

Fabrics in Motion (Cologne, 31 May–2 Jun 22)

University of Cologne, Institute for Media Culture and Theatre / Department of Art History, May 31–Jun 2, 2022

Pia Bornus

Fabrics in Motion. Mediality and Materiality of Textiles in Early 20th Century Film and Media Culture

Interdisciplinary Conference at the Institute for Media Culture and Theatre and the Department of Art History of the University of Cologne

Organized by Junior-Professor Dr. Kristina Köhler, Bianka-Isabell Scharmann (M.A.) & Pia Bornus (M.A.)

The waving seam of a skirt, floating veils, a jittering sail in the wind: Especially early films displayed moving fabrics as spectacles of their own right. A film screening could thus become a sort of object lesson in textile movement and materiality – for instance, when films made visible (by the use of slow motion) that silk chiffon moves differently from coarsely woven cotton; and the hairs of a fur collar, when moved by a breeze, seemed to emerge from the screen almost haptically.

The conference aims to discuss moving textiles in film and media culture of the early 20th century and to investigate their medial and aesthetic as well as their material, social and economic constellations. The premise of the conference is that within the media networks of the late 19th and early 20th century fabrics were experienced in new and unprecedented ways as «being in motion». These new modes of experiencing textiles concerned not only trends in then modern fashion (e.g. the tendency towards more dynamic cutting patterns or the increasing processing of light-flowing materials), but more importantly media and artistic representations ostentatiously exposing the movement of fabrics.

With putting the emphasis on «moving fabrics», we consciously and programmatically choose a perspective that runs transversally to categories like «costume», «clothing» or «fashion». On the one hand, this approach allows to address not only the symbolic and social regime of clothing, but also the sensual qualities of textiles and to look at the relations between dress and other «moving fabrics» within the mise-en-scène and the image composition. On the other hand, we would like to invite reflection on moving materials in films as part of a larger visual and movement culture in the early 20th century. How do cinema's moving fabrics relate to Art Nouveau's recurrent depictions of female figures surrounded by fluttering veils; to the undulant costumes of serpentine dancers like Loïe Fuller; to the dresses of early fashion photography that were puffed up by the wind; or to the naturalistic and impressionistic motifs of flagging sails or clotheslines?

The conference is supported by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.

Conference languages are German and English.

Program

TUESDAY, 31.05.2022, 20:00

Filmclub 813 e.V.

Mila Ganeva (Ohio, USA): Fashion on the Move: The Travel Outfits of the Stars in Silent Cinema

Followed by Film Program „Fabrics in Motion“

WEDNESDAY, 01.06.2022

Alter Senatssaal, Hauptgebäude Universität zu Köln

09:00 Registration

09:15 Address of Welcome by Kristina Köhler, Pia Bornus, and Bianka-Isabell Scharmann
Kristina Köhler (Köln): How it Moves. Experiencing Textiles in Early 20th Century Visual Culture

09:45 Kerstin Fooker (Hamburg): 'Queering' Gender and the Nation. Modern Girls as Mobile
Bodies in Japanese Silent Cinema

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Gundula Wolter (Berlin): Mode im Wind. Über zufällige, imaginierte und künstlich erzeugte
Kleidermetamorphosen in Bildern der Mode

11:45 Susanne Wittekind (Köln): Wie flatternde Hemden im Wind. Gustave Caillebottes Blick auf
die Republik

12:30 Lunch Break

14:00 Jelena Rakin (Zürich): Color Spectres. Phantom Fabrics in the Painted Films of the Silent
Era

14:45 Priska Morrissey (Rennes): The Spectacle of Costumes in Motion in the Films of Georges
Méliès. An Aesthetics of Unveiling

15:30 Coffee Break

16:00 Bianka-Isabell Scharmann (Köln / Amsterdam):
Incorporating the Turntable. A Promise of Multi-Perspectivity

16:45 Evelyn Echle (Pforzheim): Moving Lines. Elsa Schiaparelli Between Fashion, Cinema and Art

THURSDAY, 02.06.2022

Alter Senatssaal, Hauptgebäude Universität zu Köln

10:00 Marie-Aude Baronian (Amsterdam): Unpacking the Wardrobe, Imagining Costumes

10:45 Eike Wittrock (Graz): The Theatrical History of the Feather. Chapter 4: Feathers and Dance (Photography)

11:30 Peter W. Marx (Köln): Theatrical Textiles. Performance, Props, and Imagination

12:15 Lunch Break

13:15 Stéphanie Chessel (Utrecht): Cinema and Fashion. Dressing up in the Costume of Art. (French

Fashion Presentations in Newsreels Between 1909 and 1914)

14:00 Workshop Talk

Elizabeth Castaldo Lundén (Stockholm): What Was Your Question? Deciphering How the Digital Humanities Can Aid to the Study of Fashion

15:00 End of the Conference

Registration: fabrics-in-motion@uni-koeln.de

Website: <https://mekuwi.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/fabrics-in-motion>

Reference:

CONF: Fabrics in Motion (Cologne, 31 May-2 Jun 22). In: ArtHist.net, May 4, 2022 (accessed Sep 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36606>>.