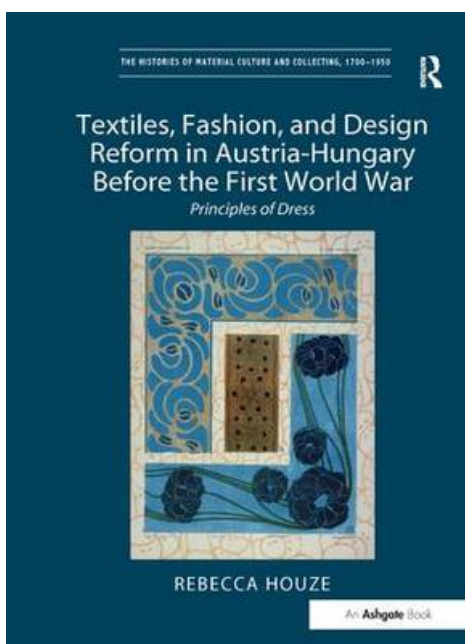


RESEARCH SEMINARS 2016-17

All are welcome to join us for TVAD Talks, held regularly on the second Wednesday of each month during term, in 1A159 (Lindop Building, College Lane campus). We start at 12.45 with a buffet lunch for a 1 pm research presentation and discussion after. For more information, contact Dr Grace Lees-Maffei g.lees-maffei@herts.ac.uk Blog <http://tvad-uh.blogspot.co.uk/>

Weds 12th October 2016 – Prof Rebecca Houze, Northern Illinois University, 'Writing Textiles, Fashion, and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary Before the First World War'

This study offers a new reading of fin-de-siècle culture in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy by looking at the unusual and widespread preoccupation with embroidery, fabrics, clothing, and fashion - both literally and metaphorically. Houze resurrects lesser known critics, practitioners, and curators from obscurity, while also discussing the textile interests of notable figures, Gottfried Semper and Alois Riegl. Spanning the 50-year life of the Dual Monarchy, this study uncovers new territory in the history of art history, insists on the crucial place of women within modernism, and broadens the cultural history of Habsburg Central Europe by revealing the complex relationships among art history, women, and Austria-Hungary. Houze surveys a wide range of materials, from craft and folk art to industrial design, and includes overlooked sources-from fashion magazines to World's Fair maps, from exhibition catalogues to museum lectures, from feminist journals to ethnographic collections. Restoring women to their place at the intersection of intellectual and artistic debates of the time, this book weaves together discourses of the academic, scientific, and commercial design communities with middle-class life as expressed through popular culture.



Weds 9th November 2016 – Rebecca Bell, Royal College of Art, 'Folk Fever and the Bureaucratic Machine: Craft and Design in early 1960s' Czechoslovakia'. Dr Steven Adams to Chair.

At an international conference held on the occasion of Franz Kafka's 80th birthday at Liblice Castle near Prague in 1963, philosopher Karel Kosík questioned the 'Kafkaesque world', raw with controversy in the Communist context. Kosík, a best-selling author whose texts around 'dialectics of the concrete' challenged Neo-Stalinism, described Kafka's 'world of a monstrous and unintelligible labyrinth, a world of human powerlessness in the network of bureaucratic machines, mechanisms, reified creations'. He posed writer Jaroslav Hašek's competent but brilliant fictional character, the good soldier Švejk, as epitomising 'a way of reacting to this world of absurd omnipotence of the machine and of reified relations' (1975: 87-88, cited by Hames, 2014: 157).

The use of humour and absurdity as a Czech literary device is also seen in applied art and design in Czechoslovakia, such as the popular inter and post-war glass figurines of Jaroslav Brychta. The latter are the focus of my first PhD thesis chapter – in this seminar, I wish to present research for my second chapter, which focuses on the ways in which similar Czech cultural tropes, particularly those relating to folk and craft, are explored amongst the 'network of bureaucratic machines' in the State design system during the 1960s. They are used to activate new relationships to traditional forms and question 'this world of absurd omnipotence'. In particular, disillusion, humour and material juxtapositions will be explored within State design projects, but also that seminal 1960s' Czech form, New Wave Cinema.

A case study of particular interest is Karel Vachek's film also from 1963, an important year for understanding the burgeoning effects of de-Stalinisation in Czechoslovak culture. Vachek's *Moravská Hellas* (Moravian Hellas), is a part-reportage, part-fiction parody of State approaches to folk festivals, crafts and music in the early 1960s. From a material history perspective, it provides insight into feelings around the State appropriation of folk and craft techniques. As character Dr Pavelčík, Director of the Museum in Uherský Blod, states towards the end of the film, 'Ethnography is at its end, everything has perished...It seems to me like a slowly dying cow'. Local storyteller Uncle Lebanek adds that it is 'some kind of fever'. Meanwhile, designers working for ÚLUV, the Centre of Folk Art Production, are trying to integrate craft and folk methods and themes to negotiate ways of establishing design practices that are both theoretically interesting and commercially viable. Through Interior design projects, fashion and design magazines, I look at how these aims were realised in the shifting intellectual climate of early 1960s' Czechoslovakia.



Film stills from Karel Vachek's *Moravská Hellas*, 1963

Weds 14th December 2016 – Dr Thom Cuschieri, University of Hertfordshire ‘The Gorey Groan – A Study in Gothic Voices’.

In Jorge Luis Borges’ short story *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* (1939), a twentieth-century French writer endeavours to reproduce Cervantes’ seventeenth-century masterpiece *Don Quixote* – not by memorising the original, but by so fully inhabiting Cervantes’ life and persona that he is able to recreate the work anew, from scratch. Borges’ wry reflection on the nature of authorship and the appropriation of style and voice is the inspiration for *The Gorey Groan*, which seeks to explore similar concerns at the heart of illustration.

Through a stratagem similar to that used by Borges’ eponymous, fictional Menard, this project seeks to gain insight into the work of two twentieth-century artists intimately connected with the gothic tradition: the American writer, illustrator, and designer Edward Gorey (1925 – 2000) and the English writer and illustrator Mervyn Peake (1911 – 1968). The project involves a meticulous study of Gorey’s visual language, style and approach, and will include the production of a series of illustrations “by Gorey” (in the Borgesian sense) of Mervyn Peake’s gothic novel *Titus Groan*, as a means of engaging meaningfully with both artists’ oeuvres.

Gorey did *not* illustrate *Titus Groan* in his lifetime, and the focus here is not the replication of an existing body of work, but rather the means by which artists create their voice, through conscious borrowing and subconscious influences. There is, of course, a third voice in this project – my own – and, unlike Menard, I aim to scrutinise my role in the shaping of Gorey’s authentic “voice” as I seek to experience Peake’s text through a particular artistic vision.



Sketch of Titus on horseback (Mervyn Peake)



she flung herself over the parapet



and surreptitiously vanished.

From 'The Object Lesson' (Edward Gorey)

Weds 11th January 2017 – Dr Barbara Brownie, University of Hertfordshire, ‘Spacewear: Weightlessness and the Final Frontier of Fashion’.

In the new era of commercial space travel, we must rethink our approach to designing clothes. Space, and the artificial environments that aim to replicate it, provide challenges for spacesuit engineers, and that may also increasingly concern fashion designers. These concerns are currently reflected most often at the intersection of reality and fiction, as science fiction speculates about the requirements of future space travel. In recent years, Earth-bound fashion designs have also begun to take a speculative approach to fashion design, which imagines the clothing requirements of future space tourists.

Although there are numerous texts that broadly consider space, this talk will specifically address environments with reduced gravity, in which the body experiences weightlessness. I will address the various features of clothes that must be reconsidered for the reduced environments of spacewalks, space stations and zero-gravity flights within Earth's atmosphere. Learning from the design of spacesuits as well as recent speculative fashion design, I identify how clothes are experienced in reduced gravity, and how designers must accommodate these conditions.

Future fashion designers will be required to reassess many of the dressmaking and design processes that are fundamental to fashion on Earth's surface. The weightless garment contains a body, but is not supported by it. Garments contain the body differently in different gravitational conditions, leading to “a newly found balance between the muscles and the tension of fabrics” (Dominino 2003, p. 278). Drape, which is a staple of garment design, is defined as a product of gravity. This book will ask whether drape can be said to exist without gravity, and how designers' approaches to drape need to change in order to suit weightless environments.

Designers must consider not only changes to the behavior of fabric, but also changes in body structure. As the body adapts to reduced gravity, it adopts a neutral posture, and weight is redistributed as the upper body swells and the spine lengthens. In the long-duration space travel that is proposed for missions to Mars, these distortions will be more extreme. Garment silhouettes must necessarily compensate for the redistribution of weight around the body. My book, *Spacewear: Weightlessness and the final frontier of fashion* will address these concerns by examining the ways in which they have been handled by engineers, fashion designers, costume designers, photographers, authors and filmmakers.



Weds 8th February 2017 - Femke de Vries, HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, (www.FemkeDeVries.com) 'DICTIONARY DRESSINGS: Clothing definitions decoded and translated towards alternative fashion perspectives'. Respondent: Professor Rebecca Houze, Northern Illinois University.

Dictionary definitions are generally experienced as factual and rational and in the case of clothing show no connection to the mythical character of fashion. They describe the characteristics of the items, the modes of use and/or the relation to the body but fashion or style is not mentioned. For example: "*Handschoen: bekleding van de hand*" (Literally translated to English as Glove: covering of the hand). It becomes clear that a hand can be covered by putting it in a pocket, by bandaging it or by sitting on it, turning a pair of trousers into a glove for they cover the hand and therefore suffice to the definition.

In this on-going project the nature of the dictionary definition as a 'zero condition' of a piece of clothing is used not to find a general truth of a piece of clothing, but to re-read clothes and explore an alternative fashion vocabulary. This vocabulary will take the shape of an image archive, theoretical and design-led approaches by experts and students brought together in a publication, website, workshops and catalogues of these workshops.



He pointed to the young African with the bandaged leg.
“Let me look at his dressings and make him more comfortable, I’m a doctor.”

BALLARD, J.G. (1966) *The Crystal World*. New York: Berkley Medallion Books.

Weds 15th March 2017 – Dr Nicolas P. Maffei, Norwich University of the Arts, ‘The Responsive Brand: Uniformity and Flexibility in Logo Design’

From the uniformity of modernism to the embrace of difference, this talk explores the historical shift from static to dynamic logos, from universal international brand identities to more flexible and responsive corporate personalities. This transformation occurred over a period extending from the nineteenth century to the present, and includes the roots of branding, the ideals of modernism, the emergence of the critical consumer, the development of the responsive corporation, and the co-creation of brands in online landscapes. From Peter Behrens’ designs for the German Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG), in 1907, considered the first corporate identity, to Paul Rand’s flexible and humanizing identity developed for International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) after WWII, this talk reviews the rise of the unchanging logo and, in turn, the multivalent brand-mark. In addition, the design responses of corporations to the vocal and ethically informed consumer are surveyed via the anti-branding movement, which has targeted Starbucks and McDonalds among other corporations. Nike is examined through local reinterpretations of the global brand. Gap’s failed logo of 2010 shows the power of the online consumer and the need for companies to listen and respond. Finally, brand reactions to the responsive consumer – characterized by chameleon-like logo transformation and an emphasis on user interaction and co-production of meaning, are investigated through the designs for telecommunications company Olo (Bibliothèque, 2012), the identity for the Tate museums (Wolff Olins, 1999), and Experimental Jetset’s Responsive ‘W’ for The Whitney Museum (2011).

