1 Session at HNA 2027 (Boston, 14-17 Jul 27)

Historians of Netherlandish Art Conference 2027, Boston, Massachusetts, Jul 14–17, 2027
Deadline: Sep 15, 2026
hnanews.org/hna-conference/

Catherine Powell-warren, Ghent University

Material Identities: Textiles and Dress in the Early Modern Netherlands.

Organizers: Adam Sammut (University of York) and Catherine Powell-Warren (KU Leuven).

Netherlandish art is a veritable encyclopaedia of early modern textiles and dress, through which cosmopolitan identities were fashioned and projected. The fur-trimmed silk velvet tabard in the Arnolfini Portrait marks out the – possibly Italian – merchant as a man of wealth and taste. In Van Dyck's portrait of Genoese noblewoman Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo, she is dressed 'alla Spagnuola' in a richly brocaded black dress. The same artist portrayed Sir Robert Shirley wearing the robe of honour he received from Abbās I of Persia, enhancing his credibility as the Shah's self-appointed emissary. Meanwhile, costume books and genre paintings illustrate sartorial habits from across society. Whether silk, fur, leather or lace, the material repertoire of dress expanded in tandem with the Industrious Revolution and an increasingly global textile trade. As a result, dress stood at the intersection of class, wealth and gender like never before in history.

This panel seeks new perspectives on Netherlandish fashion and dress, as objects designed, made, worn, and represented. We ask, what role did they play in defining social identity, both with and against the normative grain? What can academic art historians and museum curators learn from the study of materiality of textiles and dress? Paper topics could include, but are not restricted to:

• Fashion and dress in portraiture and genre scenes
• The translation of textiles and dress into other media
• Theatrical costumes and their influence on visual art
• The labour of fashion and textile production
• The importance of accessories, e.g., jewellery, arms and armour
• The local versus the global
• Sumptuary laws and class
• Gender, sexuality and cross-dressing
• Race and religion

Topics that engage interdisciplinarity are particularly welcome. We encourage early-career scholars to apply. Please send abstracts (max. 250 words) and 2-page CVs by 15 September 2026 to Adam Sammut (adam.sammut@york.ac.uk) and Catherine Powell-Warren (catherine.powell-war-

ren@kuleuven.be).

Reference:

CFP: 1 Session at HNA 2027 (Boston, 14-17 Jul 27). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 20, 2026 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/53482>.