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THE

EXHIBITION

JUDITH CLARK  
STUDIO

—  
FASHION PROJECT  
BAL HARBOUR SHOPS  
MIAMI  
—  
APRIL 10 – MAY 21, 2015



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# THE EXHIBITION

*In Conversation with  
Judith Clark & Ben Whyman*

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The following conversation between curator and exhibition-maker Judith Clark and Ben Whyman, manager of the Centre for Fashion Curation (CfFC), took place in London on 25 February 2015. Their discussion centered on the series of six exhibitions Clark is curating and designing for Fashion Project, an experimental cultural space located in Bal Harbour Shops, a luxury retail destination in Miami. The brand-new space opens with Clark's exhibition *FP01: The Exhibition*.

The two discussed the notion of a series of exhibitions that build and comment on each other, operating both independently and as a whole, simultaneously reflecting on the past and the future. Whyman and Clark also explored Clark's interest in displaying experimental and unusual fashion and the exploration of the fashion exhibition itself. This publication continues the *16pp* series established by Clark when she opened Judith Clark Costume Gallery in 1997. *16pp* captured Clark's preoccupation with dress and the narratives created around fashion within an exhibition context. The Fashion Project exhibitions are natural descendants of this ongoing dialogue.

Clark has curated more than forty exhibitions on fashion, lecturing and publishing widely on dress display. She is a professor of Fashion and Museology at University of the Arts London. In 2013, she set up the CfFC with Professor Amy de la Haye, also a curator and dress historian. Together with Ben Whyman they run a center that aspires to enliven and broaden the discussion around researching and exhibiting dress, which has attracted a number of international curators and scholars. Clark's work for

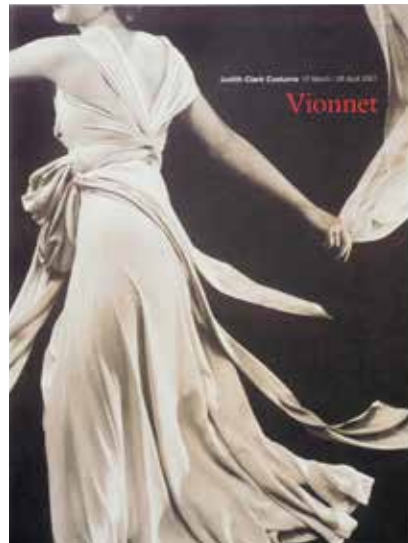
Fashion Project is the first that takes the conversation to Miami, and it is also her first exhibition in the United States.

**WHYMAN** – Judith, could you begin by briefly describing Bal Harbour Shops and Fashion Project?

**CLARK** – What we are launching in Miami in 2015 with Fashion Project is a series of six exhibitions. This is a project that is very dear to me because experimental projects about the exhibiting of dress have been my interest for over twenty years. I began my practice in a small gallery in London's fashionable Notting Hill area — similar in size to the one here — and this is the work that interests me most.

My work at Fashion Project takes a small space and looks at what a series of exhibitions might become as part of the larger project of seeing fashion in new ways. Usually when one is working in a museum in a big space it's very much about a grand statement and about thoroughly researching one theme or one designer's work. What this smaller space does is give me the opportunity to create a series of statements that can be about exhibiting itself. So these exhibitions are not so much about the biography of a designer or the investigation of a theme but raising questions around what it is to curate today. What is it to put on an installation with a dress at its center today? As you know, these are questions that we bring to our conversations at the Centre for Fashion Curation.

**WHYMAN** – So in a sense, could we describe this series of exhibitions as an episodic reflection on the craft of fashion curation and your own particular way of doing things as an exhibition-maker over and above a curator?



Clockwise from top left — Exhibition catalogue, 'Vionnet', Judith Clark Costume Gallery, 2001. Installation photo, 'Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back', Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2005, © V&A Images. Exhibition catalogue, 'Diana Vreeland after Diana Vreeland', Museo Fortuny, Venice 2011.

Building Ruben Toledo's giant silhouettes at Décor Atelier Ercola for Clark's 'Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back', ModeMuseum, Antwerp 2004. Crocheted bust form, Rosie Taylor-Davies (commissioned by Clark) for Simone Handbag Museum, Seoul 2012, © Simone Handbag Museum.

**CLARK** – Yes, I think it's about telling a story about exhibition-making and fashion and how these two things are entwined. Exhibition-making is the art of curating in the round — the dress and the mannequin, the props, etc., all thought about simultaneously as opposed to a more traditional way of working, which would be research, followed by a list of objects, followed by an external designer coming in to create an environment in space.

And yes, time is very important. What we are doing in the first exhibition is a kind of micro-history of fashion and its staging in museums, or fashion and the exhibition. Each cabinet will be different, each cabinet will reflect a moment in time that feels as though it is somehow reflective of the preoccupations surrounding display that belonged to that time. For example, I have intentionally used Victorian wooden cabinets as my canvas, so to speak, as we all associate these with the museum aesthetic.

**WHYMAN** – I know of your interest in space, and your background in architecture. I wonder if you could describe the importance of space within and around objects, particularly those objects that are clothes?

**CLARK** – Yes, space is fundamental of course. And, even more so, evoking space within a gallery context within one room, so it's like an essay form, or one sheet of paper, or a sentence. You have an opportunity to make a statement that the visitor will see the moment that they walk into the room. Space and how it is divided up, or how objects are given space, or how space is taken away, or how space is reimagined as a threat to an object, or how space is cordoned off, so to speak, because of an imagined barrier between visitor and object — these are all things that haunt curating, dress, and the very delicate textiles from which these objects are created. Conservation always comes into the picture somewhere as well. Space is a very loaded term within our job, as you well know.

In terms of these exhibitions, there is a kind of progressive opening up of space. People have described it as the liberating of museum objects in recent practice. I think what I am doing in *FP01: The Exhibition*, which has six cabinets, is starting with a cabinet of curiosities that is all about fragments, that is about a kind of anthropology of textiles — what was found, and what could be learned and evoked from these found objects. The second cabinet within *FP01: The Exhibition* works with an idea of a Victorian dress as exemplar, a dress that is hidden under Tyvek in the first exhibition; museum curators are hugely preoccupied with preserving objects and how in doing so the very object is hidden from its viewer.

There is an interesting dialogue with the Victorians about what can be exposed and what must be hidden, and what that has to do with our relationship to the body. So the exhibition starts with structures, but in doing so opens up so many conversations that are in and around curating dress.

**WHYMAN** – This sense of simultaneously revealing and concealing does that, or is the intention to problematize it?

**CLARK** – Absolutely.

**WHYMAN** – To challenge it?

**CLARK** – This is what I am asking the visitor to wonder when they come into this first exhibition: what is this about, what are we showing if we are concealing something? This is always the question. What are we showing the visitor if the dress is covered in Tyvek? This is why I have conceived these exhibitions as a series of pairs, so that within the context of an exhibition there is always the memory of the exhibitions that have come before it.

What is very exhilarating about being given this opportunity at Fashion Project is that I've never before been commissioned to curate a series of exhibitions that have the opportunity for this kind of sequential thinking about dress. It's not about coming in and out of the museum, it's about saying, well, what would you do with an exhibition if you have the space in the period beyond that exhibition. And so, this exhibition is — and I won't give everything away — but this exhibition will be morphed in its second incarnation, *FP02: Morphing*. There will be an unprecedented fluidity between the pairs of exhibitions.

**WHYMAN** – I'm just thinking back as you are talking about some of your previous work, and *The Judgement of Paris* at the Fashion Space Gallery at London College of Fashion in 2011 came to mind as an exhibition that I feel cried out for that continuation, that phase two, phase three feel. I'm not sure what it is about it, about the narrative threading through three cabinets in a row, and

depending on the angle and perspective you were viewing them, you could see different perspectives, diagonal, horizontal, sometimes vertical perspectives weaving in and out, and I wonder about that sense of narrative over a period of time, which is another thing you have referred to. You have described already that each exhibition builds on the previous one and that sense of freedom, but also perhaps, that sense of pressure about what might happen.

**CLARK** – Yes, I think it is a really good example. *The Judgement of Paris* was an exhibition that was staged at London College of Fashion a few years ago and it was the closest, I guess, to this project, as it was also about exhibition-making itself. Its central premise was if you look at historic paintings of the Judgment of Paris where the goddesses are unclothed, what do we learn about showing clothing? Or rather, how do we learn about giving clues to the protagonists' identity within an exhibition if not through their clothing? As curators, one of the things that we are always up against is what to do with the rest of the body. You know, we know that we need the mannequin as surrogate body to do justice to the proportions of the garment and to the object, that is the focus of our attention. But then, of course, we are left with hands, heads, plinths, lighting, backdrop, etc. What do we do with the rest of the body that every visitor, of course, is familiar with.

How much of the silhouette is revealed? And of that silhouette, do we need to embed within it the clues to who is wearing the dress? Because there are three things, three protagonists within an exhibition of dress: who made it, who owned it, and who wore it. There are all these histories that are entwined and I guess *The Judgement of Paris* was about who wore it. It's about how do we know who Juno is in the famous tale? How do we know who is associated with Cupid, who is associated with a peacock? Who is associated with a shield — with a Greek shield, a Gorgon's shield? So it was really an exhibition about a kind of preoccupation with props and styling that was taken out of the context of fashion itself.

**WHYMAN** – And that preoccupation, with styling — whether or not styling is the right word, but, arrangement? Decision? About what is placed next to each other, what is placed opposite each other, that is as much a part of the curatorial project, as it were, as about selecting what you are displaying.

**CLARK** – Absolutely.

**WHYMAN** – Another phrase that came to mind was the luxury of small spaces and an example we have just used, *The Judgement of Paris*, was a small exhibition. The Fashion Project series of exhibitions will be in a small space. I guess I'll ask the obvious question: Is it a luxury to work in small spaces?

**CLARK** – I think it is. I think something that is rather magical about working with Fashion Project is that it is in a space on the third floor of Bal Harbour Shops, a shopping enclave — a very famous shopping enclave that was landscaped fifty years ago — we're coming up to its fiftieth anniversary. This project is part of a consideration about that space that was always forward-thinking in terms of creating environments.

When you enter this space you've already encountered a number of luxury shops that of course have a similar footprint to Fashion Project. So one of the things that is central to a debate about exhibiting fashion is to ask: How is it different from a shop? How do you know you are in a gallery if the mannequins are wearing fashion? How do you know you are not in the shop downstairs? And I think part of the reason why I was invited to do this project with Fashion Project was that this is central to the debate in which I participate daily, kind of facing this head on, not avoiding the issue but incorporating the issue.

The different objects evoke different problems. For example, the Hussein Chalayan is just as much

about the performativity of catwalk presentations as it is a solution for everyday dress, which of course it isn't. So it's about taking dress to the limits of its presentation. The Leon Bakst costume is looking at something that was presenting a kind of Orientalism in Paris at the turn of the century that made connections with the art world, and that went far beyond the original brief in terms of creating a costume for the protagonists of the ballet. So in exhibiting dress what do we want to include and what do we want to leave out?

**WHYMAN** – What you have described is contrasts between Hussein Chalayan and the Bakst. It's something about showing how interesting and provocative these contrasts can be and this goes on reverberating across the century.

**CLARK** – Yes, I think this exhibition is very much about reading objects and about how we are invited to read objects. So the first cabinet is about anthropology and about fragments of everyday life, and I have left a kind of mystery around them; in the second cabinet we have cut to a moment in time when the museum embraces dress history

and textiles, collected under the title of fashionable dress. In the third cabinet it is no longer about the everyday, but about costume, so there is a double wearer — the actor/dancer and her character; the artist is not the dressmaker, and so on — the field starts to become complicated, as are the decisions about an appropriate backdrop (both literally and metaphorically). In the fourth cabinet it is about surrealism. Surrealism is chosen for two reasons: it's a moment in time where the fashion and art worlds quite literally collide, and so it's about not hiding behind an object but embedding the artistic practice within the sartorial. So the exhibition has a progression if you like from evidence of the norm to something that becomes in a sense more and more extraordinary.

**WHYMAN** – So much modern art is about the extraordinary in the ordinary. When you look at something that seems ordinary — the silhouette of a modern dress can often be ordinary, commonplace to us — and yet when it is interpreted and revised by someone like Hussein Chalayan, it can become a mechanical object. And there is something also about the surrealist section, that dissonance, and how that can spark another perception. Is that something that you are purposefully aiming for?

**CLARK** – Yes, I think as there are very few objects in this exhibition, each has to tell a number of different stories. And one of them is, of course, this incredible difference between the everyday and the enigmatic.

**WHYMAN** – Could we perceive these objects as almost multifaceted? As items that are working very hard, in a sense, with layers of meaning and significance imbued within them? And what fashion curators do with these objects, multifaceted, sometimes difficult, and how we unpick that — or maybe we don't unpick that?

**CLARK** – Well, sometimes. All these objects can be viewed on a series of different levels, so you can look at the objects and say 'this is a beautiful object,' or not. Each of the objects we have chosen for the exhibition has its own kind of inherent aesthetic — its own idea of the beautiful — which kind of has an excitement in its own right, be it futuristic, surreal, romantic, etc.

But what I have also been mindful of and in response to Fashion Project and Bal Harbour Shops' brief, was to really launch a cultural program. This is about asking questions that are beyond looking at dresses in the way one might look at dresses that are for sale on the ground floor and the first floor. Where will these objects go? I mean, a lot of the dresses on the ground floor and first floor are museum-worthy. These are objects that lead design, and are for sale downstairs. And, what is interesting is kind of creating a weird context for them upstairs. Where will they go? Where do they really belong and why? And, what is all this craft about?

**WHYMAN** – You are not expecting to answer all the questions in a sense, it's posing issues around the nature of the field of fashion curation. And we talk about the questions in the field: We talk about contrast, we talk about space and time, and about objects developing over time.

**CLARK** – I think that objects develop over time, and I think it is a very important point. Because it's as though now there is a kind of knowledge about how objects might be presented and might be conserved within museums. So Hussein Chalayan may already picture his Remote Control Dress, not on the body of someone walking down the street, but within a museum. They are conceived with a different kind of future, both his prescience and an unpredictable kind of future that has to do with exhibition-making. And, I think that is importantly written into this particular project. The early objects were not conceived as museum objects, they were conceived as dress or as costume or as project. Whereas we finish with Hussein Chalayan where in a way the two conversations have truly merged: dress as ongoing installation.

**WHYMAN** – That leads logically into the sense of evolution that this series of exhibitions is going to explore. What comes of it in the end is going to add even further to a discussion on not only what dress and fashion is in the twenty-first century, but as you mention, that sense of context and where everything fits in, and whether we should make it easy on the viewer or if we should always be challenging. Using dress, which is often everyday objects that we use on a day-to-day basis, using it as you described, how Hussein Chalayan uses it, as something that purposefully isn't meant to be worn, that in a sense leads the debate on beyond the exhibition.

**CLARK** – Exactly, it goes from the worn to the wearable, then to the unwearable, and on to the purely conceptual. I'm not sure what another final object might be but this first exhibition is a snapshot. As you said before, it's an episodic account of a discipline that can be traced back to the idea of the curiosity cabinet. I mean, if you have to cut it down to six cabinets of course there is a lot of shorthand, but it also means that each statement can be read from multiple perspectives. The Fashion Project space is located next to a bookshop where a series of related events will be held during this season, and so the other thing that was very important to me in this project was giving clues to conversations that might be had throughout the year; that each cabinet could, in and of itself, be the subject of a discussion about dress and costume, dress and history, dress and sculpture, dress and technology, dress and styling, dress and conservation, and we could go on and on. It is very much of a piece with our work here at CfFC. It is about being able to enact some of the conversations that we have day-to-day in London — and not only enacting the conversation, but expanding it by introducing it to a new audience.

Below — Collage by Clark, 'The Judgement of Paris', Fashion Space Gallery, London College of Fashion, London 2011.

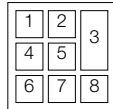


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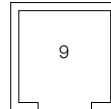
## *The Objects*

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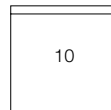
**Cabinet 1 — The Curiosity Cabinet**

- 1. Cap**  
Embroidered evening cloche, unknown, British or French, c.1925.
- 2. Headdress**  
Idea for a beaded head, Judith Clark and Rosie Taylor-Davies, British, 2011.
- 3. Mask**  
Leather and quill muzzle, Dai Rees for Alexander McQueen, British, 1998.
- 4. Decorative Panel**  
Beaded tulle and silk satin capelet, Ann Demeulemester, Belgian, 2008.
- 5. Collar**  
Silk lamé detachable collar, Miu Miu, Italian, 2014.
- 6. Neckpiece**  
Bead choker with feather pendant, John Galliano for Christian Dior, French, 1999.
- 7. Sleeves**  
Cotton under-sleeves decorated with Broderie Anglaise, unknown, European, mid 19th century.
- 8. Hairpiece**  
Kingfisher and Cornelian stone hairpin, unknown, Chinese, late 19th century.



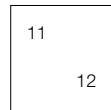
**Cabinet 2 — Conservation**

- 9. Day Dress**  
A Tyvek cover protects the memory of a Victorian dress, Judith Clark and Rosie Taylor-Davies, British, 2015.



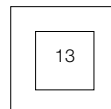
**Cabinet 3 — Mise-en-scène**

- 10. Costume**  
Original costume for a Bayadère for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes production of 'Le Dieu Bleu,' Leon Bakst, Russian, 1912.



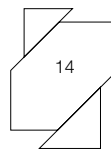
**Cabinet 4 — The Surrealist Body**

- 11. Cape**  
Embroidered velvet evening cape, Elsa Schiaparelli, French, 1935-38.
- 12. Headdress**  
Eagle headdress, Jean Cocteau (attrib.), French, c.1938.



**Cabinet 5 — Sculpture**

- 13. Bird Dress**  
Hand-dyed and printed silk and tulle dress, Felicity Brown, British, Autumn/Winter 2011.



**Cabinet 6 — Technology**

- 14. Remote Control Dress**  
Fiberglass motorized dress, Hussein Chalayan, British, 1999.



01 / 02



03 / 10



01 / 04



01 / 03



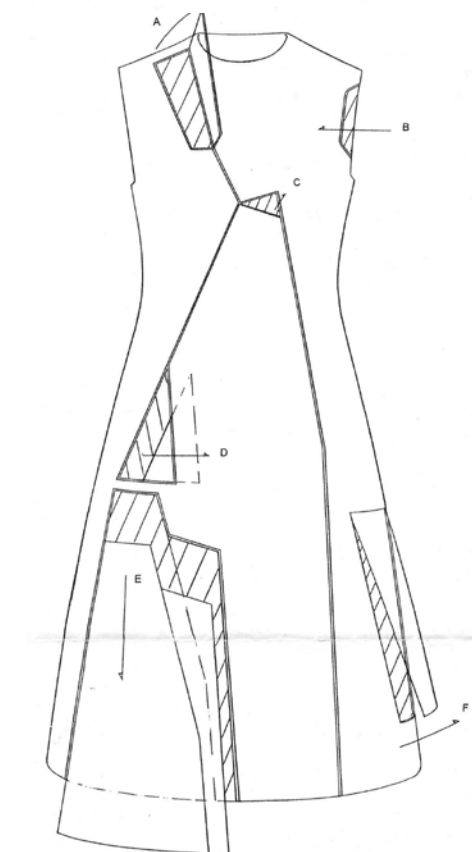
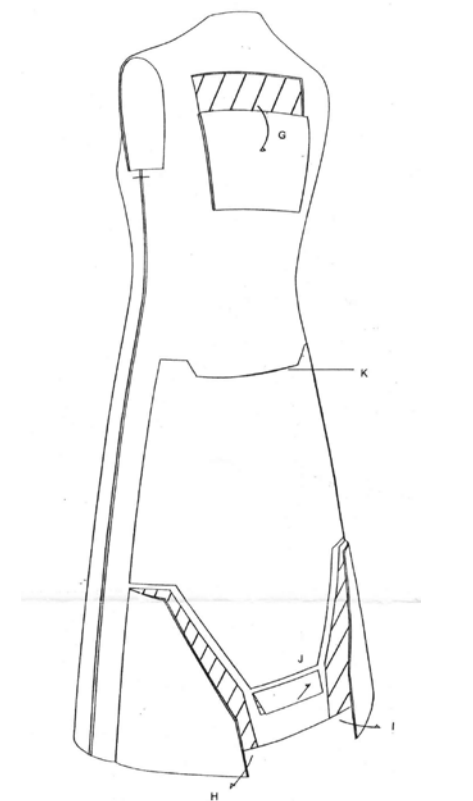
01 / 01



01 / 08



01 / 06



Opposite — 03 / 10  
 Above — Les Nouveaux Ballets Russes, p.157,  
 volume 6 in 'La Vie Heureuse', 15 June 1912.  
 Right — 06 / 14 Presentation drawing of Hussein  
 Chalayan's Remote Control Dress, Zaha Hadid  
 Architects (commissioned by Clark), The Mind  
 Zone, Millennium Dome, London 1999.




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# FASHION PROJECT

## *Information, Schedule & Acknowledgements*

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### About Fashion Project

Fashion Project is an experimental space in Bal Harbour Shops that approaches fashion and the culture surrounding it through a multidisciplinary lens. Curatorial projects and public programs explore and celebrate fashion and its many meanings and messages. Fashion Project is an initiative Whitman Family Development and is underwritten by Bal Harbour Shops.

### Schedule

#### **FP01: The Exhibition**

April 10 – May 21, 2015

#### **FP02: Morphing**

May 28 – August 10, 2015

#### **FP Summer Series**

August 15 – September 30, 2015

#### **FP03: The Past**

October 10 – November 16, 2015

#### **FP04: The Anniversary**

November 23, 2015 – January 31, 2016

### The Exhibition Conversation Bios

Judith Clark is Professor of Fashion Museology at University of the Arts London and an exhibition-maker based in London. She is one of the two founding directors of the Centre for Fashion Curation. She has curated major exhibitions internationally.

Ben Whyman is an experienced researcher and project manager in the production of fashion exhibitions and publications. Alongside his role as manager of the Centre for Fashion Curation, Ben is a part-time PhD student at London College of Fashion.

### Acknowledgements

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 Nat Chediak of Coral Gables Art Cinema  
 Tui Panich of Tui Lifestyle  
 Red Market Salon  
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 Andrea Gollin

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**FASHION3  
PROJECT**

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Catalogue design by Charlie Smith Design

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