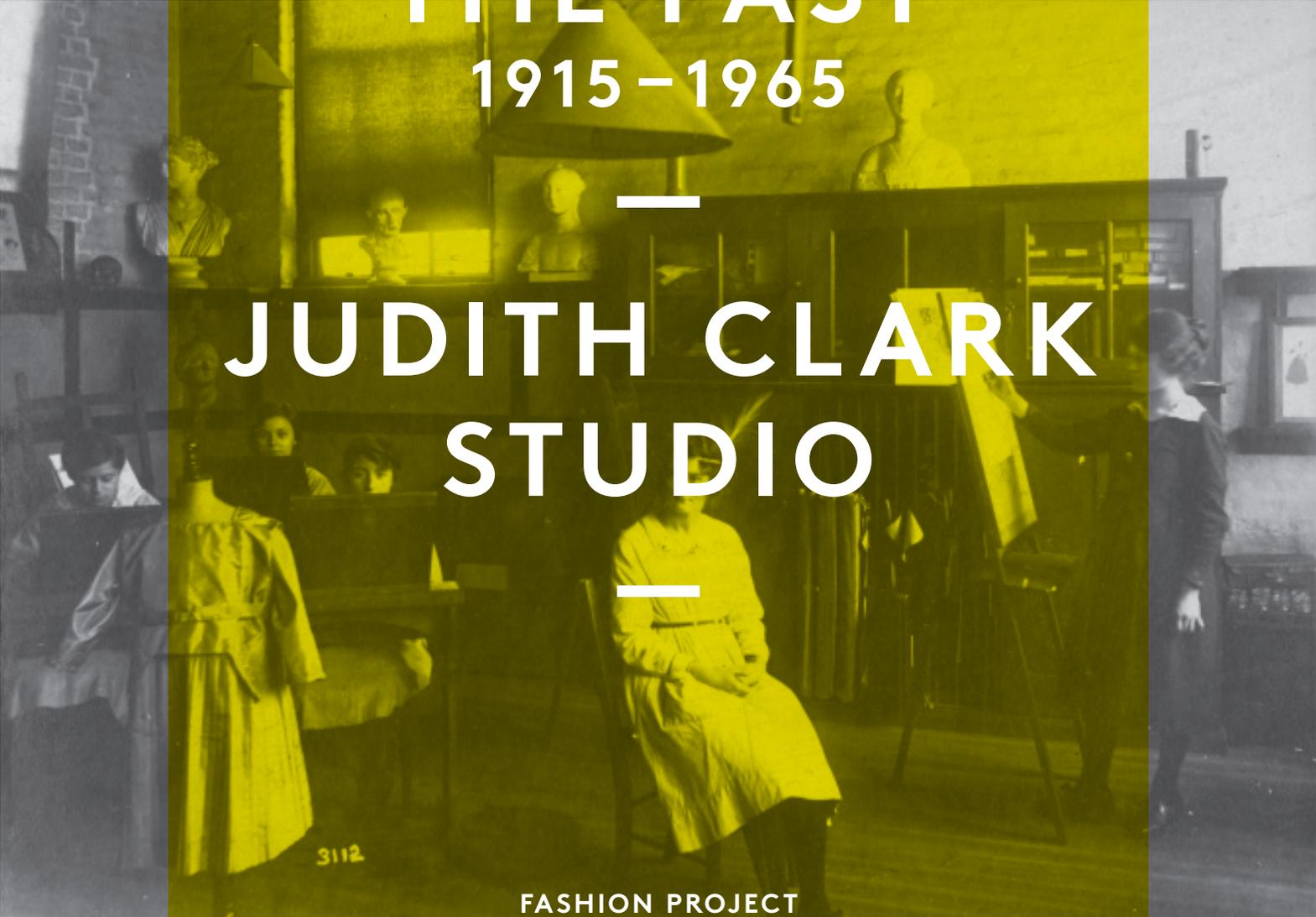

THE PAST
1915-1965



JUDITH CLARK
STUDIO

FASHION PROJECT
BAL HARBOUR SHOPS
MIAMI

OCTOBER 8 - NOVEMBER 5, 2015



Questioning History
 Annotations by Judith Clark

THE LINGERIE DRESS

Amy de la Haye

1— Anniversaries concern objects but they also concern exhibitions. This exhibition, 'The Past,' and the forthcoming exhibition, 'The Anniversary,' together celebrate the previous one hundred years in fashion and Bal Harbour Shops' fiftieth anniversary. 'The Past' considers the five decades prior to the opening of the retail center; 'The Anniversary' explores the fifty years from the opening to the present. 'The Past,' respecting our key dates of 1915 and 1965, references two important exhibitions: The 1915 'Panama-Pacific International Exposition,' held in San Francisco, and 'The Responsive Eye,' the 1965 Op Art exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. American audiences at the 1915 exhibition were able to view couture in the French pavilion, often for the first time; the Op Art exhibition was about finding a new kind of engagement when looking at works of art, about finding one's position in relation to the art. Op Art makes you wonder what the best view might be. Both historic exhibitions left their mark, and their impact is evident in Fashion Project's experimental approach to fashion and exhibition-making and its commitment to bringing objects to Miami and looking at them afresh.

Exhibited and written histories often privilege anniversaries.¹ Drawing together highly selective elements from the past and 'fitting' them to a particular year are entirely self-conscious acts. What is left out is redolent with meaning, too. The exhibition 'The Past' takes two years as its focus, one a centenary (1915) and the other its median (1965 and the opening of Bal Harbour Shops) to the current year (2015). A youthful cotton dress, trimmed with *broderie anglaise*, designed by Mary Quant in the mid-1960s, and housed in the London College of Fashion Archive, caught curator Judith Clark's eye.

That dress became the first selected item in the exhibition and a catalyst for subsequent acquisitions around the theme of lingerie dresses. As an object-led curator and dress historian, I was asked to contribute a personal, fashion-historical, textual response to the dresses before they were exhibited.



Cover — Barrett Street Trade School (now London College of Fashion), 1915. Photo: London College of Fashion Archives.

Above — All images from *The 1915 Mode: As Shown By Paris*, souvenir issue of the *Gazette du Bon Ton*, published in association with Condé Nast, 1915, in conjunction with the 1915 'Panama-Pacific International Exposition' in San Francisco. Photo: Hprints.

Below — Lingerie dress, cotton *broderie anglaise*, c. 1912. Courtesy of Amy de la Haye. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

The past is both over and continuous, rejected and incorporated.



3— If the exhibition is also about the history of exhibition-making, then this exhibition also contains within it those anniversaries. How were the dresses presented to American audiences in 1915 and should any elements of that display be quoted here?

2— The past is both over and continuous, rejected and incorporated. The past is what is passed down, repeated: fashionable dress is itself an archive of techniques, so exhibiting one object invites us to think about so many others. If lingerie dresses are associated with embroidery techniques, who was making them, how did they learn the skills, and how were the skills passed down?

4— 'The Past' is also about our own past, like the reimagined dresses. "A life as an idiosyncratic repertoire of repetitions ... The details of a life, of course can never be predicted, nor can the content or the exact working of the repetitions ... But what can be assumed is that there will be repetitions, and that these repetitions found their initial (and initiating) forms in childhood." — Adam Phillips, from *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* by Judith Clark

Lingerie dresses were fashionable in the summer of 1915. They had been since the 1890s and remained so throughout the 1910s. Infinitely pretty and appealingly 'fresh,' they were worn by women, ingénues, and young girls, and were available at all market levels. The term lingerie is derived from the French word *linge* (linen), used to describe cotton and linen undergarments. (Dress is increasingly valued as a potent source of historical evidence and for design inspiration, but the terminology that defines it risks being lost or reappropriated.) The dresses were thus named because of the similarity in material, embroidery, and decorative techniques used to make women's undergarments.²

White-on-white, a lingerie dress is simultaneously decorative and plain. It is made from fine, sheer, and lightweight cotton lawn, voile, or organdie, and sometimes linen was used — cool fabrics derived from vegetable seed fibres. The fabric decoration became popularly known as *broderie anglaise* (English embroidery), because it was so popular in England. It is also called Madeira work since nuns living on the Portuguese island made it. Because Paris led international fashion trends, much of the industry's nomenclature is French. With its round and petal shaped perforations; trailing floral and foliate embroidery; frills, flounces, parallel rows of pin-tucks; lace inserts; and threaded ribbon, the lingerie dress was perceived as quintessentially feminine. Whilst the cut and silhouette evolved in accordance with the latest fashion trends, the fabric remained similar.

At its most refined, the lingerie dress was handcrafted by skilled craftswomen employed within the dressmaking workrooms of the Paris haute couture houses. It was classified as an *après-midi* gown, designed to be worn to a garden party, an afternoon tea, or a summer wedding. Each season, the latest Paris styles were communicated to fashion-conscious women around the world via print media and film footage. However, in 1915 — over a period of nine months — the 'Panama-Pacific International Exposition,' staged in San Francisco, offered American audiences an opportunity to see — close-up — original Paris models (as prototype designs were

called) from the top houses, including Worth, Doucet, Premet, Beer, Callot, and Paquin.³

Unlike much of the fashionable wardrobe, the lingerie dress was laundered — in its day it was considered easy-care. With its light reflecting qualities, white is associated with purity, cleanliness, and simplicity, and in color psychology it is associated with new beginnings. In some cultures white is used to mark a death and the regenerated life that is believed to follow. By 1965 the color was interpreted as modernistic and futuristic, as per Prime Minister Harold Wilson's famous phrase 'white heat of technology' as well as minimalism. A white, machine-made, synthetic fiber with a crochet-like appearance was used to make a mid-1960s mini-dress with a scalloped hemline. Like the seasons, fashions change and they recur; the 1960s mini-dress could be considered a successor of the lingerie dress.

The abstracted daisy is an enduring motif. On *broderie anglaise* the daisy takes the form of five satin-stitched petals or button-hole stitched perforations. Instantly recognizable, this diminutive flower is near-ubiquitous. The name originates from the Old English *daes eag*, which means day's eye: the flower closes when darkness beckons and re-opens at dawn. The garden daisy, with its central yellow disc florets and white ray florets occasionally tipped with pink, is the most common species. Within the language of flowers, it is accorded qualities of innocence, loyal love, purity, and beauty. Not surprisingly, the daisy is associated with childhood.⁴

One item on view in 'The Past,' a child's lingerie dress, was worn in 1915 by a ten-year-old girl. We know this because the piece was acquired recently from her daughter, who was able to provide many details of her mother's life. Her mother, the girl who once wore this dress, was an identical twin, became a keen long distance sea swimmer, and lived until she was ninety-six. It was washed often and was painstakingly darned with tiny white stitches.

Both the child's dress and the woman's dress⁵ were acquired via e-Bay, and the woman's

10— Is there a connection between restlessness of design – creating collections twenty-eight times a year – and exhibition design?

6— This is the case unless the garment is associated with an additional date, such as the date of a party to which it was worn, a wedding, etc. In curating exhibitions, we determine which dates to privilege and which to disregard.

7— In 1915 the art studio and the embroidery studio were set up at Barrett Street Trade School, now London College of Fashion, where both Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye are based. Archival photographs depict the girls learning the skills of drapery, wig-making, pattern cutting, and embroidery. While exhibition-making was not the discipline they were learning, the skills themselves can be incorporated into an exhibition as well as a garment.

8— We are exploring parallels between 1915 and 1965 and a language to connect the two. This exhibition investigates skills, styling, abstracting, and looking.

9— Teen style is always a negotiation between childhood and adulthood, a transitional period when a girl looks both ways. Scale makes this dilemma literal – what does an oversized baby doll dress tell us about the dilemma, and what should we best exhibit it next to?

dress lacks provenance. Studio portraits and snapshots dated 1915 portray women wearing this style of dress. However, depictions of the Spring/Summer 1915 collections within the elite fashion press reveal a wider silhouette and a shorter – mid-calf length – hemline. In wartime this was more practical than columnar styles.

It is entirely possible that this dress was made c.1913 and donned on special summer occasions over a period of two or three years. (Garments are usually exhibited in the context of the year in which they were designed, rather than the extended period of wear).⁶ Neither the child's dress nor the woman's dress has a label and both were probably purchased from an independently owned, good quality dressmaking house or a private dressmaker.

Many young girls were taught to sew at home, and embroidery formed part of the elementary school curriculum. Those who went on to pursue a career within the dressmaking industries usually served a three year apprenticeship. From the late nineteenth century technical training was also provided within the education sector, by needle-trade schools that offered full and part-time courses, evening classes, and day-release schemes.⁷ The proliferation of creative fashion courses within the art schools, in the postwar period, most notably in the UK and USA, spawned a new generation of young iconoclastic designers. By the 1960s London and New York were established as international centers acclaimed for edgy, youthful fashions and stylish boutiques.⁸

Distinctive teen styles were pondered in 1915; fifty years later they were in the vanguard.⁹ In 1965 the mini skirt took the fashion world by storm and Mary Quant was credited with launching it. Trained in fine art, she opened her first boutique on London's King's Road in 1955. Her logo was a daisy. In her mid-1960s memoir, Quant recalls an early relationship with an older man whom she adored. He was simultaneously conducting an affair with a sophisticated woman his own age of whom Quant was desperately jealous, to the point where even the woman's name, Daisy, elicited Quant's envy: 'I wish I had been called it.' Amongst Quant's sources of inspiration was children's underclothing from the

Edwardian era, which she viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum and reinterpreted as tweed knickerbockers and *broderie anglaise* trimmed frocks. Quant noted, 'I think clothes should adapt themselves to the moment.' She also believed clothes should be of the moment: early in her career she created twenty-eight collections a year.¹⁰



Mary Quant's baby doll dress is both a parody and a recreation of the fashions of childhood.

Above left — Summer dress, cotton with *broderie anglaise* trim, Mary Quant 'Ginger Group,' c. 1965. Courtesy of London College of Fashion Archives. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

Above right — Student from Barrett Street Trade School (now London College of Fashion) finishing a child's party dress, c.1927–1928. Photo: London College of Fashion Archives.



Clockwise from above — Three plain white collars in petersham. Pupils' Needlework Samples, Barrett Street Trade School, Megan Davies Collection, 1929.

White linen rectangle with various buttonholes in pink georgette (reverse and front). Pupils' Needlework Samples, Barrett Street Trade School, Elsie Mason Collection, 1936.

White flannel square with various buttons and fastenings. Pupils' Needlework Samples, Barrett Street Trade School, Elsie Mason Collection, 1936.

Five collar pieces in petersham. Pupils' Needlework Samples, Barrett Street Trade School, Megan Davies Collection, 1929.

All pieces courtesy of London College of Fashion Archives. Photos: Thom Atkinson.



Fashionable dress is itself an archive of techniques, so exhibiting one object invites us to think about so many others.



Full transcription of the press release
for The Responsive Eye exhibition,
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
February 23, 1965.

The Responsive Eye, an exhibition of more than 120 paintings and constructions by 99 artists from some 15 countries, documenting a widespread and powerful new direction in contemporary art, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from February 25 through April 25. Directed by William C. Seitz, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, the exhibition was announced in 1962 and has been in preparation for more than a year.

As Mr. Seitz points out in the accompanying catalog*, these works exist less as objects to be examined than as generators of perceptual responses in the eye and mind of the viewer. Using only lines, bands and patterns, flat areas of color, white, gray or black or cleanly cut wood, glass, metal and plastic, perceptual artists establish a new relationship between the observer and a work of art.

These new kinds of subjective experiences, which result from the simultaneous contrast of colors, after-images, illusions and other optical devices, are entirely real to the eye even though they do not exist physically in the work itself. Each observer sees and responds somewhat differently.

Certain of the artists shown, such as the Italians of the recently dispersed Gruppo "N" and the Spaniards of Equipo 57, have an impersonal, technological approach. Others, like Morris Louis, Piero Dorazio and Ad Reinhardt, are poetic, musical or mystical in spirit; these two extremes sometimes even exist together. Some, like Agam, depend for their impact on the movement of the spectator. Yet none of them, Mr. Seitz says, merely follows a system of an invariable rule: rather they discover inherent laws through creative experience.

The exhibition is limited to works that represent its theme most purely. Representational images, symbols and free forms which evoke associations, gestural brush strokes and thick impasto which tend to muffle and weaken the function of colors and shapes, are excluded.

Every relevant tendency within the theme of the exhibition is represented, including those which have been categorized as "Optical," "Retinal" or "Cool" art, "Hard-Edge Painting," "Visual Research," "The New Abstraction," "La Nouvelle Tendence," "Post Painterly Abstraction," "Color Imagery" and "Programmatic Art."

As was the case during the 15th century when artists employed the new method of linear perspective, the means used in these works have reverberations beyond the field of art. They incorporate laws of vision studied by such 19th century scientists as Helmholtz, Hering and Chevreul, and applied, but only sporadically, by artists since the time of Monet, Cézanne and Seurat. The new perceptual art marks a peak in the history of visual research; it utilizes the graphic demonstrations of experimental psychology and optics (among them the dynamic effects of ambiguous perspective and moire pattern); it transfers experiments begun in design schools to the fine arts; it offers a new and rich source of study to scientists in several fields.

As Mr. Seitz indicates in the catalog of the exhibition, fascinating new possibilities are presented by the new perceptual art.

Can such works, that refer to nothing outside themselves, replace with psychic effectiveness the content that has been abandoned? What are the potentialities of a visual art capable of affecting perception so physically and directly? Can an advanced understanding and application of functional images open a new path from retinal excitation to emotions and ideas?

Among the artists shown and not mentioned above, are: Josef Albers, Richard Anuszkiewicz, Hannes Beckmann, Paul Brach, Enrico Castellani, Gene Davis, Karl Gerstner, John Goodyear, Robert Irwin, Ellsworth Kelly, Heinz Mack, Agnes Martin, Almir Mavignier, John McLaughlin, Guido Molinari, Kenneth Noland, Gerald Oster, Bridget Riley, Julian Stanczak, Jeffrey Steele, Frank Stella, Peter Anthony Stroud, Tadasky, Luis Tomasello, Victor Vasarely, Ludwig Wilding and Yvaral; the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (France), Gruppo "T" and Gruppo "N" (Italy); Equipo 57 (Spain) and Group Zero (Germany) are represented.

After the New York showing, the exhibition will travel to St. Louis, Seattle, Pasadena and Baltimore.

*THE RESPONSIVE EYE by William C. Seitz. 56 pages; 43 illustrations (12 in color). Paperbound \$1.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art.

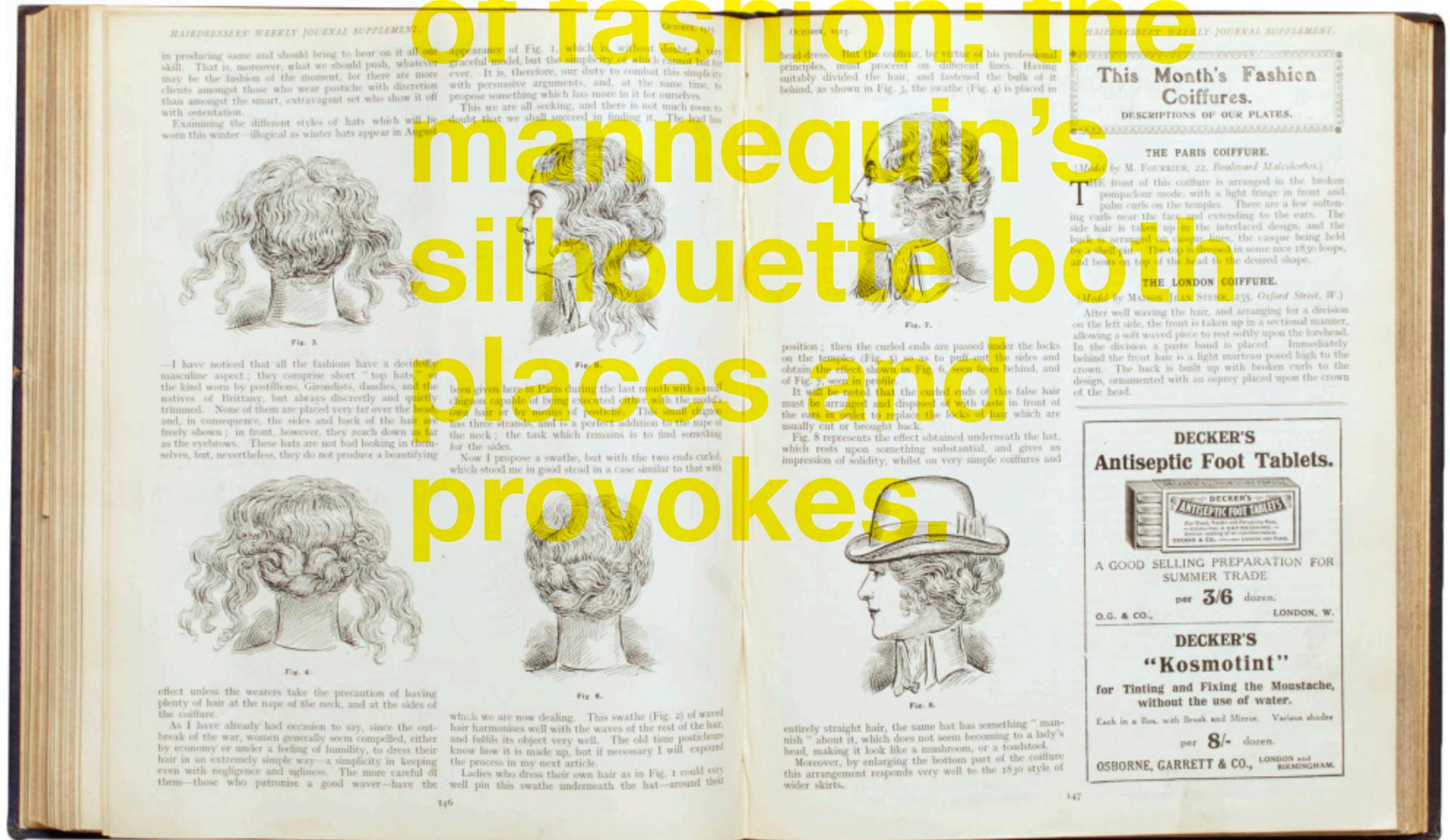


Top left — Students from Barrett Street Trade School (now London College of Fashion) learning board-work skills, 1915. Photo: London College of Fashion Archives.

Bottom left — Early hair dressing studio, Barrett Street Trade School (now London College of Fashion), 1915. Photo: London College of Fashion Archives.

Opposite page — 'Profitable Hairdressing. Suggestions in Pastiche for up-to-date Wear,' *Hairdressers' Weekly Journal*, October 1915. Courtesy of London College of Fashion Archives. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

Wigs are essential in the exhibiting of fashion: the mannequin's silhouette both places and provokes.



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Opposite above — Evening cape, silk, metal and glass beads, 1900s and 1930s. Courtesy of Private Collection. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

Opposite below — Mini dress, printed bonded fiber, mid-to-late 1960s (detail). Courtesy of Amy de la Haye. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

Above — The dancer Madame Ruzhanara in a paisley Bohemian dress, September 18, 1915. Photo: University of Kentucky Special Collections.

Back cover — Mini dress, printed paper, Paper-Caper by Scott, 1965. Courtesy of Amy de la Haye. Photo: Thom Atkinson.

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FASHION PROJECT
Information, Schedule & Acknowledgements
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The Op Art exhibition at MoMA invited viewers to choose their position in front of a work of art and by doing so animate it.

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 by Bal Harbour Shops.

Schedule

FP03: The Past

October 8–November 5, 2015

FP04: The Anniversary

November 12, 2015–January 20, 2016

Author Bios

Essay by Amy de la Haye and annotations by Judith Clark.

Professor Amy de la Haye is a curator, author and dress historian. She is the Rootstein Hopkins Chair of Dress History and Curatorship at London College of Fashion and joint director, with Judith Clark, of the UAL Centre for Fashion Curation.

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.

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