



**3<sup>rd</sup> International  
(Non)Western Fashion Conference**  
The Global Politics of Fashion

University of Hong Kong, HK  
22-23 November 2014

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

The third edition of the (Non) Western Fashion Conference is focussing on the politics of fashion from a global perspective. Despite so-called fashion globalization, the epicentre of fashion is still very much concentrated in Europe. But what do we really know about the global politics of fashion? How does fashion intersect with global politico-economic processes? What are the global power relations embodied in fashion? How do the meanings of fashionable and traditional dress relate to that hegemony? How should agency and orientalism be understood? What are the mechanisms that ensure that the centre of fashion is retained in Europe? How can alternatives be identified and how are they co-opted? What are the politics of fashion appropriation and exclusion? Is dichotomous thinking about fashion reified in the processes of fashion? Although much is written about the influence of western fashion in the non-West, relatively little research is done on what the appropriation of non-western fashion trends in western fashion really signifies. Also, even though trends have been coming from London, Delhi, Milan, Shanghai, New York, Sao Paulo, Casablanca and Dakar it remains predominantly European designers who put them on the global fashion map, while Indian, Chinese, Hispanic Latin American, Moroccan and Sub-Sahara African fashion designers continue to be excluded from European Fashion Weeks.

This edition aims to focus on agency in the context of global fashion politics. Sandra Niessen (2003) argues in *Re-Orienting Fashion Theory* that 'Eurocentric hegemonic fashion discourse aims to preserve a boundary between the West/Rest to both protect its position of power and to ensure the maintenance of a conceptual other for self-definitional purposes.' But she also argues that conceptual traditional dress is just as much a tool for the non-West to differentiate and emphasize local distinctiveness. Traditional dress is rapidly being invented and reinvented to not only create a sense of belonging and stimulate the consumption of a culturally marketed Self, but also to further national interests, stimulate international tourism, influence foreign investments and as a tool for public diplomacy. In the process, self-orientalism is playing an important role whereby, contrary to orientalism, the orientalist gaze is used to turn oneself into the Other to create, maintain and strengthen a distinct cultural identity (Iwabuchi 1994). From this perspective, the Orient is not a defenceless and innocent victim of western orientalism, but actively uses the orientalist gaze to take agency. Therefore the question whether fashion globalization leads to cultural homogenisation deserves a new debate with a focus on the contemporary revival/(re)invention of traditional dress.

## BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The (Non)Western Fashion Conference was initiated in 2012, with its first edition in Rabat (Morocco 2012) and its second in London (UK 2013). Its main objective is to provide a forum for scholars who focus on a wide variety of fashion systems and who wish to rectify a prevailing ethno- and Eurocentric discourse in fashion studies. Although fashion is historically located all around the world, many fashion traditions remain little known and therefore seem less important or influential. Many are misinterpreted due to binary oppositional thinking which creates false dichotomies like traditional versus fashionable, tradition versus modernity, western versus non-western, local versus global, and so on.

The conference aims to gather academics, curators, designers and industry professionals who are engaged in creative and critical thinking concerning (non)western fashion systems in a wide scope of geographical areas and from a wide variety of disciplines. Although it focuses on fashion from so-called non-western regions, it does not wish to be exclusive, but rather stimulate global perspectives. This is not to be mistaken for globalisation, which has been used to create participatory narratives in recent years whereby especially new economies are included in fashion discourse in the light of their recent socio-economic achievements, their convergence with the West and their successful engagement with fashion as consumers and producers. In order to understand fashion beyond Europe, it is important to refrain from thinking that it has only recently emerged as a result of globalisation (Riello and McNeil, 2010, *Global Perspectives*, 4-5).

300 word abstracts are due by the **1 June 2014**. Please note that abstract which exceed the word limit will not be taken into consideration. Emails containing the abstracts should be submitted to [m.jansen@fashion.arts.ac.uk](mailto:m.jansen@fashion.arts.ac.uk) and [taotaoct@yahoo.com](mailto:taotaoct@yahoo.com) and entitled: NON-WESTERN FASHION ABSTRACT SUBMISSION. Please include the author's name, affiliation, email address and the title of the abstract. Please send PDF, Word or RTF formats, using plain text (Ariel 11) and abstain from using footnotes and any special formatting, characters or emphasis. Receipt of the email will be acknowledged within one week. If you do not receive a confirmation, please assume that it was not received and send it again. Abstracts, participant's bio's and papers will be published on the conference website.