Wearing the City:
Fashion and clothing in the curation of urban history.

AHRC PhD Studentship at Royal Holloway, University of London
A TECHNE Partnership and NPIF award with the Museum of London

Applications are invited for a fully-funded PhD studentship examining the use of clothing, whether as examples of fashion design or as everyday wear, in the curation of urban history. The PhD project will be based at Royal Holloway, University of London, with the Museum of London as partner organisation. This award, tenable for three years and covering both fees and an enhanced maintenance grant, is made by the TECHNE AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership under the National Productivity Investment Fund Partnership Award scheme. The project is due to commence at the beginning of the academic year in September 2018, and will be supervised by Professor David Gilbert (Royal Holloway) and Beatrice Behlen (Museum of London.)

The Project
City museums have long used costume and clothing as a part of their displays. However, the relatively recent rise of material culture approaches has led to the relationship between clothing and histories of cities being rethought. Rather than just showing what people once wore in a particular city, the clothes of famous inhabitants, or the designs of the best-known fashion designers, these approaches open up new possibilities, particularly for city museums. For example, surviving clothing can be strongly imbued with histories of identity, particularly of gender, race, sexuality and urban subcultures. The fashions of designers can speak not just to their creative talents, but also to changing urban contexts of production, consumption and fashion performance on the streets of the city. This project focuses on the ways that clothing has been used in museums to narrate the history of cities – particularly London.

The project is distinctive having a research context that will allow study of this relationship in the past, but also in the development of future displays, notably in the creation of the new Museum of London at West Smithfield. As well as being the world largest city museum, the Museum of London also has a fashion and clothing collection of national and international significance, with particular importance for the social history of everyday clothing. This thesis will support the Museum in exploring the relationships between clothing and urban history, identifying a range of strategies and good practices, both from precedents in London and contemporary examples in other city museums. The project also fits the Museum's aims to develop the use of its fashion collection as a research and teaching resource.
The project has these research questions:

1. How has clothing and fashion been used by the Museum of London and its predecessor organizations in representing/narrating the history of London?
2. How are clothing and fashion used by the Museum in its current galleries and activities?
3. How is clothing and fashion currently used in other city museums?
4. How should clothing and fashion be used to represent and narrate the history of London in its new galleries, displays and spaces at West Smithfield?

The thesis will also address wider questions about the relationship between material culture and the narration and curation of urban history. The thesis may also seek to make recommendations about effective and innovative strategies for the use of fashion and clothing in city museums.

The student may choose to focus on one or several of these research questions, but there is a viable research plan and thesis structure that addresses them all. The research will involve a number of methods:

1. Archival study of acquisition and display strategies for clothing in the Museum of London (effectively since the 1965 Museum of London Act – the MoL opened in 1976), and for predecessor organizations (primarily the London Museum which opened in 1912, and which has collected both designed fashion and everyday clothing).
2. Individual garment histories from the collections, tracing their use in gallery displays and special exhibitions.
3. Detailed analysis of the use of clothing and fashion in the current galleries (for example the Vauxhall Pleasure Garden display which mixes historic and modern fashions). Interviews with current curatorial staff at the museum.
4. Focused site visits, archival and secondary research, and interviews with Museum Directors and curatorial staff at key city museums, particularly those with significant clothing and fashion collections (for example the Museum of the City of New York; Museum Rotterdam. The student will also have access to the networks and resources provided by CAMOC, the international association of city museums, and will be encouraged to present at their conferences.
5. Embedded ethnographic and participatory study of the Museum of London’s strategy, approach and practices in the design of its new galleries and display spaces at West Smithfield. The new Museum is scheduled to open in 2022. The Museum will give access to meetings and discussions during the design process (subject to issues such as commercial sensitivity and ethical research approval), and
there are opportunities for the student to be involved directly in the curation process.

The Studentship
The studentship includes a stipend of £16,553 (17/18 rate, 18/19 rate to be confirmed plus fees at home/EU rates) for three years. There is an additional NPIF £550 per year to facilitate engagement with the Partner, and students can apply for an additional six months stipend to engage in extended development activities such as work placements. Other discretionary finds are available to support study and development activities.

As a TECHNE student, the successful candidate will have full access to the TECHNE Doctoral Training Partnership development activities and networking opportunities, joining a cohort of about 50 students per year from across seven universities in London and the south-east.

The student will also join a large and dynamic group of academics, post-doctoral and doctoral researchers in the Geography Department at Royal Holloway. This is one of the largest PhD research communities in UK Geography, with a particular specialism in cultural and historical geography. The Department has an international reputation for interdisciplinary work in the humanities, and has a very strong record of collaborative PhD studentships with major museums and cultural institutions, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the Nation Maritime Museum, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the British Museum and the British Library. This will be the fourth partnership studentship between Professor Gilbert and the Museum of London (the previous students all have careers as academics or museum professionals.)

The student will have a base at the Museum of London, and will have relevant induction training, and training in skills such as documentation and collections care, and writing museum materials for the public and for teaching.

Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree in geography, history, urban history, fashion studies, museum studies, cultural studies or other relevant disciplines. Applicants should have either a Masters-level or equivalent qualification in a relevant discipline, or be working towards a Masters-level qualification in a programme of study which will finish by September 2018. Masters-level qualifications should meet AHRC requirements for research training.

Applicants must meet the UK/EU residency requirements as described in paragraphs 43-46 of the 'Conditions of Research Council Training Grants' and comply with conditions set out in the AHRC Training Grant Funding Guide.
The Supervisory Team
David Gilbert is Professor of Urban and Historical Geography at Royal Holloway, where he is also currently one of the Vice Principals. He has supervised over 20 successful PhD projects, including five collaborative projects. He has written on a wide range of aspects of the history of modern London, including London’s imperial role, public space and planning, urban tourism and suburban development, as well as London’s fashion industry and culture. He has written extensively on the relationship between fashion and major cities, including the well-known collection *Fashion’s World Cities*. He is a member of the Museum of London’s academic advisory panel, and has worked with the Museum since 2001.

Beatrice Behlen is Senior Curator in Fashion & Decorative Arts at Museum of London. She is a leading figure in fashion, costume and clothing curation, and has also published extensively in these areas. She co-supervised Bethan Bide’s successful PhD with David Gilbert, on ‘Austerity Fashion’. This collaboration also resulted in a major conference at the Museum, followed by a co-edited special edition of the journal *Fashion Theory*.

How to Apply
Applicants should submit:

(1) a two-page curriculum vitae, including contact details of one academic referee, and including details of academic qualifications, particularly details of dissertations or theses submitted. CVs should also include details of any prior experience in working with material culture, museum and/or archival collections.

(2) a short statement of interest (800 words max.) indicating relevant experience and qualities, and responding to the project details. No further covering letter is required. These should be sent by email to Professor David Gilbert, Dept of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, (d.gilbert@rhul.ac.uk) to arrive no later than Monday 20th November 2017.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interviews at the Museum of London on Monday 11th December, and will be asked to submit a short example of written work. Informal enquiries about the studentship are welcome; applicants should contact Professor Gilbert.

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/geography/prospectivestudents/home.aspx

http://www.techne.ac.uk/

https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london