



## Dear RCDF community,

Executive Board is meeting bi-weekly. The focus has been mainly on tuning applications, which is a craft in itself and we are reaching out to the community for people with experience who would be available to help us in our efforts.

Having applied to several funds and having received feedback on our applications, we are starting to realise how funding institutions are struggling with eurocentric and colonial biases regarding fashion as much as educational and museum institutions. The way we are defining fashion for example, aimed at disrupting western-centric and universal claims of contemporary fashion, are met with resistance and reluctance. Although inclusion and diversity are buzzwords in most of the calls, many funds continue to focus on supporting ‘(national) excellence’ and ‘(radical) innovation.’ But how can we strive for inclusion and diversity, if we are limited to excluding notions of excellence and nationalistic thinking? How can we convince that a focus on radical innovation rather distracts from a radical reduction of cultural diversity? Of roads into the future?

We are starting to wonder if the format of a foundation and applying for funding is the right road into the future for us? We are starting to wonder if we should invest our efforts in changing the system from within or from the borderlands, the in-between and the cracks that we have been operating from since 2012. The main reason to transition into a registered foundation was to become financially sustainable and fair to all the people investing their time and expertise. But what is the best way for the Collective to achieve that? Would it suit us better to be fully self-reliant and self-sufficient through our community? Through a system of voluntary donations based on members’ financial abilities? Here too, we are reaching out to members who have experience and expertise to advise and guide us.

Furthermore, we have news to share on our regular activities, like our monthly Conversations and the first Global Fashioning Assembly in October, as well as from our coalitional partners and exciting publications, sources, exhibitions, podcasts and courses. We are also very excited to announce the creation of the [RCDF Youtube channel](#), where you can find all the recordings of the Annual General Meeting 2021 and the Conversations in 2021 and 2022. Make sure to subscribe!

We hope you enjoy this newsletter.

**The RCDF team**

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## RCDF - NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

### CONVERSATIONS ON DECOLONIALITY & FASHION

We had another stimulating Conversations early April on Indigenous Gender Knowledges, for which we had reached out to a number of incredible individuals who have been speaking out about indigenous gender knowledges, experiences and positionalities, such as hip-hop poet and activist Bobby Sanchez, gender non-conforming author Alok Vaid-Menon and queer Kutti Collective jeweller, Githan Coopoo. As we did not manage to find a guest, we were drawn into focus on a much wider failure.

Individuals such as Bobby, Alok, Githan and many others, are continually asked to speak and share, in fact ‘tasked with teaching’ against the western/colonial/modern/hetero-normative gender binary that dominates the world. In the same way, People of Colour working in activist organisations such as Black Lives Matter (as well as those simply working with friends and in classrooms or clubs) are equally tasked with the need to educate, to inform, to explain, to unpack different positionalities, etc. They are confronted by the need (and responsibility) to be the teacher, to help undo the damage of racism, gender exclusions, coloniality, bias, etc., to redress.

Not finding a guest, also meant that we had to grapple with what it was we were aiming to facilitate within the Conversations. To ask ourselves what it means to host voices, narratives, people who have been marginalised, disavowed, even efforts made at their erasure? How do we come into relation with violence, discrimination and absence that we are Implicated in upholding? What practices/thoughts do we need to develop to unlearn the socialisations/coloniality/ privileges, etc. that created these erasures and sustain the ongoing violences and disavowals?

Not finding a ‘spokesperson,’ we opted for a different format by hosting and listening to a curation of video-recorded voices that were speaking to us and, in a way, to each other. By hosting voices and world-making dialogues, and through listening to those who are usually excluded marginalised and othered

we collectively (un)learned. We challenged ourselves to consider what it means to share in carrying the weight of difference, to take responsibility for historical erasures and for the violence and absences caused by coloniality/modernity. We selected ‘Indigenous gender knowledge’ messages as a means to disrupt the violent dichotomous gender normativity of modernity.

## GLOBAL FASHIONING ASSEMBLY 2022

The hosting communities for the first Global Fashioning Assembly (GFA22) are now set and consist of the [New Zealand Fashion Museum](#), a virtual fashion museum established in 2010, decolonising the fashion landscape in Aotearoa; [Aika Jaxybai](#), who is a fashion creative, film maker and artist based in Kazakhstan as well as the founder of the fashion brand Aika Alemi; [Sonya Battla](#), an established fashion practitioner based in Karachi (Pakistan) whose work is informed by her passion for local crafts and decoloniality practices in South Asia; the [INDIA Collective](#) that is exploring Indian traditional textile crafts and fashion underlying a wave of Fashion in India that relies upon its indigenous handloom and handicraft skills; [Own Your Culture](#), a Kenyan online platform to promote, preserve and educate Kenyans and beyond on traditional jewellery and its relevance in today’s fashion; [Ina-Maria Shikongo](#), who is a Namibian fashion creative, artist, mother and environmental activist; the [Centre for Research of Fashion and Clothing](#) which is a non-profit organization based in Zagreb (Croatia) focusing on contextualizing local fashion practices and phenomena in relation to the global fashion system and dominant fashion discourse; the [Fashion Liberation Collective North Africa](#) that aims to represent North Africa by applying a decolonial approach to local fashion systems and histories and to bring to light ‘true’ North African representations in art and design; the [Diplomado en Estudios Críticos de Moda](#) in Bogota (Colombia) that is focussing on Latin American perspectives of Euro-American debates and global paradigms regarding fashion, aimed at providing tools for critical thinking processes and practices regarding fashion and style; the [North Carolina Museum of Art](#), which will be collaborating with the Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) on a hybrid digital and in-person event to mute the (dominant) mic to make room for other voices to be amplified and heard; and [Enif Hernandez Gámez](#), who is a Mexican anthropologist whose research focusses on artisan textiles of pre-Hispanic origin in design and contemporary art. The [Research Collective for Decoloniality & Fashion](#) is the initiator and overall coordinator of the Assembly.

The hosting communities have been meeting monthly to collectively and collaboratively structure the programme, coordinate funding applications and establish communication strategies, including the decision on a visual identity, a website and social media accounts.

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## NEWS FROM THE COALITIONS

### OCEANIA

**AOTEAROA (NEW ZEALAND)** - In April 2022, the New Zealand Fashion Museum hosted the [To Fashion](#) exhibition in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). The exhibition shifts the framing of the fashion word from a noun to a verb, fashion as action. For this project the museum steps back and instead asks twelve diverse individuals to fashion their own personal appearance in a way that expresses their identity, their culture, and their truth. Championing the approach of participant as curator, their process has been recorded and filmed by Robert George and The Raro Dog team and their outcomes have been beautifully documented in a series of full size portraits by award-winning Samoan/New Zealand photographer Edith Amituanai. [To fashion](#) is intended to make visible what we have learned at the museum so far; that we construct, create, and express our identity through what we choose to wear. As a museum without a building and without a physical collection the New Zealand Fashion Museum's approach has always been unconventional and to mark our twelfth anniversary we invited twelve distinctive individuals to present themselves through what they wear. They are of varying ages, sizes, ethnicities, and genders to reflect the true character of our people and our times in order to open out the fashion conversation, to engage new audiences and to widening the parameters of fashion so that it is inclusive of the increasingly diverse demographic that is contemporary Aotearoa (New Zealand). This project seeks to stimulate and challenge the existing framing of what is meant by the word fashion and to take our thinking beyond what is shown on the runways of the world and in the High Street shop windows and to demonstrate a more inclusive model that recognises the wearer's agency in fashioning themselves through what they wear. The photographic outcomes were presented as a visual arts exhibition of life size images which were on display 24/7 in the outdoor gallery at Britomart

as part of the Auckland Arts Festival. Each had a QR code that linked directly to an audio file where the person in the image introduced themselves to their audience.

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## PUBLICATIONS - COURSES - PODCASTS - EXHIBITIONS - PROJECTS

### (ONLINE) PUBLICATIONS

- Mariella Lorusso (2021). *La decolonizzazione della moda. Lingua, appropriazione e sostenibilità nelle culture native nordamericane*. Bruno Mondadori - Pearson Italia.

### (ONLINE) RESOURCES

- **Field Essays** (2008—ongoing) is a series of books approached as a listening pause between thinkers/practitioners from all walks of life and academia; a pocket size conversation on radical practices in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Field Essays manifests itself through book-related encounters (exhibitions, workshops, podcasts, round tables, field trips). Moving back forth between reflection and fieldwork, Field Essays is an attempt at weaving an embodied and situated vocabulary of art-based making. Field Essays is led by Atelier Sophie Krier and channelled through public gallery and publisher Onomatopee Projects.

### (ONLINE) COURSES

- Following the success of their online course in 2020 and 2021 (and a short break), the **African Fashion Research Institute** once again invites interested and curious researchers, designers and creatives to share in a 7-week online critical inquiry of unlearning that aims to shift the study of fashion from the African continent. This important course will run from 18th May to 29th June 2022. Please find further details [here](#).
- **Re-imagining Fashion History** is a new course on the MA Fashion Critical Studies programme at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, run by Elizabeth Kutesko in collaboration with Tanveer Ahmed

and Isabella Coraça. It provides students with tools, methods and approaches to re-imagine fashion's histories and refuse the regimes of imperial violence that dress and bodily practices have intersected with to date. We interrogate established understandings of history as a totalising, monolithic, objective and chronological narrative of 'progress', and re-situate fashion through polyphonic perspectives that imagine alternative futures and potential histories beyond the 'West'. Part of this process involves disengaging fashion from established ways of knowing, challenging Eurocentric dominance, and illuminating the transnational networks of exchange, influence and power that underpin an evolving fashion system.

- The [Cultural Sustainability Academy](#) is a 6-week online live interactive executive program that works through 5 knowledge pillars, with a unique cross-disciplinary approach that brings in-depth perspectives on Cultural Sustainability. "Cultural Sustainability enables environmental and social sustainability through traditional and Indigenous methods of working in harmony with nature." The Academy will be running from 6 May 2022 (deadline for registration is 2nd of May).
- [CIPRI Workshops](#) are one off 90-minute digestible introductions to complex concepts that cover a diverse range of topics such as law, design, craft and innovation to support you to protect traditional cultural expressions, biocultural diversity and cultural sustainability. They expand your knowledge with practical, adaptable and digestible information that will inspire you to implement the change you want to see in the world. The workshops are every third Wednesday of the month for 2022.

## PODCASTS

- [In Search of the Pluriverse](#) (38 episodes), questions if we can, as humans and other living beings, learn to live together, in difference? Can we create a future that actually has a future? Join Sophie Krier and Erik Wong in their search for alternative perspectives, for radical imaginations, for a world in which many worlds can thrive. A search for something that is already present: the pluriverse is all around us. Wong and Krier have adopted a perspective put forward by Arturo Escobar in his book *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Duke University Press, 2018). What are the consequences of these pluriversal notions in daily life? For their search Wong and Krier

visit five locations at the fringes of Europe: Istanbul, Casablanca and Berlin (often seen as gateways to and from Central Asia, North Africa and old Europe) and two rural areas: the Isle of Mull and Asturias (as places for self-sufficient living). For every edition four makers join Erik and Sophie, two locally based, and two based in the Netherlands. Every conversation and encounter builds on the previous one in an effort to create a vibrant network that connects different places, different types of knowing and ways of living. Listen in, the door is open.

## EXHIBITIONS

- **In Search of the Pluriverse** Join this journey through the Pluriverse, a place where multiple worlds coexist and thrive. How realistic is the idea of such a world, where people and other beings live together in harmony with each other and the environment? Can there ever really be such an equal world, in which we together shape a future that truly does have a future? In fact, people around the globe are already working on this multiverse. Makers and thinkers are creating site-specific and communal projects that confirm this world view, based on their own knowledge and experiences. Curators Sophie Krier and Erik Wong take us on a journey to meet these designers of worlds. Wong and Krier mainly search on the fringes and in the margins, where one thing ends and another begins – because, as they show us, it is there that change first becomes visible. Het Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam, 23 April – 7 August 2022.

## (RESEARCH) PROJECTS

- **Ad(dressing) Indigeneity: Identity, Healing, and Social Change Through Clothing, Fashion, and Style** is a four-year research project that aims to unpack the lived dress-experiences of Australian First Nations people. It privileges, reframes, and recontextualises collective narratives of Indigenous peoples' cultural resurgence, identity, social change, resistance, healing, and wellbeing through clothing, dress and fashion. The research is conducted by Indigenous Australian researcher Treena Clark, who is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Technology Sydney, and focusses on the metropolitan area and the experiences of First Nations peoples based in capital cities. The research is gathered

through an Indigenous qualitative approach that crosses verbal and visual texts, interviews, and historical framings. Research outputs will include a substantial monograph, journal articles, social media account, website, workshops, and exhibitions to disseminate much needed scholarship on First Nations dress practices for researchers, designers, industries, and communities.

## EVENTS

- [Fashion Act Now](#) is organising a discussion, [Imagining Alternative Futures: Can Commoning Help Fashion?](#) on Tuesday, April 26th at 6:00pm BST/1:00pm EST. The discussion will range from radical imagination to localisation, degrowth, and the pluriverse, featuring author and activist, [David Bollier](#); architect [Ana María Durán Calisto](#); and [Dave](#) founder of [One Army](#) the community behind [Fixing Fashion](#). Moderated by [Bel Jacobs](#), it will be an exciting night full of ideas, hope, and synergy between industries.
- The [Union of Concerned Researchers in Fashion](#) (UCRF) Reading Group is a diverse, inclusive and multidisciplinary community that meets once a month to have multi-faceted conversations. Their 47 active members share knowledge materials, exchange ideas, read scientific and managerial contributions and then come together to discuss, reflect and help foster our collective consciousness and UCRF's objective of creating an activist knowledge ecology. They are having a number of exciting initiatives and engagement events throughout 2022. UCRF You can join the reading group [here](#).
- Linda Welters, Abby Lillethun, and Lauren Whitley are presenting the [Scholar's Roundtable at the Costume Society of America's 48th Annual Meeting and Symposium](#) to be held in person in Minneapolis, Minnesota from May 24th to 29th, 2022 on 'Innovation in the Fashion History Curriculum.' Several movements in academia and professional organizations — such as CSA's diversity/equity/inclusion/accessibility committee (DEIA), and theoretical developments in decolonization and critique of Eurocentrism — have picked up steam in recent years. The time is right to innovate effective approaches to teaching fashion history that deliver DEIA values and respond to inclusive theoretical developments. This Roundtable will explore a range of approaches to present content respectful of historical context and responsive to DEIA values in undergraduate fashion history courses. We aspire to engender

discussion with audience members on strategies for forward movement with this critical initiative.

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## MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

If you wish to join the Collective, you can fill out the [membership form](#).

The Collective is a not-for-profit organisation registered in the Netherlands. You can support our initiatives with singular, monthly or yearly donations by [Paypal](#) or bank transfer (IBAN: NL39INGB0674877012/ BIC: INGBNL2A).

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE RCDF COMMUNITY

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