

BROADHEAD Caroline (UK)

The Dress - paper

Within the values placed upon articles of clothing, the dress represents a special item. It offers the possibility of being 'dressed up', it is associated with glamour and the possibility of becoming someone else. It represents the front presented to society, a screen upon which a personality can be projected. The reference to the form of the body, the proximity to the wearer's body, the tactile quality of the material from which it is made, and its movements with or against the body are all important to both the dress designer and artists working with the idea of a dress.

The dress holds such a close association with a person so that it registers as both object and subject. As one item of clothing, the dress represents the whole person, not just a part. The dress exists as an icon of femininity, The dress is an object of desire, both to own or to wear, but also when desire for the wearer is transferred to the dress. Women wear trousers, but men have not adopted wearing dresses, except where femininity is a key point of reference such as cross dressing. Thus it has become a site to explore ideas about the social position of an individual, gender, status, class as well as the interface between inner and outer. It has been the testing ground for the edge of practicality and wearability.

The dress form has played an important role in my work since 1993, as a symbol, as a presence, as a performance element. I propose to trace the recent history of the dress at the junction where art and fashion overlap and examine ideas in both my own work and that of others.

some of the artists I will look at:

Sonia Delauney

Emily Bates

Louise Bourgeois

Hussein Chalayan

Comme des Garçons

Jean Paul Gaultier

Marie Ange Guillemot

Yayoi Kusama

Yoko Ono

Grayson Perry

Kerrie Peterson

Yinka Shonebare

Jana Sterbak

Do Ho Suh

Rosemarie Trockel

Victor and Rolf

Vivienne Westwood

Caroline Broadhead's work has been shown widely over the last 30 years and is represented in many international public collections. In 1997, she won the Jerwood Prize for Applied Arts: Textiles. She has collaborated on dance projects with choreographers such as Claire Russ and Angela Woodhouse.

Reader in Jewellery and Textiles, Middlesex University
