

Aware: Art Fashion Identity

London College of Fashion
Royal Academy of the Arts

International Symposium

London College of Fashion is delighted to be a partner in this exciting and challenging exhibition, and to be able to provide contributions from some of the college's leading researchers, artists and designers.

The relationship between art and fashion, through conceptual and practical expression, is at the London College of Fashion's core. We were immensely proud to endorse the development of 'Aware' from its original concept by Lucy Orta, London College of Fashion Professor of Art, Fashion and Environment, together with curator Gabi Scardi. Additionally, we are privileged to support two new commissions by Yinka Shonibare and Hussein Chalayan, the creation of which will directly connect to our teaching and research activity.

London College of Fashion is committed to extending the influence of fashion, be it economically, socially or politically, and we explore fashion in many contexts. This exhibition encapsulates vital characteristics of today's fashion education, and it supports my belief that fashion has the potential to bring about social change when considered in contexts of identity, individuality, technology and the environment.

We see this in the work of Professor Helen Storey, whose 'Wonderland' project brings together art and science to find real solutions for a more sustainable world, and in the exploration of craftsmanship, patronage and historical practice in the work of Professor Dai Rees.

This two-day symposium is exemplary of the relationship that the college continuously strives to develop between its own internally mandated activities and programs with broader discourses and practices within the fields of art and design. With the recent appointment of London College of Fashion Curator, Magdalene Keaney, and significant developments to the Fashion Space Gallery at London College of Fashion we now intend to increase public awareness of how fashion has, is, and will continue to permeate new territories. The opportunity to work with the Royal Academy in presenting 'Aware' has been instrumental to our vision for this, and I look forward to future collaborations.

Professor Frances Corner OBE
Head of London College of Fashion



Image Credit:

Acconci Studio
Umbruffla, 2005–10
Silk, chiffon, radiant film, cotton thread, boning,
114.3 x 152.4 x 114.3 cm

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Introduction

Professor Lucy Orta

The exhibition and symposium *Aware: Art Fashion Identity* has evolved out of a deep necessity to expand the definition and role that clothing plays within our society. It has taken almost twenty years of questioning and research (and a lot of frustration) finally to bring together a series of fellow artists and designers who share the same dedication to agitating the definition of fashion and demonstrate that clothing is a powerful instrument for communication that we have a tendency to choose, use and discard too arbitrarily.

The questions I began posing were generated by an uncomfortable doubt in my successful career as a young fashion designer and, not withstanding, linked directly to the economic decline throughout the early 1990s. The first Gulf War, followed swiftly by a stock market crash as well as mass unemployment leading to general social unrest, stood in stark contrast to the superfluous fashion we had been observing in the extravagant catwalk shows.

Along with a group of similarly disheartened designers I began searching for alternative means of expressing the deep changes that were taking place in society.

We once again find ourselves in a time where the pressures of economy, the social tensions brought about by wars abroad and the stringent austerity policies at home are forcing us to reassess our positions and values. It is time once again to look at our ability to incite transformation at the individual and collective level, to seek alternate interpretations that allow us to openly manifest change – fashion can be a powerful channel of expression that operates across the social, political and ecological spheres of society.

I hope the non-exhaustive selection of artists and their work that we are presenting in the exhibition and the symposium will provoke us, even just a little, to look and think about clothing differently.

17:30 – 16:00

Registration

18:00 – 18:30

The Skin Tellers

A performance by Claudia Losi, in collaboration with Antonio Marras

18:30 – 20:00

Rountable discussion

Chaired by Christopher Breward with Jonathan Watkins, Mark Henderson, Philip Hoare, Tom Baker, Carol Alayne, Shaun Cole

Champagne & Canapes in the Rootstein Hopkins Gallery c/o The National Media Museum (Speakers Only)

The Skin Tellers

The artistic research of Claudia Losi focuses on the relationship between human beings and nature, on travel as exploration and an opportunity to gain knowledge. Experience-based practices are central to this work and are explored through a range of different disciplines, from the natural sciences to geography and cartography, literature and poetry. Through the use of embroidery and other techniques, the artist reproduces the rhythms of transformation of lichen, glaciers and geological maps, sewing a material link between nature and human action.

The Skin Tellers serves as the latest incarnation of Losi's Balena Project, which she began formally in 2004 with the creation of a 1:1 scale model of a fin whale, made from men's suiting fabric. The project had developed out of Losi's childhood memories of searching for whale fossils near her hometown of Piacenza, and developed into an exploration of deeper historical, geological, and anthropological dimensions of man's longtime fascination with this great mammal of the sea.

Losi drew from the tales of whale's being toured across Europe as circus-like attractions to stage her own tour, which began at Viafarini in Milan (2004) continued to a square in Lerici, Liguria, two museums in the cities of Guayaquil and Quito in Ecuador, the cloister beside the Marino Marini Museum in Florence, and the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham (2008).

In the process she recorded the memories, narratives and communities through which the whale traveled in a series of workshops and interventions. To conclude the project, Claudia Losi decided to enact a rite of passage and transformation: Les Funerailles de la Baleine (Whale Funeral) took place during a 24-hour performance, on 16/17 October 2010, in an old textile mill near Biella. With the participation of fashion designer Antonio Marras the whale has been transformed into a number of suit jackets, embroidered with the stories the whale collected along its journey. The jackets will be on display as part of the GSK Contemporary exhibition at the Royal Academy. They will also be animated in the context of an evening performance at St. Mary's Church in London's Marylebone district, worn by actors who will in turn read from the stories generated throughout the project as part of a live sound composition.



Photographs:
Courtesy of Claudia Losi

Tuesday 7th December

London College of Fashion
20 John Princes Street, W1G 0BJ

International Symposium

Nearest Tube: Oxford Circus

10:00 – 10:10

Opening Address by Frances Corner

10:10 – 10:20

Opening Address by the Curators of
the GSK Contemporary Exhibition

Politics and Intervention

10:20 – 10:45

Presentation by Dr. Anthony Downey

10:45 – 11:10

Vito Acconci

11:10 – 11:40

Nasan Tur

11:40 – 12:230

Roundtable w/ Question & Response

Media and Manipulation

12:30 – 13:00

Film by eX De Medici, introduced
by Magdalene Keaney

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch

Memory and Trauma

14:00 – 14:25

Presentation by Gabi Scardi

14:25 – 14:45

Marie-Ange Guilleminot

14:45 – 15:05

Maja Bajevic

Performance and Display

15:05 – 15:25

Presentation by Kaat Debo

15:25 – 15:45

Jessica Bugg

15:45 – 16:05

Alicia Framis

16:05 – 16:30

Tea

16:30 – 17:30

Roundtable w/ Questions & Response

17:30

Closing Address by Lucy Orta

Drinks and Refreshments

18:30

Opening of the Fashion Space Gallery

The Fashion Space Gallery at London College of Fashion is a contemporary exhibition space in central London presenting a regularly changing programme engaging with global fashion, design, photography and installation.

eX de Medici/Vexed Generation runs from:
08 December 2010 – 29 January 2011
Monday – Friday: 10am – 6pm
Saturday 10am – 4pm
Nearest Tube: Oxford Circus

Speakers

Vito Acconci

(b. New York, United States)

Vito Acconci's works across a variety of disciplines, including film and video, sound, sculpture, performance, photography and architecture. In the 1970's Acconci's radical practice helped shift art from object to interaction and he turned gallery & museum viewers into participants and inhabitants of the space. He founded the Acconci Studio in the 1980's with a group of architects based in Brooklyn New York. They draw from computer logic and from mathematical and biological models and their approach to architecture explores 'occasions for activity', in which space becomes fluid, changeable and portable. Their work reinterprets poetry & geometry, computer-scripting & sentence-structure, narrative & biology within the framework of a critical and creative practice. Recent projects include a man-made island in Graz, which function as a theater, café, and playground; a soft-shelled concept store for United Bamboo in Tokyo; the *Wave-a-Wall* W 8th Street Subway Station in New York.

Carol Alayne

(b. United States, lives in United Kingdom)

Carol Alayne is acknowledged as one of the finest women's bespoke tailors in the UK today. Leaving her banking career in 1988, she moved from the US to London in order to pursue her passion for tailoring. Shortly afterwards she joined the Savile Row community where she quickly developed a reputation for working across disciplines; tailoring, haute couture and field sports. She has collaborated with designers such as Georgina Godley and Jose Levy, and has been connected with many of the foremost tailoring houses including Chanel, Huntsman, Gieves & Hawkes, Welsh & Jefferies, Hardy Amies and Holland & Holland. In 2008 she relocated to Spitalfields, London in order to set up *Tailoring for Women*, a specialist bespoke service for women. She is a regular public speaker, features widely in the press and media, and recently appeared alongside Jaeger in the V&A's special seminar devoted to the evolution of women's tailoring.

Maja Bajevic

(b. Sarajevo, Bosnia)

Bajevic studied at École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Focusing on a variety socio-political issues, Bajevic uses performance, video and installation pieces to investigate both personal and universal identity. Focusing on the themes migration and identity, the marginalisation of the alien and a contradiction between the local and the global, her work interrogates the political and economic structures of our Age. Her video work *Double Bubble* (2001) focused on the misuse of religion in modern society, while another video, *Back in Black* (2003), stems from the artist's personal experience of war and violence. Her work in the GSK contemporary, entitled *Dressed Up*, is an early piece for which she stitched printed fabric maps of the former Yugoslavia into the inside of her jacket, literally carrying the tragic story of her birth country with her on her back. It becomes a reflection on the uprooting, trauma and loss experienced through war, and our inalienable human attachment to our place of birth.

Tom Baker

(b. United Kingdom)

Tom Baker specialises in both traditional and avant-garde bespoke tailoring. He trained for five years at Hardy Amies, until 1996, when he founded Sir Tom Baker in Soho, London. It was on Savile Row that he was taught to cut and fit in the most classical English way. This traditional training combined with natural flair has put him at the forefront of bespoke tailoring today. His ability and willingness to work closely with each and every customer has earned him a loyal following, attracting television personalities, musicians, actors, captains of the industry and politicians to the door. These include Ant & Dec, Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin), Rhys Ifans, David Hasselhoff, The Prodigy and Sir Menzies Campbell to name but a few.

Whilst offering a house style based on the London Cut (sharp shoulder/accuated waist/clean trouser line), Tom Baker is well known for his unique design interpretations and flexibility.

Christopher Beward

(b. Bristol, United Kingdom)

Christopher Beward is currently the Head of the Research Department at the V&A Museum. He has held lecturing posts in the History of Art and Design at Manchester Metropolitan University and the Royal College of Art. Before working at the V&A he was Head of Research at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London, where he still holds a Visiting Professorship. Christopher sits on the Editorial Boards of the journals 'Fashion Theory' and the 'Journal of Design History'. He is an active member on numerous key committees, including the AHRC Peer Review Panel for Visual Arts and Media; the Pasold Research Fund; the Advisory Board of the Raphael Samuel Centre for Metropolitan Studies. Christopher's personal research interests lie in the field of fashion history and he has published widely on fashion's relation to masculinity, metropolitan cultures and concepts of modernity. He is currently co-curating the V&A's major 2012 Exhibition 'British Design 1948-2012.'

Jessica Bugg

Jessica Bugg is Academic Coordinator and Director of Programmes for Performance at London College of Fashion. Jessica's practice-led research explores the interface of fashion design with fine art and performance methodology and practice. Her work employs innovative design methods that are informed by interdisciplinary practice in relation to the body. She has an interest in contextual communication methods, which take into account the complexity of communication between designer, wearer and viewer of conceptual fashion in specific contexts. For the GSK Contemporary Jessica has collaborated with Hussein Chalayan on a new body of work.

Philip Hoare

(b. United Kingdom)

Philip Hoare is an English writer from Southampton. His books include *Serious Pleasures: The Life of Stephen Tennant* (1990); *Noel Coward: A Biography* (1995), *Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy and the First World War* (1997), and *Spike Island: The Memory of a Military Hospital* (2001), *England's Lost Eden: Adventures in a Victorian Utopia*, and *Leviathan, or the Whale*, which won the 2009 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction.

Speakers

Shaun Cole

(b. United Kingdom)

Shaun Cole is a curator, writer and lecturer, based at the London College of Fashion. He was formerly Head of Contemporary Programmes at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He has curated numerous exhibitions including *Fashion on Paper* (1997), *Dressing the Male* (1999) and *Black British Style* (2004-5) as well as the innovative *Days of Record* series documenting personal identity. Shaun writes and lectures on men's fashion and gay style. His publications include 'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': *Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century* (2000) and *Dialogue: Relationships in Graphic Design* (2005). He is currently writing a history of men's underwear.

Kaat Debo

(b. Belgium)

Is the current director of the MoMu Fashion Museum in Antwerp. She began her career at the MoMu in 2001 as a scientific researcher in 2001, swiftly moving into a curatorial position. She is distinguished for her research work, her close collaboration with contemporary Belgian designers. Along with her directorship at the museum, she has also filled the position of editor-in-chief at *A Magazine*, a biannual magazine, which commissions a different designer to curate each issue. Of note is her recent collaboration with curator Bob Verhelst on the *Maison Martin Margiela 20* exhibition, which recently exhibited at Somerset House, and Stephen Jones at MoMu.

Mark Henderson

As Chief Executive of Gieves & Hawkes and Chairman of Savile Row Bespoke, Mark Henderson is a key purveyor and attendant of London's bespoke tailoring tradition. Henderson has been at Gieves & Hawkes for 13 years, previously working at Mary Quant and Alfred Dunhill. He was instrumental in the establishment of Savile Row Bespoke in 2004, an organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Savile Row tailoring community, which has been the center of British tailoring since 1785.

Dr. Anthony Downey

(b. United Kingdom)

Anthony Downey is the Director of the Masters Programme in Contemporary Art at Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. He received his PhD from Goldsmiths College in 2006 and sits on the Editorial Board of *Third Text*. He lectures on globalization, postcolonial theory, the Middle East and North Africa, and the relationship between art, politics, aesthetics and ethics. Anthony has published essays and articles in *Aperture*, *Third Text*, *Nka*, *Brumaria*, *Fillip*, *Canwas*, *Art Monthly* and *Apollo*, and contributed chapters to *Conspiracy Dwellings: Surveillance in Contemporary Art* (2010), *Different Sames: New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art* (2009), *Iran Inside Out* (2009), *Understanding Art Works* (2009), *Art and Patronage in the Near and Middle East* (2011), *Representing Islam: Comparative Perspectives* (2010), *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings* (revised ed. 2011), and *Cultural Theory* (2011). He has recently featured in a number of documentaries for the BBC and CNN and, as part of the Bruges Cultural project *Horizons*, contributed to *Iran Beyond its Borders* (1960-2010). He is currently writing a book on aesthetics, ethics, and politics (forthcoming, 2012) and developing a web-based research database on visual culture in the Middle East and North Africa.

Claudia Losi

(b. Italy, 1971)

Claudia Losi studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna and received a degree in Foreign Languages and Literature from the University of Bologna in 1998. Her work often illustrates her interest in the natural sciences as well as the historical and anthropological aspects of the environment. Losi also explores the concept of story-telling through art, often using projects to link and create new communities of human interaction.

eX de Medici

(b. Australia)

eX de Medici is an artist and world-renowned tattooist. She lives and works in Canberra, Australia. Her Practice is multi disciplinary and since the 1970s has included sound performance, installation, painting, watercolour, drawing and photography. She has been artist-in-residence at the CSIRO Entomology Division's Australian National Collection, and in 2009 was appointed as an Official Australian War Artist, commissioned by the Australian War Memorial.

de Medici's work has been featured in numerous solo shows and is found in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, The Australian National Portrait Gallery, The Australian War Memorial, The National Gallery of Victoria and the Queensland Art Gallery.

Her work is the focus of a solo exhibition at the Fashion Space Gallery from 7 December to 29 January.

Alicia Framis

(b. Barcelona, Spain)

Alicia Framis studied Fine Arts at the Barcelona University and at École des beaux-Arts in Paris. In 2002 she created 'Anti -Dog' clothing, a collection comprising of 23 bullet-resistant and stab-proof dresses which addressed the victimization of women. Other notable works include *Remix Buildings* (2000), which combined buildings and concepts usually kept separated, and *Lost Astronaut* (2009), a performance piece commenting on the role of women in the contemporary world. Framis combines different cultures in projects exploring the social components of the contemporary city. Her work is about living between different cultural heritages and the shift from one to the other, but also about the deep feelings of fear linked to tensions between intercultural dynamics, and the difficult relationships between communities.

Magdalene Keaney

Magdalene Keaney is a curator and writer. She has written widely on photography and her first book, *World's Top Photographers: Fashion and Advertising* was published by RotoVision in 2007. Keaney was Associate Curator of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, London, where she curated *Irving Penn Portraits* (2010). She is currently Curator and Creative Director of the Fashion Space Gallery at the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts.

Marie-Ange Guilleminot

(b. France)

Marie-Ange Guilleminot graduated from Villa Arson, Nice in 1981, and works in a variety of media including film, sculpture and performance. Her participative work has been the focus of major international exhibitions: such 'Paravent de Munster' at the Munster Sculpture and her contribution to 'Future, Present, Past' at the Venice Biennale, both in 1997. At the Ikon Gallery she created *The Transformation Parlour*, which was based on the Chinese and Japanese craft of origami. Developed out of Guilleminot's visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 1998 she was profoundly moved by the story of a Japanese girl who was a victim of the Hiroshima A-bomb. During a lengthy, fatal illness caused by exposure to radiation, she made origami birds to embody her prayers for peace. For *Aware: Art Fashion Identity*, Guilleminot exhibits *White Clothes from Hiroshima* inspired by the photographs of victim's clothing she discovered in a book by photographer Hiromi Tsuchida. Further research led her to study the clothing, take patterns and re-create each of the garments in white cloth. Replicating the fabric of the period, each garment has been painstakingly reproduced with its flaws and hand stitching of the seamstress who made them for a child or worker.

Lucy Orta

(b. UK, 1966)

Lucy Orta is Professor of Art Fashion and the Environment and co-curator of *Aware: Art Fashion Identity*. Lucy's work bridges mobility, clothing and architecture investigating their common social factors such as communication and identity. She builds on the relationship fashion has to the body and the collective potential it has to bring about positive change. The most emblematic strands of her practice are 'Refuge Wear', 'Body Architecture' and 'Nexus Architecture', as well as creating a new body of work 'Urban Life Guards' which reflects on the body as a metaphorical supportive structure. Her new 'Anticipation Accessories', will worn by the security guards during the GSK Contemporary exhibition. Lucy Orta's collaborative research encompasses broader sustainability issues tackling the ecological and the social through projects such as: 'OrtaWater'; '70 x 7 The Meal' and 'Antarctic Village'. Her work on the subject of biodiversity is currently the focus of an important monograph exhibition 'Amazonia', at the Natural History Museum London from 6 October to 12 December.

Nasan Tur

(b. Germany)

Nasan Tur is a German artist who currently lives and works in Berlin. He is a prolific young artist who works extensively with ideas of displacement and identity. His artworks include *Human Behaviours*, randomly placed slide-projectors show thousands of slides in four-second intervals - hundreds of pictures showing passers-by taken in different European cities, rigorously organized into categories; and *Backpacks: Speaker, Cooking, Demonstration Sabotage, Fan etc.* that consist of an omnium gatherum of objects that suggest a function for each backpack. During exhibitions the backpacks constructions are placed at the disposal of the audience to utilize.

Gabi Scardi

(b. Italy)

Co-curator of the GSK Contemporary exhibition at the Royal Academy of the Arts, Gabi is an independent curator and art critic with a strong interest in multidisciplinary practices. She is a Curatorial Counsellor for MAXXI, Museum of the 21st Century Arts, in Rome and co-curates CECAC, The European Course for Contemporary Art Curators, in Milan. Between 2005 and 2009 she was Contemporary Art Advisor to the Province of Milan. In addition to her curatorial practice, Gabi Scardi teaches modules on contemporary art and public art in various Italian Institutions and is a regular contributor to national and international magazines and newspapers.

Jonathan Watkins

Since 1999, Jonathan Watkins has been Director of Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Previously he worked in London, as Curator of the Serpentine Gallery and Director of Chisenhale Gallery. Watkins was Artistic Director of the 11th Biennale of Sydney and as guest Curator for *Quotidiana* (1999-2000) at Castello di Rivoli, Turin; *Europarte* (1997), 47th Venice Biennale; *Milano Europa* (2000), Palazzo di Triennale, Milan; *Facts of Life* (2001), an exhibition of contemporary Japanese art at the Hayward Gallery, London; and *Days Like These* (2003), Tate Triennial, London. He was on the curatorial team for the Shanghai Biennale (2006), Sharjah Biennial (2007), and Palestinian Biennial (2007). Watkins has written extensively on contemporary art, and recently was the author of a Phaidon monograph on the Japanese artist On Kawara. In August-September 2008, the Ikon Gallery invited Losi to stage workshops around *Balena Project* with pupils at Erdington Hall Primary School to produce drawings of whales, which were then used by local residents, in a temporary tailor's shop on Erdington High Street, as patterns to produce hundreds of small fabric whales that formed part of her exhibition.

Leanne Wierzba

(b. Canada, 1981)

Leanne Wierzba is currently pursuing an MA History of Design at the Royal College of Art, London. Having received formal training in fashion design and applied arts from the California College of Arts & Crafts, she went on to work as a fashion designer and writer in Paris, and then London. Her writing on art, fashion and design has been published by numerous journals including *Under the Influence*, *Flux Magazine*, *SOMA*, *Dazed & Confused* and *Dazed Digital*. Her current research explores the influence of technology on creative production, design processes and the culture of industry within late-twentieth century fashion.

Credits

AWARE
ART
FASHION
IDENTITY

Royal
Academy
of Arts

GSK
Contemporary

FASHION | SPACE | GALLERY

University of the
Arts London * *
London College * *
of Fashion * *