Benjamin, Barthes, and Fashion (Manchester, 28 Jun 13)

The University of Manchester, Jun 28, 2013
Deadline: Apr 1, 2013

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Benjamin, Barthes, and Fashion

Historian, philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin wrote on fashion's relationship to modernity, commodity fetishism, history, and memory. In his unfinished Arcades Project, the notes for a large section on Fashion reveal Benjamin's desire to read the medium of dress culturally, materially, historically, and through his own brand of Marxist analysis.

Roland Barthes developed a semiotic system for interpreting the discourse of fashion. Barthes'The Fashion System, the seminal work on fashion and semiotics, suggests fashion can be understood as a language composed of codes, signs, and significations.

Both Barthes and Benjamin wrote on fashion's relationship to temporality, memory and history, and both critically investigated the potential of dress as metaphor in literary and visual analysis. In the vein of such work as Caroline Evans' Fashion at the Edge (2003), which utilizes Benjamin's writing on fashion and time, and Malcolm Barnard's Fashion as Communication (1996), which engages with Barthesian semiology, this conference invites new critical readings of fashion that engage with Benjaminian and Barthesian theories.

For this conference we invite researchers in fashion studies, dress history, costume studies, art history, visual studies, cultural studies, history, literature or other relevant disciplines to submit papers that engage with themes of temporality/chronology, semiotics, history, memory, and the process of fashion. In addition to papers that apply Benjaminian and Barthesian theories, we also encourage papers that present critical readings of Benjamin's and/or Barthes' writing on fashion and clothing.

A non-exhaustive list of topics that might be addressed in relation to Barthes and Benjamin: the study of dress through literary sources; the study of history through the study of dress; fashion as an historical medium; the operational mechanism of fashion as a system; textile/photographic archives, memory and dress; fashion and temporality; fantasy and desire in historical dress; semiotics and fashion; commodity fetishism and clothing; historical and cultural readings of fashion cycles/processes; spaces of fashion/fashion productions; the operational modes and movements of fashion; the place of 'anti-fashion' in the fashion system; semiotic readings of staging/displaying/exhibiting fashion.

Caroline Evans is our confirmed keynote speaker.

Please email a 300 word abstract with Name, Title, and Affiliation to both organisers by 1st April 2013.

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http://benjaminbarthesandfashion.tumblr.com/

Reference:

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