

Perspective, no. 2023-2: Fashion(s)

INHA, Paris

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The next issue of the biannual journal *Perspective* will focus on fashion, fashions and their mechanisms. Exploring fashion as a plural phenomenon that manifests itself in objects and images, influences artistic practices and maintains close ties with their history means understanding the formation of a body of fashion literature within the history of art. It also means attempting to grasp what art history has to gain from addressing this omnipresent yet unresolved subject that questions the discipline's borders and hierarchies. Such an undertaking necessarily involves a comprehensive look at the history of dress as form and the history of giving form and image to the self from Antiquity to the present day.

The scholarly interest in these phenomena essentially developed from the mid-19th century. Today, the consideration of clothing as art, and the effects of clothing on art, through a broader approach over space and time, offers a productive vantage point for rethinking the parallel developments of the history of art and the history of fashion, as an all-encompassing anthropological manifestation, from the arts of clothing to the question of adornment and styles.

In fact, the first histories of dress that appeared during the 19th-century came from archaeologists and historians whose studies of monuments and iconographic sources were above all intended to be "useful to the painter". From then on, the new erudition invited all pasts and all geographies to enter the creation of their time. The same scholars, such as the historian and archaeologist Jules Quicherat, helped to establish the birth of fashion in the Western world as the cyclical – and gendered – manifestation of an innovation embodied in appearances from the 14th century on, with French culture as its privileged terrain. In order to look at these phenomena today, in a context that goes beyond questions of clothing, it is necessary to confront the geographical areas and their respective chronologies and arrive at an expanded inventory of the notion of fashion across the globe and throughout history.

Two complementary definitions of fashion emerge and these underlie the two approaches that this issue of *Perspective* seeks to develop: the first aims to determine formal changes in dress and variations in the laws of appearances, while the second conceives of a single, cyclical renewal of taste that inspires customs and thus goes far beyond items of clothing and their accessories. On the one hand, we have the history of clothing and its constituent elements gradually obeying the principle of fashion (a phenomenon that has accelerated with the technical and economic mutations of Western modernity and its industrial capitalism, but whose rationales could be perceived well in advance). On the other hand, we have the epistemological question of the cyclical appearances and disappearances of ways of thinking, like variations in clothing styles (in short, the tension between sense perception and concept).

In spite of the recurrence, if not the omnipresence of the notion of fashion at the heart of archaeol-

ogy, art and the fine arts, its historiography remains relatively unfamiliar. In France, with the exception of a few recent studies, there is no major overview connecting the key stages of the development of this field by those who have created, analysed and promoted it.

Given that the fields of clothing, dress and fashion history have been defined for more than a century, in France with contributions from anthropology and sociology (e.g., fashion as a driving force of distinction, which is particularly useful for thinking about the social impact of art) and, in the English-speaking world, with the contribution of cultural studies, a global historiographical approach is now necessary. This is the twofold interest of the forthcoming issue of *Perspective*, and more generally, of research in the history of fashion today: a return to the foundations of a relatively recent field of investigation combined with methodological innovations taking place in art history and related disciplines and the new research perspectives they offer.

The fact that the logics of artistic, academic and social legitimisation have long restricted scholarly research to the unique reality of haute couture or exceptional forms of craft production for luxury consumption has essentially resulted in an elitist, relentlessly European-centred vision of fashion phenomena. Questioning the concept of the author and bringing out the complex realities of the work environments proper to fashion, or questioning that of artistic creation in order to take a less hierarchical view of the practices of clothing production and creation can give rise to a multitude of new historical narratives, with their own sources and methodologies that can now be retraced in a critical, reflexive perspective. This process imperatively involves decentering the gaze, seeing beyond the structuring dichotomies (centres and peripheries, major and minor, authorial and anonymous, in- and out-of-frame, global and local, etc.). As historian Anne Hollander reminds us, dress is above all “a form of visual art, a creation of images with the visible self as its medium” (*Seeing Through Clothes*, New York, Viking Press, 1978, p. 311). Fashion thus belongs to the visual culture of all eras, simultaneously reflecting and influencing them and offering everyone – archaeologists, art historians, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers – rich possibilities for renewing their methods and the way they engage with supposedly familiar objects of study.

[translation: Miriam Rosen]

Perspective : actualité en histoire de l’art

Published by the Institut national d’histoire de l’art (INHA) since 2006, *Perspective* is a biannual journal which aims to bring out the diversity of current research in art history through a constantly evolving approach that is explicitly aware of itself and its own historicity and articulations. It bears witness to the historiographical debates within the field, while remaining in continuous relation with the images and works of art themselves, updating their interpretations, and thus fostering global, intra- and interdisciplinary reflection. The journal publishes scholarly texts which offer innovative perspectives on a given theme. These may be situated within a wide range, yet without ever losing sight of their larger objective: going beyond any given case study in order to interrogate the discipline, its methods, history and limitations, while relating these questions to topical issues from art history and neighboring disciplines that speak to each of us as citizens.

Perspective invites contributors to update their historiographical material and the theoretical questionings from which they draw their work, to think from and around the starting point of a precise question, an assessment that will be considered an epistemological tool rather than a goal in itself. Each article thus calls for a new approach creating links with the great societal and intellectual debates of our time.

Perspective is conceived as a disciplinary crossroads aiming to encourage dialogue between art history and other fields of research, the humanities in particular, and put into action the “law of the good neighbor” developed by Aby Warburg.

All geographical areas, periods, and media are welcome.

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To the board composition: <https://journals.openedition.org/perspective/1417>.

Please send your submissions (an abstract of 2,000 to 3,000 characters / 350 to 500 words, a provisional title, a short bibliography on the subject, and a biography of a few lines) to the editorial office (revue-perspective@inha.fr) before May 16th, 2022.

Proposals will be examined by the editorial board regardless of language (articles accepted for publication will be translated by Perspective). The authors of the pre-selected proposals will be informed of the board’s decision by July 2022.

The complete articles (25,000 or 45,000 characters/ 4,500 or 7,500 words depending on the project) must be submitted by December 15, 2022. These will be definitively accepted after the journal’s anonymous peer-review process.

Reference:

CFP: Perspective, no. 2023-2: Fashion(s). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 17, 2022 (accessed Jul 10, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/36432>>.