

BACKGROUND NWFC

NWFC Mission

The NWFC was established to end the stubbornly persistent euro - and ethnocentric underpinnings of dominant fashion discourse and to construct alternative narratives. The NWFC acknowledges that fashion systems are diverse, whether independent of (historically), or influenced by (more recently), Western-dominated fashion. It encourages critical investigation and dialogue into that commonly denied, forgotten or otherwise hidden diversity, and explores interconnections among fashion systems outside the dominant 'world fashion city' network, by providing a multidisciplinary and multicultural forum where new critical paradigms can be developed from cross-cultural perspectives. The NWFC recognizes that 'fashion globalization', far from representing a remedial development, perpetuates Eurocentric biases in fashion description and fact on a wider geographical stage. Consistent with its goals, the NWFC strives to be inclusive and welcomes participation from academics, curators, designers and industry professionals who are creatively and critically involved in fashion systems everywhere in the world.

About the NWFC

European fashion history remains hegemonic in discourse and in business. It comes packaged with persistent narratives and set areas of debate such as the consumer revolution in the 18th century, the birth of couture in the last third of the 19th century and the importance of subcultural style in the mid - to late 20th century. These conventions continue to inform how the history of fashion is written and taught. Fashion histories beyond Europe, consequently, are often described in comparison to these hegemonic narratives and are defined accordingly.

While Euro - and ethnocentric frameworks of thinking inherited from the Enlightenment have been fruitfully confronted by other disciplines such as anthropology and art history, they have remained stubbornly rooted in fashion studies – a problem that in itself begs for scrutiny. The NWFC was called into existence in 2012, under the passionate leadership of Angela Jansen, to address these issues and contribute to the construction of a new fashion paradigm. The conference addresses the urgent need for alternative terminologies and also alternative ways of theorizing fashion so that the European experience is no longer privileged as the standard model. It also presents a forum for case studies that fall outside the conservative frameworks. NWFC participants deploy holism, and cross-cultural and relativistic frameworks to disrupt the simple, oppositional, essentialist thinking that characterizes conventional fashion studies.

Participation and enthusiasm for the conference have been increasing with each subsequent edition, thus demonstrating the importance of Jansen's initiative. The NWFC reaches out to researchers who often remain invisible in the academic landscape due to various barriers, including financial, linguistic and Eurocentric. Each conference has been attended by a gratifying range of nationalities that have

contributed in diverse ways. This diversity is essential to the success of the NWFC mission.

In 2013, Angela Jansen established a Steering Committee to strengthen the NWFC and broaden its impact. She selected prominent thinkers in the field and aimed for geographic diversity in representation. The Steering Committee is still under construction as it continues to expand and develop clear divisions of tasks and responsibilities.

In 2015, the conference changed its name from 'Non-Western Fashion Conference' to 'NWFFashionConference'. The original title, while laying out the focus of the conference, was burdened by the baggage of conservative, oppositional frameworks of thought. The new title is a future-oriented attempt to not step into the dualistic framework of West/Non-West all the while meeting the obligation to address it.

In 2016, a PhD workshop was added to the programme in order to encourage, support and stimulate a next generation of researchers to end euro - and ethnocentricity in fashion research and to construct alternative theoretical frameworks. Students are given the opportunity to present their research and ask questions to a committee of experts.

Past Conferences

Intentionally, each edition of the conference has been held in a different geographical location with a different local hosting partner and a unique binding theme. The NWFC recognizes that an increasing number of institutions are engaged in some of the same work as the NWFC, and in new and vigorous ways. Diversity in conference location allows for a rich experience for both hosts and participants. Hosts may receive an encouraging boost for their activities and goals and participants are exposed first-hand to living alternatives.

Except for the first three editions, the conferences take place biannually.

Year	Conference Theme	Location	Statistics
2012	Tradition/Fashion	Rabat, Morocco Jacques Berque Centre	2 days 15 participants 11 papers 1 city visit
2013	The Construction of National Fashion Identities	London, UK London College of Fashion	2 days 100 participants 6 keynotes 36 papers
2014	The Global Politics of Fashion	Hong Kong School of Modern Languages and Cultures	2 days 50 participants 3 keynotes 20 papers

2016	Local Fashion Communities	Antwerp, Belgium University of Antwerp	4 days 50 participants 4 keynotes 37 papers 1 PhD workshop 2 round tables 1 city visit
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Steering Committee

Name	Function	Field Investigation	of	Domicile
Angela Jansen, PhD	Chairperson	Fashion anthropology, Morocco		Belgium
Sarah Cheang, PhD	Treasurer	China		United Kingdom
Sandra Niessen, PhD	Secretary	Indonesia		Netherlands
Leslie Rabine, PhD	Communications	Africa		USA
Toby Slade, PhD		Japan		Japan
Jennifer Craik, PhD		Theory, Australia		Australia
Christine Tsui		China		Hong Kong
Erica de Greef		South-Africa		South-Africa

Publications to date

Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik (eds). 2016. *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity Through Fashion*. London: Bloomsbury.

Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik (eds). 2015. *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, Volume 2, Nr 1.