

## Editorial

### Special Issue of *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*: 'Globalizing Men's Style', 2021.

**Charlie Athill | Jay McCauley Bowstead**

This Special Issue, resulting out of the *Globalising Men's Style* conference, which took place in July of 2020 at London College of Fashion (LCF), examines national and regional specificities in men's dress in the context of a global exchange of style. The event, convened by the college's Masculinities Research Hub, aimed to address the dominance of western Europe and North America in existing menswear scholarship by widening our field of vision to emphasize the syncretic nature of men's fashion, style and dress. In leading the Masculinities Research Hub, we have sought to make a space for new scholarship in the fields of masculinities and menswear, to engage with specialists, researchers and practitioners from inside and outside academia, and to develop and enhance curricula. Our aim in editing this Special Issue and in planning and formulating the conference was to stimulate new research focusing on men's style that acknowledges both the shifting geographies of contemporary menswear practice, and the inherently global nature of fashion as a complex system of cultural and material exchange. We are proud to present the work of the contributing authors in *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*, a journal that has been at the forefront of scholarship in this area.

The three days of the conference, enabled intellectual, theoretical and creative cross-pollination and brought together scholars and practitioners from South and East Asia, eastern and western Europe, South Africa, North and South America and Oceania to reveal thematic confluences and new avenues for research. Chief amongst these, perhaps, was the very notion

of cross-cultural exchange: delegates revealed the transnational and hybrid nature not only of contemporary subcultures but also of time-honoured sartorial expression and ceremonial dress. As our distinguished keynote Dr Michael McMillian underscored in his opening address, while cultural exchange may take place on uneven terrain and in circumstances of profound inequality, male dress cultures nevertheless provide crucial spaces of agency, and creative self-fashioning. This Special Issue includes a selection of the research presented in the three-day conference.

The authors and practitioners featured in the following pages offer novel contributions that explore the fashion cultures of locales under-represented in existing literature, identities that have been little examined in relation to men's style, and practices of self-fashioning that articulate a complex intersection of global and regional influences. Lesiba Mabitsela examines his creative practice within a South African context. Using a self-reflexive account of fashion integrated with performance, the artist explores the urgency of decolonizing African dress. Dr Lezley George investigates how menswear in the United Arab Emirates represents a national hegemonic masculinity, performatively styled to underline cultural authority and authenticity. In an in-conversation with the editors, Vivek Vadoliya discusses his film *Kasaragod Boys*. The discussion explores the 'freaker' subculture of Kerala in southern India, which is characterized by distinctive aesthetics combining diverse international influences with a specific local sensibility. Sang Thai examines how dominant white, heteronormative notions of masculinity are encoded in the design of Australian men's T-shirts and uses a practice-based intervention that subverts expected T-shirt styling to articulate an Asian queer identity. Dr Graham Roberts reassesses the fashion photography of the US-Russian artist, Slava Mogutin. Roberts considers the role of camp in the sexual politics of representation and the challenge Mogutin poses to the state-sponsored homophobia of the artist's native Russia. Teleica Kirkland investigates Akinola Davies Junior's film

*Zazzau* to examine the traditional dress and contemporary fabrics worn by the Emir of Zazzau and his entourage. By tracing connections between these aesthetics and African diasporic dress, Kirkland celebrates a vision of Black masculinity that rejects Eurocentric paradigms.

Today, the hegemony of western fashion capitals is increasingly challenged by innovative menswear practices, street style and design emanating from new centres of creative practice. Shifting approaches to the aesthetics of masculinity, expanding and emerging markets, and the proliferation of representations via social media have stimulated an increasing interest in male dress and grooming and brought diverse and transnational manifestations of men's style to wider attention. At the same time, deficiencies of representation and Eurocentric biases, both within the fashion industry and the academy, have stimulated calls to decolonize fashion, to re-examine fashion history and to rethink the fashion curriculum. Regarding this last point, while a Special Issue, by its very nature, can only offer a snapshot of research in this area, we hope that it contributes to this broader project to expand academic horizons.

We are grateful to a great many colleagues in supporting this Special Issue and the conference from which it originated. We are indebted to the authors who contributed to the Special Issue, and to the delegates who presented at the *Globalising Men's Style* conference for their original scholarship, energizing debate and dedication. We are enormously grateful to Dr Andy Reilly editor of *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion* for entrusting the Special Issue to us, and for his knowledge, calm support and advice throughout the process (and indeed over many years). Our sincere thanks to conference keynote Dr Michael McMillan for his ongoing involvement in the Special Issue. We very much appreciate the invaluable contribution of our anonymous peer-reviewers. We are deeply grateful to Dr Sarah Gilligan, Professor Shahidha Bari and Dr Shaun Cole for their generous ongoing expertise and support, which have enriched this Special Issue. We are indebted to Professor Felicity Coleman and

everyone in the LCF Research Department for all their help with the research hub. We are also sincerely grateful to Dr Frances Grahl and Emira Khalili of the Cultural Studies Department for their knowledge, dedication and expertise.

Charlie Athill and Jay McCauley Bowstead have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the authors of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

### Charlie Athill

Charlie Athill is a lecturer in cultural and historical studies at London College of Fashion, part of the University of the Arts London. He is also co-convener, with Jay McCauley Bowstead, of the Masculinities Hub at the London College of Fashion. Broadly, his research interests lie in the links between gender and age in both material and popular culture. Published articles include a study on discourse analysis and the representation of male hipsters in the UK, a narrative case study exploring the role of material culture in the expression of gender fluidity, and a personal account of the significance of emotions and the senses in fashion retail therapy during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020-21 in the UK.

London College of Fashion – University of the Arts London, 272 High Holborn, London WC1V 7EY, UK.

[c.athill@fashion.arts.ac.uk](mailto:c.athill@fashion.arts.ac.uk)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6773-8558>

### Jay McCauley Bowstead

Jay McCauley Bowstead is a lecturer in cultural and historical studies at London College of Fashion. He is co-convener of LCF Masculinities Research Hub where he and Charlie Athill organised the conference ‘Globalising Men’s Style’ in 2020. Jay’s scholarly work focuses on gender, design, and materiality, with recent publications including the monograph *Menswear Revolution* in 2018, a co-authored article on designer Charles Jeffrey with Fenella Hitchcock in 2020, and a chapter on cultural hybridity in the anthology *Dandy Style* edited by Shaun Cole and Giles Lambert in 2021. Other research interests include the relationship between ethics, fashion production and public policy discourses.

London College of Fashion - University of the Arts London  
Contact: London College of Fashion – University of the Arts London, 20 John Prince's St, Marylebone, London W1G 0BJ, UK.

[j.mccauleybowstead@fashion.arts.ac.uk](mailto:j.mccauleybowstead@fashion.arts.ac.uk)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7281-8544>