

ORIENTAL INSTITUTE SEMINAR (OIS)

Outward Appearance vs. Inward Significance

ALEKSANDRA HALLMANN

The 14th Annual University of Chicago Oriental Institute Seminar *Outward Appearance vs. Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World*, took place on March 1–2, 2018. Thanks to the generous and ongoing support of Arthur and Lee Herbst it was possible to organize a venue for a dialogue leading to a multidisciplinary and comparative approach to clothing studies in the ancient world, focusing on dress as an analytical tool used to inquire about the identity of the wearer. It brought together eighteen scholars from three continents (see the list of participants) who use different research methodologies and work on clothing-related studies within a wide geographical and chronological spectrum, all while pursuing common themes in their scholarship.

Non-verbally, attire conveys important meaning that must be decoded through various methodological approaches, be it an artifact or a visual- or text-oriented approach. The fragmentary corpus of evidence available to assist in the study of ancient costume in different geographic areas justifies searching for crosscultural patterns in dress behavior. These different approaches were demonstrated thanks to gathering researchers with a geographical focus on the ancient Near East, including Egypt, along with the larger Mediterranean world and the ancient Americas, who are studying ancient attire from different perspectives and applying different methodologies. The goal of the proposed conference was to construct definition(s) of the clothed self and to investigate multiple trajectories of the dress' role in the construction of various identities in the ancient world.

The conference took place in the Oriental Institute in Breasted Hall. It was divided into six thematically oriented sessions organized crossculturally, and not separated by region, culture, or period. The sessions were chaired by Janet Johnson, Susanne Paulus, and Emily Teeter from

THE 14TH ANNUAL
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BREASTED HALL
115 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60637

MARCH
1-2
2018

OUTWARD APPEARANCE
VS. INWARD SIGNIFICANCE
ADDRESSING IDENTITIES THROUGH
ATTIRE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Hans Barnard University of California, LA
Marie Louise Bech-Nielsen University of Copenhagen
Eun Boydler Institute for Field Research
Claudia Brittenham University of Chicago
Megan Cifarelli Mountaineer College
Jean Evans University of Chicago
Benjamin S. Foster Yale University
Laura Gowlinski Loyola University, Chicago
Margarita Gleba University of Cambridge
Ann C. Gunter Northwestern University
Aleksandra Hallmann University of Chicago
Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones University of Edinburgh
Margaret C. Miller University of Sydney
Brian Muhs University of Chicago
Jana Myšáková Charles University in Prague
Robert Riber University of Chicago
Gay Robins Emory University
Ursula Rothe Open University
Allison Thomson Southern Cross University
Tasha Vorderstrasse New York University
Sita Wright

The meaning of a piece of clothing changes the moment it is worn, as it becomes associated with its wearer. Attire can demonstrate affiliation to a particular group, be it religious, political, ethnic, or social, serving as an important means to construct self-identity, often including or excluding an individual from a group. In order to understand what clothes can reveal about the wearer, it is necessary to reconstruct socio-cultural context and understand the non-verbal language the dress conveys. This conference creates a venue for a multidisciplinary and comparative approach to dress studies in the ancient world, searching for cross-cultural patterns in dress behavior. The goal of this conference is to construct (a) definition(s) of the clothed self and investigate multiple trajectories of the dress' role in the construction of various identities in the ancient world.

ABOVE: Oriental Institute Seminar Poster, 2018.

the Oriental Institute, and grouped topics: clothing and the imperial identity; distinctive and associative function of dress; construction of royal and religious dress; textiles and identity: value, status, prestige, and trade; transformative nature of dress and construction of various identities. The last session was followed by a panel, wherein four respondents (Ann C. Gunter, Brian Muhs, Jean Evans, and Rita Wright) summarized and commented on the evidence presented. Their responses led to a final roundtable discussion conducted by the organizer. It elaborated on one of the principal goals of the conference: constructing a definition or definitions of the clothed self and pointed toward the multiple trajectories of clothing's role in the construction of various identities in the ancient world. Ancient attire was set in a broad socio-cultural perspective, wherein the meaning of dress in terms of various social, political, ethnic, or religious identities was questioned. The vivid discussions after each lecture and during the round table panel stressed an awareness of the status, critiques, and advances of dress studies within the broader field of ancient studies and fostered a renewed discourse directed towards new strategies to investigate the subject. All those papers are now in the process of preparation for the forthcoming proceedings that will be published in Oriental Institute Seminar Series Volume 15 in 2020.

A few special events accompanied the conference. The participants were welcomed by the specially organized Persian dinner held in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian gallery of the OI Museum. This was preceded by a tour of the Museum collection led by the Jean Evans and Kiersten Neumann. The next day, all participants and attendees were treated with a night reception in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian gallery. The farewell dinner was held at a local French restaurant, La Petit Folie, and all of our lunches were held in the magnificent OI director's office.



ABOVE: OIS reception in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian gallery. Photo by Aleksandra Hallmann.





ABOVE: Oriental Institute Seminar 2018. Photos by Charissa Johnson.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would sincerely like to thank Christopher Woods, Gil Stein, James Gurchek, Petra Goedegebuure, and the entire postdoctoral committee for their interest in this topic. The organization of the entire conference, including special events, would not be possible without the tremendous help of colleagues from the Oriental Institute: Mariana Perlinac, Polina Kasian, D'Ann Yoder Condes, Nate Francia, Jean Evans, Kiersten Neumann, and our student volunteer Catie Witt. Warm thanks go to Knut Boehmer, our IT expert, who has been of inestimable help with all technical matters during the entire event, as well as to our editors Charissa Johnson and Tom Urban. Particular thanks go to Charissa Johnson for not only designing the stunning poster and conference program, but also for making photographic documentation of our event.



ABOVE LEFT: Round table discussion with participants (from left to right): Aleksandra Hallmann, Benjamin Foster, Claudia Brittenham, Megan Cifarelli, Jean Evans, Ann Gunter, Ran Boytner, Robert Ritner, Tasha Vorderstrasse, Brian Muhs, Marie Louise Bech Nosch, Allison Thomason, Laura Gawlinski, and Rita Wright. Photo by Charissa Johnson.

RIGHT: Participants, respondents, and OI attendees enjoying a special reception in the OI Museum. Photos by Charissa Johnson.



PARTICIPANTS AND RESPONDENTS (*) OF THE CONFERENCE

- Aleksandra Hallmann (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)
- Allison Thomason (Department of Historical Studies, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville)
- Ann C. Gunter (Department of Classics, Northwestern University, Chicago)*
- Benjamin R. Foster (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University)
- Brian Muhs (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)*
- Claudia Brittenham (Department of Art History, University of Chicago)
- Hans Barnard (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA)
- Jana Mynářová (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University in Prague)
- Jean Evans (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)*
- Laura Gawlinski (Department of Classical Studies, Loyola University, Chicago)
- Margaret C. Miller (Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia, University of Sydney)
- Margarita Gleba (McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, UK)
- Marie Louise Bech Nosch (The Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Megan Cifarelli (The Art History Department, Manhattanville College, NY)
- Ran Boytner (Institute for Field Research, UCLA)
- Rita Wright (Department of Anthropology, New York University)*
- Robert K. Ritner (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)
- Tasha Vorderstrasse (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)
- Ursula Rothe (Classical Studies Department, Open University, Reading UK)



Participants and respondents of the OIS conference:

FIRST ROW FROM THE LEFT: Catie Witt, Tasha Vorderstrasse, Aleksandra Hallmann, Rita Wright, and Ann Gunter.

SECOND ROW FROM THE LEFT: Petra Goedegebuure, Marie Louise Bech Nosch, Ursula Rothe, Allison Thomason, and Brian Muhs.

THIRD ROW FROM THE LEFT: Emily Teeter, Ran Boytner, and Margaret Miller.

FOURTH ROW FROM THE LEFT: Claudia Brittenham, Megan Cifarelli, Robert Ritner, and Jean Evans.

FIFTH ROW FROM THE LEFT: Benjamin Foster, Jana Mynářová, Laura Gawlinski, and Margarita Gleba.

Photo by Charissa Johnson.