

Ημερίδες Ενδυμασιολογίας - Πρακτικά Costume Symposia - Proceedings

5η Ημερίδα / 28 Μαΐου 2016
5th Symposium / 28 May 2016

Exhibiting dress: engaging with the past
and the present



Coordination - editing: **Elia Petridou**
Copy editing: **Nerina Kioseoglou**
Cover design: **Mariza Nikolopoulou**
Book design: **Andriana Motaki**
ISSN: 2732-6969
ISBN: 978-618-85187-4-2
© 2023, Hellenic Costume Society

Συντονισμός - Επιμέλεια έκδοσης: **Έλια Πετρίδου**
Επιμέλεια κειμένων: **Νερίνα Κιοσέογλου**
Σχεδιασμός εξωφύλλου: **Μαρίζα Νικολοπούλου**
Σχεδιασμός εντύπου: **Ανδριάνα Μοτάκη**
ISSN: 2732-6969
ISBN: 978-618-85187-4-2
© 2023, Ελληνική Εταιρεία Ενδυμασιολογίας

Table of contents

Elia Petridou

Prologue. Exhibiting dress 5

Tania Veliskou – Mary Thivaïou

(Re)Collections of childhood at the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume.
Visual installations as a different approach to interpreting costume exhibits 7

Elena Melidi – Alexandra Nikiforidou – Eleni Pspathoma

What Are You Wearing? What Did They Wear? Re-exhibiting
the Costume Collection at the New Museum of Modern Greek Culture..... 19

Sjouk Hoitsma

Close to your skin. Participatory practices in collecting and exhibiting dress 29

Sofia Pantouvaki

Critical Costume 2015: Curatorial Approaches and Transmedia Display
Practices in Exhibiting Performance Costume 37

Prologue

In 2016, a time when major shifts are taking place globally regarding the role of museums in contemporary societies, the Hellenic Costume Society dedicated its Annual Symposium to ways of curating and displaying dress with the aim to bring together curators, academics and dress practitioners to discuss latest trends in museology. At the time, in Greece, museums with significant collections of historical garments were in a process of renovation, even relocation to new premises, and of radically restructuring their exhibitions.

As a prevailing trend in museum practice, curators record in their presentations a trend towards a stronger connection between museum and society also expressed as a shift from objects and collections towards people and narratives. More specifically, Tania Veliskou and Mary Thivaïou present the design of the first exhibition after the reopening of the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume, which closed its doors in 2015 with the intention of internal restructuring, obtaining certification and changing its permanent display. The new exhibition, titled *I come from my childhood*, aims to illustrate the way children dressed during the 19th and early 20th century in Greece. The new exhibition is structured on the idea of transcending the old-fashioned way of displaying garments as static objects worn by mannequins and introducing, instead, alternative moving-image-based works and art installations. By using conceptual approaches, visual techniques, and non-conventional formats similar to those of art-installation displays, the new exhibition is designed to bring life and movement into the display of historical garments.

At the same period, the Museum of Modern Greek Culture (formerly known as the Museum of Greek Folk Art) was being totally refurbished with plans for relocation to new buildings. Curators Elena Melidi, Alexandra Nikiforidou and Eleni Papathoma record a major shift in the design of the new museum, from an object-oriented approach with emphasis on the artistic qualities of the exhibits to a people-centered approach with emphasis on the narrative and contextual information. While the new exhibitions are to maintain the focus on the connection between modern Greek culture and the making of modern Greek identity, emphasis is now to be placed on the connection of objects with contemporary society and everyday life rather than on the beauty and authenticity of Greek culture. Using stories, ideas and clothes themselves as a starting point for narratives, the exhibition is being redesigned to illustrate everyday life, ideas, tastes, social structures, and so on, through a variety of interpretative means.

Coming from the Netherlands, a more daring approach to the connection between museums and local communities is presented by curator Sjouk Hoitsma at the Museum Rotterdam, the city museum of Rotterdam. In the context of rethinking the relation of the city's current (immigrant) population to history and heritage, curators have been reaching out to citizens by

6 | working on location in projects outside the museum. They visit youngsters in neighbourhoods, organize events and performances and, through a variety of innovative fashion-related projects, they use dress to redefine heritage while contributing to community building. Such an approach differs entirely from “normal” exhibitions and literally brings life to museum practice. As curator of the Critical Costume 2015 international exhibition, Sofia Pantouvaki moves, too, towards a more intense experience of dress exhibitions in a “sensual” as well as “notional” sense. By focusing on costume and performance, the Critical Costume exhibition explores costume in relation to bodies that move and connect in space and time. Can an exhibition record how moving bodies feel and respond to garments? Pantouvaki discusses innovative techniques employed by artists and researchers with the aim to critically change our way of perceiving the body while reconsidering the role of costume in contemporary performance. Using new technology, new modes of representation, new materials and new practices, artists and researchers experiment and explore ways in which costume is interpreted and experienced in a multimedia context.

The common ground of all contributions to this volume is that current trends in exhibiting dress involve, first and foremost, a concern for people rather than objects as ends in themselves. Beauty, craftsmanship and authenticity, although still significant dimensions for the evaluation of a museum object, in the context of display give their place to practices that highlight the connection of objects to people. Historical garments and costumes become not only semiotically markers of identity but active agents in the construction of bodies, ideologies, social structures and desires. By actively involving visitors and offering a multidimensional experience, exhibitions of dress are becoming a privileged field for the exploration of how dress creates people in as much as people create dress.

Elia Petridou

Asst. Professor of Social Anthropology, University of the Aegean
epetridou@aegean.gr