

The international seminar Business History of Fashion: The State of the Art Business History @ Erasmus, 30 November 2018

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Business history of fashion is a growing field. This was seen in the international seminar *Business History of Fashion: The State of the Art* organised by Alice Janssens, Mariangela Lavanga and Ben Wubs (Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication). It gave an insight in the latest research in the field, but also in aspects that can stimulate further research. These insights will foster a better understanding of the fashion industry, which can provide an answer to the challenges that the industry is facing today.

The State of the Art: Emerging Scholarship

The morning session started off with Patrizia Casadei followed by Bethan Bide, both recent doctoral recipients. Casadei focused on how we can define a fashion capital in contemporary society and provide a taxonomy of ideal types of fashion cities, while Bide's research shed light on the role of a London-based department store in shaping teenagers fashion in post-war Britain.

Unpicking the fashion city: Theoretical issues and ideal types. An empirical analysis of London – **dr. Patrizia Casadei (London School of Economics)**

This paper looks at what defines a fashion city nowadays, if it is possible to establish multiple models of fashion centres and how contemporary fashion cities can be studied. Among other things, this research shows that symbolic elements are important in shaping the idea of a fashion city and its reputation, and that historical values play a big role in these symbolic elements.

Dressing a new demographic: Manufacturing teen aged fashions in post-war Britain – **dr. Bethan Bide (Middlesex University)**

Sometimes big impacts of historical events overshadow the smaller ones, but in essence smaller impacts can have a long lasting influence. WWII caused major disruptions, also in manufacturing and retail. A department store that adapted well to these circumstances was Bentall Centre in Kingston, London. The department store provided a place for teenagers to meet up, enjoy fashion, music and be youthful, and clothes were presented in a way that contributed to shape their own teenager identity, well before the era of the Swinging London.

Fashion valorisation: Fashion education, fashion research, fashion exhibitions

The seminar continued with a presentation of two new projects - the international project Erasmus+ RE-FRAME FASHION by Dr. Mariangela Lavanga and the French network for fashion research Culture(s) de Mode by Dr. Maude Bass-Krueger and Dr. Sophie Kurkdijan – and of business of fashion activities of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London by her senior curator Sonnet Stanfill.

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership: RE-FRAME FASHION – **dr. Mariangela Lavanga (Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication)**

Together with Paris Dauphine University (FR) and Gdansk University of Technology (PL), Lavanga and Wubs have been granted funding from the European Commission for their international project RE-FRAME FASHION under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership. The aim of the two-year project is to investigate the current educational needs of the fashion industry, develop innovative teaching and pilot three new courses with the involvement of fashion industry stakeholders: Entrepreneurship in Fashion, Heritage in Fashion, and Sustainability in Fashion. The three courses will be piloted in existing international masters at the three universities in next academic year 2019-2020.

Culture(s) de Mode, French Network for Fashion Research – **dr. Maude Bass-Krueger and dr. Sophie Kurkdijan (founders of Culture(s) de Mode)**

Bass-Krueger and Kurkdijan run a successful international fashion seminar in Paris for many years already connecting archivists, researchers, museum curators, designers, students, historians, journalists, philosophers and many more. Recently they received a grant from the French Ministry of Culture to develop a network for fashion research in France called Culture(s) de Mode (<https://culturesdemode.com>). The network brings together fashion researchers and practitioners during seminars, events and workshops. Its aim is to group all the people who contribute to fashion research in France and foster connections between them beyond their institutional grounding. Culture(s) de Mode creates bridges between disciplines as well as between institutions.

“The Business of Fashion at the Museum” – **Sonnet Stanfill** (senior curator at Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

Sonnet Stanfill discussed the business aspects of the V&A, the relevance of its touring exhibition and its international expansion towards the east. She highlighted that fashion is the beating heart of the V&A and its archive is still an important reference for students and designers in the UK. During her presentation, she gave the audience insight in some new developments of the museum, one of them being the renovation of the gallery hosting the permanent fashion collection of the museum.

The Business History of Fashion Published

The afternoon was dedicated to the presentation of two recently published books: *The Fashion Forecasters: A Hidden History of Color and Trend Prediction* (Bloomsbury Academics) edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Ben Wubs and *European Fashion: The Creation of A Global Industry* (Manchester University Press) edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Veronique Pouillard. The books are the result of an international HERA project Enterprise of Culture. The speakers discussed some of their chapters in the book and reflected on their international project.

Hubs of fashion forecasting: Interstoff and Première Vision – **Prof. Dr. Ben Wubs (Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication)**

Just like Stanfill gave a little insight ‘behind the scenes’ of the V&A, Wubs did this regarding the creation of trends. He explained why fashion forecasting is important and how it has been done in the past. Since fabrics are the basics of fashion, fabric fairs played and still play an important role in fashion and color forecasting.

European fashion: The creation of a global industry – **Prof. Dr. Vèronique Pouillard** (University of Oslo)

One of her first slides said: “The textile and fashion industries were at the core of the industrial revolution”. It is important to realise this to understand the big impact the fashion industry had and still has. For example the massive contribution of pollution and the challenge of becoming more sustainable. Pouillard, one of the editors of *European Fashion*, introduced the publication which covers research on the history of the postwar fashion industry in Europe. She ended with an important message, namely: we have to put in collective effort. Fashion is a global phenomenon, researching it should cover different perspectives, just as the book has highlighted.

Western clothing and fashion system in Japan since 1945 – **Prof. dr. Pierre-Yves Donzé** (Osaka University)

Donzé’s research looked into how a Western industry emerged in Japan, and what the main challenges were, but also why the Japanese fashion industry is uncompetitive on the global market. He showed that from a western perspective Japanese fashion is often seen as exotic or ethnic, while

Japanese fashion is highly influenced by Western fashion. This highlights the importance of the notion of Pouillard to do research together and study different perspectives. In this way, we can create a complete image of the fashion industry.