

Dis/orienting identity

**3rd Annual Parsons Paris
Graduate Symposium**

20 April 2018
9am to 1pm

MAD Auditorium
111 rue de Rivoli
75001 Paris

THE NEW SCHOOL
**PARSONS
PARIS**

This half-day symposium will examine how visual and material culture is used to manipulate or mediate identity. The event will take a critical look at the effects of mass media on self-perception and consider how marginalized groups—whether non-Western or over the age of 65—are taking charge of their own cultural representation through fashion, performance, and discourse.

How do social media shape the understanding we have of ourselves, and how are contemporary artists responding to this digital refraction? Is it possible to balance between two identities, or is some amount of asymmetry inevitable? Can non-Western countries construct a new cultural canon without European aspirations and self-orientalisation? And finally, how can academic inquiries like these be exposed to a wider audience through museums and publications?

Keynote speakers Diane Drubay (Buzzeum, We Are Museums) and Anja Aronowsky-Cronberg (Vestoj magazine) will present on how they are working to bridge discourse between scholars, artists, and the public and what they see in the future for cultural representation beyond academia.

SCHEDULE

9am
Coffee + opening address

9.30
Keynote Speaker

Diane Drubay, We Are Museums

10am
Panel: Around Orientalism

Erica Kermani, MFA Design and Technology
Philippa Nesbitt, MA Fashion Studies
Angelene Wong, MA Fashion Studies
Moderator: **Forrest Pelsue**

11am
Break

11.30
Keynote speaker

Anja Aronowsky-Cronberg, Vestoj

12pm
Panel: Media + Desire

Ariel Stark, MA Fashion Studies
Tala AlGhamdi, MA Fashion Studies
Jorge Torrens, MA Design & Curatorial Studies
Moderator: **Katherine Wilkes**

1pm
Closing remarks
End of symposium

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Diane Drubay **We Are Museums & Buzzeum**

French and Berlin-based, Diane Drubay is a long-standing member of the museum and innovation effervescence, a specialist in museum digital strategy, an event curator and community builder.

She founded Buzzeum in 2007, a new media and communication agency which specialised in museums and cultural institutions, and the homonymous blog which gave her international fame by reviewing innovative museum news. Before founding Buzzeum she worked at the Ministry of Culture and Communication as a digital project manager, and at the Henner Museum in Paris as the online communication manager and event curator.

In 2011 she co-founded Museomix, a hackathon for museums. In 2013 she founded We Are Museums in Lithuania, a yearly event and European hub at the intersection of culture and innovation which has been traveling since then to Poland, Germany, Romania, Latvia and Morocco. Since 2014 she has curated the programming of Museum Connections, the international trade show and conference for museum businesses set in Paris every January.

For the last few years she has taught digital strategy and project management at Sciences Po Paris and EAC Paris, and regularly speaks at international conferences to share her vision of the future of museums.

Diane Drubay is also a video artist and photographer, investigating psychoactive and transcendental experiences through images of nature to expand the idea of the sublime.

Anja Aronowsky-Cronberg **Vestoj magazine**

Anja Aronowsky Cronberg is the founder and editor-in-chief of the annual journal Vestoj, the Paris-based sartorial publication reinventing fashion editorials with an academic slant. Additionally, the editor is a senior research fellow in fashion theory and practice at the London College of Fashion.

Cronberg earned her bachelor's degree in Fine Art at Central Saint Martin's. After a brief tenure as a stylist, Cronberg returned to school to pursue a master's degree in History of Design at the Royal College of Art. During her studies, Cronberg assisted Acne Paper with various tasks, leading to her being hired post-graduation as the editor of the publication.

Cronberg left Acne Paper to begin Vestoj in 2009. Produced under the patronage of the London College of Fashion since 2014, Vestoj paints a holistic, considered portrait of the fashion industry as interpreted through a variety of specialist lens, showcasing visual spreads alongside the expertise of academics.

Vestoj is published as a platform for critical thinking on fashion and today includes the journal, an online platform, and regular live performances, all intended to question and reflect on why we wear what we wear.

STUDENT PANELISTS

Erica Kermani, “Well No. 1, a Genesis Story: Mythology, Diaspora, and Orientalism”

Well No. 1 is a new mythology based on the first oil well in Iran, and the first in the Middle East. Through a series of fictional videos and ritualistic performances, this counter mythology serves to reverse this history of oil extraction for the purpose of Iranians and the diaspora to heal, resist, and reclaim culture and land. Drawing on my own experiences as a first-generation Iranian-American, I implicate myself into this narrative to unearth what has brought me to this place in time and space.

Angelene Wong, “The ‘Global’ City: Singapore’s Fashion Identity Deconstructed”

This essay traces how multicultural Singapore attempts to construct its fashion identity in the broader context of the global fashion conversation from 1960 to today. Within 52 years of independence, it has become the epitome of modernisation in terms of rapid capitalisation and industrialisation, to earn the title of most expensive city for expatriates to live in for the fourth consecutive year. Despite its first world economy status, its fashion identity, to which its national identity is attached, does not enjoy a similar stability. Building on sociologist Beng-Huat Chua’s studies of consumerism as a defining characteristic of Singaporean lifestyle and economic growth, this essay unpacks the various process of globalisation, hybridisation and (re)indigenisation manifested in Singaporean dress.

Philippa Nesbitt, “Designing Liminality: The Careful Identity of Yohji Yamamoto”

In 1981, exhausted with the fashion system and angry with the socioeconomic climate in Japan, designer Yohji Yamamoto made the bold decision to move to Paris in an attempt to break into the notoriously exclusive Parisian fashion system. Using Wim Wenders’ meditation on identity in Notebooks on Cities and Clothes as a key platform, three aspects of identity that become increasingly complex for Yamamoto will be discussed: geography, artistry and time. Through the exploration of these issues, a deeper, contextualized understanding of the ways in which Yamamoto contests aspects of each identity to carefully construct the image of himself as we know it today will be presented.

Ariel Stark, “The Rebellion of the Démodé: Age & Representation in the Fashion Industry”

The fashion industry has traditionally perpetuated and celebrated the ideals of youthfulness and newness, continually renewing itself for the benefit of a capitalist market. The celebration of this ideal is prevalent in fashion runways, editorials, and advertisements - brands and media content must also perpetuate these principles within their products in order to maintain social and cultural relevance. Using works from cultural and anthropological theorists, I will analyze the representation of age in the fashion media as a counter-cultural representation of a previously marginalized population within the fashion industry. Through this analysis, I focus on the limitations of the current ideal “older woman” as celebrated by the fashion industry, and their lack of generalizability. This particular trend showcasing the fashionable older woman shows the industries selectivity of what kinds of older women garner the attention of the spotlight and which women continue to be left out of the conversation.

Tala Alghamdi, “Realizing Our Self on Instagram”

Social media has been implicated as the culprit to the vanity of a generation, but is this obsession with the self a symptom of the times or are these platforms just a way for us to explore our self in a way that we have been all along? Starting at the point of Instagram, this project considers Lacanian and Freudian developmental psychology to propose a way of understanding how a digital platform such as Instagram can essentialize the way in which our perception of ourselves comes to be. With the interface of Instagram as the mirror through which we begin to “objectify” ourselves, our experience of Instagram and the processes that come after it can be tools to organize and alter the realization of our self as something that not only is but can also exteriorize and document the recognition given to this self from other people.

Jorge A. Torrens, “‘Digital Dismorphia’ an Exhibition Proposal”

In the age of social media and the expansion of invasive online marketing, through qualitative analytics and information gathering algorithms, it is become increasingly important to determine the effects of our digitized self-image. A virtual life that allows people to have a presence in several systems and contexts simultaneously, advances a mediated and exaggerated multiple personality disorder of sorts, a condition that has become a central aspect of many online art projects. Digital Dismorphia purposes to create an interactive exploration of the technological mediation of self-concept and the complicated space between exhibitionism and documentation.