

**VIRTUALLY (UN)DRESSED:  
RESEARCHING THE BODY IN  
THE DIGITAL AGE**

**2020 DRESS AND BODY  
ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**

**NOVEMBER 13-14, 2020**

## **VIRTUALLY (UN)DRESSED: RESEARCHING THE BODY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

“Dress” is a highly inclusive concept that includes all varieties of body supplements and body modifications\* found in human cultures around the world. It is not limited to clothing, costume, or fashion or to any particular time, place, or economic structure. The mission of the Dress and Body Association (DBA) is to bring together scholars from diverse disciplines and areas of the world to share academic research about dress and body practices, to offer quality opportunities for networking, and to forge links with like-minded individuals and organizations.

Dress and Body Association Mission Statement, 2020

Heather M. Akou Indiana University  
Therèsa M. Winge Michigan State University

The Dress and Body Association will be holding its inaugural conference November 13-14, 2020. Consistent with the long-term goals of the DBA, this conference will be entirely online including keynote speakers, research presentations, and opportunities for virtual events and networking with other scholars. Visit the DBA website to learn more about the organization: <https://www.dress-body-association.org/>

Although the digital realm is in many ways *disembodied*, it is also an important site for political activism and for building social networks and communities. Many users know that digital images and videos are frequently curated and sometimes manipulated, yet online media is saturated with iconic images. As we have seen with movements such as body positivity, Occupy, the Women’s March, Black Lives Matter, etc., this imagery of bodies and dress profoundly shapes public sentiment. It can also impact research by creating and limiting funding opportunities, changing trajectory/ies for scholars, and challenging the status quo. To register for the conference: <https://www.dress-body-association.org/conferences>

The Dress and Body Association is excited to announce that Dr. Joanne Turney, Design Historian at Winchester School of Art at University of Southampton will give our opening Keynote and Dr. Elka Stevens, Fashion Designer in the Department of Art at Howard University will give our closing Keynote. In addition, to our panels of presenters for the two-day conference, we are enthusiastic to share that we will have a Virtual Coffee House for breaks between presentations with a monitor who can place people in breakout rooms for conversations and networking, with an online DBA Exhibition Space for publishers, editors, vendors, etc. In the near future, the Dress and Body Association will be offering workshops on topics significant to Dress scholars, researchers, and practitioners.

## SCHEDULE

**FRIDAY**

**NOVEMBER 13, 2020**

**7a EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/85844070569>

Meeting ID: 858 4407 0569

**OPENING REMARKS**

HEATHER AKOU

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**ON TREND? BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND POCKETS OF RESISTANCE**

Joanne Turney

Announcements

**9a EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/86159547071>

Meeting ID: 861 5954 7071

**FASHIONING AVATARS**

**DIGITAL 3D-FASHION: DESIGNING FOR VIRTUAL BODIES AND SPACES**

Natalia Särmäkari

**VIRTUAL LIFE: FASHION, EXPRESSION AND IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

ELIZABETH BOURGEOIS

**VIRTUAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY**

KRISTINA GLIGOROVSKA

**11a EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/82274128017>

Meeting ID: 822 7412 8017

**LOCATING THE BODY**

**CLOTH MAKING AND INTERIORS: BODY, PLANS AND POSSIBLE INTERACTIONS**

ANITA PUIG

**DEVELOPING A BODYSUIT AS A TOOL FOR SHIFTING BODY PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE DIGITAL: IMAGINING THE DIGITAL GARMENT AS PERCEPTIVE BODY**

Jan Tepe

**BODY AND MIND IN DIGITAL FASHION**

CHARLOTTE BRACHTENDORF

**BODY BEYOND ITS LIMITS: THE CASE OF MOODRISE MOBILE APPLICATION**

Mariia Ternovska

## 1P EST

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/85444650081> Meeting ID: 854 4465 0081

BREAK--VISIT THE VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUSE AND EXHIBITION SPACE

## 2P EST

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/89941948821> Meeting ID: 899 4194 8821

INTERROGATING SOCIAL NORMS

**"NOW WE'RE JUST TRYING TO TAKE IT BACK, IS ALL": THE YEEHAW AGENDA AND FELTING THE MATERIAL COMPLEXITY OF COWBOYDOM**

STEFAN RABITSCH

**ETHNICITY IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: SEARCHING FOR A DIFFERENT STYLE OR PRESERVING A MINORITY IDENTITY.**

AICHA NAIRI

**DE-CENTERING WHITENESS: HOW RACIALIZED FEMININITIES SHAPE DRESS**

ANGELA NURSE

**THE WEB AS PERFORMANCE: SITUATED NOESIS AND ONLINE DALIT BODIES**

PRIYANKA SRIVASTAVA

**WELCOME TO THE UNCANNY VALLEY: EXTERIORIZED INTERIORS THROUGH THE LENS OF KNITWEAR**

REBECCA SCHUILING

## saturday      November 14, 2020

### 7a EST

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/87037524500> Meeting ID: 870 3752 4500

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE MEDIATED BODY

**DIGITAL SOLIDARITY AND BODY IMPERFECTIONS**

MARIA SKIVKO

**SELFIES AS SELF-LOVE PRAXIS: THE USE OF SELFIES IN QUESTIONING FASHIONABLE NOTIONS OF THE BODY**

CHE T JULIUS BUGTER

**AUTONOMOUSLY CRAZY OR CRAZILY AUTONOMOUS? REPRESENTATIONS OF BODY MODIFICATION IN THE REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAM 'BODYSHOCKERS'**

JENNY O'SULLIVAN

**"INSTAGRAM VS. REALITY": WHAT BODY-POSITIVE BLOGGERS GOT WRONG ABOUT POSING**

Ksenia Gusarova

**Online CHATROOMS VIS-A-VIS EXPECTATIONS and REALITY**

BHUMIKA SHARMA and MOHAMMED MUQTADIR

**9a EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/82795238472> Meeting ID: 827 9523 8472

NARRATIVES OF BODY POLITICS

**DRESSING THE VICIOUS and VIRTUOUS women in TAMIL mega SERIALS**

Premalatha Karupiah

**HANDMAIDENS IN PROTEST: CHARACTER DRESS BLURS REALITY WITH SCIENCE FICTION**

Theresa M. Winge

**KOMBINEZON VS TOWEL. THE IDEOLOGICAL ROLE OF DRESS IN THE SOVIET/EASTERN EUROPEAN SCIENCE FICTION**

Anna Novikov

**11a EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/86721153172> Meeting ID: 867 2115 3172

INVESTIGATING DRESS and THE BODY

**WRAPPED UP IN THE FIELD: MAINTAINING ETHNOGRAPHIC DISTANCE VS. BEING THE APPRECIATIVE CRITIC ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

ARTI SANDHU

**SEX WORKER STYLE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "DRESSED LIKE A WHORE"?**

JO WELDON

**FLESHING OUT HISTORICAL FICTION**

HEATHER AKOU

**"THE ITCHING BODY": PANDEMICS as seen BY DANCE PRACTITIONERS**

LINDA KVITKINA

**1P EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/85444650081> Meeting ID: 854 4465 0081

BREAK--VISIT THE VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUSE and EXHIBITION SPACE

**2P EST**

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/89764996500>

Meeting ID: 897 6499 6500

KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
ELKA STEVENS

**CLOSING REMARKS**

Theresa M. WINGE



**Friday**

**November 13, 2020**

**7am EST**

**OPENING REMARKS**

HEATHER AKOU  
CO-DIRECTOR, DRESS AND BODY ASSOCIATION  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

**KEYNOTE**

ON TREND? BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND POCKETS  
OF RESISTANCE

Joanne Turney  
DESIGN HISTORIAN  
EDITOR, *CLOTHING CULTURES*  
WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

This presentation aims to consider the ways in which studies of dress and fashion have changed over the past 10 years. By situating the themes around my (and my co-editor, Alex Franklin's) publication, *Clothing Cultures* (Intellect) and the wider field, I outline key changes, trends, and possibilities that will help us not only contribute merely to a wider, richer, and more inclusive discipline, but also to others and the world in which we live. Therefore, this keynote is about all of our clothing cultures, and how we can contribute to discourse in a post-pandemic world.

**9a EST**

## **FASHIONING AVATARS**

### **DIGITAL 3D-FASHION: DESIGNING FOR VIRTUAL BODIES AND SPACES**

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The use of digital 3D-software and design of digital-only garments have increasingly gained ground in the fashion field. Designing in and for the virtual realm enables unlimited creative experimentation, minimization of resource use and investment, the participation of large communities in fashion production, and an inclusive approach to bodies and identities. This phenomenon raises questions about the materiality, tactility, and corporeality of professional fashion design practice together with the symbolic and institutional value of fashion designers' authority. How does digital fashion practice shape fashion design? The phenomenon of "digital fashion design" has been little addressed in scholarly fashion studies and design research literature, yet, largely noticed by the media. Two ethnographically examined in-depth case studies of digital fashion pioneers, Atacac and The Fabricant, as well as findings of a qualitative survey of 42 digital fashion designers, are presented in this paper, proposing that digital fashion designers are "newcomers", contesting and expanding the dominant fashion field. They translate the tacit knowledge and the physical garment construction skills of a fashion designer as well as the situated embodied experience as a human being in the virtual space. Designers are feeding their knowledge to the software that, on its part, educates the amateurs and novice-designers about garment construction. When designing digital-only garments for virtual spaces or games, designers are not constrained by the functional, material, financial, and social requirements, but encounter a risk of a gimmicky outcome. Digital fashion designers create quantified representations of garments, containing the same data as the real – possible or impossible – garments. The interplay between the physical and the digital constructs a cyborg designer, working in decentralized virtual, or "phygital," spaces and communities, designing for the digital twins, avatars, and virtual layer of expression, liquifying the professional, authorial, material, and bodily boundaries.

### **VIRTUAL LIFE: FASHION, EXPRESSION AND IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

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During social distancing, fashion and self-expression have pushed further into virtual environments. In VR spaces, identities can be curated easily, untethered from the necessities of life and work. Personal styles reach a wider audience and follow new rules. Digital platforms leave some, but not all "real world" clothing constraints behind. Virtual aesthetics are set by the user and the software.

Gen Z are native users, applying face filters on Instagram and Snapchat; and styling outfits and skins in apps like Gacha Life, Roblox, and Fortnite. These games cultivate space for community and personal style. Loosely tied to human forms, each app has physical aesthetics, with clear vernacular dress defining it. There are ecosystems of makers, consumers, and critics. Designer-modelers create original assets, brands, and luxury items.



Fashion and beauty are ephemeral, but always reflect idealization of form and self. Online communities have already established new beauty ideals that impact live fashion trends. Fashion houses develop AR filters, gaming hairstyles challenge real world colorists, and musicians perform virtual concerts in their avatar forms.

In these times, social media and gaming communities promote the expression of public identity. Online dress is no longer tied to "real" bodies or cloth. In virtual worlds, there are still tribes, status symbols, gender identities, and roles; but, free of fabric, form, and static social structure, there is room for fantastic invention.

## **VIRTUAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY**

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Who is the digital me? A virtual nemesis, or just a friendly avatar..

Continual gaze at the portrait of Dorian Gray offers a new mode for perceiving our presence in the virtual sphere. It can be argued that our digitized bodies could be the antidote of aging, representing our inclination towards ageless beauty. The process of continual metamorphosis, merging and exceeding of borders between reality and dreams, natural and artificial beauty, physical and digital worlds, constitutes one of the initial points in the introspection of the virtual self and the virtually enhanced body.

By situating the digital realm as a second reality, the protagonists are invited into a journey where the virtual bodies can be interpreted as sites that offer a sensitive modern twist of beauty in relation to artificiality. Knowing that beauty has always found its satisfaction in artificiality, and that fashion has an immortal thirst for beauty, the question on the meaning of virtual bodies, garments, and fashion scenes as new recycled ideals floats on the surface. In that manner, the virtual representations are saturated with signs concerning the idea of transcendence, overcoming the fashion's embedded beauty criteria, suggesting the impeccable masquerade where we can be immortals, and our bodies posthuman.

The need for a second reality, one in which we can escape for a moment, has been an inspiration for various forms of performances, and fashion is the primary medium. Amidst the mystery that surrounds the concept of the second reality, it is a utopian world created in our mind, whether simulating past or future; it is a radically different universe, wherein supremacy is portrayed in all its depth. Today, it is mirrored in the digital world and translated as a utopian island where we can be detached from reality and the constraints of our physical bodies. And in fashion, it is a place that augments yielding "phygital" experiences

## 11a EST

### LOCATING THE BODY

#### **CLOTH MAKING AND INTERIORS: BODY, PLANS AND POSSIBLE INTERACTIONS**

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Robin Evans, in his *Translations from drawing to buildings*, and other essays, deals with reciprocities between architecture and spatial conditions related to the use of space confronting the void that results in architecture between representation and construction. This paper is the result of a pregrad course, developed not through drawings and buildings as representations of lives, but it expands this argument through the question on how the real body is an unknown field for most undergraduate students of architecture. If they only work with the body as an abstract being, how can they relate to built space? Moreover, how is the body they use if their relation with space is only through plan or axonometrics? This course, developed as a design studio class, worked as an empiric verification on the difference that real scale, on-hands work can make on students, specifically regarding the void between real life bodies in space, versus working with CAD figures and typifications. Considering that the garment worked as the first layer to relate with the built environment, students were asked to construct this first layer as a clothing design exercise. For this process, cloth making tools such as patterns and their alterations, but more importantly, body measuring techniques, were taught and used throughout the course. This obliged students to work with their own measures understanding, and rewriting their relation with plans, and the spatial consequences that come from their drawings. Researching about specific interiors, students were asked to make a piece of clothing that interacted and transformed the relation between subject-and space with their own measures. The results confirmed the hypothesis of the poor understanding of the human body they have, and how clothes can be a tool for research and defining the built environment on architecture students.

#### **DEVELOPING A BODYSUIT AS A TOOL FOR SHIFTING BODY PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE DIGITAL: IMAGINING THE DIGITAL GARMENT AS PERCEPTIVE BODY**

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The emergence of immersive virtual worlds opens up new possibilities for fashion designers on how to think and design garments for the digital body.

This paper aims: (i) to present a technologically advanced bodysuit for externalizing bodily perceptions of seeing, hearing, and feeling touch towards the outermost layer of the bodysuit, (ii) to then propose and elaborate on the idea of the digital garment as body substitute when bodily senses can get externalized towards non-human body-related materials and further digital materials, and (iii) to argue the findings based on an experiment conducted with participants.

To achieve these aims, it was important to develop a technologically advanced bodysuit that relocates perception areas of the body in the physical reality instead of translating them into the digital reality right away. This is due to the reason that we are desensitized nowadays when interacting with digital bodies as human body substitutes since we encounter such experiences daily through digital media.

Undergraduate fashion design students as participants experienced the relocation of body senses within an experimental setup organized in three phases. In phase one, participants experienced wearing the bodysuit without perception alteration, to then experience the relocation of seeing, hearing, and feeling touch towards the outermost layer of the bodysuit in phase two. In phase three, information from the participants was gathered through questionnaires and group discussions.

The outcomes show that all participants experienced the alteration of seeing, hearing, and feeling touch while wearing the bodysuit. Further, the questionnaires and discussion showed that the participants experienced a shifting understanding from their body-surface towards the bodysuit's outermost layer. This then led to a new understanding from the participants' side of the digital garment as digital body substitute which led to new ideas of what designing digital garments could include from fashion designers' perspectives.

## **BODY AND MIND IN DIGITAL FASHION**

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In the short history of Fashion Studies, dress has been most commonly interrogated as a form of visual representation or semiotic 'text'. As such, it seems all too easy to think of fashion as disembodied. In this vein, the digital fashion produced by The Fabricant or Carlings exists only as a file and not as a material garment. Once purchased, the items can be edited onto photographs of the customers and then posted to their social media. It appears that such phenomena continue to portray dressed bodies as images.

Yet, scholars have started to pay more attention to the bodily and haptic experiences of dress. In particular, Joanne Entwistle reminds us that fashion is not just discursive but also embodied. Always situated in space and time, dress is a bodily practice that draws attention to our fleshy nature. Such arguments are often based on phenomenological approaches, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and diametrically opposed the Cartesian mind-body-dualism.

Thus, the question arises, if and how digital dresses that never touch the body of their actual wearers can be understood as embodied. In this paper, I argue that digital fashion indeed remains a bodily practice. Arguments that insist on the need to overcome the Cartesian mind-body-dualism tend to misunderstand the concept as one where body and mind are completely separate, rather than highly interactional. I argue that understanding fashion as image or text does not preclude bodily experiences. In fact, thinking with Merleau-Ponty, even at the mere sight of fashion images, we cannot evade our own bodies. As the body mediates how we experience the world, engaging in digital fashion practices draws attention to the dialectic relationship between our corporal schemas and digital fashion specifically and to the connection between Fashion Studies and Philosophy of Mind generally.

Literature:

Entwistle, J. (2000) *The Fashioned Body: Theorizing Fashion and Dress in Modern Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962 [1945]) *The Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Examples: The Fabricant ([www.thefabricant.com](http://www.thefabricant.com))

Carlings (<https://carlings.com/en/atf/campaign-page/>)

## **BODY BEYOND ITS LIMITS: THE CASE OF MOODRISE MOBILE APPLICATION**

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In this presentation I am going to discuss how the notion of "extension of man" coined by Marshall McLuhan is reflected in technology of mobile applications. More specifically, I will concentrate on the case of Moodrise wellness app which claims to offer "world's first on-demand, digital nutrition delivery system for mobile devices." The app can be defined as a literal incarnation of the image of a human "scattering one's nervous system around the globe" provided by Marshall McLuhan (2012) half a century ago. By implying that a particular kind of content may stimulate various hormones' release and, as a consequence, determine a human's emotional state, Moodrise further elaborates the motto "you are what you consume" and blurs the boundaries between a body and outer as such. Moodrise can be described as an extreme case of the application logic, which doesn't necessarily imply something extra was added, but rather points to the fact that nowadays a human body spreads way beyond its biological "borders." Therefore, the investigation shows a way to consider the content as the very essence (literally, as fluids and guts) of a human body extended throughout software. On the other hand, such an approach marks a shift of the discussion's focus from the critique of representations to exploration into modes of being with technology. Given the foregoing, the point of particular interest is the addictive nature of mobile applications. If every piece of content serves as an equivalent of biologically active substances, should we address software's user as an indiscriminate consumer? Should we struggle for a healthier society by limiting what they can see online and how much time they can spend scrolling through their cells?

As a result, a detailed analysis of how health and normality are defined within Moodrise's coordinates will allow us to outline what the corporeality of a subject of a gadget is and to propose the ways of the human psyche's concept reexamination.

**1P EST**

**Break**

VISIT THE VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUSE AND EXHIBITION SPACE

2P EST

## INTERROGATING SOCIAL NORMS

### **"NOW WE'RE JUST TRYING TO TAKE IT BACK, IS ALL": THE YEEHAW AGENDA AND FELTING THE MATERIAL COMPLEXITY OF COWBOYDOM**

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"Every cowboy has to have a cowboy hat." – Tulsa Hughes, *Cowboy & Indiana* (2018)  
The main title of this paper is taken from G. Neri's 2011 YA novel *Ghetto Cowboy*; it is a coming-of-age story that places black teenager Cole into the asphalt-and-concrete cowboy world of North Philadelphia's Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club. There, he learns not only to survive and persevere in an environment that is undergirded by a host of systemic inequalities, but also discovers the long and rich history of African American cowboydom and horsemanship. Neri's novel encapsulates and speaks to (avant la lettre) what has since gathered considerable momentum—the Yeehaw Agenda.

In the fall of 2018, Bri Malandro retweeted a Ciara photoshoot—for which the R&B singer-songwriter donned fine cowboy hats and western apparel—stating that "the yee haw agenda is in full effect." She thus gave a name to creative forces and artistic impulses that had already been percolating for a little while in African American art, fashion, and literary circles, spiking late that year and continuing throughout the spring of 2019. By now, the Yeehaw Agenda has coalesced into a multi-platform, intermedial, social activist ecology of cultural production which most recently also merged with the Black Lives Matter movement. (Re)claiming and recoding what is often mistakenly seen as an exclusively white domain, the Yeehaw Agenda seeks to seize and democratize western ephemera, icons, and narratives—especially western wear—in an effort to make more visible the long-standing contributions of African Americans to the multicultural fabric of the American West, and ranching and horsemanship economies in particular.

Growing out of a larger project dedicated to the cultural history of cowboy hats, this paper will deploy the most iconic piece of cowboy dress along with its embodied material mobility as focal points for accessing and mapping the Yeehaw Agenda's significance. The complexity of the materials that cowboy hats are usually made of—fur felt and straw—will serve as conceptual scaffold for mapping how pertinent contributors to the Yeehaw Agenda have employed this quintessentially American piece of headwear. This mapping includes but is not limited to: Pyer Moss's 2018 "American, Also" campaign which featured the Compton Cowboys and the Cowgirls of Color rodeo team, Cardi B's opening performance at the 2019 Houston Rodeo, the meteoric emergence of Lil Nas X, Solange Knowles' performance art film *When I Get Home* (2019), which blends Afrofuturist elements with African American trail riding and rodeo heritage, Megan Thee Stallion tour de force "country girl" aesthetic, and Ivan B. McClellan's photographic art which has been featured by notable western wear brands such as Wrangler, Ariat, Boot Barn, and Stetson. Ultimately, each of these instances, where we see a person of color wearing a cowboy hat, engaging in a social practice that has been primarily associated with white Anglo ranching culture and horsemanship makes cowboy whiteness/white cowboys vulnerable to cultural critique.

## **ETHNICITY IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: SEARCHING FOR a DIFFERENT STYLE OR PRESERVING a MINORITY IDENTITY**

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Social networks are omnipresent in our daily lives. Through these technological means, we are exposed to an infinite number of images that reinforce the standards surrounding women's bodies. It is a fact that social media have changed the way consumers buy, think and act.

Indeed, today, talking about a digital identity has almost become a truism. Although considered as a virtual world, the Internet presents itself at the same time as a space for identity construction, even if obviously all manipulations are possible here. For example, there is no way of telling whether an individual who presents himself or herself as such in a web space is actually that person. Speaking in these conditions of digital identity deserves to be nuanced each time, because, as Georges rightly acknowledges, the notions of real and virtual maintain ambiguous relations within the framework of new sociabilities interfaced by representations.

The fashion sector also stands out for its strong presence in social media and content-generating platforms. This sector is undergoing a major transformation that affects the way trends are researched, the perception of design and the location of the end customer. In fashion, interaction with the public is very important because it allows the customer to be actively involved in the brand and the consumer himself to become an ambassador for the brand.

In recent years, we have noticed the frequent return to ethnic motifs, seen as a need for the inspirational sphere, but also as a cultural reference present within the fashion system. This aesthetic distinction also manifests itself in social networks through the creation of pages and blogs promoting such an ethnic product. The question that arises in this context is the following: Is the installation of ethnic products on social networks a practice imposing a different style or a way of preserving a minority identity ? The objective of our intervention is to study this kind of expression in order to finally answer the question posed. This is based on a case study.

## **DE-CENTERING WHITENESS: HOW RACIALIZED FEMINITIES SHAPE DRESS**

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The intersection of dress, race, and femininity often centers on how women respond to the dominance of a whitewashed hegemonic ideal of beauty upheld in institutional policies and practices, as well as media outlets. Because women who embody ideal white femininity get social perks and privileges, dress research on the intersection of femininity and race tends to focus the ways in which women use body modification and supplementation deal with the immense pressure. Either women accommodate the ideal by attempting to live up to society's preference or they use their bodies as a political site to resist the dominance of the ideal white femininity and white supremacy. In either case, the discourse on race and dress revolves around an ideal of white femininity. Based on 36 interviews about everyday dress with Black and white women, between the ages of 18 and 25 a midwestern university, I found that only White women centered their dress practice on the ideal construction of white femininity. They did this by modeling their dress on white celebrities and friends, whereas Black women looked to Black television characters, celebrities, and friends for style inspiration. For Black women, their rationale was not driven by a desire to resist ideal whiteness or a political agenda to disrupt the status quo, instead they articulated a desire to embody the ideal version of Black womanhood. Neither group was overtly focused on the social implications of their dress, but rather their racial subjectivities as Black and

White women limited what they thought was possible for their bodies. In practice their daily dress behavior was driven by distinct racialized and gendered beauty ideals, suggesting a pluralistic model of embodied dress rather than a singular ideal. By de-centering singular societal idealized version of white femininity, this research provides evidence for a racially plural model of ideal femininities that frames and limits how women understand their bodies and decide what to wear.

## **THE WEB AS PERFORMANCE: SITUATED NOESIS AND ONLINE DALIT BODIES**

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The Dalit presence on the online mediascape of the country is a relatively recent phenomenon, and a lot of social scientists have engaged with the many ways in which the world wide web has been an ally in harnessing the power of computer mediated communication in its attempts to invest the community with the dignity and rights due to it as subjects of a modern human society. However, the web, like every other human fabrication, is marked with the normative convictions of its architects. In the case of India, the social matrix of the web replicates the dynamics of western scientific/ technological values dovetailing with motifs from the hegemonic cultural practices and value systems of the country. In the light of this, it isn't inaccurate to claim that the web is a complicated ally for the Dalits as much of the Dalit episteme and experience structures don't necessarily find an intuitive expression on the web.

Increasingly, however, epistemes based on objective absolutisms and the duality of the mind and the body are under greater challenge on web platforms now from several minority cultures (including Dalits) that assert the 'situated' noesis of our embodied selves. Drawing upon the works of Denzin and Conquergood on performance and culture, particularly the assertion of the former that "the world is a performance, not a text" (2003), this paper claims that the internet too is a performance, and not a text. Focusing upon the interconnections between the Dalit body and its experiential knowledge as found on several online platforms, I contend that the transnational Dalit networks of the second-generation users of the internet are re-shaping and re-defining the system's core principles and premises in order to challenge and re-assess the existing forms of institutional engagements and their participatory hierarchies in various establishments—both online as well as offline, academic or otherwise.

## **WELCOME TO THE UNCANNY VALLEY: EXTERIORIZED INTERIORS THROUGH THE LENS OF KNITWEAR**

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In popular culture "the uncanny valley" refers to a computer-generated figure bearing a near-identical resemblance to a human being. This sense of something being, not quite right, is unsettling. Essentially, there is a fine line between charming and creepy. The uncanny leaves us with the feeling that something that is strangely familiar is now disconcerting when encountered in an unexpected or taboo context.

The Covid-19 pandemic upended norms, where it ventures into the uncanny valley. I am attending meetings in my comfy knitted pajamas while gazing into the homes of my work colleagues, consumed by questions. I now know how many pillows are on a colleague's bed in a home I have never been in and been distracted by family members in various states of dress walking in the background. Bastions of decorum now feature the uncomfortably familiar. Our interiors are being exteriorized.

Indeed, Zoom meetings, online school, doctors' appointments, exercise classes, therapy sessions, etc. are all being conducted in the same space while wearing the same thing; clothing that is familiar, intimate, comfortable, secure, and domestic, no matter the occasion, no matter the topics being discussed. The aesthetics of pandemic fear is comfort, specifically, knits. In this presentation, I discuss the aesthetics of knits and associated comfort. Clothing items typically worn in public spaces, like bras and pants, are not conducive to the pandemic zeitgeist. On one hand, the duality of knitted loungewear offers comfort, mobility, a second skin, as you move from bed to couch and back again. On the other hand, where that uncanny feeling lies is that your boss is also wearing the same comfort items while conducting business on heretofore items of furniture meant for more intimate activities, such as beds.





**saturday**

**NOVEMBER 14, 2020**

**7a EST**

**THE MEDIATED BODY**

**DIGITAL SOLIDARITY AND BODY IMPERFECTIONS**

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What we observe today in the fashion world is the process of fashion democratization: fashion standards are blurred by diversity and multiculturalism, fashion icons more often can be found not at the catwalk, but at the street, luxury segment due to the economic crisis is facing crucial changes. Parallel to that, the entire idea of a fashioned body is transforming: new approaches to understanding beauty and beauty standards and limitations in body performance in public (and/or virtual) space offer opportunities in researching and defining fashioned bodies. Moreover, the digitalization of fashion offers endless opportunities to perform a fashion look and a fashioned body up to a new fashion ideology.

However, instead of body embellishment with the help of digital technologies, there is a trend to demonstrate the body as it is, without filters and effects. It relates to body imperfections as well as body transformations due to some life and health issues etc. This "digital body" ideology transmits the idea of creating a new iconic image, free of marketing tricks and consumerism standards. It arouses public discussion (positive and negative) and facilitates public empathy. Moreover, it produces the idea of digital solidarity on body imperfections. The research investigates digital images of an imperfect body on Instagram and the reaction of followers regarding public empathy and digital solidarity.

**SELFIES AS SELF-LOVE PRAXIS:  
THE USE OF SELFIES IN QUESTIONING FASHIONABLE NOTIONS OF  
THE BODY**

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The selfie is often regarded as a sign of vanity, and as something which serves no other purpose than generating clout (based on likes and compliments). Nevertheless, uploading a picture of one's body can become quite radical when said body is "different" in comparison to normative and fashionable bodies. In this paper, I want to explore how "selfies as self-love praxis" can open up different perspectives upon our bodies, and subsequently lead to a reconsideration of the fashionable body.

On August 6, 2013, I uploaded my first selfie onto my Instagram profile. Almost 6 years later, on July 30, 2019, I uploaded the first selfie of my unclothed body, with the caption "i have been having a lot of intense and contradictory body feelings lately so here you have a selfie that I took to sort of feel better about it I guess [(thot)selfies as self love praxis / pink filter love]".

In my own life, I have adopted the selfie as a form of self-love praxis. Every time I post my body — with its stretch marks, skinfolds, hair, sweat, large belly and chest and discolorations — onto a digital platform, my aim is to love this body a bit more. I am luckily not alone in this quest. Many artists and activists use social media to showcase selfies of bodies that live outside of the norm, and advocate for more bodily freedom and agency. Using for example Sara Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* and Eva Illouz' (2007) *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, I work towards an analysis of my own "selfie praxis", as well as other body-activist practices. Using these analyses, I want to propose new ways for our bodies to interact with fashion. The focus is on regaining agency over their representation and sensitivity — hence reinstating the value and importance of the enormous range of bodies living inside the fashion system.

**AUTONOMOUSLY CRAZY OR CRAZILY AUTONOMOUS?  
REPRESENTATIONS OF BODY MODIFICATION IN THE REALITY  
TELEVISION PROGRAM 'BODYSHOCKERS'**

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Body Modification has become an area of interest for academic research, however many scholarly works focus on the medicalization of the practice. To date, much of the literature has been presented through a psychological or psychiatric lens in order to 'explain' such behaviours.

Body Modification has also become the focus of lifestyle/reality television series such as 'Bodyshockers' (British Channel 4), 'Ink Masters', 'Botched', etc. This paper will focus on 'Bodyshockers' which presents individuals who are modified or intend to have modifications performed. The popularity of this genre and its easy accessibility through digital platforms such as Youtube means that body modifiers are exposed to a worldwide audience of millions. This accessibility also means that audience reactions can be seen almost instantly. This paper aims to explore the intersection between bodily autonomy and psychiatric discourse by analysing the way in which body modifiers are presented on 'Bodyshockers'.

## **"INSTAGRAM VS. REALITY": WHAT BODY-POSITIVE BLOGGERS GOT WRONG ABOUT POSING**

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There is a long-standing tradition of feminist critique of fashion's artifice — the trappings of femininity and sexuality which are seen to physically restrain and inconvenience the body, as well as forcing a false and alienating image of herself onto the woman. However, as Pamela Church Gibson (2000: 352), among others, has pointed out, this argument is largely built on the confusion between "the natural" and "the authentic". What is more, it can be contended that "the natural" itself is a cultural construct, which evolves together with the visual media (Hollander 2016), so the quest to strip away the artifice is pointless at best, and often harmful, as it plays into the hand of misogynist discourses which equate women's nature with superficiality and deceit.

Starting from these premises and drawing on my own research into amateur posing (Gusarova 2020), in the proposed talk I would like to interrogate a common juxtaposition of "staged" and "unstaged" photographs labelled "Instagram vs. Reality". This device has been adopted by body-positive bloggers seeking to undermine the tyranny of perfect Instagram images by showing their constructed nature and the "real" look of a seemingly ideal body. Visually similar or exactly the same pairs of photographs, though, have been used in other contexts to mock women's vanity and "ugliness". I would like to counter this rhetoric by questioning the contradictory move whereby one of the two mediated images is described as more "real" than the other, as well as the equation of "reality" with the perceived negativity of this image.

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## **ONLINE CHATROOMS VIS-A-VIS EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY**

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The world of chat-rooms is not new. For many parts of the world, people are still gradually trying it. Yahoo chatrooms remained quite popular and brought together people from across the countries with common interests. With the emergence of more websites and applications offering chat facilities, yahoo lost its vigour. Users resort to chatrooms for a number of reasons and the use is subjective. One of the most common reasons in present times, based on own experience and observations is either engaging in sexual conversations or finding a partner to engage in sexual activity in real life. Sexual conversations online give the ease and freedom of anonymity to both the users. People often try to gratify their sexual urges and get involved in masturbation (self-help) with the presence of an online sexual partner. For those who have not started sexual life in reality, for those who don't have satisfactory sexual life in real life with their own partner etc. are the ones who use this platform for performing masturbation. Another set of users just

engage in sexual talk with no intent of masturbation. The next group of users look for potential sexual partners. All the aforementioned users exist in the chatrooms. The next reason for using the chatrooms is to get a break from real life stress and tensions. These users have no sexual intentions. They talk harmlessly and engage in talks on general topics. In a country like India, the majority of users are engaged in either sexual talks online or general talks. The men or boys usually don't expect the women or girls to be ready to meet in person for sex after few online talks. In reality, if a girl agrees to meet for sex alone, the men in India see her with doubt and suspicion. In some cases, they come under fear of being cheated so that even after agreeing to meet, they don't turn up to meet the girl. The Amazon original - Four More Shots please, Season 1 showed the story of a girl who was a virgin and was shamed for being overweight. Eventually, she explored her sexuality through chats by sharing her nude videos. This story resembles the lives of many girls of India and abroad. These platforms if used carefully and sensibly may be used for both reel and real fun. There is no wrong in meeting someone for sex, whom you got to know online. A beautiful dimension of these chatrooms is that people have also ended up finding their long term partners and have got married. The present study is based on personal experiences, observations and fictional portrayal of online behaviour in the digital world. The author was introduced to the platform of online chats in 2014 and explored a number of national and international chat-rooms for over three-four years. The paper shall discuss a perception of the digital world gained over the years.

**9a EST**

## **NARRATIVES OF BODY POLITICS**

### **DRESSING THE VICIOUS AND VIRTUOUS WOMEN IN TAMIL MEGA SERIALS**

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This paper examines the dressing of women in Tamil mega serials. It analyses and compares the dressing style of women portrayed as virtuous and vicious in mega serials. Tamil mega serials are television series that can have more than 1000 episodes. Mega serials are produced in India and aired 6 days a week on Tamil channels from India. Women mostly take the role of the main protagonist and antagonist. The story revolves in households with extended family living together and issues affecting women such as: domestic violence, adultery, and fertility. These issues are presented with the emphasis on the traditional notion of femininity. This is a preliminary analysis of five episodes each of two mega serials broadcast on SunTV. Most characters are dressed in traditional attire either in a sari or salwar kameez. 'Modern' clothes such as jeans, skirts, t-shirts are sometimes worn by young characters or someone from a wealthy family. Women were portrayed as being neatly dressed with full makeup at all times. While the main characters were mostly shown in saris, the sari blouse design and types of accessories were used to differentiate the vicious and virtuous women. The virtuous woman often used a blouse or accessories that are simple or small when compared to the vicious women. The vicious women are shown with rather big, bold or chunky accessories (necklace, ring, bangles, and earrings). Other than the storyline and the character, the simplicity in the dressing of the virtuous woman is used to emphasize traditional notion of femininity as the most cherished form of femininity in a society.

## **HANDMAIDENS IN PROTEST: CHARACTER DRESS BLURS REALITY WITH SCIENCE FICTION**

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Protests for women's health rights with the same dress are happening around the globe, with gatherings of hundreds of people wearing red robes and white bonnets. The media names the protestors "Handmaids" or "Handmaidens" because the costume looks as if plucked from the pages of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood or the more recent movie or TV series. The visual imagery of a sea of dissenting "women" in red bodies with bobbing white heads moving in unison is compelling, powerful, and symbolic both implicit and explicit within this protest dress.

The use of the red and white Handmaiden's dress evokes characters from a science-fiction story is both tableaux vivant ("living picture") and simulacra and simulation (1). The protestors' use of the dress of the Handmaidens characters slides along a continuum between simulacra and simulation (1). In this way, reality blurs into science fiction and back again, creating a space in reality that offers meaning making, as well as performance of theatre in the streets. In this presentation, I explore the red and white Handmaiden's protest dress in order to examine the ways these protestors' dress offer captivating, ominous, and even terrifying visual spectacles in order to engage empathy for a cause via assuming the identity of a character from a science fiction story. When worn by anonymous protestors, the visual symbols embedded in the Handmaiden dress evoke the reader's/viewer's empathy for the SF story's characters, whereas the symbolism and emotional attachment is transferred to the protestors' cause but with a cost.

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## **KOMBINEZON VS TOWEL THE IDEOLOGICAL ROLE OF DRESS IN THE SOVIET/EASTERN EUROPEAN SCIENCE FICTION**

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Visual messages to the audience is an essential part of every political ideology, and the connection between dress and politics is far from new. There has been extensive research into the ideological and political use of clothing by various countries and governments in different historical periods. Dress has played this role of expressing individual and group belonging since the dawn of civilization. The ideology of group attire was implemented extensively through various media in different parts of the world during the Cold War, when various actors have created and promoted different types of patriotic attire using the new types of media and literature. During the Cold War time, science fiction literature and movies describing the future Communist societies became extremely popular behind the Iron Curtain. Comprehensive descriptions were given to body and attire in these utopian societies, demonstrating how the new Soviet/Communist citizen will look like. At the same time, the Communist Bloc's science fiction represented dystopian societies, where dress also played an essential role as well and was used in order to emphasize their negative character. My paper focuses on this Communist Bloc authors' visualization of the future utopian and dystopian societies' inhabitants. I will analyze it, questioning in what ways the authors took some dress elements from the Western science fiction famous literature and movies and what dress elements were the authentic result of the Eastern European imagination.

## 11a EST

### INVESTIGATING DRESS AND THE BODY

#### **WRAPPED UP IN THE FIELD: MAINTAINING ETHNOGRAPHIC DISTANCE VS. BEING THE APPRECIATIVE CRITIC ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

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In 2015 Anju Kadam and Aly Mattan began the #100sareepact on their social media accounts to encourage them to wear the saree more often. This casual challenge quickly became viral amongst seasoned, enthusiastic, and even unfamiliar saree wearers on Facebook. Over time, the saree pact and countless Facebook groups and Instagram hashtags changed the way saree stories came to be shared via social media channels and led to the emergence of vibrant online communities and fashion networks centered around the appreciation of sarees.

What began a casual curiosity within my own Facebook friend circle soon grew into to an ethnographic study of online saree pacts and saree groups with the intention of identifying the key themes that emerge as women in India and within the global diaspora post stories about their lives while also talking about their sarees, as well as the ways in which the saree acts as a conduit for the creation of imagined [digital] communities. The blurring of boundaries between personal social media use and research work became an unavoidable outcome as I began to interact with prominent saree pact members, especially those with the Saree Speak Facebook group. Further heightened by the invasive and seductive nature of social media platforms, such overlaps between the field and personal “sareeing” additionally contributed to a richer and more immersive experience of the online content. It also became apparent that a simple application of offline ethnographic methods to digital spaces was not sufficient, and the need to develop new tools or research methods arose.

By introducing readers to this project’s research methodology, my aim is to highlight how this study adds to the evolving field of digital ethnography and the challenges and opportunities presented by social media research and related ethnographic practices. Finally, as this paper will highlight, not only did this study of sarees on Facebook and Instagram lead me to question my assumptions about digital communities centered around fashion, it also led me to reflect on my positionality within this research and question the validity of the role of the researcher as the objective critic in such formats. I propose that only through taking on the role of the “appreciative critic”—as theorized by the Indian tradition of aesthetics known as *rasa*—was it possible to fully enjoy the act of embodied appreciation of traditional Indian dress practices, and through this enjoyment, understand how community and kinship could be formed through crafting narratives in and around the saree.

#### **SEX WORKER STYLE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “DRESSED LIKE A WHORE”?**

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This paper will discuss how sex workers dress and why, and how their dress is interpreted by outside observers, legal entities, their clientele, and fashion designers. Sex workers at every level have always influenced fashion, yet are regularly erased. The stigma of appearing to be a prostitute is so absolute that police regularly describe what women and femmes were wearing

when they arrested them; lawyers have used women's garments as excuses for violence they have experienced. Intersections of class, race, and gender exacerbate this. Sex workers themselves navigate dressing for their jobs at intersections of competing desires: their own tastes, the requirements of employers, the regulations of lawmakers, and the interests of their clients. Depending on where they work, they may need to stand out or blend in. Strippers rely on spandex and platform shoes; dominatrices on corsets and stiletto heels; escorts on yoga pants and duffle bags that allow them to enter hotels as "personal trainers." Yet in news article after news article, the most common image is only of the most visible work, the "heels on the street" trope that leaves the subjects without a head or torso to humanize them.

Activist sex workers around the world have thought critically about what they wear and have reclaimed these items as symbols of identity and resistance. Ultimately they have created their own symbolism for a global movement, showing unity in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australia. While "sex worker" is a description of a job rather than an ascribed identity, "dressing like a whore" is a concern for women and femmes inside and out of the sex industry.

The author has worked in various branches of the sex industry over 40 years and has observed these events first-hand. Her research seeks to validate her observations and to give historical context to her personal insights.

## **FLESHING OUT HISTORICAL FICTION**

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In this paper, I examine the research methodology behind a novel that I am currently writing. "Not Like Her: A Family Story" is a work of historical fiction. It focuses on my grandmother, with many elements about working-class dress, consumption, and body image. Lila Slaback (Schneider) was born in 1922... the sixth of eight children... and grew up in the 'big city' of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Her family was able to remain in their working-class neighborhood during the Depression, but it was a struggle. Lila grew up as an overlooked, overweight young woman. Her first engagement in 1941 fell apart when her fiancé was rejected from the Navy and married someone else. She ended up working as a cocktail waitress, being intimate with a soldier, and getting pregnant. Shamed by her family, a friend introduced her to an older man (a farmer) who agreed to marry her and treat the baby as his own. However, having developed a taste for movie theaters, the bustle of the city, and earning her own money, Lila was never able to adjust to rural life. She ended up having a series of affairs, moving back to La Crosse, and living a hard life as a single mother. She died when she was only 36 years old, leaving seven children behind. In this paper, I explore one of the digital trails that helped me 'flesh out' the story of my grandmother and how she met the father of her first child—people I was never able to meet, but whose lives deeply impacted my own.

## **"THE ITCHING BODY": PANDEMICS AS SEEN BY DANCE PRACTITIONERS**

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The title of this abstract begins with a quote by a dancer from Moscow who was describing his thoughts and feelings about the COVID-19 lockdown after it was over. It was as if the body constantly lacked movement, including that which went unnoticed in regular life (such as walking, going up and down the stairs, etc.), and no matter how much exercise you would do, it was constantly 'itching' and demanding more.

As a dance practitioner myself, I hit a different end of going through self-isolation. Even though feeling the need for physical movement, I was unable to get myself to do a routine of any sort. Even though social media translates the picture praising efficiency, I observed the same among my friends and colleagues that dance. So I decided to conduct several interviews with dancers in an attempt to interpret the effect of lockdown on people connected to dance and discovered various experiences of living through the pandemics and coping with the anxiety or embracing the advantages of this unusual situation.

It seems that it was these two contradicting trends that the dance in lockdown situated itself between. To a varying degree, it was either the time devoid of movement, or the period with accentuated attention on movement of some sort, more visible, and more accessible to a wider audience than ever before, often for free. Dancers themselves were becoming not only performers, but also the spectators, at least for the time being, until it got overwhelming too, and many refrained from watching performances online after some time into the lockdown period. The conflicting image of COVID-19 lockdown being either the time of despair, or endless opportunities, brings dancers into the wider context of the lockdown experiences.

In the presentation, I will be talking about dance practitioners in terms of body image, eating habits, clothing choices, and, of course, dance practices and space for performing and practicing dance. The presentation will be based on interviews with dancers, dance practitioners and choreographers working in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg.

**1P EST**

**Break**

VISIT THE DBA VIRTUAL CAFE AND EXHIBITION SPACE

**2P EST**

**KEYNOTE**

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FASHION DESIGN  
DEPARTMENT OF ART  
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**CLOSING REMARKS**

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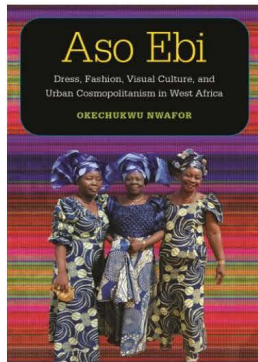


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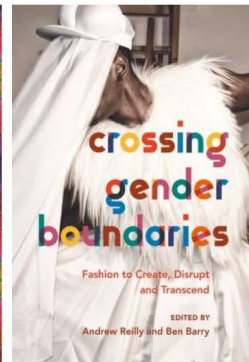
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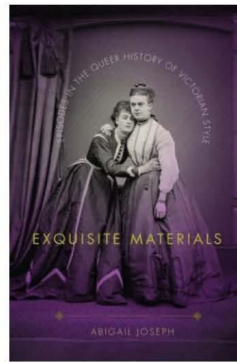
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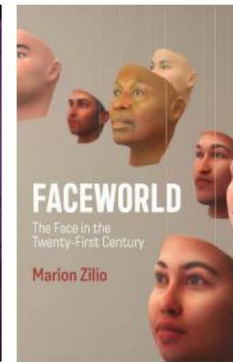
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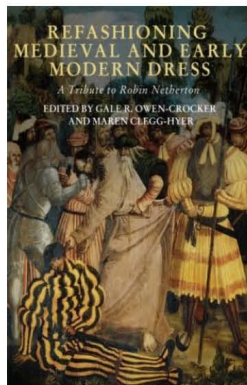
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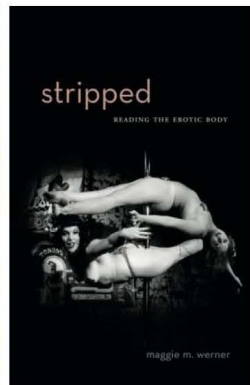
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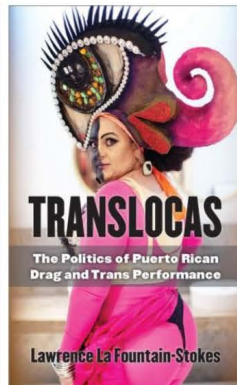
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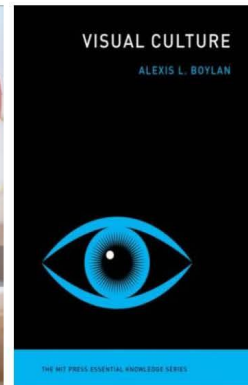
Boydell & Brewer



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