

Dress & Identity i. Early Modern World (Chicago 3-5 Apr 08)

Gabriel Guarino

Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting

Chicago, April 3-5, 2008

The Communication of Appearances:
Dress and Identity in the Early Modern World

Relying on a broad definition of fashion, this CFP aims to attract several panels focusing on one or more of the following issues: the material realities in which fashion is engendered; the diffusion of particular sartorial styles; and the complex ways in which clothes reveal the wearer's gender, social status, and hers or his intellectual, political, religious and cultural values.

The direct symbolic relation of clothes with identity, clarifies well the polyvalent language of attire, thus inviting an interdisciplinary approach, which will bring together specialists in communication studies, art history/visual studies, literature, anthropology, political sociology, and more.

Possible suggested topics:

1. Various expositions of how early modern geographical discoveries, technological innovations, and the related expansion of urban centers, markets, and products affected the daily lives and appearances of contemporaries.
2. National styles and their influence throughout Europe and the New World, with particular reference to Italian fashion during the Renaissance, Spanish fashion during the Catholic Reformation, and French fashion from the times of Louis XIV onwards. Of course, subtle analysis of sartorial evolution should transcend all-encompassing discourses of zeitgeist, cutting across social and regional divides. Changes in design, reflecting contemporary ideas of proper appearance and taste, should be confronted with specific cases of personal and group agency across social, regional, and gender divides.
3. The ways in which women and men used apparel and cosmetics for body improvement or concealment.
4. Sumptuary Laws: including the various strategies applied by governments and city councils to restrain expenditures on attire, as well as the

physical marking of socially undesirable groups such as Jews and prostitutes.

5. Clothes as disguises: for example, Carnavalesque costumes showing the ritualized opportunities used to symbolically subvert and transgress sartorial conventions.

6. The functions of supposedly unchangeable forms of clothing (anti-fashions) used in public ceremonies by monarchs/princes/rulers, civic officers, and clerics.

No geographic limitations apply, and papers dealing with any related topic are welcome.

Proposals should include the following items:

1. Preliminary abstract, 150-300 words.
2. CV with e-mail address, phone and fax numbers.

Please send them by April 30, 2007 via e-mail attachments to: Gabriel

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Reference:

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