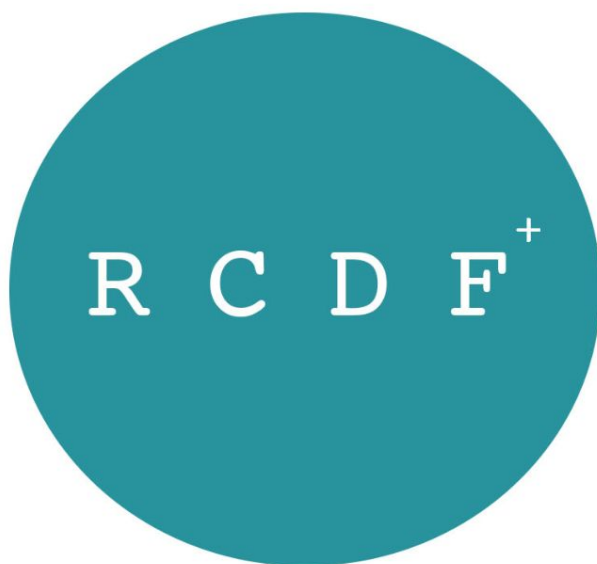


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Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that we send you the Summer 2019 newsletter of the Research Collective for Decolonizing Fashion, to inform you of our activities in the last three months as well of those ahead. We had two very inspiring and thought provoking panels at the **45th Annual Meeting and Symposium of the Costume Society of America** on 15-20 April 2019 in Seattle, Washington.

We are also excited to announce the RCDF three month **residency at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht** in August-November 2019 in preparation of our one-day event '**Conversations to Redress a Fashion Disaster: A**

Furthermore, we are preparing our co-organised symposium on '**Decolonizing Fashion Objects in the Ethnographic Museum**' with the Museum for World Cultures in Leiden on 14-15 November 2019.

The editorial team has welcomed two new members: **Allison Martino**, who is a Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in African Studies at Bowdoin College in Maine and **Ellye Van Grieken**, who is an MA student History of Design at the Royal College of Art in London.

We have also had the pleasure of welcoming a number of new members and have been working on a number of new (online and hardcopy) publications.

The highlighted blogpost is by our steering committee member **Sandra Niessen** on a new initiative, the **Union of Concerned Researchers in Fashion** that wishes to play a role in steering the Western fashion system towards sustainability. The RCDF applauds this important initiative, but also sees it as a critical juncture at which to raise awareness that sustainable fashion can only be decolonized fashion. This issue will also be the focus of the Residency at the Van Eyck Academy in the fall.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter,

[The RCDF team](#)



[Decolonizing Fashion at the Costume Society of America 2019 Annual Symposium](#)

By Arti Sandhu

15-20 April 2019, the RCDF organised two research presentation panels for the Costume Society of America's 2019 annual symposium. The annual symposium's theme was 'Diffusion and Diversity in Dress,' and while past years have included content that focuses on fashion and dress research beyond the West, this was a first for CSA—to have an entire conference devoted to the exploration of diversity and how it could be better implemented and explored in the fields of academia, curatorial practice, and dress research. So even though the two RCDF panels were not alone in exploring non-Western fashion and dress, the umbrella of “decolonizing fashion” allowed the panelists to focus their arguments and explore common themes or strategies through which the canon of fashion studies could be challenged and re-envisioned.

The nine presentations in two back-to-back sessions represented diverse areas of fashion research, ranging from South Asian historic and contemporary fashion, African textiles and clothing innovation, stereotyping of non-Western dress systems through Western curatorial conventions, the history of critique of modern fashion along the lines of decolonization, to explorations into how fashion studies pedagogy itself can be decolonized. One of the key themes that emerged across the two panels was that of going beyond merely exposing Eurocentric biases to identifying the sources for these biases that have historically informed dress research and articulation of the fashion phenomenon. [Read more](#)

RESEARCH CENTER FOR MATERIAL CULTURE

Decolonizing Fashion Objects in the Ethnographic Museum

A symposium co-organised with the Research Center for Material Culture
The National Museum of World Cultures, The Netherlands
Leiden, 14-15 November 2019

Moving objects from one cultural frame of reference to another – for example from ethnography to fashion – challenges not only curators, museums and

museum goes, but invites a close interrogation of both the structural limits and perceived affordances of the various disciplines at stake (anthropology, ethnography, history, fashion studies and practice, etc.). Various projects are already responding to this challenge, inviting artists, curators and community members to re-mediate objects from ethnographic museum collections, to reframe, re-imagine and restage these objects. We propose to rethink confluences of history, museum practices and aesthetic concepts, engendering a decolonized concept of fashion by exploring principles and qualities of fashion in objects that have previously been denied a fashion status. This two-day workshop will work through these aims to produce a new and inclusive statement on fashion curation, set within the context of the National Museum of World Cultures in the Netherlands and the unique potential of this ethnographic collection. **More soon.**



Three-month residency at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht

Three members of the Research Collective for Decolonising Fashion (RCDF) Steering Committee have been accepted for a three-month residency at the Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. The goal of the residency is to prepare for a one-day event entitled 'Conversations to Redress a Fashion Disaster: A Decolonial Critique on Fashion's Climate Emergency Response' as part of the Climate Marathon organised by the Academy on 4-8 November 2019.

Fashion is undergoing a revolution precipitated by its failure to curb continual growth and address its destructive effects. The physicality of fashion is under the looking glass, and with it all facets of fashion are coming into focus: how has the system of fashion production become such a global threat? What kinds of changes are needed to fashion production, consumption, use and disposal to confine garb to global carrying capacity? How will this involve fashion

designers? Within the discourse on fashion's transformation, the RCDE perceives the critical and disappointing absence of decolonial discourse

During the Van Eyck marathon on Climate Emergency, the Collective will underscore the urgency of including decoloniality in the emerging discourse on fashion transformation. The untrammelled growth of fashion has led not only to the degradation of the physical environment, it has replicated itself throughout the world, impacting if not decimating other clothing systems in its sphere of influence. The proposed Fashion Conversations at the Van Eyck in Maastricht will address both problems: Big Fashion's disregard for non-Western clothing systems, and the decolonial redress needed to adjust Big Fashion to a sustainable future.

Big Fashion, dominated by Western industrial capitalism, is imperialist and racist. This is a Western problem with a global reach (fashion globalization). Fashion scholarship and practice has continued during the past two decades with the implicit and often destructive colonial biases persisting despite academics and other practitioners having argued strongly for more inclusive and less destructive practices. As the need to transform fashion into a fair system bounded by a reasonable ecological footprint becomes evident, the need to recognize Big Fashion's underpinning racist principles becomes increasingly urgent. Euro-modernity is based on exploitation -- not just of the natural resources, but also of the so-called Other. Unless and until Big Fashion's ongoing colonial biases are radically redressed, its transformation into an inclusive, ethical, sustainable, and fair system will prove unattainable.

Through a series of conversations, the day dedicated to redressing Fashion at the Van Eyck will review the scope of Fashion's problem and the emerging discourse of fashion transformation. The conversations will open up space and underscore the imperative for new ways of thinking about - and designing for -- fashion and sustainability and more inclusive engagement.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY



[New blogpost: Giving a Damn and Hyperopia: Decolonizing for Sustainability.](#)

By Sandra Niessen

Independent scholar, Arnhem

The more effectively a fashion producer functions the more destructive it is. That is the nature of the beast. (Kate Fletcher)

On the 5th of June, 2019, I attended a community event at ArtEZ (a tertiary art and design education institution in Arnhem, The Netherlands). The Union of Concerned Researchers in Fashion was the first item on the agenda. Kate Fletcher, Research Professor at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion at University of the Arts London and an original founder of the Union, was there to explain the Union. She wanted to elicit the interests and concerns specific to Arnhem/The Netherlands. Laudably, the Union organises such assemblies to keep in close touch with its members.

Kate Fletcher said something during her introduction that remained on my mind throughout the afternoon: "It appears that it is easier for people to conceptualize the end of the world (as we know it) than a world that is not driven by capitalism." Think about that! Very scary given that it behooves us to think of, and realize, alternatives to capitalism if we would like to postpone the demise of civilization.

The group split up into smaller discussion units to hash out a variety of fashion sustainability concerns and then report back. We did not discuss that scary paradox but the entire session was devoted to fashion re-visioning. Kate Fletcher's words were in the back of my mind throughout. [Read more.](#)



New Members RCDF Editorial Team

Allison Martino has joined the editorial team in March 2019 as Blog Editor. She is an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Africana Studies at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. She earned her Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of Michigan and her M.A. in the History of Art from Indiana University. Allison's research, teaching, and curatorial projects focus on art and visual culture of Africa and the African diaspora, and she is especially interested in fashion and textiles in Ghana. Her current book project traces the cultural evolution of adinkra cloth from its use in the early nineteenth century as royal dress among Akans of Ghana to its expanding roles today as a global icon of Africa. Her research has been supported by fellowships from Fulbright-Hays and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Ellye Van Grieken also joined the team in March 2019 as Content Designer. She is a second year History of Design (MA) Student at the Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art in London. She completed her undergraduate degree in Art History at the University of Sussex. Her MA research focuses on how identity is represented and constructed through dress and performance. Her current research examines the global phenomenon of trousers for women at the beginning of the 20th century. She is also interested in translating her research into an interactive medium that can render it more accessible to a wider audience. Her undergraduate research focused on the photographs of Seydou Keita and the issue of agency.



New online publication

[Decolonizing Fashion: Defying the 'White Man's Gaze'](#)

By Angela Jansen

@Vestoj Opinion

Evaluating the work of designers outside the established fashion capitals according to (references made to) their cultural identity not only continues to fulfil 'the centre's' need to distil a diffuse and disordered peripheral Other into more rational categories based on collective identities, but also to differentiate and therefore discriminate and exclude, while simultaneously protecting its own boundaries. By setting this fashion apart as ethnic it not only diminishes it and discards it as 'not real' fashion, but also confirms French, Italian, American or British fashion as the norm. [Read more](#)

New Literature

[Contemporary Indonesian Fashion: Through the Looking Glass](#), by Alessandra Lopez y Royo (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

[The Anthropology of Dress and Fashion: A Reader](#), by Brent Luvaas and Joanne B. Eicher (Eds.)(London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

New Exhibitions

[Power of Pattern: Central Asian Ikats from the David and Elizabeth Reisbord](#)

[Collection](#), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Feb 3 till Aug 11 2019.

[Chintz: Global Textile](#), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, May 22 till July 21 2019.

[Virgil Abloh: "Figures of Speech,"](#) Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, June 10 till September 22 2019.

New CFP

[International Convention of Asia Scholars](#) (ICAS) Roundtable Endangered Textile Design: Will We Make Room For It To Survive? Leiden, 18 July 2019

[Fashion Colloquia 2020: Heritage... Stories of Change... Our Shared Future](#), Jaipur, 25-29 January 2020



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