

Talking Textiles Workshop

Session One: Early Modern Europe

Patricia Walker
Research PhD Student, Trinity College Dublin
Department of History

The Stuffe of Death: Descriptions of Clothing and Textiles in Elizabethan and Jacobean Murder and Execution Pamphlets.

Murder and execution pamphlets published in England between 1570 and 1630 discussed early modern murders and the resulting punishments of felons. Admonitions against sin and crime heavily featured in this form of cheap print but these pamphlets also revealed a great deal about clothing and forms of non-verbal communication related to death and dying. As clothing was worn by everyone in England from all social ranks and it should come as no surprise that it featured heavily in murder and execution pamphlets. Within this literature, clothing was admired for its beauty and craftsmanship but it was also associated with sinful behaviour including pride, deception and murder. This paper will discuss three ways in which clothing played a major role in murder pamphlets: as a murder weapon, as a tool for the miraculous revelations of murder and on the scaffold as a final way to identify innocence or contempt.

Dr Fergus Robson
Post-doctoral Researcher, Trinity College Dublin
Department of History

Dressing Up and Dressing Down: French Soldiers' Visions of the "Other's" Attire

The well documented obsessions with clothing in 18th century and Revolutionary France went beyond the salons and streets of Paris and the provinces, they were present in the army and not solely in the soldiers' concern for their ragged shirts and collapsing boots. Attire constituted one of the principle means by which French soldiers mediated and understood the civilians they encountered while on campaign. This paper will examine the ways in the soldiers of the Army of Italy and the Expedition to Egypt formed their ideas of difference with reference to locals' clothing. Fashion and tradition were represented in these soldiers' accounts of their experiences, not merely as descriptive narratives but often as proto-ethnographic and culturally charged tools of categorisation, control and valorisation. Observations on the way Italian and Egyptian women, and less often, men, dressed helped them to navigate unfamiliar cultures and societies, informed the prejudices they developed and brought to the fore idealised understandings of femininity, both foreign and French. In doing so their conception of themselves as French men, and also of French women were both nuanced and reinforced through the prism of cultural difference. As such neither

the vogue for togas and translucent gowns; nor the craze for cashmere shawls and theatric turbans tell the whole story of French cultural engagement with the dress of Italy and Egypt. The ways in which clothing was a form of communication, whether that was the power and dominance conveyed by the uniforms of an occupying army (which also turned the troops into easy targets for resentful civilians) or the insights into local society afforded by costume, both provide an oblique and revealing angle from which to view the experience and representation of militarised cultural encounters during the wars of the French Revolution.

10 Minute Break

Session 2: Twentieth Century Europe

John Porter
Research Phd Student, Trinity College, Dublin
Department of History

Depictions of Women in Irish Advertisements, 1922-1937

John's research interests include the history of consumption in early to mid-Twentieth century Ireland, and the ways in which, studies of the Irish consumer may shed new light on central issues, such as citizenship, constructs, gender identities, and class realities. The depiction of women in Irish advertising are one such example. As yet advertising sources have not been used extensively in Irish historiography, but they provide crucial insight into the values and ideals of society albeit in a complicated and problematic way. This presentation will discuss depictions of women in Irish advertisements in relation to three central issues. Firstly, can we identify a dominant, if somewhat inconstant image or images of Irish women in advertisements? Secondly, how similar is the depiction of women in advertisements to the historical paradigm of women's role within society? Finally, to what extent can we trace similarities with advertisements in other contexts during this period, for example, in the United States or Britain?

Susan Campbell
Research PhD, Trinity College Dublin
Department of History of Art and Architecture

'Unpicking the Weave: Order and Disorder in Textiles and Art'

The creation of textiles is among the original ordering activities human beings engaged in to secure their basic physiological needs. As an innovation, it appears to predate ceramics and metalwork, and derives from methods such as weaving, also used in the construction of shelter. Drawn from preliminary research into the order-disorder interplay in the oeuvre of contemporary artist/textiles collector Richard Tuttle, this paper aims to explore the essentially ordered character of the spinning and weaving processes that underpin textile production. Apart from the conservatism that persisted through the ages in the handing down of their requisite techniques, they have traditionally required

the taming of natural elements closely worked into predictable and durable 'planes of threads'. Having made a case for the centrality of order in the production of textiles, the paper will outline certain differences and commonalities between textiles and art – noting, indeed, that canvas has long been used as the standard support by artists. It will illuminate the order inscribed within spinning with reference to 'the linear' and 'the painterly' (a duality derived from Heinrich Wölfflin), and the warp/weft interaction of weaving in terms of horizontal and vertical dynamics, the frame and the modernist grid. Finally, it will culminate with a focus on the use of textiles within art-making in the period from 1960, at which time they underwent formal and material changes similar to those of painting and sculpture, reflecting a more disordered aesthetic.

Alex Ward

Curator of Dress and Textiles, Art and Industrial Division, National Museum of Ireland

Ib Jorgensen: A Fashion Retrospective

Ib Jorgensen: A Fashion Retrospective, is a new exhibition which has just opened at The National Museum of Ireland: Decorative Arts and History showcasing the career of an important figure in the Irish fashion industry during the second half of the 20th century. For nearly forty years, Danish born Ib Jorgensen was Ireland's leading fashion designer, responsible for dressing some of the most stylish and wealthy women in the country. A graduate of Dublin's Grafton Academy of Dress Design, Jorgensen established his couture salon in 1957, at a time when Irish fashion was beginning to make its name on the world stage. By the late 1970s he was at the peak of his career with shops in Dublin and London and workrooms in both cities. Ib designed air hostess uniforms for Aer Lingus on two separate occasions, and in 1980 was invited to create the first uniform for the newly established Irish Army's Women's Service Corps. Thirty nine pieces of Ib Jorgensen couture spanning thirty five years are on display in the exhibition, garments which highlight Ib's finely honed tailoring skills and his love of luxurious fabrics. This short paper will look at Ib Jorgensen's career, putting it into context, from his training at the Grafton Academy in the 1950s to the pressures which led to his retirement. It will outline how the exhibition was planned and put together and will also briefly discuss the issues around the display of dress in a museum context.