CURATORIAL PRACTICES IN MUSEUMS HOUSING

FASHION AND DRESS COLLECTIONS

IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

by

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(Under the Direction of José Blanco F.)

ABSTRACT

This study utilized in-depth interviews with curators of fashion and dress departments at large-scale museums in the United States and the United Kingdom to further explore the methods employed by curators of fashion and dress exhibitions. The objectives were to understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of the curator responsible for the exhibitions; to understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions through the viewpoint of fashion and dress curators; and to understand the recent history of curatorial work within fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums. The collected data illustrates general themes concerning goals of the curators, research conducted for exhibitions, decisions concerning garments and mannequins, time frames for exhibition planning and methods of developing ideas for fashion and dress exhibitions.

INDEX WORDS: Fashion, Dress, Exhibition, Curator, Museum, Mannequin, Catalogues

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within museums, the curator is one of the best-known figures in the public sphere. Curators help maintain the popularity and success of the museum among its constituents through producing exciting exhibitions available to the public. A curator is responsible for the display of pieces in both permanent and temporary exhibition spaces (Dean & Edson, 1994). This definition often expands to include the acquiring of objects for the collection as well as the conceptualization and implementation of exhibitions within a museum. In the twenty-first century world of dress and fashion history, well-known curators easily come to mind as popular and powerful within the realm of museums. From Harold Koda at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the "High Heeled Historian" Valerie Steele at the Fashion Institute of Technology (Louie, 1999), the esteem that numerous dress curators enjoy is due in part to the fascination the public has with the subjects of fashion and dress. According to Amy de la Haye, a curator of dress in London who has curated exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Brighton Museum, "few other forms of material culture can provide such tangible evidence of lives lived. Fashion and dress are some of the few media that humans can discernibly imprint, mark, or alter" (2010, p. 287). The tangible nature of fashion and dress helps explain the popularity these exhibitions have enjoyed within the past forty years.

In the 1960s, fashion began to display a lively and bright energy in various areas of life and took an interesting social and cultural turn (Eicher, 2010). As a result, the phenomenon of

"fashion" had a strong effect on the way fashion and dress was evaluated within academic settings. Fashion became the center of a new intellectual debate, which formed the foundation of contemporary fashion and dress studies. The new focus on fashion as an appropriate area for academic study gave way to the specialized fashion and dress museum. The surge in popularity surrounding the fashion and dress museum, as well as appropriated departments within previously established museums, took place predominately during the late twentieth century.

Beginning with Cecil Beaton's 1971-72 exhibition entitled Fashion: An Anthology, fashion and dress exhibitions have enjoyed a prominent spot within the realm of major exhibitions put together by large-scale museums. The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) in New York City holds an annual fashion and dress exhibition, while the Victoria & Albert Museum (the V&A) in London usually has a fashion and dress exhibition every two years. In the twenty-first century, fashion and dress exhibitions held by the Costume Institute at the Met are events that appeal not only to the worldwide fashion scene but also to the general public (Eicher, 2010). Smaller museums around the world, such as the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, the Chicago History Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, also house smaller fashion and dress collections and often show fashion and dress exhibitions on a more loosely specified schedule (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Chicago History Museum, Mint Museum of Art). Perhaps now more than ever, a museum's competitive edge lies in its curators' ability to use objects, such as items of dress or fashion, "to tell real-life stories that can move viewers emotionally and/or challenge or enhance existing experiences and perceptions" (de la Haye, 2010, p. 287). Through fashion and dress, this ability to tell stories relevant to contemporary life today as well as life in the past has come to the forefront of the goals of curators across the entire art spectrum.

The field of fashion is, by its very nature, marked by an artistic renewal based on an elimination of the past. As a result, the need to reinterpret dress and fashion and to then link it to a new societal creativity has become a major concern of fashion and dress curators. To keep up with this demand, fashion and dress museums are "establishing collections, conducting research, and promulgating the results thereof in exhibitions and publications of one sort or another" (Fukai, 2010, p. 294). Therefore, the museum of the twenty-first century will offer opportunities for people to consider more widely and more intensely the culture of the dress and fashions that they, and others, wear.

Dress and fashion curators often struggle with difficult yet fundamental questions throughout their careers. These questions can include but are not limited to: what items to acquire for their respective collection, how to display an object so it will appear as its finest and truest representation, whether to restore an item to its original condition or keep it as it currently appears, and how to make a space appropriate for an upcoming exhibition. A common problem, which nearly every curator has to deal with, involves the idea that clothing best tells its story when placed on the human form and is, as a result, in movement. To see a dress on a mannequin does not offer the same experience as to see it walking along the street or runway, in motion as it was originally intended to be. This inability to offer a realistic display of clothing is addressed by Lou Taylor (2002) in *The Study of Dress History*, where she discusses the difficulties in displaying a Yohji Yamamoto dress, which is conceptualized and designed with motion in mind. Fashion and dress curators are constantly trying to answer these questions within their everyday discussions and executions of exhibitions. By researching the processes of fashion and dress curators, I hope to have an insight into the thought processes of curators who are attempting to answer these, and many other questions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore current curatorial processes that take place within museums housing a fashion or dress department.

Objectives

The objectives for the study were as follows:

I. To understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of the curator responsible for the exhibitions.
II. To understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions through the viewpoint of fashion and dress curators.
III. To understand the recent history of curatorial work within the fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums.

Methodology

In this study, qualitative case studies informed by oral testimonies will be utilized to explore the motivations of individuals who are employed by museums as dress and fashion curators within a fashion and dress department. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) defined a case study as "a type of qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, program, or event, for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation" (p. 108). Case studies usually include one or a very small amount of subjects within their natural settings so the researcher may study them in-depth (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This case study involved eight participants.

Justification

The history of many well-known collections within museums, such as the Isham Collection at the V&A (Cumming, 2004), have been researched, but a lack of research surrounding the processes of dress and fashion curators remains within the field of dress history. The curator's process of inspiration, design and execution in creative ways has yet to be investigated. By understanding these important factors, we gain insight into the cultural ideals that shape our world through the study of dress and fashion.

Michael Govan, the CEO and Director at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, states, "in today's world, where the lines between paintings, sculpture, media, and design are blurring, it is a great moment to be considering the enormous importance of dress" (Spilker & Takeda, 2010, p. 7). Clothing has been a connecting force among humans throughout history and remains so today. Through the study of fashion and dress, one can further understand the society in which we live as well as gain insight into the societies of others. The work of dress curators is essential in accomplishing this insight into different cultures and more specifically, the lives of individuals. Like any other form of art, displaying fashion and dress for intellectual consumption and the appreciation of aesthetic beauty by the public is an important goal in today's society.

Limitations of the Study

Dress curators who participated in this study were selected based on accessibility to the researcher. Therefore, the dress curators were confined to the geographical areas of London, New York City and Los Angeles. The most noticeable limitation to this study regards the distance between the researcher and the candidates for interviews. Through electronic mail, the researcher contacted the interviewees and asked the questions necessary to this study. However,

interviews conducted in-person are often more informative and lead to a stronger conversation which frequently reveals more than the interviewer originally planned. Because qualitative interviews are often more personal than quantitative interviews, participants in qualitative interviews may feel as if they are simply engaging in a social conversation with the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This getting-to-know-you type of interview may lead to topics that the researcher had not intended on breaching, which leads to a stronger depth of information obtained from the interview. Ideally, this study would have involved dress curators from locations other than London, New York City and Los Angeles to allow for broader generalizations.

Curatorial practices could very well differ from one location to another, as well as from large to small museums. Most curators interviewed were employed by museums, such as the V&A in London and the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT) in NYC; which represents another limitation. To be truly comprehensive, a study of great proportions would be necessary. With access to a wider variety of museums in regards to size of collections, this study would have encompassed more information and data, which in turn could have been applied to a greater variety of fashion and dress history collections. In smaller museums and university collections, economic factors such as funding, space management, and support from the public are more problematic than in large-scale museums. Because of these differences in problems and limitations, representing a wider range of museums, in regards to size, would offer more information on the processes of dress curators.

In this study, only traditional museum institutions were considered, which represents another limitation. Fashion designers have opened their own fashion museums to archive their career. Examples include the Fashion and Textile Museum dedicated to Zandra Rhodes in

London and the Foundation Pierre Bergé Yves Saint Laurent dedicated to the work of Yves Saint Laurent in Paris. Had these designer specific museums been included in the study, a wider range of data would have been collected that could be applied to more dress curators.

Another limitation to this study involves the number of interviews conducted. As Sarah Thornton states in the introduction to *Seven Days in the Art World* (2007), "as the art world is so diverse, opaque, and downright secretive, it is difficult to generalize about it and impossible to be truly comprehensive," (p. xvii) which further explains the limitation of the sample size in this study. With a small sample size, answers cannot be applied to all curators within the field of fashion and dress history. With a larger number of curators involved in the study, the findings would have been strengthened and more fully supported. Understanding the processes and practices of more dress curators would give a clearer picture of the occupation as a whole. However, because this study includes only museum institutions that contain a sizeable fashion and dress collection, a smaller sample size helps determine methods specific to this group of curators.

Definition of Terms

Clothing – refers to any material covering the body; the two most obvious functions of clothing are to provide concealment in the name of modesty and to protect the body against inclement weather and other unpleasant or dangerous contacts (Payne, 1965, p. 1)

Curator – the curator is a specialist in a particular academic discipline relevant to the museum's collections. The curator is directly responsible for the care and academic interpretation of all objects, materials, and specimens belonging or lent to the museum; recommendations for acquisition, deaccession, attribution, and authentication; and research on the collections and the

publication of the results of that research. The curator also may have administrative and/or exhibition responsibilities and should be sensitive to sound conservation practices (Dean & Edson, 1994)

Dress – in the field of textiles and apparel, a widely accepted definition of dress is "…the total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of the body itself and all material objects added to it" (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003, p. 130)

Exhibition – meaning a public display of objects of interest; display of objects of art, manufacture, commerce, or agriculture (Merriam-Webster's, 1984, p. 308)

Fashion – changing styles of dress and appearance that are adopted by a group of people at any given time and place (Lillethun & Welters, 2011, p. xxviii)

Haute Couture – As defined by the Chambre Syndicale de la Parisienne, firms that create models that may be sold to private customers or to other segments of the fashion industry that also acquire the right to reproduce the designs. Designers show at least two collections a year of original designs to the public. An original design is not the only one of its kind, but means only that the garment was designed and made in the atelier of the designer (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003, p. 236)

Mannequin – a model of the human body, used to display clothes in department stores, etc. (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003, p. 321)

Museum – a non-profitmaking, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment (Glaser & Zenetou, 1996, p. 26)

Style – a characteristic or distinctive mode of presentation or conceptualization in a particular

field. In apparel, style is the characteristic or distinctive appearance of a garment, the combination of features that makes it different from other garments (Stone, 2006, p. 473)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The curators' ability to tell real-life stories that can affect viewers emotionally and/or enhance past experiences and perceptions often defines the success of a particular exhibition. While dress exhibitions are prominent within the world of museums today, this was not always the case. Beginning in the 1960s, alongside the change in academic perception regarding the subject of dress and fashion, exhibitions centering on fashion and dress took on a more elaborate and theoretical viewpoint. Prior to this time period, fashion and dress exhibitions were often a second-thought addition to a larger exhibition centered on a different subject not related to fashion or dress. The change in twentieth century visual expression, which now included fashion and dress as subjects worthy of academic endeavor, gave rise to the specialized fashion and dress museum. During the second half of the twentieth century, this movement towards an increased prominence of dress and fashion collections and exhibitions became particularly pronounced. As a result, the responsibilities of a dress curator came under increased attention as curiosity concerning dress collections reached new heights. Only within the past forty years has literature been devoted to the discussion of dress collections from a historical standpoint, which recognizes the changes that have come about within the last half of the twentieth century and have continued into the twenty-first century.

Historical Background

According to the *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (Eicher, 2010), the development of and changes in museums of dress and fashion can be placed into three historical periods.

> The earliest period, prior to 1970, was characterized by a general approach to collecting dress and fashion. In the second period, from about 1970 to 1990, museums tended to develop a specialized focus on some aspects of dress and fashion. Museums of the third period, the twenty-first century, seem to move their focus away from Paris to other fashion centers that have been developing around the globe (Fukai, 2010, p. 288).

In the Pre-1970 period, one of the earliest examples of a museum with a distinct purpose for its collection of dress and textiles was the V&A in London. Founded in 1852, the museum's aim was to develop a coalition of industry and art. The collection of dress and textiles actually began in 1844 and the purpose of acquiring important items of dress and textiles was clearly defined: "artisans, designers and workers' in all textile fields might 'gather a lesson for their respective crafts' from its collections of work of a high artistic quality" (Rothstein, 1984, p. 13).

Throughout history, there have been notable figures that envisioned the establishment of a fashion museum. Artist Maurice Leloir (1851-1940) systematically brought together a collection of clothing items while pursuing the study of historical dress in France. In 1907, he set up La Societé de l'Histoire du Costume (The Society of Costume History). In 1920, as part of his wishes to found a dress museum, Leloire donated his entire collection to the city of Paris. This donation eventually became the basis for the dress department of the Musée Carnavalet before forming the foundation for the dress museum Musée du Costume de la Ville de Paris, created in 1956. In 1977, this collection was moved to the Palais Galliera and is currently known as the Musée Galliera – Musée de la Mode et du Costume de la Ville de Paris. After a systematic cataloguing of the collection in 1993, the collection now holds two exhibitions each year. The

Musée de la Mode et du Costume de la Ville de Paris serves as a representation of a personal collection beginning with the ambition of becoming a dress collection for the public and eventually accomplishing that goal (Fukai, 2010). Through the help of individuals who placed an emphasis and great importance upon the study of dress and preserving the history of dress, contemporary fashion and textile museums are able to thrive in society.

The second period, which encompasses the 1970s -1990s, began with the development of fashion as an energetic and lively global phenomenon as a result of the booming ready-made clothing industry. The 1971-72 exhibition curated by Cecil Beaton, Fashion - An Anthology, held at the V&A, marked the beginning of the trend towards highly regarded and well-attended dress exhibitions. In 1972, the Met invited Diana Vreeland, the former editor of *Vogue*, to assist as a special consultant to the museum. During her time at the Met, she put on many elaborate and successful fashion exhibitions including The World of Balenciaga (1973) and Hollywood Design (1974). Before her death in 1989, Vreeland's exhibitions influenced and inspired fashion museums across the world. Following her death, Vreeland's exhibitions became legendary within the realm of dress curatorial work for the sheer spectacle of the display. During the 1970s-1990s, fashion and dress exhibitions gained their ground as exciting and reputable displays of physical works of art from the field of fashion and dress studies. This development can be partially attributed to Vreeland's innovative exhibitions during her time at the Met as well as the work of Beaton.

In the twenty-first century, fashion and dress exhibitions have experienced global popularity. Museums that hold fashion and dress exhibitions include but are not limited to, the ModeMuseum Provincie Antwerp (the MoMu Fashion Museum), the Kyoto Institute in Kyoto, Japan, the Met in New York City, the V&A in London, and LACMA in Los Angeles. More

frequently in the twenty-first century than in the past, large-scale, crowd-pleasing dress exhibitions have become the norm.

Each year, the Met puts together a crowd-pleasing exhibitions drawing the attention of those interested in dress history as well as the general public. From retrospectives of designers such as Gilbert Adrian (2002) and Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (2005) to spotlights on AngloMania (an exhibition focused on British fashion from 1976 through 2006, a period marked by an explosion of creativity and experimentation in the United Kingdom) (2006) and Superheroes (2008), the Met has presented a wide range of exhibitions to an audience worldwide (The Metropolitan Museum of Art c). Along with two exhibitions each year, the Met also hosts a star-studded red carpet event, known as the Met Gala Benefit, which serves as the Costume Institute's primary fund-raising event and celebrates the opening of the spring exhibition. Through the work of Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of *Vogue* and co-chair of the Gala Benefit since 1995, the gala has become one of "the most visible and successful charity events, drawing a stellar list of attendees from the fashion, film, society, business, and music industries" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art c).

In July 2010, *Vogue* captured the spirit of the Costume Institute's ball in "Oprah Goes Gaga," an article by Jonathan Van Meter (2010) that focused on the opening of the American Woman: Fashioning a National Identity (2010) exhibition at the Met. The publication of this article in *Vogue*, with pictures of stars greatly outnumbering photographs of the actual exhibition, represents the popularity of the fund-raising event for the Costume Institute. As evidenced by the elegant gala, the Met has transformed their renowned collection of fashion and textiles into a curatorial department that attracts Hollywood stars, political heavyweights, and a growing interest from the public.

At the V&A, an event known as 'Fashion in Motion,' originated by Claire Wilcox in 1999 (The Victoria and Albert Museum d), sets the stage for new designers to showcase looks from their collections to an audience who usually does not have access to fashion show. By bringing high fashion closer to the public, the V&A has increased awareness concerning their collection, which ranges from the seventeenth century to present day. Since 1999, 'Fashion in Motion' has featured well-known designers such as Alexander McQueen (1999), Anna Sui (2000), Issey Miyake (2001), Catherine Walker (2001), Jean Paul Gaultier (2003), Missoni (2003), Christian Lacroix (2006), and Giles Deacon (2009) (The Victoria and Albert Museum d). Along with 'Fashion in Motion,' the V&A also presents high profile exhibitions nearly every year. Like the Met, the V&A has previously focused on designers such as Versace (2002-2003), Ossie Clark (2003-2004) and Vivienne Westwood (2004). They have also held well-attended exhibitions such as Kylie – The Exhibition (2007), New York Fashion Now (2007), The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-1957 (2007-2008), and Grace Kelly: Style Icon (2010) (The Victoria and Albert Museum g).

Types of Dress Collections

English and North American Collections

In the twenty-first century, fashion and dress collections are generally assembled to show changes in design, manufacturing processes, and taste. According to Eleanor Thompson's entry in *The Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (2010), "they are used to record social and cultural customs and reconstruct and understand personal and national narratives" (p. 295). Collecting is now informed by carefully planned and written policies so collections demonstrate local and national cultural goals and initiatives (Thompson, 2010).

> Fashionable European and North American dress was not seriously or systematically collected until the latter half of the twentieth century…none of the major national European museums that were founded in the period from 1800 to 1850 collected fashionable dress. It was condemned as feminine frivolity, unworthy of serious attention. (Thompson, 2010, pp. 296-297)

Fashion and dress collections often developed slowly and sporadically from a low position within the pecking order of the arts. In the hands of female dress and fashion curators such as Diana Vreeland, curatorial work within fashion and dress collections grew during the last half of the twentieth century. In *Establishing Dress History* (2004), Lou Taylor, a prominent British dress scholar, writes that collections of European and North American dress and fashion often carry a decidedly feminine identity even if curated by men. This femininity in dress and fashion may be due to the belief that only women care about their appearance and clothing.

Despite the unreceptive attitude of museum directors towards the collecting of items for their dress and fashion department for more than a century after its founding in 1852, the V&A has led the way in fashion and dress collecting through its well-developed collecting activities. The museum's founding mission was to educate manufacturers and the public about "good design" through acquired pieces (Thompson, 2010, p. 297). Initially, garments were only acquired for the collection because of the significance of the textiles from which they were made. In the 1950s, this attitude changed and fashion and dress were acquired for reasons such as fashionable cut or construction, provenance, rarity and the aesthetic appeal of the garment design. Collecting became more strategic in Europe in the 1950s, when female curators who had a specific interest in fashion history were appointed. Collecting by museums in North America began a bit earlier, with the 1930s pinned as the beginning of serious collecting under female curators. Often, the center of many fashion and dress collections in museums is originally created

from the personal collections of individuals such as wealthy patrons, artists, and theater designers (Thompson, 2010).

In 1969, fashion photographer Cecil Beaton approached the V&A with the idea of collecting contemporary couture. The subsequent 1971 exhibition Fashion – An Anthology raised the profile of fashion and dress and placed it distinctly in the minds of museum curators (The Victoria and Albert Museum e). It was not until this proposal by Beaton that the V&A considered forming a collection of dress and fashion based on the same requirements and criteria of discernment and quality as would be used for a collection of sculpture or painting. When Beaton began collecting for the V&A exhibition Fashion – An Anthology, he chose items very selectively from the style leaders of his generation and mourned the fact that he was too late to acquire iconic pieces from notoriously stylish women of the past.

The idea that truly serious collecting of fashion and dress did not begin until the early 1970s at the V&A, which now boasts one of the most prominent costume collections in the world, is somewhat astounding. According to Eleanor Thompson, "the intimate relationship of dress to the body may account for the unease with which academic and curators have, in the past, viewed dress" (2010, p. 295). In the 1960s, fashion began to show vibrancy and energy in all areas of life and took an interesting social and cultural turn. As a result of this energy, the phenomenon of fashion changed the way dress had been appraised historically and became the focus of a new intellectual debate. It is during this time that contemporary fashion studies may have emerged. This shift in twentieth-century art thus gave rise to the specialized fashion and dress collections such as the V&A's fashion and textiles collection. The collection at the V&A currently covers fashionable dress from the seventeenth century to the present day, with an emphasis on progressive and influential designers from the major fashion centers of Europe.

Particular emphasis is placed on designers and fashion movements within the United Kingdom, as the V&A is located in South Kensington, London and was founded by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1852. The fashion and textile collection also houses accessories such as shoes, jewelry, gloves and handbags (The Victoria and Albert Museum c).

With more than thirty five thousand costumes and accessories spanning five continents and just as many centuries in their collection, the Costume Institute began as the Museum of Costume Art in 1937. The Museum of Costume Art was a completely separate entity from the Met until 1946, when The Museum of Costume Art merged with the Met through the financial support of the fashion industry. Known as The Costume Institute since its merger with the Met in 1959, the collection became a full-fledged curatorial department. Led by curators such as Diana Vreeland, Richard Martin and Harold Koda, the Met has held an influential spot within the realm of dress and fashion curatorial work since the 1970s. In January 2009, the Brooklyn Museum transferred its renowned costume collection, which was amassed over more than a century, to the Costume Institute. Known as the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, it includes the collection of American designer Charles James as well as the world's leading holdings of American fashion and dress from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The combined collections of the Brooklyn Museum and the Met now constitute the largest and most comprehensive fashion collection in the world (The Metropolitan Museum of Art c).

At LACMA, the costume and textiles department houses more than twenty thousand objects that represent more than one hundred cultures and two thousand years of creativity in the textile arts. In the last fashion and dress exhibition presented by LACMA, Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915 (2011), the curators endeavored to explore fashion's

"aesthetic and technical development from the Age of Enlightenment to World War I. It examined sweeping changes in fashionable dress spanning a period of over two hundred years, and evolutions in luxurious textiles, exacting tailoring techniques, and lush trimmings" (Los Angeles County Museum of Art a).

While serious collecting of fashion and dress experienced a delayed beginning the field has flourished since the 1970s. With large-scale museums such as the Met, the V&A, LACMA and the Museum at FIT (MFIT), dress and fashion collecting has continued to thrive in the twenty-first century. Worldwide, fashion and dress collections exist in the Museum of Fashion in Bath, England, the Museo del Traje in Madrid, Spain, and the ModeMuseum in Antwerp, Belgium. Through the work of well-known dress curators like Harold Koda, Richard Martin and Valerie Steele, dress and fashion exhibitions have developed into exciting events that draw the attention of famous stars as well as the general public.

Ethnographic Dress Collections

Founded in the late-sixteenth century and seventeenth century private museums, the earliest dress and fashion collections were known as *Wunderkammer* or cabinets of curiosities. The cabinets of curiosities contained specimens of natural science, which were collected by European aristocracy. Fashion and dress were originally acquired as visual evidence of the existence of exotic peoples from distant places. This visual evidence served to fuel romanticized myths of the "noble savage" and material was often incorrectly identified, as their place of origin was rarely known. Collected objects were often displayed to strengthen colonial Europeans' views of their own supremacy. The explorations of British voyager Captain James Cook inspired the development of methodical collecting approaches. Despite the development of more sophisticated identification of items of clothing, the meanings of these objects were often

discarded upon entering an established museum. Overriding the approaches of Europeans' were their feelings of racial and intellectual superiority (Thompson, 2010).

In the nineteenth century, travelers frequently collected garments as souvenirs and thus stripped the items of their complex cultural meanings. Also in the nineteenth century, items of dress and fashion began to take their place in the newly emerging academic field of anthropology. In the twentieth century, museums with fashion and dress collections had to address the history of the collection and reconcile the way the items were acquired. In the 1950s, Commander Gilbert E. Boone and his wife Katharine collected items of dress and fashion during a tour of duty in Japan. Their goal was to promote curiosity in and comprehension of East Asia that would help fight the resentment and ignorance that prevailed after World War II (Thompson, 2010). Over time, sentiments towards other cultures changed, resulting in a shifting attitude towards the collecting of ethnographic dress.

Designer Specific Collections

In the past ten years, various designers have opened private museums to house their previous designs and creations. Notable collections include the Zandra Rhodes Fashion and Textile Museum, the Foundation Pierre Bergé Yves Saint Laurent art museum, the Musée Christian Dior de Granville and the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, which opened in June 2011. In early September 2011, the Gucci Museo opened its doors to the public in Florence, Italy. The Gucci Museo features rotating exhibitions assembled from Gucci's extensive archives. According to author Christina Binkley, "the museum is aimed at reminding the world that Gucci is, like rival Louis Vuitton, a luxe brand infused with an artisanal history" (2011, para. 2). The decisions of designers to make their collections available to the public seem to be driven by the

desire to perpetuate their reputations and thus ensure a prestigious story in line with their careers (Thompson, 2010).

British designer Zandra Rhodes opened her Fashion and Textile Museum in 1996 in London because she felt her work was being ignored and should be placed in a museum to be viewed by the public so she would be remembered (Mower, 2003). In 2007, the museum was acquired by the Newham College of Further Education and reopened as part of its fashion education program. Along with Rhodes's own clothes, textiles and designs, the museum houses works by designers like Biba, Ossie Clark, Jean Muir and numerous others who, along with Rhodes, energized the London fashion scene with their designs in the 1960s and 70s (Fashion and Textile Museum).

The Foundation Pierre Bergé Yves Saint Laurent was created in 2002 to prolong the history of the Yves Saint Laurent House following its closure in October of the same year. Opened to the public in 2004, the goals of the foundation are as follows:

> To conserve the 5,000 Haute Couture garments and the 15,000 accessories, sketches and assorted objects that bear witness to 40 years of Yves Saint Laurent's creativity, to organize exhibitions: fashion, paintings, photographs, drawings, and to support cultural and education projects. (Fondation Pierre Bergé Yves Saint Laurent).

Over the years, the Foundation has held fashion-related exhibitions such as Yves Saint Laurent Style (2008) and Russian Folk Costume (2009) (Fondation Pierre Bergé Yves Saint Laurent).

The Musée Christian Dior de Granville, located in Dior's childhood home in Granville, France, is currently managed by an association made up of city, regional and national officials. These officials work together with members of Dior and LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton S.A. (LVMH) to put together an annual exhibition (Christian Dior Museum and Garden).

The Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, located in Balenciaga's hometown of Guetaria, Spain, opened its doors in early June 2011. The museum showcases Balenciaga's elaborate style in the

form of dresses exhibited throughout the gallery space. According to the museum's website, "the exhibition at the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa aspires to showcase the best of Balenciaga's work, provide insight into the keys to his success and honour his contribution to the history of fashion" (Cristóbal Balenciaga Museo). The museum's permanent collection consists of six display areas which are organized thematically: Early Years, Day, Cocktail, Evening, Brides and Essential Balenciaga (Cristóbal Balenciaga Museo). To keep the permanent exhibition lively and entertaining, and due to conservation needs, the objects on display are rotated every six to twelve months.

While designer-specific museums house important material about the designers' oeuvre, they are challenged to provide a critical context to that work due to financial constraints and the lack of curatorial staff. Designer-specific museums also pose a problem for traditional museums that house a dress and fashion collection. By maintaining their work within their own museums, designer-specific museums make it difficult for traditional museums to acquire important pieces that would be placed on display for the public to view. Ultimately, this may be affecting the designers more negatively than they initially thought when they decided to open their own museum. The exposure gained at traditional museums, where the amount of visitors may be higher, would likely be greater than that of their own private museum.

Education-Based Collections

In the United States, there are many dress and fashion collections attached to universities, which are utilized for teaching purposes. These collections of national and sometimes international fashion and dress usually show the universities' own material culture as well as teaching and postgraduate research interests (Thompson, 2010). Major holdings are kept in the University of Georgia Historic Clothing and Textiles Collection, the University of Rhode Island

Historic Textile and Costume Collection, the Ohio State University Historic Costume and Textiles Collection, the University of Minnesota Goldstein Costume Collection, and the Kent State Design Laboratories.

The Historic Clothing and Textiles Collection held in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors at the University of Georgia (UGA) is a study collection of over one thousand five hundred garments, accessories and textiles, which date from the 1800s to the present day. The collection includes women's, men's and children's clothing, hats, shoes, and jewelry. Along with clothing, the collection also contains pictorial items that represent historic dress, such as magazines and authentic photographs. Highlights of the collection include a Mother Hubbard dress from the 1890s, numerous nineteenth century wedding dresses, christening gowns, flapper dresses from the 1920s, and paper dresses from the 1960s. Notable designers represented within the collection include Claire McCardell, Pauline Trigere, Bill Blass, Geoffrey Beene, Yves St. Laurent, and Mariano Fortuny. World dress is represented through items from Japan, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Africa, Thailand, China, and the Middle East.

The mission of the collection is as follows:

> …To document the state of Georgia's history through the preservation of historic clothing and textiles. The collection is also used in instruction, research, and as a source for inspiration. It is a veritable library of fashion history providing examples of line, design, fabric, workmanship, and quality. (Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors)

The focus areas of the collection at UGA center on clothing, textiles and accessories that represent various periods in history as well as the evolution of dress in the United States. Within the collection, there is a particular emphasis placed on items formerly owned or worn by Georgians (Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors). Through the work of faculty members and students in both the undergraduate and graduate programs at UGA, various exhibitions have been produced for the public in Athens, Georgia. With exhibitions previously held at the Georgia

Museum of Art, located on the campus of UGA, and another at the Lyndon House of Art, located in downtown Athens, select items from the collection are often available for public viewing in Barrow and Dawson halls.

The University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection holds almost twenty thousand objects. The mission of the collection is

> Teaching textiles, costume design, historic costume, and historic textiles classes in the TMD [Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design] department as well as other departments on campus, research by students, faculty, and visiting scholars; exhibition in the Textile Gallery and loans for exhibitions in other museums (University of Rhode Island).

Items in the collection include fashion, dress and textiles from across the globe. The earliest holdings in the collection, aside from a few pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles and early Egyptian cloths, are from the late eighteenth century.

The Historic Costume and Textiles Collection at Ohio State University (OSU) holds over eleven thousand and five hundred objects such as textiles and items of clothing and accessories for men, women and children. The collection also maintains a number of period magazines, fashion plates, swatch books and commercial patterns. Their mission is "to collect, preserve, and interpret textile and apparel material culture and make these artifacts available to researchers" (The Ohio State University). The collection focuses on objects important to central Ohio and the fashion industry of the United States. According to the OSU Historic Costume and Textiles Collection website, "the Collection is available to students, scholars and collectors" (The Ohio State University).

The collection at OSU holds items by American designers such as James Galanos, Arnold Scaasi, Pauline Trigere and Calvin Klein. The collection also houses designs by major European designers like Charles Frederick Worth and Elsa Schiaparelli. Along with their Historic Costume

and Textiles Collection, OSU also maintains the Ann Rudolph Button Collection, which holds more than twenty five thousand artifacts. The Ann Rudolph Button Collection is one of the most complete holdings of buttons and button-related materials within the United States. "It includes representative examples of almost every type of button, many of which are unique, rare and seldom available to scholars and collectors" (The Ohio State University). The Historic Costume and Textiles Collection also holds the Traphagen Collection, which focuses on women's clothing since the nineteenth century, and a collection of ethnographic dress, which includes a complete pre-WWII Japanese wedding kimono and a complete Macedonian wedding ensemble (The Ohio State University).

To display exhibitions, OSU maintains The Gladys Keller Snowden Gallery, which is located in the Geraldine Schottenstein Wing for the Historic Costume & Textiles collection. The Snowden Gallery is an integral part of the Historic Costume & Textiles Collection as it houses current exhibitions showcasing textile and clothing artifacts (The Ohio State University).

Dress and Fashion Exhibitions

History

Beginning in the late sixteenth century and lasting through the eighteenth century, private collections known as cabinets of curiosities often contained elements of fashion and dress. These items were most likely collected to represent elements of a different culture, which were considered strange and distinct. However, items of fashion and dress were sometimes collected to represent the artistry of the object. Many museums were founded on the basis of these private collections from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Examples include the Fashion Museum in Bath and the historical dress collection at the Pitti Palace in Florence, Italy.

According to Jean L. Druesedow (2010), beginning with stories told by Marco Polo of the dress he observed in his travels during the thirteenth century, people have shown an interest in the history and regional characteristics of fashion and dress. With the emerging neoclassical movement of the late eighteenth century, an interest in the way dress and fashion styles have changed throughout history surfaced. This interest increased the amount of publications circulating within the public realm and the collecting activities of private individuals, which centered on both fashionable and ethnographic items. Despite the prevalence of private collections, as well as the presence of fashion and dress within various museums, exhibitions centered on fashion and dress did not truly begin until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Fashion Museum in Bath, England was created when Doris Langley Moore presented her collection of fashion and dress to the city of Bath in 1963. Another example includes the historical dress collection at the Pitti Palace in Florence, Italy, which began with the acquisition of the Umberto Tirelli collection (Druesedow, 2010).

As Druesedow (2010) has noted in reference to the popularity of fashion and dress exhibitions in the twenty-first century,

> Museum visitors in general have found the dress of other times, people, and places to be curious and exotic and have responded with enthusiasm to exhibitions of dress. Because exhibition visitors wear clothes themselves, displays of dress are one of the most accessible exhibition subjects. Each visitor has an immediate reaction to what is seen and can identify physically as well as aesthetically with a garment. Exhibitions of dress can provide a concrete and human understanding of a specific historical period or foreign place and yield an enhanced appreciation for life and art beyond the personal experience of the visitor. (2010, p. 304)

This connection between visitors and the clothing on display has been an inherent part of the human experience since the late sixteenth century with the establishment of cabinets of curiosities. Due to the longevity of collections of dress and fashion, one can anticipate that fashion and dress exhibitions will continue to experience popularity among the general public.

Possibly one of the earliest intentionally organized exhibitions on fashion and dress was at the opening of the Royal Armory as a museum in Stockholm, Sweden in the early seventeenth century. In 1628, King Gustav II Adolph decided his clothes from his campaign in Poland, where he was wounded, should be preserved. As a result, his bloodstained garments were on display to the general public and served as the first acquisitions of the Livrustkammarens collection (Museums in Stockholm). Aside from the connections to royal or ruling families, most early museum curators saw no reason to display clothes that were currently in fashion.

In 1884, in the History of Dress section of the International Health Exhibition, the V&A displayed garments on wax forms designed by Madame Tussaud's (Rothstein, 1984). Among the earliest exhibitions in the United States devoted to historically fashionable dress was the exhibition organized in New York City in 1928 by a group of individuals who founded the Museum of Costume Art in 1937. Irene Lewisohn was the Neighborhood Playhouse founder and leader of the Museum of Costume Art until 1946 when the Museum of Costume Art merged with the Met to form the Costume Institute (The Metropolitan Museum of Art c). Through the comparison of these early examples of fashion and dress exhibitions and the work of current dress curators like Ligaya Salazar, who has published a blog on the Yohji Yamamoto exhibition at the V&A, the development of dress and fashion exhibitions can be further understood. The lengthy process and extreme use of care in regards to items of dress currently employed by dress curators differs greatly from that utilized throughout history.

Growth of Fashion and Dress Exhibitions

With Cecil Beaton's exhibition Fashion: An Anthology at the V&A in 1971 and the following year, when Diana Vreeland became the special consultant for exhibitions at the Costume Institute of the Met, a new era of fashion and dress exhibition began. As evidenced in

the book *Diana Vreeland* by Eleanor Dwight (2002), Vreeland had a dramatic approach to the display of dress and fashion. Her approach, which included inventive props such as life-size elephants and elaborate settings, brought international attention and crowds of visitors to the Costume Institute's galleries at the Met. Around the same time, most likely linked to the work of Vreeland and Beaton, the field of fashion and dress studies experienced a surge in popularity. Through the fifteen fashion and dress exhibitions conceived by Vreeland for the Costume Institute, the attitudes of museum directors, curators, and international visitors were changed indefinitely. Due to the increased popularity of fashion and dress exhibitions on an international scale, many museums found exhibitions of fashion and dress to be relevant to their missions and important to their visitors. It became clear to museum staff that fashion and dress exhibitions brought a new, larger audience to museums. In the time of Vreeland, the aesthetic of presentation took precedence over historicity, with the presence of abstract mannequins, vibrant colors, and unusual juxtapositions. In all fifteen of Vreeland's exhibitions, there were various elements of surprise combined with inspiring examples of fashion and dress (Druesedow, 2010).

Dress and Fashion Exhibitions

Within the realm of fashion and dress exhibitions, there are numerous areas a dress curator can explore: retrospectives, contemporary fashion and fashion idols. Of these topics, one of the most well known types is an exhibition on the work of a single designer. Often called a 'retrospective,' within this exhibition the curator pays specific attention to the history of the designer's work and their contributions to the fashion world. Previously, The Costume Institute at the Met has focused mainly on exhibitions centered on retrospectives, contemporary fashion, and particular time periods in fashion and dress history.

The Costume Institute at the Met has held retrospectives on Gilbert Adrian (2002), Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (2005), Paul Poiret (2007) and Alexander McQueen (2011). At the V&A, past retrospectives include The art and craft of Gianni Versace (2002-2003), Ossie Clark (2003-2004), and Vivienne Westwood: A Retrospective (2004). At The Fashion Museum in Bath, England, retrospectives have included Bill Gibb – a Personal Journey (2008), which displayed exciting ensembles by the famous British fashion designer Bill Gibb, who was extremely popular in the 1970s, and Vionnet Dresses (2010). In Vionnet Dresses, The Fashion Museum working in partnership with the V&A and the Bowes Museum to save a collection of rare 1930s evening dresses by Madeline Vionnet. Vionnet is considered one of the greatest couturiers of the twentieth-century (Fashion Museum a and b).

In Poiret: King of Fashion at the Met in 2007, dress curators Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton endeavored to explore and explain the career of Paul Poiret as the premiere haute couturier in the first decade of the twentieth century. Poiret is remembered as the "King of Fashion" and is credited for liberating women from the constriction of the corset. He also established the blueprint for the modern fashion business through his ventures in perfume, cosmetics and decorative arts companies to promote a total lifestyle (Bolton & Koda, 2007). The core collection of the garments on display in Poiret: King of Fashion came from an auction in Paris in 2005, where the Met purchased some of the most important designs available. The garments on display provided new insights into the artistic vision of Poiret and helped reinforce his position as one of the most influential designers of the twentieth century (Bolton et. al., 2007). In the exhibition, Koda and Bolton set the garments on mannequins and placed them in various scenes: outdoors, on the balcony of a home, in a living room, or at a vanity where the mannequin was imagined to be preparing for the day ahead. The use of stage settings places the

work of Koda and Bolton in a different category than other dress curators. This category is very visual and incorporates time specific and appropriate features surrounding the dress and fashion on display. Because retrospectives display fashion and dress from a designers' historic oeuvre, it may be beneficial to place the garments in a scene typical of the appropriate time period for the visitors experience and understanding of the designer and their work.

Differing from this idea is the concept that a clean, uncluttered display is the most appropriate way to effectively communicate the message of the garments on display. While not a single designer exhibition, in The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947 – 1957 (2007), the displays designed by senior curator Claire Wilcox (2007) at the V&A enabled the visitor to focus on the garments rather than outlying factors such as what the woman wearing a Balenciaga or Dior ball gown might have been doing while in the elaborate ensemble. While the two attempts vary drastically in visual outcome, there is no right or wrong method. To say one way of displaying fashion and dress is more effective than another is nearly impossible. Visitors to museums respond differently to each type of display, thus representing the need for these various types of exhibition displays.

Another category of fashion and dress exhibitions includes contemporary fashion. Examples of exhibitions on contemporary fashion at the V&A include Radical Fashion (2001-2002), Men in Skirts (2002), Sixties Fashion (2006-2007), and The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947 – 1957 (2007-2008). Elsewhere, examples of exhibitions of contemporary fashion include Fashion in the 50's (2001) at the Bath Fashion Museum, The Art of Affluence: Haute Couture and Luxury Fashions 1947 – 2007 (2008-2011) at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Fashion Show: *Paris Collections 2006* (2006-2007) at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts.

In Fashion Show: *Paris Collections 2006* (2006-2007), the garments on display demonstrated why fashion remains a fine art in the twenty-first century. The exhibition featured runway garments from the spring and fall/winter collections of ten influential couturiers and designers and explored the ideas and inspirations that motivated Paris fashion in 2006. The exhibition also aimed to explain why Paris has remained the fashion capital of the world through the age of globalization and instant communication. Featured designers included Azzedine Alaia, Hussein Chalayan, Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, John Galliano for Christian Dior, Christian Lacroix, Maison Martin Margiela, Olivier Theyskens for Rochas, Valentino, Viktor & Rolf, and Yohji Yamamoto (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston a). According to *the New York Times*, the exhibition was "a hit…its beauty deceptively guised in its simplicity" (Wilson, 2006, para. 10). From this quote, we can categorize this exhibition along with The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947 – 1957 (2007) in regards to exhibition display as clean and uncluttered.

Dress, as defined by the authors of the *Fairchild Dictionary of Fashion* (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003, p. 130), is "the total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of the body itself and all material objects added to it." Fashion, also defined by the *Fairchild Dictionary of Fashion* (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003, p. 154), is "a sociocultural phenomenon in which a preference is shared by a large number of people for a particular style that lasts for a relatively short time, and then is replaced by another style." With these definitions, accessories hold their place among the categories of fashion and dress. As a result, exhibitions centered on various types of accessories have been on display in many museums.

The Heights of Fashion: Platform Shoes Then and Now, which was on display at the Mint Museum of Art from April 2009 through January 2011, highlighted sixty examples of platform footwear from the 1930s through the present. In Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones, on

display at the V&A from February through May 2009, milliner Stephen Jones took inspiration from historic hats and transformed this inspiration into contemporary designs. Jones, who has designed hats for couturiers and celebrities such as Vivienne Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier, Madonna and Dita Von Teese, focused on the creation and decoration of elegant, experimental and usually whimsical hats. The exhibition allowed visitors to explore "the world of millinery from the inside out, following the life-cycle of a hat from its point of inception in the milliner's mind to its final incarnation atop the wearer's head" (The Victoria and Albert Museum e). According to the V&A's website, "Cecil Beaton's 1971 show raised the profile of fashion and put it firmly on the museum map. Jones feels the time is now right to do the same for what he terms 'the ultimate accessory' – the hat."

The V&A also displayed an exhibition entitled Tiaras from March through July 2002. This exhibition presented more than two hundred examples of gem-set head ornament and included tiaras worn by British and European royal families as well as tiaras worn and coveted by celebrities such as Elton John, Victoria Beckham, Wonder Woman, and Gwyneth Paltrow (The Victoria and Albert Museum g).

At the Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT), Scandal Sandals & Lady Slippers: A History of Delman Shoes was on display March through April 2010. The exhibition celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of Delman Shoes, a leader in women's footwear and creator of glamorous and classic styles. The objects on display, which dated between 1926 and 2007, chronicled the company's creative past, and came from the permanent collections of both the Museum at FIT and the Delman Archives. The exhibition explored the most successful period of Delman Shoes, the 1930s through the 1950s, which helped bring international acclaim to American fashion (The Museum at FIT c).

Ethnographic dress is another area of fashion and dress that is explored by dress curators. Ethnographic research, which is used in examining different groups through observation, interviews and artifact analysis, has been a central aspect to dress history since it's early beginnings in the seventeenth century (Flynn & Foster, 2009). Explorers would often bring back items of fashion and dress from distant lands as examples of the cultures that inhabited these lands. In today's museum work, curators and historians understand the importance of representing objects from foreign countries correctly when placed on display in culturally sensitive and well informed settings. An example of an ethnographic dress exhibition includes Imperial Chinese Robes from the Forbidden City at the V&A, which was on view from December 7, 2010 through February 27, 2011. According to the V&A website, "this exhibition showed the sumptuous robes and accessories worn by the emperors and empresses of the Qing Dynasty, the last ruling dynasty of China (1644-1911)" (The Victoria and Albert Museum g). The exhibition was part of an exchange between the V&A and the Palace Museum in Beijing and displayed official, festive and travelling dress for rituals, celebrations, weddings and royal visits as well as sumptuously patterned fabrics created for ladies of the court who were fashion-conscious.

While the dress and fashion exhibitions discussed above are some of the most common types, there are many other exhibitions that include dress and fashion. In the past, fashion and dress exhibitions have centered on style icons such as Grace Kelly: Style Icon (2010) at the V&A and Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years – Selections from the John. F. Kennedy Library and Museum (2001) at the Met. Daphne Guiness (2012) is currently on display at MFIT and explores the personal style of heiress Daphne Guiness, who is known for her daring fashion sense (The Museum at FIT a). Other areas that fashion and dress exhibitions may display include

fads, fashionable groups, and conceptual exhibitions. Fashion and dress exhibitions will likely continue to explore various areas of fashion and dress, drawing inspiration from nearly every aspect of human life and culture.

Curatorial Process

Inspiration

In the exhibition catalogue for The Concise Dictionary of Dress (2010), an exhibition curated by dress historian Judith Clark in collaboration with psychoanalyst Adam Phillips and held at the Blythe House in London in 2010, there is a question and answer section. In this section, various professionals and academics from the field of fashion and dress history offered questions for Clark to answer in reference to her exhibition. One inquiry poses a difficult question for Clark regarding the origination of ideas for exhibitions: "It is plain that we, as curators, measure fashion against time. Is it also essential that we should armour ourselves against conformity of thinking?" (Clark & Phillips, 2010, Question 15). This question, anonymously submitted to Clark, represents a difficult task for dress curators. When beginning the exhibition process, is it important to differentiate one idea from another? Conformity in thinking is something dress curators are attempting to avoid. According to Clark, "treating a current curatorial consensus as time-related is like putting something in inverted commas – it becomes opinion, not natural" (Clark & Phillips, 2010, para. 34). With this statement, Clark states her opinion that looking at dress history through a time-related spectrum makes interpretation of items narrow. With this idea in mind, dress curators often make attempts towards reinvigorating fashion and dress exhibitions through the use of substantially different themes and ideas.

Clark also states that she starts "with objects, then often think[s] of patterns and then think[s] of other objects that will fit the pattern" (2010, para. 18). For Clark, the curatorial process begins with an object-based approach. While this is a common approach, many dress curators begin with an idea and do not choose the objects to go on display until preparing for the installation of the exhibition. For Clark and other curators, the exhibition installation is a rather important aspect of the exhibition. Many dress curators believe the garment selection is a vital part of the success or failure of the exhibit. Neither viewpoint can be considered right or wrong, as curators differ in their beliefs.

Lou Taylor believes in the importance of working with theorists in cooperation with dress and fashion exhibitions. "The need to develop such provocative and challenging dress exhibition themes has never been greater. The need for the curator and theorist to cooperate together to produce such progressive exhibitions has never been more positively at stake" (Taylor, 2002, p. 306). Both Clark and Taylor hold multi-faceted views as they both argue for the validity of object-based approaches as well as the importance of the idea behind an exhibition.

Research

At the V&A, the curator of the Yohji Yamamoto exhibition (2011), Ligaya Salazar, wrote a blog concerning the process she went through from the beginning to end of the exhibition. According to Salazar, the inspiration for the exhibition came from the idea of "celebrating and marking the thirtieth anniversary of Yohji Yamamoto's arrival on the Parisian fashion circuit" (The Victoria and Albert Museum j). Classified as a retrospective, the exhibition featured garments from Yamamoto's illustrious career in the fashion world. The blog, which the curator began writing on October 3, 2010, offers insight into the curators processes and the preparation of the exhibition. The curatorial staff at LACMA also publishes a blog, entitled "Unframed: The

LACMA Blog" (Los Angeles County Museum of Art b). In "Unframed: The LACMA Blog," various members of the curatorial staff of the Costume and Textiles department publish articles on topics such as preparing mannequins for display and prepping garments for travel to another museum. The idea that dress curators are now offering unguarded access to this type of information shows the growth of interest surrounding fashion and dress exhibitions. That visitors want this behind-the-scenes access is paramount in understanding the success and future of fashion and dress exhibitions.

In the Yamamoto blog, Salazar discussed the various research trips she took after the initial inspiration for the exhibition. On the first research trip, Salazar traveled to Japan to visit a few of the craftspeople that contribute to the production of Yamamoto's garments. During this trip, Salazar visited Chiso, one of the renowned Kimono-making companies and a close collaborator of Yamamoto, to see the Kyo-yuzen dyeing technique. The next research trip, which involved a trip to Kyoto where Salazar visited the print shop of Mr. Kenkichi Senda, provided insight into the traditional craft of kara-kami ('Chinese paper') prints. This trip, while not directly linked to the Yamamoto exhibition, provided valuable information on a traditional Chinese art form that has possibly influenced the work of Yamamoto. The third trip to the Yamamoto headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, centered on a ninety-minute interview with Yamamoto for the exhibition catalogue. It is evident from these research trips that gaining first-hand background knowledge is vital to the success of a dress and fashion exhibition.

At the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Museum (FIDMM) in Los Angeles, the curatorial staff works together to publish posts to the "FIDM Museum Blog." In a post, titled "The Height of Fashion," the author discussed the exhibition FABULOUS! Ten Years of FIDM Museum Acquisitions, 2000-2010, which opened on September 13, 2011. In reference to the

exhibition catalogue, registrar Meghan Grossman Hansen states, “accompanying the exhibition is a fully illustrated 375-page catalogue” (Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising). While the catalogue accompanying this exhibition is a catalogue in the traditional sense, exhibition catalogues can be non-traditional in the sense that they do not include photographs of all the garments on display. The publication of non-traditional catalogues is usually due to the lack of time given to the curators in regards to the entire exhibition process.

The research process varies drastically from one dress curator to another. For The Concise Dictionary of Dress, Clark and Phillips at one point considered throwing definitions for the words related to clothing and fashion in the air and pairing them with the installations of garments through pure chance (Clark & Phillips, 2010). This idea of using chance and fate to interpret the garments on display for visitors places the work of Clark within a conceptual category. While the initial research was completed, the curators were still completing research by deciding which definition should go with the appropriate garment. As a type of wall text, these definitions framed the visitors’ opinions regarding the garments on display.

Garment and Mannequin Selection and Preparation

During an archive trip to Tourraine, France, Salazar was able to finalize her choices of garments for the Yamamoto exhibition. However, according to Salazar, “to get to the garment selection which is now pretty much finalised, I first went through all the images of past collections to get to a rather large first draft of an object list” (The Victoria and Albert Museum j). Following this research, Salazar, her project manager and two colleagues of Yamamoto went to Tourraine to visit the Yamamoto archives, which are kept by a family that has been working with the French Haute Couture industry for many centuries. During this trip, Salazar and her companions

> …dressed and photographed the preselected garments and additional ones we found in the archives. This served several functions for us: to document the dressing process and condition of the work, an image base I could use to tighten the selection later on and familiarise ourselves with the physicality of the pieces. (The Victoria and Albert Museum j)

This process of garment selection proves the extent to which dress curators must go to find the right pieces for each exhibition. Following this initial selection process, Salazar then had to filter the garment choices down from four hundred to just under a hundred. Salazar utilized a pre-selection process, which prioritized the garments "that most vividly illustrated the themes to be brought out in the exhibition" (The Victoria and Albert Museum j).

Once the selection of the appropriate garments is finalized, the mannequin selection begins. According to Taylor (2002), there is still a strong debate occurring over the appearance of mannequins in dress and fashion exhibitions. While Taylor is referencing the overall look of the mannequins, the need to find a mannequin that will fit a certain garment is also of importance. The blog for the Yamamoto exhibition offers insight into the mannequin selection process:

> After gathering and classifying the mannequins we can reuse, each piece is assigned to a different one depending on its requirements. Some pieces need mannequins that work with trousers, others might need arms, or heads…after this we can decide whether we need to order any other mannequins, and the conservation department can assess whether work needs to be done in terms of underpinning and padding to make the garments look the best they can. (The Victoria and Albert Museum j)

After selecting the appropriate garments and mannequins for an exhibition, the curatorial staff has to make the mannequin fit the garment. According to "Unframed: The LACMA Blog,"

> The process of dressing historic garments on mannequins is exacting and time-consuming. Not only must the final presentation accurately portray the fashionable silhouette of the period, the art object must be safely supported for the duration of the exhibition. In doing so, the costume cannot be altered to fit the mannequin; rather it is the mannequin that is padded out to the shape of the garment. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art b)

As evidenced by this quote, preparing the mannequin for the appropriate garment is an important

concern of dress curators. In the LACMA blog, Clarissa Esguerra, a Curatorial Assistant in the Costume and Textiles department, describes the mannequin preparation process from beginning to end for the exhibition Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700 – 1915 (2011). The curatorial team starts by researching the date of each piece intended to go on display. Once the research is complete, the fashionable silhouette for each garments era is determined and assigned a mannequin. For this specific exhibition, LACMA had both male and female mannequins built to represent the dramatic changes in silhouette from the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. With nearly one hundred historic garments to prepare on mannequins, the process began many months in advance of the shows opening date of March 12, 2011.

Once a garment is assigned a mannequin, the dresser conducts a series of measurements to determine the correct positioning of the torso, hips and legs of the mannequin. Following this process, the dresser uses batting, and a layer of insulation, to build up the mannequin to the correct proportions of the garment. The curators at LACMA decided to use control-top pantyhose on both the lower and upper portions of the mannequins to hold the batting in place while also ensuring a smooth surface for the garment to rest upon. This aspect of mannequin preparation often takes several days to finish (Los Angeles County Museum of Art b). Once the padding is complete and the mannequin has been built to the appropriate fashionable silhouette, the garment is carefully placed on the mannequin and considered ready to go in the exhibition space.

The preparation of mannequins may also include creating the appropriate hairstyle. After receiving numerous requests to detail the process used to create the paper wigs worn by mannequins in Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915 (2011), Sophia Gan, an installation assistant in the Costume and Textiles department at LACMA, detailed the process on

"Unframed: The LACMA Blog." According to Gan, the process of creating the handcrafted wigs began nine months before the opening of the exhibition. At this time, "the curators were finalizing their exhibition checklist of fashionable dress and deciding on display methods" (Los Angeles County Museum of Art b). Considered a secondary detail, the hairstyles and accessories, were essential in shaping a stylish and historically correct exhibition. To accurately portray the hairstyles of the eras on display, the installation and curatorial team looked to portraits, fashion plates and photographs that corresponded with the era of the garment. Along with this research, other factors such as the purpose of the clothing (e.g., daywear, evening court dress) and whether the mannequin would be wearing a hat was considered before constructing the wigs (Los Angeles County Musum of Art b). In the exhibition Dark Glamour (September 2008 – February 2009), curated by Valerie Steele at MFIT, wigs designed and hand made by a friend of a member of the curatorial staff were also utilized to complete the overall look of the mannequins on display (Spooner, 2010). The consideration of the mannequin's hairstyle shows the vital nature of mannequins within fashion and dress exhibitions. Without the appropriately styled mannequin, a fashion and dress exhibition will undoubtedly lose the ability to communicate the intended message to the audience.

Exhibition Design

The design of the exhibition space is an intrinsic part of the appeal of a dress and fashion exhibition. Many dress curators consider the placement of mannequins, overall design and the lighting to be as important as the garment selection. For Salazar, who worked with one of Yamamoto's long-term collaborators, Masao Nihei, the exhibition design process was undoubtedly a thrilling one. Mr. Nihei conceptualized various designs for the exhibition, and it was up to Salazar to filter through these designs to form a coherent, striking exhibition design.

Once this was accomplished, Salazar went through a process of using ‘pin-ups’ to visualize the space. The use of ‘pin-ups’ helps organize and group the objects for display and decide which themes will be represented in the exhibition. The ‘pin-up,’ a pictorial plan that helps visualize the space, was the product of the days spent in the archives in France and Japan.

While simultaneously working on the labels for this part of the exhibition, Salazar spent time creating the timeline aspect of the exhibition design, which “will consist of a mixture of clips of key fashion shows from the last 30 years of his illustrious career, some bits about his main collaborations in film, performance and photography and some very special extras” (The Victoria and Albert Museum j).

In early January, with the exhibition opening on March 12, 2011, Salazar and the team of curators involved in the exhibition began the task of putting together the exhibition. Two weeks prior to January 19, they began to build the necessary installations. After receiving “crates full of Yohji Yamamoto treasures” in early January, the conservation department at the V&A began condition checking each piece carefully and determining whether the items need to go through a heat treatment known as “Thermo Lignum” (The Victoria and Albert Museum j). Thermo Lignum is utilized to eradicate damage-causing insects like woodworms, moths, and carpet beetles (Thermo Lingum). Following this procedure, a final decision is made on which garments need underpinning as the team of curators has already begun constructing soft silk arms and covering dress forms with calico (The Victoria and Albert Museum j).

On February 4, 2011, the gallery space for the exhibition was handed over to the curators who began working on preparing the exhibition. With the help of building contractors, the process of making Mr. Nihei’s vision a reality began with the laying of a bright white floor. Following the completion of this, a black powder-coated scaffold structure was erected to

demarcate the multi-media timeline. Once the scaffold was in place, the concrete bases for the garments were installed.

The process described by Salazar on 'Yohji Yamamoto at the V&A,' describes the curatorial process from the beginning to end. While every dress curator may not utilize this exact process, it provides important insight into the topic. Along with 'Unframed: The LACMA Blog,' it is evident that more dress curators are opening up about the methods utilized in their careers.

The information presented concerning the system employed by dress curators comes mainly from recent or current blogs in which the information is posted by the dress curator or a member of their curatorial team. The purpose of my study is to conduct deeper research into the approaches of dress curators in England and the United States since this area of dress history is currently under studied. This review of literature has sought to provide insight into the possible influences and motivations of individuals who are employed by museums as dress curators.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The procedure used for this study included qualitative case studies, informed by oral testimonies, in order to explore motivations of individuals who are employed by museums as dress and/or fashion curators within a fashion and dress department. Participants of in-depth interviews were recruited via electronic mail or mail. Participants were located through networking, contact with previous graduate students at the University of Georgia and the relationships of various professors at UGA. Data were collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews and infield observations.

Data analysis took place in the form of a four-stage process described in *Analysing Oral History: A New Approach When Linking Method to Methodology* (Chapman, Francis, Miller-Rosser & Robinson-Malt, 2009). In their discussion of analyzing oral testimony, the authors present a four-step process, which includes 1) collecting data through interviews, 2) constructing portraits of meaning, also referred to as biographies, 3) discovering "telling extracts" and 4) constructing a collective meaning (Chapman et. al., 2009, p. 479). After constructing biographies centered on the careers of each participant to place them on a continuum of fashion and dress curators, a master interview was constructed which contained each answer from each participant under the proper question subheading. The master interview allowed for a broader interpretation of the data, which was grouped around common themes (Thompson, 2000). A master interview was produced to converge the data and to find "telling extracts," or commonalities, among the collected data. The majority of data analysis took place during the construction of a collective

meaning, where my interpretations of the participants' testimonies developed one inclusive story (Chapman et. al., 2009). Author Paul Thompson (2000) states that "to make generalization possible, we must wrench the evidence on each issue from a whole series of interviews, reassembling it to view it from a new angle…and in doing so, place a new meaning on it" (p. 269). According to Chapman et. al. (2009), the collective meaning comprises the whole picture as evidenced by the data collected. In the collective meaning, the researcher's interpretations of the each participant's testimonies are combined to form one story. In this case, a group of testimonies were utilized to portray a larger community (Thompson, 2000). The collective meaning centered on the story told by the answers given to each question, which in turn constructed a story concerning the processes and methods of fashion and dress curators. The collective meaning consists of brief "quotations, with evidence from one interview compared with that from another…argument and cross-analysis are clearly essential for any systematic development of the interpretation" of data (Thompson, 2000). In the collective meaning, a narrative mode of analysis was utilized, in which a cluster of perspectives were combined to form a broad interpretation of the practices of fashion and dress curators (Thompson, 2000).

Oral testimonies are an effective research method for gaining insight into collective practices and behaviors. In this study, the objectives center on the understanding of fashion and dress exhibitions and curatorial work within recent history in the United Kingdom and the United States. Through oral testimonies with individual participants, it is possible to understand the larger community present within the field of fashion and dress curatorial work.

Objectives

This study sought to answer the following objectives:

I. To understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of the curator responsible for the exhibitions.

II. To understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions through the viewpoint of fashion and dress curators.

III. To understand the recent history of curatorial work within the fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums.

Methodology

Qualitative case studies informed by oral testimony were utilized to explore the motivations of individuals who are employed by museums as dress and fashion curators within a fashion and dress department. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) defined a case study as "a type of qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, program, or event, for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation" (p. 108). The poorly understood situation of this study references the practices and methods of fashion and dress curators. Case studies usually include one or a very small amount of subjects within their natural settings so the researcher may study them in-depth (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This case study involved eight participants.

Data Collection

Case studies utilize a wide range of data collection methods. These include "observations, interviews, appropriate written documents and/or audiovisual material" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010,

p. 164). My data collection may best be described as a real-life setting, a representative sample and brief field notes. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), "research that is conducted in the outside world, although it may not have the tight controls of a laboratory project, may be more valid in the sense that it yields results with broader applicability to other real-world contexts" (p. 99). I observed the methods of dress curators at the V&A during a two-week research trip. I utilized a representative sample, consisting of eight fashion and dress curators, which enabled me to approach conclusions about fashion and dress curators in general. Through analysis of the semi-structured in-depth interviews and in-field observations, themes or patterns became more evident and added credibility to the study. Along with added credibility to the study, multiple methods of data collection are more likely to reveal unanticipated information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

According to Flynn and Foster (2009), field notes are "mental notes, jotted logs/notes, and other data including observation notes, photographs, transcribed interviews, notes taken in an interview" (p. 306). Field notes have been utilized in studies in dress using an ethnographic approach. In 'King Herod's Masked Soldiers' by José Blanco F. and Raúl J. Vázquez-López, the researchers utilize an ethnographic approach. Through in-depth interviews with participants in the Masked Festival of Hatillo, the researchers were able to examine this unique group to gain better understanding of the festival. The researchers also analyzed artifacts, in this case the costumes worn during the festival, and utilized field notes in their ethnographic research (Blanco & Vázquez-López, 2010). While my study is not an ethnographic study, data collection through field notes can be beneficial in understanding overall themes and will allow for a more complete understanding than would be accomplished through one form of data collection.

Three individuals were observed and I conducted semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview questions to explore the motivations and processes used by dress and fashion curators. I observed three of the participants in their workplace setting to add supplemental information to the study. In "Sixties Dress Only! The Consumption of the Past in a Retro Scene" by Heike Jenss (2005), the author drew on participant observation during events in the 1960s while also conducting interviews with various members of the German sixties scene. In this article, Jenss uses observation along with interviews to add validity to the study concerning "the use and meaning of historic fashions and second hand dress in a particular youth culture" (pp. 177–178, 2005). By combining observation with in-depth interviews, I will be able to utilize triangulation. In triangulation, "multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 99). In my research, I used observation while at the V&A in hopes that the activities observed offered supplemental data to the in-depth interviews I conducted. Through observations in the field and in-depth interviews, I found common themes that appear in the data derived from both methods. In "Men Don't Wear Velvet You Know!" by Lomas (2009), the author relied on oral testimonies, which were collected through in-depth interviews, to form the basis of her research. Through in-depth interviews, Lomas was able to understand the shopping patterns and experiences of three homosexual men in London during the 1950s-early 1970s. In my research, in-depth interviews allowed me to gain insight into the practices of fashion and dress curators at museums in England and America.

In "Fashion in Context: Apparel Styles Worn by Young Women in the United States and South Korea in the 1970s" by Eundeok Kim and Jane Farrell-Beck (2005), the authors utilized in-depth interviews to explore the phenomenon of the spread of Western influences regarding

dress in the 1970s. The authors interviewed fifteen women who were all college students in the 1970s. Through their in-depth interviews, Kim and Farrell-Beck were able to explore the apparel style choices of young women in South Korea and the United States in the 1970s. In a similar manner, I utilized in-depth interviews in the style of oral testimonies to uncover important information regarding the practices and methods of fashion and dress curators in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Participants were recruited via electronic mail or letter mail. These participants were located through networking via personal internship experience, previous graduate students at UGA, and the relationships of various professors at UGA.

Data Analysis

Data analysis took place through the search for and extrapolation of common themes from each of the interviews conducted. Chapman et al. (2009) further discuss this process: "similar to thematic analysis, the researcher is searching or listening for the 'commonalities,' which in turn are the 'telling extracts'" (p. 479). It is during this stage of data analysis, where the researcher searches for commonalities, that the rigor of the method is substantiated by the ability to identify inconsistencies and cross-validate individual testimonies when compared with the interview set as a whole (Chapman et. al, 2009). According to Chapman et. al. (2009), the ability to validate the research comes from cross-analysis of the data. In this method of data analysis, the oral testimonies are regarded as the excavation site from which the researcher constructs an argument concerning certain patterns of behavior or events in the past. In this study, it was imperative that the researcher was able to view the patterns or inconsistencies present in the data collected as to construct a collective meaning regarding the practices and methods of fashion and

dress curators. The "telling extracts," also known as commonalities (Chapman et. al., 2009, p. 479), form the building blocks for the analysis of the collective meaning of the participants' oral testimonies.

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with curators of dress and fashion to firstly understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions while also gaining insight into the goals of the curators responsible for these exhibitions. During these interviews, I secondly aimed to understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions through the viewpoint of the fashion and dress curators. In my last series of questions, I offered questions with the goal of comprehending the history of curatorial work within the fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums. Through my questionnaire, I was able to answer the three objectives of my study.

Peer Debriefing

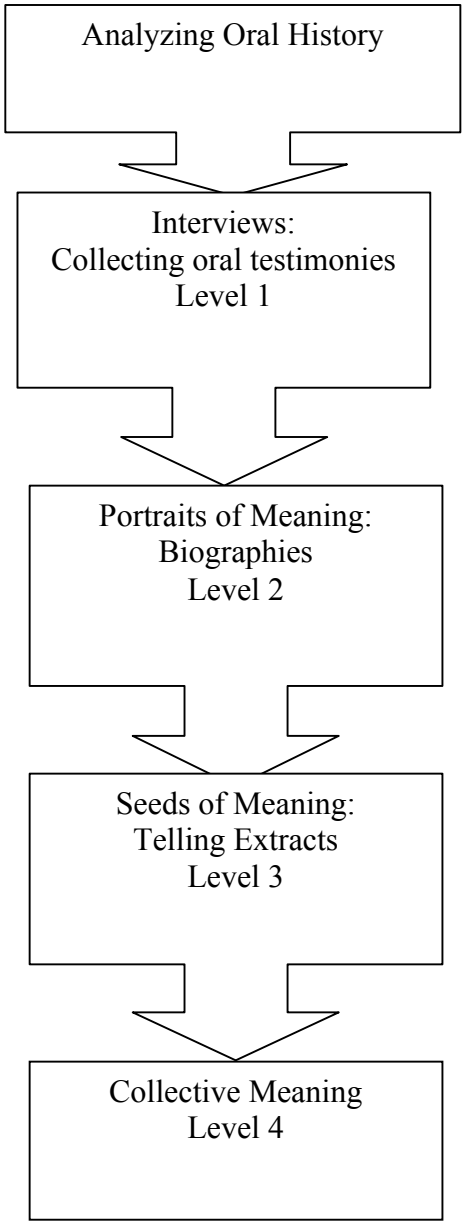
Peer debriefing, a technique used by qualitative researchers, allows peers of the researcher to review and evaluate transcripts, emerging categories from those transcripts, and final reports. Additionally, a peer acts as a critical investigator or auditor. The peers may detect whether or not a researcher has over-emphasized a point or missed legitimate topics of discussion. In general, the peer does a careful reading of the data and the final data analysis (Janesick, 2007). Numerous writers have suggested that utilizing peer debriefing enhances trustworthiness and credibility in a qualitative research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Creswell, 1998; Janesick, 2004).

For my research, I requested two graduate students from the University of Georgia's Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors to review my data. Each graduate student

carefully read through my ‘Data Analysis,’ ‘Discussion’ and ‘Conclusion and Implications.’ After conscientious editing of my final three chapters, the graduate students offered valuable insight into edits I needed to apply as well as important suggestions for further improvement of my discussion of the data collected.

It became apparent from each peer debriefing that I needed to clarify the way in which my interview with Oriole Cullen was conducted. My interview with Cullen was conducted without the aid of a recording device, therefore her comments were taken in note form. In the editing of the ‘Data Analysis,’ the graduate students commented on their confusion over the seemingly truncated comments made by Cullen. Therefore, I added a clarification of this within my ‘Data Analysis’ chapter. The formatting of the master interview set was also brought to my attention through peer debriefing. After reviewing the peer edits, I went through my master interview set and formatted the direct quotes correctly. Grammar and sentence structure inaccuracies were also brought to my attention and consequently resolved.

Figure 1 - Analyzing Oral History



CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Description of the Interviews

Data was collected utilizing in-depth interviews with four fashion and dress curators. Four more interviews were conducted in which I proposed three questions to the participants. This was a necessary measure for curators who were short of time during the data collection period. The following questions were proposed during the shortened interview:

I. As a curator, please describe the goals of some of your previous exhibitions.
II. Please describe how you develop ideas for exhibitions.
III. In your experience, how has the process you go through for exhibitions changed during your time as a dress curator?

These particular questions were chosen for the short interview because they covered each objective, while offering the opportunity for the greatest range of information to be obtained.

Explanation of the Data Analysis Process

Upon completion of all interviews, I compiled biographies for each participant. The construction of biographies was done as the second step in the four-step process described by Chapman et. al. in *Analysing Oral History: A New Approach When Linking Method to Methodology* (2009). By creating biographies, also known as portraits of meaning, I was able to place the curators on a continuum regarding their general views towards fashion and dress curatorial practices.

Following the construction of biographies, I compiled the data into one master interview set. This set contains pertinent quotes and information placed under the corresponding question subheading. As a result, any reader and myself may now look to the master interview set and view all answers given on a particular question. Within the master interview set, it may be important to note that my interview with Oriole Cullen was conducted without the aid of a recording device. As a result, her responses are written in note form, as I wrote quickly during our interview to record her words. A master interview set was compiled as the third step in the process described by Chapman et. al. (2009), where I attempted to discover telling extracts from the data collected. By placing the data in a continuous document I was able to discover commonalities or inconsistencies among the data. The telling extracts were extracted from the document and placed into numerous tables, each assigned titles to correspond with the many topics of the study. Through the use of these tables, I was able to clearly understand the commonalities or inconsistencies among data. Three of the tables is included in this section to facilitate understanding of the method utilized for analysis; the remaining two tables are presented in Appendix D and Appendix E.

The findings present in step three enabled the telling of one inclusive story, or a collective meaning. In Chapter V, a collective meaning is presented where I make connections between the data collected and constructed a general understanding of the practices and methods of fashion and dress curators.

Portraits of Meaning

Sonnet Stanfill

At the time interviews were conducted, Sonnet Stanfill was a Curator of 20th Century and

Contemporary Fashion at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. She has held this position for nearly seven years. Stanfill began her career in fashion and dress history with an MA from the Courtauld Institute in London following a BA in Art History from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. After completing her MA at the Courtauld, Stanfill volunteered at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York two days a week, while simultaneously volunteering at the Museum of the City of New York two days a week. She then moved back to London where she completed a six-month internship at Kensington Palace. After six months at Kensington Palace, Stanfill began work at the V&A as an assistant curator. Stanfill worked as an assistant curator for four years; she then began working in her current position as a Curator of 20th Century and Contemporary Fashion.

During her time at the V&A, Stanfill has curated fashion and dress exhibitions including Ossie Clark (2003) and New York Fashion Now (2007). During the summer of 2010, Stanfill was working, in conjunction with her colleague, Oriole Cullen, on an upcoming exhibition and accompanying catalogue centering on ball gowns from 1950 – 2011, with a focus on British designers. This exhibition, titled Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 (2012), will coincide with the 2012 London Olympics and the celebration for the Queen's Jubilee in an effort to display the sartorial capabilities of British designers while simultaneously attracting large crowds of tourists in town for the Olympics. An exhibition catalogue will be published to coincide with the exhibition (Cullen & Stanfill, 2012).

Stanfill has published the exhibition catalogue New York Fashion (2007) along with an article in *Fashion's World Cities* (Breward & Gilbert, 2006), entitled "Curating the Fashion City: New York style at the V&A." In this article, Stanfill discussed the way the V&A represented the design tradition of a major fashion city, in this case New York City, within a museum in London.

In “New York Fashion Now” (2007), Stanfill utilized a limited selection of garments to construct a narrative about a ‘New York Look’ (Breward & Gilbert, 2006, p.29). “Punks and Pirates: the Costiff Collection of Vivienne Westwood” in *The Fashion Reader* (Stanfill, 2011) is an academic article which discusses a collection of nearly three hundred Vivienne Westwood garments, which were acquired by the V&A in 2002 after over twenty years of collecting by Michael and Gerlinde Costiff.

Stanfill utilizes standard curatorial practices, such as informative wall text, when it comes to planning and implementing fashion and dress exhibitions. Stanfill believes the purpose of the collection at the V&A is to teach visitors about the history of clothing and textiles in an exciting and informative way. She is a proponent of standard exhibition elements such as wall text, yet she also embraces new trends such as the trend for the inclusion of interactive elements within fashion and dress exhibitions. While she has not included interactive elements within the exhibitions she has curated in the past, she spoke fondly of the use of interactive elements within exhibitions curated by Oriole Cullen as well as Claire Wilcox, such as Hats: An Anthology (2009) and Radical Fashion (2001-2002).

Judith Clark

Judith Clark, who currently works with Amy de la Haye as a Co-Director of the MA Fashion Curation program at the London College of Fashion, obtained an Honors BS degree in Architecture from the Bartlett School of Architecture in London. In 1992, Clark received a History and Theory Graduate Diploma from the Architectural Association Graduate School in London.

Following research on housing problems in Mumbai, India, Clark began her career in the art world. In 1998, Clark completed work in the installation and design of the millinery section of the exhibition Addressing the Century: 100 years of Art and Fashion (1998-99) at the Hayward Gallery in London. In August 1997, Clark opened the Judith Clark Costume Gallery in Notting Hill, London. The privately owned gallery space, which focused on mounting fashion and dress exhibitions, remained open until September 2002. In her gallery space, Clark staged twenty-one exhibitions dedicated to fashion and costume. Upon the closing of the Judith Clark Costume Gallery, Clark continued to work in fashion and dress exhibitions. Clark completed several exhibitions including Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back (2004) at the ModeMuseum Antwerp in Belgium, Anna Piaggi: Fashion-ology (2006) at the V&A, Simonetta la Prima Donna (2008) at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, Italy, and The Concise Dictionary of Dress (2010) at the Blythe House in London.

Clark has published numerous exhibition catalogues, including *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* (2004), *Anna Piaggi: Fashion-ology* (2006), *Simonetta: La Prima Donna della Moda Italiana* (Caratozzolo, Clark & Frisa, 2008) and *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* (2010). An example of a published article by Clark includes “Looking Forward. Historical Futurism” (2001).

In regards to fashion and dress exhibitions, Clark is well known for her conceptual and thought-provoking exhibitions. In The Concise Dictionary of Dress (2010), which was staged at the Blythe House, the off-site storage facility for the V&A as well as the Science Museum London and the British Museum, Clark worked with psychoanalyst Adam Philips to explore the various meanings of words commonly associated with clothing. At the end of the exhibition catalogue, there is a question and answer section where professionals from the field of fashion

and dress history posed questions to Clark and Philips, which they in turn answered. In one question, Clark discussed the process of pairing garments with the chosen words. She mentions that at one time, Clark and Philips thought about leaving this pairing up to chance by simply throwing cards with the definitions written on them in the air and pairing them with the installations in an unreasoned, or blind, sense (Clark & Phillips, 2010). While they ultimately did not use this method, it is rather unconventional and displays Clarks' ability to think beyond commonly utilized curatorial practices.

Claire Wilcox

Claire Wilcox currently works at the V&A as a Senior Curator in the fashion and textiles department. In 1999, Wilcox devised the live event, 'Fashion in Motion,' which originally featured the work of contemporary fashion designers worn by models who would walk through the gallery space at the V&A. Currently, the 'Fashion in Motion' events feature the work of contemporary designers in a fashion show format which is usually staged in the Raphael Gallery of the V&A. Wilcox began her education at Exeter University in Exeter, United Kingdom, where she obtained her BA Honors in English Literature. She then completed a BA Honors program at the Camberwell College of Arts, University of London. Between degrees, Wilcox worked at the V&A from 1979-1983. She then worked as a freelance curator until 1999, when she began working at the V&A again.

Wilcox has curated numerous exhibitions, including Satellites of Fashion (1998), Radical Fashion (2001), The art and craft of Gianni Versace (Buss, Mendes & Wilcox, 2002), Vivienne Westwood: A Retrospective (2004), and The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-1957 (2007). For each exhibition, Wilcox has published exhibition catalogues. Other published

books include *A Century of Bags: Icons of Style in the 20th Century* (1997), *Modern Fashion in Detail* (1998), and *Bags* (2008). Her most recent book, *The Ambassador: Fashion and Trade in Post-War Britain*, of which she is a co-editor, will be published in 2012 (Designers & Books).

Wilcox works mostly within the standard practices of curatorial work in fashion and dress exhibitions, with Radical Fashion (2001) serving as an example of a departure towards a more experimental fashion and dress exhibition. In this exhibition, Wilcox focused on 'radical' designers such as Hussein Chalayan, Comme des Garçons, Alexander McQueen and Jean Paul Gaultier. In this exhibition, Wilcox allowed each designer featured in the exhibition to have a specific space within the gallery. She then gave each designer the freedom to design their space however they want, as well as choose which ensembles would go into their space. By empowering the designer with the ability to have artistic control over how their clothing was displayed, Wilcox helped usher in a new era of fashion and dress curatorial work, where the curators are redefining what it means to be a curator within the field of fashion and dress.

Oriole Cullen

Oriole Cullen currently works at the V&A as a Curator of Modern Textiles and Fashion. Cullen earned an MA from the Courtauld Institute in London, which she took on because it served as an extension of her interests in Art History. Following the completion of the MA program, Cullen worked at the Costume Institute at the Met with Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton on the exhibition Goddess (2003). Cullen then joined the V&A in 2006, where she has since worked on numerous exhibitions.

During her time at the V&A, Cullen curated the exhibition, Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones (2009), which coincided with the publication of the exhibition catalogue of the

same title. Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones (Cullen & Jones, 2009) traveled to the Queensland Art Gallery in Australia and the Bard Graduate Center in New York City. She has also completed work on the book *V&A Pattern: Pop Pattern* (Cullen, 2010). Cullen is currently working on the upcoming Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 exhibition at the V&A, in partnership with her coworker Sonnet Stanfill. The exhibition is set to open May 19, 2012 and will remain open until January 6, 2013 (The Victoria and Albert Museum a).

Cullen's style of curating fashion and dress exhibitions tends to utilize standard curatorial practices by including wall text and interactive elements. While planning Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones (2009), Cullen worked in conjunction with Jones to curate the exhibition. Collaboration with the living designer is an unusual approach to curating a fashion and dress exhibition, but it has been tried in the past as well as the present. Currently, the Met is planning an exhibition entitled Elsa Schiaparelli and Miuccia Prada: On Fashion, which is set to open during the summer of 2012 (Milligan, 2012). Miuccia Prada is still actively working as the head designer of the Prada brand, and has vocalized her opinion of the upcoming exhibition.

> It's too formal. They are focused on similarities, comparing feather with feather, ethnic with ethnic, but they are not taking into consideration that we are talking about two different eras, and that [Schiaparelli and I] are total opposite. I told them, but they don't care. (Milligan, 2012)

As evidenced by the concern of Prada, producing an exhibition centered on a living designer or milliner can prove difficult due to the input and opinions of that particular designer.

Clare Sauro

Clare Sauro, who currently works at Drexel University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, received her Honors BA in Liberal Studies from the State University of New York College in Oswego, New York. She then completed an MA in Museum Studies: Costume and Textiles at

the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Following the MA program at FIT, Sauro began working at the Museum at FIT (MFIT). She first worked part-time as a technologist, where she dressed historic and contemporary garments for archival photography, researched accession numbers and maintained photographic logs of items in the museum collection. Following three years in this position, Sauro became a preparator in the museum registrar's department. In this role, Sauro was responsible for the shipping and receiving of incoming and outgoing materials, as well as preparing objects for shipping from the museum. After two years as a preparator, Sauro became a curatorial assistant, a position she held for two years. Sauro then became an assistant curator in the Costume Collection at FIT, where she co-curated Dutch at the Edge of Design: Fashion and Textiles from the Netherlands (2005). She was also involved in object selection and installation, loan facilitation and exhibition design for the exhibitions The Couture Accessory (2002), Designing the It Girl: Lucile and Her Style (2005), Lilly Daché: Glamour at the Drop of a Hat (2007) and Sole Desire: The Shoes of Christian Louboutin (2008). Sauro also assisted with object research and selection for Fashioning the Modern Woman: The Art of the Couturière, 1919-1939 (2004).

While working as an assistant curator, Sauro wrote extended catalogue entries for *Love and War: The Weaponized Woman* (Fashion Institute of Technology, 2006) and *Ralph Rucci: The Art of Weightlessness* (Mears, Sauro & Steele, 2007). She has contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (Steele, 2005), and the exhibition catalogue for *Cocktail Couture: Ritual and Invention in American Fashion, 1920-1980* (Fenston, Hannel, Ingersoll & Sauro, 2011) and *Arbiters of Style: Women at the Forefront of Fashion* (Fashion Institute of Technology, Hill, Sorkin, 2008).

In her current position as a Curator of the Drexel Historic Costume Collection in Philadelphia, Sauro has curated the exhibitions Rest Your Feet (2008) and Brave New World: Fashion and Freedom, 1911-1919 (2011). She has also researched and assessed storage and conservation needs for the collection of more than 10,000 objects. Sauro is also responsible for all acquisitions and deaccessions, donor and lender relations and media inquiries.

Sauro's style of curating tends to include standard practices for fashion and dress exhibitions. As she currently works as a curator of the Drexel Historic Costume Collection, she attempts to strike a balance between a historical and art/craft based approach. Because she works at an educational institution, she consistently tries to incorporate an educational component that supports the degree programs at Drexel University into her exhibitions.

Kevin Jones

Kevin Jones is currently a curator at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum (FIDMM) in Los Angeles, California. He received an Associate of Arts in Fashion Design from the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM) and a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Following graduation from the University of California, Jones began work as a coordinator on the Art Museum Council of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), where he worked for nearly a year. He then began work at FIDMM as a collections manager, a position he held for three years. As the collections manager, Jones assisted curators and visiting scholars while maintaining the daily needs of storage, care and retrieval within the FIDMM collections. In 2002, Jones became a curator at FIDMM, where he has completed work on numerous exhibitions, including: FABULOUS!: FIDM Museum Acquisitions, 2000-2010

(2011), High Style: Betsy Bloomingdale and the *Haute Couture* (2009), Aesthetes, Bohemians & Craftsmen: Artistic Dress, 1880s-1920s (2008), Fashionable Dress in an Artistic Landmark: The Gamble House, c. 1908 (2008), Fashion Makes Scents (2006), Hollywood Master Designers of the Golden Age (2004), Mourning Glory: Fashion's Untimely Demise (2003), RUDI Gernreich (2003), and Revolution & Evolution: Women's Daywear through a Century of Change, 1840-1940 (2002).

Jones has published two exhibition catalogues, including *FABULOUS!: FIDM Museum Acquisitions, 2000-2010* (Johnson & Jones, 2011) and *High Style: Betsy Bloomingdale and the Haute Couture* (Johnson, Jones & Sanderson, 2009). Jones also published the article "'Good Time' and Passing Time: A Conversation with Betsy Bloomingdale" in *Vestoj, The Journal of Sartorial Matters* in 2009.

The curatorial style Jones follows lies within standard museum practices regarding fashion and dress exhibitions. He is a strong believer in providing the visitor with information in the form of wall text, and at the very least tombstone information, which includes the basic information regarding a piece of clothing; the object title, date, place, materials, etc. He also believes in making the pertinent exhibition information easily accessible for the visitors. Jones believes in developing exhibitions by looking into the collections strong or weak points and then developing an exhibition idea. He may also start to acquire items the collection lacks, thus building an exhibition around those acquisitions. Jones encourages the usefulness of the FIDMM blog, which has gained a strong following through the continuous postings regarding fashion and dress.

Other Participants

Two participants in this study do not wish to be identified. These two participants have

completed work on major exhibitions at two different large-scale museums in the United States. They have both worked in fashion and dress curatorial departments for numerous years and have gained extensive experience within the field. Their interviews offered valuable information regarding the methods and procedures utilized by fashion and dress curators within the United States.

Telling Extracts

In step two of the data analysis process described by Chapman et. al. (2009), I attempted to discover commonalities or inconsistencies among the data collected. From the data collected, I compiled a master interview set to enable ease in discovering telling extracts from all interview participants. The master interview set is presented below, along with a key that explains the notations made within the master interview. Following the master interview set, three documents were constructed with specific themes, which were discovered through analysis of the master interview set, one of which is represented after the master interview set.

Answers from All Interviews

Key:

CS = Clare Sauro

CW = Claire Wilcox

JC = Judith Clark

KJ = Kevin Jones

OC = Oriole Cullen

SS = Sonnet Stanfill

UA = Unidentified A

UB = Unidentified B

JS = Jessica Schwartz (Researcher)

JB = José Blanco (Advisor)

I. Introduction: professional life

   a. The data collected pertaining to the professional lives of each participant was presented in the portraits of meanings.

II. Types of fashion and dress exhibitions and goals of curators (Objective #1)

   a. As a curator, please describe the goals of some of your previous exhibitions.

SS: Well, um, my first, I've done two displays here. The first one was Ossie Clark, which was, uh, a kind of, sort of a summary of his life and work, which was appropriate for the space that it was in because he was only active for about ten years but he was very influential during that time. And the, I think the goal of that exhibition, or that display was to put on something that was really lively and appealing but also satisfying the ambitions of the main lender, he was somebody who had, his name was Alfred Radley, and he had been the, I guess Ossie Clark's business partner. Much older guy, um, who had his clothing company, manufacturing company, had produced the Ossie Clark diffusion range, which was called Ossie Clark for Radley. So with that project we had to satisfy a very demanding external lender, who I think was thinking about posterity. And, um, but to his credit he was the reason why the exhibition happened, he lent to the show from his fantastic collection and was, um, very supportive of the project so, uh, so that show was really about diplomacy, I would have to say, and putting on something that was very entertaining. So that was the goal, and I think the goal with most of our fashion exhibitions is to

walk the balance between um, lively and entertaining projects but that also have uh, an intellectual rigor to them.

SS: And, um, my next was the New York Fashion Now, and the aim with that show was to introduce the British public to designers that they might not know, because um, I think in the UK, New York designers are kind of disparaged because they're viewed as very commercial and um, but when in reality what their talent is is providing, designing clothes for a population that needs casual, easy separates and it's not, um, about avant garde, creative fashions in the way that London is. So it was a way to bring the kind of latest talent of New York to London and I think we succeeded in that, um, so yeah…

SS: And in Ballgowns (Laughter), the aim of the Ballgowns show is to fill a big space with big dresses that will be popular, appealing to a wide audience and uh, would have a lot of sort of celeb appeal.

JC: Um, I think in terms of visitors, the gallery, it was, it was like, doing something, very much in a way, in a lonely way, to start off with. Um, because it was 1997, and not knowing quite who was participating in these kinds of projects other than in the institutions. So I knew who was working as curators in the sort of major institutions, but there was no opportunity to do this sort of outside, sort of extramural, um, so I think the idea at the time was to sort of open it, of course alert these people to its existence and sort of hope for the best and see, and a lot of people actually then contacted me because I didn't have a lot of contacts, it's not like I started with this networking book.

JC: You know at all, and I…a lot of the people I was writing to I'd never set eyes on, so they'd walk into the gallery and I wouldn't know who they were because I didn't know what they looked like. You know, I'd see their name on a book or something and I'd just…and it was only when they sort of signed the visitors book, you know that I'd feel like chasing them down the road, you know because I'd realize that that was the guy who'd done that book or whatever so it was very sort of, um, making it up as I, as you go along, as I'm sure everybody knows. And it was a very small space, it was about nine meters by four meters, and so it was possible to do experiments, sometimes very cheaply and sometimes I'd be able to raise some money so I'd have a bigger, I would send out a bigger mailing list, and so it was very hand to mouth. Um, but the great privilege of that time was that there were people like, you know, Caroline Evans and Christopher Breward and people um, who were really immersed in it and wanted to have other conversations about it and in a way they weren't as known then, because it is you know fifteen years ago, whenever, so they weren't quite as sort of mobile as they are now, so we'd have seminars there and I'd hire, I don't know thirty chairs or something, and we'd sit around and talk about things and it was really incredible for me, it was like the best version of what I could've dreamt of was actually there and people like the jeweler…who I subsequently worked with, literally came through the door with her CV, saying you know, "I would like to do an exhibition," or things like that, who I'd never met before, who I had no way of really meeting because I came through an architecture school, so these were not my colleagues. Um, so I think that, the visitors were people, it was on a small street, it was in Notting Hill, which was getting sort of fashionable at the time, but it was still, even though I think people think "Oh it was Notting Hill and so it was so hip," it was actually on a side street and as you know, if

something's on a side street, people don't go there. So there were days when I'd be sitting there by myself all day, with my cup of coffee thinking, "Is this worth it?"

JC: And the desire to be surprised and to be taught things and to be taught, sometimes quite specific things in terms of dress history. And so then, I guess my project was to say, well, they're coming with an expectation to learn about dress history, and a love of dress history, and what I want to do to them at that point is to signal that the installation is as vocal as the objects, and so to surprise them in a sense in that way, not through drama, but just through how the connections between the objects were being made.

JC: Um, and then again I think the visitors, some went through and said, "Isn't this a beautiful Dior gown," or whatever, I mean, you can't, you can't tell a, as you know as well as me, you can't tell a visitor what to learn or what to see. But you can, um, you can supply something else, which then, again I feel it's very word of mouth and that there's a sort of group of people who are really interested in fashion museology and some who go and you know, love the clothes, which is fantastic, but it's a different conversation, so I think visitors take all sorts of things from…

…

JB: I mean, I think more in the past, but even still somehow at many museums, curators and particularly education departments are obsessed with the idea that you know, there's something essential that you're supposed to be shown in the exhibit so have you seen a change, like since you've been working, curators, education departments being more open to the fact that the exhibit doesn't have a chronology or doesn't have a detailed ending?

JC: Yeah, definitely. I think at the beginning, and I think this is also why Amy and I want to go back, um, you know, at least forty years if not more in the book, is to say we're standing on the shoulder of other, you know, curators, um, and dress historians. In that I think they had a lot of, um, they had a responsibility or they felt they had a responsibility making this subject worthwhile, you know getting the gallery dedicated to it at all, you know, um, you can see where the Costume Institute is in the basement, so this has worked to make it a valid subject, um, when a lot of courses didn't exist and you know they were doing it, um, really as, sort of militantly, and I think we have a huge luxury of sort of, them having done a lot of work in terms of this is a serious subject, and then we can, in a sense, play with that thematically and intellectually, you know, we can say "well, we're taking it from this angle," with the knowledge that now, most people accept it's a valid thing to do. You know, that it sort of is a subject. Um, so, I think there is this shift.

…

JC: Um, but I think there are some departments, for example at the Met, that I think have invested in their installation, and I think from Diana Vreeland in the sense that they have acknowledged a sort of commercial um, more marketable art, and it's associated with Von Davies, you know and they just have different um, yeah they have different goals. Whereas MoMu in Antwerp have always remained experimental, you know they want, they are building a reputation on their relationship with the Antwerp designers and with creating, um, exhibitions that are, that have a sort of avant garde narrative, i.e. a disruptive one, not a necessarily coherent one. Um the V&A are lucky because they've got a permanent collection as well, and so you can always have both in the building, which I think opens up a huge number of opportunities because if you're doing a temporary exhibition you're not saying let's not have a permanent one, whereas

at the Met, of course they no longer have a, they don't have a permanent one anymore so you're, it also needs to be all things to all people um, so I think there are, and even in Antwerp apparently there's a lot of pressure by the um, local government to have a permanent exhibition in there as well because they feel that it's not teaching enough you know, in terms of dress history and so they want, even though it's in their archive and their archive is open and students can use their archive, I think they're incredible in terms of their historic resources, the local government wants it to be more explicit. Um, so, it's a difficult question to answer.

OC: For audience - great experience, learn something new and see things that make you stop, look and say "wow, that's impressive" – goals of exhibits; Some visitors don't want to learn; Has to look good and appealing.

UA: To educate the public through the display of art…each exhibition and curatorial team sets their own unique goals on what kind of information we wish to disseminate and with what objects from our collection (or vice versa)…our goal was to create a show that would inaugurate this collection and make it viewable to the public for the first time…we selected pieces that we felt represented the collection best (this collection is too large to display all of it at once), then we built our themes around the pieces.

CS: I believe that clothing and fashion are both an important decorative art forms and expression of material culture. In my exhibits I try to strike a balance between a history and art/craft approach. I try alternate between the two to keep a balance. As a university collection I always try to have an educational component, which supports the degree programs at Drexel University.

KJ: Uh, well for the Fabulous Exhibition, the goals were for the first time get out every type of object the museum collects into the gallery space. And to really, because we collect menswear, womenswear, childrenswear, uh, textiles, accessories, fragrance packaging, jewelry, ephemera, you know so it was the first time we've ever shown all of those objects together, and also you know, since it's a decade, a ten year time period, it's a lot easier to do that because we can focus on the object that we know will be immediately acquired.

KJ: And also to celebrate our donors, uh, you know, it's a way of getting stuff out, donors who are still alive, still around, uh, still interested in the museum, uh and they, it's a good PR with them, um also the objects that the museum has purchased, often many times there's objects that the funding for those objects has come from the individuals who originally were object donors to us.

KJ: So they saw the value of the museum, what we were doing, the educational components, and decided to further their involvement with the museum and to support us financially. So if I find an object and I like it very much, and I can sometimes approach a donor and they will then acquire that object for us, whereas we would not be able to acquire it because the funds would not be available.

KJ: It's developing relationships.

KJ: I think it's a universal idea because it's making connections, personal connections. Yes, you have the odd person contact you and they have something and they just want to get rid of it, you

know, and it might just be something that is really desirable and then you never hear from them again. Over the last thirty-four years, we've had more than a thousand donors, most of them I've never heard of, I don't even know who they are, they just donated thirty years ago or twenty-five years ago, or twenty years ago, and that was a one off kind of deal. But then you do have those individuals who become, frankly, emotionally connected to the museum and, uh, those are the people that you, you know you court.

b. Please describe the goals of your current, or in-process, exhibits.

CW: So I revisited the principles of what this display was going to be all about and how to achieve it and through consultation with visitors and also through complaints and letters praising us, the one thing that the visitor wants with this display is chronology. And we do experiment with breaking chronology and using themes and people just very much appreciate chronology. I think it's the one certainty in life, is that time goes on. Um, we are starting the display in the 1750s, and that's because we've got early dressing display elsewhere in the museum, in our permanent galleries such as the British Galleries and the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries. But also because in a way the fashion system as we understand it began to operate strongly in the mid 18th century and another reason is that the older objects are more fragile and require a bit of conservation. Because this is a fast project, we don't have the opportunity to conserve very fragile objects.

UA: we are currently working on a major exhibition on men's wear, 1760 – contemporary. No major exhibition has been done to date that examines primarily men's wear. Currently our goal is

to show that the movements in men's aesthetic – both ostentatious and not – have been reoccurring through time.

CS: The DHCC does not have a dedicated exhibition space and we are currently fundraising for a new building. The DHCC is a collection that has been relatively dormant for the past 2 decades and as a curator my exhibition goal is to raise public awareness. The recent exhibition, Brave New World: Fashion and Freedom, 1911-1919*,* was timed to coordinate with PIFA (Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts) and garner greater publicity than a university exhibition usually receives.

UB: My goal as a curator is to educate the public about history, specifically focusing on fashion and textiles using a theme that is timely, interesting, and engaging.

KJ: Um, no because you know what? It's the same work over and over and over, it's just a different title and different objects. You know, the ultimate goal is to work on something that is of interest to the museum, uh, showcases either a strength of the museum or you develop an exhibition idea that is, uh, a component that your museum is weak on, so you have to have a certain amount of time that you can really focus and build up that weaker side of your collection.

KJ: Uh, because you know you can talk to people about it, you're doing research, you're looking for objects either to purchase or to borrow, and it kind of, you start to become known for working on a specific project and then people start to think "oh! I'm doing research and I come across something oh, Kevin would like that," or that would help him or "oh I found this object,

you know, are you interested in it?" So there's all sorts of different reasons to develop a specific project, there's always politics involved, or can be involved, you know, that you get pulled into an exhibition that you know, you're frankly not really interested in but you've got to work on it. But at the same time you know that by doing that you're going to be given the opportunity to do something you're very interested in later on. So that, it bounces back and forth but the main thing is to uh, have your galleries filled so you have people coming into your museum, it's just the, the privilege of being a curator that often you get to direct what goes into, what those exhibitions are because of your interests.

c. Please describe the various areas of fashion and dress exhibitions (e.g. retrospectives, historical, conceptual, etc.)

UA: I don't believe that we have a catalog of "types" of exhibitions we do, but I think you [are] correct that, generally, fashion exhibitions tend to be either retrospective, historical, conceptual, or a blend of these. Our department tends to be more conceptual, with historical and retrospective themes within.

d. Do you have a preference for a certain type of exhibition? Please explain.

SS: Hm. Um, I think, well I'm not sure that I do have a preference. I've worked on a retrospective I guess, which was the Ossie Clark although ten years it's hard to call that a retrospective, it was his life's work. Um, and then New York Fashion Now, I'm not sure if that would be, I'm not quite sure how you would classify that but, I guess I really enjoy, because I'm working on now a pre-proposal for an exhibition on Italian fashion and I kind of like this idea of exploring a geographical area. In some ways it's an easy category but in other ways it's very

satisfying because you can make connections between designers and how one influences the other, if they're designing simultaneously. And um, and also you can explore the infrastructure between designer and manufacturer uh, accessories maker, you know, so it's a really, I find that very satisfying. I guess the kind of geographical themed, uh, themed project. But um, you know, I'm still, been here since '99, and um, I've got many hopeful years ahead to do many types of shows.

UA: It really just depends on the topic. The objects themselves dictate where the exhibition will go.

UB: I prefer exhibits that are somewhat thematic; they are contextual and paint a picture of the story being told. I believe this gives the exhibition purpose as it makes it accessible to a broader audience. Many studies say that the typical visitor does not read labels and didactics. They may be true but but [sic] think they should nevertheless be available for those audiences who would like to learn more than what is apparent in the visual display of the garment/object. I think this is especially true for dress exhibitions whose academic or fine art merit is still debated.

KJ: Um, hm, I like working on any type of an exhibition that has nineteenth century dress in it. You know, I love the nineteenth century so I try to pull in as much of that as possible. Now you can't just always do exhibitions on nineteenth century dress, but um, and also I love the haute couture so for me it's working with that level of object, you know, for us, we are a design museum so it's the strong aspect of design for any type of object that we collect, and how it reads

in it's given time period, to me, that is what is exciting about working on our exhibitions, no matter what the themes are, it's the fact that we're bringing out the best of design of a given era.

KJ: Um, you know, we're not a history museum, so frankly I don't care who wore something, we always collect that type of information.

KJ: But, if I were working at the Smithsonian, I would have a totally different mindset about putting exhibitions together because it's historical based. Uh, you know, so it just, the focus of the design is something that is personally of interest to me and always has been, so it's a good fit for me to work at the FIDM museum because that's what we focus on in our exhibitions.

III. Current curatorial processes (Objective #2)

a. Please describe how you develop ideas for exhibitions

SS: Well, um, I would say that the exhibition program at the V&A, probably like any museum is, is a complicated jigsaw puzzle. And I wish that I could say that the fashion curators sit in our office and concoct the plan and present it to the museum as a fete de compli but in reality, um, the programming of all exhibitions, including fashion, and everything from small displays to major shows, goes through an exhibition, they call it a public planning group. And, um, the people that sit on that group are very savvy in terms of what, of balancing the programs of offerings in the museum. Everything from a display of exhibitions in the big hall to the smaller displays in the contemporary space to the photography gallery so they have a whole, a whole kind of master plan and they also know what types of shows work well in what season, because of the summer season, and also they keep tabs on what's happening all over the world in terms of

exhibition topics and what's going on where. And so, um, so sometimes it's a very, it's almost like alchemy. You know, it's a kind of very intuitive process for the public planning group as to what, what should go when on the calendar. So, you know, I've put forward proposals in the past, which I thought were great, but the public planning group said that's not really going to work, or it's not the right time, or come back in a few years. So um, but in terms of what we try to contribute to the public program, um, a lot of it has to do with external forces. Sometimes people come to us, like with the Ossie Clark show, and say "Oh my God Ossie Clark's the most important designer from the '60s and '70s why haven't you done a retrospective?" And then someone in the museum says, "Yeah, I agree with that, let's explore that." And so, sometimes it's external people coming to us with an idea, but more often it's, um, ideally it's a curator working with a part of the collection they're really passionate about and putting forward what they think is a winning proposal. And that, I would suspect, is the majority of the cases. Is one of us sitting down and thinking, "You know what? I really want to do an exhibition on Italian fashion." It always has to be supported by a very good collection because if we go, if we have to rely on loans, it becomes very expensive. And so, if it's something that you're passionate about, that's supported by the collection, that hasn't been done before, that has broad appeal, because there are many things we would be excited to do but that no one would come to see. (Laughter) Our kind of geeky little passions, um, so you know, it is a lot like alchemy, you know you kind of have to put all the ingredients into the mix and see if it will work. Um, but an idea, in the ideal world it is curators putting forward things that they're passionate about and hopefully that also corresponds to what the museum thinks would be popular and would justify the effort and money spent. So, um, I'm sure every museum's different but all of us, when we have ideas, um, in this department, talk about it with each other and then if we all think it's good it goes to the public

program group and then hopefully they also think it's good and then it…they don't always, they don't always like it.

OC: Why this topic and why now – two key questions asked in beginning of exhibit process; Present idea to review boards, trustees, etc. before idea is accepted.

CW: I think, um, ideas for major exhibitions in a museum, which are sort of an enormous investment of time and funding into them, are not taken lightly. They are decided by a committee, but they're driven by the passion of the curator. And we, we um, the museum likes to have a headline show every three to four years of fashion and I've actually curated all the headline shows really for the last decade. And in each case, except for one, the decision has been made, it's been in the air and it's sort of evolved. The very first one I did actually there was a cancellation and the head of exhibitions asked if I had any ideas and I had a great idea and I did that but…and that was called Radical Fashion, that was in 2001…but the next three, which was, um, Versace at the V&A, 2002, Vivienne Westwood, 2004, The Golden Age of Couture, 2007, they really emerged from a combination of the feeling for that particular exhibition being in the air. There's something intangible. It's this like…you're picking up on it. It's also about, um, the particular curators passions…it's very important, you really can't curate a good show unless you're absolutely passion about it. You can learn passion. I mean, when I was asked to do Versace, it wouldn't have been my first choice. But I learned passion about Versace…very, very interesting. Going to Milan, and understanding how the family couture business works. And so, that's, I guess headline shows like this are sort of a distillation of ideas.

UA: Ideas typically begin with the objects that we want to display. From there we tinker with concepts or themes to use as a guide as we go through our collection. We typically create a storyboard with images of the objects so that we can visually organize the pieces. A thematic thread eventually comes out of this process and then an order of the objects and an object checklist is born.

CS: I believe strongly in an object-based approach. In the past I have worked on exhibitions where we started with the concept and then found the objects to display. This felt forced and unethical even when the exhibition was a success. Furthermore, my current budget is extremely limited so I can't borrow from other institutions or private lenders (loan fees and shipping costs are too much) so I must utilize the existing objects in the DHCC.

UB: Themes for exhibitions curated by the junior staff at my former institution were more often than not 'suggested' by the director. It was then the responsibility of the curatorial staff assigned to the exhibition to develop a proposal based on what we thought the director had in mind.

KJ: And it's also timely, you know you've got something that's going on in the world or the design field or the fashion field, um, and you kind of, that becomes everybody's idea of what to work on at that given time. Also trends, you know, it's sportswear so everybody starts doing sportswear or something like that. I try to kind of stay away from some of that because it becomes, it's really hard to do a timely show. For one thing, um, people's attention spans and associations with the media are so fast now that if you try to do something that is of the moment, especially because an exhibition, if you really do one that has a lot of meat in it, takes two to

three years to develop. And especially if you have a catalogue or something like that, oh, that's so labor intensive and really you just can't turn that around quickly. So it's, it is looking at ok, well, what does your museum have that's a real strong point that you haven't done an exhibition on, so do an exhibition on that, but you know, Betsy Bloomingdale gave us all of her clothes so why don't we do an exhibit on Betsy Bloomingdale, for one thing it was all haute couture and you still have the woman who bought the clothes, I can call her up, I can go over to her house, you know, she's here in LA, that's a really rare thing, especially when there's not a lot of clients anymore, she also lived through the time period when haute couture was actual clothing and a lifestyle, all the way through the time were it became media driven and that's what it was for, it wasn't real dress anymore, and I mean that's fascinating that somebody actually lived through that transition and is still around and can answer all your questions. Uh, and the clothes are beautiful, so that was a timely project that did not have a clock ticking.

KJ: You know, it wasn't just because Betsy Bloomingdale was suddenly in the media, oh quick let's do an exhibition on her because we have some of her clothes. Uh, and then, again, looking at weaknesses, you know, you have your strengths but you also have your weaknesses, so build up, right now one of the, there's four projects I'm working on one, and it's going to take place over through at least this decade, you know, by 2020 hopefully they'll all be finished, but one is a sportswear exhibition, uh, we wanted, my assistant curator and I wanted to do a historical sportswear exhibition, uh that really is the nineteenth century into the first half of the twentieth century, looking at how sport for women really liberated woman, it was women getting out there and you know, today women and sports is common place.

KJ: Uh, whereas it was not at one time and how did those types of fashion garments morph into sport wear. So, and uh, we did not have a lot of that material at all in the collection and...and I have been very focused on collecting for the museum over the last few years. So we, uh, are planning that because we have a dearth of this material, and yet we have the ability to find objects. Uh, another show is Hollywood's influence on fashion, no one has ever really talked about that it's always been the studio itself, or the movie star, or the Hollywood designer. But what was fashion doing at the time. So that's a really tricky show because it's very hard to find objects, we have acquired some of them, but it's going to be a heavy loan show.

KJ: So it's just developing these shows by looking at what do you have, what you don't have, and what's possible.

b. How do you conduct the research necessary for the exhibition?

SS: Yeah, um, it depends on how much time you have. With, um, the Ossie Clark display and the New York Fashion display, I had about a year. Well, New York Fashion maybe I had a year and a half. And every exhibition is different, um, with the Ossie Clark display because the designer was dead, uh, I had to rely on, um, on looking through periodicals, you know, Vogue and the fashion press, for information about the designs we were going to include. Um, with New York Fashion show, because they were all very much alive, they were all, and, you know, I got to go to New York and interview them over a series of trips, and so, the research for that was very different because it was based on a series of interviews, like this where I'm with my recorder and have a series of questions and spoke to them about their work. Um, and so, I think, you know it depends on how much time you have, every exhibition is different. Ballgowns show as well, a

year, you know, so ridiculous, but we know going into that the show will be very light on research, so it's really meant to be a kind of celebration of design rather than a hard-hitting piece of investigative curatorial work. Probably shouldn't admit that but what're you going to do? Block it out! Um, yeah, so I think, but I think with any project it's important to start with being aware of literature that's already existing around that subject.

SS: So, for the Italian fashion exhibition, if that does move forward, I'll need to become very, um, familiar with the literature on Italian design, not just fashion but across the design disciplines after the war. And uh, and so there will be a lot of reading, a lot of reading. And then I think, just being hyper aware of all design production during the period that this show's meant to cover, so that involves going and looking at other museum collections, looking through designer archives, um, interviewing designers that are still alive and so, a lot of travel, that'll be really hard, traveling to Italy.

OC: Book is done one year in advance – research and writing.

UA: I usually begin by really examining the pieces. I look inside, at the construction, the textile, etc. I next go to secondary sources to get an overall idea of what I am looking at and within its cultural context. From there I am able to identify other primary research, such as related fashion plates, images and writings (e.g. ladies magazines, tailoring manuals, etc.) contemporary to the object's time period.

KJ: Well, there's a whole lot more that you can talk about with an object other than who wore it, you know, why was it made, how did it fit into the cultural realms and the artistic realms at any given time period, uh, how does it look on..., how has it morphed over time and how it's looked at now. You know, why is this relevant, on and on and on. Um, we are very, I mean I am very interested in history personally, I love the fact that, you know and here we're talking about an exhibition that is going to be on royal dress, that's all about provenance, uh because it's these people who wore these were very significant in their day and for some reason their garments survived, you know it's also going to be, no matter what we do, if our exhibition is more history heavy or it's more design heavy, or whatever, it's still going to have the aspect of what the museum is focused on, uh because we are a design institution. So, um if we talk about...it's relationships to other garments in it's time period and what we think about it today.

c. Please describe the garment selection and preparation process.

SS: Well, selection, it's different for every show, um. It has to be in good condition, it has to look good on display, and be mountable on a mannequin. If it doesn't work on a mannequin, that's an automatic, you know exclusion. Um, it shouldn't need much conservation. Sometimes we can get around that if the conservation team has the time then we can repair or restore something before it's displayed. But, um, first of all it has to look good. It has to look good on display. It's no good if it represents some interesting fact or point, if it's just going to look like a damp little rag when you display it. And so, I mean hopefully, I don't want to give the impression that it's all about fluff and not about substance but, um, hopefully the topic, you know the exhibition theme is strong enough that when you choose something for inclusion it has to fit within that really nicely so there's intellectual justification so that you are able then to just

choose pieces that really, that people want to pay money to come and see. Um, where possible we try to use our own collection because loans are really expensive, so that's also important. And, it's also good to include pieces where there's a provenance, where you can trace the ownership of the object and the ownership tells its own story, so, um it's always better to include something worn by someone or owned by someone rather than an anonymous, uh, gift. But that's a kind of extra benefit…it's a nice to have kind of category I'd say.

UA: This alone is a long process. We select a garment that is necessary to the goals of the exhibition. Many times the garment, if it is displayed on a mannequin, will need to be accessorized and styled accordingly. Factors such as gender, time of day, level of formality, place, etc. are all taken into account and a tremendous amount of research is done on how to pull an authentic-looking ensemble together for display.

UA: I must also add that after art selections are made, the objects go to Conservation to be condition reported and treated if necessary prior to any dressing.

UA: To keep track of everything, we create a dressing sheet with a packet of all of the research, which is all stored in a series of binders was [sic] call the "Dressing Bible."

UB: It was very much a back and forth process between developing the story and objects that would support the story. When garments were selected they were proposed to the director and chief curator for approval. Objects selected were grouped together on a garment rack or appropriate cart. Object numbers were recorded, packages were created in the Museum's

database. They were physically transported to the conservation department for assessment and later dressing. They [sic] objects' locations were also updated in the database.

KJ: Ok, um, first of all, it depends on, we are actually still kind of bantering around the ideas about how, how do we want this themed? Our gallery is broken up into, generally we have three themes with an intro…

KJ: So we always have to think about what's going to look good in this gallery and how can we space it out and what's going to make sense, you know, uh, geographically for us. And so three themes seem to work best. Ok, well do we want to focus on, you know, celebrity, the designer, you know, construction, or um, themed by the Baroque and bondage and you know, whatever else. You know, looking at his designs. We're still working out how exactly we're going to uh, focus the themes of the exhibition. Also, for me, you know, you learn what reads in that gallery and what reads in a photograph and what doesn't. You know when Versace stuff, some of it is so dynamic that it's obvious that it's going to be mag, you know fantastic for an exhibition. And other pieces, especially his earlier work is not so extreme, and so it's like how do you balance the total extreme designs with his more mundane designs. And uh, there has to be a balance and uh, they tend to read well in photographs. We also have all the look books with models wearing the clothes, so we're looking at those to see how it was all styled and put together. And it is not an exhaustive collection so we have to think like, damn I wish I had, you know, this jacket which would have finished off the look. But we don't have it, so do we not want to go with that outfit. This is all stuff that we, you talk about research, there's the research, there's the book research, uh finding source material research, you know, whatever that you have to go through, but then

there's also the research within your collection to find out what you have just like the fabulous exhibition now, you know that was ten years of objects to pull from, we had two hundred objects in the exhibition but we acquired vastly more than two hundred objects in that ten year period. So, it is, it's narrowing down, seeing what's going to work and what isn't going to work. It's also, uh, you start formulating themes, you also start formulating the relation of the objects are going to look. You have to think about color, how the color relations are going to look, for the Versace it's going to be easier because it's basically going to be all men's but we are going to intersperse some women's, and it needs to be balanced, so if you have one woman in one section you need to have another woman in each of the other sections. You know, uh, so this is what we also consider research. Not just book research. But it's all an aspect of putting together and exhibition that then makes it, uh, readable for your public. One of the hard things is that you work on the show for so long and you know it inside out and think it's very obvious but then the public come in and don't get it. So that's why its, and research also, we are constantly talking about our shows, obviously our staff members but also people within the college itself and colleagues. Like we'll go to a CSA event, and we're talking about it, we're running things past people to get their take on it. I consider that research as well because uh, it's somebody getting what you're trying to say. We bring pictures with us and we see how people react to them because we want this installation to be as tactful as possible.

d. Can you tell me about the mannequin selection and preparation process?

SS: Yeah, the mannequins is an interesting issue for the V&A because we have always struggled with budgets. For the main, for the big exhibitions, the fashion exhibitions we have tended to use, uh, for conservation reasons we've often used the Stockman dress forms, which are the

cheapest, but they're also the most conservation friendly. Um, so I have never, the ballgowns will be first time when I have bought mannequins specifically for a show and they're going to be full figures with arms and legs and heads. Some will have heads. So, because mannequins are so expensive, they can run between six hundred and eight hundred pounds (GBP) for one. And when you multiply that, I mean the major fashion exhibitions can have one hundred and thirty outfits in it or more, um, it's just an enormous expense. So, yeah, this will be the first, the ballgowns show will be the first time that I've worked with, that I've bought, I mean Oriole and I together ordered something specifically.

UA: The mannequins selected depend on the needs of the garments, the look of the exhibition, and the budget. The best mannequins available, which are very flexible and ideal for garments made bespoke, tend to be quite expensive. In the past we have used Kyoto mannequins, which are the easiest to dress. In our next show we are waiting for a designer before deciding on a mannequin, because these mounts will affect the look and feel of the show.

UB: This was determined by the exhibition department in conjunction with the conservation department.

KJ: All the 19th century garments are on Kyoto's, um, or Brooklyn, we also have Brooklyn mannequins, which are like Kyoto's but they're different but I don't think they're made anymore but we were given some of them um, by one of our donors, he bought them when the Brooklyn, when the whole collection was being disassembled and sent over to the Met so that was great, fantastic. And then we have a selection of probably two hundred, two hundred and fifty, two

hundred mannequins that work very well for our twentieth century. All different poses you know from the 30s to present. So we're fortunate that we have enough mannequins to choose from to, because for us, the proportion of the garment on a mannequin and its pose is very, very important, we try very hard to interpret the garment correctly and to give it a sense of its time so that's important.

JS: Okay. And then as far as preparing and dressing the mannequins is that done…

KJ: It's all done in-house by the staff…

JS: Okay. So not just the curatorial team but other members of the museum?

KJ: Um, three of us dress, Christina the associate curator, I dress, and then Carolyn, who is the collection manager.

e. Please describe the methods of exhibition design.

SS: There's a lot, depending on the gallery, the fashion gallery, which has traditionally has been just the downstairs space, with the glass cases, and there is very little you can do with that space because the cases are fixed, you can't get rid of them, the light, the lighting is as it is, you can't really tweak it much. The light bulbs can go up a little, they can go down a bit but there's no, like, LED, there's no state-of-the-art, it's very old-fashioned, so in the two previous shows that I've done, they have been in that space so I had to work with the existing gallery and therefore there was no need for an exhibition designer.

SS: I worked with our internal design department to choose things like color, what color do we paint the cases, what kind of graphics we have, but it…

JS: Or what dress goes where…or what outfit…

SS: I tend to do that myself. Yeah, um, make that selection. They just paint, gave me the backdrop, painted the cases, did the graphics, um, and then I did everything else. With the ballgowns show, it's been treated as a major exhibition, because we now have the space above the old display area, so it's more than doubling the footprints of the gallery and the potential, the space for potential display. And also, that area upstairs is an open plan, I mean it's an enormous open space, so there will need to be some kind of build, and so the way that works, you know, for creating a design, is that the museum solicits, uh, bids from three to four, four usually, design firms, offering, you know suggesting to them that they put forward a proposal and they come and pitch us with their vision of how this show could look. And then we choose one, and that design team ends up working with the curator and the exhibitions department to craft the, um, a setting basically, a build for the project.

JS: So that second floor is totally open space, there are no…

SS: There's no built-in anything.

JS: So are they planning to leave that as just open space for future exhibits?

SS: Yeah. It could also be a performance space, it could be split so that there would be just the mezzanine, would be its own space and downstairs could be something separate but you can go between the two. But this will be the first show that uses it and it is enormous. It's half the size of the Raphael gallery.

JC: I'm very interested in how sort of theory finds it's way, um, into installation design because I think installation design has always been associated with just sort of making something look good.

JC: It was acknowledging how far everyone had come in terms of dress history that we didn't have to worry about it quite so much and we could do something else with the installation. But I think there were misconceptions about whether I sort of didn't care about dress history or that I sort of, which actually, I mean I'm not a dress historian so that's one thing that I, I couldn't write a book about dress history because I don't have the skill and I just don't have the knowledge.

OC: During the second year, the design of space is done as well as the curators working with the garments.

UA: This is either done by in-house exhibit designers or they are hired on contract. The designer and the curatorial and conservation team first meet to talk about the look of the show, the needs that must be met for the safety of the garments, and logistics such as availability of space, the amount of objects and mounts in the show, the timeline, etc. The designer than [sic] comes up

with ideas and everyone meets again to present them. This may happen a few times before everyone is on the same page.

KJ: Yeah, it's a team collaboration and you're never going to get everything you want.

KJ: And also there's budget and time constraints as well. Now, for this exhibition I did get everything I wanted. Um, one of the things that is, you really have to have a conversation, good communication skills. Um, gosh it's so important and the earlier the better to get started on anything because if you think oh I've got time to work on it, no actually you don't.

KJ: Um, for this exhibition because we're covering…different time periods, you can't select a period, you know, it's like, something's going to work but it's not going to work for other garment types, so I, uh, I wanted it to look very industrial and happily our designer is of the same mind and we went very industrial looking so very stark, uh and it's very neutral so the object would pop out and it would also not clash with any kind of material.

f. Can you tell me about the exhibition catalogue process?

SS: Well, um, again it depends on the show. Exhibitions that have what is really a proper catalogue have photographs of objects that are in the show with catalogue entries.

JS: And is that how, I have the New York Fashion Now book, is that how...

SS: No. That was not, that was a publication that was done to coincide with the show and it included designers that were in the exhibition but a number of the, but it wasn't, it didn't have representative images of each object in the show.

JS: Which is sort of how the Yamamoto book is also.

SS: Yeah, yeah. And so the, all the shows that I've worked on here will not have had a formal catalogue. The, I would say the major themed exhibitions like the Modernism exhibition, Art Deco, uh, the upcoming, oh what is it called, it's a Modernism exhibition, have had what I would kind of consider traditional catalogues. But the challenge with our publishing schedule is that because we print the catalogues in Asia, our lead-time is a year before, so the text has to be submitted to the publishers twelve months before the exhibition opens, which means that you have to know what's going in the exhibition twelve months ahead. And actually, it's really two years ahead because you have to start writing that a year before, you know, it takes a very long time to craft a catalogue so, um, we, I have never been in a situation where I've had that kind of lead time.

JC: Um, I think they're important also because they're more and more students of course who want to know, you know, how you get from A to B, so, and I often find it frustrating when you look at an exhibition catalogue that is sort of perfect but you have the object that is perfectly photographed and you have the essays, but often you have no idea what it was like. Especially with the, a lot of the historic exhibitions that I'm desperate to see what they looked like and you cannot find the installation shots.

UA: Exhibition catalogues vary depending on show, from being more image-oriented to more academic with new research articles. This process usually takes 3 years of research, writing, photography and editing. There is usually a very rigorous photography schedule, in addition to time lines set by the editor, a publisher, and a graphic designer, not to mention the exhibitions department.

KJ: Having a child!

KJ: Um, you know, it's very, very, very involved and many, many, many late, late nights. It's hundreds of hours of over-time work. Uh, nothing you could ever do like this could fit into a forty hour, Monday through Friday workweek. Period. Uh, you have to be dedicated to this type of project. Uh, we're very fortunate here that we have a lot of leeway in our work with our director, she trusts us explicitly, I'm always passing everything by her, and she's aware of what's going on, but you know, you have to bloody well sit down and do the work. Uh, writing is very difficult, I find, I'm not a natural born writer. So, you write and write and write, and you have to understand that every single thing that you write is going to be ripped apart into shreds.

KJ: So you have to be willing to go through that emotional turmoil. I'm serious because that's something very personal. This is your work but you've got all these other people looking at it and they're not going to see what you see and they're going to shred it. And you know, for every paragraph that we wrote, Christina and I, probably five words out of two hundred, were kept.

KJ: You know, all the words kept getting changed, and you never ever have enough time so you just need to start as early as possible and you just have to plow through it. Um, so I mean, we, you know we had trips to CSA, we're bringing our manuscripts with us on the plane, we're working on the manuscript at night after the event. We're flying to Paris, uh, we're bringing our manuscripts with us and we're working on them on the plane and all throughout the time we're in Paris. You know, it's just all, it's non-stop and editing is a bitch, it is the worst thing in the world. It's so time-consuming and we agonize over should we use this word or should we use this word? And I'm serious. Also we work with, I edited it, Christina edited it, another person in our office edited it, we have a publications person edit it and we have an outside editor. So we have a total of five people editing it, and you know what? I would love to have another editing session. The catalogues over. You know, it's, and you also have to learn to let it go.

KJ: Um, but at the same time we're working on the photography shoot and having to schedule all of that and we had to do it in classrooms because we don't have a designated photography area. So we have to build a photography studio and tear it all down. I mean, it's having everything prepped, having conservation done, all of that organized. And it all hinges on the catalogue because the catalogue has to get to the printer, so we're working with a catalogue designer. Uh, so, you really, as the curator it is your responsibility and it is on your shoulders, you have to be the leader, and you also have to have emotional support from all of these people involved and behind you, in order to make the catalogue, otherwise it's going to be a failure.

JS: Now, do the majority of the exhibition catalogue that come out of FIDM, are they, I guess traditional exhibit catalogue in the sense that they have photographs of the garments that are on display. Um, because I know some other museums, they don't have that kind of time.

KJ: Yes, yes. Right, you know what? It really depends on the time and also the look you're going for. I know the Met, sometimes their catalogues are just all photographs of, from magazines or you know, photographers. They're not showing the objects…time to dress everything. It is to do this, especially when you're doing a large catalogue.

KJ: Uh, for us, we want to get our objects out there and we have a pool of photography to pull from. And then in the future, at the Met for instance, they bring out all these catalogue with the same photos over and over and over but with a different theme. You know, so, if they have a large pool of photos to now pull from, so they don't have to continually shoot everything unless they're going for a specific look. Oh my gosh, choosing the look of your catalogue for photography from the very beginning to the very end, is something that really gets set. You need to come up with what your look is going to be and stick with it. Um, because that's going to be the common thread throughout your catalogue to make it seem like a whole unit. Um, that is something that you need to discuss with the photographer, so that would be something for the Versace menswear, which we're doing a photo shoot for this weekend, and we're setting the book and the catalogue right now. And this is for something that is going to happen probably in three years. So you know, it's really tricky. Uh, to do that and also to do something that is different from what you've already done and different from what other people have done, you know for the creativity to come into play.

KJ: But you know, again, you have to work with a lot of people. You have to be a team member. And be willing to be strong as a curator but flexible with other peoples' views.

g. Can you offer any insight into exhibition techniques that are specific to dress and fashion exhibitions?

SS: I think that over the last decade the one thing that has become really essential for fashion exhibitions is film because, for obvious reasons the fact that clothes are meant to be worn on the moving body and the static display really kind of takes the life literally, the life out of them. But um, also because our audience, you know, is so, um, trained to absorb information through film, through the moving image, so it's become, I mean, I think the first fashion display…I mean for the last ten years all the fashion exhibitions that we've done have had some kind of film component. And it's now expected. I mean, you just wouldn't do a show without film now. Um, and then the other thing that of course is, makes or breaks a show is how they're mounted on the mannequins, what kind of mannequins you use and we're very lucky that we have a fantastic conservation team who are, um, adept at making things look really beautiful on a mannequin. So, yeah, those are the two main kind of crucial, crucial elements.

UA: Dressing art objects on mannequins and installing mannequins onto the platforms are generally much more difficult that [sic] hanging framed art. The process takes at least three people with one person steadying the mannequin from the top, one person protecting the hem of the objects, and another that guides the poles to the platform for final drilling. All people must be aware of the fragility of the textiles during handling. Curators place the mannequin and art prep handlers secure the mount to the floor. Furthermore, if the mounts are invisible floating mounts

whereby the mount is suspended and lit to create the illusion of floating, special wires, many hands, and people on ladders are needed. Some objects like kimonos require special T-shaped stands, either lacquer or kosode, and require a very different kind of dressing sensibility.

KJ: Um, but yes it's important, it's also time-consuming to develop a website as well and do your blog postings and setting up your conferences, your speaker series and all of this kind of stuff, you know, it's so time-consuming that for the Betsy Bloomingdale exhibition we didn't have very good auxiliary events outside of the exhibition catalogue and the documentary itself.

KJ: We just frankly ran out of time. We do not have the development personnel on staff that does that. And it's really not like a lot of institutions do. You know smaller institutions in particular don't have anything like that. So you really end up doing it all. Let me tell you, it is so time-consuming. You talk about research, you know you look at our catalogues and we have photographs and support documentation outside of our photographs of the actual objects.

KJ: And you're flipping through it and it's oh, how charming, those are great photographs, but you know, for every photo that's in there or illustration from another institution, it's eight to twelve to twenty hours of research until you find that one image. So all of that has to be incorporated. Um, it's hard, doing technological type of support and interactive things in a gallery, then you're getting your IT and you know, uh, the publications people involved in it, you know, the design, your production…edit it…you can do anything if you have the money and you have the time.

KJ: Um, so we have shown videos in our galleries, that we have…production, we have redeveloped completely our website, which is still in development, phase one was completed, there are other things down the road. Uh, we developed a social media component, which we feel is very important. But any interactive, computer-generated type of possibilities, I really don't get too involved, I just don't have time to do it. I don't know how to do that. Um, the one thing that we're really kind of looking into doing in the future, uh, oh my gosh, another thing too is organizing all of the docent tours. And tours, and your opening and all of that. Um, you know scheduling docents is so time-consuming and you really almost need a docent coordinator to do that.

h. How do you feel about exhibition blogs that offer insight into the processes of dress and fashion curators?

SS: Oh, yeah, um, I think, I think that it's a very good thing because our world of fashion curation is so small and we kind of think that it feels very big because it's our universe but it is very small. But to the outside world, I don't think most people would know the level of work, the amount of work that goes into doing, into curating an exhibition. But also in terms of fashion, how much work is involved in making the things look good on the mannequins and all the restrictions that we have in terms of our objects that other collections within the museum do not have just because they're textiles, they're fragile, and there are so many requirements, um, when you display an object that's a fashion or textile, you have to adhere to these requirements just for the survival of the object. So I think any kind of information that sheds light on that aspect is really good. And I think that the old model of the curator kind of sitting behind their desk, deep in thought and dispensing wisdom and being the kind of ultimate, um…

JS: Academic?

SS: Yeah, that kind of, and the all-knowing figure, is very outmoded. There are so many people, as I'm sure you know, collectors, dealers, so many people whose work crosses over with that of the fashion curator that know, in some ways, that know more. And so, um, I think it's um, I think that kind of exchange is really healthy.

UA: I think that they offer very good insight into the field and allow people to understand the process of pulling an exhibition together, especially if these blogs originate from a museum or museum professional.

UB: I think these are educational and quite useful for audiences, students, scholars and hobbyists.

KJ: Okay, okay! Um, what is really interesting, I find, and this is what has been told to me by people outside the museum, and I'm really happy how it's come about, because the FIDM museum blog is very popular, um, other museum blogs are not as popular. Like LACMA's blog, I don't follow that blog, you know, I knew they had one but I don't follow it…

KJ: Yes, yes. Exactly. And also people love the fact that we post the photographs.

KJ: And that's completely what sells the blog to people. Um, and how we've been able to develop such a great following. Um, and also that we have a…manager and so she can take care

of the blog, she takes care of facebook, she's a great writer, you know, she's a great researcher. She can do all of that, we couldn't, if we had to do that as well, it would just fall apart. And you have to be dedicated to it because it has to be updated all the time. You have to post constantly in order to keep bringing people back. So, uh, and also to make it into a rich resource. I mean, we have had so many people contact us for research because of the blog. People from all over the world. And they have had things borrowed from us from other institutions because of it, we have had our photographs published in you know, various types of publications because of the interest that people found online. So it's been very beneficial to us.

i. Please discuss any additional elements of your exhibition preparation process.

UA: Dressing the mannequins is an art unto itself and takes far more skill than many realize. Not only does the dresser have to handle the art with care, but they must have very good knowledge of the piece in order to understand the silhouette. Garment construction is important in achieving this silhouette while using archival materials. The process of dressing a mannequin takes at least one full day, not including research, selection of the ensemble, conservation treatments, and making a wig.

IV. Shift in curatorial practices (Objective #3)

a. In your experience, how has the process you go through for exhibitions changed during your time as a dress curator?

SS: Uh, yeah. Let me think about that. Well there's, in terms of the category of, in terms of display techniques I would say the, again the obvious thing is mannequins. There's always a pendulum shift from, when I first arrived it was mannequins with heads, wigs, make-up, full on,

the full thing. And that was the V&A's big statement from the early eighties when they redisplayed the fashion gallery. But then, you know, by the late nineties, you know twenty years later, it had become very dated. So then the pendulum shifted again to the stockmen, no heads, minimal, and a kind of, a dress floating in a case kind of thing, no accessories. In the old display it was, the accessories were incorporated into the outfit so it was full from head to toe. So then it went the opposite way to very minimal, now I think it's coming back towards a more, you know, to the full figure, heads and arms but maybe not accessories, so it's kind of back in a middle ground. So that's just in terms of display technique.

SS: Um, I think, I think the thing that is possibly going to change everybody's lives is the McQueen exhibition, because, I haven't seen it yet but I'm going, and I just think that that show has caused so much discussion, both within our field but also in terms of the public, you know, even for people who don't ever go to fashion exhibitions, they're going to the McQueen show. And it, it is such a challenge to all of us, because of the splendor, the kind of amazing atmosphere that it's created, um, it is a challenge to us going forward as to how we're going to make our shows, um, theatrical and beautiful on very little money. So, I mean, I think in terms of, but I think in terms of subject, I think that there's been some very interesting explorations of ideas and themes that may be more traditional like the retrospective, that's been done so many times as a thematic show, but curators like Judith Clark who have um, really challenged the boundaries of what it means, what is a fashion exhibition. Like her, um, dictionary of dress or her spectres show, um, which is not about necessarily telling a straightforward story or a chronology, it's about challenging the visitor and suggesting ideas rather than telling. And so, I think that curators like Judith are really trying to redefine what a fashion exhibition can be,

should be, whereas the traditional V&A shows tend to be in the kind of nice boxable categories…although I would also argue that Claire Wilcox's exhibition Radical Fashion falls into that category where she let each designer have a space and said to them, "What's your vision? How would you communicate what you do?" And you can design, she let them design the space and choose the outfits. So, um, yeah, I think that there are curators coming up with new ideas about what it means to curate a fashion exhibition.

JC: You know, or look elegant or look, you know it's very much to do with the dialogue of the architecture of the day rather than the object that's being exhibited. It's like you know, minimalism is in so let's chop off all the heads and…let's get it really, which is fine, but it doesn't allow it an opportunity to talk, um, about the relationships of the objects, and so I think there are a lot of falsehoods because you put, you know ten mannequins on a plinth and it's like those ten mannequins are wedded in some way and sometimes it's not true, it's just because of the size of the plinth in that room or something. You know, it's to try and make all of these things a little more explicit.

JC: … are curators more visible now, has the practice of curators in fashion changed as we see, cause you know we see so much contemporary fashion, sometimes we see things that were on the runways…yeah, so that wasn't the case right, so, it's a big question but how has it changed and do you think it's changing more in some regards than others? Is it changing…

CW: Yes, everyone's a curator now!

CW: Yes, I have noticed that there's a big difference and I think it's partly…actually I was talking to someone about this the other day who's writing an article for, um, what's it for, I'll remember in a minute, it's a very, very interesting writer, it's for a major, um, a major magazine, it'll come back to me. Um, because the question he was asking was about how fashion houses are now creating and curating their own archives.

JS: Right.

CW: There's a heightened consciousness of the value of museums and archives and I actually genuinely do think that this, um, this growth in stature at the museum and people's consciousness is down to the fact that the V&A and other major museums like the British Museum have, have woken up to the fact that they, they can and should be dynamic, open institutions, and I actually think that the museums have led this. I think that museums have raised consciousness about collections and about exhibitions and displays through putting on spectacular show after spectacular show, through publishing, through making available expertise, um, and I think that the technology has allowed this to be disseminated not just, say in the UK, but worldwide so, um, websites, catalogue entries available to everybody, our system where anybody can look for an image and use it without being charged. So I do actually think that the museums have driven this and the result is that visitors are increasingly sophisticated but increasingly curious, and it raises the game for us, um, particularly in fashion, where people are so literate about it and I think it's very exciting times and it's quite different in institution life. I first worked in, between 1979-1983, when I first got the museum, because I actually left because I felt that I, I felt that the museum was very inward looking and when I came back a few years

later, the museum felt on the cusp of change. And for me, I just saw green lights. I you know…I had the idea about Radical Fashion…and we started Fashion in Motion and instead of closed doors the doors were opening.

CS: In the nineteen-nineties there was a strong push towards minimalism with exhibitions utilizing stark, featureless mannequins in a white cube-like environment. I think this was an attempt to gain respect in the art world, to prove costume history/fashion is a serious topic. Unfortunately, the debate continues and many curators are regularly forced to justify their existence. However, it seems we have returned to Vreeland-esque spectacle in exhibitions. I am not sure if this is just the taste pendulum swinging away from minimalism or a reaction to the restrictions of the art world. Certainly the success of the McQueen exhibit would argue "more is more."

KJ: Um, trying to become more academic to bring more substance to the exhibition, it's really easy to do, it's not easy, but to do a show where it could be a shooting gallery of mannequins dressed up and stuck around the gallery. And we do those shows, you know the Hollywood show is like that but people like it, you know it's someone won an Academy Award and blah blah blah but it's working on shows that actually have some substance to them and that takes up time and as an educational institution that's what we're all about so it's finding a balance.

KJ: Of shows that are just there to fill the gallery space so the space isn't dark. Balance with installations that show off the museum's collections and have content. Like the Hollywood show is all borrowed. You know, we do a lot of Hollywood and I'm not into it, I have to do it, it's part

of my job, but it balances with being able to have the opportunity to work on shows that I am interested in, and I choose, that I'm searching for the object, and I'm acquiring the object and I'm working on the publication and I'm blah blah blah and on and on and on. You know, so it's finding that balance, but for the museum specifically, bringing in substance to the installations.

b. What changes are you experiencing now in your work as a dress curator?

UA: An increase in social media and audio-visuals, as well as the growing rigmarole of the "blockbuster" exhibition which requires more time spent on fundraising rather than research.

KJ: Yeah, working on catalogues and documentaries. That never would have happened. We didn't have the collection, I mean our collection is vastly different than it was twelve years ago, I mean seriously night and day. And uh, so that's what's exciting. But also, you know, the FIDM powers that be see the passion and the drive and see the results, I mean I started out doing tiny little installations on the third floor of the building, you know, these window gallery spaces, you know and…that's what kind of led to being able to do major exhibitions in our galleries where before that wasn't even going to be possible. You know, so it's just building slowly and having a vision for the future of the museum and a higher plan that you know, won't always come to fruition, but I've already seen a lot of growth in the museum and so has the administration and that's the reason why we've been able to continue on with yet the next big kind of project.

c. Where do you see the field of fashion and dress curatorial work heading?

SS: See above answer (a) and:

SS: Yeah, I think, I think some of the interesting things that will happen will be this grey area of,

you know, fashion curation, which is people who are trying to do something marketedly different, kind of, um, not just frocks on mannequins but, and not just telling a straightforward story but yeah, being very challenging about the idea of fashion curation.

d. Do you feel that exhibitions must provide visitors with predetermined information (about the objects, creators, time period, etc.) or that visitors should be able to produce their own interpretations without interference from the curator?

SS: I think, it really, the traditional V&A show…

JS: Has wall text…

SS: It does, and it should because our founding principle was to act as a resource for makers and designers and craftspeople. And so I think there's, and we get a wide range of visitors, different ages, different backgrounds, um, a lot of international visitors, and I think our role as educators can be underestimated, is that right, overestimated? Yeah. And so the traditional V&A show has wall text, it has information about what you're looking at and explains why this thing relates to the exhibition topic. I can think of shows that didn't do that, I mean, I think Judith's shows here have been less wedded to that idea, but in this context of the V&A I think we will, we're all about wall text, we're all about the labels, we very much feel a responsibility to explain. But I don't think that's necessary for all, one of the best, one of the most stunning shows that I've seen was, um, at the Musee de la Mode, a retrospective of Viktor & Rolf, it was about ten years ago and they had no labels, it was just film…next to each dress they had a film of that object on the catwalk when it was originally shown and it might've, at the beginning of the film said, given the

date, collection, Autumn/Winter 2009, but there's no curatorial voice in the…yeah, and so because the objects were so dramatic and theatrical it worked, actually.

JC: I mean, I think that's also that I um, feel quite strongly again, and I think is kind of a misconception as though I would burn all captions…
[Laughter]

JC: Which is just sort of not true…

JB: Yeah.

JC: Because some of the most beautiful exhibitions I've ever seen have been dresses in a row with captions, long captions, and I've just stood there, gazing, and the dresses, I mean it's a different experience. Um, so it's, the sort of, I would like to promote sort of, not alternatives as in that you remove one, but just alternatives as in you can have all sorts of, you know, different thoughts about it.

UA: The curator makes the selection of the objects, decides on the display method and placement, and makes conscious decisions about the order. Thus, a curator's job is precisely to "interfere" with the visitor's interpretation even without the inclusion of labels – this is the only way that the art can be selected for display to the public.

UA: For costume and textile exhibitions, I believe that the tombstone information – the object title, date, place, materials, etc. – are very important to note. The credit lines, from a developmental point of view, are crucial in order to pay respect to those philanthropists who gave or paid for the art. Also, didactics and any label copy should be available for those visitors who wish to learn more. As a rule, labels should be short and succinct at about forty-five words per label. Didactics should be no more than seventy-five words.

UA: Those who would rather infer knowledge solely on viewing the objects can simply ignore the labels. We try to build shows that both the academics and complete new-comers to the field can both learn and become inspired. There is no one-way approach that fits everyone's learning styles.

UB: Many studies say that the typical visitor does not read labels and didactics. They may be true but but [sic] think they should nevertheless be available for those audiences who would like to learn more than what is apparent in the visual display of the garment/object. I think this is especially true for dress exhibitions whose academic or fine art merit is still debated.

UB: I think there should always be more information. Whether it be a link to a website, a handout, tours or always having someone on hand to answer these questions. The aim of the exhibition is to educate the public and all to [sic] often, even and [sic] education institutions, this is not the main focus.

KJ: Oh, I'm not at all for that. I think you have to guide and focus the person coming in because people don't know what they're looking at. Um, they don't know how to interpret it, and that's why you're there as the curator. Um, I'm fine with tombstone information at least. You know, the basics of what it is they're looking at. Um, I do personally like interpretive text, but again it's that balance. We do shows where we just do stuff around the gallery where we do just a little bit of tombstone and then we do other shows that are focused, themed installations, um and you know, regarding didactics, we limit the wordage to two hundred words for didactics on the main panel for the themes. And then seventy-five words max, that includes the tombstone information, for individual objects. Because you always hear that people don't read, yes they do, people read. Not everybody reads but people do read. But frankly, you make it interesting and they're going to read. You make it boring and they're not going to read. If you make it too labor intensive for them, they're not going to do it. So you have to use very large font, and you don't put your text panels on the floor, the Metropolitan Museum of Art thank you very much, you know, I'm 6'3", and I have to crouch down on the floor to read the text panel. You know I do it because I'm a freak, other people are not going to do it. You know, so you have to make it as easy as possible for the people coming to visit. But don't give up on the content.

e. What is the impact of the developing field of museum education on curatorial practices for fashion and dress?

SS: Yes, uh, I think the education team is always on board from the beginning of an exhibition planning process. They come to the meetings, um, they start to think early on about what offerings they can give, um, to the program, whether it's a study day or um, in conversations with designers, anything to do with kind of communicating the subject to a greater...

JS: Audience.

SS: Yeah. So the education department is very much on board from the beginning. Um, I'm trying to think of examples, but, so for the ball gowns show, they, and part of it is because their leaflets get printed up very well in advance so if there's going to be a study day they need to know far in the future so they can put it on their calendar and it goes out to all their other mailings. So we haven't set a date yet for a study date for the ball gowns show but we've started to talk about it and talk about what the program could be and who we could include. So even though the show opening in a year away, and the close is a year and a half away, so we've got quite a bit of time, it seems like we've got, you know, ages of time, um, but we are talking now about what we could do.

UA: The shortened length of label copy comes from research done by the education department on the average visitor's attention span. Also, various educational components such as online games, blogs, and docent tours demand a lot of time, but are important projects to work on. However, I see this impacting all curatorial departments equally, not just dress and textiles.

f. What is the impact of the trend for interactive exhibitions on curatorial practices for fashion and dress exhibitions?

SS: Um, so far I haven't because my shows have been very low budget. But I know, for example, in the Radical Fashion exhibition, there was a wonderful, it was an Alexander McQueen I think, where it was a hologram, and you could stand, look at the dress, the kind of hologram on the dress, in the mirror, stand behind it and it looked like you were wearing it. And I know in the

British Galleries they've made replica petticoats and undergarments that children can try on, and so there are, in fashion there have been those elements. I know that Oriole in the Hat exhibition had hats that people could, especially children…they put the mirrors down low so that young visitors could come put the hats on and see what they looked like. But, um, so my colleagues have done it but I have yet to do an interactive element in mine.

SS: It's a great idea. Yeah, I think especially with younger visitors that's how they connect with the subject, is by touching and trying on and you know, up in the jewelry gallery there's a number of computer terminals where you can design your own jewelry, very popular. That's how many visitors, that's how they interact.

JS: And it sort of breaks up the monotony of reading wall text, moving to another item, reading wall text

SS: Yeah, yep. That's a very old-fashioned way of doing things so I think that's true that it does enliven the experience.

UA: There is growing interest and work towards online interactive exhibitions which allow interested museum-goers to view objects if they are not able to physically visit the museum. Again I think this goes for all curatorial exhibitions, not just those about dress.

g. What is the impact of the trend for conceptual exhibitions on current curatorial practices?

SS: Um, that's a good question. You know, uh, I would say that the work that I tend to do is, it's very straightforward um, interpretation and it's not, it's not really how I see a collection. I see the collection, the role of our collection as a learning tool, and as a way to disseminate information. So, um, I think it's very good that other curators are working in that realm but it's not really my…

JS: But I know they have more independence from an institution

SS: Correct.

JS: So do you think if you were to ever veer from the V&A that you would…

SS: I'm so institutionalized!

[Laughter]

…

SS: No, I do feel, I feel, that's why I think I'm well suited to working here is that I, that's how I see my role and I don't think that I would ever want to do a show like that. So I'm all about kind of straightforward communication. I'm not so interested in the, um…I'm not so interested in the, that kind of approach.

JS: It's very theoretical. Some of the work. And a very different audience.

SS: Yep. Yeah, no I'm very well suited to the traditional audience. Here's the frock. Here's why it's important.

UA: There are more cross-collaborations between curators working with artists. A lot of energy has been given towards exploring different methods of installing an exhibition where it is no longer confined to a space with walls, art and labels. The challenge is to find the right fit for an exhibition, curator, collection, and artist to make these conceptual exhibitions successful. The impact of this trend curatorially is that the curator has to be more willing to collaborate with other artists and share the duties of "curating," which can be difficult for some or easy for others. However, this is something that has not yet effected my department and only something that I can observe from other curatorial departments.

KJ: So that's for concept. That's the same type of exhibition as doing an historical…that has historical relevance to the object. You're doing you know a designer, you're looking at a designers work, it's the same thing, you know a conceptual exhibit is just a concept and every exhibition has a concept even if it's a conceptual concept. To me it's more minimalist, is kind of the concept because you don't want to force your thoughts or viewpoints on your audience. You want them to make it up. No matter what you're manipulating the audience because you're choosing certain objects and putting them next to each other for a reason that maybe only you get in the end and your audience is left baffled, or it's very obvious and your public gets it or they're challenged. But that's the concept, so conceptual exhibitions, you know, sure.

Collective Meaning

In Chapter V, a collective meaning is presented representing the construction of one inclusive story. This inclusive story is based off my interpretations of the participants' testimonies during interviews, after reading the interviews carefully several times and clustering common themes and ideas emerging from the data. The collective meaning, as described by Chapman et. al. (2009), comprises the whole picture as evidenced by the data collected. In Chapter V, my interpretations of each participants' answers to interview questions are combined to form one story. Through the oral testimonies given by participants', it is possible to understand the larger community present within the field of fashion and dress curatorial work. This understanding of the fashion and dress curatorial community is presented within the discussion of the data analysis in Chapter V.

Table 1.1

Objective 1 – *Goals of Previous Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Goals – Previous Exhibitions
Judith Clark	Experiments; desire to be surprised and taught things
Oriole Cullen	Great experience, learn something new; see things that make one stop and say "wow, that's impressive"
Kevin Jones	Display recent acquisitions; celebrate donors; show objects the museum has purchased; developing relationships
Clare Sauro	Balance between history and art/craft approach; educational approach
Sonnet Stanfill	Lively, appealing; satisfying lender; introduce public to new designers; popular and appealing
Claire Wilcox	
UA	To educate the public through the display of art; create an inaugural show and make collection visible to public
UB	Educate the public about fashion and textiles history; use a timely, interesting and engaging theme to do this

Table 1.2

Objective 1 – *Goals of Current Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Goals – Current Exhibitions
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Ultimate goal is to work on something of interest to the museum; really is the same work over and over just with a different name
Clare Sauro	Raise public awareness
Sonnet Stanfill	
Claire Wilcox	Chronology
UA	Show the movements of men's aesthetic; explore under researched and exhibited areas in fashion
UB	

Table 1.3

Objective 1 – *Preference*

Participant Name	Preference
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Anything with 19th century dress in it; haute couture; anything with a strong aspect of design
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Geographical themes; also enjoys working on retrospectives
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Depends upon the topic; objects dictate where exhibition will go
UB	Prefers thematic exhibitions because they are contextual and paint a picture of the story being told

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In-depth case studies were performed in which four participants were interviewed. Two of the participants, both female, were residents and employed in the United Kingdom. The other two participants, one female and the other male, were residents of and employed by institutions within the United States. Further case studies were performed in which four participants were interviewed through a series of three questions, each of which centered on the three main objectives of the research. While the remaining four participants were female, two of these participants were residents and employed in the United Kingdom. The remaining two fashion and dress curators were residents of and employed in the United States.

Participants were selected based on their current or previous employment at a museum that housed a sizeable collection of fashion and dress in either the United States or the United Kingdom. Four of the case studies included participants who were either currently or previously employed at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London. One participant previously worked at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT) in New York City, and the final interviewee is currently employed at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Museum (FIDMM) in Los Angeles. The remaining two participants will remain unidentified.

The objectives of the study were:

I. To understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of the curator responsible for the exhibitions
II. To understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions

through the viewpoint of fashion and dress curators

III. To understand the recent history of curatorial work within fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums.

Data analysis took place in the form of a four-stage process described in *Analysing Oral History: A New Approach When Linking Method to Methodology* (Chapman, Francis, Miller-Rosser & Robinson-Malt, 2009). In this method, the four stages for data analysis are as follows: 1) collecting data through interviews, 2) constructing portraits of meaning, 3) discovering consistencies in data, and 4) constructing a collective meaning (Chapman, et. al., 2009). After transcribing the interviews, the majority of data analysis took place during the construction of a collective meaning, where I interpreted the data to develop one inclusive story. Through the use of a tape recorder, the participants' testimonies were taken transcribed and gave the interpretations of each testimony their authenticity due to the ability to directly quote the participants and use their own words within the discussion (Thompson, 2000). The presence of the participants own voices further this authenticity and provides access to the raw data. Because case studies informed by oral testimonies are viewed as a "significant tool for gaining insight into collective practices and behaviours…it has the capacity…to understand the larger cultural context that has evolved" (Chapman et. al., 2009, p. 477). This study aims to understand the methods and processes that occur within the world of fashion and dress curators, therefore this method of data analysis is appropriate.

In analyzing my data, I first examined each set of information gathered from participants by listening to each interview in full. After transcribing the interviews, I began to look for commonalities or inconsistencies among the answers provided. The majority of information came from the four in-depth interviews, which were conducted with two residents of the United

Kingdom and two residents of the United States. In-depth interviews were conducted in the United Kingdom and the United States to gain an overall understanding of the practices and methods of fashion and dress curators.

Objective 1

Inspiration – Goals of the Curator

The goals of fashion and dress curators when installing an exhibition undoubtedly differ from project to project. According to Sonnet Stanfill, the Curator of 20th Century and Contemporary Fashion at the V&A, the goals of her exhibitions vary depending on various factors such as topic, donor involvement, time and financial availability. For her first exhibition, Ossie Clark (2003-04) (The Victoria and Albert Museum i), "the goal of that exhibition, or that display was to put on something that was really lively and appealing but also satisfying the ambitions of the main lender." Kevin Jones, a Curator at the FIDMM, discusses the importance of celebrating the donors of the museum during exhibitions. In celebrating the benefactors of the museum, by displaying items purchased through the generosity of donors, Jones is able to further develop relationships with influential members of the community who "saw the value of the museum, what we were doing, the educational components, and decided to further their involvement with the museum and to support us financially." Jones believes the idea of developing relationships through the display of acquisitions made possible through donors is "a universal idea because it's making connections, personal connections."

An additional goal of Jones' exhibitions lies in the desire to display recent acquisitions of the fashion and dress department. A second curator, who wishes to create an inaugural show and make new additions to the collection visible to the public, mirrored this goal. Jones discussed the

ability to focus on an object recently acquired if organizing an exhibition based on recent acquisitions. In FABULOUS! 10 Years of FIDM Museum Acquisitions, 2000-2010 (2011), Jones displayed the most recent acquisitions of the FIDM Museum, with pieces ranging from the 1800s to contemporary designs by Alexander McQueen (Grayot, 2011). The display of recent acquisitions coincides with the desire to celebrate the donors who often make the acquisitions possible.

For Oriole Cullen, the Curator of Modern Textiles and Fashion at the V&A, providing a lively experience is an important aspect of her overall goals for an exhibition. Cullen also described the importance of visitors learning new information and viewing objects that make them stop in front of the ensemble and say "wow, that's impressive!" The idea that fashion and dress exhibitions are meant to be entertaining is not particularly new information. However, the combination of entertainment with intellectual rigor is an aspect of fashion and dress exhibitions that has recently come to the forefront. Fashion and dress curators are less frequently putting on exhibitions simply to please the audience with beautifully fashionable garments. They are delving deeper into the garments themselves, their history, and their cultural context to provide an enlightened intellectual experience alongside a visually pleasing one.

In reference to this development in the goals of fashion and dress exhibitions, Stanfill stated, "…I think the goal with most of our fashion exhibitions is to walk the balance between um, lively and entertaining projects but that also have uh, an intellectual rigor to them." Ultimately, the goal at the heart of each exhibition is to educate the public through the display of fashion and dress. In conjunction with this idea, an unidentified American curator stated, "…each exhibition and curatorial team sets their own unique goals on what kind of information we wish to disseminate and with what objects from our collection (or vice versa)." For Jones, a

major shift in his work over the past decade lies in the attempt "to become more academic to bring more substance to the exhibition" and to work on "shows that actually have some substance to them...as an academic institution that's what we're all about." Ultimately, all the curators interviewed discussed the desire to educate visitors through academically substantial exhibitions. As educational institutions, museums are viewed as centers of learning and fashion and dress curators understand this objective and continue to work to present educational yet innovative exhibitions on fashion and dress.

A prime example of the intent to further the intellectual rigor of fashion and dress exhibitions lies in the work of Judith Clark, an independent curator who has previously worked at the V&A. For Clark, the main goal of her independently owned gallery, which remained open from 1997 to 2002 in Notting Hill, London, was to surprise the visitors through the connections she made between the objects themselves. While working at her gallery, Clark was able to experiment with the exhibition design and setup due to its small space, about nine meters by four meters, and the independent nature of the gallery. During her time at the V&A, Clark noted the differences between visitors to her gallery and the large-scale museum: "…it's a matter of working with their expectations, because in the gallery they had no expectations, whereas, if you're doing something in a bigger museum, they come full of, full of expectations." This difference in expectations of visitors manifests itself in the goals of the curator for various exhibitions. Oftentimes, visitors of large-scale museums come to learn a wealth of new information on various topics. To incorporate this expectation and desire on the part of the visitors into each exhibition, the curators have to include a high level of academic rigor within the display, while also showing eye-catching and visually pleasing garments. At Clark's gallery, she was less tied to the desires of the visitor to see beautifully displayed garments due to the

difference in the expectations of her visitors. While they came to her gallery to view fashion and dress items, they did not necessarily come with the notion that they would see only beautiful items. With this in mind, Clark was able to experiment with the items on display to a greater degree, therefore providing a different experience, than at large-scale institutions.

Another example of the incorporation of intellectual rigor within a fashion and dress exhibition is seen in the exhibit Radical Fashion (2001-2002), curated by Claire Wilcox, a Senior Curator in the Textiles and Furniture Department at the V&A. In this exhibition, Wilcox highlighted the work of 'radical' designers such as Azzedine Alaïa, Hussein Chalayan, Helmut Lang and Jean Paul Gaultier, among others. Wilcox sought to bring these 'radical' designers into the public realm through a fashion and dress exhibition. She also sought to display the sartorial capabilities of each designer while they simultaneously challenged traditional views of the fashion world. While the visitors to the V&A may have arrived with particular expectations, Wilcox managed to experiment with a fashion and dress exhibition in a traditional setting and possibly surprise visitors to the V&A.

The importance of visitor expectations were further explained when I spoke to Wilcox. While discussing her current exhibition, which is a redisplay of the permanent collection in the fashion galleries of the V&A, she mentioned how important the visitors experience was in the process of arranging the pieces in the gallery, which is set to open in 2012: "…through consultation with visitors and also through complaints and letters praising us, the one thing that the visitor wants with this display is chronology." The continuum of time is a certainty in life. As a visitor to a new setting, such as a museum or more specifically a temporary exhibition, chronology can put the visitor at ease and set a calming tone for their experience at the museum. With chronology in mind, Wilcox has been working to arrange the permanent galleries in a way

that is chronological and visually pleasing for the visitor. One of the main factors weighing on a curator's goals for an exhibition lies in the expectations of visitors to their respective institutions. The curator's goals for an exhibition are often dependent upon who will see the exhibit and where it is situated, whether in a large-scale museum or a private gallery space (The Victoria and Albert Museum f).

Exhibition Ideas

At the V&A, once the curator has settled on an exhibition topic, they then present their idea to a committee, which is known as a "public planning group." According to Stanfill,

> …I wish that I could say that the fashion curators sit in our office and concoct the plan and present it to the museum as a fait accompli but in reality, um, the programming of all exhibitions, including fashion, and everything from small displays to major shows, goes through an exhibition, they call it a public planning group.

Cullen discussed the process in that prior to beginning work on an exhibition, the initial idea is presented to review boards and trustees for approval. She also mentioned two important questions, which she asks herself in the beginning of the exhibition process: why this topic and why now? According to Stanfill and Wilcox, the approval of an exhibition topic is "…almost like alchemy…it's a kind of very intuitive process for the public planning program…" Wilcox furthers this sentiment stating, "…in each case, except for one, the decision has been made, it's been in the air and it's sort of evolved." The public planning group understands the schedule of exhibitions at the V&A and what types of exhibitions will work during each season of the year, as well as certain years, such as the 2012 London Summer Olympics, which coincides with the Queen's Jubilee. While a curator at the V&A may propose an exhibition idea at one point in the year, the public planning group may decide whether it will or will not work for that particular point in time. If it is decided that an exhibition idea will not work, the public planning group often suggests curators re-submit their ideas at a later time. The public planning group may also

accept an exhibition idea but alter the exhibition schedule to coincide with their understanding of what types of exhibitions work best in certain seasons. Wilcox sums up the important nature of the process in the following statement: "…ideas for major exhibitions in a museum, which are sort of an enormous investment of time and funding into them, are not taken lightly. They are decided by a committee, but they're driven by the passion of the curator."

At other institutions, which employed participants of this study, the ideas presented for an exhibition are approved or declined by the director of the museum. An unidentified curator at an American museum discussed the generation of exhibition ideas as being "suggested" by the director of the institution. Once the idea was provided by the director, the curatorial staff then worked to develop an exhibition proposal based on the idea. Clare Sauro and an unidentified American curator discussed the generation of exhibition ideas through an object-based approach, where the curators develop an idea based on what objects they want to display to the public. Jones indirectly mentioned an object-based approach when he discussed the utilization of strong points of the FIDMM fashion and dress collection. He also spoke of the ability to build up the weak points of the collection through acquisitions necessary for a specific exhibition, which can similarly be considered an object-based approach for an exhibition.

Objective 2

Research

According to Stanfill, the research process for a fashion and dress exhibition depends heavily upon the amount of time between the approval of the initial idea and the implementation of the exhibition, a sentiment mirrored by Jones and Cullen. While the curators conduct research prior to submitting their idea for approval, much of the research occurs following approval of

their idea. During her time at the V&A, Stanfill has typically had one to one and a half years to complete the research. With her first exhibition, Ossie Clark (2003-04) (The Victoria and Albert Museum i), Stanfill had about a year, and with her second exhibition, New York Fashion Now (2007) (The Victoria and Albert Museum g) she had closer to a year and a half. With the current exhibition Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 (The Victoria and Albert Museum a), set to open during the summer of 2012, Stanfill and Cullen were given just over a year to work on the research for the exhibition. Regardless of the timetable given to work on an exhibition, Stanfill feels the first step in research for any exhibition starts with being aware of the existing literature surrounding the topic. An unidentified American curator concurs about the importance of understanding research that already exists, stating she usually begins the research project by examining the pieces set to go on display while also studying secondary sources so she can understand the topic as a whole and set the pieces within their cultural context. Stanfill continued discussing the importance of understanding existing knowledge in reference to an exhibition on Italian fashion, which has already been proposed to the public planning group at the V&A.

> So, for the Italian fashion exhibition, if that does move forward, I'll need to become very, um, familiar with the literature on Italian design, not just fashion but across the design disciplines after the war. And uh, and so there will be a lot of reading, a lot of reading. And then I think, just being hyper aware of all design production during the period that this show's meant to cover, so that involves going and looking at other museum collections, looking through designer archives, um, interviewing designers that are still alive and so, a lot of travel…

In line with the unidentified American curator beginning her research process by investigating the pieces that will potentially appear in the exhibition, Stanfill stresses the importance of being savvy, well versed in, and aware of the objects themselves.

According to Jones, "it's luxurious if you have three years" to conduct the research necessary for an exhibition. While he is currently working on four major exhibitions, all set to

show before 2020, three years is the typical lead-time he works with for fashion and dress exhibitions. “Doing an exhibition is always tricky, you work within the time frame that you have. And it’s never the same.” In the interviews conducted, it became apparent that the curators adjust the possibilities for each exhibit depending upon the time frame available. As stated by Jones, “you really adjust what you’re able to do.”

At two museums where research for this study was conducted, while the curators work on an upcoming exhibition, they use one large binder containing all the pertinent information for each exhibition. Through observation at the V&A, I viewed a similar method concerning the organization of information for the upcoming exhibition Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 (2012). This binder contained photographs of the pieces set to go on display, a drawing of the exhibition space with the potential placements of each garment within the exhibition space and the accession sheets with information for the garments that may go on display. At an American museum, the curatorial staff uses a similar method. To keep track of all the information relevant to an upcoming exhibition, curators create a dressing sheet that contains a packet of all the pertinent research. This information is stored in a binder, which is accessible to the curatorial staff. At both museums, the curatorial staff utilized this method to keep the information about an upcoming exhibition organized and easily accessible. With numerous members of the curatorial staff working on an exhibition, it is imperative that any and all information regarding the exhibition be within reach throughout the process.

Exhibition Catalogues

Throughout the course of the research, the curators have various deadlines to meet for the publication of the exhibition catalogue. If an exhibition catalogue is included in the production of an exhibition, “it compounds it, the difficulty of the time frame when you have a publication

involved, or a docu[mentary].” According to Stanfill, the process for exhibition catalogues depends on the time permitted for the exhibition. “…again it depends on the show. Exhibitions that have what is really a proper catalogue have photographs of objects that are in the show with catalogue entries.” Because of the lack of time for most of her exhibitions, Stanfill has yet to publish a formal catalogue for her exhibits. In the exhibition catalogue for New York Fashion Now (2007), Stanfill was unable to incorporate photographs of all the garments on display. Stanfill also discussed the challenges she and the other fashion and dress curators face when working to publish an exhibition catalogue:

> …the challenge with our publishing schedule is that because we print the catalogues in Asia, our lead-time is a year before, so the text has to be submitted to the publishers twelve months before the exhibition opens, which means that you have to know what’s going in the exhibition twelve months ahead. And actually, it’s really two years ahead because you have to start writing that a year before, you know, it takes a very long time to craft a catalogue so, um, we, I have never been in a situation where I’ve had that kind of lead time.

The rigorous schedule for catalogue publication is also evident at an American museum, where a curator discussed the difficulties of publishing an exhibition catalogue. According to an unidentified American curator, the curatorial staff would ideally have three years to research, write, photograph and edit the catalogue for an upcoming exhibition. No matter the time given to curators, there are always timelines set by the editors, publishers, graphic designers and the exhibition department, making the catalogue publication process extremely time-sensitive.

While a traditional catalogue for fashion and dress exhibitions has photographs, it does not include photographs of the installation itself, an aspect Clark laments.

> …I often find it frustrating when you look at an exhibition catalogue that is sort of perfect but you have the object that is perfectly photographed and you have the essays, but often you have no idea what it was like. Especially with the, a lot of the historic exhibitions that I’m desperate to see what they looked like and you cannot find the installation shots.

Setting aside the issue of lead-time for the publication, exhibition catalogues are usually

published in conjunction with the opening of the exhibition, and often before the exhibition opens. Because of this, it is difficult to include installation shots. To do so, the exhibition catalogue would have to be available at a date far beyond the opening date of the exhibition, which could prove an inconvenience for some visitors to the exhibition. However, this is an important aspect to consider when discussing exhibition catalogues. I have often found myself wishing to see installation shots within catalogues I purchased when I am unable to attend the exhibition itself. Due to my interest in the field of fashion curation and how the exhibitions themselves look in terms of installation, I have wondered if I am alone in this desire for information specific to certain exhibitions. This desire for knowledge on the part of students in fashion and dress curatorial programs was addressed by Clark: "…I think they're [installation shots] important also because there are more and more students of course who want to know, you know, how you get from A to B…" To discover whether or not students and professionals within the field of fashion and dress curatorial practices are alone in looking for installation shots or not would require research into the desires of visitors to various fashion and dress exhibitions.

A possible answer to the problem regarding the lack of installation shots in exhibition catalogues could be the incorporation of informative pamphlets, which would be available to museum visitors when the catalogue is not yet accessible during their visit to the exhibition. Visitors to exhibitions often like to share with others what they saw while visiting a museum; this can be achieved through the publication of an informative pamphlet that is available to all visitors. As a complement to the exhibition catalogue, an explanatory pamphlet may bridge the gap between exhibition catalogues being available before an exhibition and the desire for more informative regarding the exhibition itself. Certain museums, such as the Met and the MFIT, have already embraced the practice of posting time sensitive exhibition information, such as

installation shots, on museum websites or museum-run-blogs. If more museums embraced this idea, they would be able to side step the issue regarding the lack of installation shots available to students and professionals in the field of fashion and dress history. With the increased presence of fashion and dress exhibitions across the globe, it is difficult to keep up with each one. Unless financed through work or personal expenses, it is highly unlikely that a student or professional would be able to travel to each fashion and dress exhibition held during one year, let alone for continuous years. As a result, exhibition catalogues and museum websites are often the primary sources available for those who did not see a particular exhibition. Providing installation shots on-line would be a sufficient answer to this gap in exhibition catalogue content. With the wildly popular Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty displayed during the summer of 2011 at the Met, the curators were adept in their decision to place installation shots as well as videos of the exhibition online. While the exhibition experienced a record number of visitors, 661,509 in total (Wilson, 2011), many fashion and dress historians and members of the general public did not get the opportunity to travel to New York City to view the exhibition. By placing installation shots on their blog (The Metropolitan Museum of Art a), the curators enabled further learning and enjoyment of their work.

Garments and Mannequins

In the majority of fashion and dress exhibitions, the garments on display are the central focus for visitors. However, the mannequins that the garments are placed on are equally important in effectively communicating the curators desired message and in ensuring the success of an exhibition amongst visitors and within the museum world. The process by which the garments and mannequins are selected is an intriguing one.

The garment selection process, which is often very laborious, is usually dependent on a few key factors. In reference to the process of selecting the garments to go on display, Stanfill discussed three main points: “It has to be in good condition, it has to look good on display, and be mountable on a mannequin. If it doesn’t work on a mannequin, that’s an automatic, you know exclusion. Um, it shouldn’t need much conservation.” The conservation department at the majority of museums are consistently short on time, which necessitates the use of garments that are already in good condition. However, the conservation department at a museum can provide necessary and pivotal work on garments for exhibitions. An unidentified American curator discussed the importance of the conservation team in preparing for an exhibition.

> I must also add that after art selections are made, the objects go to Conservation to be condition reported and treated if necessary prior to any dressing. The dressing process is very tough on the art work, so we want to make sure that they are safe, as well as look visually appealing.

In regards to garment selection, Stanfill goes on to say, “…first of all it has to look good. It has to look good on display. It’s no good if it represents some interesting fact or point, if it’s just going to look like a damp little rag when you display it.” Even if a garment is a prime example of a goal or message the curator is trying to convey, it is an automatic exclusion if it does not fit on a mannequin. A fashion and dress curator has to consider not only how a garment will look on a mannequin, but also how it will look within the gallery space itself. According to Jones, “we always have to think about what’s going to look good in this gallery and how we can space it out.” Through spending time in the gallery and working within the space, the curator understands what types of items work within a certain gallery space. Color relations between objects on display are also important in regards to obtaining balance within the gallery space. Along with color, the representation of male and female mannequins should also be balanced if both types of garments will be presented within an exhibition. As stated by Jones, “if you have one woman

[mannequin] in one section you need to have another woman [mannequin] in each of the other sections."

Another important aspect of garment selection centers on the use of the museums own collection. This is done to cut down on exhibition costs, as loans from other museums are often expensive. With the upcoming exhibition Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 (2012), Cullen discussed the use of the collection at the V&A when deciding upon a topic. Due to a change in the exhibition schedule, Cullen and Stanfill were given a short amount of time to put together a crowd-pleasing exhibition centered on British design history that would be on display during the 2012 Summer Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee in London. To choose a topic, Cullen and Stanfill went into the V&A's fashion and dress collection and searched for a group of items that stood out. After a bit of time in the collection, numerous ball gowns caught their attention. Being short on time, they did not have the option of sending many items to the conservation department or of using loans, so utilizing their own collection, which included many well-preserved ball gowns, was of great importance. This is also a prime example of the intuition present in the exhibition schedule as decided by the public planning group. With the upcoming Summer Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee, the public planning group understood the importance of displaying a crowd-pleasing exhibition, which focused on British designers and British sartorial capabilities. The exhibition will include a few pieces of Royal dress, which ties in with the celebration for the Queen's Jubilee.

Once the garment selection has been made, the curatorial staff begins to discuss the mannequins that will be utilized in the exhibition. In the majority of the interviews I conducted, the main issue surrounding the selection of mannequins was budget. Concerning the topic, Stanfill stated "…the mannequins is an interesting issue for the V&A because we have always

struggled with budgets." An unidentified American curator mirrored this sentiment saying the mannequin selection depended on the needs of the garments set to go on display, the desired look of the exhibition, and the budget available for the exhibition.

Stanfill discussed the use of Stockman mannequins in many exhibitions at the V&A: "For the main, for the big exhibitions, the fashion exhibitions we have tended to use, uh, for conservation reasons we've often used the Stockman dress forms, which are the cheapest, but they're also the most conservation friendly." In previous fashion and dress exhibitions at an American museum, the curatorial staff has used Kyoto mannequins because of the ease in dressing the forms. At the FIDMM, Jones utilized Kyoto mannequins for the FABULOUS! 10 Years of FIDM Museum Acquisitions, 2000-2010 (2011) exhibition because the visitor could view nearly every object on display from 360° within the gallery. According to Jones, the FIDMM has a collection of over two-hundred mannequins, both Kyoto and Brooklyn, for fashion and dress exhibitions. As they have enough mannequins to choose from, they rarely order specially manufactured mannequins for specific garments.

Over the years, there has been a pendulum shift in the types of mannequins preferred by fashion and dress curators. In the early 1980s, the mannequins used often had heads, wigs, and make-up, which were used to give a strong life-like appearance. The curators also incorporated style-specific accessories into the outfit so the visitor would be able to view a full ensemble from head to toe. By the late 1990s, the pendulum had swung to the opposite end, promoting minimalism and encouraging the use of "stockmen, no heads, minimal, and a kind of, a dress floating in a case kind of thing, no accessories." While the pendulum has already shifted from one extreme to the other, Stanfill feels it is shifting yet again. "…now I think it's coming back towards a more, you know, to the full figure, heads and arms but maybe not accessories, so it's

kind of back in a middle ground." Sauro also discussed the pendulum shift regarding the types of mannequins used within fashion and dress exhibitions:

> In the 1990s there was a strong push towards minimalism with exhibitions utilizing stark, featureless mannequins in a white cube-like environment. I think this was an attempt to gain respect in the art world, to prove costume history/fashion is a serious topic. Unfortunately, the debate continues and many curators are regularly forced to justify their existence. However, it seems we have returned to Vreeland esque spectacle in exhibitions. I am not sure if this is just the taste pendulum swinging away from minimalism or a reaction to the restrictions of the art world. Certainly the success of the McQueen exhibit would argue "more is more."

Throughout the history of fashion and dress exhibitions, there have been shifts in what is an appropriate appearance for a mannequin. In the mid-1930s, commercial mannequins were most used when displayed as animated figures, opposed to the rather lifeless mannequins of the 1920s, which displayed the waistless shifts of the 1920s. The clothing of the 1930s was more curvaceous and vibrant than the clothing of the 1920s and as a result museums of the time rarely displayed them on lifeless mannequins (Taylor, 2002). This is a prime example of the shift apparent in the mannequin selection process. In a recent exhibition, Yves Saint Laurent Style (2008) at the Montreal Museum of Art, the curators utilized minimalist mannequins in regards to design, which incorporated the full figure, including lifelike arms and a stylized head. According to John Potvin, an Associate Professor at the University of Guelph, Canada, the haute couture jackets designed by Yves Saint Laurent stood out as "exemplars of the designers continued symbiosis with the world of modern art…[and] his ability to translate a two-dimensional painting into a three-dimensional fashion object" (2010, p. 243). The review by Potvin exemplifies the impact of mannequins within a fashion and dress exhibition. Through the use of minimalist mannequins within the Yves Saint Lauren Style (2008) exhibition, visitors were able to focus on the ensembles on display in great detail without distraction from the mannequins that the garments were placed on.

Exhibition Design

An important element of any exhibition in a museum centers on the way the exhibition itself is designed. In fashion and dress exhibitions, the layout of the garments becomes very important during the planning process. Because garments are three-dimensional, the natural desire is to see the entire garment from all sides instead of simply the front. Another difficult issue encountered by fashion and dress curators is the idea that garments are meant to be seen in motion. As stated by designer Derek Lam, "clothing is about movement on the body and that's what I like to deal with, how clothing works on a human form" (Keeve, 2005). One of the ways in which fashion and dress curators are dealing with the issue of lack of movement in fashion and dress exhibitions is to include film.

> I think that over the last decade the one thing that has become really essential for fashion exhibitions is film because, for obvious reasons the fact that clothes are meant to be worn on the moving body and the static display really kind of take the life literally, the life out of them.

In addition to the trend for including film in fashion and dress exhibitions, there has been an increased appearance of interactive elements within the exhibition space. An unidentified American curator mentioned the growing presence of social media and audio-visuals within fashion and dress exhibitions. Stanfill also discussed the trend towards more interactive elements in exhibitions:

> …in the Radical Fashion exhibition, there was a wonderful, it was an Alexander McQueen I think, where it was a hologram, and you could stand, look at the dress…in the mirror, stand behind it and it looked like you were wearing it.

Along with Radical Fashion (2001-02) (The Victoria and Albert Museum f), there was also an interactive element in the exhibition Hats: An Anthology By Stephen Jones (2009) (The Victoria and Albert Museum e) exhibition, which was curated by Cullen. According to Stanfill, the exhibition space included hats that visitors, especially children, could try on. Along with the

hats, there were also mirrors located in the exhibition, many of which were set at lower levels for younger visitors, so they could see what they looked like in the hats. Stanfill stated that, whenever the curatorial staff at the V&A has ventured to include any interactive elements in their exhibitions, they have been extremely popular among visitors of all ages.

The presence of film within fashion and dress exhibitions has become commonplace in many museums. In Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2011) at the Met, the curators, Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda, incorporated a video of McQueen's Spring/Summer 2010 collection, *Plato's Atlantis*, "in an attempt to make fashion into an interactive dialogue between creator and consumer" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art a). In a retrospective of Viktor & Rolf at the Musee de la Mode et du Textile in Paris in 2003, film was utilized in place of wall text. Next to each ensemble on display, the curators placed a film of that particular object on the runway when it was originally shown. This incorporation of film within fashion and dress exhibitions exemplifies the increased importance of interactive elements, whether in the form of an item one can try on or simply view in conjunction with the ensembles themselves. While the inclusion of interactive elements within fashion and dress exhibitions has become essentially expected by visitors, various institutions cannot include these elements due to budget and personnel issues. According to Jones, "it's [interactive elements] coming up more, people want it to be part of the installation because that's the cool thing to do. But I need people to be able to do it. And the time to be able to develop it."

During the final year of preparation before the opening of the exhibition, the curatorial staff spends a great deal of time working on the design of the exhibition space while simultaneously working with the garments. The curatorial staff ultimately decides which garment goes where within the exhibition space. Often, while working with an internal design

department, the curators decide which colors to use on the walls within the exhibition as well as any graphic images to be used within the space. Stanfill and an unidentified American curator both spoke of contracting exhibition design services for major exhibitions. According to Stanfill, the V&A solicits bids from three or four design firms who then offer a proposal and pitch their exhibition design to the museum. This proposal includes their vision for what the show would look like if they were given the opportunity to work on the project. An unidentified American curator spoke of a similar process, stating the exhibition design is either done by an in-house team of exhibition designers or exhibition designers who are hired on contract to do the work. When an outside firm does the exhibition design,

> The designer and the curatorial and conservation team first meet to talk about the look of the show, the needs that must be met for the safety of the garments, and logistics such as availability of space, the amount of objects and mounts in the show and the timeline.

These meetings between the exhibition designer and curatorial staff occur many times before the design plan is finalized. While various institutions have the option of contracting out the exhibition design, other museums complete the design of the space with their own personnel. At FIDMM, the exhibition design is currently developed and implemented by three members of the museum staff: the associate curator, curator and collections manager. No matter who is involved in working on the exhibition design, it is a team collaboration and good communication skills are necessary to complete the work in a satisfactory manner.

For some curators, the exhibition design is as an opportunity to experiment within the allotted space. As expressed by Clark, “I’m very interested in how sort of theory finds its way, um, into installation design because I think installation design has always been associated with just sort of making something look good.” For Clark, exhibition design is not simply about making the objects on display look nice and well organized. She believes that the exhibition

design should be connected to the theory, concept or idea that originated the exhibition. The ability to experiment with installation design depends on the location of the exhibition. If located in a private gallery space, the curatorial staff has more flexibility in regards to experimenting with various aspects of the exhibition. In larger museums, which have to consider the expectations of the visitors to their space more so than private gallery spaces, there is less opportunity to experiment. Stanfill, who sees the collection at the V&A as a learning tool and a way to disseminate information, promotes the use of straightforward communication in exhibitions within the museum. In other spaces, the ability to experiment is seen as a testament to the distance fashion and dress exhibitions have traveled within the art world. Beginning as a type of exhibition that was not always taken seriously, fashion and dress has taken a spot amongst well-respected museum exhibitions in recent years. In reference to the exhibition she curated for MoMu in Antwerp, which then was on display at the V&A, Clark discussed the embedding of theory within the exhibition and how it can be seen as a statement of "…how far everyone has come in terms of dress history that we didn't have to worry about it quite so much and we could do something else with the installation."

Wall Text

Another aspect of exhibition design involves wall text for the pieces on display. Whether or not the curator is responsible for providing the visitors with predetermined information concerning the pieces on display has recently become an area of discussion within the museum world. Various members of the museum world view it as their job to provide information to the visitors, while others have taken the route of allowing visitors to produce their own interpretations concerning the pieces on display without interference from the curator or the museum. As with the goals of curators in regards to visitor expectations and the design of the

exhibition space, there is again a difference between what is done at a large-scale museum and within a private gallery space. When faced with this question, Stanfill mentioned the traditional nature of the V&A, and how important traditional wall text is to the establishment.

> …we get a wide range of visitors, different ages, different backgrounds, um, a lot of international visitors, and I think our role as educators can be underestimated…so the traditional V&A show has wall text, it has information about what you're looking at and explains why this thing relates to the exhibition topic.

Stanfill also discussed fashion and dress exhibitions completed by Clark, who was less inclined to use wall text within her exhibitions completed at the V&A: "…I think Judith's shows here have been less wedded to that idea…" While the V&A holds a traditional view towards the inclusion of wall text, Stanfill discussed other fashion and dress exhibitions she had visited that were successful despite their lack of wall text. In a retrospective of Viktor & Rolf at the Musee de la Mode et du Textile in Paris in 2003, the curatorial staff utilized moving images instead of traditional wall text to explain the background of each garment. Stanfill regards this exhibition as "…one of the most stunning shows that I've seen…" The lack of wall text combined with the inclusion of an audio-visual element within a fashion and dress exhibition over the past ten years shows the tendency for fashion and dress curators to experiment with traditional elements of museum exhibitions. The relatively new nature of the field of fashion and dress history may account for the ability of curators to experiment with wall text.

While Clark herself has been less likely to use wall text in her own work, she maintains "…some of the most beautiful exhibitions I've ever seen have been dresses in a row with captions…" In Clark's view, attending an exhibition that has wall text is a very different experience than attending one that does not have wall text. Clark would like to promote alternatives for wall text in the sense that there can be varying thoughts on the topic. She does

not wish to have one method cancel out the other, but instead an acceptance of the use of various methods.

During the interview, an unidentified American curator described the importance of tombstone wall text during fashion and dress exhibitions. Tombstone wall text, which includes the object title, date, place, materials and usually the donor information, is regarded as the basic information used on wall text. While there is no one way to please all visitors, it is important to many fashion and dress curators to include, at the very least, the tombstone information. Stanfill states, in support of the use of wall text within fashion and dress exhibitions at the V&A, "…we very much feel a responsibility to explain."

According to an American curator, information regarding the exhibition should be available for those visitors who would like to learn more. Whether this ability to learn more takes place in the form of a link to a website with more information, a handout, docent led tours, or simply having a knowledgeable museum employee present within the gallery space at all times, it is important that information be accessible to those who wish to learn more about the topic at hand. Several museums offer websites that coincide with exhibitions held at their museum. These websites are available even after the exhibition has closed. This is especially beneficial for those who were unaware of the exhibition dates or those doing research on particular subjects, for which exhibitions are important sources of knowledge. At the FIT Museum in New York City, a website for the exhibition Japan Fashion Now (2010-2011) remains available to the public. On this website (The Museum at FIT b), a write-up regarding the contents of the exhibition is present. There is also the option to "View the Online Exhibition," where the visitor is taken to another website which contains further information as well as installation shots. For the Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-1957, a microsite is available on the V&A

website. On the microsite, visitors can scan through various options such as "The Exhibition," where brief descriptions of each main area of the exhibition are provided. There is also the option to view "Exhibition Highlights." In the "Exhibition Highlights," ensembles such as the 'Bar' suit and hat by Christian Dior are discussed through text as well as photograph (The Victoria and Albert Museum h).

An innovative way in which fashion and dress curators have been able to dispense information in recent years has been through the publication of blogs. Of the curators whom I spoke to about the emergence of blogs within recent years, they all agreed that they were a welcome addition to the museum world. "I think that it's a very good thing because our world of fashion curation is so small and we kind of think that it feels very big because it's our universe but it is very small." Stanfill goes on to discuss this idea in regards to fashion and dress exhibitions.

> But also in terms of fashion, how much work is involved in making the things look good on the mannequins and all the restrictions that we have in terms of our objects that other collections within the museum do not have just because they're textiles, they're fragile, and there are so many requirements…when you display an object that's a fashion or textile, you have to adhere to these requirements just for the survival of the object.

The dissemination of information shedding light on the level of work fashion and dress curators through blogs has been helpful to the visitors as well as professionals and students within the field. Stanfill feels the old model of the museum curator sitting behind their desk and deep in thought is very outmoded. The publication of blogs helps dispel this old-fashioned idea of museum professionals. An unidentified American curator also viewed blogs that originate from museums or museum professionals as useful in regards to the processes of fashion and dress curators. Currently the V&A, LACMA, FIDM, and the Met, among others publish blogs, which offer insight into the methods utilized by fashion and dress curators within their museums.

At FIDMM, the museum blog is run by an individual blog manager, who manages the blog as well as the FIDMM facebook page. According to Jones, she is an extremely capable writer and researcher, which adds to the appeal of the FIDMM blog. Jones emphasizes the importance of photographs to the blog as the element that "completely...sells the blog to people." Through the blog manager's dedication and continual posting to the blog, the fashion and dress department has experienced an increase in requests for access to the FIDMM archives for research by readers of the blog. While the presence of blogs is beneficial to researchers, scholars, students and visitors alike, it is also beneficial to the museum itself.

Objective 3

Shift in Process

"Yes! Everyone's a curator now!" exclaimed Wilcox when asked if she had noticed a shift in the field of fashion and dress curatorial work from when she began working in the field. The idea that curators are now prominent within society holds substance in today's world of museums. From fashion houses creating and curating their own archives to independent scholars adopting the title "curator," the field of fashion and dress curatorial work has experienced a surge in popularity that does not seem to be slowing. According to Wilcox,

> There's a heightened consciousness of the value of museums and archives...I think that museums have raised consciousness about collections and about exhibitions and displays through putting on spectacular show after spectacular show, through publishing, through making available expertise.

The heightened consciousness surrounding fashion and dress exhibitions has resulted in the visitor's desire for blockbuster and spectacle exhibitions. An unidentified American curator and Stanfill both noted the increased presence of blockbuster exhibitions such as Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2011) at the Met. Stanfill dubbed the explosion of interest in fashion

and dress exhibitions as "The McQueen Effect." More and more museums are realizing the potential of fashion and dress exhibitions in getting visitors through the door, resulting in an increase in spectacle exhibitions such as Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2011). With movie producer Baz Lurhmann working as the creative consultant for Elsa Schiaparelli and Miuccia Prada: On Fashion (2012) at the Met (The Metropolitan Museum of Art b), the tendency for spectacle exhibitions will undoubtedly continue.

Concurrent with the rise in popularity of fashion and dress exhibitions, there has also been an increase in the number of educational opportunities available for those wishing to enter the fashion and dress curatorial world. A recent Masters of the Arts program at the London College of Fashion titled Fashion Curation, "offers a unique opportunity to investigate and develop the specialist practice-based, critical and interpretative skills involved within the discipline of fashion curation" (London College of Fashion). The program, taught by Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye, includes courses in displaying dress, creating 'stories' from objects, and writing wall texts aimed at large audiences. At the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, the Dress, Body, Space and Modernity: Fashion in the City, 1919-1939 Masters of Art program, taught by Dr. Rebecca Arnold, is a focused study into a particular time period of fashion history that also offers a brief insight into the history of fashion and dress as a wider topic (The Courtauld Institute of Art). Parsons: the New School for Design in New York City offers a Fashion Studies MA program, which provides an interdisciplinary approach to the history and museology of fashion and dress (Parsons: the new school of design). At the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City, the Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory and Museum Practice Master of Arts program "combines the rigorous study of fashion and textile history with hands-on training in the analysis, conservation, storage, and exhibition of textile and costume materials,

and in collections management and exhibition planning" (Fashion Institute of Technology). According to Cullen, there were few jobs available when she was studying fashion and dress history at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Due to the explosion in popularity and the increase in venues which host fashion and dress exhibits internationally, there has been an increase in the number of jobs available. However, with the surge in educational opportunities and the number of students studying fashion and dress with the intention of entering the fashion and dress curatorial world, traditional posts are becoming less frequent and more competitive. Consequently, Cullen mentioned the increase in individual curatorial work, in a similar fashion to Clark, who owned and operated a private gallery space dedicated to fashion and dress exhibitions. The surge in popularity for fashion and dress exhibitions can undoubtedly be seen in the extreme popularity of the exhibitions Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty, held at the Met during the summer of 2011. According to Stanfill,

> I think the thing that is possibly going to change everybody's lives is the McQueen exhibition...I just think that that show has caused so much discussion, both within our field but also in terms of the public...even for people who don't ever go to fashion exhibitions, they're going to the McQueen show.

Dubbed "The McQueen Effect" by Stanfill, the popularity surrounding the McQueen exhibition shone a light on the rapidly rising popularity surrounding spectacle-style fashion and dress exhibitions.

Through the combination of an increase in educational opportunities, public awareness and interest, and the substantial and exceptional work of fashion and dress curators, the future of fashion and dress exhibitions is nearly inexhaustible. The very nature of fashion as a business and cultural phenomenon is infinite, thus allowing for the continual exploration of the subject within fashion and dress exhibitions worldwide.

In regards to the question of whether or not there has been a shift in the processes utilized by fashion and dress curators, it seems the questions asked did not elicit responses that shed enough light on the issue. However, another possibility is that there has not been a shift in processes but rather a shift in the desired outcome. While the processes remain the same in the field of curatorial work for fashion and dress, there are now a wider variety of the types of exhibitions produced. Whether the exhibition is minimalist, standard, theoretical, or spectacular, the way a fashion and dress curator puts together the exhibition seems to be the same. However, the ultimate product, in the sense that the exhibition is a product that can be consumed by visitors, varies among exhibition topics, museum cultures, and curatorial style. The Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2011) exhibition at the Met represents a vital point in the shift of the type of exhibition produced. Fashion and dress curators might now be looking to put together spectacular exhibitions that draw in a large audience.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore current curatorial processes that take place within museums housing a fashion or dress department. The objectives for the study were as follows:

I. To understand the various types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of the curator responsible for the exhibitions.

II. To understand the developmental process of dress and fashion exhibitions through the viewpoint of fashion and dress curators.

III. To understand the recent history of curatorial work within the fashion and dress departments at various English and American museums.

The objectives were attained through analysis of the information garnered during in-depth interviews with four curators. Further information was gained through brief interviews with four additional curators. Through the analysis of the data collected, insight into the current curatorial processes that take place within large-scale museums housing a fashion or dress department was achieved, thus attaining the purpose of the study.

The findings regarding Objective 1 centered on the types of fashion and dress exhibitions and the goals of each curator I interviewed. The data collected displayed a consensus on various topics. Mainly, each curator interviewed agreed that the main goal of their exhibitions is to educate the public through fashion and dress. Various participants, including Stanfill and Cullen, stressed the importance of putting together a lively, appealing, and educational exhibition. Unexpectedly, a discussion of the expectations of visitors to fashion and dress exhibitions came

up throughout various interviews, including those with Clark and Wilcox. Through these discussions, it became apparent that a concern for the expectations of visitors to their exhibitions played a role in their respective goals as curators. Also of importance was the way in which exhibition ideas were approved or declined. At the V&A, exhibition ideas go through a "public planning group" and at FIDMM ideas are submitted to the director of the museum. An unidentified curator discussed the exhibition planning process as including a "suggestion" by the director for an appropriate exhibition topic. Exhibition ideas are often generated by the passion of the curatorial staff and submitted to a colleague in a senior position at the institution for approval.

Objective 2 explored current curatorial practices. In regards to research, each participant stressed the importance of being familiar with all the available primary and secondary sources on the exhibition topic. An unidentified participant also spoke of the importance of being knowledgeable on the items that go on display. A similarity among participants was the use of a primary binder that contains all the crucial information and documents pertaining to an upcoming exhibition. In the discussion of exhibition catalogues, it is apparent that putting together a fashion and dress exhibition and catalogue is dependent on the amount of time available for research and planning. Good communication is also valuable throughout the exhibition planning process. In the discussion of mannequins and garments utilized in exhibitions, budget was a central concern. Each institution attempts to use mannequins they already own as well as garments housed within their collection, as loaning items can be expensive. Interactive elements are increasingly expected by visitors to fashion and dress exhibitions. Interviewees mentioned the desire to include interactive elements within exhibitions as well as the budget constraints, which constrict their ability to include these components. In the

discussion of exhibition design, a commonality among curators was the use of in-house staff to put together the exhibition. Participants employed at the V&A and at an unidentified museum mentioned the occasional use of contracting services for exhibition design. The topic of wall text served as a point of discussion throughout the interviews. Nearly all the participants, with the exception of Clark, feel wall text is necessary as a tool for educating visitors to the museum. Clark does not dispel the importance of wall text but is less inclined to use it within fashion and dress exhibitions she curates. Jones, Stanfill, and an unidentified curator expressed happiness concerning fashion and dress exhibition blogs, as they provide valuable insight into the curatorial process for the exhibitions.

For Objective 3, the focus was placed on attempting to discover if there has been a recent shift in fashion and dress curatorial practices. The questions I asked did not always elicit discerning remarks by the participants. In future research, I would suggest developing a refined quality of questions, which would result in deeper investigation into this topic. However, the questions asked did bring forth valuable information. Importantly, the belief that "everyone's a curator now" came to light. The idea that there is a heightened consciousness surrounding fashion and dress exhibitions was also a topic of discussion during objective 3. According to Stanfill, the increased attention surrounding fashion and dress exhibitions can be termed "The McQueen Effect," due to the exponential popularity of the Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (2011) exhibition at the Met. Paralleling the rise in the popularity of fashion and dress exhibitions is the increased availability of educational opportunities for those wishing to enter the fashion and dress curatorial world.

Significance

Through the completed study, information regarding the curatorial practices of fashion and dress curators was attained and presented to the reader. The findings from this study increase our understanding of the methods utilized by fashion and dress curators, which was previously a mostly unexplored topic. This study enables a general understanding of the processes and procedures utilized by fashion and dress curators. My hope is that this study will encourage further examination and study into the methods of fashion and dress curators specifically, but curators across other fields in general.

Limitations

With any study conducted, there are limitations to what the researcher is capable of carrying out. The limitations initially recognized by the researcher included the distance between the location of the researcher and the participants. An aspect of this limitation was overcome through a two-week research trip to London, where four interviews were conducted with fashion and dress curators. Since I only conducted eight interviews, my population was relatively small. Through more interviews, a deeper understanding could have been obtained regarding the subject of fashion and dress curatorial work. An additional limitation understood regards the size of the museums where participants were employed. Each of the interviews conducted were with curators currently or previously employed within large-scale museums. Since small-scale museums were not included in the study, it remains unseen whether practices of fashion and dress curators vary from large to small-scale museums. The last limitation noted in this study centered on the idea of traditional versus non-traditional museums. All the participants of this study are currently or previously employed by traditional museums; which meant, for the

purpose of this study, the institutions were not founded by fashion designers who wished to archive their collections while also educating the public about their career. If museums dedicated to fashion designers had been included in this study, a wider range of data would have been collected and it may have been possible to discern whether there are differences between fashion and dress curators at traditional and non-traditional museums.

A further limitation was recognized throughout the data collection and oral history analysis process. This limitation has its roots in my desire to conduct numerous interviews with each participant. Through conducting follow-up interviews, I would have gained a deeper insight into the practices of fashion and dress curators as well as gain the ability to clarify any misunderstood or vague comments or phrases from previous interviews. Due to the distance between the researcher and the participants, as well as the busy schedules of each participant interviewed, follow-up interviews were unlikely and therefore not considered within the methodology of this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

As with any study on a topic of interest to the researcher, future research is to be expected and encouraged. Some recommendations for future research into the topic of fashion and dress curators are:

I. In general, more research should be conducted on this topic as so little information has been published regarding it.

II. A refined quality of questions should be developed regarding the shift in curatorial practices. This should be done in future research to investigate deeper into whether or not there has been a shift in fashion and dress curatorial practices. As a result, any

reader and myself would gain a better understanding regarding the way fashion and dress curatorial practices have evolved and changed over time.

III. Additional research could be conducted into the specific areas of fashion and dress curatorial work such as mannequin and garment selection or exhibition design. By focusing on topics specific to fashion and dress curatorial work, insight into the field as a whole will continue to expand. Further understanding of the work completed by fashion and dress curators is necessary in part due to the rising interest of the general public.

IV. A larger number of interviews with curators would greatly benefit the study and provide deeper insight into their practices. Ideally, research would be conducted within numerous major museums and an extensive variety of countries.

V. Through an increase in the amount of interviews conducted, a cross-analysis of practices used by fashion and dress curators in different countries could be achieved. A comparison of curators in America and those in various locations would be of importance to the field of fashion and dress curatorial practices.

Conclusion

This study provided the initial step in gaining further insight into the practices and methods utilized by fashion and dress curators within large-scale museums in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is my hope that I will be able to continue conducting research into the subject as well as encourage others to explore this emergent career within the museum world. I feel extremely privileged to have spent the greater part of two years researching and further understanding the work completed by fashion and dress curators. With the increased public

awareness and interest in the outcome of the hard work of fashion and dress curators, it is an extremely exciting time within this field.

The purpose of this study was to explore current curatorial processes that take place within museums housing a fashion or dress department. Through four in-depth interviews and four further interviews centering on questions fundamental to the study, a wealth of data was collected. The data presented displays the importance of time and budget when planning a fashion and dress exhibition. Difficulties unique to fashion and dress exhibitions were also discussed: including the importance of the type of mannequin utilized within the exhibition as well as the need to use garments within the institutions respective collection for budgetary reasons. Other topics explored during this study include the research and exhibition catalogue process, exhibition design, curatorial sentiments on wall text and published blogs. Finally, a brief discussion occurred which focused on whether or not there has been a shift in curatorial processes over recent decades. Overall, it seems the curators interviewed believe there has in fact been a shift in regards to the idea that fashion and dress exhibitions are returning to spectacle-style shows and an increase in educational opportunities available for those wishing to enter into the fashion and dress curatorial world.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

PROJECT NUMBER: 2011-10809-0
TITLE OF STUDY: Fashion and Dress Curatorial Practices in Large-Scale Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Jose Blanco

Dear Dr. Blanco,

Please be informed that the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and initially approved your above-titled proposal through the exempt (administrative) review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, /unless:/ (i). the information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; /and /(ii). any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note there may still be revisions requested via email during the final approval process. Final approval will be granted by the IRB Chairperson and sent via campus mail.

Please remember that no change in this research proposal can be initiated without prior review by the IRB. Any adverse events or unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB immediately. The principal investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of approved protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Human Subjects Office if your study is completed or terminated.

Good luck with your study, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRBnumber and title in all communications regarding this study.

Sincerely,

LaRie Sylte
Human Subjects

APPENDIX B

INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Informational Letter

11/10/11

Dear: Participant,

I am professor (or a graduate student under the direction of a professor) in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled "Fashion and Dress Curatorial Practices in Large-Scale Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom." that is being conducted under the auspices of The University of Georgia. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the practices and motivations of fashion and dress curators at large-scale museums.

Your participation will involve answering open-ended in-depth interview questions and should only take about 1-2 hours. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty. The results of the research study may be published, and you have the option to publish your name, affiliation, both, or neither. Based upon your answer, the information will be published accordingly.

The findings from this project may provide information on the general practices and methods of dress and fashion curators in the early 21st century. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (704) 608-0256 or send an e-mail to Jess1987@uga.edu or jblanco@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia, Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia, 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; e-mail address irb@uga.edu.

By completing and returning the consent form in the envelope provided, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Jessica Schwartz

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a voluntary research study conducted by Ms. Jessica Schwartz and Dr. Jose Blanco in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors at The University of Georgia. For this study, we will conduct interviews to explore the processes and motivations of fashion and dress curators in large-scale museums.

For this project, you will take part in a semi-structured interview regarding your practices as a curator within a fashion and dress department. These interviews will take place in your home, workplace or any other location that you prefer. Within this setting (workplace, home, etc.), I will ask open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format.

The interview session is expected to last 1-2 hours. We will audio-tape or video tape your responses to the interview questions during our session and I will transcribe them at a later time. These audio or video tapes will not be publicly disseminated. Upon transcribing them, the tapes will be destroyed. The transcripts will be kept in a locked file in a locked office on campus for which we have access.

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts due to your participation in this project. If you become uncomfortable with your participation in the project, you may stop at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may benefit from the opportunity to express your curatorial processes and from learning, upon publication of the results of the study, how your processes relate to those of other individuals within your field. This study may offer practical information and educate students within the fashion and dress history fields.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Jessica Schwartz at (704)-608-0256. I can also be contacted at jess1987@uga.edu or Jose Blanco at jblanco@uga.edu. I look forward to communicating with you regarding your curatorial practices. Thank you for assisting us in this project.

Sincerely,
Jessica D. Schwartz
Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors

Please choose and mark one of the following statements:

_____ I do not want the researchers to use my name. The results of my participation will be reported as confidential or using a pseudonym. The only people who will know that I am a

research subject are members of the research team. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others.

_____ My identity and the results of this participation will be made public in any publications.

a. The researchers can use my name when discussing my answers to the research questions.
b. The researchers can use my affiliation when discussing my answers to the research questions.
c. The researchers can use my name and affiliation when discussing my answers to the research questions.

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706)-542-3199; E-mail address: irb@uga.edu

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

I. Greetings and Introductions. Procedural aspects, review of consent form and research goals.

II. Introduction: professional life

   a. Describe your educational background.

   b. Please list all previous experience in the field of fashion and dress within museums.

   c. How long have you been in your current position?

   d. What is the title of your current position?

   e. To what would you attribute your interest in the field of fashion and dress history.

   f. Do you consider yourself a fashion and dress curator?

   g. If not, please describe the title you attribute to yourself and why.

III. Types of fashion and dress exhibitions and goals of curators (Objective #1)

   a. As a curator, please describe the goals of some of your previous exhibitions.

   b. Please describe the goals of your current, or in-process, exhibitions.

   c. Please describe the various areas of fashion and dress exhibitions (e.g. retrospectives, historical, conceptual, etc.)

   d. Do you have a preference for a certain type of exhibition? Please explain.

IV. Current curatorial processes (Objective #2)

   a. Please describe how you develop ideas for exhibitions

b. How do you conduct the research necessary for the exhibition?

c. Please describe the garment selection and preparation process.

d. Can you tell me about the mannequin selection and preparation process?

e. Please describe the methods of exhibition design.

f. Can you tell me about the exhibition catalog process?

g. Can you offer any insight into exhibition techniques that are specific to dress and fashion exhibits?

h. How do you feel about exhibition blogs that offer insight into the processes of dress and fashion curators?

i. Please discuss any additional elements of your exhibition preparation process.

V. Shift in curatorial practices (Objective #3)

a. In your experience, how has the process you go through for exhibitions changed during your time as a dress curator?

b. What changes are you experiencing now in your work as a dress curator?

c. Where do you see the field of fashion and dress curatorial work heading?

d. Do you feel that exhibitions must provide visitors with predetermined information (about the objects, creators, time period, etc.) or that visitors should be able to produce their own interpretations without interference from the curator?

e. What is the impact of the developing field of museum education on curatorial practices for fashion and dress?

f. What is the impact of the trend for interactive exhibitions on curatorial practices for fashion and dress exhibitions?

g. What is the impact of the trend for conceptual exhibitions on current curatorial

practices?

VI. Final business and contact information for researchers provided

APPENDIX E

OBJECTIVE 2

Table 2.1

Objective 2 – *Ideas for Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Ideas
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	Ask why this topic, why now? Present idea to review boards, trustees and public planning group
Kevin Jones	Considers strong points of the collection; avoids trendy or timely shows; also builds up collection through acquisitions
Clare Sauro	Object-based approach; beginning with idea and then finding objects feels forced
Sonnet Stanfill	Complicated jigsaw; public planning group; balance in programs; alchemy; intuitive process; external forces; passionate
Claire Wilcox	Decided by a committee but driven by the passion of the curator; it has been in the air and it has evolved
UA	Object-based approach – ideas begin with what they want to display
UB	"Suggested" by the Director; curatorial staff develop proposal based on this

Table 2.2

Objective 2 – *Research*

Participant Name	Research
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	Book is done one year in advance; this includes research and writing
Kevin Jones	Usually three years; working on four projects now; all will be done by 2020; research includes many things
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Depends on time frame; look through periodicals; interviews; familiar with literature; hyper aware of the period the shows' meant to cover
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Examine pieces; go to secondary sources; identify primary research
UB	

Table 2.3

Objective 2 – *Garment Selection*

Participant Name	Garment Selection
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Themes of the show determine the garment selection; color relations are important; balance in galleries
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Good condition, look good on display, be mountable on a mannequin, should not need much conservation; use own collection
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Select a garment that is necessary to the goals of the exhibition; conservation is important; use a "Dressing Bible"
UB	Back and forth process between developing the story and objects that would support the story

Table 2.4

Objective 2 – *Mannequin Selection*

Participant Name	Mannequins
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Pulls from storage; Kyoto and Brooklyn mannequins; over 200 to choose from
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Budgets; use Stockmen dress forms for conservation reasons
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Depends on the needs of the garments, the look of the exhibition and the budget
UB	Determined by the exhibition department in conjunction with the conservation department

Table 2.5

Objective 2 – *Methods of Exhibition Design*

Participant Name	Exhibition Design
Judith Clark	Interested in how theory finds its way into installation design
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Done in-house with the collections manager; team collaboration; budget constraints; communication is important
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Worked with internal design department to choose color and graphics; decided which dress went where on her own; can also hire design firms on contract
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Done by in-house exhibition designers or hired on contract
UB	

Table 2.6

Objective 2 – *Exhibition Catalogue*

Participant Name	Exhibition Catalogue
Judith Clark	Important to know how to get from point A to point B; frustrating that catalogues do not have installation shots
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Very involved; many late nights; start early; scheduling with photography and conservation; look of catalogue is the common thread of the exhibition
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Depends on the show; challenged because of publication schedule
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Three years of research, writing, photography and editing; rigorous publication schedule
UB	

Table 2.7

Objective 2 – *Techniques Used in Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Techniques
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Applications for phones; needs the time and money to develop these technological items; the public wants to see interactive elements within exhibitions
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Film; how ensembles are mounted on mannequins makes or breaks a show
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Dressing mannequins
UB	

Table 2.8

Objective 2 – *Thoughts on Blogs*

Participant Name	Blogs
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Very important; photographs and constant posting bring back readers; there is a blog manager at FIDMM; staff at FIDMM are contacted by blog readers who want to conduct research within the museum archives
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Good thing; disseminates information about the field; educational
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Offer good insight into the field; allows one to understand the process of pulling an exhibition together
UB	Educational; useful for audiences, students, scholars and hobbyists

APPENDIX F

OBJECTIVE 3

Table 3.1

Objective 3 – *Changes within Fashion and Dress Curation*

Participant Name	Changes
Judith Clark	Pendulum swing for mannequins; curators are now more visible to the public
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Trying to become more academic; balance between substance and entertaining garments
Clare Sauro	Shift in mannequins; stark mannequins an attempt to gain respect in the art world; Vreeland-esque spectacle like the McQueen show becoming popular
Sonnet Stanfill	Pendulum swing for mannequins; the McQueen Effect; more spectacle; the McQueen exhibition has caused discussion
Claire Wilcox	"Everyone's a curator now!" – fashion houses now curating their own archives; heightened consciousness of the value of museums
UA	"Blockbuster" exhibitions becoming popular
UB	

Table 3.2

Objective 3 – *Presence of Predetermined Information*

Participant Name	Predetermined Information
Judith Clark	"I would like to promote…alternatives as in you can have all sorts of…different thoughts about it!"
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Wall text guides and focuses visitors; tombstone information at the very least; have to make it as easy as possible to understand but do not give up on content
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Traditional V&A show has wall text; feels a responsibility to explain what is on display
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Traditional show has wall text; tombstone information is very important, "no one way approach that fits everyone's learning"
UB	Should be available for those who would like to learn more; there should always be more information available

Table 3.3

Objective 3 – *Interactive Elements within Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Interactive Elements
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	Visitors want these but he needs the personnel, time and budget to include them in his exhibitions
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	Radical Fashion (2002) and Hats: an Anthology (2009) had interactive elements; allowed visitors to connect with the subject by touching and trying on various objects in connection with the exhibition topic
Claire Wilcox	
UA	Growing interest and work towards on-line interactive exhibitions; allows interested museum goers to view objects if not able to visit the museum
UB	

Table 3.4

Objective 3 – *Viewpoint towards Conceptual Exhibitions*

Participant Name	Conceptual Exhibitions
Judith Clark	
Oriole Cullen	
Kevin Jones	
Clare Sauro	
Sonnet Stanfill	
Claire Wilcox	
UA	
UB	

Note. No informing answer was given regarding this topic.