

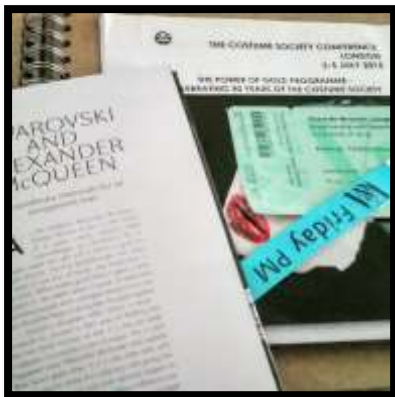
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# THE COSTUME SOCIETY CONFERENCE, LONDON: “THE POWER OF GOLD”- CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE COSTUME SOCIETY

By Kerri Plumtree

## REPORT:

This year I was fortunate enough to be awarded The Costume Societies Conference Student Bursary. I study Fashion at The University of Lincoln and it was an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to attend



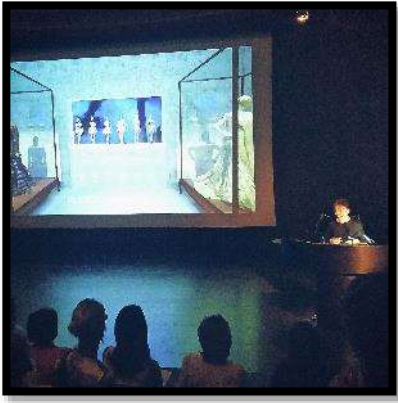
this event and join all the members of The Costume Society in celebrating their Bi-centenary. I met so many remarkable and erudite people from different disciplinary backgrounds all unified by their passionate commitment to conserve Costume, Fashion and Textiles for future generations

As part of the Bursary award I was given the opportunity to visit the Clothworkers' Centre at Blythe House. The centre specialises in the study and

conservation of Textiles and Fashion. It was a chance to get up close and personal with a variety of carefully selected pieces from the V&A archives. It was a breath taking experience to see the varied use of gold within so many beautiful historical garments and in such great detail. The selection of garments illustrated the various techniques designers and dressmakers utilised to imbue the power of gold within their work. I



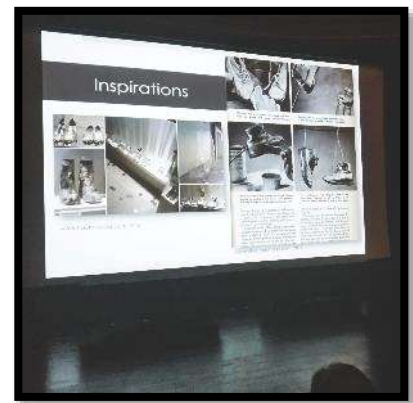
especially enjoyed the examples of straw work, they appealed to the child within me and reminded me of the popular fairy tale 'Rumpelstiltskin'. As a designer I am always looking for new techniques to consider when developing my concepts. Being at the Clothworkers' centre I felt like a kid in a candy shop, it was a rich source of research and inspiration and I look forward visiting again.



Over two days I had the privilege of listening to various speakers discuss their thoughts on the power of gold within Costume and Fashion throughout the ages. One of the personal high lights for me from Saturday included Claire Wilcox' presentation on the Alexander Mc Queen exhibition 'Savage Beauty'. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to hear the curator speak about the practices the team executed to create such a moving and thought provoking tribute to the late Fashion designer Lee Mc Queen (I'm not ashamed to say I went all fan girl and got my ticket signed). The exhibition itself was

phenomenal by far the best Fashion exhibition I have ever seen, it was a fully immersive experience. One I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Within my own fashion practice research I am investigating our relationship with Fashion and the moving image. By visiting the exhibition and hearing Claire speak I was able to examine in depth how the moving image within Fashion creates symbolic value and what it adds to the viewer's experience, and the recollection of those encounters. Using Alexander McQueen as an example of a designer who used the moving image within his own Fashion practice, the occasion proved to be a valuable resource for my research.

So, I'm nearing the end of my time at University and it is time for me to contemplate my final collection and to consider the materials and techniques I will use. On the second day of the conference Joanne Horton gave a presentation entitled "All that Glitters is not necessarily gold: An examination of chemical metallisation techniques in Couture Textiles." I was enthused by her in depth analysis of the chemical processes and technologies employed by contemporary Fashion designers to create a luxurious aesthetic to their work. It has prompted me to explore further the possibility of inter disciplinary collaboration within my own practice. Utilising more of the departments within my own University and building relationships with my peers beyond areas of my own expertise. I endeavour to cultivate innovative and imaginative results when sourcing materials and developing my own textiles.



The Bursary I was awarded also included an invitation to the Gala dinner held at The Imperial College. (The real



reason any student attends anything, the prospect of free food...only joking). In all seriousness though who doesn't relish the opportunity don their finest regalia paint on a bit of slap and catch a bit of down time wining and dining in the company of funny and interesting people. I bagged myself a signed book at the silent auction, an excellent addition to my personal Fashion library. My way of giving back a little of what was given to me. It was here I learnt the most about what the society is all about. The Costume Society is a collective of people, perhaps even 'family' that has grown together over the last 50 years to

celebrate and appreciate Costume and Fashion. They work tirelessly to support each other in the conservation of Clothing, generously sharing their knowledge and funding people like me to further my research and continue the dissemination of information about the social importance of clothing. I am truly grateful to have been part of such a fantastic weekend and I can't wait to see you all again next year in Manchester for 'Democracy and Fashion'. May you continue to grow over the next 50.