Fashion & Folly

Strawberry Hill Extra-Illustrated

Proposal Overview for Strawberry Hill, April 2017
Jenna Rossi-Camus
Fashion & Folly:

• is the title and topic of my practice-based PhD research, focused on fashion curation.
• is being developed as a proposal for a site-responsive exhibition set within STRAWBERRY HILL HOUSE
• is a thematic exhibition examining fashion satire from the 18\textsuperscript{th}-21\textsuperscript{st} centuries
• is site-responsive. Its curation and design are devised for Strawberry Hill and connect the exhibition material and narratives to the site and Horace Walpole.
• includes two and three dimensional material including prints, paintings, clothing, and moving image shown alongside their comic representations
• includes proposed commissions by other creative practitioners who are invited to respond to the themes and site.
• presents itself as an immersive installation with interactive elements – A new way of seeing STRAWBERRY HILL and learning about its history and HORACE WALPOLE
• does not need to be realised as part of my PhD project. The research aims to generate a creative, innovative and rigorously researched viable proposal informed by my experience and research at Strawberry Hill.
‘STRAWBERRY HILL, fashion and jokes’, or ‘Walpole and I’.

Was I a fool not to have seen the signs earlier? *Serendipity* played its part...
Fashion & Folly
Themes & Route

Fashion & Folly is a self-guided exhibition, but visitors are provided with a map and the curatorial texts are LETTERS:

‘Dear Visitor…’

Fashion & Folly is an intervention: a new way of seeing Strawberry Hill. It is an extra-illustration of Walpole’s castle. It is a collage superimposed on a ‘villa in which every apartment is a museum.’
The HALL welcomes visitors with the theme MUSEUM OF ERRORS: playing with expectations about museums, fashion and humour displaying material that illustrates their inter-relationships.

Who is looking and who is laughing - why is fashion funny? Are clothes worthy of our reverence or merely of ridicule?
Fashion strives for unattainable beauty. How do fashions of the past 300 years measure up to ideas about ideal beauty?
In the LITTLE PARLOUR we gather for play. The theme FOOLS is a family album. We see Folly personified as female – and also as jester, harlequin, and Mr. Punch. Each has a costume, and fashion follows their lead.

Is it a fool who rushes to follow Fashion? Or are her votaries knowing and wise?
Fools
Jesters, dolls and dandies
People of Consequence
The Great Parlour (Refectory)

The GREAT PARLOUR is a space for promenading & showing off the latest looks. PEOPLE of CONSEQUENCE takes a walk from 18th C. pleasure gardens the catwalks of fashion capitals.

Dedicated followers of fashion peacock to and fro – are you among them or are you grabbing a seat in the front row?
People of Consequence

‘Monstrosities of ...’
The Inconvenience of Dress
The Breakfast Room

The BREAKFAST ROOM sets the stage for fashion mishaps in and outside of the home.

INCONVENIENCE OF DRESS shows clothes getting in the way, out of bounds and paving the way for laughs.

Fashions that satisfy in front of a mirror, but are unsuited for just about everything else.
The Inconvenience of Dress
Fashion vs. weather and leisure
The Green Closet holds a trove of satires on one theme: the crinoline. The INCONVENIENCE OF DRESS is a convenient source of laughs.
Selves and Others
The Blue Bedchamber

In the BLUE BEDCHAMBER we are surrounded by all sorts of people.

SELVES & OTHERS shows how clothes are signifiers in jokes about identities.

Clothes can sometimes be maps – marking geographical and ideological territories.
Selves and Others
Dressed to Transgress
Farce of Fashion
The Armoury

The ARMOURY plays host to cycles and returns. FARCE OF FASHION is a mix and match history where today looks a lot like yesterday.

Is fashion a sort of armour? Does it protect against what it cannot prevent?
Farce of Fashion

Styles in Flux

“Mini, midi, maxi. Maxi, midi, mini…”
The LIBRARY is a site of knowledge and power.

ANCESTRIES traces family trees of fashion humour; its translations and copies.

Queen Elizabeth I: The ultimate power dresser – or fashion caricature *par excellence*?
Ancestries
Satires inspired by satires
Disguises
Plaid Bedchamber / The Wardrobe

The PLAID BEDCHAMBER & WARDROBE provide space for consideration of self-improvement.

Fashion offers us DISGUISES – gender, shape or age – can all be taken care of.
Disguises
Mutton as Lamb at large!
Vanities
Mr. Walpole’s Bedchamber

In MR. WALPOLE’S BEDCHAMBER a mirror is held up to male display. The VANITIES of the dandy, fop, mod and model are many-splendored and ripe for ridicule.

Everybody’s crazy ‘bout a sharp-dressed man?
Vanities
Mr. Walpole’s Bedchamber
In the STAR CHAMBER and through the TRUNK CEILED PASSAGE we see fashion as both repulsive and humourous. The GROTESQUE and caricature are close relatives.

Extreme fashion silhouettes distort the body – but why do they also make the face contort into a smile?
Grotesque
The Star Chamber / Trunk-Ceiled Passage
In the HOLBEIN CHAMBER a morbid museum awaits. DIABOLICAL DRESS has inspired moral panic - sometimes communicated through jokes.

Another dialogue between Fashion and Death...
Diabolical
Footsteps of the devil

The devil of fashion. English manuscript. Twelfth century.
Excess/Exposure
The Long Gallery / The Great North Bedchamber

The LONG GALLERY display’s fashion’s most exuberant incarnations. But where would EXCESS be without EXPOSURE?

Extravagance is expected – but what makes “over the top” erupt into laughter?
Excess
Legs of Mutton and Feathered Friends
Excess
Buttons and bling
Exposure
The Great North Bedchamber

In the GREAT NORTH BEDCHAMBER – a fashion peepshow. EXPOSURE invites an eye towards clothes that are sheer, short or otherwise shocking.

How little is too much and vice-versa?
Exposure
The Great North Bedchamber
Folly Disembodied
The Tribune

In the TRIBUNE fashion curiosities are displayed. FOLLY DISEMBODIED strips the clothes of their wearer to see who might have the last laugh.
Folly Disembodied
Strange but true...
The ROUND DRAWING ROOM becomes a wheel of fashion. The FUNNY BUSINESS of design and desire comes full circle.

‘Everything I say is a joke. I am a joke myself.’
- Karl Lagerfeld
Funny Business
Designer parodies & plaything dresses
The BEAUCLERK CLOSET houses the work of one woman. The CURATOR’S TOWER is a colophon and a peek behind the scenes.

An ode to mentors and muses, and a monument to bricolage. Visiting artist…?
Next Phases of the Research Project

• Further development of the themes and content
• Writing of the Theme “Letters”
• Development of the Site-responsivity rationale following on-site experience and research
• Exhibition Design: drawings
• Exhibition Design: building a scale model of all the exhibition rooms
• Research Grant visit to Lewis Walpole Library: August 2017
• Research and writing on other aspects of the project
• December 2017 – First Draft Submit
• December 2018 – Final Draft Submit with Project Materials
Thank you.