**AGENDA**

*Not Only Dressed but Dressing*

*Clothing, Childhood, Creativity*

Workshop 1: Creativity and Play

Education Room, Worthing Museum, Friday 8 April 2022

9.30 a.m. Coffee

10 a.m. Welcome from organizers

10.30 a.m. First panel

Alice Sage

Verity Wilson

12 p.m. Lunch

1 p.m. Second panel

Jane Carroll

Nicola Miles

2 p.m. Collection spotlight with Gerry Connolly and Jojo Lance

3 p.m. Coffee

3.30 p.m. Third panel

Ben Wild

Maija Nygren

4.30 p.m. Discussion

5.30 p.m. Workshop end

6.00 p.m. Workshop dinner

Giuseppe’s Southern Italian Restaurant

8 Warwick Lane

Worthing

BN11 3DP

Workshop Information

*Organizers*

Hannah Field (University of Sussex) and Kiera Vaclavik (Queen Mary, University of London)

*Network Administrator*

Juliette Milbach (School of Advanced Study, University of London)

*Museum Representatives*

Gerry Connolly (Head of Museum and Exhibitions)

Jojo Lance (PhD Candidate, in Conjunction with University of Brighton)

*Other Network Participants in Attendance*

Dominique Zarini (Chargée d’Études des Collections, Musée du Textile et de la Mode de Cholet)

*Filming*

Firas Itani

*Discussion Questions*

* What is the place of dress in children’s lives?
* How do clothes enable self-expression and foster children’s aesthetic sense?
* Where does clothing intersect with other childhood possessions and obsessions?

*On the Day*

**COVID Precautions**

We ask that all participants are double vaccinated and take a lateral flow test on the morning of the workshop. We also ask that participants are masked throughout the day, except when eating or presenting.

**Arriving at the Museum**

The organizers will come to the door of the museum at 9.30 to let everyone in, but if you need access before or after please call Juliette on 07990753346 or Hannah on 07531781524.

*Abstracts*

**Jane Suzanne Carroll (Trinity College Dublin)**

**Paper Dolls, Pin-ups, and Play: *Katy Keene* Comic as a Site of Ludic Fashion**

This paper explores child readers of *Katy Keene* comic as creators and designers of playful fashion. When *Katy Keene* launched in 1949, the editor Bill Woggins invited child readers to become co-creators of the comic’s content, calling on them to suggest storylines, and to submit original designs for the clothes and accessories that Katy wore. Each published design included a line of text crediting the designer and special issues featured profiles and photographs of readers, placing them centrestage in the comic, alongside their heroine Katy. The paper dolls included in the comic invited further creative play, encouraging readers to continue the game of dressing Katy, America’s ‘Queen of Pin-Ups and Fashions’, at home. In this way, *Katy Keene* offered opportunities for both fashioning and self-fashioning, becoming a ludic space where children play with ideas and images of fashion, mixing pieces inspired by haute couture with outlandish inventions of their own. I argue that by enabling children to become creators of fashions, Katy Keene offered young readers the opportunity to develop their own aesthetic sense—both individually and as a community.

*Jane Suzanne Carroll is Ussher assistant professor of children’s literature at Trinity College Dublin. Her teaching and research interests centre on children’s literature, landscape, and material culture in children’s fiction. Her new book* British Children’s Literature and Material Culture *was recently published by Bloomsbury.*

**Nicola Miles (University of Brighton)**

**Children’s Clothes, Clothkits and Creativity**

In 1969 Clothkits burst on to a rather drab fashion scene for children. Companies like Biba and small boutiques, mainly in London, stocked children’s clothes that were innovative and exciting, yet accessible only to the few. Clothkits kit-clothes were the idea of Anne Kennedy and came to prominence having been selected by the Centre for Industrial Design, now the Design Centre, to be part of an exhibition in 1968 for pre-school children.

The first kit was an instant hit. What appealed to both adults and children most of all were the bright colours and playful designs that became the Clothkits’ hallmark. My PhD research has focused on oral testimony from people who made and/or wore Clothkits. One interviewee described her experience of wearing Clothkits as a child as like ‘living in a picture book.’ I suggest that these type of clothes with their colours and narrative patterns evoke for both children and adults a glimpse of something else: a sense of possibility that an imaginary world can inspire, a place where fairy tales can exist.

*Nicola Miles is currently doing a PhD at Brighton, where she researches children’s clothes with particular reference to the company Clothkits. She recently contributed to a forthcoming book on Clothkits by Jason Kennedy. Nicola also has a background in textile design and works freelance designing prints for children.*

**Maija Nygren (Almaborealis)**

**What Are We Wearing?**

Fashion was once considered as a tool for democracy by many, yet today, it has led to a multi-faceted injustice. Multi-national brands produce great quantities of clothing at low cost behind closed doors, whilst future generations are losing skills to repair and an understanding of where their clothes come from. The need to prolong the use of our clothing is no longer with us, as we can purchase new garments quickly and economically.

The knowledge of clothes making has been present throughout human history, yet today we head to an era where large brands of the industry dominate our clothing culture and where schools lack quality craft education that is rooted in the real world. This leads to an estranging of generations not simply from the joy of making, but also from an understanding of where clothes—our second skins, these items we wrap ourselves each day—come from, what they are made of, and by whom.

Almaborealis is an experimental knitwear lab based in Edinburgh. Our workshop ‘What Are We Wearing?’ and design concept ‘Puzzleware’are intended as a playful experience promoting creative thinking, problem solving, and dexterity for four- to twelve-year-olds. The hand skills embedded in clothes making, as well as material intelligence, can offer a breadth of lifelong skills whilst embedding an understanding of how clothes can be kept in use, repaired, and re-used for the longest possible life. Through experiencing the make-up of everyday items via first-hand, playful exploration, a sense of appreciation, resourcefulness, and sustainability will be ignited in the early years, leading to awareness and informed consumption decisions in life.

As the fashion industry dominates and dictates how we dress and sew, and as many other crafts are vanishing from the school curriculum, basic knowledge of traditional craft is disappearing. Future generations have the right to know where the everyday items they use come from, and it is us adults who hold a responsibility to support the delivery of this knowledge.

*Maija Nygren is a knitwear designer and educator based in Edinburgh who learned to crochet at the age of five with her Finnish grandmother. She founded Almaborealis where she creates educational, child-led kids’ textiles which embrace local and ethical production.*

**Alice Sage (Hill Top)**

**The Fantasies and Realities of Costume in Madame Behenna’s Juvenile Jollities**

The Juvenile Jollities was a troupe of child performers active around Stoke Newington, London, from 1921 onwards. A century later it may seem hard to believe, but this group of twenty kids attracted large paying crowds. Their concerts lasted up to four hours, keeping adult audiences ‘interested and enthralled’ all evening (*East End Observer,* 1923).

A kaleidoscopic display of costumes was central to the Jollities’ appeal. Some children changed dress twenty times, swapping chiffon ballet dresses for pastiche ‘street urchin’ rags or velvet evening dresses. For the children, dancing with Madame Behenna opened creative and playful possibilities. A girl might dress as a flower, a Pierrot, a toy soldier, an adult woman, even a boy. It was rare for girls to wear anything other than dresses in the 1920s; but in the Jollities girls wore shorts and even trousers.

My case study of the Juvenile Jollities uses archive records and costume at the Young V&A to piece together the Jollities children’s experience of performing, singing, and wearing these fantasy roles.

*Alice Sage is property curator at Hill Top, Beatrix Potter’s Lake District home. Her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London, supervised by Vivienne Richmond and completed in May 2021, investigated fantasies of interwar childhood through fairies, dreams, and stage performance. She has held curatorial roles at museums of childhood at the V&A and Edinburgh.*

**Ben Wild (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

**Innocent until Dressed? The Plight and Power of Costumed Children**

Since the nineteenth century, fancy dress costume has been a widespread entertainment for ‘western’ children. The enjoyment the young derive from dressing up is rarely questioned, but their choice of costume has never been straightforward for they are almost invariably determined by adults, and not solely because of time and money. Adults’ social and political affiliations have been as important—if not more so—in determining how their nearest and dearest appeared in public. An enduring belief since the Enlightenment that children were born innocent made them compelling and potent signifiers. This was amplified when they were dressed in costume and subject to special attention through competitions or choreographed tableaux. From town fêtes and village parties, to the grandest of society balls, children in fancy dress costume were often ignorant avatars, blissfully unaware that they were embodiments of their guardians’ values. Powerless in one sense, these children were also powerful. Where aristocratic parents dressed their children as historical luminaries to convey the heritage and legitimacy of their family, manufacturers of household goods encouraged consumers to dress children as their products, to inculcate brand loyalty. Analyzing examples of children’s fancy dress, photographs from *Vogue,* the Bishopsgate Institute, and reports from CWS journals, this paper will consider the problematic, important, often invidious, role of children in costume.

*Cultural historian Dr Wild is currently senior lecturer in contextual studies (fashion) within Manchester Fashion Institute. His research situates contemporary and historic dress and fashions within their social and cultural contexts. He published* Carnival to Catwalk, *a global study of fancy dress, in 2020.*

**Verity Wilson**

**Aspiration and Spectacle: Children in Fancy Dress**

This paper engages with childhood and fancy dress as depicted in photographs in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike any era before, we have photographic records, for example, of a juvenile costume ball in 1873 and a Peace Tea in 1919. These two events, with dressed-up children at their core, will be examined to determine the several meanings that might be ascribed to such gatherings. The camera’s remarkable trajectory from experimental wonder to technological marvel went hand-in-hand with a changing conception of childhood, and the simultaneity of both also coincided with one of the high points of fancy dress in Britain and the empire.

*Verity Wilson worked for twenty-five years at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, as a curator in the Asian Department. Between 2009 and 2014, she co-edited the peer-reviewed dress studies journal* Costume. *Her latest book,* Dressing Up: A History of Fancy Dress in Britain, *is due from Reaktion Books in June 2022. Her current work centres around the changing depiction of dress with the advent of photography.*

A picture containing chart

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