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Born in 1967 in Tübingen, Germany
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PROJECT

The Triumph of Fashion: A Global History

My book analyses how a fascination with fashion became a marked feature of life in Europe as well as other parts of the world, and what the legacy of this historical process means today. The pre-industrial period of c. 1300 to 1800 proved to be pivotal for fashion's global triumph. Fashion emerged as a powerful economic sector that involved and newly interconnected broad groups of makers, traders, consumers, and thinkers who embraced its effects. Books about the history of fashion often don't start until 1800 or focus just on Europe, and many commentators see only courts and top elites as drivers of change, while others assume that fashion has always existed through practices of adornment. But the story needs to be told from the bottom up, as consumers drove innovation. Fashion, moreover, is often defined through European categories, which turn on novelty in tailoring. As a result, Europe is often claimed to have invented fashion. Yet the definition is wrong, and change within Europe shared features with and substantially depended on change elsewhere - in fact, it particularly thrived on Asian and Ottoman innovation. Nor was the Western world central to trade in textiles, well into modernity. To understand these processes means to understand history and how we have come to think about ourselves in time in new ways.

Recommended Reading

Rublack, Ulinka. *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Rublack, Ulinka, and Maria Hayward, eds. *The First Book of Fashion: The Book of Clothes of Matthäus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
Riello, Giorgio, and Ulinka Rublack, eds. *The Right to Dress: Sumptuary Legislation in a Global Perspective, c. 1300-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Paperback 2020.

The Triumph of Fashion: A Global History

Global history is often written by historians who privilege accounts of economic, political, legal and institutional structures, but it also increasingly aims to chart changes in attitudes as well as subjectivities by attending to social practices and narratives that are rooted in everyday life and the imagination. The history of material culture and dress and fashion in particular offers a unique opportunity to do so and is most likely to succeed if it asks not just about supply and demand, technologies or the importance of sumptuary laws, but, in an anthropological vein, inquires into who gave what meaning to dress, why, and to what effect. My focus will not be on specific countries or dynasties but on interconnections, cultural exchanges and those multicentric developments which point to the fact that from 1300 onward there were larger areas of the globe which related to each other through their interest in fashion. The first part of my talk provides some examples for this emergence of fashion as a global phenomenon, while the second part looks at the importance of global accessories. A final section will examine just how these developments reshape questions about cultural difference, ecologies and the ethos of textile production, which are crucial for contemporary discussions about the future of fashion.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Rublack, Ulinka (Stuttgart,2022)

Die Geburt der Mode : eine Kulturgeschichte der Renaissance

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1776108795>

Dressing up

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1776108795>

Rublack, Ulinka (Cambridge,2020)

The right to dress : sumptuary laws in a global perspective, c. 1200-1800

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1697683584>

Rublack, Ulinka (Chicago, Ill.,2016)

Renaissance dress, cultures of making, and the period eye

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1764141229>

Rublack, Ulinka (Oxford,2013)

Matter in the material Renaissance

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1764139275>

Rublack, Ulinka (Oxford,2010)

Dressing up : cultural identity in Renaissance Europe

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=667595724>

Dressing up

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=667595724>