental structures developed in the sixteenth century as memory aides, described by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory*. A common technique employed by mnemotechnics (the practice of recalling complex information) was the construction of imagined buildings, seeded with specific memories in each room. This dollhouse could be interpreted as a physical memory palace. Drawn from the minds of Viktor & Rolf, the house offered a visual walk through the designers' imaginations, apparently unlocking the material memories of their past collections. In Evans' view, if the maquettes of 'Launch' acted as a charm that conjured up the phantasmagoric brand of Viktor & Rolf, then the oversized dollhouse 'evidences Viktor & Rolf's desire to visualize their world as they have created it'.[628] While Evans rightly traces a link between these two forms and their symbolic value, I suggest a proviso to Evans' statement. The dollhouse, although a three-dimensional representation of their past work, was *not* a reproduction of their past creative practice involving model-making. Rather, its distortions of space and proportion metamorphosed this structure and the objects it contained into a re-creative spectacle that can be interpreted as another incarnation of the designers' imaginary.

As a space of representation, drawing on the associations of domestic architecture, the house of Viktor & Rolf also has an indirect relationship with the traditional costume museum housed in historic domestic residences. These associations occur in spite of the designers' explicit intention that their work be exhibited in a fine art

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[627] Tettero designed Viktor & Rolf's Milan shop with an upside-down interior, based on a traditional Parisian couture salon.

[628] Evans and Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, 2008, 20.

space free from traditional dress display practices.[629] True to Viktor & Rolf's subversive approach, however, the associations between the miniature, the dollhouse and the costume museum were, in this exhibition, neither straightforward nor transparent. The efficacy of the installation derived from its complication of scale. It was simultaneously two physical extremes, a gigantic version of a miniature: a dollhouse and a miniature version of a couture salon. The miniature, Stewart asserted, is a mental world of proportion and control, whereas the gigantic presents a physical world of disorder and disproportion.[630] In conflating these two extremes, Viktor & Rolf disrupted the usual modes of relating to the traditional structures of the dollhouse, the couture fashion house and the costume museum in the historic domestic house. The oscillation of scale in Viktor & Rolf's dollhouse reverberated across time and space, echoing and distorting the image and associations of this physical structure into the conceptual systems of the mediatic world that encloses fashion and museology.

The miniature world of the dollhouse, according to Stewart, offers a 'transcendent vision known only through the visual'.[631] Conforming to Stewart's proposition, Viktor & Rolf's oversized dollhouse was physically inaccessible, but could be viewed from all aspects. It was visible from any point in the exhibition; visitors could peer into its interior spaces from three different levels: from the ground, from the upper floor of the gallery and from a specially constructed viewing platform (Fig. 5.21). The viewer's aspiration is to animate the miniature, Stewart has argued: in her opinion, the dollhouse functions as a representation through sympathetic magic.[632] Following this argument, Viktor & Rolf's house would have simulated the process of sympathetic imagination through which visitors animate traditional dress exhibitions. In such exhibitions, visitors measure themselves up against the objects on display; as argued in Chapter 3, they 'dress up' in the exhibits by sensuously

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[629] Martin, *Interview with Viktor & Rolf*, 2008.

[630] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 74.

[631] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 70.

[632] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 86, 126.

imagining the experience of the original owners. The dollhouse's reduced proportion to the body, however, ruptured this process; in order to relate to the figures in the house, visitors had to imaginatively miniaturise themselves. Viktor & Rolf deliberately complicated this process by making the dolls in their house 70 cm high, larger than the size of the nineteenth-century dolls on which they were based. The effect of the dolls' slightly increased scale was, in Evan's view, 'somewhat alarming'.[633] Denied physical access and presented with distorted imaginative access to a 'lived' experience of the house and its content, the visitor could only look in with detached distance. In the galleries that surrounded the house, however, visitors moved from a tiny world to a gigantic one (Fig. 5.22). Each gallery represented a different collection, as though a magnifying glass had enlarged each room in the house to human proportions.[634]

The reversal of scale in the galleries surrounding the dollhouse might have reversed the objectifying, miniaturising gaze, thus pulling the audience deeper into the house's interior. But the human-sized dolls, like their miniature counterparts, appeared to deliberately repudiate the 'magical' process of sympathetic imagination. Although made in the likeness of the models who wore the garments for their original runway presentation, these dolls were deliberately uncanny simulacra, apparently designed to unsettle the expectations of the audience. Their bisque porcelain heads (with real human hair; Fig. 5.23) were modelled after the bébé dolls produced as children's toys by Maison Jumeau in the nineteenth century. The bodies, however, were based on German lady dolls (or fashion dolls) popular in the late nineteenth century; according to Evans, they were reputedly used by couturiers to model dresses. The materiality of the dolls played with the associations between human and simulacrum, animate and inanimate, life and death that were discussed in Chapter 2. Their increased scale reinforced their uncanny quality, as Stewart has

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[633] Evans and Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, 2008, 19.

[634] Evans and Frankel, *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, 2008, 19.

argued by quoting Stanley Hall's study of dolls: 'the fear of dolls is almost always of large dolls'.[635]

The dollhouse, Stewart asserts, is the most abstract of the miniature forms, and cannot be known sensually because of its reduced scale and enclosed form.[636] Viktor & Rolf's play with scale, together with the uncanny quality of their dolls, rather than reversing this situation, reinforced a skewed sensual engagement with the installation. Maleuvre has advanced Stewart's reading of the dollhouse as an enclosed detached medium that holds insights for deconstructing the structure of Viktor & Rolf's house and its relationship to the costume museum. In *Museum Memories*, Maleuvre proposed that the dollhouse is the result of our culture's aspiration towards totalisation.[637] In his words, the dollhouse is an expression 'of a consciousness that seeks to cram the world into a compact object graspable at a glance'.[638] Maleuvre continued,

> … the desire to fit the world into a pea-sized replica betrays an
> aspiration to settle the dialectic of experience by replacing it with a
> ready-made overview. In the miniature, the object is experienced
> from above, detachedly; that is, it is not experienced at all.[639]

Maleuvre's words echo the previous chapter's discussion of the totalising project of the chronological overview favoured by Buck at the Gallery of Costume. Buck strove to contain four centuries of dress history within the domestic spaces of Platt Hall. The position from the top of the viewing platform overlooking Viktor & Rolf's dollhouse mirrored that of Buck, who rose above the situatedness of her gaze to

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[635] Stanley G. Hall, *A Study of Dolls* (New York: E. L. Kellogg and Co., 1897). Cited in Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 124.

[636] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 63.

[637] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 133.

[638] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 133.

[639] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 133.

encompass the whole of the history in her displays. The dollhouse, Maleuvre concluded, 'is an objectively detached description of the house: it cracks open the home's inner shell to let in the peering eyes of exteriority'.[640] Similarly, a costume museum in the mould of Platt Hall aims for an objectively detached description of history, cracking open its interiority to the museum visitor. The detached gaze encouraged by the approach of curators like Buck, in Maleuvre's words, 'sucks the interior out of the house'.[641] Viktor & Rolf's house in cross-section reconstructed Maleuvre's ideas in three dimensions. Without external walls, the house's content was bared for all to see, its inhabitants trapped by an interior infrastructure that placed them within white framed internal spaces. Spot-lit garments were thus offered up for detailed inspection from a detached external gaze, as if they were the contents of the costume museum's glass cases. Although Viktor & Rolf presented the audience with a material representation of their collection, they intended this material world to be experienced visually, through a distorted lens that mirrored the presentation of their fashion shows.

The analogy between the costume museum and the dollhouse is continued by their presentation of historical time: in both structures, time appears to stand still. Similarly to the traditional costume museum's production of historical time discussed in the previous chapter, Stewart suggested that the miniature produces a type of 'transcendent time which negates the change and flux of lived reality'.[642] The rooms in Viktor & Rolf's house appear, on first viewing, as a still representation of the collection's debut on the catwalk, analogous to the fixed representations of the costume museum. In both spaces, garments are apparently frozen in 'an infinite time of reverie'.[643] This is where Viktor & Rolf's house's allusion to the costume museum and the domestic dollhouse ends. The pair did not arrange the dolls in their house into homey scenes; rather, they posed and lit them as if ready for a photo

[640] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 137.

[641] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 137.

[642] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 65

[643] Stewart, *On Longing*, 1984, 65.

shoot (Fig. 5.24). The traditional dollhouse and the traditional costume museum in the historic house are both politically domesticated worlds representing simple, clean-cut societies.[644] In Platt Hall, this manifested as Buck's displays outlining the 'natural' succession of middle- and upper-class styles. Viktor & Rolf's dollhouse, however, is not a home, but rather a couture salon creating visual illusions that upset the order of the museum as a space of representation. The magnified rooms that surrounded the dollhouse, Viktor & Rolf stated, were at the service of the house, and not the other way around. In their words, the designers wished to create the appearance that the 'work was a consequence of the house',[645] thus reversing the status of the exhibition installation as a translation of the concept of the collection. Here, in these rooms, the original presentation of the collection on the catwalk (represented as films projected onto the walls) appeared, when juxtaposed with the oversized dolls, in Clark's opinion, 'almost more remote from reality, more strange within the controlled still of the exhibition'.[646] Viktor & Rolf thus knowingly played with the relationship between object and image and movement and stasis. Within the heterotopic space of the *House of Viktor & Rolf*, the designers' repetition and manipulation of forms reverberated in endless relays between the physical structure of the house and the form of the garments displayed within it. *The House of Viktor & Rolf* instantiates their conceptual practice, but their dollhouse is no mere *bimbeloterie*, effortlessly seizable by the mind. Rather, it was a restless *mise en abyme* that collapsed the fashionable spectacle into the structures and practices of the costume museum, and in so doing intentionally skewed the expectations of both. The designers also subverted the intentions of the memory palace. Their three-dimensional structure did not enable the visitor to capture and pin down the 'secrets' of their conceptual practice. Rather, the structure destabilised the visitors' perception of their work: upon entering the *House of Viktor & Rolf*, the visitor was staged as an

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[644] Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*, 1999, 135.

[645] Penny Martin, *Interview with Viktor & Rolf*, 2008.

[646] Judith Clark, "Looking at Looking at Dress," *Viktor & Rolf Exhibition Symposium*, The Barbican Art Gallery, September 2008.
<http://showstudio.com/project/inside_the_house_of_viktor_rolf/symposium>. 8 October 2015.

oversized doll, puppeteered by the designers' manipulation of physical space and proportion.

Whereas the *House of Viktor & Rolf* was a deliberately diffuse and confounding clash of the fashionable spectacle with a concrete structure associated with memory storage, *The Impossible Wardrobe*, I will argue, was a reconciliation of the intangible, 'living' experience of fashion with the museum storeroom as a physical space of material memories. *The Impossible Wardrobe* was a forty-minute catwalk performance directed by Saillard featuring the actress Tilda Swinton. The performance took place in the physical space of Palais de Tokyo, during the week of Paris' Spring/Summer 2013 ready-to-wear presentations, but was played out in the conceptual space of the museum archive.[647] Visual artist Katerina Jebb translated the performance into a film titled *The Future Will Last a Very Long Time*, filmed in the Musée de la Mode, Palais Galliera's storeroom. Saillard's performances returned to the familiar museological and academic narrative of dress as a talisman of memory, and the museum archive as the repository for Benjamin's historical 'fragments', dormant until resurrected in the present. Unlike traditional museum practice, however, Saillard harnessed the spectacle- and image-making capacity of the fashion industry to evoke the ephemeral, emotional life of garments. Saillard and Swinton acted the role of caretakers of historical artefacts from the museum's collection: culturally and financially valuable couture pieces by designers, including Fortuny, Poiret and Schiaparelli, worn by both anonymous and well known historic individuals. Fifty-seven garments removed from the museum's storeroom were paraded down the catwalk by Swinton. Her physical actions diverged from the museum's customary handling practices but remained within the bounds of conservation protocols. Saillard's intention, in his words, was to 'present [the historic garments] like an offering, like something sacred'.[648]

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[647] The performances were staged as part of Paris's Autumn Festival.

[648] Elisabeta Tudor, "Tilda Swinton Hits the Catwalk," *Vogue* (October 1, 2012). <http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2012/10/01/tilda-swinton-stars-in-catwalk-performance-at-palais-de-tokyo>. 9 October 2015.

Saillard and Swinton sacralised the historical object through the rituals of the museum, dramatised by the fashionable performance. With their hands sheathed in the symbolic white cotton gloves of the museum,[649] Saillard gently passed garments to Swinton, who then performed with them on the catwalk. Using specific gestures and actions, choreographed by Saillard with the assistance of Axelle Doué, Swinton created a dialogue with the former owners of each garment. Wearing a white coat, composed of the same type of cotton used for the protective coverings under which garments are stored in the museum, Swinton carefully, protectively and reverentially handled the garments. Her bodily movements and facial gestures channelled a response to the personalities of the garments' previous owners—or at least the personalities as Saillard and Swinton imagined them. For example, in the case of a navy and gold embroidered coat worn by Napoléon Bonaparte, Swinton held the coat pinched stiffly between her fingers. She looked down at it, considered it carefully and smelt the collar as if trying to discern traces of this long-deceased personage's scent. In this way, her performance channelled the process of imaginative identification that Wilson has described that transforms objects into fetishes. Swinton's interaction with the garment extended this process by producing a physical response to the sensuous evocation of life. After smelling Napoléon's coat, Swinton pushed it away from her body, her hands stretched out before her as if she were rejecting it (Fig. 5.25). An alternative view might have been that she was acting out the process of the garment assuming control of her body and leading her purposefully down the catwalk. When Swinton took hold of other garments, the articulation of her body appeared to suffuse that object with life. For example, her sashaying hips animated a pair of Chanel suits clasped to her sides like panniers (Fig. 5.26). On another occasion, a Mario Fortuny long-sleeved black 'Delphos' dress reached up triumphantly against the lengths of Swinton's outstretched arms (Fig 5.27).

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[649] In actual practice, nitrile gloves are recommended for curatorial and conservation tasks in preference to cotton gloves, which do not offer as much dexterity; they also trap dust.

The soundtrack to the performance underscored the transformative narrative advanced by Swinton's movements; as she traversed the catwalk, her voice stated through the sound system: '"Today's an important occasion", she thinks. She must wear the right clothes, the right combination of clothes. They'll make her lucky'. Saillard reiterated that his performance did not aim to be resurrective, but rather re-creative. When asked by *Dazed* if the point of the performance was 'to breathe new life into these garments', Saillard responded:

> It is very paradoxical; as I asked Tilda to be the pedestal of each
> garment, I asked her to incarnate the clothing, but not in every
> instance. I like the contrast between clothes which were worn and
> still have life and clothes that will never be worn.[650]

Saillard thus implied that Swinton's performance was not an attempt to resurrect the original worn experience of the garments, but rather that she was a conduit who transformed the sensuous spectacle of fashion.

Swinton's performance arguably anthropomorphised the garments more effectively than if she had physically inhabited them, as Saillard recognised: 'Showing historical costumes on a person can rapidly turn into a morbid presentation'.[651] The metamorphosis of these objects, Saillard noted, required a measured subtlety. The charismatic actress, Saillard revealed, was chosen for her understanding of the delicate balance between 'restraint and interpretation'[652] required of the performance, and, as *The New York Times* reported, for her striking appearance. Saillard implied that her appearance acted as a neutral conduit: 'her white skin and hair, while striking, can also, at times, be as plain as beige, like the edifice of a

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[650] Bubble, "The Impossible Wardrobe," 2012. (Note: the punctuation in this quote has been edited slightly for clarity.)

[651] Tudor, "Tilda Swinton Hits the Catwalk," 2012.

[652] Tudor, "Tilda Swinton Hits the Catwalk," 2012.

museum'.[653] As Chapter 4 argued, however, the objectivity and neutrality of the museum is flawed; indeed it is possible to argue that objectivity and neutrality are also flawed in the case of the actress. Her esoteric, restless countenance is, I suggest, a palimpsest reverberating with the characters she has played in the past. She brought to this performance echoes of her role as muse to the designers Viktor & Rolf. The designers based their entire Autumn/Winter 2003 'One Woman' collection on Swinton, sending a cast of red-haired clones down the runway. Saillard's performance also resonated with Swinton's turn in artist Cornelia Parker's performance titled *The Maybe*, in which Swinton lay sleeping in a coffin-like glass case, surrounded by the relics of famous dead people, who had become icons of an earlier age.

Like Saillard, Parker viewed historic objects as ripe for projection. *The Maybe*, to quote contemporary art curator Jessica Morgan, '[rescued objects] from languishing uncreatively in the sterile environments of their more conventional museum surroundings'.[654] If Parker aimed, in her words, 'to build an exquisite corpse from all these little fragments',[655] then Saillard strove to re-create an exquisite life. In *The Maybe*, Swinton was inside the glass case; in *The Impossible Wardrobe*, she was outside, as in Saillard's words, 'the pedestal' for the collection. Jebb's film advanced Parker's assumptions by presenting the archive as a clinical environment, containing and constraining the aura of historical objects. Swinton, however, acted as the conduit to their lived experiences, projecting the ghosts of the personalities embodied in (or associated with) these material objects onto her body. In this way, Saillard's performance imaginatively animated static objects, and in so doing united the fashionable spectacle with the museum storeroom as a space of material

[653] Eric Wilson, "Putting a Soul into Clothes without a Body," *The New York Times* (September 30, 2012). <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/01/fashion/tilda-swinton-stars-in-the-impossible-wardrobe-at-the-palais-de-tokyo-in-paris.html>. 9 October 2015.

[654] Jessica Morgan, "Matter and What It Means," Bruce Ferguson, Jill Medvedow, Jessica Morgan and Cornelia Parker, *Cornelia Parker* (Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, 2000) 34.

[655] Quoted in Juliet Miller, *The Creative Feminine and her Discontents: Psychotherapy, Art and Destruction* (London: Karnac Books, 2008) 134.

memories. Conversely, the *House of Viktor & Rolf* recognised the museum's capacity to preserve and give form to the memories and products of the spectacle of contemporary fashion, albeit obliquely. In separate ways, both exhibitions refuted Guy Debord's claim that the spectacle destroys memory.[656] The idea that the living experience of fashion, of which the spectacle is a central component, is in opposition to the museum as a repository of material memory (as Cunnington implied in 1937) is clearly outdated. Throughout this chapter I have explored the ways in which contemporary practice has metamorphosed objects into the spectacle of contemporary practice, or vice versa, in order to present a 'living experience' of fashion. I have demonstrated that these display practices, developed by curators in collaboration with creative practitioner, are a new medium that balance the practices and methods of the museum with those of the fashion industry.

I will draw this chapter to a close by reflecting on the question asked at the start of this chapter—What does it mean to resurrect a living experience of fashion?—with insights drawn from my conclusions about the exhibitions and performances I have discussed.

Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining Cunnington's belief that the costume museum is a 'mausoleum' of old clothes, in opposition to fashion as a 'living art'. The contemporary display practices discussed throughout this chapter, however, have effectively ruptured Cunnington's assertion, and have replaced it with a much more complex dialectic. In place of Cunnington's fixed opposition of the museum as a space of 'dead' objects, in contrast to the 'living' culture of the fashion industry, these exhibitions and performances have highlighted a nuanced and permeable interplay between concrete objects and spectacle, presence and absence, artifice and

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[656] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994) para. 19. Cited in Evans, "A Shop of Images and Signs," 2008, 19.

reality, memory and imagination. I conclude that the flux between these states constitutes the living experience of fashion.

Contemporary fashion theorists—notably de Perthuis, along with Lehmann and Evans—have also posited the idea that fashion is in a constant state of transformation: a cyclical process of metaphorical death and resurrection. Reflexive curatorial practice, however, recognises that the resurrection of fashion can only ever be imperfect and partial. Indeed, in order not to petrify fashion into 'statue-like' permanence (to appropriate Lehmann's phrase), the curators of the exhibitions and performances discussed in this chapter embraced the fragmentary and artificial nature of their reconstructions as an essential element of the experience of fashion. The integration of digital technologies into exhibitions, animating objects and mannequins was not, in the case of *Impossible Conversations*, *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* and *The Empress's New Clothes*, in the service of mimicking an original representation or lived experience of fashion. Rather, these technologies facilitated the transformation of objects into a form that could be framed as 'fashion's imaginary'. Fashion's imaginary, as de Perthuis explained, actively transforms the material world into a new synthetic form. Like the hyperreal simulacrum described by Baudrillard, this obviously artificial form extinguishes claims about true and false, real and artificial.

Throughout this chapter I have argued that metamorphosis is central to the experience of fashion. Metamorphosis occurred in some of the examples I have discussed in this chapter through the engagement of new technologies. In all examples, however, metamorphosis arose through an imaginative process that I have explained using Bachelard's concept of 'material imagination' and Dufrenne's conceptualisation of aesthetic perspective. Material imagination and aesthetic perspective, as I have employed these concepts, describe the way in which fashion is made present in the minds of exhibition visitors. Material imagination, in my adaption of the term, is a result of a performative process: in the examples I have discussed, this could be an actual 'real' performance, as in Saillard's *Models at*

Work and *The Impossible Wardrobe*, or a digital performance, as in *The Empress's New Clothes*. Material imagination and aesthetic perception both offer a way of conceptualising the recovery of the 'living' spectacle of fashion that is applicable to fashion of all periods. It is neither tied to the specificity of modern fashion and its spectacular presentations, nor to the codes and rituals of the spectacle of pre-modern fashion. Material imagination and aesthetic perception thus offer a way to theorise the sensuous performance of fashion that is central to a living experience of dress of all periods. Pre-modern fashion—which exists in the Gallery of Costume's collection as fragmentary and disconnected garments that are arguably alien in their unfamiliarity to contemporary audiences—is, I suggest, currently experienced as the 'dead' objects of the past. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this chapter, in particular the concept of material imagination, could be applied to animate the dress of this period.

In the conclusion to this thesis I will outline an exhibition proposal that aims to transform the Gallery of Costume's display of seventeenth-century dress into Cunnington's concept of a 'centre of living art'.

Conclusion

The thesis has examined the Gallery of Costume's past and present display methodologies (and the theoretical assumptions they were grounded on) in order to propose reflexive methodologies for the display of historic dress. This PhD was originally planned as an embedded research project in which I would be based at the Gallery of Costume full-time, researching and developing three experimental displays. These displays would be tested and evaluated at the Gallery of Costume when it reopened to the public in 2010, following an extensive redevelopment. For various reasons, the project developed in a different direction to the original proposal. In part, changes occurred due to my personal circumstances for which I took three extended absences from my study during 2010-2011, 2012 and 2013-2014 and which caused me, in 2012, to move abroad. Clearly, no longer being based at the gallery would change the shape and perspective of this study. However, early on the first year of this study, it also became apparent that the gallery would not be able to support the ambitious aims of the project. The Gallery had neither the money, nor space nor resources for me to be able to conduct experimental displays; these same issues have arguably curtailed curators' display practices since the gallery opened in 1947.

I suggest that the way that the project unfolded indicated that as a collaborative partnership we were uncertain about how to partake in a fully reflexive and critical mode of enquiry. Embedded research, Michael Dujin wrote, is based on trust; the object of study must allow it to happen—and preferably to initiate it.[657] In turn, Dujin states, researchers must have a 'well-thought through, transparent and accepted' approach to their study.[658] When these conditions are met, a community of inquiry involving the researcher and host will develop; this community will actively

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[657] Michael Dujin, *Embedded Reflection on Public Policy Innovation: A Relativist / Pragmatist Inquiry into the Practice of Innovation and Knowledge Transfer in the WaterINNovation Program* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2008) 337.

[658] Dujin, *Embedded Reflection on Public Policy Innovation*, 2008, 336.

participate in providing reflection on their mutually evolving practices.[659] The initial willingness of Moira Stevenson, previously Head of Manchester City Art Gallery, for the Gallery of Costume to participate in this collaborative PhD was perhaps not followed through in practice. The lack of resources and space allocated to the project could be interpreted as evidence of this assertion. Conversely, it is possible to suggest that my interpretation of the aims for this project were neither *transparent* enough nor sufficiently formulated to be fully acceptable to the gallery.

The overarching objectives of this research have, however, remained consistent: to offer perspective on the gallery's methodologies and the challenges facing costume curation in the twenty-first century. The value of this project, to appropriate James Duggan's words, has been to contribute to a 'process of enlightenment' by providing new perspectives and challenging old ideas.[660] I have sought to provide perspective to the Gallery of Costume by theoretically contextualising its practices and methodologies and by marking out the wider field of practice in which the gallery operates. In presenting and analysing new approaches to displaying costume, I have aimed to challenge Lambert to look differently at the way in which he approaches displaying the gallery's collection.

Despite the changes made to the structure and outcomes of this thesis, the original question asked at its outset remains to be answered: what are the possibilities for curating historic dress in the Gallery of Costume's Collection. The contribution of this thesis is to offer open-ended suggestions that could be taken up and developed by curators in future.

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[659] Dujin, *Embedded Reflection on Public Policy Innovation*, 2008, 336.

[660] Duggan, "Embedded Research," 2014, 20.

A Framework for Reflexive Dress Exhibitions

I conclude by sketching out a theoretical framework that pulls together the themes of this thesis and represents the issues that frame dress exhibitions in the twenty-first century. This framework takes the form of a series of overlapping propositions. These ten statements are intentionally open to curators' interpretations, and thus they could translate them into practice in numerous ways. I will, however, present my insights into these statements (which have been drawn from my research findings), and will close this thesis by building these statements into a theoretical exhibition for the Gallery of Costume.

>   *i.   Dress is established as a serious and valid subject matter*

If curators take this assertion as the starting point for their practice, as Clark does,[661] they are freed to look at dress from different perspectives than their forebears, and in so doing redress those aspects of past practices that have shown themselves to be problematic in the twenty-first century.

This proposition has encouraged me to reassess the foundation on which I built my own display practice. Prior to this thesis, the exhibitions I had co-curated were based on the assumptions I had inherited from my object-based, material culture schooling: that the continuing validity of dress studies can be demonstrated by exhibitions that place the materiality of dress in a wider social, cultural and economic context. The exhibition that I co-curated with Lou Taylor and Amy de la Haye, *Fashion and Fancy Dress: The Messel Family Dress Collection* (discussed in the introduction and Chapter 3), was a model of this approach. I still believe that our material cultural approach to *Fashion and Fancy Dress* demonstrated the academic validity of dress as a discipline through object-based research. I concur with Breward, however, that the discipline has evolved to be a 'broad enough church to be able to contain all these

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[661] Cited in N. J. Stevenson, "The Fashion Retrospective," *Fashion Theory* 12.2 (2008) 227.

approaches [object-based and conceptual]'.[662] I concede that had I worked from the proposition that the discipline of dress history was already firmly established, we might have stepped out of object-centric display methodologies to seek other— perhaps more engaging and creative—methods for expressing the intangible aspects of our narrative. For example, the imaginative relationship these women had with their own clothing and that of their relations, how their dress performed a vision of themselves, how their dress worked upon their bodies to mediate a sense of themselves and how the garments acted as *memento mori*. These intangible aspects of dress, I argued in Chapters 3 and 5, are central components of the experience of fashion that cannot always be expressed solely by object-based methodologies. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems that our exhibition was a development of Buck's approach. Although I did not consider myself, at the time, to be putting forth an objective, neutral narrative, in displaying dress by these means, we nonetheless implied that the objects would *speak* directly to the audience without the need for more intervention or theatrical interpretative devices. As I concluded in Chapter 4, however, rigidly objective display methodologies, such as those advocated by Buck, disconnect audiences from fashion as a living experience, a point expanded upon in statement ii (below).

To summarise, as a consequence of this research project, I have reached the conclusion that while object-based material culture research can be used to write the academic history of dress, curators could turn their attention (to borrow Clark's terms) to creating a 'new grammar' to express the specificity of historical fashion in the museum. Steele agrees that although exhibitions should be grounded on solid academic research, she anticipates that the future of historic dress curation depends on developing our exhibition methodologies.[663]

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[662] Christopher Breward, "Between the Museum and the Academy: Fashion Research and its Constituencies," *Fashion Theory* 12.1 (2008) 91.

[663] Valerie Steele, *Personal Interview*, 20 June 2010

ii.   Exhibitions could express fashion's trans-historical and transient
character

Chapters 1 and 4 argued that Buck's chronological displays seamlessly drew the history of dress into a cohesive and complete narrative. One unintended consequence of her displays, as previously discussed, was that because they fixed historic garments into a defined era in the near- and far-distant past, styles thus appeared antiquated as soon as they were supplanted by new ones. Contemporary fashion theory challenges the validity of Buck's approach: in particular, Lehman's analysis of the transient and trans-historical quality of modern fashion that draws on Benjamin's metaphor of the *Tiger's Leap*. *Spectres* was undoubtedly the most progressive and experimental exhibition to have developed Benjamin's metaphor in a museological setting. While this exhibition did not offer itself as a replicable form, it did suggest approaches for future practices: most obviously the juxtaposition of seemingly disparate garments to suggest trans-historical connections. Accepting the trans-historical and transient quality of fashion, I argued in Chapter 4, does not necessarily entail a refutation of chronological displays. Rather, it requires that curators keep in check chronological displays' tendency to totalise and inflict a historically distanced look at the objects of the past. Steele achieved this simply (but effectively) by creating chronologies that are constructed from the concerns of the present.

iii.   Exhibitions can be open-ended—A continuum of possible meaning

Chapter 4 outlined the issues associated with the historic costume museum's attempts to tell a complete narrative of the history of dress. Both Buck and her contemporary Langley Moore, by the contrasting display methodologies of chronology and tableaux, attempted to unite their fragmented historic collections into a cohesive and historically authentic narrative. One unintended consequence of their totalising representations was to fix historic dress as the objects of the past, disconnected both from audiences' experiences of the present and from the trans-

historical and transient character of fashion. I suggest that costume curators should not strive to present reality as people experienced it at the time, but rather to make it clear in their display practices that they are laying out objects of a possible perception. Benjamin and Foucault present an alternative framework from which the costume museum could construct such open-ended narratives. Their preferred historiography embraces the fragmentation and discontinuity that Benjamin proposed is a manifestation of fashion's structuring of historical time.[664]

iv.   All exhibition narratives are authored

Chapter 4 concluded that those curators who, following Buck, seek to present an authentic and accurate relationship to the past, do so in vain. Curators present the past not as it happened, but rather as it is seen to happen from the alienated standpoint of the present. Referencing White's thesis *The Fictions of Factual Representation*, I argued that all historical narratives are authored. Following this conclusion, I assert that curators should aim to represent the nuances inherent in our representations of the past, rather than to produce objectively accurate historical representations. Greater transparency—including acknowledging the authorship of exhibitions—is, I conclude, central to developing both more nuanced and more engaging exhibitions.

v.   The presence and absence of life are inescapable in the display of dress

The biographies, bodies and personalities associated with worn dress, Chapters 2 and 3 argued, are simultaneously present and absent in displays of worn dress. Once garments enter a museum, they will (in most museums) never again be worn on a living human body. Worn dress, however, usually bears traces of the original people's bodies that once wore it. Historically, curators attempted to fill the void created by absent personages with concrete symbols of their bodies and biographies—for example, with realistic mannequins or photographs of the original

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[664] Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1968, 261.

owners wearing the garments. The central paradox of display methodologies that attempt to restore the lives and bodies associated with a garment is that their absence is often felt more keenly as a consequence. Realistic mannequins, I argued in Chapter 2, have an unnerving lifelessness that can draw attention to the absence of the fleshy human form that should be there. Likewise, while the exhibitions *Kylie* and *Grace Kelly* (discussed in Chapter 3) intended to solidify the sartorial identity of these celebrities through an examination of their dress, the curators' display strategies appeared to have had the opposite effect. Reviewers of both exhibitions noted that when faced with the actual clothes these celebrities had worn, the 'real' physical identity of these women was frustratingly out of focus.

An alternative museological strategy to those that try to recover the lives associated with clothing is the attempted eradication of the bodily traces imprinted upon an individual's dress. Conservation practices that are designed to return dress to a pre-worn state (a practice once advocated by Buck, but no longer adhered to by the majority of dress curators and conservators) hinted at psychological ambivalence about the absent body. Rather than denying the unsettling human presence (or lack thereof) that can hover around worn dress in the museum, I propose that curators could embrace these presences and absences. As I concluded in Chapter 2, by probing this binary opposition that underscores the mannequin, curators might develop more nuanced uses for human simulacra. Cynthia Cooper's considered employment of invisible mannequins in *Reveal or Conceal* (analysed in Chapter 2) exemplifies such a reflexive approach. In absenting a visible body substitute, she intended the visitor to imaginatively reconstruct the bodies that were central to the form of those garments. The 'dressing room' installation in *Kylie* similarly conjured the singer's presence in the audience's collective imagination by absenting an accurate physical facsimile of her body. The arrangement of her belongings summoned Kylie's presence. The dressing room was arguably the equivalent of the invisible mannequin's void—a space representing an individual, into which visitors were encouraged to imaginatively insert their bodies. In both installations, where there ought to have been an absence, the void created a missing body or person; and

where there was presence, the imaginative re-creation of that body. Imagination is, I suggest, central to the animation of dress in the museum, a proposition I will expand upon in statement viii.

The other occasionally uncomfortable presence that could be acknowledged more transparently in exhibitions is that of the curator. Buck, as discussed in Chapter 4, advocated what I argue was an erroneous assumption: that curators could and should absent their presence from exhibitions. Rather, I propose the opposite: that curators should acknowledge their role in structuring the exhibition space. As I argue in statement iv, all historical narratives are authored.

vi.   *Mannequins are never neutral props*

Buck was of the opinion that the headless forms she developed at the Gallery of Costume were merely a neutral mass restoration of the original three dimensions of historic garments. Chapter 2 argued, contrary to Buck's beliefs, that mannequins are not neutral props, nor can they be edited out in their entirety from the exhibition space. The form of mannequins, like that of the living human body it simulates, is shaped by cultural attitudes (an argument Foucault made with conviction) and evolving curatorial and academic discourses on the fashionable body. Even the invisible mannequin, which took Buck's intention to delete the visible artificial body from dress displays to its ultimate conclusion, represents ideas about the relationship between the body and dress. Invisible mannequins, such as they were used by Sewell and Cooper in their exhibitions *Woman* and *Reveal or Conceal*, respectively, are a curatorial device for engaging an embodied understanding of dress informed by phenomenological philosophy. *Reveal or Conceal* and *Woman* supported Chapter 2's conclusion that bringing an awareness of the current theoretical state of the fashionable body to curators' practice enables them to act with a greater degree of reflexivity when selecting human simulacra.

If one accepts the assumption that the mannequin is not a neutral prop, then its form could be harnessed to act out curatorial propositions. Experimental curators like Clark, Koda and Bolton have advanced their exhibitions' narratives with mannequins that were dramatically adapted with ceramic prosthetics (*Spectres*) and emphatically exaggerated artificial wigs (*AngloMania*). Similarly, creative practitioners—notably Gaultier and the collective known as *More than Fashion*, discussed in chapters 5 and 4, respectively—have animated mannequins with audio-visual projections so that they appeared to act out the designers' creative vision or give voice to the curators' narrative. There are other, more subtle, but no less effective examples of mannequins acting out curatorial intentions in this thesis: for example, the Museum of London's abstracted mannequins of Princess Charlotte and Queen Victoria, discussed in Chapter 2. These forms, reconstructed from material clues mined from curator Kay Staniland's scrutiny of their extant dress, undermined popular pictorial representations of these women by showing how their bodies physically changed over time.

vii.   *Exhibitions can acknowledge the way dress works on the body and mediates the experience of the self*

In the past three decades, fashion theory has worked on an embodied account of fashion, drawing upon Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy.[665] Approaching dress from a phenomenological framework, Entwistle has written, means acknowledging 'the way in which dress works on the body which in turn works on and mediates the experience of the self'.[666] Entwistle's statement could translate into exhibitions that attend to the experiential dimensions of fashion—the ways in which dress works on the body's surface, and the way in which people see themselves and are seen. Conservation guidelines that prohibit the touching of museum exhibits imply a barrier to re-creating the embodied experience of dress. However, I argued (with reference to the work of Stewart and Kwint) that given

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[665] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 1976.

[666] Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, *Body Dressing* (London: Bloombury, 2001) 44.

encouragement to do so, tactile memory and imagination can step in to reconstruct an embodied experience.[667] With the desire to touch an object suppressed, the imagination, in Stewart's summary, 'is forced to overcome the single sense to which art is usually delivered by the almost synaesthetic process of evocation'.[668] Exhibitions could thus compensate for the loss of touch by engaging visitors' other senses—sight, hearing and smell—to stimulate an emotional response to the objects on display.

viii.   Imagination can activate dress in the museum

Clothing can be functional, but it can also be intensely personal and poetic, evoking emotions and serving as totems of memories and dreams. As discussed in Chapter 3, the personal associations of dress occur because of its intimate relationship to the body. I suggest that visitors' imaginations can activate static dress, imbuing it with feeling, character (real or imaged) and personality. In Chapter 5, I adapted Bachelard's concept of *material imagination* to theorise the metamorphic process by which matter can be rematerialised and given a sensuous bodily presence.

ix.   Metamorphosis is core to the realisation of fashion in the museum

Rather than striving to resurrect dress, with all that implies about bringing objects back to life, Chapter 5 argued that curators could more productively seek to create a process of metamorphosis in their displays. I suggest that it is impossible to recover the exact experience of historic dress as it was worn on the bodies of the past, as indeed it is impossible to replicate exactly its original performance as part of the fashion system. Nor, I suggest, do curators need to aim for the reproduction of the

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[667] Marius Kwint, "Introduction: The Physical Past," Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999) 1-16; Susan Stewart, "Prologue: From the Museum of Touch," Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999) 17-26.

[668] Kwint, *Introduction: The Physical Past*, 1999, 6.

original representation of garments, because the experience of fashion, as de Perthuis and Lehman both argued, is neither natural nor mimetic. Fashion relentlessly remakes the material world; its constant borrowing, repetition and reworking of past styles, Lehman states, is part of a cycle of death and resurrection. Its immortality is thus balanced upon *metamorphosis*, which, as I used the term in Chapter 5, describes fashion's process of re-creation—the transformation of material objects from their physical state into another form that expresses the intangible aspects of fashion.

x.   *Exhibitions could express fashion as a performance*

Chapter 5 concluded that fashion exists at the intersection of material objects and performance. Fashion's performance can be the fantastical spectacles associated solely with modern fashion, or it can be the performance of identity that is common to the fashions of all periods. Both performances express an imaginative and imagined vision. With this in mind, Chapter 5 argued that exhibitions could work to translate fashion's mutability: its state of flux between object and imaginative vision, reality and imaginary, real and ideal. Dufrenne's concept of aesthetic perception offers a way to conceive of the process through which material objects are made manifest and present upon their performance. Saillard's catwalk presentations and Harris's digital artwork of clothing set in motion (both discussed in Chapter 5) exemplify *performance* as Dufrenne uses the term. They provide a sensuous account of the fashionable body that exists in parallel with material objects. The performance in both examples is dependent upon visitors' perception for its completion.

The Dressing Room: **A New Methodology for Displaying 17th-century Fashion at the Gallery of Costume**

In the final part of this conclusion, I will draw the framework I have outlined above into a suggestion for a new display of seventeenth-century dress at the Gallery of Costume titled *The Dressing Room*. But first, I begin by describing the current

seventeenth-century display—*The Needle's Excellency*—and its practical and conceptual concerns. *The Needle's Excellency* is located in Platt Hall's smallest gallery, on the first floor. To preserve the delicate fabrics of seventeenth-century clothing, the gallery's windows are always kept shuttered, and the light levels never exceed 50 lux. Mounted upon Buck's headless forms in glass display cases are women's bodices, shoes, gloves, stomachers, purses and a pair of striking red stays (Fig. 6.1). In another display case, a man's coat and cravat are mounted upon a full-bodied Ryman/V&A mannequin (Fig. 6.2). On one wall, lace collars, cuffs and coifs are mounted in frames (Fig. 6.3).

The arrangement of this gallery has remained largely unaltered since 1988, when Jarvis and Lambert developed the display to explore the textural and surface quality of seventeenth-century dress. Jarvis selected exhibits (some of which are still on display today) to demonstrate techniques of embroidery, black-work, white-work and lace making. Her object-based approach continued Buck's scholarly focus on the design and construction of dress of this period. Lambert made changes to the display during the 2008–2010 redevelopment; notably, changing over half the exhibits and writing new labels some of which make aesthetic connections between exhibits and dress of more recent periods. The gallery's overarching narrative, however, continues to be focused on the stylistic and material qualities of dress

Lambert's labels make it clear that clothing that has survived from this period, particularly complete outfits, is extremely rare. The display thus represents the curators' best efforts to unite a collection of separate and fragmented garments into a cohesive narrative. While the Gallery of Costume's approach to the dress of this period has been of academic value, the gallery has physically and conceptually stagnated in the nearly thirty years since the display first opened. In the same period, academic inquiry into this period has begun to place its fashions into a cultural context: in addition to Ribeiro's meticulously researched text *Fashion and*

Fiction,[669] discussed in Chapter 5, Susan Vincent's *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* [670] explored dress as an expression of early modern culture. *The Needle's Excellency*'s focus on materials and technique, in conjunction with the manner in which these garments are displayed, disconnects these garments from the cultural context and the sensual body that gave them meaning. The gallery, at least to my mind, resonates with the eerie and uncanny atmosphere that Chapter 2 argued can be attributed to a denial of an embodied account of dress, and which Chapter 4 suggested is a consequence of the loss of an object's lived experience.

I intend to address the issues of this display within its existing physical parameters. My display will only feature the material objects that exist in the gallery's collection, it will take place within its current allocated space and it will follow the conservation guidelines set for historic garments: glass casing, low light levels and the use of mannequins (if the material will stand to be mounted in three dimensions).

I began planning this exhibition by considering the physical limitations of not only the exhibits but also the space of the gallery. Anthea Jarvis and Jane Tozer both experienced the Gallery of Costume's internal spaces as small and constraining, however, I see in these previously domestic spaces creative potential. The scale and position of the seventeenth-century gallery suggested, to my mind, the site of a dressing room. Diana Wolfthal confirms that the spaces where women dressed and undressed in the seventeenth century were relatively small and private.[671] Dressing rooms could have been a curtained part of the lady's bedchamber or a closet. A portrait (c.1600) of Elizabeth Vernon, Countess of Southampton, provides a unique depiction of a partially undressed woman in such a space (Fig. 6.4). This image has been the subject of considerable academic attention in the past decade, not least from

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[669] Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

[670] Susan Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

[671] Diane Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) 51.

Ribeiro, who thoroughly discussed the painting in relation to contemporary texts that referenced women's dress. Arguably, however, Ribeiro ignores the most intriguing aspect of this painting: its sensuous account of the performance of fashionable dress of this period. The portrait's erotic content, of which the subject's state of undress is central, is thoroughly critiqued by Wolfthal, who devotes an entire chapter to this aspect of the image in her text *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe*.

I have built my display upon the conceptual foundation of Wolfthal's cogent and scholarly analysis of the painting, the central aspects of which I will now briefly summarise. The portrait's composition is unique; as Wolfthal writes, 'no other early modern painting shows a standing, full-length, partially dressed woman combing her long, loose hair while gazing intently and directly at the viewer'.[672] Wolfthal rightly notes that the painting could be depicting the subject either in the act of dressing or undressing.[673] She has deduced that the subject is undressing, and draws evidence to support this conclusion from her reading of the painting and its relationship to John Donne's poem *Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed*, in which the narrator verbally undresses a woman, garment by garment.[674]

Wolfthal points to the tension in the portrait that is created by the relationship between the concealed and visible parts of Vernon's body, which suggests to the viewer's imagination the possibility of nudity.[675] The garments and items of jewellery strewn around Vernon not only are signs of her status, but are also intimate objects that have touched her body. As such, their placement in the painting is intended to heighten the viewer's sexual arousal. For example, Wolfthal connects a delicate lace ruff pinned to a velvet backdrop to contemporary allusions to female

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[672] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 43.

[673] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 44.

[674] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 61.

[675] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 44.

genitalia.[676] The carved ivory comb that Vernon runs through her loose hair—itself a sign of sexual availability—was no doubt a love token from her husband. Wolfthal uses these material clues to date the painting; she deduces that it was most likely created around the occasion of Vernon's marriage to Henry Wriothesley, with whom she had previously enjoyed an illicit affair.[677] The painting thus functioned as a celebration of Vernon as both a wife and a lover. The pleasure of this portrait, privately displayed by Vernon's husband, Wolfthal states, 'was undoubtedly augmented by memories of having watched the beloved dressed and undressed…. As an intimate expression of sexual desire, the painting is part likeness, part fantasy, part fetish, part reminder of pleasurable memories and part promise of future delights'.[678] Wolfthal's summary of the portrait resonates with my analysis of fashion as a material object, magical fetish and imaginative reconstruction. It is this synthesis that my display installation aims to capture.

Wolfthal is clear that the portrait must be viewed in light of Vernon's life and love affair.[679] Yet she connects the specificities of the sitter's life (as expressed by her portrait) to a broader thesis about the period's prevailing morality and changing attitudes towards sex. Like Wolfthal, I intend to use the details of this portrait to develop a wider narrative, in this instance about the central position of dress in the construction of women's embodied identities. This narrative aims to connect the specificity of Vernon's distant historical experience to visitors' contemporary relationships with their clothing.

I propose to resurrect elements of this playfully erotic portrait, as well as lines from Donne's poem, as an immersive, three-dimensional experience that engages material objects with visitors' senses of sight and sound. This spectacle aims for the re-creative, rather than the re-constructive, following the *Pleasure Gardens'*

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[676] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 51.

[677] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 64.

[678] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 62, 71.

[679] Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed*, 2010, 63.

methodology discussed in Chapter 4. It would metamorphose historic objects into the performance of the self that contemporary fashion theorists—notably Entwistle, Cwerner and Woodward—argued (as discussed in Chapter 3) is central to the act of dressing.[680] This performance highlights women's agency in the construction of their identities, connecting a distant historical figure to that of the contemporary viewer.

The figure of Vernon, rather than being a mimetic simulacrum, would be a shadowy presence summoned by a combination of objects from the Gallery of Costume's collection: a digital re-creation of the fashionable body and the sounds evoked by the sensuous, textual qualities of her dress. While the Gallery of Costume's collection contains many of the small garments shown or implied in the Vernon portrait, it does not contain the largest item—her dress. This absence would be compensated for by visitors' imagination and senses, stimulated by the creative practice of artists, such as digital artist Jane Harris and 'synaesthete' sound designer Nick Ryan.[681] Harris could digitally re-create the form and movement of a body dressed in a similar fashionable gown of the period in the Victoria & Albert collection (Fig. 6.5) by following the processes discussed in Chapter 5. Ryan would endow this digital spectre with an auditory presence; he has collaborated with designers and artists, transforming tactile responses to their garments into a sonic experience.[682] An emotive, bodily response to sound, Stephen di Benedetto has argued, can give form to absent bodies in a performance setting. In *Sensing Bodies: A Phenomenological Approach to the Performance Sensorium*, di Benedetto writes that soundscapes are particularly effective, as 'our biology programs us to receive aural input, recognise it

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[680] Entwistle and Wilson, *Body Dressing*, 2001; Saulo B. Cwerner, "Clothes at Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe." *Fashion Theory* 5.2 (2001) 79-82; Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

[681] SHOWstudio, *The Sound of Synaesthesia* (2006).
<http://showstudio.com/project/the_sound_of_clothes_synaesthesia/interview> 22 November 2015

[682] In 2006, Nick Knight commissioned digital artist Daniel Brown to collaborate with Ryan in the production of an audio-visual interactive that responded to the tactility of Nicolas Ghesquière's Spring/Summer 2006 collection. This project was part of the SHOWstudio's *The Sound of Clothes* series. Ryan has also collaborated with Hussein Chalayan.

and fill in the rest of the details. We perceive the substance of the stimuli when data perception suggests it'.[683] Di Benedetto's thinking thus suggests that the display methodology that I am proposing would position the visitor's body to play a central role in the production of its meaning. Andrea Witcomb asserts that 'spatial experiences' reliant upon visitors' bodily responses can 'challenge the authority of the museum to produce and regulate their subjectivity'. In 'Interactivity in Museums: The Politics of Narrative Style' (a chapter in her book *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*), she argued that the narrative of such immersive displays innately has the potential to be 'polysemic' and 'open ended', and thus such narratives counter the problems of the traditional costume museum's didactic linear displays, as discussed in Chapter 4.[684]

While I envisage this display being free from unified three-dimensional simulacra, I suggest that it could include wax sculptures of fragmented body parts, similar to the ceramic prosthetics created by sculptor Naomi Filmer for *Spectres* (Fig. 6.6). Dissecting the body into discrete parts, rather than the display being an unnatural separation, would reflect the dominant dialectic of the culturally constructed body in this period. Vincent asserts that in the early modern period, 'both male and female forms were progressively more and more unbalanced and "distorted", with separate parts of the dressed anatomy given independent status'.[685] These wax sculptures would highlight and materialise the bodily gestures and poses created by specific items of dress. The materiality of the medium would resonate with its commemorative function. The testimonies of classical authors reveal that wax masks, worn by actors dressed in the clothing of the deceased, were used to animate the dead at funerals.[686] As Chapter 2 argued, the materiality of wax makes it

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[683] Stephen di Benedetto, "Sensing Bodies: A Phenomenological Approach to the Performance Sensorium," *Performance Research*, 8.2 (2003) 104.

[684] Andrea Witcomb, *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (London: Routledge, 2003) 130.

[685] Vincent, *Dressing the Elite*, 2003, 29.

[686] Elizabeth D. Harvey, "The Touching Organ: Allegory, Anatomy and the Renaissance Skin Envelope." In Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 99-100.

particularly suitable as a metaphor for the work of memory. With this point, I end my analysis of the display. Because I argue that imagination is central to its realisation, I will take the reader on a walk through my imaginative conceptualisation of this display.

The Dressing Room

Walk up the stairs to Platt Hall's first floor and turn left: an open door leads to a small room. It is dark, it is quiet; an intimate space cut off from the rest of the museum. A male voice calls out of the darkness:

> 'Come, madam, come, all rest my powers defy'.

On entering the room, the darkness begins to fade a little: the edges of the room are indistinct—two walls lined with mirrors reflect back upon themselves what appears to be velvet swathes of a deep ochre colour. The effect is of a restless kaleidoscope of drapery, punctured by glimpses of our reflections. An ambient score begins to play: sonorous, purring notes—a sonic echo of the luxurious velvet swags. Crackles and rustles overlay the opening chords. High, piercing notes enter the composition, creating an unexpected dissonance. The score intensifies, as if the source of the noise is approaching. A female figure walks into view across one wall; she wears a shimmering gown of luminescent cream silk, falling in heavy folds from her shoulders to the ground. The material, richly embroidered and pierced all over with deep slashes, undulates with her every movement in ripples of light and shade so that the fabric appears almost alive. The auditory picture of its movement evoked by the score is 'like a snake wriggling into the brushwood'.[687]

We cannot see the woman's face clearly; because her pleated high collar casts a shadow on her features, it is not clear if she sees us standing in the room. The light

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[687] Émile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise*, Frank Belmont, trans. Vol 3 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1883) 17.

rises a little more: the background and foreground around the figure become a little sharper. With this focus, it is apparent that we are in the woman's dressing room. It is furnished behind her with what might be a bed—and in front of her with what is certainly a dressing table, upon which are lain an embroidered pincushion and a finely carved tortoiseshell comb. Alongside the table stands a chest of drawers. The realisation of where we are is accompanied by the unanswered question of whether we are invited guests or unwelcome voyeurs to this most private of spaces. As we ponder, we become more aware of the mirrors, drawing our attention to our fractured presence in the room.

Our reverie is broken by the male voice that first drew us into the room:

'Unpin that spangled breast-plate which you wear,
That th' eyes of busy fools may be stopp'd there'.

The woman unpins an embroidered stomacher that fills the gap between the open front of her gown. She places each pin carefully into the pincushion on her dressing table. A light tinkling noise accompanies this delicate procedure. A flash of scarlet is revealed beneath the loosened stomacher. This visual shock is matched aurally by a series of chimes that strike without warning. The man speaks once more, in a humorous and spirited tone that softens the nature of the command:

"Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime
Tells me from you that now it is bed time".

With this, the figure turns to face us directly and pulls open her gown to reveal stiff scarlet stays that she begins to unlace, causing the metal tags enclosing the ends of the laces to clink together. The male voice rings out again, suggestively:

"Off with that happy busk, which I envy,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh"

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The figure reaches to pull a long, ornately carved whalebone busk out of the breast of her stays. The male voice speaks again, more softly but still urgently:

"Your gown, going off, such beauteous state reveals,
As when from flowry meads th' hill's shadow steals.
Off with that wiry coronet and show
The hairy diadem which on you doth grow:
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes, heaven's angels used to be
Received by men".

The woman removes her jewelled headband, and in doing so unloosens her bound hair, allowing it to fall around her shoulders. Next she kicks off a pair of blue shoes that sparkle with silver embroidery and allows her gown and corset to fall to the ground. Now clothed only in a long, loose, white cotton shift, trimmed around the neck in fine embroidery, she appears as an ethereal figure floating in space. A single violin begins to play an eerie, haunting tune. The room grows dark. The woman's shift glows, a sole bright spot of light in the darkness. She begins to spin in time to the music. The delicate fabric of her shift alternately billows out from her body and clings to it. As she turns, her figure becomes hazier, more abstract and indistinct, until finally it fades completely from sight. The music stops, as does the projection that had played out across the gallery's bare, painted walls. The light increases, and we find ourselves once again in a traditional gallery space. Around us is a series of glass cases displaying a pair of red stays on an invisible Perspex mannequin, pincushions, dress pins, a comb, jewellery, shoes and, in one corner, a man's coat. Another case—a contemporary approximation of a seventeenth-century chest of drawers—has drawers that can be opened to reveal stored clothing: finely decorated bodices and leather gloves, cotton undergarments, delicate lace cuffs and collars. In the final case are a series of wax-sculpted body parts. Next to these are the garments

that would be worn over that part of the body: an elegant, erect neck and the finely pleated ruff that would have forced this proud carriage, and a pair of hands folded one over the other next to a pair of gloves, the former clearly too large to fit the latter, which appear never to have been worn. Behind the sculptures are graphics of details from seventeenth-century portraits showing parts of the dressed body in an enlarged scale: a pair of hands holding a delicate pair of gloves, and necks encased in a variety of collars and ruffs. As we begin to move around the room to look at the exhibits, the man speaks again for the last time, catching us slightly off guard:

"As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be".

I draw this thesis to its conclusion by briefly analysing how my display proposal relates to the framework for reflexive practices that I previously outlined.

i. *Dress is established as a serious and valid subject matter*

This display proposal is built on the foundation of contemporary scholarship of seventeenth-century dress; however, I do not seek to prove the validity of this research by representing it in the gallery as a 'book on the wall'. Rather, as I have previously suggested the proven worth of this research has freed me to translate its findings into new display methodologies.

ii. *Exhibitions could express fashion's trans-historical and transient character*

It should be acknowledged, as Ulrich Lehman does, that the trans-historical character of fashion as Walter Benjamin articulated it is a modern phenomenon.[688] However, I have responded to the above statement by drawing a connection between

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[688] Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2000), xx.

the historic and contemporary experience of fashion; this display has attempted to demonstrate how both are a performative experience. It should, however, be noted that this is a very loose interpretation of Benjamin's articulation of the trans-historical character of fashion. Fashion's transient character I have attempted to express through the use of new technologies: these aim to present the fashion of this period as a spectral presence.

iii.   *Exhibitions can be open-ended—A continuum of possible meaning*

The narrative of this display is deliberately open to visitors' interpretations: for example, it is unclear if the visitor is a voyeur watching this woman undress, or whether he or she is in the position of the narrator instructing the woman to undress. This display aims to directly engage the imaginations, senses, emotions and personal experiences of the visitor; such immersive displays, as previously noted, have the potential to be open ended.

iv.   *All exhibition narratives are authored*

It is my intention that this display should be viewed as a contemporary art installation and thus clearly acknowledged as the combined work of a curator and artists. However, I acknowledge that the proposal, as I have articulated it, does not conform to the way in which artistic inventions in museums customarily operate. In this instance, I have dictated a narrative and an imaginative vision for the display: artists do not usually work to act out a curator's vision. If this display were to happen in practice, it should evolve as a collaboration involving both the vision and practice of the artist(s) and the knowledge, ideas and vision of the curator.

v.   *The presence and absence of life are inescapable in the display of dress*

This display has aimed to embrace both the presence and absence of the bodies and lives associated with dress by uniting material objects and new technologies.

Without a life-like three-dimensional body substitute I intend for the visitor to imaginatively reconstruct the bodies that were central to the form of the garments.

vi. *Mannequins are never neutral props*

Accepting this proposition, I have suggested the use of 'invisible' mannequins that as Chapter 2 argued can engage visitors to imaginatively inhabit the garments on display. I have also suggested the use of prosthetics to act out historically specific ideas about the relationship of seventeenth dress to the body.

vii. *Exhibitions can acknowledge the way dress works on the body and mediates the experience of the self*

The manner in which dress works on and mediates the experience of self is central to this display. I have attempted to demonstrate that seventeenth century garments in the Gallery of Costume represent a sensuous embodied experience.

viii. *Imagination can activate dress in the museum*

The viewer's imaginative perception, Wolfhal has argued, was central to understanding the portrait of Elizabeth Vernon upon which this display is based. Mirroring the composition of the portrait, I have suggested the arrangement of objects in relation to a digitally created body to engage visitors' imaginations in the construction of an embodied, sensuous account of seventeenth-century fashion.

ix. *Metamorphosis is core to the realisation of fashion in the museum*

This point is the most conceptual and obtuse of all the statements I have made, and thus the hardest, in my opinion, to demonstrate and argue the validity of. This display aims to transform the visitor's perception of historic dress; rather than

present it as the static, fixed objects of the past, I have tried to metamorphose them into a 'living' experience of fashion.

x.   Exhibitions could express fashion as a performance

This display has attempted to express garments as the performance of a sensuous identity through the considered use, and relationship between, sound, imagery and material objects.

I conclude my brief analysis of the *Dressing Room* by drawing attention to two key issues not yet accounted for: funding and space. This ambitious display proposal would likely consume the gallery's entire annual budget. Finally, the issue of space: this display was created in response to the domestic associations of Platt Hall's interior, yet there is uncertainty about whether or not the Gallery of Costume will remain in Platt Hall long-term. *The Pleasure Garden* at the Museum of London, however, demonstrates how such immersive spaces can work within the overall narrative of a themed gallery. In the same way that the *Pleasure Garden* is one element in the story of Modern London, the *Dressing Room* could work as part of a display of seventeenth-century portraiture at MAG, or as part of a broader thematic display on identity. *The Dressing Room*, and the framework upon which it was built is intentionally flexible and as such it takes into account both the changing circumstances of the Gallery of Costume and the developing context of dress and fashion curation.

In the seven years that I have been working on this thesis the specific context for my research is much altered. The organisational structure of Manchester City Galleries has undergone many significant changes, notably in 2011 entering into a partnership with Manchester University's Whitworth Gallery and the Manchester Museum to share staff and resources. This partnership has directly and positively influenced the

Gallery of Costume. Since joining with the Whitworth, textile conservator Ann French was, in 2013, seconded to give advice to the gallery. Under her guidance, the gallery's standards of presentation have significantly improved and are more closely aligned with contemporary display practices, notably those of the Victoria & Albert Museum.[689] The most important strategic development to have occurred since the start of this study has been the appointment of Maria Balshaw as Director of MCG in 2011. Lambert has indicated her direct engagement with the Gallery of Costume.[690] The ideas she has for the future of the gallery are, she stated in 2014, being considered in the wider context of her aims for MCG and likely reductions to the MCG's budgets.[691] The Gallery of Costume's future within Platt Hall is by no means secure: this study has demonstrated that Platt Hall has been identified by Manchester City Council as a disposable asset. Thus, on numerous occasions in the past either the council, MCG directors and Gallery of Costume curators have proposed moving the gallery out of Platt Hall. Regardless of the gallery's physical location there are, however, a number of critical issues surrounding the display of historic dress that I have addressed in this thesis.

The dialectic surrounding the display of historic dress focuses on three key issues: how to reconstruct the bodies and personal histories that give physical, social and cultural form to dress; how to structure dress history's narrative; and how to 'breathe life' into static garments in the museum. One could argue that these same issues have faced the Gallery of Costume's curators for the past seven decades, regardless of the financial and political climate in which the gallery operated at the time or the particular interests of its director or curator. The framework I have outlined thus encourages curators to engage reflexively and creatively with the core issues shaping the curation of historic dress. Rather than offer a static set of solutions to practical and theoretical problems this framework can and should be adapted to take into account developments in dress history, theory and curatorial practice.

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[689] Miles Lambert, *Personal Correspondence*, 19 January 2015.

[690] Lambert, *Personal Interview*, 12 August 2012.

[691] Balshaw, *Email Correspondence*, 21 January 2014.

Figures

Time	Work
September 2008 – December 2009 *Full-time*	Researching and writing first draft of Chapter 1: Library and archive research; observation and participation in gallery activities, e.g. scanning installation images; interviews with museum staff.
January 2010 – March 2010 *Full-time*	Planning and mounting *The Perfect Lady?*; assisting with gallery reopening.
April 2010 – May 2010 *Full-time*	Researching Chapter 2; library and archive research; observation and participation in gallery activities, e.g. mannequin audit.
June 2010 – July 2010 *Full-time*	Research trip to New York City; interviews with Harold Koda and Valerie Steele.
August 2010- December 2010 *Full-time*	Researching and writing first draft of Chapter 2: Library and archive research; observation and participation in gallery activities, e.g. scanning installation images; identification of exhibitions to be used as case studies; interviews with curators.
December 2010 – January 2012 *Part-time*	Interruption: Maternity leave.
February 2012 – June 2012 *Part-time*	Researching and writing first draft of Chapter 3: Library and archive research; identification of exhibitions to be used as case studies; interviews with curators; return visits to the Gallery of Costume.
June – July 2012 *Part-time*	Interruption: Move to United States.

August 2012 – May 2014 *Part-time*	Researching and writing of first draft of Chapters 4 and 5; interviews with curators; return visits to the Gallery of Costume; follow up interviews with Miles Lambert; email interview with Maria Balshaw.
May 2014 – August 2015 *Part-time*	Interruption: Maternity leave.
August 2015 – January 2016 *Part-time*	Edits to first draft and preparation of final draft; follow up correspondence with Miles Lambert.

Figure 0.1: Timetable of Research and Writing

Figure 0.2: *The Perfect Lady?* **Gallery of Costume, 2010.**

Photographs courtesy of the Gallery of Costume

Figure. 1.1: Platt Hall.

Photograph from Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 1.2: Platt Hall's dining room, 2010.

Between 1983-1985 the room's original blue, white colour scheme and gilding was restored.

© Manchester City Council.

Figure 1.3: Platt Hall's central staircase at ground floor level, 2010.

© Manchester City Council.

Figure 1.4: Platt Hall's central staircase ascending to the first floor, 2010.

© Manchester City Council.

Figure 1.5: *Fashion on Horseback*, **Gallery of Costume, 1954.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.6: Nineteenth century gallery, Gallery of English Costume, 1947.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Labels in figure: Screen of Masonite, Support for case roof, Opening for ventilation, Sliding glass door, Showcase, Showcase, Side window, Feet, 5, 10, 15, 20
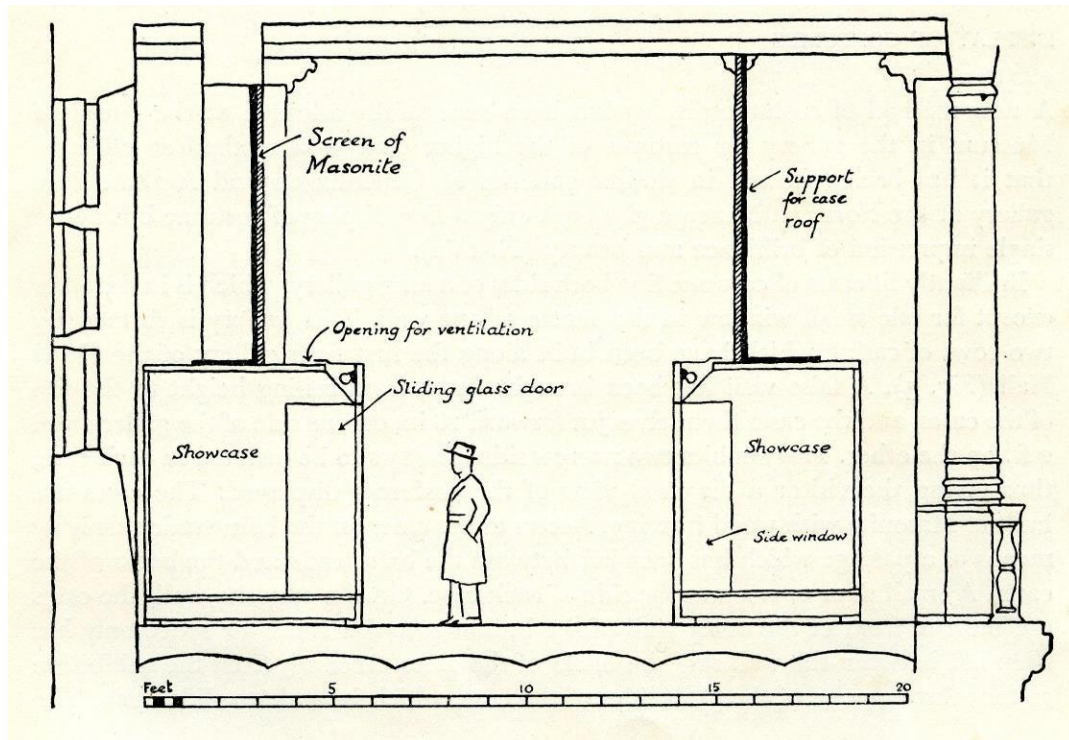
Figure 1.7: Cross section plan of costume display cases at the Nordiska Museum, Stockholm, illustrated in 'Textiles in Scandinavian Museums: Their Treatment and Methods of Display', *The Museums Journal***, April 1940.**

Reproduced courtesy of *The Museums Journal*.

Figure 1.8: Ground floor gallery, Gallery of Costume, 1955.

The new installed cases were arranged like 'windows' in the wall. 1955.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

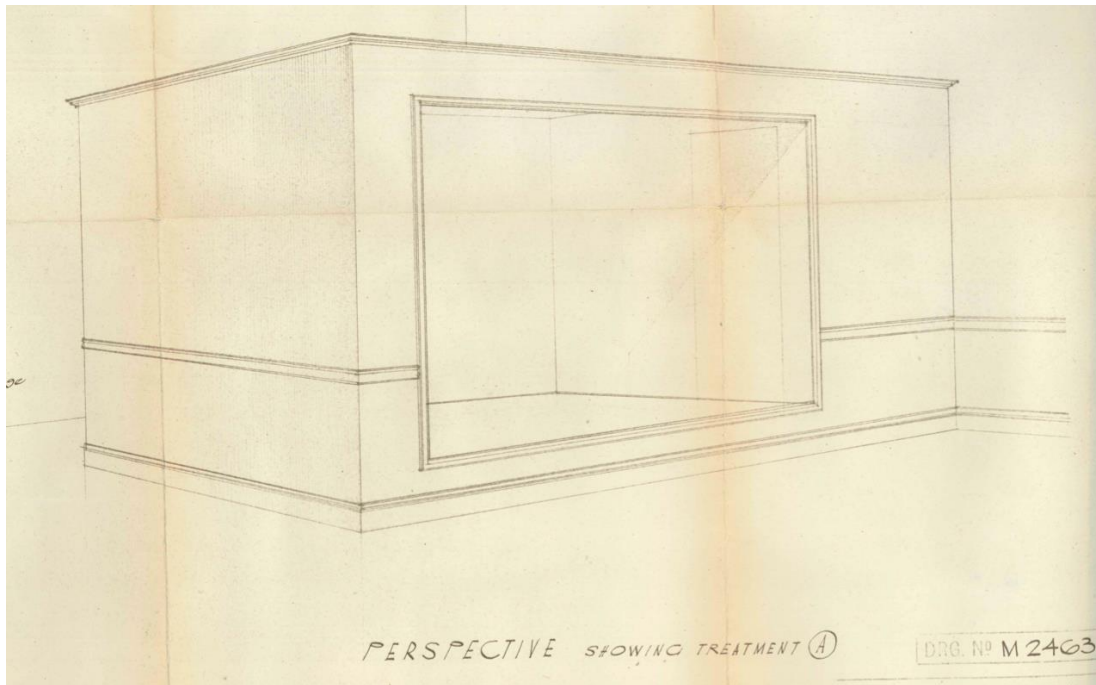PERSPECTIVE SHOWING TREATMENT Ⓐ   DRG. Nº M 2463

Figure 1.9: Architect's plans for the first floor cases at the Gallery of Costume, 1955.

The diagram demonstrates the intention to naturalise the cases within the interior of Platt Hall with dado rails continuing from the walls across the cases.

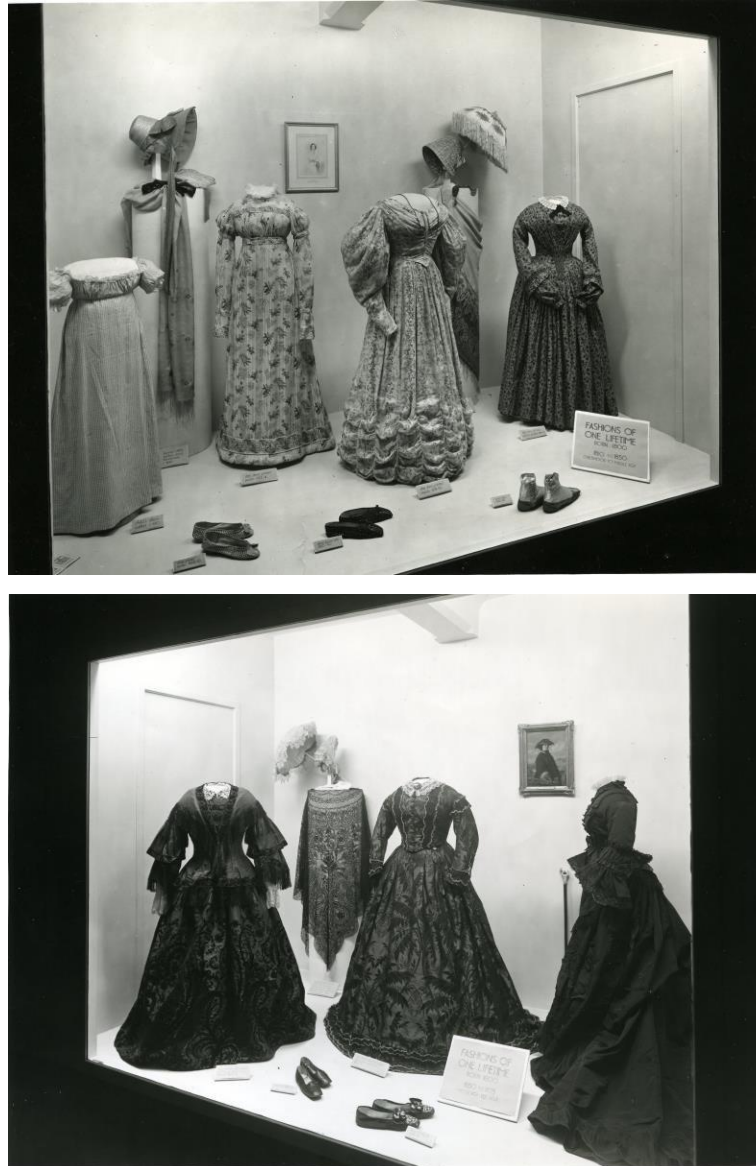Reproduced courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.10: *Fashion's of One Lifetime,* Gallery of Costume, 1950.

This first case, 'Childhood to Middle Age, 1810-1850', pictured above, began with a child's dress, dresses from 1820, the 1830s and 1840s suitable for a young girl, a bride, and a young married woman. The second case 'Middle Age to Age, 1850-1875', pictured below, held dresses, shawls and capes suitable for a middle-aged woman, a widow, and a very old woman.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.11: *Ours the Needle,* **Gallery of Costume, 1974.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.12: Kyoto Costume Institute mannequin.

© The Kyoto Costume Institute

Figure 1.13: *Fashion: An Anthology*, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 1971.**

Reproduced courtesy of Sotheby's Picture Library.

Figure 1.14: *Sleeping Beauties*, **Gallery of Costume, 1975.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.15: Twentieth century displays, Gallery of Costume, 1979.

Top photograph: 1920-1930s. Bottom photograph: 1960s-1970s.

Photographs courtesy of the Gallery of Costume

Figure 1.16: *Chic: 1920-1940*, Gallery of Costume, 1980.

Photographs courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.17: *Fabric of Society*, **Gallery of Costume, 1983**

Printed nineteenth century cotton dresses on display in the first floor gallery.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.18: *Fabric of Society*, **Gallery of Costume, 1983.**

Nineteenth century cotton dresses arranged in the dining room.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.19: *A Suit of her Own*, **Gallery of Costume, 2000-2002.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.20: *Suffragettes to Supermodels*, **Gallery of Costume, 2010.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.21: *Designer in Focus: Dior, 1947-57*, **Gallery of Costume, 2013-14.**

Garments displayed in the temporary exhibition gallery.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.22: *Designer in Focus: Dior, 1947-57*, **Gallery of Costume, 2013-14.**

Garments displayed in the dining room.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 1.23: *Cotton Couture***, Manchester Art Gallery, 2014-2015.**

Photograph courtesy of the Manchester Art Gallery.

Figure 2.1: 'Platt Body', undated, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Display form constructed from a padded wooden frame covered with cotton calico.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.2: Wooden frame on which Anne Buck's headless mannequins were constructed, undated, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.3: Display form, undated, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.4: Pierre Imans mannequin, c. late 1920s, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.5: Fashion mannequin, c. mid 1950s, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.6: Derek Ryman mannequin, designed in 1983, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.7: Kyoto Costume Institute mannequin, designed in 1980, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.8: The Costume Court, Case 8, Ladies Court and Formal Dresses, 1755-1766, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1962.
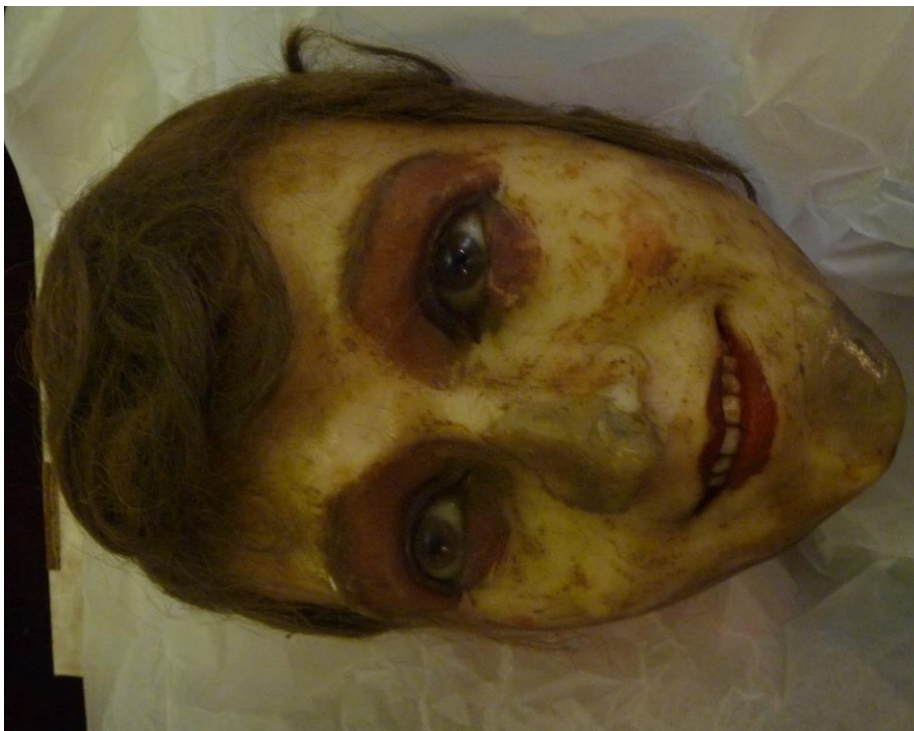
Figure 2.9: Wax head, c. late 1920s - early 1930s, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photographs courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.10: Wax head, c. late 1920s - early 1930s, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Photographs courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.11: Mannequin, c.1920s-1930s, Gallery of Costume, Manchester.

Anne Buck probably adapted this commercial retail mannequin for use in the Gallery of Costume's displays.
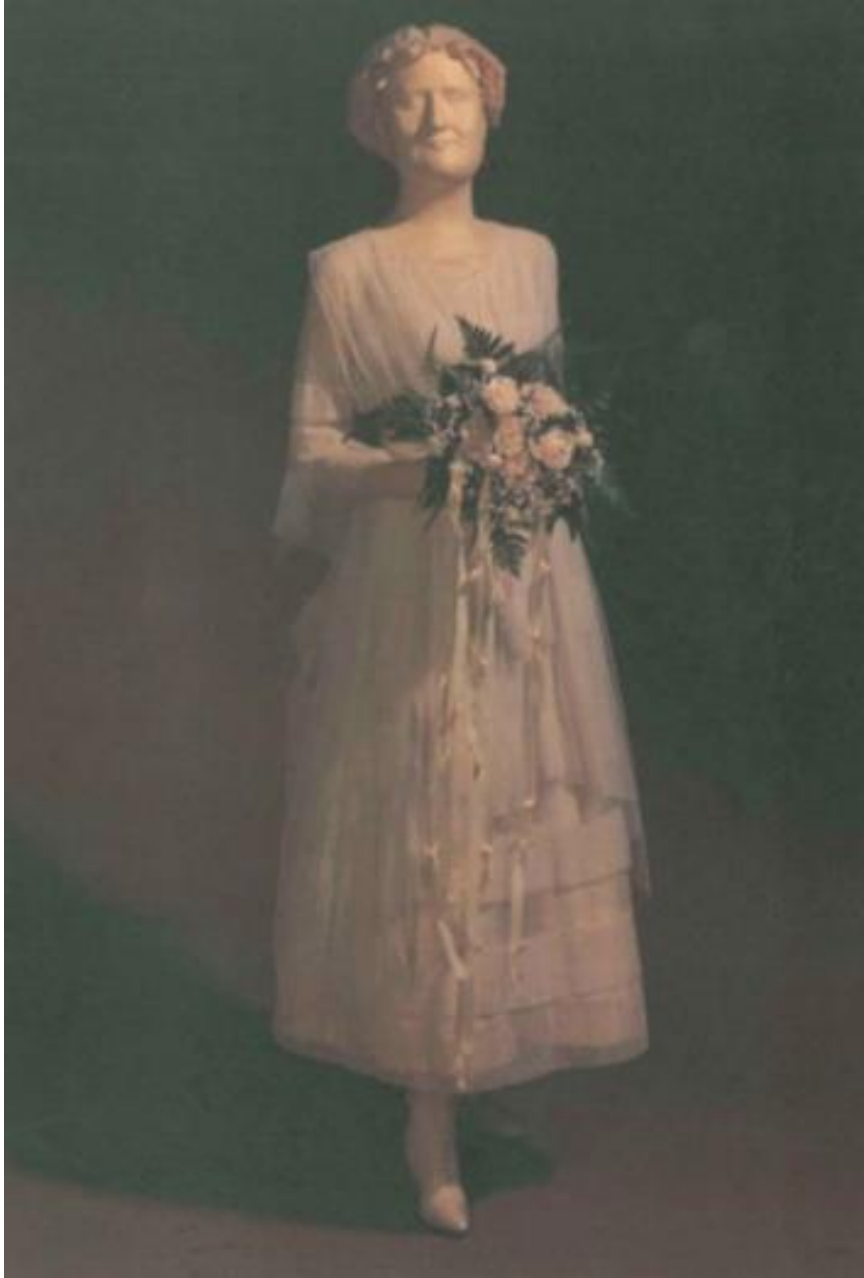
Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.12: Mannequin used in *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920*, **1994, Chicago Historical Society.**

© Chicago Historical Society.

Figure 2.13: Mannequin used in *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920*, **1994, Chicago Historical Society.**

© Chicago Historical Society.

Figure 2.14: Mannequin depicting Queen Victoria, *A Century Of Queens'*
Wedding Dresses 1840-1947, Kensington Palace State Apartments, 2002.

Figure 2.15: Mannequin depicting Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother) *A Century Of Queens' Wedding Dresses 1840-1947*, Kensington Palace State Apartments, 2002

© Rex Features.

Figure 2.16: Mannequin depicting Queen Victoria aged 18, *In Royal Fashion: The Clothes of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Queen Victoria 1796-1901*, **Museum of London, 1997.**

Figure 2.17: Mannequin depicting Queen Victoria aged 60, *In Royal Fashion: The Clothes of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Queen Victoria 1796-1901*, **Museum of London, 1997.**

© Museum of London.

Figure 2.18: Alexander Bassano, *Queen Victoria*, 1882.

Half-plate glass negative.

© National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 2.19: Dress c.1830s displayed on a Siégel mannequin, Musée Municipal du Costume, Paris, 1959.

Reproduced courtesy of the *Museums Journal.*

Figure 2.20: Advertisement for Marshall fashion fabrics, 1959.

Reproduced courtesy of *Vogue*.

Figure 2.21: Printemps window, c. early 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

Figure 2.22: Kyoto Costume Institute Mannequin, designed in 1980.

© The Kyoto Costume Institute, photograph by Taishi Hirokawa.

Figure 2.23: Harry Benson, photograph of Diana Vreeland and mannequin in the Balenciaga exhibition at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973.

© Staley-Wise Gallery.

Figure 2.24: *Chic 1920-1940*, **Gallery of Costume, Manchester, 1982.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 2.25: 'Alexandra' mannequin, manufactured by Derek Ryman for the Victoria & Albert Museum.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 2.26: 'Albert' mannequin manufactured by Derek Ryman for the Victoria & Albert Museum.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 2.27: 'Rupert' mannequin manufactured by Derek Ryman for the Victoria & Albert Museum.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 2.28: Dressmaker's bust forms, *Cotton Couture*, Manchester Art Gallery, 2014-2015.

© Manchester Art Gallery.

Figure 2.29: The Fashion Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.

Figure 2.30: *Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950,* **The Fashion Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.**

© Getty Images.

Figure 2.31: **Perspex mannequin, Fashion & Textiles Gallery, Bowes Museum.**

© Bowes Museum.

Figure 2.32: *Giorgio Armani*, **Soloman R. Guggeneheim, New York, 2000-2001.**

© SRGF, NY, photograph by Ellen Labenski.

Figure 2.33: *Form Follows Fashion***, Museum at FIT, 2004.**

© Museum at FIT, 2004, courtesy of Valerie Steele.

Figure 2.34: *Reveal or Conceal,* **McCord Museum, 2009.**

Figure 2.35: 'Pretentious,' *Concise Dictionary of Dress*, **Blythe House, London, 2010.**

Photographs by Norbert Schoerner, courtesy of Artangel.

Figure 2.36: Charles LeDray, *Mens Suits*, the Fire Station, 1 Chiltern Street, London 2009.

Photograph by Julian Abrams, courtesy of Artangel.

Figure 2.37: Charles LeDray, 'The Sorting Room', *Mens Suits***, The Fire Station, 1 Chiltern Street, London, 2009.**

Photograph by Julian Abrams, courtesy of Artangel.

Figure 2.38: Charles LeDray, 'The Sales Room', *Mens Suits*, **The Fire Station, 1 Chiltern Street, London 2009.**

Photograph by Julian Abrams, courtesy of Artangel.

Figure 3.1: Outfit of the type worn by a Suffragette, composed of a Mascotte dress c. 1910 and a 'Votes for Women' sash, *Suffragettes to Supermodels,* **the Gallery of Costume, 2010.**

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 3.2: Peter Russell dress worn by Anne, Countess of Rosse, 1933,
Fashion & Fancy Dress: The Messel Dress Collection 1865-2005, **Brighton**
Museum and Art Gallery, 2005.

© The Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton & Hove.

Figure 3.3: 'Arctic', *Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection*,
Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005-2006.

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 3.4: Iris Barrel Apfel with the mannequins used in *Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection,* Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005-2006.

Photograph by Kiaren Willis, courtesy of *Palm Beach Post*.

Figure 3.5: 'Arctic', *Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection,* **Costume Institute, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005-2006.**

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 3.6: Page from *One Woman's Wardrobe* the catalogue for the exhibition *Getting Dressed: One Woman's Wardrobe*, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1998.

© Jill Ritblatt. Photograph © Toby McFarlan Pond.

Figure 3.7: Page from *One Woman's Wardrobe* the catalogue for the exhibition *Getting Dressed: One Woman's Wardrobe*, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1998.

© Jill Ritblatt. Photograph © Toby McFarlan Pond.

Figure 3.8: 'Princess', *Grace Kelly: Style Icon*, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2010.**

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 3.9: *Grace Kelly: Style Icon,* **the Victoria & Albert Museum, 2010.**

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 3.10: Kylie Minogue's dressing room reconstructed in *Kylie*, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2007.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 3.11: *Pleasure Garden,* **Museum of London, 2010.**

© Museum of London.

Figure 4.1: *The Age of Elegance?* **Gallery of Costume, 2012.**

Stills from a film of the intervention.

Reproduced courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 4.2: Nineteenth century display, Gallery of Costume, 1947.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 4.3: 'The Draper's Shop', *Panorama Room***, Museum of Costume, Bath, 1963.**

Photograph courtesy of the Fashion Museum, Bath and North East Somerset Council / Bridgeman Art Library.

Figure 4.4: *Panorama Room*, Museum of Costume, Bath, 1963.

Photograph courtesy of the Fashion Museum, Bath and North East Somerset Council / Bridgeman Art Library.

Figure. 4.5: 'Pepper's Ghost', *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back,* **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005.**

Photograph by Ronald Stoops. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 4.6: 'Reappearances: Getting Things Back', *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005.**

Photograph by Ronald Stoops. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 4.7: 'Reappearances: Getting Things Back', *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005.**

Photograph by Ronald Stoops. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 4.8: 'Locking In and Out', *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back,* **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005.**

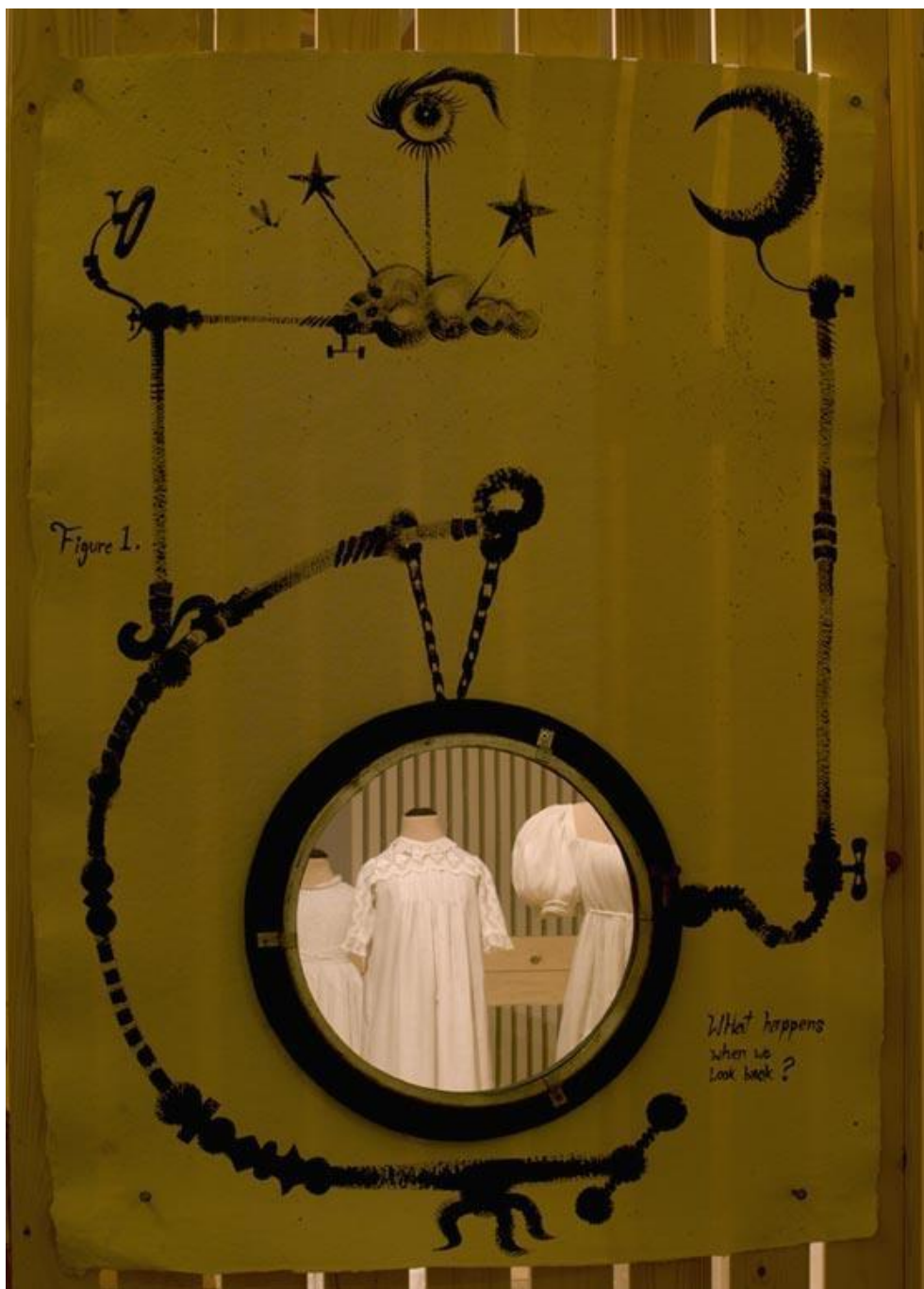Photograph by Ronald Stoops. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 4.9: *Behind the Scenes,* **Fashion Museum, Bath, 2010-2016.**

Photographs courtesy of the Fashion Museum, Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Figure 4.10: *Pleasure Garden*, **Museum of London.**

Figure 4.11: *Pleasure Garden*, **Museum of London.**

© Museum of London.

Figure 4.12. *Pleasure Garden*, **Museum of London.**

© Museum of London.

Figure 5.1: Jane Harris, *Empress's New Clothes,* Museum of London, 2003.

Still from a computer generated three-dimensional animation.

© Jane Harris.

Figure 5.2: 'Act One: Black Sheaths', *Fashion in Motion: Olivier Saillard,*
Models at Work, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.**

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 5.3: 'Act Two: The White Tunic', *Fashion in Motion: Olivier Saillard, Models at Work,* Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 5.4: 'Act Three: Catwalk Without Clothes', *Olivier Saillard, Models at Work,* **Palais de Tokyo, 2012.**

Photograph by Marco Rivera.

Figure 5.5: 'Act Four: Modeled in Calico', *Fashion in Motion: Olivier Saillard, Models at Work,* Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 5.6: 'Act Five: Shadow Garments,' *Fashion in Motion: Olivier Saillard, Models at Work,* **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2012.**

© Victoria & Albert Museum
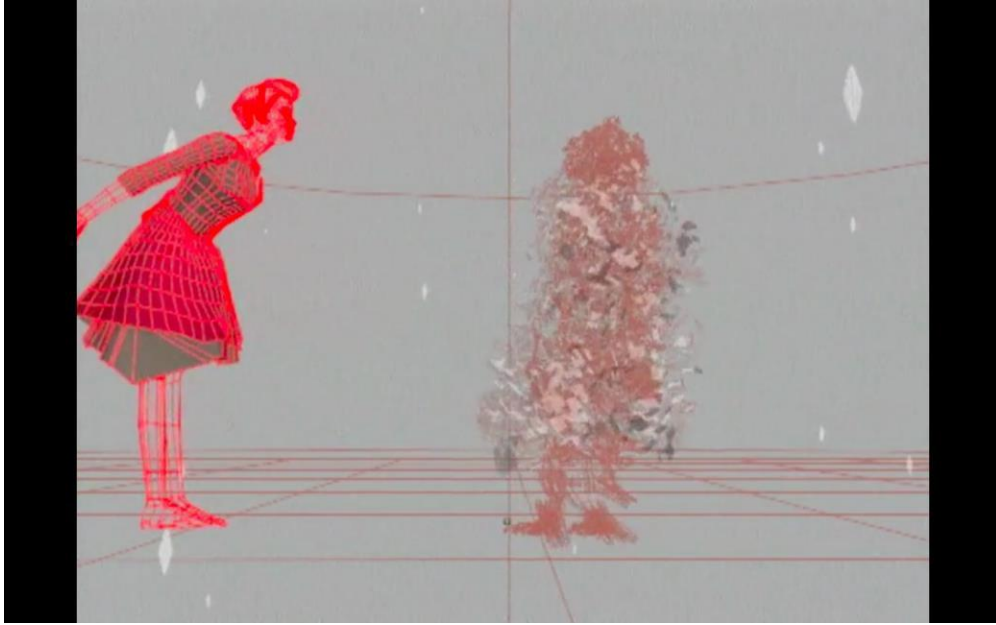
Figure 5.7: Hussein Chalayan, *Ventriloquy*, Spring/Summer 2001.

Still of a computer generated three-dimensional animation.

Courtesy of Hussein Chalayan and Me Company collaboration.

Figure 5.8: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*, **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2011.**

Photograph courtesy of *Kloset Blogazine*.

Figure 5.9: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*, **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2011.**

Figure 5.10: *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations,* **Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.**

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.11: *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations,* **Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.**

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.12: 'A Surreal Body', *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations,* **Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.**

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.13: 'A Surreal Body', *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations,* **Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.**

© Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.14: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*. **Brooklyn Museum, 2013 (On tour from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts).**

© Getty Images.

Figure 5.15: Nick Knight, *It's a Jungle Out There*, 1997.

Knight created this image for the invitation for Alexander McQueen's 'It's a Jungle Out There', Autumn/Winter 1997/1998 collection.

Photograph courtesy of Nick Knight.

Figure 5.16: Alexander McQueen, 'It's a Jungle Out There', Autumn/Winter 1997/1998 Collection.

Photograph © Sølve Sundsbø / Art + Commerce, courtesy of Alexander Mcqueen.

Figure 5.17: *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, **Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.**

Photograph by Lyndon Douglas, courtesy of the Barbican Art Gallery.

Figure 5.18: Viktor & Rolf, 'Launch', Spring/Summer 1997.

Displayed in *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.

Photograph by Lyndon Douglas, courtesy of the Barbican Art Gallery.

Figure 5.19: **Viktor & Rolf, Autumn/Winter 2003 Collection.**

Photograph by Marcio Madeira, courtesy of *Vogue*.
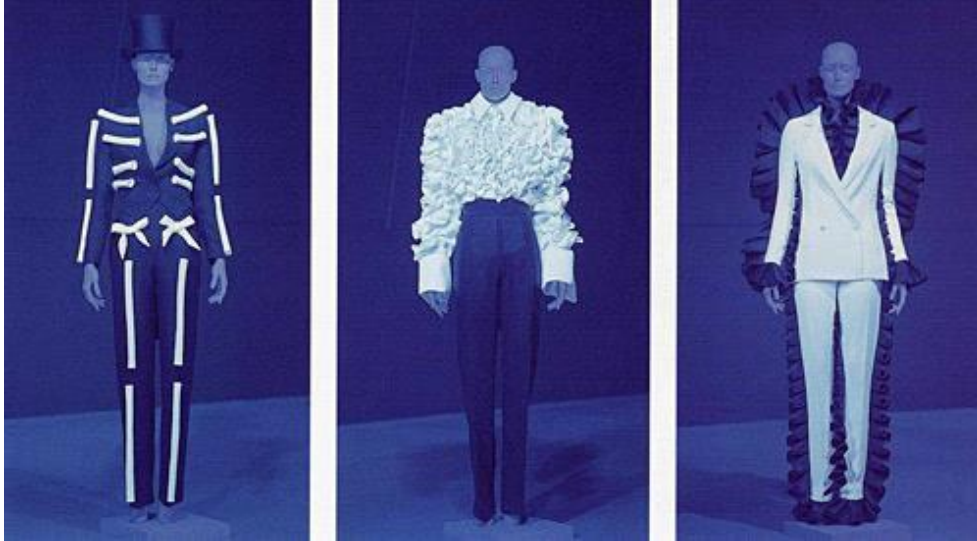
Figure 5.20: Viktor & Rolf, Spring/Summer 1999 Collection.

Photograph by F. Dumoulin / Java, courtesy of Viktor & Rolf.

Figure 5.21: *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, **Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.**

Photograph by Lyndon Douglas, courtesy of the Barbican Art Gallery.

Figure 5.22: *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, **Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.**

Autumn/Winter 2007 Collection.

Photograph by Lyndon Douglas, courtesy of the Barbican Art Gallery.

Figure 5.23: *The House of Viktor & Rolf*, **Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.**

Spring/Summer 2005 'Flowerbomb' Collection.

Photograph courtesy of Barbican Art Gallery.

Figure 5.24: *The House of Viktor & Rolf*. **The Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.**

Spring/Summer 2005 'Flowerbomb' Collection.

© Siebe Tettero.

Figure 5.25: Olivier Saillard, *The Impossible Wardrobe*, Palais de Tokyo, 2008.

Tilda Swinton performing with Napolean Bonaparte's coat, 1800-1815, Collection Galleria.

Photograph by Piero Biasion, courtesy of *Vogue*.

Figure 5.26: Olivier Saillard, *The Impossible Wardrobe*. Palais de Tokyo, 2008.

Tilda Swinton performing with a pair of Chanel suits, 1963. Collection Palais Galleria.

Photograph by Piero Biasion, courtesy of *Vogue*.

Figure 5.27: Olivier Saillard, *The Impossible Wardrobe*, Palais de Tokyo, 2008.

Tilda Swinton performing with a Mariano 'Delphos' dress, Collection Palais Galleria.

Photograph by Piero Biasion, courtesy of *Vogue*.

Figure 6.1: Stays c. 1620-40, *Ours the Needle*, Gallery of Costume, 2010.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 6.2: Coat c. 1685-95, *Ours the Needle*, Gallery of Costume, 2010.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 6.3: Wall mounted lace collars and cuffs, 'Ours the Needle, Gallery of Costume, 2010.

Photograph courtesy of the Gallery of Costume.

Figure 6.4: Portrait of Elizabeth Wriothesley (née Vernon), Countess of Southampton, artist unknown, c. 1600.

Figure 6.5: Early seventeenth-century gown, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum number: 189-1900.

© Victoria & Albert Museum.

Figure 6.6: Naomi Filmer, ceramic prosthetic attached to a mannequin,
Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back, **Victoria & Albert Museum, 2005.**

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