

Research Interest Group

APPEARANCES, BODIES & SOCIETIES



RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES

FOR A NEW APPROACH TO RESEARCH INTO PHYSICAL APPEARANCES

The Physical Appearances, Bodies, and Societies RIG has been set up as a result of discussions in the wake of various conferences and exhibitions: Modes en miroir: la France et la Hollande au temps des Lumières, Paris 2005; Vêtir nos identités, Rennes 2007; and Fastes de cour et cérémonies royales: Le costume de cour en Europe, 1650-1800, Versailles 2009.¹ Recent publications about physical appearance, clothing practices, and bodily adornment have also fuelled these exchanges.²

At a meeting held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris on 1 February 2013, Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros (Palais Galliera) and Jean-Pierre Lethuillier (CERHIO, Université Rennes 2) put forward proposals which were discussed by Denis Bruna (Musée des Arts Décoratifs), Catherine Lanoë (POLEN, Université d'Orléans), Aude Le Guennec (Centre d'Archéologie Générale, Anthropologie de l'Art, Université Paris IV), Gabriele Mentges (Technische Universität, Dortmund), Isabelle Paresys (IRHIS, Université Lille 3), Dominique Séréna-Allier (Museon Arlaten), and Sylvie Grange (Service des Musées de France, Bureaux des réseaux professionnels et internationaux). Apologies were sent by Aziza Gril-Mariotte (Centre de Recherches sur les Relations entre les Arts, Université de Haute-Alsace) and Olivier Renaudeau (Musée de l'Armée).

This text - *Research framework and guidelines. For a new approach to research into physical appearances* - provides a summary of these discussions. It starts with a review of current research focusing on its various contradictions and shortcomings before going on to define the principles governing the work of the RIG, emphasising the areas of potential interaction with the history of material culture, the history of techniques, the history of body,

¹ *Modes en miroir. La France et la Hollande au temps des Lumières*, ed. by Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros (Paris-Musées, 2005); *Des Habits et nous. Vêtir nos identités*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Lethuillier (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007); *Fastes de cour et cérémonies royales. Le costume de cour en Europe, 1650-1800*, ed. by Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel and Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros (Château de Versailles/RMN, 2009).

² The most significant of which will be indicated in the footnotes to this text.

and gender history, as well as systematically arguing in favour of placing its research activity within a European perspective. Its fundamental objectives are:

- to provide a fresh way of viewing clothing and physical appearance as "total social facts", as part of a multidisciplinary perspective that seeks to break down barriers within this field of research.

- to develop a method drawing jointly on a scholarly approach and on a practical and/or technical one, thereby according a greater place to objects within the range of possible sources.

The international conference announced at the end of the text and planned for 2015 will provide an overview of research in Europe and ensure that the RIG's research programmes fit in with those being conducted across Europe. The main lines of research presented at the end of the text provide a framework that will be used to draw up future research programmes.

1. The reasons for this project

The researchers who took part in the discussions mentioned consider that it is crucial that academics, museum researchers, textile restorers, and collector-researchers pool their efforts,³ and that it is equally urgent to adopt a multidisciplinary approach drawing on history, ethnography, sociology, the history of art, and so on.⁴ It strikes them that any previous attempts in France to foster exchanges and complementarities – between disciplines, themes, and institutions – in the field of physical appearance and vestimentary practice has traditionally run into obstacles, leading to blind spots and contradictions in our research and knowledge.

Blind spots. Since Daniel Roche's seminal work *La Culture des apparences* (1989),⁵ historical research has moved on significantly and now examines clothing (and especially its visible parts) with an eye to seeing what we can learn about the definition and usage of norms and social relationships, as well as the power issues relating to these norms. These questions have been studied via textual and pictorial sources, and the tendency has been to focus on the limited number of social groups in a position to implement these norms or else directly concerned by them, with a particular focus on court circles. This has resulted in significant advances over the past twenty-odd years.⁶ But as in all areas of active research, there are various questions that remain unresolved and require further work.

Despite these advances, however, other fields of research – and other social groups – have been left one side. The history of physical appearance and the history of material culture have not interacted as extensively as one might have thought and hoped, and despite the

³ The term "collector-researchers" is used here to refer to collectors who have published papers and taken part in roundtables, study days, conferences, exhibitions, etc.

⁴ Such as the initiative conducted by the Centre de recherches du château de Versailles, in partnership with the Institut d'études culturelles de l'université de Versailles – Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, who organised an international research seminar based on the theme of "Crafts and techniques from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries" that was held from 3 June to 12 July 2013, with contributions by curators, historians, and art historians.

⁵ Daniel Roche, *La Culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Fayard, 1989).

⁶ See in particular Sylvie Mouysset and Catherine Aribaud, *Vêtue et pouvoir* (CNRS/Université Toulouse Le Mirail, 2003); Isabelle Paresys, *Paraître et apparences en Europe occidentale du Moyen-Âge à nos jours* (Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008); Isabelle Paresys and Natacha Coquery, *Se vêtir à la cour en Europe, 1400-1815* (Université Lille 3 – Charles de Gaulle, 2011); *Cultures de cour, Cultures du corps. XIV^e-XVIII^e siècle*, ed. by Catherine Lanoë, Mathieu da Vinha, and Bruno Laurioux (Presses universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2011).

increase in research activity whole swathes of the history of the body have been neglected.⁷ Evidence of this may be seen in how little work has been conducted in early modern history into, say, modesty,⁸ even though this issue is crucial to the construction of the individual and their relationship to their body. The history of the body is all too frequently hived off from the history of physical appearance, which in turn is often reduced to the history of the vestimentary apparel.⁹ The notion of "work on bodily appearance",¹⁰ developed for recent periods, is unable to fully make up for this (for example, the silhouette long depended on what enveloped the body rather than on the body itself). And whilst gender history has indeed benefited from innovative work based on appearance, it relates primarily to the modern era.¹¹

Contradictions. Although historical research into vestimentary practice examines the materials and colours that are perceptible from the text and image, and acknowledges the more general need to explore the materiality of the object,¹² in practice it tends to shy away from studying the forms of clothing, either on the basis that these relate to obsolete categories developed by "historians of costume",¹³ or else because the study of forms is viewed as rapidly leading to an aesthetic approach to fashion, regarded as a matter for art historians. This has meant that historians have built up a history of clothing that fails to take the object itself as its starting point – thereby turning their backs on their initial commitments. It has also offered the additional comfort of allowing them to avoid the thorny technical questions raised by items of clothing, along with the inherent problems of vocabulary (the fact that words are unable to define all the possible shapes of clothing, and the further fact that different meanings are given to words in different places, especially in different countries, including in the language of the researchers).¹⁴ The lack of interest in adopting a technical approach to the history of physical appearance has led many academics to underestimate the research carried out in museums,¹⁵ thereby providing *a posteriori* justification for the barriers existing between

⁷ Works by Catherine Lanoë, on the contrary, take her object of study – cosmetics – and use it to develop a history of material culture opening on the one hand onto social relationships and court usages, and on the other, via the fears and practices cosmetics engender, onto questions of bodily health. *La Poudre et le fard. Une histoire des cosmétiques de la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Champ Vallon, 2008). See too the recent conference *Corps parés, corps parfumés*, held at the École normale supérieure de Lyon in November 2010 and organised by Catherine Lanoë and Laurence Moulinier-Brogli.

⁸ This notion tends to be approached in a very general way (in the great debate between Hans-Peter Duerr and the theses of Norbert Élias) that fails to include all the meanings of words "modesty", "honesty", etc, relating to forms of partial nudity (of the throat, head, etc, which have been very little studied) rather than to total nudity. The stimulating works by Jean-Claude Bologne are hindered by the state of research, something which is equally true of his earliest work, *Histoire de la pudeur* (Olivier Orban, 1986) as it is of the most recent, *Pudeurs féminines* (Le Seuil, 2010).

⁹ As illustrated by the recent overview *L'Histoire du corps* (Le Seuil, 2005) edited by G. Vigarello, A. Corbin, and J.-J. Courtine. However, it is also worth noting the far broader perspective adopted in the recent issue of *Micrologus: Natura, Scienze e Società Medievali*, XV (2007) entitled "The Body and its Adornment".

¹⁰ Philippe Perrot, *Le Travail des apparences. Le corps féminin, XVIII^e-XIX^e siècle* (Le Seuil, 1984).

¹¹ See Jennifer Jones, *Sexing la mode. Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Berg, 2004); *Femmes travesties: un «mauvais» genre*, ed. by Nicole Pellegrin and Christine Bard (Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1999); Christine Bard, *Une Histoire politique du pantalon* (Seuil, 2010); and *Id., Ce que soulève la jupe. Identités, transgressions, résistances* (Autrement, 2010).

¹² See the introduction by Natacha Coquery and Isabelle Paresys to *Se Vêtir à la cour en Europe*, and that by Catherine Lanoë to *Cultures de cour*.

¹³ This is the expression used by Roland Barthes about nineteenth-century authors such as Quicherat, as well as those who came after him in the twentieth century, in "Histoire et sociologie du vêtement" *Annales* 12.3 (1957), 430-441.

¹⁴ See the conference held in Dijon on 20-21 October 2011, "Les mots des vêtements et des textiles. Désignation et restitution dans le cadre d'un réseau d'interdisciplinarité", available online at http://octant.u-bourgogne.fr/vetementetextile/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=302:colloque-de-dijon-2011&catid=30:colloque-de-dijon-2011&Itemid=55

¹⁵ See for instance *La culture des apparences*, p.29.

different research sectors. And yet in many fields the work carried out in museums goes well beyond that carried out in academia, bringing the latter into question even, and this for a variety of reasons - museum research is attentive to the circulation of objects,¹⁶ discovers items of clothing whose forms do not comply with pre-existing frameworks,¹⁷ conducts experimental archaeology,¹⁸ identifies lexical problems,¹⁹ reflects about the history of collections,²⁰ and so on.

This lack of cooperation and coordination results from long-standing factors that aggravate the lack of multidisciplinary approaches - something which is normally taken as referring to the lack of communication between disciplines, such as between anthropology and history, or between history and the history of art for instance. This may be observed in the field of physical appearance too, only here there are additional divisions reinforcing or multiplying these separations. The most important of these is no doubt that between the approaches taken by museums and by academic historians. One of the key ambitions of the RIG is to bring these two worlds together. But the thematic divisions (between vestimentary practice and bodily adornment, between Parisian and regional fashion,²¹ etc.) and the comparative isolation of French research in comparison to that conducted abroad also need to be taken into account, and overcome.

On all of these points, the RIG plans to follow the example of certain researchers who have forged a different path, building a history of vestimentary practices based on objects themselves, and to work in constant collaboration with museums²².

2. Pursuing new lines of research

The RIG's research activity is defined by the four following considerations:

2.1. About physical appearance and fashion. The theme of physical appearance does not concern vestimentary apparel alone, which though it makes up a significant proportion of this field of study does not exhaust it, for all forms of adornment to the face and body, together with bearing and posture, silhouette, and so on also need to be examined.

In addition to this initial point the concept of "physical appearance" also requires scrutiny and analysis. It appeared in France and was developed in works by Philippe Perrot

¹⁶ *Modes en miroir*.

¹⁷ Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros, "Existe-t-il une mode «provinciale» en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle?", in *Les Costumes régionaux entre mémoire et histoire*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Lethuillier (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), pp.299-304.

¹⁸ Amongst the rare examples of this in France see the work carried out by Madeleine Blondel, curator at the Musée de la vie bourguignonne, Perrin de Puycousin, and Patricia Dal-Prà, textile restorer at the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF): *Couvrez ce sein...* (Musée de la vie bourguignonne, 1995), *Bourgogne en coiffes, Les bonnets d'enfants* (Musée de la vie bourguignonne, 2005), and *Bourgogne en coiffes. Coiffes mâconnaises et bressanes* (Musée de la vie bourguignonne, 2009). See too Christine Aribaud, *Destins d'étoffes. Usages, ravaudages et réemplois des textiles sacrés, XIV^e-XX^e siècle* (CNRS/Université Toulouse-Le-Mirail, 2006).

¹⁹ Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros, "Caractériser le costume de cour: propositions", in *Fastes de cour*, pp.54-69.

²⁰ Such as the multidisciplinary meetings organised by Sylvie Grange, Head Curator, Service des Musées de France, Bureau des Réseaux professionnels et internationaux in Colmar-Dijon, 18-20 February 2010, and in Seebach-Strasbourg, 16-18 July 2011.

²¹ Even comparisons between regions have often not been carried out. With very few exceptions the libraries of ethnographic museums in France only have holdings relating to their own region, to the detriment of others.

²² Such as Nicole Pellegrin. See for example Chauvin, Jacques, Nicole Pellegrin, Marie-Christine Planchard, *L'Aiguille et le sabaron. Techniques et production du vêtement en Poitou. 1880-1950*, Centre d'archéologie et d'ethnologie poitevine, Poitiers, 1983.

and Daniel Roche in the 1980s,²³ and has subsequently been applied in the field of interpersonal relationships rather than that of the elaboration of individual identity. Whilst it is impossible to arrive at a clear-cut distinction between the two areas, the transactions with the body involved in self-construction require reassessment, as does the impact these have on the psyche.²⁴ Furthermore the existing literature accords widely varying degrees of attention to the visual cultures brought into play and partially fashioned by physical appearance,²⁵ and future studies need to examine this aspect in particular. And - in addition to the connotation of superficiality attached to it in certain languages - the concept of appearance has been received in different ways across Europe, and the relative weight accorded to these various considerations has and still continues to vary from one country to the next.

The concept of "fashion" is affected by the same problem. It is sometimes regarded as being merely a question of style and taste.²⁶ Its forms - which are or are at least deemed to be ephemeral - are regarded as devoid of any inherent interest, and instead it is the social tensions they generate between specifiers and peripheries that are deemed worthy of attention. Such an approach quite rightly places the emphasis on a dimension that "historians of costume" neglected in the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, material changes in form always involve transactions with the body, and it is these alone which enable the body to be integrated within the strategies authorised by fashion, something which is regarded as essential in current research. In addition to this, studying fashion provides direct material for the history of the body.

One way of arriving at this kind of social apprehension of fashion involves reconsidering the timescales we use, for this in turn leads on to different approaches to the concept. The links between fashion and technical and economic innovation, together with the return to old fashions, lead us to consider fashion according to a less ephemeral timescale than the one usually applied, and once we take these forms of innovation into account other timescales suddenly emerge for studying fashion images.

Ultimately what beckons behind these approaches is an even more fundamental re-examination of the notion of style as a way of categorising and dividing up the history of physical appearance.

2.2. Physical appearance and the body. The appearances given to the body, and which transform it, express the forms of relationship the individual has with him or herself. It is this link that the RIG wishes to explore in particular.

Its research activity will share the same basic approach traditionally taken in the history of physical appearance, namely the relationship to others and power issues, gender construction, the construction of individual identity, and so on. However, whilst it will share these lines of research it will deliberately seek to "re-materialise" practices and consider the body in its physicality, as already called for by certain researchers,²⁷ and in all its aspects (including hygiene, health, and modesty, as well as comfort, the history of the senses, and so on). Modesty must not be viewed primarily as a moral principle and the associated normative discourse based thereon. It also relates to gestural and vestimentary practices that reveal that

²³ Philippe Perrot, *Le Travail des apparences; Id., Les Dessus et les Dessous de la bourgeoisie. Une histoire du vêtement au XIX^e siècle* (Éditions Complexe, 1984); and Daniel Roche, *La Culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Fayard, 1989).

²⁴ The issue of coquetry also invites us to conduct such a re-evaluation. See Jean-Claude Bologne, *Histoire de la coquetterie masculine* (Perrin, 2011).

²⁵ *Paraître et apparences*. See too the online journal *Apparence(s). Histoire et culture du paraître*, especially 4 (2012), entitled *Apparences vestimentaires à l'époque moderne*.

²⁶ See for example Daniel Roche, "Traditions et inventions, les costumes régionaux", in *Les Costumes régionaux*, p.II. See too Roland Barthes, *Système de la mode* (Le Seuil, 1967).

²⁷ *Cultures de cour*, pp.13-16.

the legs, bosom, or hair. It depends upon the kind of fabrics used and whether or not they hug the forms of the body. The history of hygiene is not uniquely about the practice of ‘dry washing’, but also includes the way clothing makes it possible (or not) to regulate temperature depending upon the seasons, the degree of tolerance of aggressions to the skin (something which varies over time), and so on.

The project is thus inseparable from another goal, namely to draw on a solid history of material culture, which takes objects as the primary source of analysis. It therefore lies at the intersection of several fields – the history of physical appearance and fashion, as conceived within the open conceptual framework mentioned in the preceding paragraph; the history of the body and of gender; and the history of material culture.

2.3. *The object as a fundamental source.* Whenever museum collections include an object under study, it will be studied. The RIG considers it important to compare objects to texts and pictorial sources because objects can provide additional details and nuances to what these sources tell us, and contradict them even.

Above and beyond the need to take into account problems of vocabulary specific to this field of research, at least four perspectives can be sketched out here to lend concrete form to this principle. Firstly, it is necessary to study the origins of the object – who made it for whom? For what purpose or, possibly, by what roundabout means is this purpose achieved? Using what material and how? This is the only way to be able to properly account for the qualities and end purposes of the object. The second perspective is "archaeological" in that it takes into account the wear and use of the object, thus necessitating the study both of the object’s visible outer face and its invisible inner. The possibilities afforded by experimental archaeology, hitherto but little used in France, will be exploited thanks to the professional skills of textile restorers and of the costumiers of great European institutions (including theatres). Thirdly, the object will be compared to images presenting it in use, and which are sometimes more informative than the object itself about the contexts and/or the intentions relating to it.²⁸ And lastly, the building up of museum collections since the nineteenth century, the way current collection campaigns are conducted, and the way objects are presented within museums (or the effects of their being presented in association with other objects) are all issues that historians need to examine, whilst taking into account the successive expectations of the public over the past two centuries.

2.4. *Social frameworks and chronology.* The study of physical appearance should take in all social groups and milieus from the court down to the agricultural labourer, from the urban centres to the peripheries, as well as viewing France within its European context and its relationship to globalisation. The circulation of objects and models raises the question of the amalgamation of material and visual cultures, and of the many different ways of appropriating them. It is surprising that this issue, that has become so central to cultural history as a whole (especially since the work of Roger Chartier), should not yet have been explored with regard to the field of physical appearance, where the tendency is still to oppose national and regional fashions, for instance, in a somewhat simplistic manner.

The decision to work from the sixteenth century onwards needs to be understood as indicating an initial landmark, and not as some kind of fixed limit. It in no way implies that the RIG is not interested in earlier periods, and it is indeed attentive to them. The decision is based on the desire to compare textual and pictorial sources with objects in museums whenever possible, and these are held in larger number as one advances through the early modern and modern eras.

²⁸ *Paraître et apparences*, as well as the exhibition *Plein les yeux. Le spectacle de la mode*, held from 16 January to 28 April at the Cité internationale de la dentelle et de la mode de Calais.

3. Building bridges across the barriers

These principles can only be implemented if new bridges are established between research conducted in academia and that conducted in museums, and if the research conducted in France is open to the issues studied in neighbouring countries. The fundamental ambition of the RIG is thus to foster a multidisciplinary approach, and this relating to four different areas: the way research programmes are devised, the selected sources and methods, how findings are promoted and disseminated, and international cooperation.

3.1. Devising research programmes. The RIG refuses to juxtapose one-track questions on traditional themes, even be it with an eye to combining them into some later synthesis. Instead it will study issues that cut across boundaries and call for all sorts of cooperation and collaboration from the outset. That is why it brings together academics, museum researchers, accredited textile restorers, and collector-researchers to work on the same research programmes.

This transversal approach relates to the themes, disciplines, and professions, as found in the lines of research suggested at the end of this text.

3.2. Sources and methods. Using objects as a fundamental source necessarily leads to a multidisciplinary approach. Examining collections held by museums can only be done with the help of those who know them and handle them. The undertakings made *supra* (see 2.3) relating to the manufacture of the object, its place in images and text, and the way it is displayed in the museum also imply that its proper study requires researchers with different skill sets to work together.²⁹

However, objects of material or aesthetic value (thus primarily relating to elites) tend to be better conserved and so - given the aim of examining all levels of society - it is not feasible to base research on objects alone, especially for more distant periods. The RIG will therefore continue to use texts and pictorial sources, but these standard historical sources will now be subjected to the new lines of questioning sketched out here.

3.3. Promoting and disseminating findings. The work of the RIG will take the form of study days, conferences, and exhibitions whenever possible. The way these are devised and, ultimately, the dissemination and utilisation of results will seek to avoid the practices that serve to institutionalise barriers, with the exhibition catalogue traditionally – and with very few exceptions – being seen as the realm of museum curators, and conference proceedings as the result of academic research. The publications of the RIG will seek to combine both approaches within one document, whilst respecting the skills and obligations specific to each.

In addition to exhibitions and publications, the promotion of results could also take the form of updating information about objects held in museums and in the databases that list them.

3.4. International cooperation. The RIG intends to operate as a pan-European network. Whilst France is at the heart of the research envisaged by the RIG, it is nevertheless clear that numerous issues are now tackled on an international scale due to the circulation of usages or, on the contrary, via the comparison of singularities encountered at the regional and national level, as shown by the conferences/exhibitions referred to in the foreword.

²⁹ Odile Blanc, “Histoire du costume: l’objet introuvable”, *Médiévales* 29 (1995), 65-82.

More generally, constant cooperation with foreign researchers is the only way to be able to federate issues and approaches, and thus reduce the discrepancies between the research being conducted in different countries. The RIG intends to place its work within the pan-European context so as to enable results to be compared, thus enabling French research to participate in international debate - something which, as Daniel Roche has observed, it tends not to do.³⁰ The international conference planned for 2015 has the express goal of generating effective and fruitful forms of collaboration.

Certain issues could even take these international dimensions as their crux and starting point. Conferences and special exhibitions could be held outside France both to produce and to promote findings.

4. Proposals and framework for research activity

A conference is planned for April 2015, *Les modes, les apparences et leur histoire: état, enjeux et perspectives*, as an intermediary stage for the first six-year research programme. The twofold aim will be to subject concepts to scrutiny and to foster international cooperation.

4.1. Planned international conference. The variety of approaches currently pursued in Europe arises from the different national contexts and the varying distance from places that have, historically, determined fashion. It is also based on the differing ways the concept of "physical appearance" and "fashion" are received (see 2.1.), and more specifically on the varying level of importance attached to social interplay, court circles, visual cultures, and so on. These differences are reinforced and become more pronounced with the varying degree of interest accorded to objects as a source of information. Experimental archaeology, for instance, is accorded a greater role in Great Britain than it is in France. The histories of fashion currently being built up are grounded in different bases, and draw on differing terminologies too.

Institutions and networks can bring out these differences in a particularly evident manner, with such and such an issue or form of research acquiring greater visibility than others, and this to the point where work of real value risks being marginalised. Amongst the institutional factors reference must be made to the place accorded to cultural anthropology and the history of textiles in university teaching, the links between research organisations and museums (such as the museum in Nuremberg), and involvement in European concertation and research bodies (especially the lack of French involvement therein). The differing scale of networks, journals, and the means available for publishing research all play a part in the differing levels of dissemination, with the English-speaking world enjoying an advantage here.

By comparing projects, means, and the methods used, the conference will enable participants to place themselves within the European context, something which is currently much needed. This will be an important stage in setting up international cooperation, based on increasing the visibility of French research.

4.2. Proposals for areas of study. The four themes defined below should not be viewed as tantamount to some kind of definitive programme issuing from and somehow summarising this *Research framework and guiding principles*. They may be modified in the future and other lines of research may be added. Nor are they a plan of research to be assimilated, as they stand, to the future six-year research programmes. Instead they seek to lay out the directions in which the RIG researchers wish to travel.

³⁰ Roche, "Traditions et inventions, les costumes régionaux".

They provide a framework which will evolve over time. The mission of the Steering Committee is to compare this framework to the developments in research and findings, and to regularly update it. The six-year research programmes will be drawn up by the Steering Committee on the basis of this framework.

I. The uniformity of physical appearances and their uniformization.

The aim is to analyse on a pan-European scale the various forms taken by the processes of uniformization of physical appearances. In France at least³¹ this concept tends to be deployed in highly general terms without any real prior scrutiny, and based at best on a few facts from the modern era. Instead of starting with the postulate that uniformization is something imposed on passive masses and simply part and parcel of modernity, the RIG will unpack the concept and processes so as to build up a criticism of such a hypothesis.

The notion of uniformization needs to be approached using different scales. Firstly, it relates to the use of uniforms and the formation of the modern State, as well as the standardisation of objects, techniques, and know-how. But it also pertains to mass fashion, the emergence and development of which will be analysed. It does not apply solely to the world of objects, but also relates to the silhouette and hence by extension to the body. The exact form of the body may be concealed by clothing, and can even be 'reshaped' by it. But when more openly displayed the processes of uniformization are more directly based on the body itself, resulting in more frequent instances of individual trauma. Lastly, the processes of uniformization call for analysis of visual cultures and the ways in which the clothed body is perceived, especially how fashion pictures are constructed and produced.

It mobilises concepts which though interrelated do not all apply at the same level. Hence the long-term phenomenon of the uniformization of physical appearances needs to be distinguished from the fashions conveying this process, and from the standardisation of objects which arises from technical and economic considerations. Larger issues may be detected behind this amalgam, such as the emergence of the principle of equality, the democratisation of societies and, more recently, the phenomenon of "globalisation".

There are several possible lines of research here. The first would be to examine uniformization itself by studying the means and vectors by which it transpires, ranging from the use of vestimentary signs (coloured scarves,³² uniforms, etc.) to all the various other categories via which it can transpire - such as accessories, attitudes, and postures, be they subject to constraints imposed by clothing and hairstyles or by the needs of education (dancing, fencing, and so on for the more distant periods).

An alternative line of research would consist in distinguishing between the various kinds of people promoting or prescribing uniformization, and who thus determine its various purposes - be it for economic reasons and the desire for profit, with the emergence of industrial manufacture and varying degrees of standardisation of objects, or else for social reasons with the need for recognition and group adhesion, to display authority or a certain skill, to impress others and thus win over their allegiance, etc.. This approach could focus on the dynamics and contradictions at work, and thus analyse processes by looking at their contrary. How and to what extent are uniformized practices (or those undergoing uniformization) brought into question by the identity markers which sometimes manage to transpire in tandem with them? And equally, how are attempts to assert originality undermined, weakened, or stifled by these processes? The proper analysis of these issues

³¹ The same does not hold true everywhere, and the situation is different for instance in Germany. See *Schönheit des Uniformität*, ed. by G. Mentges and B. Richard (Campus Verlag, 2005); and *Uniformierungen in Bewegung*, ed. by G. Mentges, D. Neuland-Kitzerow, and B. Richard (Waxmann, 2007).

³² Denise Turrel, *Le Blanc de France. La construction des signes identitaires pendant les Guerres de religion (1562-1629)* (Droz, 2005).

implies the need to compare and contrast fashions in the regions and capitals, across different national spaces, and to examine the differences in appearance constitutive of gender.

The study of these issues and the identification of the historical processes at work since the sixteenth century onwards will proceed according to various distinctions. The first distinction will be between a form of uniformization which presents itself as such and promotes uniformity (be it military, professional, or so on), and another form which seeks to conceal its true nature. A second series of distinctions will relate to the varying levels of bodily involvement at the various stages of the process – depending upon whether the body is concealed or the silhouette "reshaped", the body is exhibited, etc. The various stages these processes have taken over time call for a concomitant examination of the idea of ruptures within the history of physical appearance and the temporalities of fashion, and this is the subject of a another study theme developed in more detail below.

II. Gender, silhouette, and appearances.

The question of gender, through manners of dressing and the creation of different silhouettes, remains fundamental and represents an essential objective of the GIS. Other topics need to be explored relating to similar issues, such as the postures and attitudes dictated by "modesty" (blushing, casting the eyes downwards, etc.), or the fact of displaying naked arms or bosoms, which though objects of desire are associated in social terms with their exact contrary, namely modesty or decency. This social construction is related to the figure of the other in contrast to whom one positions oneself – the figure of virility, the various expressions of which are based on the desire for an appearance conforming to the political and social context.³³

Hair and the obligation incumbent upon women to style it (that is both to have a hair style and to have their hair arranged) – something which until the middle of the twentieth century was regarded as a matter of decency – raises nearly all of the issues mentioned here. An initial approach to this topic would involve reassessing the importance of hair – something which is all too often neglected – and its relation to temptation/modesty up until the early twentieth century.³⁴ It is the seductive and erotic charge of hair that endows women's hairstyles with much of their meaning. And at the intersection between the issues of hair, gender, silhouette, and appearance, lies the vast topic of wigs and postiches, which emerged in the seventeenth century, before disappearing at the end of the following century. Recent periods have been marked by the use of hats when outside (unlike headdresses which were worn on all occasions), then of headscarves, and finally the practice of going 'uncovered', leading to the current social issue of the veil.

The fact of having a permanent hairstyle raises issues of hygiene and the possibility of washing hair. Prior to the general availability of industrial or home-made shampoos there was a different relationship with the body, based on a renewed desire not to have thick masses of hair and to avoid hair loss due to the rubbing of the headdress, and so on. This gave rise to the need for headdresses to be smaller in size, eventually leading to their disappearance. It is also one of the reasons behind the series of twentieth-century styles mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

III. The temporalities of fashion and ruptures with the history of physical appearance.

Periods when appearances changed rapidly are highly instructive about social relationships, but they can also tell us a lot about the way individuality is constructed and

³³ *Histoire de la virilité*, ed. by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Georges Vigarello (Le Seuil, 2011).

³⁴ Jean-Pierre Lethuillier, "La coiffe au XIX^e siècle: une figure du voile? Réflexion sur l'exemple Breton", in *Les voiles dévoilés. Pudeur, foi, élégance...*, Université de la Mode Conference (Éditions Lyonnaises d'Art et d'Histoire, 2008), pp.36-45.

about the individual's relationship to their body. The most recent examples (with the "Roaring Twenties" in the early twentieth century, and then the 1960s), for instance, are informative about many topics above and beyond vestimentary changes. The project of the RIG is to explore this angle by working on moments of rupture from the sixteenth century up to the current day.

The first task will be to complete the historical survey and identify moments when vestimentary forms and other elements of individual appearance, along with certain types of silhouette, either emerged or disappeared. These results are already partially available in the existing histories of vestimentary practice, but above and beyond the work needed to describe these changes what is also required is to examine their scale and historical reach.

This is inseparable from another line of enquiry relating to the temporalities specific to fashion phenomena, and one where it will be useful to compare the approaches adopted in museums and universities. The history of physical appearance as conceived in academia tends to be placed within the long-term framework of cultural issues, with priority being given to classical sources (texts and images). Within such an approach short timeframes relate to the moment when the opposition between contrary tendencies working over centuries reached a critical stage and suddenly crystallised. But research conducted in museums takes direct observation of changes as its starting point and so operates with reduced chronological intervals, meaning that over the past half-century it has increasingly moved away from a purely circumstantial concept of time³⁵ to instead examine fashion as a form of *bricolage* involving preparatory phrases prior to change (resulting from technical or economic progress, and distinguishing between innovation and widespread deployment), the reinterpretation and recycling of older forms (in some instances in conjunction with innovation), and so on.

The temporality of fashion cannot be laid down in a uniform manner from the sixteenth through to the twenty-first century. It depends in turn on social definitions of fashion, and hence on specifiers – the court, and then subsequently fashion retailers and fashion houses; on foreign influences from Italy, Spain, and later England, etc.; on imitators at court, in the town, in the provinces, or abroad depending on the period; and on the the speed with which images were created and exchanged. Analysis of these procedures and mechanisms of change are thus inseparable from one another.

The issues relating to chronology have an immediate and fundamental impact on our approach to the history of the body and the overly neglected topics of modesty, hygiene, movement, and so on. The way historians can apprehend feelings and behaviour changes, for instead of evolving imperceptibly over long timeframes they become subject to observable shifts. They acquire additional historical density and substance, and so the history of the body has a greater chance of including them within what it has to tell us. Above all it now becomes possible - and necessary even - to devise a chronology that is rooted directly in them instead of one issuing from some related yet distinct overarching framework.

IV. "Traces" and the archaeology of clothing.

This, together with the preceding theme, is a particularly significant way of basing the history of physical appearance on historical objects,³⁶ and involves a twofold reversal of attitude towards them. Firstly, instead of only being interested in new, complete outfits and regarding the rest as "mismatching", we instead focus our attention on the compromises struck with norms. Instead of sifting through objects on the basis of such criteria as their

³⁵ See for instance Madeleine Delpierre, *Costumes français du XVIII^e siècle, 1715-1789*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Palais Galliera, November 1954 - January 1955, p.1 fn.1.

³⁶ This approach draws on use-wear analysis, a method developed by archaeologists of prehistory and consisting in identifying the origins of materials and how objects were made on the basis of observing the many traces left on them.

complete character, or their clear identification with a given country or social group, researchers carefully examine “intercalated” forms. Secondly, and drawing on museum collections, it is the concealed part of the object which now becomes the focus of interest via examinations of how they were initially structured and assembled, of how they were reinforced or repaired (where this was normally not meant to be seen), and the traces of usage and wear found on vestimentary items of any nature and on objects used to prepare individual appearance, opening onto new research approaches to the way they were used or appropriated.

The aim is thus to build up a veritable archaeology of clothing and develop methods of analysis which have hitherto only being applied on a one-off basis for particularly rare or well-known items of clothing (such as Charles de Blois’ doublet, fourteenth century, held by the Musée des Tissus in Lyon) or specific corpuses (such as the Burgundy headdresses held by the Musée de la Vie bourguignonne in Dijon).³⁷

This topic could subsequently develop in new directions with the study of the materials and techniques used to manufacture items (looking for instance at such tools as scissors, needles, and thread, or assembly methods such as patterns, stitches, seams and so on). We know that various stitches have disappeared and others have been saved *in extremis* from oblivion (the *neudé* stitch in Brittany for instance). The standardisation of assembly techniques means that more needs to be done to explore this history of now defunct skills.³⁸

There are two main issues behind this project. The first is to direct our attention away from norms and towards the compromises made with those norms, giving greater room to daily life and the effects of time. The second is of course to add to the history of the body by examining the intimate compromises made between it and objects of apparel.

These four proposals all seek to fulfil the goals of the RIG. Each however draws on specific aptitudes by exploring a given aspect:

- *examining areas of problematic substance along with the words used to discuss the content*: all of the theme relating to uniformization (I) raises the question of the relationship between fashion and physical appearance and calls for work on the definition of concepts, and perhaps their redefinition. The same is true of the work on the temporalities of fashion (III).

- *linking up the history of physical appearance, the history of the body, and the history of visual cultures*: this is what lies behind the theme of uniformization (I) and the study of gender on the basis of physical appearance (II).

- *establishing and trying out methods*: this is particularly the case when it comes to rethinking the chronology of the history of physical appearance on the basis of the objects themselves (III), and when their study is based entirely on experimental archaeology (IV) (giving rise to issues of vocabulary).

- *bringing together all those involved in research, be they academics, museum researchers, textile restorers, or collect-researchers*: this multidisciplinary approach will be essential for the themes of gender (II) and traces of use and wear (IV). These issues are closely bound up with the history of the body and will help to emphasise neglected aspects, in particular modesty and bodily hygiene.

³⁷ See *supra* work by Christine Aribaud, Madeleine Blondel, and Patricia Dal-Prà, fn.18.

³⁸ Michèle Baudrier, “Techniques d’assemblage de différentes pièces de vêtements en Sarthe (1800-1860)”, in *Les costumes régionaux*, pp.305-11.