

## **THE CRITICAL FASHION MUSEUM**

**November 25, 2026**

*A Study Day organized by Revers (UGent), MoMu, and The New School Parsons Paris*

In recent years, fashion museums and exhibitions have become sites of critical discussion and contested terrain. Museum collections, policies, and histories have long been shaped by colonial and imperial mandates, class privilege, projects of social "education," and structural racism. These factors are now under new scrutiny. Fashion collections, which struggled for legitimacy throughout the twentieth century and are now firmly established in art and decorative arts museums, are increasingly subject to the same reassessment.

This critical reflection is more urgent than ever, as fashion exhibitions are growing in popularity beyond fashion museums due to increased visitor attendance and significant public interest in the topic. Chronic underfunding and restrictive institutional frameworks have deepened museums' reliance on brands, multinational conglomerates, and commercial partnerships. Brands have not only invested in exhibiting fashion and supporting public institutions, but they have also started constructing corporate narratives by creating their own museums. Consequently, a new global institutional landscape has emerged, making it essential to evaluate the scope, responsibility, and autonomy of museums and curators.

The Critical Fashion Museum study day aims to create a space for investigating these issues, exploring the idea of 'critical' through institutional biases, curatorial positionality, scholarly independence and community relationships. We invite scholars interested in academic and curatorial practices and museum professionals to engage in conversation with each other.

### **FORMAT OF THE EVENT**

*The Critical Fashion Museum* will be a one-day event combining scholarly exchange and critical discussion. The program will include:

- A keynote lecture by Professor Carol Tulloch (University of Arts of London)
- Two panels of invited speakers discussing critical issues in fashion museology today.

- A workshop where MA students, Ph.D. candidates, and postdoctoral scholars will present their work and receive feedback from senior scholars and museum professionals.
- A critical exhibition visit consisting of a group visit to the current exhibition, followed by a discussion of the exhibition's methodological, historiographical, and curatorial frameworks.

*The Critical Fashion Museum* will present a research award, which will provide mentorship and financial support for the publication of an article resulting from the study day.

**We welcome contributions for the workshop and feedback session, in which MA students, PhD candidates, postdoctoral scholars present their work and receive responses from senior scholars and museum professionals.** Suggested themes include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Institutional policy and critique**

- How is value defined, produced, and legitimized in fashion museums?
- How does sponsorship shape curatorial authority and epistemic frameworks?
- How can we evaluate the relationship between designers, brands, and museums? How does this relationship compare to those in other disciplines, such as contemporary art and architecture?

#### **Critical collections**

- How are fashion collections formed, classified, and preserved?
- How are museums reevaluating their collections?
- How does the rise of private fashion “museums” and corporate collections challenge the mission and practices of public or semi-public institutions?

#### **Critical exhibitions**

- What stories are being told through exhibition practices? How do institutions communicate through their exhibitions?
- How can exhibitions change the ways in which institutions present themselves and operate?

#### **Critical curating practices and politics**

- How do curatorial strategies mediate between institutions, commercial partners, and publics?
- Where do we draw the boundaries between museum curated, co-curated, authorized, and brand-led exhibitions?

- How can curators and museums actively collaborate with designers and brands in ways that are meaningful and respectful?
- In what ways do fashion exhibitions and fashion museums blur the line between critique and branding?

### **History of fashion museums and fashion collections**

- What are the local, regional, and global histories of fashion museums and collections across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa?

### **Academia and the Museum**

- What role does academic research play in shaping fashion exhibitions and collections?
- How can collaboration between universities and museums produce new critical methodologies for fashion history and curatorship?

### **Workshop Proposal Submissions**

We invite **MA students, PhD candidates, postdoctoral scholars** to submit the following:

- A 500-word abstract explaining the research you would like to present at the workshop. This could be connected to past or current research.
- A 300-word bio
- If applicable, a list of recent projects and publications related to the topic proposed

Advisory Committee: Maude Bass-Krueger (UGent - Revers), Kaat Debo (MoMu Antwerp), Wim Mertens (MoMu Antwerp), Marco Pecorari (The New School Parsons Paris), Caroline Stevenson (London College of Fashion), and José Teunissen (Amsterdam Fashion Institute - AMFI)

**Proposal submission deadline: July 1, 2026**

**Please send proposals to: [revers@ugent.be](mailto:revers@ugent.be)**

For further information or inquiries about the proposal submission process and/or the event, please contact [maude.basskrueger@ugent.be](mailto:maude.basskrueger@ugent.be), [pecorarm@newschool.edu](mailto:pecorarm@newschool.edu), and [wim.mertens@momu.be](mailto:wim.mertens@momu.be)