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journal@dresshistorians.org
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The Journal of Dress History is the academic publication of The Association of Dress Historians (ADH) through which scholars can articulate original research in a constructive, interdisciplinary, and peer reviewed environment. The ADH supports and promotes the study and professional practice of the history of dress, textiles, and accessories of all cultures and regions of the world, from before classical antiquity to the present day. The ADH is Registered Charity #1014876 of The Charity Commission for England and Wales.

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The Journal of Dress History is designed on European standard A4 size paper (8.27 x 11.69 inches) and is intended to be read electronically, in consideration of the environment. The graphic design utilises the font, Baskerville, a serif typeface designed in 1754 by John Baskerville (1706-1775) in Birmingham, England. The logo of The Association of Dress Historians is a monogram of three letters, ADH, interwoven to represent the interdisciplinarity of our membership, committed to scholarship in dress history. The logo was designed in 2017 by Janet Mayo, longstanding ADH member.



OCEANISTA: Fashion and the Sea, Curated by Maria McKinney-Valentin and Marie Ørstedholm for The Maritime Museum of Denmark, Elsinore, Denmark, 21 April 2021 to 28 November 2021, Tickets £14.00.

Curated by Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy, Maria McKinney-Valentin, and Head of Exhibitions at The Maritime Museum of Denmark, Marie Ørstedholm, the exhibition *OCEANISTA: Fashion and the Sea* showcases how the oceans and seafaring have been some of the

greatest sources of inspiration for fashion through the ages. The exhibition is shown at The Maritime Museum of Denmark, set in the award-winning architecture by BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group) in the former drydock in Elsinore. Displaying works by established designers as well as upcoming talents, a variety of garments—from haute couture to humble, worn-out sailors' clothes—artworks, accessories, photographs, and films is included in the exhibition, which is a voyage of discovery into the many different ways in which the sea has inspired fashion.

Arranged around themes of nautical inspiration, the exhibition traces the connection between fashion and the sea on several parameters. Some themes focus on specific patterns, such as how the iconic blue stripes have meandered from the French naval uniform of the 1850s to the fashion universe of designers like Chanel and Gaultier, or how the dazzle pattern has been transformed from a method of naval camouflage during the First World War to a feature used in a wide variety of fashion items, including a dazzle pattern mouthpiece. Other themes trace concepts such as the sexy sailor, ropes, and upcycling to name but a few, providing a multifaceted narrative. In specifically addressing gender identity and sustainability, the exhibition shows itself in tune with issues of current times. Exploring gender identity through designs by Thom Browne, playing with the masculine symbols of naval uniforms, the exhibition provides an interesting take on the conforming connotations of this most distinctive of naval clothes. The exhibition also applauds designers and artists trying to work sustainably with the resources of the world's oceans and seas, showcasing amongst other things clothes, shoes, and accessories

made of ocean plastic, seaweed, and fish skins, posing the important question of how the industry itself can change its impact on the planet.

Using dramatic lighting, the windowless space of the exhibition room itself, as well as a continuous soundscape to enhance the visitor's sense of being underwater, *OCEANISTA* aims to create a distinct sensory experience of fashion display. The exhibition itself is split into two separate spaces: the ship and the ocean floor. The first thing encountered by the visitor is a ship-like construction, surrounded by darkness, and demanding full attention to the video art projected on its sides, setting the tone for an exhibition aiming to be a voyage onto and into the oceans. Behind the ship is a space made to symbolise an ocean floor, dotted with coral-like structures and lit by coloured lights, as if the sun was shining down through the waves of the sea. Moving first into the ship and then onto the ocean floor, the exhibition encourages the visitor to enact the voyage of nautical inspiration the curators trace, from the world of the seafarer onto the international fashion scene. Consequently, the exhibition is especially successful in tying together the narrative and the design of the exhibition.

The displays inside the ship are primarily concerned with how patterns, textiles, and concepts of life at sea have inspired fashion. Thematic display cases show clothing used by sailors throughout history as well as modern-day fashion inspired by these. Continually juggling the narrative of seafaring and that of fashion, the displays aim to showcase both sides of the story. A display of sweaters, for instance, describes on the one hand the different meanings of the traditional patterns, pointing to the myth that these could be used to identify sailors lost at sea, whilst on the other hand showing modern versions recognisable to most visitors, but also the so-called *Prison* or *PARADOX Sweater* (1986) produced to be as ugly as possible to deter prisoners from trading it for cigarettes. Other displays are directly comparative, placing for instance a Swedish naval officer's uniform from the nineteenth century next to a uniform jacket by Balmain (2016), thus emphasising how direct the impact of nautical clothes on fashion can be. All the displays revolve around Philip Treacy's headpiece *Silver Ghost Ship* (2013), serving as a constant and eye-catching reminder of how intertwined the sea and fashion have been throughout history, as it toys with the fashion for outrageous hairstyles at the French court of the *ancien regime*.

By contrast, the ocean floor showcases dressed mannequins, highlighting the haute couture nature of the pieces on display in this part of the exhibition. Focusing on the designers' visions, the visual impact of each garment is emphasised as they stand solitary in the open exhibition space, displaying for instance the *Bubble Dress* by Iris van Herpen (2016–2017) in a wonderland of orange corals, enhancing the way the dress toys with bioluminescence by presenting it almost as a product of the sea

itself. Other displays make for interesting visual juxtapositions, such as a tattooed piece of a sailor's skin preserved in formaldehyde displayed alongside Maison Margiela's tattoo dress (2014). Combining garments, artworks, and historical artefacts, the exhibition is thus especially successful in making each thematic display a concentrated dive into a specific nautical inspiration. The strikingly different nature of the displays inside the ship and on the ocean floor provides a significant change in visual appeal, making *OCEANISTA* an exhibition of both visual impact and an object-focused historical narrative. Each display is accompanied by explanatory text panels, written engagingly and with wit, thematising the particular inspiration common to the items on show, ensuring that the exhibition can expertly sew together the story of seafaring and that of fashion. As the haute couture and the traditional nautical clothes are displayed in separate exhibition spaces, a direct visual comparison between the two is unavailable. Although it would have been interesting to see the traditional alongside its haute couture counterpart, the themes that run throughout the exhibition are easily recognisable and accessible so as to transcend the divide, ensuring that the link between the nautical and the haute couture remains clear.

Appealing to all the senses, *OCEANISTA* calls for immersion and involvement from the visitor in both its sensory, visual, and narrative components in order to give the complete experience. However, by making the most of the visual impact of the garments on display, the atmosphere created by the lighting and soundscape as well as the narrative power of the story itself, *OCEANISTA* presents an engaging narrative and visual illustration of how sailors' life at sea and indeed the products of the sea have inspired fashion through the ages. The exhibition will appeal to fashion-minded audiences as well as those interested in seafaring, as it adds a significant chapter to both stories. Highlighting important issues such as sustainability while at the same time delving into the history of seafaring, the exhibition points both forwards and backwards in the story of the connectedness of fashion and the sea. At the same time, it is a trailblazer for the opportunities presented by the use of atmospheric elements in fashion displays. In short, *OCEANISTA* is an exhibition of stunning visual richness and engaging historical narrative, a sensory voyage of discovery into the close links between fashion and the sea.

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Email: louise.depner@gmail.com

Louise Kjærgaard Depner is a historian specialising in the history of museums and cultural historical exhibitions, currently teaching museology at The University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She has recently finished her Master's degree on the interior exhibitions of The Royal Collection at Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen, exploring the challenges and potentials embedded.