



University
of Glasgow

Robinson, Jamie Isabelle (2015) *Is the icon as exhibit changing the face of conservation? A comparative study into factors affecting textile conservation decisions in two recent blockbuster costume exhibitions.* [MPhil]

Copyright © 2015 The Author

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, institution and date must be given

<http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/149/>

Deposited on: 21 February 2017

Enlighten: Dissertations
[http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/
theses@gla.ac.uk](http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/theses@gla.ac.uk)

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Is the Icon as Exhibit Changing the Face of Conservation?

A Comparative Study into Factors Affecting Textile Conservation Decisions in Two Recent
Blockbuster Costume Exhibitions

Jamie Isabelle Robinson

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Letters / Master of
Philosophy in Textile Conservation in the School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of
Glasgow, 20.08.15.

2097564

Abstract

This dissertation aims to shed light on the changing spaces and circumstances of textile conservation for contemporary costume exhibitions with the advent of the blockbuster spectacle. Textile conservators have had to react to these changing circumstances through myriad resourceful, creative and collaborative means to ensure that innovative display decisions are not at the expense of object preservation. Impacting factors including the space, the objects, the team, the design, the time, the money, the tour, the mannequins and the audience have each been discussed broadly and in the context of two recent blockbuster costume exhibition case studies; *David Bowie Is* and *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*.

While different in many respects both exhibitions offered extreme examples in exhibition design and object display for textile conservators to contend with, an extreme which is fast becoming the norm. Both exhibitions involved the combined skills of a wide range of museum and external specialists to create their unique, immersive experience. Furthermore, both exhibitions were from single owner archival collections with costumes selected, conserved and displayed to conjure up the personality of their wearer. Together, these two exhibitions pose a number of contemporary challenges for textile conservators to work with, and within; a way of looking at blockbuster costume exhibitions, not from the ‘what?’ but from the ‘how?’

Contents

List of Illustrations	5
1. Introduction	8
1.1. Personal Note	8
1.2. Aims and Objectives	12
2. Contextual Research	13
2.1. What is a Blockbuster?	13
2.2. The Rise of the Temporary Blockbuster Fashion Exhibition within the Institution	14
2.3. The Rise of the Temporary Blockbuster Fashion Exhibition within the Institution	16
2.4. Fashion vs. Costume; Exhibiting the Celebrity Wardrobe	17
3. Literature Review	20
4. What Changed?	25
4.1. The Legislation	25
4.2. The Space	26
4.3. The Design	27
4.4. The Mannequin	27
4.5. The Time and Money	29
4.6. The Tour	30
4.7. The Audience	31
4.8. The Objects	33
4.9. The Team	34
5. Case Studies and Methodology	36
5.1. Case Studies	36
5.1.1. <i>David Bowie Is</i> , V&A, 2013	36
5.1.2. <i>Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!</i> , Somerset House, 2014	38
5.2. Methodology	39
6. The Objects	41
6.1. Display of Modern Materials	41
6.2. Preserving Evidence of Wear	43
7. The Space	46
8. The Team	49
9. The Tour	51
10. The Mannequins	55
11. The Time and Money	62
12. The Design	65
12.1. The Light	65
12.2. The Dust	66

A Comparative Study into Factors Affecting Textile Conservation Decisions in Two Recent Blockbuster
Costume Exhibitions

12.3. The Audience	68
12.4. The Successful Collaboration	68
13. Conclusion	71
14. Where Do We Go From Here?	75
14.1. What Does this Mean For the Future?	75
14.2. Future Research	75
Bibliography	76

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Rotating Dress, *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, V&A, 2015.

Sketch by the Author.

Figure 2: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View, V&A, 2013.

The Guardian, "Sleeve Notes: David Bowie Hits No 1," March 22, 2013,

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/mar/22/sleeve-notes-david-bowie> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 3: Co-Curator Shonagh Marshall Adjusting Garments in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Exhibition, Somerset House, 2013.

Times Live, "Style Queen, Isabella Blow's Wardrobe on Show in London: Pictures," November 20, 2013,

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/lifestyle/2013/11/20/style-queen-isabella-blow-s-wardrobe-on-show-in-london-pictures> (accessed August, 08, 2015).

Figure 4: *Britain Can Make It* Exhibition View, V&A, 1946.

Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye with Jeffrey Horsley, *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2014), 30.

Figure 5: Parties of School Children Visiting the *Britain Can Make It* Exhibition, V&A, 1946.

Design Council Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives.

Figure 6: Princess Diana's Royal Wedding Gown Exhibition View, *Diana: A Celebration*, Touring Exhibition © 2011 by Arts & Exhibitions International.

Diana: A Celebration, "Wedding Gallery," <http://www.dianaexhibition.com/gallery/67-diana-princess-of-wales-exhibition-wedding-gallery-royal-wedding-gown-train-image-diana-a-celebration> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 7: *The House of Victor and Rolf* Exhibition View, Barbican Art Gallery, 2008.

Dezeen Magazine, "The House of Victor & Rolf at the Barbican," July, 14, 2008,

<http://www.dezeen.com/2008/07/14/the-house-of-viktor-rolf/> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 8: Alexander McQueen Oyster Dress Photographed on Human Mannequin.

LDN Fashion, "Top 10 Most Iconic Alexander McQueen Dresses," February 11, 2014,

<http://ldnfashion.com/features/top-10-alexander-mcqueen-dresses/> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 9: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* Exhibition View, Barbican Art Gallery, 2014.
Photograph taken by the author.

Figure 10: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* Exhibition View, Barbican Art Gallery, 2014.
Sketch by the author.

Figure 11: Dresses From the Collection of HM the Queen in Protective Case, *Fashion Rules*, Kensington Palace, 2015.
Photograph taken by the author.

Figure 12: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View, 2013 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Alex Flowers, "David Bowie Is... Bringing Us All Together," V&A Blog, April 18, 2013, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/news-learning-department/david-bowie-isbringing-us-all-together> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 13: *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Exhibition View, Somerset House, 2014.
Somerset House, "Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!," At Somerset House, <https://www.somerset-house.org.uk/visual-arts/isabella-blow-fashion-galore> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 14: Left: Sketch by the Author Showing Saturday Night Live Costume, Right: David Bowie on Stage in the Costume Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department.

Figure 15: Saturday Night Live Costume in *David Bowie Is* Exhibition, V&A, 2013.
Charlie Porter, "David Bowie Is at the V&A," <http://charlieporter.net/stories/9647> (accessed August 16, 2015).

Figure 16: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Packing Instructions Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department.

Figure 17: *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Mannequin Close-Up, Somerset House, 2014.
Time Out London, "Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore! at Somerset House," May 31, 2013, <http://now-here-this.timeout.com/2013/11/15/behind-the-scenes-at-the-isabella-blow-fashion-galore-exhibition-at-somerset-house/> (accessed August 09, 2015).

Figure 18: Left: Crouching Figure in Development at the Proportion Workshop, Right: Final Installation of Ziggy Stardust Costume © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 19: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Instructions for De-Installation of Shoes and Boots (Detail) Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department.

Figure 19: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Instructions for Folding the Arms of a Mannequin Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department.

Figure 21: Display of Philip Treacy Hats in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, Somerset House, 2014.

Somerset House, "Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!" At Somerset House, <https://www.somersetouse.org.uk/visual-arts/isabella-blow-fashion-galore> (accessed August 08, 2015).

Figure 22: Sea Diorama Behind Glass in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, Somerset House, 2014 © Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images for Somerset House.

Stephanie Hirschmiller, "First look at Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!," Telegraph, November 19, 2013, <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG10460311/First-look-at-Isabella-Blow-Fashion-Galore.html> (accessed August, 09, 2015).

Figure 23: A Perished Silk Dress in *Fashion & Fancy Dress: The Messel Family Dress Collection 1865–2005*, Brighton Museum and Birmingham City Art Gallery, 2005-2006.

Gabrielle Berlinger, "From the desk of... Dr. Amy de la Haye," Cultures of Conservation, January 16, 2014, <http://cultures-of-conservation.wikis.bgc.bard.edu/blog:from-the-desk-of-dr-amy> (accessed August 09, 2015).

Figure 24: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View Showing Yamamoto Cape, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2013 © Sonia D.

Urban Moms, "David Bowie Is..." <http://urbanmoms.ca/entertainment/david-bowie-is/> (accessed August 09, 2015).

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Personal Note

The museums and public institutions of today are constantly striving to present a collaborative front, removing themselves from their traditional hierarchical structure to make for richer working and learning experiences.¹ Conservation has always been a collaborative profession, never undertaken in isolation, it only makes sense in the context in which it is applied. It is my feeling, however, that these intrinsically collaborative methods practiced in conservation, which museums and institutions are so keen to promote across all disciplines today, are just not being acknowledged as much as they could, and should be. The pre-conception of conservators in many institutions is still unfortunately that of the ‘party-pooper’, or as one curator put it, ‘computer says no or computer says yes.’² Are conservators doing enough to promote and document their own cross-disciplinary negotiations to a wider audience or are they just talking to each other?

For this very reason I want to explore conservation in context and, for the purposes of this study, I have chosen the blockbuster costume exhibition as my context. Why the blockbuster costume exhibition? Individual exhibitions, as self-contained entities, work as excellent case studies, yet they are also one of the many areas in which conservators come out of the laboratory and work creatively and collaboratively with a wide range of museum and external professionals. The bigger, bolder and more complex the exhibition’s design, the wider the professional pooling of knowledge and skills. Exhibition designers and curators are pushing the boundaries between creative disciplines, striving to meet the expectations of their contemporary audience. In the last decade we have seen a huge rise in the costume or fashion exhibition as multi-sensory, multi-disciplinary immersive event. Why? Because they are, above all, popular. They draw large and diverse crowds into the museum environment,

¹“The Future of Collaborations between Curators, Academics and Makers,” *Treasured Possessions: Material Worlds from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, St. John’s College, Cambridge, May 11, 2015. (Conference).

² Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

commanding high budgets for higher profits in return.³ They do this by offering not an exhibition but an experience.

Conservators have to work creatively to make the unfeasible feasible without putting the objects at risk, they are facilitators, enablers and problem solvers, not the people that say ‘that is not possible,’ but the people that say, ‘how can we make that possible? How can we suspend that Spiderman costume horizontally from the wall or rotate that McQueen gown to give a fuller three-hundred and sixty degree viewing experience?’ (Figure 1). Blockbuster exhibitions are the perfect space from which to explore conservation in context for they are constantly evolving, experimenting and challenging those who have to make that concept a reality. As Lou Taylor stated in her text, *Establishing Dress History*, ‘Far more is expected in dress exhibitions today than gorgeous spectacle or chronological analysis. Today the most interesting and innovative dress exhibitions tell specific material culture stories through carefully managed use of critical approaches married to the liveliest of display techniques.’⁴ How are conservators rising to the challenge?

Figure 1: Rotating Dress, *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, V&A, 2015

³ Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 287.

⁴ Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 301.

On consideration I decided on two case studies with a number of key similarities and differences. While not representative of the whole, two carefully selected case studies offer a range of attitudes and approaches to exhibiting contemporary costume, an insightful view into some of the factors affecting textile conservation decisions. I weighed up my options, thought back over past technical feats and multi-media extravaganzas and finally settled on *David Bowie Is* shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 2013 (figure 2), still touring the globe and *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* shown at Somerset House in 2014 (figure 3). These exhibitions are both, first and foremost, examples of recent, big-budget, high profile, multi-media events drawing large audiences. Both exhibitions offer extreme examples in exhibition design and object display for textile conservators to contend with, an extreme which is fast becoming the norm. Both exhibitions involved the combined skills of a wide range of museum and external specialists to create their unique immersive experience. Furthermore, both exhibitions were from single owner archival collections with costumes selected, conserved and displayed to conjure up the personality of their wearer. It is here that I have decided to situate my study; it is here that I feel that something new is happening within exhibitions and it is here that contemporary textile conservation can be seen in context, as an evolving, collaborative practice in its evolving, collaborative environment.

This study does not, by any means, claim to be comprehensive and, time and money permitting I would have extended my research far further. It is a starting point, a spring board for further study and a way of looking at blockbuster costume exhibitions, not from the ‘what?’ but from the ‘how?’

Figure 2: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View, V&A, 2013

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/mar/22/sleeve-notes-david-bowie>

Figure 3: Co-Curator Shonagh Marshall Adjusting Garments in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Exhibition,
Somerset House, 2013

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/lifestyle/2013/11/20/style-queen-isabella-blow-s-wardrobe-on-show-in-london-pictures>

1.2. Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To contextualise the rise of the blockbuster costume exhibition.
- To understand the factors impacting on exhibition choices in the two particular case study examples; design aesthetic, location(s), resources (human and financial), time, stipulations of the Isabella Blow Foundation and David Bowie Archive, object condition.
- To outline the role of the textile conservator within the broader context of exhibition aims, objectives and impacting factors: What did they do? How did they do it? Why did they do it (what factors affected these decisions; design aesthetic, location(s), resources etc.)?
- To exemplify the collaborative, reactive, creative and variable role of the conservator within the blockbuster exhibition context.

Objectives

- To provide an overview on the rise of the blockbuster costume exhibition, drawn from available literature.
- To collate and evaluate current literature on textile conservation for contemporary costume exhibitions.
- To interview a number of individuals involved in case study exhibitions (including the textile conservator), to understand the factors affecting conservation decisions and the outcome of those decisions.
- To use information gathered through interviews to document the role(s) of the textile conservator in the context of the two contemporary blockbuster costume exhibitions.
- To consider the implications of this continually developing exhibition format on the role of the conservator working on blockbuster costume exhibitions.

Chapter 2

Contextual Research

2.1. What is a Blockbuster?

Before we consider the rise of the temporary blockbuster costume exhibition we must first consider what we mean by the word ‘blockbuster’. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the blockbuster exhibition as, ‘big, popular, moneymaking showcases that deliver a powerful impact.’⁵

Academics are reluctant to use the word, with its ‘made-for-big-screen’ connotation suggesting prioritisation of entertainment at the expense of education.⁶ This dissertation seeks to reclaim the word ‘blockbuster’; for yes, these exhibitions are unashamed money spinners, but they are so because they are popular, they are popular because they are sensational and who’s to say that entertainment and education cannot go hand in hand?

When arguing the case for the blockbuster in 1987 the chief curator of the National Gallery of Art said, ‘Education need not consist in the communication of an intellectual thesis solely; it may also result from the viewer’s experience of art assembled on more flexible terms, of which the burden may be the demonstration of varieties of human experience.’⁷ This remains true today, blockbuster exhibitions are experientially experimental because they can afford to be and educational because they are experimental. They are here to stay because, love them or loathe them, we all go to see them, making them a self-perpetuating phenomenon, and surely, if a single exhibition can draw an average of two thousand six hundred visitors a day into a museum it is a good thing.⁸ The blockbuster exhibition is, in the words of John Miller, ‘The Show you Love to Hate.’⁹

⁵ Sandra Millikin, “Art Exhibition,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/36531/Blockbuster-Art-Exhibitions-Year-In-Review-1996> (accessed June 06, 2015).

⁶ Suzy Menkes, “Gone Global: Fashion as Art?” *The New York Times*, July 4, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/05/fashion/is-fashion-really-museum-art.html?_r=0 (accessed June 29, 2015).

⁷ S. J. Freedberg, Gervase Jackson-Stops and Richard E. Spear, “On “Art History and the ‘Blockbuster’ Exhibition”,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (June 1987): 295, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051024>.

⁸ Sarah Kamali, “V&A’s Hollywood Exhibition Exceeds Expectations,” *Vogue News*, January 29, 2013, <http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2013/01/29/v-and-a-hollywood-costume-exhibition-most-popular---museum-high-visitor-numbers> (accessed June 29, 2015).

⁹ John Miller, “The Show You Love to Hate: A Psychology of the Mega-Exhibition,” in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 269-274.

2.2. The Rise of the Temporary Blockbuster Fashion Exhibition within the Institution

Amy de la Haye suggested in her recent lecture *Objects of Passion* that the blockbuster fashion exhibition emerged in the United Kingdom as far back as 1946 when *Britain Can Make It* was shown at the V&A (figure 4).¹⁰ The circumstances for the exhibition were fortuitous; the museum's entire collection had been removed and transported to locations of relative safety during the Second World War leaving the ninety thousand square foot space empty and open to complete transformation for a limited period only. James Gardner, the Chief Display Designer, assembled a forward thinking creative team charged with staging the exhibition in thirty two sections, each one carefully crafted to envelop the visitor.¹¹ *Britain Can Make It* was a commercially driven enterprise; a showcase of contemporary design in idealised, fantasy settings for a post war generation to admire and aspire to (figure 5). Perhaps it is because of its overt early onset relationship with consumerism that Valerie Steele claims the exhibition of fashion has traditionally had a lowly status within academia and the museum.¹²

Figure 4: *Britain Can Make It* Exhibition View, V&A, 1946
Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971

¹⁰ Amy de la Haye, *Objects of Passion*, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, April 30, 2015. (Lecture).

¹¹ Elizabeth Darling, "Exhibiting Britain," VADS, http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/designingbritain/html/bcmi_intro.html (accessed June, 29, 2015).

¹² Valerie Steele, "Museum Quality: the Rise of the Fashion Exhibition," *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2008): 8, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175174108X268127>.

The textile conservator Emily Austin noted in her dissertation research *Contemporary Fashion Collections within Museums and the Role of the Conservator* a rise of late in high-budget, touring, 'satellite' temporary fashion exhibitions, in some instances comprising entirely of loaned objects. She is not the only person to mark this change, one article titled, 'Museum Quality: Mona Lisa, Move Over. Victor & Rolf is at the Louvre, Part of a New Craze for Fashion at Museums' stated that, 'Fashion exhibits are multiplying faster than crashers at a Manolo Blahnik sample sale.'¹³ Austin attributed this shift to one of the ways in which museums can provide for their audience without the necessary resources to, 'put in place the long term collection strategies to house particularly problematic contemporary objects.'¹⁴ This is certainly true, however the author would also argue that the rise of the temporary touring fashion exhibition is part of a bigger global trend. Not so much an elevation of costume within the museum but an acknowledgement that the traditional museum academic hierarchy no longer exists.

Taylor wrote in defence of the blockbuster fashion exhibition saying that, "It is easy to be cynical about the blossoming of such exhibitions. However through their success has come some level of professional recognition within museum hierarchies of the educational and cultural validity of displaying properly catalogued and analysed clothing."¹⁵ The author would argue that it is not so much that costume and fashion are finally getting the recognition that they deserve but instead that popularity has usurped that traditional academic ordering and become the primary measure of success and status within the museum. By touring Dior, in the same way that a museum would tour Picasso it is making strong statement, it is saying that fashion is worthy of museum status, worthy of touring the globe, because the people that matter, the visiting public, the consumer, wants to see it. With government cutbacks in the arts sector, museums must now respond to popular demand; the museum is no longer a repository for culturally significant items, but a business dictated by visitor numbers.¹⁶

¹³ Miles Socha, "Museum Quality: Mona Lisa, Move Over. Victor & Rolf is at the Louvre, Part of a New Craze for Fashion at Museums," *W Magazine*, November 2003.

¹⁴ Emily Austin, "Contemporary Fashion Collections within Museums and the Role of the Conservator," Unpublished Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2014, 23.

¹⁵ Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 59.

¹⁶ Austin, 23.

Figure 5: Parties of School Children Visiting the *Britain Can Make It* Exhibition, V&A, 1946
Design Council Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives

2.3. The Rise of the Temporary Blockbuster Fashion Exhibition outwith the Institution

The last decade has marked the rise of the fashion exhibition in extraordinary spaces; car show rooms, factories, private galleries and auction houses.^{17,18} Catwalk fashion shows have long been held in ever more extreme locations but this transition from fashion show to fashion exhibition (differentiated by the use of inanimate mannequins) is a recent phenomenon matching the proliferation of fashion exhibitions within the museum. It is arguably the popularity of the museum fashion exhibit which has instigated and inspired this external explosion. While the majority of these non-museum spaces flout conservation protocol, there are a number of slightly ambiguous spaces which sit squarely between accredited museum and private show room; namely the contemporary arts space. There are two notable examples of this in the United Kingdom specialising in the blockbuster fashion exhibition; The Barbican Arts Centre and Somerset House (although a number of one-off examples have been staged at other venues, such as The Hayward Gallery which showed

¹⁷ Kitty Morris, Freelance Textile Conservator and Specialising in Exhibition Installation, July 03, 2015. (Skype Conversation).

¹⁸ Alexandra Palmer, "Untouchable: Creating Desire and Knowledge in Museum Costume and Textile Exhibitions," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March, 2008): 32-33, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175174108X268136#.VaOwZ_k5O8A.

Addressing the Century: 100 Years of Art and Fashion in 1999).¹⁹ They conform to, but are not restricted by accredited museum standards of care, have no collection or on-site conservation facilities and employ teams of specialists on a freelance basis.

2.4. Fashion vs. Costume; Exhibiting the Celebrity Wardrobe

It may be noted that up till now this text has been discussing the term ‘fashion exhibition’ as opposed to ‘costume exhibition’. For the purposes of this research the decision has been made to use the term ‘contemporary costume’ as it is felt to better describe the objects in the selected case study exhibitions. The exhibitions chosen are not fashion exhibitions as such, they are person-centred, and so, while they sit best within a history of fashion exhibitions, under the broader canopy of ‘Exhibitions of Popular Culture’, they fall under another sub-category; somewhere between the catwalk and the performance.

Like the blockbuster fashion exhibition the blockbuster celebrity costume exhibition evolved out of a consumer driven museum culture, developing in tandem and moving not from the shop window to the museum but from the glossy magazine photo shoot. Steele argues in *The Berg Companion to Fashion* that the cult of the celebrity (as we now like to call it) was a product of the 1980s. When discussing the iconic status of Diana, Princess of Wales, Steele notes, ‘the public had developed over two decades a need, even a craving, for celebrity worship – and the press has responded.’²⁰ (Figure 6). Taylor has dedicated a sub-chapter to this subject in her book *Establishing Dress History* writing that at the start of the new millennium there was, ‘A vital economic need for [museums] to tap into the ‘celebrity’,’ (in the same way museums tapped into designer fashion, catering to the twentieth century museum audience).²¹ Alex Griffin, Interpretation Developer at the Natural History Museum states that, ‘Popular culture engages audiences with things they recognise, celebrates modern life and has high relevance to current audiences [...] In these competitive times, only a fool buries their head in the high-brow sand.’²² The difference between exhibiting high fashion and exhibiting celebrity costume is not from a historical legitimisation point of view (no

¹⁹ Christopher Breward, “Addressing the Century: 100 Years of Art and Fashion,” *Frieze*, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/addressing_the_century_100_years_of_art_and_fashion/ (accessed July 12, 2015).

²⁰ Valerie Steele, *The Berg Companion to Fashion* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2010), 129.

²¹ Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 291.

²² Museums Association, “Ethical Debate: Exhibitions,” <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/13808> (accessed June 29, 2015).

longer relevant, as previously argued) but from a practicalities one. The fact that the clothes are associated with their wearer, were worn by that person, changes the nature of the object giving it an almost relic-like status, loaded with experience.^{23,24}

Figure 6: Princess Diana's Royal Wedding Gown Exhibition View, *Diana: A Celebration*, Touring Exhibition © 2011 by Arts & Exhibitions International
<http://www.dianaexhibition.com/gallery/67-diana-princess-of-wales-exhibition-wedding-gallery-royal-wedding-gown-train-image-diana-a-celebration>

Academics, curators and conservators have long advocated a more biographical approach to the care and display of museum artifacts.^{25,26} A slow but steady move has been noted since the 1980s towards accepting, and even emphasising, signs of wear to museum objects as representative of their journey, with curators such as Taylor and Haye being instrumental in this approach to the exhibition of costume.²⁷ The space inhabited by the celebrity costume exhibition (or 'biographical blockbuster') however, is certainly still a challenging one for conservators and curators alike who are balancing audience expectation of a 'blockbuster exhibition' with their ethical responsibility to preserve the 'true nature' of the object; soils,

²³ Dinah Eastop and Mary Brooks, "To Clean or Not to Clean: The Value of Soils and Creases," *ICOM Committee for Conservation 11th Triennial Meeting Preprints*, Edinburgh, September 1-6, 1996 (Glasgow: James & James Ltd., 1996), 687-691.

²⁴ Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review* (October 2005): 1015-1045, http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/europeanstudies/Auslander-Beyond_Words.pdf.

²⁵ Dinah Eastop, "Textiles as Multiple and Competing Histories," in *Textiles Revealed. Object Lessons in Historic Textile & Costume Research*, ed. Mary M. Brooks (London: Archetype, 2000), 17-28.

²⁶ Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 24-63.

²⁷ Amy de la Haye, "From the Desk of Dr. Amy de la Haye," *Cultures of Conservation*, <http://cultures-of-conservation.wikis.bgc.bard.edu/blog:from-the-desk-of-dr-amy> (accessed June 17, 2015).

stains, 'sacred dirt' and all.²⁸ When *Valentino: Master of Couture* was exhibited at Somerset House in 2012 the archive bought with it a team of Valentino seamstresses to tweak the dresses on display and ensure that they were being exhibited in pristine condition.²⁹ When *Isabella Blow* was staged two years later in the same venue audience expectation had to be managed; these clothes were not coming from the catwalk, they were coming from the person, a person who expressed her personality not just through what she wore, but how she wore it. This was no longer an exhibition of fashion but an exhibition of costume.

²⁸ Dinah Eastop, "Conservation as Material Culture," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilly et al. (London: Sage, 2006), 516-533.

²⁹ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

Chapter 3

Literature Review

The presentation of costume as immersive installation is not a new concept. However, while theoretical texts on the subject are abundant there is little information in conservation literature (or beyond) on the practicalities of staging such an event. In the book *Spaces of Experience* Charlotte Klonk noted this absence in literary accounts of the exhibition of fine art also, stating that, ‘historically, gallery staff, although they often thought it important to put on record *what* they showed, were much less concerned with *how* they showed it.’³⁰ The potential to document process (rather than product) is further complicated today; breadth of display, complex design and time limitations necessitate the combined skills of a vast multidisciplinary exhibition team comprising of both internal and external professionals. Gaining any overarching perspective on the ‘how’ process, let alone recording it, is difficult when responsibilities have been divvied up and packaged off to maximise efficiency.

A conference titled *Fabric of an Exhibition: An Interdisciplinary Approach* held in Ottawa in 1997 resulted in a number of generalised texts on the subject of textile conservation specifically for temporary exhibitions. Christine Paulocik discussed the breadth of skills required across the exhibition team at the Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) to stage those epic costume installations expected today (in 1997), while noting that the larger the team, the greater the potential for friction and conflict. Paulocik stated that, ‘the ability to negotiate, compromise and cooperate are key elements to maintain successful work relationships.’³¹ A second text from the conference preprints ‘Invisible Boundaries: Searching for Common Ground Between Curators, Conservators and Interpreters’ outlined the necessity for interdepartmental communication and collaboration toward achieving what is ultimately a common exhibition goal.³² This necessity was reinforced by Alison Lister in her contribution to the book *Changing Views of Textile Conservation* in which she advocated better informed dialogue between conservators, curators, educators and exhibition

³⁰ Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors From 1800-2000* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 10.

³¹ Christine Paulocik, “Behind the Seams of an Exhibition,” in *Fabric of an Exhibition: An Interdisciplinary Approach: Preprints of a Conference Symposium 97 - Fabric of an Exhibition*. Ottawa, Canada, September 22 to 25, 1997 (Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 1997), 24.

³² Abby Sue Fisher, “Invisible Boundaries: Searching for Common Ground Between Curators, Conservators and Interpreters,” in *Fabric of an Exhibition*, 33-37.

designers.³³ The *Fabric of an Exhibition* conference presented the need for greater communication in an expanding field, nearly two decades on, have steps been made towards achieving this?

Recent textile conservation texts have predominantly been concerned with advancements in specific areas of exhibition planning and implementation, particularly in mount-making and display. Lara Flecker's 2007 book *A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting* is an extremely thorough text accompanied by an excellent range of annotated imagery. Its predominant focus is on DIY mount fabrication, only touching briefly on collaboration between external mount-makers, curators, designers and conservators for more complex, high-end solutions.³⁴ *The Body in the Museum* conference at the Museum of London in 2012 addressed some of the issues of working with external designers and artists and presented information on conservation-friendly mount-making materials and techniques for best practice. The conference was sadly un-documented but highlighted much interest in the subject and set the scene for subsequent literature on the topic.³⁵

Sam Gatley and Roisin Morris (one of the speakers at *The Body in the Museum* conference) of the V&A have been instrumental in publicising innovations in costume mounting techniques for specific exhibitions within the museum, publishing both together and separately on the subject.^{36,37} The museum's conservation blog is also heavily exhibition focussed, acting as on-going publicity for its constantly evolving programme, but in a short article, aimed at the visiting public, the complexity of the decision-making process is sometimes in danger of being lost to make way for a more reader-friendly account. This breadth of literature demonstrates the range of methods and materials available but innovation in conservation for contemporary exhibitions is not merely confined to costume mounting procedures, as the literature would suggest. A high level of public interest in the

³³ Alison Lister, "Making the Most of Mounts," in *Changing Views of Textile Conservation*, ed. Mary Brooks and Dinah Eastop (Los Angeles, California: Getty Conservation Institute, 2011), 428-437.

³⁴ Lara Flecker, *A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting* (Oxford: Burlington, Massachusetts: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007).

³⁵ Beatrice Behlen, "The Body in the Museum," Museum of London Blog, January 01, 2012, <http://blog.museumoflondon.org.uk/the-body-in-the-museum/> (accessed June 21, 2015).

³⁶ Sam Gatley, "Cutting Character: Research into Innovative Mannequin Costume Supports in Collaboration with Royal College of Art Rapid Form Department," *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 60 (Spring, 2012), <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2012-issue-60/cutting-character-research-into-innovative-mannequin-costume-supports-in-collaboration-with-the-royal-college-of-art-rapid-form-department/>.

³⁷ Sam Gatley and Roisin Morris, "Striking a Pose: The Display of Hollywood Costume," *Costume*, Vol. 49, No.1 (January, 2015): 75-90.

subject (perhaps in part due to its aesthetic appeal) has meant that the literature is not reflective of the reality. Creative solutions and cross-disciplinary negotiations from exhibition design, to staging, object selection, treatment and on-going monitoring are occurring on a regular basis but going undocumented leaving a skewed impression of conservation for exhibitions.

Other texts on the subject of contemporary costume exhibition preparation and implementation have focussed on the couriering of objects from venue to venue; an activity which has developed in tandem with, and as a result of, the rise in multi-venue global exhibition tours. The most comprehensive of these texts, again, come from the V&A conservation department with the teams' experience in the field reflected in their literary monopoly of the subject. Elizabeth-Anne Haldane et al.'s text, 'Crossing Continents: Packing Costumes for Multi-Venue Tours,' describes some of the solutions concocted by the department for the safe transport of two costume exhibitions; *Surreal Things* and *Art Deco*. The team drew on past experience to develop creative packaging solutions tailored to the specific requirements of the objects. The text makes a strong case for the input of conservation from the very beginning to, 'dramatically reduce potential problems.'³⁸ Susana Hunter and Roisin Morris have also outlined the additional concerns of touring costume objects containing potentially hazardous substances.³⁹

The next North American Textile Conservation Conference (NATCC) later in 2015 is dedicated to the subject of *Material in Motion* and Haldane will be presenting further advances in transportation practice in a paper titled, 'Moving Maharajas: The Display and Transportation of Indian Costume and Textiles.'⁴⁰ Few other museums in the United Kingdom have the infrastructure in place to instigate such large and extensive tours of costume which accounts for why the majority of the research literature has come from the one institution. The specificity of these texts is perhaps a reflection on the museum's

³⁸ Elizabeth Haldane et al., "Crossing Continents: Packing Costumes for Multi-Venue Tours," in *Facing Impermanence. Exploring Preventive Conservation for Textiles. Preprints, NATCC 2007, Washington DC.*, ed. S. Thomassen-Krauss (Washington DC.: NATCC, 2007). Cd.

³⁹ Susana Hunter and Roisin Morris, "The Show Must Go On: Touring Textile and Costume Objects with Hazardous Substances," *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 59 (Spring, 2011), <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2011-issue-59/the-show-must-go-on-touring-textile-and-costume-objects-with-hazardous-substances/>
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2011-issue-59>.

⁴⁰ NATCC, "Paper Presentations," <http://www.natconference.com/upcoming-conference/paper-presentations.html> (accessed June 25, 2015).

structure, with the sheer quantity of tasks to complete requiring clear division of labour across its staff members.

A single text dating to 2005 by Catherine Nightingale, published in *The Conservator*, detailed the input of preventive conservators in exhibition design for ‘The London Look: Fashion from Street to Catwalk’ at The Museum of London. Nightingale discusses her close working relationship with the internal designers to integrate principles of collection care into the exhibition installation.⁴¹ Research would indicate that this is clearly not the norm with designers and conservators traditionally having slightly different agendas.^{42,43} This is likely the reason why little literature on the subject has been published. Further documented examples of collaboration between conservators and designers would be advantageous for the profession to show that collection care is not in opposition to access.⁴⁴

While not contemporary costume focussed, Louise Squire’s article, ‘The Textile Conservator’s Role in the Project Culture: Three Loan Exhibitions,’ in the book *Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice* offers a parallel to what the author hopes to achieve with this text, touching more broadly on every aspect of conserving for temporary exhibitions, from initial condition assessment to environmental monitoring post installation. Squire’s article looks at three Royal Academy case studies to exhibit a range of reactive solutions to the challenges presented and dictated by the unique circumstances of each exhibition. These three, very different exhibitions, have the cumulative effect of exemplifying how, ‘constraints [can lead] to some ingenious solutions,’ with effective communication, supportive teamwork and mutual professional respect at the core.⁴⁵

Nearly two decades on from *Fabric of an Exhibition*, the exhibition landscape is unrecognisable. Many of Paulocik’s points still hold true for large institutions and indeed

⁴¹ Catherine Nightingale, “Designing an Exhibition to Minimise Risk to Costume on Open Display,” *The Conservator*, Vol. 29, (2005/6): 35-49.

⁴² Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

⁴³ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁴⁴ Helen Jones, “The Importance of Being Less Earnest: Communicating Conservation,” *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 41 (summer, 2002), <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-41/the-importance-of-being-less-earnest-communicating-conservation/>.

⁴⁵ Louise Squire, “The Textile Conservator’s Role in the Project Culture: Three Loan Exhibitions,” in *Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice*, ed. Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer (Oxford: Elsevier/Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010), 18.

subsequent literature, such as ‘Costume Dilemmas: Dangerous Liaisons’ exemplifies how complicated exhibition staging, involving the expertise of outside consultants, designers, wig makers, mount makers and lighting specialists, can be achieved amicably and within the museum guidelines.⁴⁶ As indicated by Squire’s text, the conservator working within the expanded twenty-first century exhibition team certainly relies on an unprecedented level of collaboration and interdepartmental discussion to accomplish common goals. Primary research undertaken to date would suggest that moves have been made to achieve this within large institutions. Less literature exists still around the exhibition venue without permanent collection, despite its prominent place today as a location for contemporary costume exhibitions. Such sites employ teams of freelance conservators, installation experts, lighting technicians and mounting specialists to transform the space and objects within that space under extreme time and resource limitations and it is the author’s hope that this research will shed light on some of these less documented working environments.

⁴⁶ Chris Paulocik, “Costume Dilemmas: Dangerous Liaisons,” in *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, Vol. 16 (Washington DC: The Textile Speciality Group, 2006), 56-64.

Chapter 4

What Changed?

Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye's book *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971* includes twenty-eight aspects of the presentation of Cecil Beaton's 1971 *Fashion: An Anthology* exhibition.⁴⁷ For these authors it was not the space, the painted backdrops, the use of turntables, the mannequins or even the objects themselves which marked this exhibition as seminal, it was the combination of all twenty-eight aspects.

4.1. The Legislation

In 1971 textile conservation was still in its infancy primarily concerned with the preservation of historic tapestries and carpets and certainly devoid of a role to play in the exhibition of contemporary fashion. The Museum Registration Scheme was not established until 1988 (renamed The Museum Accreditation Scheme in 2004).⁴⁸ The requirements for accreditation today include a policy of Care and Conservation which extends to exhibitions and loans. Objects must either be insured commercially by the loaning institution or covered under the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) to fulfil care and conservation requirements.⁴⁹ Conservation measures are agreed between the loaning body and the borrowing institution depending on object needs but weekly checks on the condition of lent items are a stipulation of the GIS.⁵⁰ The role of the conservator today is not just to provide active care and support for objects on loan but also to prove that the loaning institution is fulfilling their part of the agreement by performing such regular checks; monitoring light levels, relative humidity (RH) and temperature, implementing a programme of integrated pest management (IPM) and surface cleaning as well as providing documentary evidence to support these activities. This is obviously a requirement of all exhibition loans, not just contemporary costumes. Changes in legislation have largely impacted on the role of the conservator in exhibition planning and implementation, necessitating a much more integrated approach within the museum.

⁴⁷ Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye with Jeffrey Horsley, *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2014), 121-168.

⁴⁸ Arts Council England, "Accreditation Scheme," <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/> (accessed 23, June 2015).

⁴⁹ Gov.uk, "Protecting Cultural Objects on Loan," <https://www.gov.uk/protecting-cultural-objects-on-loan#how-museums-and-galleries-obtain-approval> (accessed 23, June 2015).

⁵⁰ Squire, 18.

4.2. The Space

It may also be true that it is these stringent museum legislations which have, in part, contributed to the exhibition of contemporary fashion and costume spilling into less conventional arts spaces over the past decade. These new exhibition sites are not obliged to conform to the museum's accreditation policy and, as such, are afforded a greater freedom in exhibition design and costume display.⁵¹ Without blanket museum requirements, e.g. the maintenance of a metre distance between visitor and costume on open display, objects are undoubtedly at higher risk of damage. The conservator must work strategically to ensure that risks are fully recognised by designers and curators, thereby fulfilling their ethical responsibility.⁵² In addition to this the non-museum exhibition venue is also a logistically challenging site for textile conservators to adapt to. The exhibition venue is likely to be limited both in space and facilities for conservation related activities, without the necessary provisions in place to meet the requirements of a permanent collection. Exhibition preparation has to either be undertaken in private conservation studios, involving the ferrying of objects to and fro around the country, or on-site under less than ideal conservation conditions.⁵³

These unconventional and unrestricted spaces also, by default, pose challenges for conservators working within the museum. As noted by Alexandra Palmer in her text, 'Untouchable: Creating Desire and Knowledge in Museum Costume and Textile Exhibitions,' conservators working within museums adhering to international codes of ethics are having to creatively animate the objects to, 'compete with these "imitation" museums.'⁵⁴

⁵¹ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁵² Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁵³ Email Correspondence with Email Correspondence with Kitty Morris, Freelance Textile Conservator and Specialising in Exhibition Installation.

⁵⁴ Palmer, 34.

4.3. The Design

The evolution of the blockbuster costume exhibition into multi-sensory event presents a challenging set of circumstances for conservators to work with, and within. Technology has propelled progress towards the ultimate cinematic stage set for the visiting public to admire and inhabit. Light levels, height of objects and movement of visitors through the space are no longer dictated by the individual requirements of single objects but act instead as staging mechanisms employed by designers and architects to create a unified experience. The conceptual artist Ilya Kabakov termed this the ‘total installation’ in which visitors move from one environment to the next sampling each immersive installation.⁵⁵

4.4. The Mannequin

Paulocik noted that, ‘costumes can be among the most difficult types of artifacts to display well. The three-dimensional structure requires interior support to define the shape and function of the garment, but mechanical stresses occur each time mannequins are undressed or mounted.’⁵⁶ Rather than merely providing support, mannequin styles, shapes and poses have become increasingly complex to enhance the theatricality of the exhibition display. Conventional casts and sculpted forms are cut away, elevated, suspended, mechanised, projected onto and made out of a wide range of non-traditional materials to inject animation into a static environment (figure 7). Paulocik argues that stylised mannequins have increased in popularity over the last decade in a bid to focus attention on the costume rather than the mannequin.⁵⁷ In her book, *The Study of Dress History*, Taylor writes, ‘The whole range of human experience attached to the wearing of clothes is inevitably lost on the static dummy behind glass. The challenge for the curator and exhibition designer is to try and revive it.’⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Klonk, 194.

⁵⁶ Paulocik, *Fabric of an Exhibition*, 23.

⁵⁷ Paulocik, *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, 58.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 24.

Figure 7: *The House of Victor and Rolf* Exhibition View, Barbican Art Gallery, 2008

<http://www.dezeen.com/2008/07/14/the-house-of-viktor-rolf/>

While abstract mannequin faces appear to still be in vogue the posing of these mannequins has become increasingly humanoid. Flecker noted in an interview in 2014 that, ‘the decade-long fashion for cutting away limbs and heads, reducing mannequins to the torso, is on its way out – “What brings a mannequin to life are the limbs”.’⁵⁹ Photography for the Met’s *Savage Beauty* exhibition catalogue took this trend one stage further, with garments photographed on live models in extreme contortions, the models were then Photoshopped to transform them back into beautifully sculpted mannequins (figure 8). It is unlikely that this activity would have been undertaken with accessioned objects, raising certain questions regarding ethical practice. At what point does object preservation take priority? Should a high profile museum to which other institutions look up to, to inform their own best practice, be authorising the wearing of display objects, regardless of whether the garments are accessioned or not? Does this set a precedent for other museums who now have to compete with live mannequins? Flecker noted that from this point on, ‘everyone had seen this publication and wanted the same thing, lots of people didn’t realise that they weren’t mannequins. A lot of people were seduced by these amazing poses that mannequins just couldn’t possibly make.’⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Fatema Ahmed, “A Guide to Dummies,” *ICON The Secret Life of Museums*, Vol. 136 (October, 2014), <http://www.iconeye.com/design/features/item/10971-mannequins-a-guide-to-dummies>.

⁶⁰ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

Figure 8: Alexander McQueen Oyster Dress Photographed on Human Mannequin
<http://1dnfashion.com/features/top-10-alexander-mcqueen-dresses/>

4.5. The Time and Money

Contemporary costume exhibitions are getting bigger!

‘The phenomenon of temporary exhibitions has continually increased in scale for nearly a generation: In the number of organised events in public attendance, as well as the quality of the work accomplished and remunerations accorded the function of the exhibition curator.’⁶¹

The increasing size and quantity of exhibitions pose both logistical and temporal challenges for exhibition teams to meet. Conservators have to develop innovative organisational

⁶¹ Natalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, “Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*: Inventing a Singular Position,” in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 235-236.

strategies to ensure that targets are achieved and resourceful approaches to guarantee that necessary object treatment and support is not being compromised. Furthermore, conservators are frequently having to delegate tasks to their wider team members improving their ability to document and communicate their activities.

Every exhibition has its own budget and the percentage of this allocated to conservation undoubtedly affects decisions made. Money will always be a limiting factor, however big, bold and brash the exhibition, but this can result in some extraordinarily creative solutions, particularly when coupled with the broadened expertise of an interdisciplinary exhibition team.

4.6. The Tour

Blockbuster costume exhibitions are extremely popular. One of the ways that a public institution can justify the incurred expense of such an event is by touring the exhibition to ensure maximum visitor numbers. Venues pay a set fee to house the show for a certain period of time thereby allowing the instigating institution to claw back some of its start-up expenses.⁶² The tour, as previously noted, is also a publicity mechanism, *The Princely Treasures: European Masterpieces 1600-1800 from the V&A* tour was initiated in preparation for the museum's newly renovated, soon to open, *1600-1800 European Galleries* in the South Kensington museum.⁶³ By showcasing some of the extraordinary objects to go on display the museum's objective was to raise international awareness of its collection, stimulating business for the future. Objects have always been toured and displayed between venues but it is the length of tour period and distance covered which sets the twenty-first century blockbuster apart. *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* recently opened in Paris and is due to finish its four year tour in Munich in the autumn. The exhibition toured ten venues across four continents during this period and was seen by nearly 1.5 million visitors (figures 9 and 10).⁶⁴ Conservation is faced with the challenge of making this possible, once again, without impacting on the condition of the objects.

⁶² Clare Wilsdon, "Research and Exhibitions," Research Methods in Practice Course, November 07, 2013. (Lecture notes).

⁶³ V&A, "Princely Treasures: European Masterpieces 1600-1800 from the V&A," <http://www.vam.ac.uk/users/node/9200> (accessed July 14, 2015).

⁶⁴ Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, "Jean Paul Gaultier," <http://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/on-tour/jean-paul-gaultier/> (accessed June, 24, 2015).



Figure 9: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* Exhibition View, Barbican Art Gallery, 2014

4.7. The Audience

Risk to objects on open display increases proportionally to visitor numbers. Blockbusters, by their very definition, inspire a large audience. Vigilance is required to ensure that objects are not damaged either purposefully (through theft or vandalism) or unintentionally through visitor contact.⁶⁵ Conservators are often responsible for advising on a control strategy to prevent such damage. Large audiences also affect dust, RH and temperature levels.⁶⁶ Humans release heat and moisture, which in turn can contribute to an unstable environment. Dust generated can make for unsightly display, be abrasive to the textile surfaces and present a food source for pests. The Met saw 661, 509 visitors through its gates in 2011, all clamouring to catch a glimpse of *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*.⁶⁷ Textile conservators had to prepare for vast, unprecedented visitor numbers to a fashion exhibition, a

⁶⁵ Canadian Conservation Institute, "Preventive Conservation and Agents of Deterioration," <http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/resources-ressources/agentsofdeterioration-agentsdedeterioration/index-eng.aspx> (accessed June 24, 2015).

⁶⁶ Paulocik, *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, 57.

⁶⁷ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "661,509 Total Visitors to Alexander McQueen Put Retrospective among Top 10 Most Visited Exhibitions in Metropolitan Museum's History," <http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/news/2011/mcqueen-attendance> (accessed June 24, 2015).

task that would have been inconceivable without inclusion of conservators in exhibition planning from the off.

The staging of contemporary costume as installation presents an additional challenge. It has been frequently noted that visitors subconsciously associate the contemporary costume exhibition with the shopping experience for, as stated by the curator Shonagh Marshall, ‘we can relate to [clothing], we know what its form and function is, we may have something similar, we can understand wearing that fabric and how it feels against our skin.’^{68,69,70} The involuntary hand that reaches out to remind its owner what a fabric feels like to the touch is a far greater danger when exhibiting contemporary costume on open display than historical objects, which visitors are more hardwired to avoid. Interactive exhibitions such as *Versace* at the V&A in 2002, where visitors were actively invited to touch Donatella’s gowns on the way out, serve only to confuse the public further.⁷¹ Celebrity costumes are at even greater risk, for their relic-like status can override even the most severe of ‘Do Not Touch’ signs (figure 11).

⁶⁸ Palmer, 32-34

⁶⁹ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁷⁰ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁷¹ Taylor, *Establishing Dress History*, 291.



Figure 11: Dresses From the Collection of HM the Queen in Protective Case, *Fashion Rules*, Kensington Palace, 2015

4.8. The Objects

Aesthetic display lies at the core of the blockbuster exhibition. Contemporary garments regularly comprise of experimental and incompatible composite materials which may accelerate their rate of deterioration. Fashion exhibitions are often undertaken in collaboration with living designers who arrive with a team of their own dress-makers to primp and preen the creations into catwalk ready perfection.⁷² This is common practice and we expect nothing less of the twenty-first century fashion exhibition, but celebrity costume exhibitions, as previously stated, are a completely different beast. The wear is intrinsic to the story and today, as a rule, the owner or archive will understand sufficiently the value in retaining iconic stains, creases and signs of use. Exhibition of that story does however have

⁷² Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

to be undertaken selectively and with sensitivity so that it is in keeping with the blockbuster display. Isabella Blow wore her couture with reckless abandon, a feature that the curators of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* were keen to reveal within the exhibition as evidence of her chaotic, spirited personality.⁷³ The story of the subject's careless lack of inhibition was strategically told through her wardrobe by the collaborative efforts of curators and conservators. Making contemporary costume objects palatable for blockbuster consumption is not always a straightforward process, particularly when evidence of wear is aligned with sensational display. Conservators may have to act far more interventively to present the heavily worn celebrity garment as something show-stopping and spectacular.

4.9. The Team

Conservation activities which may have, in the past, been undertaken unanimously by the textile conservation department within the museum are regularly subdivided so that, rather than practicing their broad range of skills, conservators are driven to specialisation in a bid to maximise efficiency (as previously noted). More obvious still is the subdivision of labour when we move into the less conventional non-museum venue, where subject specialists are employed on a freelance basis to meet the particular needs of the exhibition.⁷⁴ Mount making and mannequin dressing activities, traditionally undertaken by conservators, are more frequently being outsourced to dedicated companies with the role of the conservator shifting from the practical to the advisory or mediatory.

Today a creative team from the world of high fashion or theatre is routinely drafted into the museum sphere to transform the space, and objects within that space, into a multi-sensory experience. The conservator must make themselves heard over the multitude of competing agendas to ensure that object preservation remains a priority. Lucy Commoner writes in her text 'A Case of Compromise: Working with Guest Curators' that, 'as museums experiment with new approaches to enliven their installations and to reach wider audiences, conservators will be challenged to become partners in this new exploration.'⁷⁵ This broadening of the exhibition team to include individuals with little or no understanding of conservation

⁷³ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁷⁴ Squire, 13.

⁷⁵ Lucy Commoner, "A Case of Compromise: Working with Guest Curators," in *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, Vol. 16 (Washington DC: The Textile Speciality Group, 2006), 29.

principles or standards of museum care does present conservators with additional challenges. Far from meeting these challenges with hostility however, this research hopes to illustrate the enthusiasm and creativity with which textile conservators are taking up the baton.

As for Haye and Clark, it is often not until we draw all of these isolated developments together that we can really begin to understand the impact of seemingly small changes in exhibition practice on the role of the conservator. For this author it is not the exhibition team, the design, the tour or even the objects themselves which sets the blockbuster costume exhibition apart. It is a combination of factors which, when viewed cumulatively paint a picture of a challenging new space for textile conservators to negotiate.

Figure 10: *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk* Exhibition Sketch, Barbican Art Gallery, 2014

Chapter 5

Case Studies and Methodology

5.1. Case Studies

5.1.1. *David Bowie Is*, V&A, 2013 (Figure 12)

David Bowie Is was the dream child of two curators from the Theatre and Performance Department at the museum; Geoffrey Marsh and Victoria Broackes. Together they concocted the proposal, visited the David Bowie Archive (DBA) in America and, alongside the David Bowie archivist Sandy Hishkowitz, whittled the collection down to over three hundred objects in 2011 for potential display nearly three years later.⁷⁶ The exhibition included a wide range of textile artifacts but also other associated ephemera; notes, drawings, books, records, photographs, film footage and more. This exhibition represented a departure in the museum's exhibition design history; Broackes and Marsh enlisted the design expertise of both 59 Productions and Real Studios to collaborate in their vision, the first time that a production company from the world of theatre and opera (59 Productions) had lead in designing a V&A Museum exhibition.⁷⁷ The exhibition was sponsored by Gucci and Sennheiser GmbH who were responsible for providing the audio equipment and designing the sound installation.⁷⁸ Conservators worked with the specialist external mount makers at Gems Studio to create expressive poses which would not impact on the historic costume. These were set on platforms, predominantly on open display, amid a cacophony of projected imagery and architectural staging.

⁷⁶ Phaidon, "David Bowie Is – An Interview with the V&A Curator," <http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2013/march/18/david-bowie-is-an-interview-with-the-vanda-curator/> (accessed June 28, 2015).

⁷⁷ 59 Productions, "David Bowie Is – London," http://59productions.co.uk/project/david_bowie_is (accessed June 28, 2015).

⁷⁸ Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh, *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), 315.

Figure 12: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View, 2013 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/news-learning-department/david-bowie-isbringing-us-all-together>

The exhibition was intended not so much a retrospective but an overview of a career in the spotlight leading up to that point. The carefully orchestrated examination of the artist's life coincided beautifully with the shock release of the single 'Where Are We Now?' just two months before the opening. Marsh denied all knowledge, saying in an interview, 'At the time I certainly got a strong feeling that he wasn't doing anything, although in actual fact, he was just starting to stir.'⁷⁹ If this was indeed the case the exhibition catalogue, written prior to the single release, was certainly prophetic, with its bold captions separating the main body of the text such as, 'DAVID BOWIE THEN... DAVID BOWIE NOW...'.⁸⁰ Clever marketing or happy accident the aligning of these two events caused a media sensation with 40,000 tickets sold before the exhibition even opened its doors. A tour was already in the pipeline so designing mounting techniques suitable for transportation was a consideration from the very beginning. This global tour is set to continue well into 2016 with new dates continuing to be added.

⁷⁹ Phaidon, "David Bowie Is – An Interview with the V&A Curator," <http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2013/march/18/david-bowie-is-an-interview-with-the-vanda-curator/> (accessed June 28, 2015).

⁸⁰ Oriole Cullen, "Changes: Bowie's Life Story," in *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), 302.

5.1.2. *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, Somerset House, 2014 (Figure 13)

The Isabella Blow archive was purchased in its entirety before going to auction by Blow's friend and confidant, Daphne Guinness, on her death in 2007. Guinness described this move as an impulsive reaction against the archive's dissemination.⁸¹ *Fashion Galore!* was initially intended for Central Saint Martins but organisers quickly realised that the university did not have the infrastructure in place to host an event on the scale proposed and the plan was swiftly presented, and subsequently moved, to Somerset House. Somerset House has a history of exhibiting experimental fashion exhibitions, such as *Maison Martin Margiela '20' The Exhibition*, 2010. Shonagh Marshall was already working for the venue as a curator and her previous experience archiving the Isabella Blow collection situated her ideally to co-curate the show with her Central Saint Martins colleague, Alistair O'Neill. Halahan Associates, Collections Care and Conservation Consultants, work with Somerset House on their exhibitions programme and suggested enlisting the freelance textile conservator, Liz Rose, to assist on the project. Rose accompanied the curators in making their selection of two hundred and thirty seven objects from the archive for potential exhibition in January 2013 (the exhibition opened in the November the same year). After initial condition assessment and treatment time estimation of the selected objects Rose pitched her quote to the archive (1137 treatment hours) and recruited three further textile conservators for the task in hand.⁸² Treatment was undertaken predominantly on-site with the additional use of the freezing facilities at the Horniman Museum and the commercial dry cleaners Upstage, recommended by the V&A.

Marshall and O'Neill commissioned the set designer Shona Heath to stage the exhibition, creating her signature otherworldly scenes usually reserved for glossy photo shoots. Heath adapted the mannequins purchased by Somerset House for the *Valentino: Master of Couture* exhibition two years previously; breaking them down, reconfiguring and re-painting them. The exhibition catalogue was slightly unconventional; shot by the fashion photographer Nick Knight at Doddington Hall (Blow's childhood home) with live models wearing the objects prior to their exhibition display. The architects Carmody Groarke (who had previously worked on *Postmodernism Style and Subversion* at the V&A) worked closely with the design

⁸¹ Daphne Guinness, "Preface," in *Isabella Blow Fashion Galore!*, Exhibition Catalogue by Alistair O'Neill and Nick Knight (London: Rizzoli International Publications, 2013), 5.

⁸² Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

team to realise their collaborative, creative vision.⁸³ Textile conservation was not involved in costume mounting due to time restrictions, instead the professional installation company Whitewall was bought in under the supervision of Jennifer Dinsmore and Frances Halahan of Halahan Associates. Halahan Associates also undertook all environmental monitoring while the exhibition was on display. The exhibition was shown in Somerset House for three months before the objects were returned to the archive with no plans to tour the exhibition.

Figure 13: *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Exhibition View, Somerset House, 2014
<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/visual-arts/isabella-blow-fashion-galore>

5.2. Methodology

This research seeks to examine factors affecting textile conservation decisions in *David Bowie* and *Fashion Galore!*. These two case studies have been chosen because they are seemingly comparable in many senses, previously outlined, but have a number of striking differences impacting on conservation decisions. *Fashion Galore!* was a single venue exhibition while *David Bowie* was (and remains) on a global, multi-venue tour. *Fashion Galore!* was shown in an exhibition space with no permanent collection or in-house conservation staff, while *David Bowie* was held within a museum with a well-established

⁸³ Carmody Groarke, "Exhibition. Postmodernism Style and Subversion at the V&A," <http://www.carmodygroarke.com/project/all/Postmodernism-Style-and-Subversion-V-and-A.html> (accessed June 30, 2015).

conservation department. Together, these two exhibitions pose a number of contemporary challenges for textile conservators to work with, and within. It is hoped that, by selecting exhibitions that are now two or three years in the past, the contributors can reflect on their changing practice resulting from a more general change in exhibition circumstances.

This dissertation calls for a mixed method research strategy. A range of qualitative data can be collected from case study exhibitions; interviews can be combined with first-hand observations and collated into a more objective whole.⁸⁴ The author visited both exhibitions during 2013-2014 prior to embarking on her research, making notes and drawings on site (and subsequently). These will be coupled with information gleaned from a number of interviewees who have all contributed to this study either in person (when possible), or by phone, email or Skype. Interview transcripts have been included as appendices.

⁸⁴ Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Social Research Projects* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2014), 52.

Chapter 6

The Objects

6.1. Display of Modern Materials

Contemporary, composite materials, be they for stage, screen, catwalk or gallery, are always going to be difficult for conservators to treat. There are three reasons for this; the composite nature of the materials themselves, produced for showy effect rather than to last the test of time, often means that they are intrinsically flawed working against one another to accelerate their own rate of deterioration, the complicated manufacturing techniques and recipes are often protected making it difficult for conservators to identify their component parts and treat accordingly and finally conservators do not yet have the experiential back catalogue of dealing with such composite materials which they can apply to aid in their predictions.

Both exhibitions were testament to the difficulties faced by conservators confronted with the task of exhibiting intrinsically flawed garments in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Isabella Blow's much-loved designer, Alexander McQueen, was renowned for his unusual combinations of materials, never believing that fashion should be confined to textiles.⁸⁵ Textile conservators recalled how one rubber skirt in the exhibition had been applied with large glass shards making it so heavy that the materials were literally pulling each other apart.⁸⁶ It was therefore agreed that the primary goal of the conservation work was structural, to ensure that the objects could withstand being put on a mannequin. Rose said in an interview, 'we really just had to do the bare essentials.'⁸⁷

While the majority of the objects in the David Bowie exhibition were, by contrast, in fair condition, a small number of garments were not able to be exhibited in their current state and outsourced to the private conservator Zenzie Tinker to treat due to time limitations and

⁸⁵ Claire Wilcox, "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty," in *Costume Society Power of Gold Conference*, V&A, London, July 03-05, 2015.

⁸⁶ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁸⁷ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

museum policy on conservation of loan objects.⁸⁸ The Saturday Night Live Costume was particularly problematic; the PVC waistcoat was losing its shape and going tacky as a result of the plasticiser migrating to the surface while the polyurethane foam lining to the accompanying skirt had completely disintegrated (Figures 14 and 15). Tinker was tasked with the removal of the old foam to prevent further degradation and fabrication of a completely new lining from calico, polyester needle felt, wadding and rigiline (polyester boning).⁸⁹ Polyurethane is an extremely unstable material known to deteriorate at an accelerated rate, emitting gases in the break down process which have the potential to cause damage to textiles in the local vicinity.⁹⁰ Treatments such as the re-lining of the Saturday Night Live skirt may sound invasive by conservation standards but for the garment to be displayed and appreciated as spectacular *original* stage costume intervention had to be drastic.

Figure 14: Left: Sketch by the Author Showing Saturday Night Live Costume, Right: David Bowie on Stage in the Costume Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department

⁸⁸Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

⁸⁹Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

⁹⁰Jacquelyn Lewis, "Chemists and Couture Meet at the Met," Blouinartinfo International, October 21, 2007, <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/25592/chemists-and-couture-meet-at-the-met> (accessed August 16, 2015).

Figure 15: Saturday Night Live Costume in *David Bowie Is* Exhibition, V&A, 2013

<http://charlieporter.net/stories/9647>

6.2. Preserving Evidence of Wear

While the romantic notion of retaining evidence of wear may often appeal to exhibition organisers today, the reality of the ‘do nothing approach’ can not only be extremely unsightly for the blockbuster audience, who may, it has been argued, expect to see perfect gowns as a form of escapism, but can also be the very cause of the object’s eventual demise as soiling becomes increasingly acidic and creases become tears.⁹¹ In the words of Caroline Evans, professor of fashion history at Central Saint Martins, ‘the costume conservator is faced with a

⁹¹ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

dilemma: how much to restore in order to preserve the fabric, and how much to leave the marks of dirt and decay untouched, so as not to destroy the traces of the past.’⁹²

In the case of the David Bowie exhibition, the wishes of the archive regarding signs of wear by the objects’ high-profile owner were categorical, Lara Flecker, Costume Mounting Specialist at the V&A, said, ‘some of the garments were filthy, the archive wanted to keep the filth because that was part of its ‘David Bowie-ness’ so we didn’t do any cleaning particularly.’⁹³ There was no real argument otherwise, for the soiling was not so disfiguring and spoke of the performative aspect of the costume, authenticating them in a way. Bowie is quoted in the exhibition catalogue as having said, ‘[the costumes] were everything that I wanted them to be and more [...] heavily inspired by Kabuki and Samurai, they were outrageous, provocative and unbelievably hot to wear under the lights.’⁹⁴ In any case, the decision of whether evidence of wear should be removed to preserve the objects for the future was not one that conservators working on *David Bowie Is* had to make, for ultimately that was the owner’s prerogative. The museum deferred to the wishes of the archive, safe in the knowledge that their decisions were informed.⁹⁵

In the case of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* the conservators were faced with this decision as excessive wear had resulted in the objects becoming extremely weak and unsightly. Evans noted that, ‘Blow wore her wardrobe hard, just as people used to work a horse hard. A dressage artist manqué, she put it through its paces.’⁹⁶ The archive gave conservators a free reign to treat the objects as they saw fit on the understanding that evidence of wear would be retained partially, to indicate the personality of the wearer, but with sensitivity to the family of the deceased and in the spirit of the spectacular display. Staining was reduced where possible leaving a faint memory; a trace of use rather than a full on assault.

⁹²Caroline Evans, “Materiality, Memory and History: Adventures in the Archive,” in *Isabella Blow Fashion Galore!*, Exhibition Catalogue by Alistair O’Neill and Nick Knight (London: Rizzoli International Publications, 2013), 140.

⁹³ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

⁹⁴Victoria Broackes, “Putting Out the Fire with Gasoline: Designing David Bowie,” in *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), 122. *David Bowie Exhibition Catalogue*, 122.

⁹⁵ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

⁹⁶ Caroline Evans, “Materiality, Memory and History: Adventures in the Archive,” *Isabella Blow Exhibition Catalogue*, 139.

Shonagh Marshall, the curator, explained how Liz Rose, the textile conservator, sewed round the beautiful holes and rips, preventing them from getting larger, but retaining those marks that were unique to Isabella (figure 16). Marshall said in an interview with the author, ‘it felt like a creative process [...] there was a conversation [between Rose and myself] about the glamorous stains not the gross ones [...] Some threads can tell you about [Isabella’s] life and [Rose] really found those and ran with it. She made them so beautiful.’⁹⁷ Conservation is rarely discussed as a creative process (though it undoubtedly is). *Fashion Galore!* was pioneering in its display of a heavily worn high fashion wardrobe and conservation decisions were all the more complex for it, requiring creativity and artistry to present the damage as something imperfect and beautiful. This falls in line with an increasing Material Culture inspired approach, noted over the last decade, to the study and display of clothing in a bid to pull out stories embedded in, ‘design, manufacture, retailing and consumption [of objects].’⁹⁸ However, the application of this research approach to the presentation of contemporary high fashion has not been undertaken before marking this exhibition as somewhat of a departure.

⁹⁷ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

⁹⁸ Lou Taylor, “Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches,” in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, ed. Sandy Black et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 29.

Chapter 7

The Space

Space is always a premium within a museum. The working environment may be more conventional than a non-museum venue, with available conservation studios, facilities and storage areas, but negotiating that space has become a careful juggling act for exhibition staff to navigate, as size and number of exhibitions rise. The *David Bowie* exhibition was no exception; it was installed back to back at the V&A South Kensington with *Hollywood Costume* in 2013, a process described as a logistical challenge with the Exhibitions Department trying to manage two major exhibitions coming in and going out at the same time.⁹⁹ These spatial limitations pose new challenges for textile conservators working within even the most well-established of museums. To make most efficient use of studio space Flecker explained how conservation staff, ‘condition check in the stores and store [the objects] in the stores, then bring them in [to conservation] when we need them and get them conserved as quickly as possible, which usually isn’t fast enough.’¹⁰⁰ While exhibitions comprising entirely of loan objects may save on resources, facilities and storage space in the long term, their continual turnover puts constant pressure on short term storage provisions.

The spatial restrictions of working in Somerset House were further complicated for the textile conservation staff of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* due to the limited availability of conservation facilities. All two hundred and thirty seven objects for potential display were brought to the venue, thirty percent of which had been assigned the condition rating of ‘poor’ and required urgent conservation work.¹⁰¹ Treatment was undertaken in a make-shift studio on site with inspection lights and tables borrowed from other companies involved in the exhibition, covered with sheets of Melinex® (inert polyester film). Conservators had to be resourceful in their sourcing of materials as there were no dyeing facilities.¹⁰² Chris Sambrook, one of the freelance textile conservators working on the project, wrote in an email correspondence to the author, ‘we worked with a very limited range of materials as the

⁹⁹ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁰² Ibid.

facilities were minimal – requiring an inventive approach, sourcing materials locally where possible.¹⁰³

Materials were not the only thing that was sourced at close range. The freezing facilities at the Horniman Museum in Kennington were utilised as well as the services of Upstage drycleaners, based in Islington, who had experience of solvent cleaning museum artifacts having worked with the V&A in the past. Soils and stains from wear and use had resulted in many of the objects suffering severely from pest infestation and therefore freezing prior to interventive conservation was a necessary preliminary treatment to prevent further damage and proliferation.¹⁰⁴ When facilities are limited conservators may have to rely heavily on external professionals; conservators have to be practical and creative with their knowledge of local amenities to ensure that off-site treatments are both cost efficient and undertaken in a conservation-friendly manner.

Somerset House is an exhibition venue rather than a museum. It is not required to conform to museum accredited standards and, as such, almost all the objects for *Fashion Galore!* were on open display, arranged on low plinths or specially designed architectural units to create an immersive experience. The curator described the freedom that comes from working outwith a museum, saying that the public take great pleasure in close interaction with display objects, however, the curator and conservators agreed that this had to be balanced against the objects' additional vulnerability.^{105,106} Somerset House fulfils its duty of care by relying heavily on its invigilation staff to monitor those objects which are additionally vulnerable due the close object/viewer interaction. Jennifer Dinsmore, conservation consultant for Halahan Associates, explained that the invigilation staff become very familiar with the exhibition over a three month period and are therefore an excellent measure of change, reporting back to the conservators where necessary.¹⁰⁷ This transfer of responsibility depends on invigilation staff being adequately briefed to know what to look for and conservators being sufficiently

¹⁰³ Email Correspondence with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁰⁴ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁰⁵ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁰⁶ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁰⁷ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

approachable and contactable if anything untoward is detected. As stated by Sambrook in a phone conversation with the author, 'ideally you have a good rapport with the team and you recommend as much as you can to ensure that preservation information is transmitted down the line.'¹⁰⁸

The textile conservators of *Fashion Galore!* had little involvement in exhibition design and installation due to time limitations, however the architects and Whitewall, the external installation team, were familiar with museum protocol, Halahan Associates were on hand to advise and external contractors benefited from textile conservators working on sight, for this meant that they were nearby to answer more specific queries.

¹⁰⁸ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

Chapter 8

The Team

Sambrook noted in a telephone interview with the author that it is now quite common to have a number of different teams working on a single project due to tight schedules and time limitations, high turnover of exhibitions and extreme nature of design.¹⁰⁹ Steele noted the change in curatorial responsibilities as a result of this shift, saying that the curator, ‘must now perform an enlarged administrative role, determining a conceptual framework, selecting specialised collaborators from various disciplines, directing work crews, consulting with architects, assuming a formal position in terms of presentation etc.’¹¹⁰ Klonk writes in her book, *Spaces of Experience*, how decisions which were once an essential part of the curator’s job are frequently placed in the hands of specialist designers.¹¹¹ This streamlining of the system has the potential to lead to a lack of communication with smaller, independent groups beavering away in multiple on and off-site locations until the final exhibition countdown. This division of labour does extend to textile conservation and can be seen in both case study exhibitions, particularly in the separation of costume mounting from interventive treatment responsibilities, which would traditionally go hand in hand. The V&A has recently enlisted a small Resource Planning team of three to prevent the role separation that can accompany expansion.¹¹² This suggests that the museum understands the need for increased transparency and interdepartmental dialogue within the expanded, refined exhibition team.

It is possible to speculate how, in these circumstances, textile conservation may slip down the priority list, when external contractors, drafted in for their creative input but often without previous museum experience, are involved in exhibition design and planning. Both case study exhibitions were however prime examples of expansive teams working collaboratively with contractors to realise exhibition goals. The exhibition team for *David Bowie Is* was vast because of the high Audio/Video (AV) weight and the addition of external designers from 59 Productions. Paulocik noted how exhibitions involving a large group can have conflicting concerns, writing that, ‘duties may intersect but priorities may not necessarily be the

¹⁰⁹ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹¹⁰ Socha, 236.

¹¹¹ Klonk, 193.

¹¹² Michelle Jenson, “Culture Change and Resource Planning,” V&A Blog, November 28, 2014, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/managing-our-collections/culture-change-and-resource-planning> (accessed July, 25, 2015).

same.¹¹³ The V&A works towards cross-disciplinary negotiation through a series of project team meetings throughout the exhibition planning process attended by representatives from all departments involved.¹¹⁴ Flecker said that these ‘everyone involved’ meetings are incredibly important because issues emerge which no one has considered. She also noted however that this is something that has changed a great deal over the last decade, saying that they now feel incredibly integrated into the exhibition decision making process.¹¹⁵ As the team expands the necessity for cross-disciplinary discussion is perhaps more widely recognised and increases to prevent disconnection. The goal of the Resource Planning team at the V&A is to, ‘open lines of dialogue so that departments can better understand what they need from each other.’¹¹⁶

Separate companies/groups carried out the costume mounting, textile conservation and preventive conservation for *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* with the result that these activities were undertaken quite independently due to the tight time schedule. Rose did note however, that the team had a very good rapport and that the textile conservators did not feel separated as they were working on-site and were consulted on design decisions on occasions.¹¹⁷ In this exhibition textile conservation worked closely with curation with the consequence that conservation factored heavily in exhibition interpretation. Rose participated alongside Marshall and Evans in a group panel discussion, *Inside the Archive* at Somerset House in February 04, 2014. The inclusion of textile conservation in curatorial and academic discussion of the project is significant in recognition of the creative role that conservation played in the project, with conservators becoming, ‘active participants in the processes that determine the presentation and interpretation of objects.’¹¹⁸ While the expanded team may presuppose the likelihood of separation between disciplines, by recognising this possibility institutions can actively work against it to encourage inclusion and mutual understanding.

¹¹³ Paulocik, *Fabric of an Exhibition*, 29.

¹¹⁴ Conversation Between a Representative from the V&A Exhibitions Department and the Author, July 02, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹¹⁶ Michelle Jenson, “Culture Change and Resource Planning,” V&A Blog, November 28, 2014, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/managing-our-collections/culture-change-and-resource-planning> (accessed July, 25, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹¹⁸ Lister, 430.

Chapter 9

The Tour

A lengthy global tour is now common practice for recouping substantial exhibition costs and generating revenue. With the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) no longer picking up the museum bill, the institution has had to look for additional ways to generate income to ensure its longevity; the shop, the café, the venue and of course, the tour.¹¹⁹ What does this mean for objects embarking on this extensive globe-hopping journey and how can conservators ensure the preservation of the works once they depart from the museum stronghold?

The V&A Exhibitions Department is responsible for the running of this ‘well-oiled machine’, organising transport and insurance for exhibition objects. The loaning venue pays a substantial set fee for the exhibition itself with additional expenses including in-coming transport, packing and crating and, in the case of *David Bowie Is*, a fee to 59 Productions for the re-design of the AV elements to the specific requirements of the loaning institution, plus the costs of their own designers and contractors. This is a huge compromise for a museum budget and one that even large international institutions may find hard to commit to so slots are therefore allocated on a first come first served basis. This allocation inevitably results in long, complex transports between venues rather than the objects taking the most distance-efficient route.¹²⁰ *David Bowie Is* was so popular that slots have long been allocated one after the other in an ever increasing list of venues. A member of the Exhibition Department said, ‘there is only time to de-install, transfer, install, run of the exhibition, de-install [again],’ requiring a high level of organisation to coordinate the slick transfer of objects and information from one location to the next.¹²¹

Because of the quantity of exhibitions that the V&A dispatch on tour (up to twenty in a year) it is not possible to send a textile conservator to de-install, courier and install every exhibition. This is why, as explored further in Chapter 10 on Mannequins, the V&A feel it is more time

¹¹⁹ Nicola Sullivan, “DCMS Budget Cut Will Hit Museums,” *Museums Journal*, <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/09062015-cost-cutting-measures-will-impact-museums> (accessed July 17, 2015).

¹²⁰ Conversation Between a Representative from the V&A Exhibitions Department and the Author, July 02, 2015.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

efficient, cheaper and safer to travel the costumes vertically, fully mounted where possible.¹²² The speed of turnaround has also encouraged textile conservators to devise creative means of streamlining the installation/de-installation process. Detailed installation and de-installation sheets are provided with each object including their specific packing instructions (figure 16).¹²³ Packing is made to be used and re-used, fabricated from silk and cotton rather than tissue. Packing fabrication and information for a tour is a huge undertaking, described by Flecker as a third of the exhibition all over again and this has to be factored into exhibition preparation.¹²⁴ This quantity of preparatory work required of the conservation department has increased with the proliferation and professionalisation of the exhibition tour. Mounting for a tour is very different to mounting for a single venue show, having to be built into exhibition design right from the beginning.

The condition reporting for *David Bowie Is* took the form of a standardised system to maximise efficiency but was additionally important because of the extensive tour period. Flecker said that, ‘for condition reports [costumes] are usually mounted [...] You have pictures all round so that if there is any damage people can add to it very easily and changes can be seen very quickly and clearly.’¹²⁵ A member of the Exhibitions Department noted that during the run of an exhibition things get tired or have natural discolouration or creases and every time one is noticed photographs are taken and a report is written which is shown to their contact at the David Bowie Archive after which treatment or withdrawal is agreed.¹²⁶ The tour was originally set for six venues but high demand encouraged its extension. While the tour would not have been extended if it had greatly compromised preservation, a lengthy tour such as *David Bowie Is* must undoubtedly take its toll on the objects. Conservators have to prepare for a two year tour turning into a four year tour as runs are extended or adjusted to accommodate additional venues to maximise revenue.¹²⁷

¹²² Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Conversation Between a Representative from the V&A Exhibitions Department and the Author, July 02, 2015.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Figure 16: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Packing Instructions Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department

Few museums have the infrastructure in place to tour exhibitions on the same epic proportions as the V&A, but once initial costs have been incurred and a global tour set in motion it makes good financial sense to extend a tour for as long as possible, object condition allowing.¹²⁸ A lengthy tour will take its toll on even the most vigilantly preserved and carefully transported of objects but government cutbacks plus public demand leaves the museum with little alternative.¹²⁹ It is therefore possible to speculate that, like the blockbuster exhibition itself, the extensive global tour is something that we may expect to see a lot more of in the future as large institutions have to become more philanthropic to ride the

¹²⁸ Conversation Between a Representative from the V&A Exhibitions Department and the Author , July 02, 2015.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

wave of cuts to their budgets.¹³⁰ While Somerset House has not, to this date, toured any of its exhibitions, being what Marshall described as ‘babies’ in the world of exhibiting with a public programme only dating back to 2008, interest was expressed in the possibility of touring to the west coast of America.¹³¹ *Fashion Galore!* was not conceived as a touring exhibition, something that, as previously noted, is an essential part of the exhibition planning process, and therefore a subsequent tour would not be possible. Marshall did note however, that its popularity does mean that it may, ‘reimagine itself in a new guise somewhere [in the future] but it won’t be *Fashion Galore!*.’ Watch this space.

¹³⁰ Nicola Sullivan, “DCMS Budget Cut Will Hit Museums,” *Museums Journal*, <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/09062015-cost-cutting-measures-will-impact-museums> (accessed July 17, 2015).

¹³¹ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

Chapter 10

The Mannequins

Two recent exhibitions suggest an increased interest in the mannequin, as sculptural form beyond internal structural clothing support; *Silent Partners: Artist & Mannequin from Function to Fetish* at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 2014, and *Ralph Pucci: the Art of the Mannequin* at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York 2015.^{132,133} Barbara Paris, the curator of *Ralph Pucci*, explained how, ‘Mannequins are an important branch of creative design, a vital element of visual culture [...] crucial to the visual impression but [like the picture frame] often overlooked.’¹³⁴ Experimental mannequin forms contribute to the theatricality of the display, however their new centrality to exhibition design can be cause for concern when dramatic effect usurps support and preservation.

Rose, the textile conservator overseeing the interventive treatment for *Fashion Galore!*, was clear that their textile conservation assigned free-lance role had not included any kind of mannequin adaptation or costume mounting for display. She recalled how she had said that she was worried about the mannequin finish, sprayed on by the external design team, but she was not aware of whether conservation concerns resulted in any modifications, noting, ‘There was no Oddy testing, there was nothing that you would get in a museum.’¹³⁵ (Figure 17). Sambrook agreed, stating that when you are working freelance you do not always have the authority to challenge decisions already made within an organisation. A lack of conservation involvement may have the potential to lead to miss-interpretation and inadequate support, ‘the mannequins were selected to give an up to-the-minute shop front dramatic visual effect rather than museum-style support.’¹³⁶ They were re-configured, adjusted, spray painted and made up but only for aesthetic appreciation and not in collaboration with conservation. This makes a strong case for the inclusion of conservation from the initial planning stages of an

¹³² The Fitzwilliam Museum, “Silent Partners: Artist & Mannequin from Function to Fetish,” <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/whatson/exhibitions/silentpartners/> (accessed July 14, 2015).

¹³³ Museum of Arts and Design, “Ralph Pucci: The Art of the Mannequin,” <http://madmuseum.org/exhibition/ralph-pucci> (accessed July 14, 2015).

¹³⁴ Dezeen, “Ralph Pucci’s fashion mannequins “mirror how we want to see ourselves”,” <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/05/29/ralph-pucci-fashion-mannequins-exhibition-museum-arts-design-new-york/> (accessed July 14, 2015).

¹³⁵ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹³⁶ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

exhibition. When a number of different teams are working independently to a tight deadline there is far less potential for cross-pollination of ideas to fulfil common goals.

Figure 17: *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* Mannequin Close-Up, Somerset House, 2014

<http://now-here-this.timeout.com/2013/11/15/behind-the-scenes-at-the-isabella-blow-fashion-galore-exhibition-at-somerset-house/>

The V&A has its own costume mounting team who work with technical support and external mount-makers to ensure that the complex, extreme mounts specified by designers are providing their supportive function. The combination of state-of-the-art design and preservation is a luxury afforded to the national museum, however, with allocated money for mannequin fabrication (as was the case for *David Bowie Is*) and conservation on board, the process quickly becomes extremely complicated. The V&A enlisted the expertise of the team at Gems Studio who worked with mannequins from their sister company, Proportion, to make them suitable for museum display. The V&A and Proportion/Gems have worked together on many high profile projects. The sculpting team at Gems Studio were therefore the ideal collaborators with their highly attuned understanding of museum requirements.^{137,138}

¹³⁷ Personal Communication with Ashley Backhouse, June 12, 2105, Project Manager Gems Studio, External Mannequin Makers for *David Bowie Is*.

¹³⁸ Museum and Heritage Booklet Courtesy of Proportion London.

The David Bowie mannequin called for something rather drastic as the costumes covered a range of sizes from Bowie's, 'heroine taking early days to his much larger, eating normally stage.'¹³⁹ A made to measure mannequin was sculpted in clay, to avoid the 'Madame Tussauds' effect, costume-mounting specialists were never given any actual Bowie measurements working instead from a list of measurements made by one of the V&A conservators while on a flying visit to the archive. Flecker said, 'It is really difficult taking measurements, every garment is different and then some of them stretch and some of them have some kind of weird corseted inner bodice which makes it smaller.'¹⁴⁰

The poses were particularly outlandish, selected from photographs by the curators to suggest rather than emulate the artist. Budget restrictions led to innovation in design; one torso was sculpted plus four leg poses and a number of arm poses. These could then be cut, adjusted and spliced together to create multiple unique poses.¹⁴¹ (Figure 18). Conservators had to ensure that these complicated mannequins could be dressed without undue stress to the objects. By conveying their concerns to the mount makers, Proportion technicians were able to develop an ingenious interlocking and bolting system of assembling the figure without impacting on the costume.^{142,143} Many of the costumes were rather tight and their accompanying shoes were extremely fragile prevented the use of calf spigots. Instead a fixing was attached to the back of the neck, to which a metal right angle could be inserted dropping into a base, to take the weight and support the object. This allowed the mannequin to be raised up on the pole for shoe removal prior to transit without the need to lay the figure on the ground.¹⁴⁴ (Figure 19).

¹³⁹ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Personal Communication with Ashley Backhouse, June 12, 2015, Project Manager Gems Studio, External Mannequin Makers for *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁴² Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁴³ 'David Bowie Is... In The Mannequin Workshop' Press Release Courtesy of Proportion London.

¹⁴⁴ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

Figure 18: Left: Crouching Figure in Development at the Proportion Workshop, Right: Final Installation
of Ziggy Stardust Costume © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 19: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Instructions for De-Installation of Shoes and Boots
(Detail) Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department

The extensive tour of *David Bowie Is* necessitated the design of mounts which would not only make the objects look wonderful for display but would also protect the costume in transit.¹⁴⁵ Flecker said, ‘The mounting is part of the packing. We send everything on the mannequins as much as we possibly can because, a. it reduces enormously the handling and, b. it reduces enormously the time that is required to dress and undress these things.’¹⁴⁶ This practice is beginning to be replicated by other museums although it should be noted that the system is so efficient for the V&A because of the sheer quantity of exhibitions that they send out.¹⁴⁷ For this reason many of the David Bowie mannequin design mechanisms had a preservation purpose. Stability was increased by extending the metal pin through the foot to the base, up the leg. Arms were bolted in place rather than slotting (the head was removable to allow access); an adjustment which made the arms more secure for transit and also less likely to catch the fabric during dressing. Many of the arms were set within suits and therefore not visible. These were constructed from wire to reduce the cost but also to permit the arms to be unbent during transport to release creasing.¹⁴⁸ (Figure 20).

¹⁴⁵ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Email Correspondence with Email Correspondence with Kitty Morris, Freelance Textile Conservator and Specialising in Exhibition Installation.

¹⁴⁸ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

A Comparative Study into Factors Affecting Textile Conservation Decisions in Two Recent Blockbuster
Costume Exhibitions

Figure 20: Example of *David Bowie Is* Exhibition Instructions for Folding the Arms of a Mannequin
Courtesy of the V&A Conservation Department

Both museum and mount maker agree that working in collaboration to overcome challenges faced during this exhibition propelled them forward professionally. Ashley Backhouse of Gems Studio said that, ‘With each new exhibition the company has the opportunity to experiment with a new set of issues, adding a new string to their bow and increasing their knowledge and repertoire of what they can offer clients in the future.’¹⁴⁹ Flecker noted that through development of the David Bowie mannequin, exclusive to the V&A, the museum had created an extra svelte male form, perfect for mounting historic costume in the soon to open European 1600-1800 Galleries.¹⁵⁰ This collaborative venture has a wider implication for museums and exhibition teams broadening their options for the future and raising awareness of the necessity of support within exciting and experimental costume display.

¹⁴⁹ Personal Communication with Ashley Backhouse, June 12, 2105, Project Manager Gems Studio, External Mannequin Makers for *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁵⁰ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

Chapter 11

The Time and Money

Every exhibition has a budget and a time limitation which conservators must factor into their proposed course of action. The blockbuster exhibition may have a bigger budget than most but this has to stretch a long way to create the unique immersive experience and does not necessarily correspond to a rise in conservation resources. Both of my two case study exhibitions included a large number of garments, in many circumstances problematic to treat and mount for reasons previously described. Creative solutions to display these problematic objects safely in their predetermined stage sets take time, never an abundant commodity when exhibition turnover is on the increase in a bid to boost revenue.¹⁵¹ As previously stated such limitations should not be seen as hindering conservation but setting the boundaries for the treatment; providing a context for conservators to work within and shaping their decisions.

The textile conservators working on *Fashion Galore!* noted an extremely tight time schedule for even minimal treatment. Rose first visited the archive in January 2013, yet the exhibition was already set to open on November 17th, to coincide with the late Blow's birthday. The conservation 'go ahead' was not given until June 2013 leaving less than five months for all practical treatment, costume mounting and installation.¹⁵² While not every object selected from the Isabella Blow archive was to go into the display, the conservators knew that it was likely that Blow's favourite items would make the cut and these were, by default, within the 30% of objects in poor condition, having been worn a great deal.¹⁵³ The textile conservators worked strategically, worst to best, so that if time was cut short for any reason object condition would not prevent its display. Conservators discussed what could be achieved during this slim timeframe with exhibition organisers, alerting them to the relevance that signs of wear were going to have to play in setting the exhibition story (when time restrictions prevented little cosmetic treatment).¹⁵⁴ While preservation of wear was always

¹⁵¹ Michelle Jenson, "Culture Change and Resource Planning," *Managing Our Collections*, V&A Blog, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/managing-our-collections/culture-change-and-resource-planning> (accessed July 25, 2015).

¹⁵² Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

going to play an important part in the exhibition presentation, available time and the reality of the objects' condition likely impacted on the weight placed on this narrative.

Conservators from both case study exhibitions noted the time that it took to attain the objects from their respective prestigious archives with clearance for work to proceed from their celebrity owners adding an unforeseen time limitation to the event.^{155,156} Contractors may be bought in at a later date in exhibition planning to save on costs but this inevitably effects what they can achieve to prepare the objects for exhibition, particularly when there are additional unforeseen hold-ups such as the archival release of objects. This short-term external crack team is a product of the contemporary exhibition format in a venue with few on-site facilities; it makes good financial sense to employ a number of smaller, highly specialised groups to streamline the preparation and installation process. By contrast, in-house museum conservators may well be bought in at an earlier stage of exhibition planning; there are no additional costs in doing so and they are more likely to have become ingrained in the exhibition planning process over their longer period of employment.

Exhibitions at the V&A are long in the planning, often commencing three years in advance of installation.¹⁵⁷ This early involvement allows conservators to contribute to discussions at the planning stage and ensure that the specific requirements of each object are being met in the design. Early onset communication and regular project team meetings guarantee the smooth running of the installation process further down the line.¹⁵⁸ A sculpted mount, as was required for the extremely small Bowie garments, is time consuming to fabricate and when object arrival from the archive was pushed back conservators had to make a decision on what could be achieved in the time available. This time restriction (in conjunction with the cost implication) aided in the decision to sculpt a single mannequin which could then be broken and reconfigured into multiple different poses. Cost and time are intrinsically linked and impacted on all aspects of mount making for *David Bowie Is* resulting in some creative

¹⁵⁵ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁵⁶ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁵⁷ Conversation Between a Representative From the Exhibitions Department and the Author, V&A, July 02, 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

problem solving, for example, the replacing of limbs with wire in instances where sleeves would obscure the arms.¹⁵⁹

In both case studies there was a certain amount of money to spend on conservation, each being high profile exhibitions and therefore worth the investment for certain return. For *Fashion Galore!* the necessity and prioritisation of conservation may not have been fully realised until after Rose's involvement. Textile conservators had not been employed during the early planning stages and therefore the poor condition of the proposed display objects may not have been fully appreciated initially. The money for treatment came out of the central budget with Rose presenting her case to the Isabella Blow Foundation when exhibition preparation was already underway.¹⁶⁰ Budget adjustments could perhaps have been mitigated by the inclusion of a textile conservator's voice in the exhibition team from an earlier stage. A lengthy exhibition prelude allows a more holistic approach to exhibition preparation; this is preferable for object preservation but not always realistic outside of the museum.

Working with a single owner archive comes with additional challenges; the archive has sole custody of the decision making process and conservators have to be persuasive in their reasoning and sensitive to the wishes of this external body. The exhibition of the single owner archive may well become more prevalent in the future, with designers appreciating the benefit of retaining and preserving their own historical material for this very purpose. In both case study circumstances conservators positively noted the generosity of their respective archives in entrusting objects to their care. The Isabella Blow Archive handed over all decisions to curators and conservators at Somerset House. This trust was particularly aided by the fact that Marshall, the curator at Somerset House, had previously archived the Isabella Blow Collection. The David Bowie Archive were slightly more involved having strong opinions on the visual effect that they wanted to achieve through the exhibition but it was noted how responsive they were to conservation advice, saying that they were always willing to bend a bit.^{161,162} It is vital to foster this relationship in the exhibition of contemporary

¹⁵⁹ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁶⁰ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁶¹ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

costume for it is only through mutual understanding, trust and collaboration that an exhibition can realise its full potential. It is important to note that every party will have a slightly different perspective but the end goal is a common one, that of exhibition success.

¹⁶² Conversation Between Zenzie Tinker, Private Textile Conservator Who Treated the David Bowie Costumes, and the Author, August 11, 15.

Chapter 12

The Design

Exhibition design today is regularly assigned to external specialists drafted into the museum to realise the stage set on which the exhibition plays out. This theatrical allusion has become what Greer Crawley and Donatella Barbieri describe as, ‘the predominant aesthetic and temporal reference for the presentation of historical dress within the museum.’¹⁶³ The result of this experiential stage set is a creative compromise between the wishes of the guest designer and the conservator’s mandate to protect the collection, as described by Commoner in her presentation *A Case of Compromise*.¹⁶⁴

12.1. The Light

Lighting, particularly in the form of projection, plays an important role in creating the multi-sensory blockbuster experience. In a world of moving imagery it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the museum recommended standard of 50 lux or below.¹⁶⁵ The conservator’s role is not to enforce such regulations but to advise and recommend ensuring that if limits are exceeded, they are done so with knowledge of the potential cost. At the V&A cumulative light damage is calculated over the exhibition period for proposed levels, after which it becomes the responsibility of the archive or owner to decide whether they are prepared to take the risk.¹⁶⁶ Cumulative light levels become less predictable when an exhibition has a heavy AV weighting (as for *David Bowie Is*) and therefore extra vigilance is required in the monitoring of objects on display.¹⁶⁷ A member of the V&A Exhibitions Department said that light levels had to be adjusted. The exhibition required constant monitoring and modification to ensure preservation of the works over such a prolonged period.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Greer Crawley and Donatella Barbieri, “Dress, Time and Space,” in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, edited by Sandy Black et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 56.

¹⁶⁴ Commoner, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Graham Martin, “Preventive Conservation in Practice,” *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 06 (January 1993), <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-06/preventive-conservation-in-practice/>.

¹⁶⁶ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Conversation Between a Representative From the Exhibitions Department and the Author, V&A, July 02, 2015.

Exhibition designers frequently use low light levels to great effect in the blockbuster costume exhibitions to create cinematic spaces. Dinsmore explained that Somerset House works closely with a lighting designer who is sensitive to the conservation concerns of bright lighting.¹⁶⁹ Issues regarding light levels seem to occur not necessarily with exhibition designers, used to having to bend a bit to placate conservators, but with fashion designers who want their objects to be shown off to their best advantage regardless of the damage it may cause. The hats in the *Isabella Blow* exhibition were by Philip Treacy and extremely brightly lit on the request of the fashion designer rather than the exhibition designer.¹⁷⁰ (Figure 21). Flecker noted that it can be very difficult to combine the museum and fashion because it brings in a whole new set of personalities and opinions.¹⁷¹

Figure 21: Display of Philip Treacy Hats in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, Somerset House, 2014
<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/visual-arts/isabella-blow-fashion-galore>

¹⁶⁹ Personal Communication with Jennifer Dinsmore, June 11, 2015, Halahan Associates Conservation Consultants, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

12.2. The Dust

High visitor numbers equal high dust levels. Elevating objects slightly can make a big difference but there is always a certain amount of mystery to how dust accumulates.¹⁷² Conservators have to take increased dust levels and fluctuations in RH and temperature resulting from increased visitor numbers, in combination with the susceptibility of modern materials on display, into consideration when advising on object placement and exhibition display cases. This can create a tension between designers pushing for open display in line with twenty-first century exhibition practice and conservators advising closed cases to protect the contemporary, high-risk materials. Loaning institutions may also have their own stipulations on open/closed display which will impact on design decisions. Marshall explained in an interview why the three dioramas; the land the sea and the air, were all behind glass in *Fashion Galore!*. The bodice in the sea diorama was on loan from the Fashion Museum, Bath, which stipulated that it must be displayed behind glass and as a result all three dioramas were set behind glass for the sake of continuity.¹⁷³ (Figure 22).

¹⁷² Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁷³ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

Figure 22: Sea Diorama Behind Glass in *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, Somerset House, 2014 © Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images for Somerset House
<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG10460311/First-look-at-Isabella-Blow-Fashion-Galore.html>

12.3. The Audience

Casing an object provides a stable display environment while increasing security and preventing incidental or wilful contact. Incidental contact is mitigated to some extent by the metre distancing rule from objects on open display, set out by Museum Guidelines.¹⁷⁴ The V&A work with their external designers providing guidelines for object preservation when the project is first put out to tender. Designs are reviewed after the proposal stage and circulated to curation, conservation, security and technical services so that any problems or potential risks can be flagged up.¹⁷⁵ As previously noted, distancing and elevation of objects is an area which appears to be a little more flexible outwith the museum. Conservators were not consulted on the architectural design for *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*, having not been

¹⁷⁴ Clair Battison, "It's a Marathon Not a Sprint!: A Very Brief Overview of Exhibition Delivery From a Conservation Point of View," V&A Blog, May 23, 2014, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/its-marathon-not-sprint-very-brief-overview-exhibition-delivery> (accessed August 18, 2015).

¹⁷⁵ Conversation Between a Representative From the Exhibitions Department and the Author, V&A, July 02, 2015.

involved at the initial planning stages. As a result object height and situation did, in certain instances, place them at risk of incidental damage.¹⁷⁶

Wilful contact is one of the hazards in the display of clothing and its likelihood increases in the exhibition of the celebrity wardrobe. This was of particular concern for curators and conservators of the David Bowie exhibition who had to prepare objects not just for costume enthusiasts but for hordes of David Bowie fans – a far more alarming prospect. Flecker recalled how, ‘everything had to be tied or secured in some way, particularly with David Bowie because of the fans.’¹⁷⁷ It was not just the visitors who craved proximity to the artist through his wardrobe but press too, with one early incident alerting the museum to the potential problems and confirming the necessity to set garments well away from the public.¹⁷⁸

12.4. The Successful Collaboration

If embraced rather than rejected by designers, conservation concerns can make for some extremely innovative and exciting display mechanisms. In *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!* a Hussein Chalayan dress, once buried in iron filings, was displayed horizontally in a glass vitrine (presumably because of its fragility). This mud-caked garment became suddenly suggestive of the absent body, a ghostly coffin in a room of stockman mannequins, a technique previously employed by Haye in her display of a perished silk dress in the exhibition *Fashion & Fancy Dress: The Messel Family Dress Collection 1865–2005*.¹⁷⁹ (Figure 23). Another way that preservation and dramatic display can be brought into alignment is through object elevation. In the centre of the first room in *David Bowie Is* two Yohji Yamamoto capes were set on a high plinth. While it is likely that this staging mechanism was undertaken for dramatic effect over object preservation it had the added advantages of removing the objects from reach of inquisitive hands and reducing dust deposition, known to accumulate less at higher levels.¹⁸⁰ (Figure 24).

¹⁷⁶ Personal Communication with Liz Rose, May 20, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

¹⁷⁷ Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Amy de la Haye, “From the Desk of Dr. Amy de la Haye,” *Cultures of Conservation*, <http://cultures-of-conservation.wikis.bgc.bard.edu/blog:from-the-desk-of-dr-amy> (accessed June 17, 2015).

¹⁸⁰ Bhavesh Shah, Susana Hunter and Stuart Adams, “Dust to Dust. Access to Access,” *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 59 (Spring 2011) <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2011-issue-59/dust-to-dust.-access-to-access>.

Figure 23: A Perished Silk Dress in *Fashion & Fancy Dress: The Messel Family Dress Collection 1865–2005*,
Brighton Museum and Birmingham City Art Gallery, 2005-2006
<http://cultures-of-conservation.wikis.bgc.bard.edu/blog:from-the-desk-of-dr-amy>

Figure 24: *David Bowie Is* Exhibition View Showing Yamamoto Cape, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2013 © Sonia D.
<http://urbanmoms.ca/entertainment/david-bowie-is/>

Chapter 13

Conclusion

This dissertation aims to shed light on the changing spaces and circumstances of textile conservation for contemporary costume exhibitions with the advent of the blockbuster spectacle. Textile conservators have to react to these changing circumstances through myriad resourceful, creative and collaborative means to ensure that innovative display decisions are not at the expense of object preservation.

The blockbuster costume exhibition is considered to be a twenty-first century product yet Haye has proved that the concept goes far further back, citing *Britain Can Make It* at the V&A in 1946 as the dawn of a new immersive age for fashion in the institution. The last decade has, however, seen the rise of the global touring fashion exhibition argued by the author as, not so much an elevation in status of costume in the institution, but a shift in priorities, driven by public demand. This has led to a far more universally appealing approach to the exhibition of dress in weird and wonderful displays and locations; an exhibition mutation stressing public presentation above all else.¹⁸¹ The exhibition of the celebrity wardrobe is one such strand of populist display, accompanied by an additional set of challenges due to the objects' association with their high profile owner. Little has been written on the role of the textile conservator working on contemporary costume exhibitions beyond their innovative costume mounting techniques and touring procedures, particularly outwith the museum. This dissertation seeks to show, through two case study examples, how textile conservators are adapting their methods far more broadly to changing circumstances with a 'can do' attitude to even the most complex objects and situations.

The expansion and propagation of costume exhibitions over the last ten years has coincided with a broadened understanding of textile conservation principles, particularly post the introduction of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, with stringent guidelines on preservation and display. This understanding has encouraged a more integrated approach to exhibition organisation within the museum, with textile conservators frequently being invited to participate in the staging of such events from early in the planning stages to ensure the

¹⁸¹ Natalie and Pollak, 237.

longevity of objects on display.¹⁸² The V&A has developed a number of mechanisms through the early inclusion of conservation to increase object preservation while on display and tour. The parallel success of temporary costume and fashion exhibitions in the non-museum context would also suggest the continued proliferation of such exhibitions in less conventional settings. Such exhibitions rely on teams of short-term contractual freelancers bought in later in the planning stages (usually for economic reasons), as exemplified by the case study *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*. Specialist contractors, drafted in to construct an immersive and experimental display, may not have the same inbuilt conservation understanding as in-house teams. Conservation information is more easily transmitted if the conservator's voice is integrated from the early planning stages, although time and budget may limit this from happening. As noted by one of the textile conservators working on *Fashion Galore!*, 'while freelance conservators may sometimes have an influence, they may not always have the authority to challenge decisions already made in an organisation.'¹⁸³

An immersive and experimental display, be it in the museum or outwith, may well inevitably come with additional risk to the objects. Conservators in both case study circumstances explained that collaboration in this context comes with a certain amount of compromise when there are many different agendas at play; the fashion designer may stipulate conditions to maximise object visibility, the exhibition designer wants to create a show stopping extravaganza, the exhibiting institution must generate income through high visitor numbers and extensive tours, and so forth. The conservators working on *David Bowie Is* demonstrated how risks can be reduced as far as possible, with the conservator taking on an educative role, by calculating potential risk and raising awareness of the effect that this will have on object preservation.

The non-museum exhibition is not required to conform to stringent museum accreditation guidelines and therefore the potential for damage to objects on display may be higher. However, once again, by collaborating with security and invigilation staff conservators can share their concerns encouraging the wider team to take a greater interest in object preservation, as exemplified in *Fashion Galore!*. Exciting design and preservation need not be mutually exclusive but this research shows how conservators have to be prepared to bend

¹⁸² Personal Communication with Lara Flecker, June 10, 2015, Costume Display Specialist, V&A, *David Bowie Is*.

¹⁸³ Personal Communication with Chris Sambrook, June 08, 2015, Freelance Textile Conservator, Somerset House, *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

a bit if they are ever to shake off their killjoy reputation and become active participants in the exhibition decision making process and this was notable in both case study exhibitions.

Perhaps there is a certain amount of truth in the words of wisdom offered to Paulocik, during her period of employment in the textile conservation department at The Costume Institute, 'Choose your battles, you can't fight them all.'¹⁸⁴

Inter-group communication becomes paramount to avoid problems at the installation phase as roles become more specialised and autonomous to maximise efficiency over a short time period, however it is also worth noting that this necessity becomes more recognised as the team expands.¹⁸⁵ The V&A has the benefit of both the Exhibitions Department and Resource Planning Team to act as intermediaries and bridge the potential divide between display and conservation. Within smaller institutions this task falls to curators whose administrative responsibilities have increased with exhibition complexity.¹⁸⁶ While the global tour to date only really applies to national, well established institutions with the infrastructure in place to orchestrate such an undertaking, their success may inspire others institutions in the future to embark on similar ventures.¹⁸⁷ The V&A has set a standard for touring costume exhibitions; their increasingly high turn-over has required exhibition teams to streamline the installation and de-installation process maximising efficiency in time and resources but also developing ways of minimising the effect that this tour will have on the objects' condition over a sustained period of time. These development strategies are not only valuable for the museum itself but for the profession as a whole if indeed we do see an increase in globe-touring costume exhibitions, alerting others to the issues that surround the practice.

It is no easy feat to align spectacular blockbuster display with intrinsically flawed, heavily worn celebrity costumes (and not perhaps something that had been undertaken to such an extreme before *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*). The situation is also additionally problematic due to precedents set by fashion exhibitions for presenting pristine garments, often restored by the designer workshop prior to display. Conservators working on both case study exhibitions approached this challenge slightly differently, in response to the specific exhibition circumstances, to ensure that the objects were conserved, and displayed, in a way

¹⁸⁴ Paulocik, *Fabric of an Exhibition*, 24.

¹⁸⁵ Squire, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Socha, 236.

¹⁸⁷ Personal Communication with Shonagh Marshall, May 20, 2015, Somerset House, Curator of *Isabella Blow: Fashion Galore!*

that would speak of their wearer's personality. Textile conservators working on *Fashion Galore!* were limited in time, facilities and resources and by what could realistically be achieved with the poor condition of 30% of the garments. The majority of the treatments were therefore primarily structural but creatively executed to soften stains and present tears and rips in an aesthetic manner. The close working relationship between conservators and curators ensured that evidence of wear played a starring role in the exhibition story as testament to Blow's flamboyant character. Lister highlighted the need for conservators to become, 'active participants in the processes that determine the presentation and interpretation of objects,' and textile conservators' involvement in *Fashion Galore!* is an excellent example of this in practice.¹⁸⁸ Conservation for *Fashion Galore!* demonstrates the potential that these extremely challenging exhibitions have in offering textile conservators new opportunities to explore their creative role in exhibition presentation.

A relatively small proportion of the objects selected for *David Bowie Is* were in a poor condition and the treatment time available was a lot longer. Signs of wear did not feature heavily in the exhibitions story (although the archive did feel that it was important to retain this evidence). Haye noted in a recent lecture that even the V&A, a design museum with a long history of returning items to pristine condition, is now far more concerned with retention of evidence of wear.¹⁸⁹ Interventive treatment was predominantly undertaken in response to the accelerated degradation of modern materials and, in certain instances, had to be quite severe to retain the objects' aesthetic appeal for its blockbuster exhibition audience. The extended global tour was also a substantial consideration for textile conservators faced with preparing objects for display. The mannequins were designed to recreate expressive and iconic David Bowie poses to curatorial stipulation but also to ensure adequate support and protection of the objects both on display and in transit. The specific circumstances of the exhibition, combining theatrical design with an extensive global tour, resulted in a number of innovative solutions to mount-making and display challenges. This strand of creative problem-solving has a wider benefit raising awareness of the necessity of conservation-friendly mounts for touring shows but also the range of practical possibilities for institutions looking to embark on this course of action.

¹⁸⁸ Lister, 430.

¹⁸⁹ Amy de la Haye, *Objects of Passion*, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, April 30, 2015. (Lecture).

Chapter 14

Where Do We Go From Here?

14.1. What Does this Mean For the Future?

The blockbuster costume exhibition of the twenty-first century is an ever evolving, multi-media spectacular, in which the viewer expects to be amazed and awed, to see something completely new and original and become an active participant. This expectation weighs heavy on exhibition organisers competing with the last ‘big thing’ to engage this ever expectant crowd. Both case study exhibitions were testament to the fact that there is no set formula; each exhibition comes with its own unique set of challenges to resolve. There is no denying that this insatiable public appetite for real experience in the digital age changes the role of the conservator, whose traditional responsibilities perhaps sat more easily in the museum of the past, primarily concerned with the safe-keeping of the nation’s collection. The museum has changed to meet the demands of its audience and this overwhelming success, as indicated by its ever increasing visitor numbers, has inspired other museum-like gallery spaces to follow suit. Conservation must be addressed within its twenty-first century context and this is what I have attempted to achieve, on a small scale, through this dissertation. Yes, this environment comes with additional obstacles but it is also exciting, offering possibilities for the elevation of conservation in the decision-making process.

14.2. Future Research

This dissertation has highlighted some of the challenges of conservation for contemporary blockbuster exhibitions. The study could be expanded to look at more exhibitions and present a broader overview of *how* conservators are attacking the challenges posed by these evolving, creative spaces. The research has provided the author with a wealth of educational material to inform her own professional decisions, opening her eyes to the complexities of preparing for a blockbuster exhibition. It is her hope that she will have the opportunity one day to explore this subject in practice and continue to promote the integration of conservation principles from the earliest stages of exhibition planning.

Bibliography

Unpublished Sources

Austin, Emily. "Contemporary Fashion Collections within Museums and the Role of the Conservator." Unpublished Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2014.

Costume Society Power of Gold Conference. V&A, London, July 03-05, 2015.

De la Haye, Amy. *Objects of Passion*. Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, April 30, 2015. (Lecture).

Haldane, Elizabeth-Anne. "Preparing Textiles for Loan and the Role of the Courier." *Professional Development*, University of Glasgow, February 17, 2015. (Lecture).

Treasured Possessions Conference: Material Worlds from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. St. John's College, Cambridge, May 11, 2015.

Wilsdon, Clare. "Research and Exhibitions." *Research Methods in Practice*, University of Glasgow, November 07, 2013. (Lecture).

Contemporary Sources

59 Productions. "David Bowie Is – London." http://59productions.co.uk/project/david_bowie_is. Accessed June 28, 2015.

Arts Council England. "Accreditation Scheme." <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/>. Accessed 23, June 2015.

Ahmed, Fatema. "A Guide to Dummies." *ICON The Secret Life of Museums*, Vol. 136 (October, 2014). <http://www.iconeye.com/design/features/item/10971-mannequins-a-guide-to-dummies>.

Battison, Clair. "It's a Marathon Not a Sprint!: A Very Brief Overview of Exhibition Delivery From a Conservation Point of View." V&A Blog, May 23, 2014. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/its-marathon-not-sprint-very-brief-overview-exhibition-delivery>. Accessed August 18, 2015.

Behlen, Beatrice. "The Body in the Museum." Museum of London Blog, January 01, 2012. <http://blog.museumoflondon.org.uk/the-body-in-the-museum/>. Accessed June 21, 2015.

Beward, Christopher. "Addressing the Century: 100 Years of Art and Fashion." Frieze, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/addressing_the_century_100_years_of_art_and_fashion/. Accessed July 12, 2015.

Canadian Conservation Institute. "Preventive Conservation and Agents of Deterioration." <http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/resources-ressources/agentsofdeterioration-agentsdedeterioration/index-eng.aspx>. Accessed June 24, 2015.

Carmody Groarke. "Exhibition. Postmodernism Style and Subversion at the V&A." <http://www.carmodygroarke.com/project//all/Postmodernism-Style-and-Subversion-V-and-A.html>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

Darling, Elizabeth. "Exhibiting Britain." VADS. http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/designingbritain/html/bcmi_intro.html (accessed June, 29, 2015).

De la Haye, Amy. "From the Desk of Dr. Amy de la Haye." Cultures of Conservation. <http://cultures-of-conservation.wikis.bgc.bard.edu/blog:from-the-desk-of-dr-amy>. Accessed June 17, 2015.

Dezeen. "Ralph Pucci's fashion mannequins "mirror how we want to see ourselves"."
<http://www.dezeen.com/2015/05/29/ralph-pucci-fashion-mannequins-exhibition-museum-arts-design-new-york/>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

Gov.uk. "Protecting Cultural Objects on Loan." <https://www.gov.uk/protecting-cultural-objects-on-loan#how-museums-and-galleries-obtain-approval>. Accessed 23, June 2015.

Jenson, Michelle. "Culture Change and Resource Planning." *Managing Our Collections*. V&A Blog, November 28, 2014. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/managing-our-collections/culture-change-and-resource-planning>. Accessed July 25, 2015.

Kamali, Sarah. "V&A's Hollywood Exhibition Exceeds Expectations." *Vogue News*, January 29, 2013. <http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2013/01/29/v-and-a-hollywood-costume-exhibition-most-popular---museum-high-visitor-numbers>. Accessed June 29, 2015.

Lewis, Jacquelyn. "Chemists and Couture Meet at the Met." *Blouinartinfo International*, October 21, 2007. <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/25592/chemists-and-couture-meet-at-the-met>. Accessed August 16, 2015.

Menkes, Suzy. "Gone Global: Fashion as Art?" *The New York Times*, July 4, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/05/fashion/is-fashion-really-museum-art.html?_r=0. Accessed June 29, 2015.

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. "Jean Paul Gaultier." <http://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/on-tour/jean-paul-gaultier/>. Accessed June, 24, 2015.

Museum of Arts and Design. "Ralph Pucci: The Art of the Mannequin." <http://madmuseum.org/exhibition/ralph-pucci>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

Museums Association. "Ethical Debate: Exhibitions." <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/13808>. Accessed June 29, 2015.

NATCC. "Paper Presentations." <http://www.natconference.com/upcoming-conference/paper-presentations.html>. Accessed June 25, 2015.

Phaidon. "David Bowie Is – An Interview with the V&A Curator."

<http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2013/march/18/david-bowie-is-an-interview-with-the-vanda-curator/>. Accessed June 28, 2015.

Sullivan, Nicola. "DCMS Budget Cut Will Hit Museums." *Museums Journal*.

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/09062015-cost-cutting-measures-will-impact-museums>. Accessed July 17, 2015.

The Fitzwilliam Museum. "Silent Partners: Artist & Mannequin from Function to Fetish."

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/whatson/exhibitions/silentpartners/>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "661,509 Total Visitors to Alexander McQueen Put Retrospective among Top 10 Most Visited Exhibitions in Metropolitan Museum's History."

<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/news/2011/mcqueen-attendance>. Accessed June 24, 2015.

V&A Museum. "Exhibitions Department."

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/e/exhibitions/>. Accessed June 21, 2015.

V&A. "Princely Treasures: European Masterpieces 1600-1800 from the V&A."

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/users/node/9200>. Accessed July 14, 2015.

Printed Material

Auslander, Leora. "Beyond Words." *American Historical Review* (October 2005): 1015-1045, http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/europeanstudies/Auslander-Beyond_Words.pdf.

Broackes, Victoria and Geoffrey Marsh. *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh. London: V&A Publishing, 2013.

Broackes, Victoria. "Putting Out the Fire with Gasoline: Designing David Bowie." In *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh, 117-122. London: V&A Publishing, 2013.

Clark, Judith and Amy de la Haye with Jeffrey Horsley. *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971*. New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2014.

Commoner, Lucy. "A Case of Compromise: Working with Guest Curators." In *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, Vol. 16, 21-30. Washington DC: The Textile Speciality Group, 2006.

Crawley, Greer and Donatella Barbieri. "Dress, Time and Space." In *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, edited by Sandy Black et al., 44-60. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Cullen, Oriole. "Changes: Bowie's Life Story." In *David Bowie Is*, Exhibition Catalogue by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh, 235-306. London: V&A Publishing, 2013.

Denscombe, Martyn. *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Social Research Projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 2014.

Eastop, Dinah and Mary Brooks. "To Clean or Not to Clean: The Value of Soils and Creases." *ICOM Committee for Conservation 11th Triennial Meeting Preprints*, Edinburgh, September 1-6, 1996, 687-691. Glasgow: James & James Ltd., 1996.

Eastop, Dinah. "Conservation as Material Culture." In *Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilly et al., 516-533. London: Sage, 2006.

Eastop, Dinah. "Textiles as Multiple and Competing Histories." In *Textiles Revealed. Object Lessons in Historic Textile & Costume Research*, edited by Mary M. Brooks, 17-28. London: Archetype, 2000.

Evans, Caroline. "Materiality, Memory and History: Adventures in the Archive." In *Isabella Blow Fashion Galore!*, Exhibition Catalogue by Alistair O'Neill and Nick Knight, 137-142. London: Rizzoli International Publications, 2013.

Fisher, Abby Sue. "Invisible Boundaries: Searching for Common Ground Between Curators, Conservators and Interpreters." In *Fabric of an Exhibition: An Interdisciplinary Approach: Preprints of a Conference Symposium 97 - Fabric of an Exhibition*, Ottawa, Canada, September 22 to 25, 1997, 33-38. Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 1997.

Flecker, Lara. *A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting*. Oxford: Burlington, Massachusetts: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007.

Freedberg, S. J., Gervase Jackson-Stops and Richard E. Spear. "On "Art History and the 'Blockbuster' Exhibition"." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (June 1987): 295-298.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051024>.

Gatley, Sam and Roisin Morris. "Striking a Pose: The Display of Hollywood Costume." *Costume*, Vol. 49, No.1 (January, 2015): 75-90.

Gatley, Sam. "Cutting Character: Research into Innovative Mannequin Costume Supports in Collaboration with Royal College of Art Rapid Form Department." *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 60 (Spring, 2012). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2012-issue-60/cutting-character-research-into-innovative-mannequin-costume-supports-in-collaboration-with-the-royal-college-of-art-rapid-form-department/>.

Guinness, Daphne. "Preface." In *Isabella Blow Fashion Galore!*, Exhibition Catalogue by Alistair O'Neill and Nick Knight, 5. London: Rizzoli International Publications, 2013.

Haldane, Elizabeth-Anne et al.. "Crossing Continents: Packing Costumes for Multi-Venue Tours." In *Facing Impermanence. Exploring Preventive Conservation for Textiles. Preprints, NATCC 2007, Washington DC.*, edited by S. Thomassen-Krauss. Washington DC.: NATCC, 2007. Cd.

Heinich, Natalie and Michael Pollak. "Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*: Inventing a Singular Position." In *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, 231-250. London: Routledge, 1996.

Hunter, Susana and Roisin Morris. "The Show Must Go On: Touring Textile and Costume Objects with Hazardous Substances." *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 59 (Spring, 2011). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2011-issue-59/the-show-must-go-on-touring-textile-and-costume-objects-with-hazardous-substances/>.

Idacavage, Sara. "Fashion, Materiality and Alternate Life Cycles: How Museum Practices Disrupt the Linear Temporality of Clothing." Online Ph.D. Thesis, December 3, 2013. http://www.academia.edu/8422305/Fashion_Materiality_and_Alternate_Lifecycles_How_Museum_Practices_Disrupt_the_Linear_Temporality_of_Clothing. Accessed June 29, 2015.

Jones, Helen. "The Importance of Being Less Earnest: Communicating Conservation." *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 41 (summer, 2002). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-41/the-importance-of-being-less-earnest-communicating-conservation/>.

Klonk, Charlotte. *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors From 1800-2000*. New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Lister, Alison. "Making the Most of Mounts." In *Changing Views of Textile Conservation*, edited by Mary Brooks and Dinah Eastop, 428-437. Los Angeles, California: Getty Conservation Institute, 2011.

Martin, Graham. "Preventive Conservation in Practice." *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 06 (January 1993). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-06/preventive-conservation-in-practice/>.

Miller, John. "The Show You Love to Hate: A Psychology of the Mega-Exhibition." In *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg et al., 269-274. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Millikin, Sandra. "Art Exhibition." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/36531/Blockbuster-Art-Exhibitions-Year-In-Review-1996>. Accessed June 06, 2015.

Nightingale, Catherine. "Designing an Exhibition to Minimise Risk to Costume on Open Display." *The Conservator*, Vol. 29, (2005/6): 35-49.

Palmer, Alexandra. "Untouchable: Creating Desire and Knowledge in Museum Costume and Textile Exhibitions." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March, 2008): 31-63,
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175174108X268136#.VaOwZ_k5O8A.

Paulocik, Christine. "Costume Dilemmas: Dangerous Liaisons." In *The Textile Speciality Group Postprints*, Vol. 16, 56-64. Washington DC: The Textile Speciality Group, 2006.

Paulocik, Christine. "Behind the Seams of an Exhibition." In *Fabric of an Exhibition: An Interdisciplinary Approach: Preprints of a Conference Symposium 97 - Fabric of an Exhibition*, Ottawa, Canada, September 22 to 25, 1997, 23-32. Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 1997.

Shah, Bhavesh, Susana Hunter and Stuart Adams. "Dust to Dust. Access to Access." *V&A Conservation Journal*, Vol. 59 (Spring 2011)
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2011-issue-59/dust-to-dust.-access-to-access>.

Socha, Miles. "Museum Quality: Mona Lisa, Move Over. Victor & Rolf is at the Louvre, Part of a New Craze for Fashion at Museums." *W Magazine*, November 2003.

Squire, Louise. "The Textile Conservator's Role in the Project Culture: Three Loan Exhibitions." In *Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice*, edited by Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer, 13-18. Oxford: Elsevier/Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010).

Steele, Valerie. "Museum Quality: the Rise of the Fashion Exhibition." *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2008): 7-30. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175174108X268127>.

Steele, Valerie. *The Berg Companion to Fashion*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 2010.

Taylor, Lou. "Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches." In *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, edited by Sandy Black et al., 23-43. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Taylor, Lou. *Establishing Dress History*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Taylor, Lou. *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Further Reading

Anderson, Fiona. "Museums as Fashion Media." In *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, edited by Stella Bruzzi, 371-389. London: Routledge, 2000.

At Somerset House. "About Somerset House." <https://www.somersetouse.org.uk/about>. Accessed August 15, 2015.

Barker, Rachel and Alison Bracker. "Beuys is Dead: Long Live Beuys! Characterising Volition, Longevity, and Decision-Making in the Work of Joseph Beuys." *Tate Papers*, Issue 4 (October 2005). <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/beuys-dead-long-live-beuys-characterising-volition-longevity-and-0>.

Barnard, Malcolm. *Fashion Theory: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Bogle, Elizabeth. *Museum Exhibition Planning and Design*. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2013.

Bolton, Andrew and Harold Koda. *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

College Art Association. "Art History and the "Blockbuster" Exhibition." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1986): 358-359. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3050971>.

Dezeen Magazine. "Future Fashions Exhibition by You Are Here and Glamcult Studio." <http://www.dezeen.com/2013/10/25/future-fashions-exhibition-at-dutch-design-week-2013/>. Accessed July 12, 2015.

Dezeen Magazine. "Modelbelofte 2014 Exhibition Showcases "Innovative" Graduate Fashion." <http://www.dezeen.com/2014/10/22/modebelofte-2014-graduate-fashion-exhibition-dutch-design-week-2014/>. Accessed July, 12, 2015.

Dobbie, Maggie. "Another Mannequin-Making Method." *ICON News* (May, 2014): 30-32. <http://www.icon.org.uk/images/iconnews%20may%202014%20web%20version.pdf>.

Furedi, Frank. "Celebrity Culture." Springer Science and Business Media, 2010. <http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/article/10.1007/s12115-010-9367-6/fulltext.html>. Accessed August 15, 2015.

Hewer, Paul and Kathy Hamilton. "Exhibitions and the Role of Fashion in the Sustenance of the Kylie Brand Mythology: Unpacking the Spatial Logic of Celebrity Culture." *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 12, Issue 4 (December 2012): 411-425. <http://mtq.sagepub.com/content/12/4/411.full.pdf+html>.

Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things." http://web-facstaff.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Kopytoff_CulturalBiography.pdf. Accessed August 15, 2015.

MacDonald, Sharon (ed.). *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Muñoz Viñas, Salvador. *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*. Amsterdam; London: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005.

Obie, Chandra. "Collecting Pop Culture: A Discussion of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Three Major Types of Collectors of Pop Culture Objects." Unpublished Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2007.

Paddon, Hannah. *Redisplaying Museum Collections: Contemporary Display and Interpretation in British Museums*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2014.

Riegels Mechior, Marie and Birgitta Svensson (ed.). *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice*. London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Riegels Melchior, Marie. "Fashion Museology: Identifying and Contesting Fashion in Museums." September 22-25, 2011. https://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Oxford_fashion_exploring_critical_issues_PAPER_MarieRiegelsMelchior.pdf. Accessed August 15, 2015.

Tomkins, Calvin. "Anarchy Unleashed." *The New Yorker*, March 25, 2013. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/03/25/anarchy-unleashed>. Accessed July 12, 2015.

V&A Blog. "History of an Object in 100 Worlds." <http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/section/history-object-100-worlds/page/2>. Accessed June 29, 2015.

V&A. "V&A Mission and Objectives." <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/v/v-and-a-mission-and-objectives/>. Accessed August 15, 2015.

Wyles, Rosie. "Towards Theorising the Place of Costume in Performance Reception." In *Theorising Performance: Greek Drama, Cultural History and Criminal Practice*, edited by Edith Hall and Stephe Harrop., 171- 180. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2010.