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Fashion and Cultural Heritage in Perspective: 1st Seminar on History and Historiography of Fashion and Dress. University of São Paulo (USP)/Federal University of Goiás (UFG) (June 2013)

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"I've started to believe that the magic in the clothing is in the fact that it receives us: it receives our smell, our sweat, it receives even our form."
Peter Stallybrass¹

The close relation between the fashion field and the cultural heritage has not always happened in a natural and direct way. The beginning of this tortuous way has crossed the understanding of fashion as an integrative, reflexive and articulated part in the western societies.

Merleau-Ponty (2004, p. 24) shows us how the relation between men and objects is never far, or better, how we are invested in the things. We print our marks in what we touch, use, create and, especially, in this case, in what we wear. Fashion is inserted in the happenings, changes and it is related to the cultural and social universes in which it may enter.

Thinking about fashion as a cultural heritage is to understand it as materiality – the cut, modeling, cloth, techniques – as well as its transcendent aspect, what is, its human side. In this way, considering fashion as inseparable element from the cultural and social universe is imposing itself as an integrated part of what we call material culture².

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Huyssen (2000, p. 09) drives attention to a contemporary search for memory or the emergency of memory as a cultural and political issue. In the specific field of dress and fashion we see researchers who work on this perspective, among whom we can highlight the works of Lou Taylor (2002, 2004) and Daniela Calanca (2002, 2013). In this perspective we can find an important partnership between the University of Bologna (Unibo) and two important Brazilian universities, the Federal University of Goiás (from its Visual Art College - FAV/UFG) and the University of São Paulo (from its Arts, Sciences and Humanities - EACH-USP), which made possible the organization of the I Seminar on History and Historiography of Fashion and Dress³, which happened at USP from June 2nd to June 3rd, 2013 and at UFG from June 12th to June 13th, 2013.

This seminar promoted the debate about the most current interests in the research and writings about dress history with emphasis on fashion and its insertion in the field of cultural heritage. The event promoted the meeting between the researcher Daniela Calanca, professor at the University of Bologna and researchers who work in the investigation field about that theme in Brazil.

Daniela Calanca promoted a series of three conferences in which she brought up fundamental issues on Fashion Social History, Memory, Archives, Cultural Heritage and a pioneer project that has been developed in the University of Bologna with the partnership of the Ministry of Cultural Goods of Italy and UNESCO, in the creation of a digital archive about fashion in the 20th century in Italy. She starts the discussion underlying an approach of Fashion Social History based on a particular notion of History, it is, as a science that studies the past from the present. This idea is present in the problems proposed by Foucault⁴ about past as a discourse and, in this way, History doesn't intend to be a loyal and absolute rescue of the happenings, an impossible mission, but as discourses that go inside, which help us think the contemporary questions. So, the Social History of Fashion must be understood beyond the materiality – clothes themselves –, as a field of debates and reflections about the practices, habits and changes of a certain society that can be reflected in dress.

In this sense, the understanding of the cultural heritage and memory is not related to the spectrum of the past, but as something that is strongly related to the present being projected into the future. Calanca makes clear the importance of archives and collections for the researchers.

In Italy, the archives have a public nature and are connected to the Public Ministry of Cultural Goods. The collections, however, have a private nature, so that they are not available to consultation. As a rule, for a collection to integrate a public archive, the government needs the help from an evaluator who usually comes from the universities and studies the importance of that collection to the cultural heritage. Another kind of archive is the digital one, which is really essential to researchers and students each day. In Italy these archives show the opening attitude from the government for the importance of the new applied technologies.

In 2008, the Italian government created and financed an audacious project: the Digital Archive of Fashion in the 20th Century. Commanded by fashion students and researchers from the University of Bologna, the portal was put into work in 2011. Daniela Calanca observes that this was a very important initiative which revealed a change in mentality about the frequent prejudice against fashion as a knowledge field and it meant an opening of the research data basis for researchers and students in the area. The Project has an ambitious purpose which is to propose a model of “fashion archive” from a portal that includes not only the documents already well preserved in the archives, but also those related to private archives from companies and industries, especially in the territory of Rimini. In this sense, digital technology becomes an allied in a purpose that involves processing a huge quantity of information. This proposal is associated and based on the National System Archive (SAN) that is a catalogue digital system for different kinds of cultural goods in Italy.

The system is really complex and to use it you just need to download the data. It is composed of an archive of current/contemporary fashion and a historic archive. The current fashion archive is composed of fashion companies that are currently in the job. In some cases, according to Daniela Calanca, the company asks the University the visit of a researcher/evaluator to investigate the heritage it possesses. In other moments, when the company has enough material to create a current archive and a historic one, it is possible to think about creating an internal museum open for visitation.

According to Daniela Calanca people live an impasse today because most fashion archives from the Ministry have come from private collections, from families, and it is necessary for these companies to be conscious about the importance of creating archives that save the heritage and history of that company. She is used to proposing visitations and trainings for students in the companies that contribute a lot for this project.

This pioneer initiative developed at the University of Bologna is put into perspective and dialogues with the discussions proposed on the round table at University of São Paulo/USP, which happened on June 4th and was composed by the Doctors - professors Daniela Calanca (Unibo); Suzana Avelar (EACH/USP), Maria Cristina Volpi (Escola de Belas Artes/Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), Rita Andrade (FAV/ UFG – coordinator).

At the Federal University of Goiás/UFG, the round table that happened on June 14th was composed by the Doctors-professors Daniela Calanca (Unibo), Maria Claudia Bonadio (Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora); Manuelina Duarte (Faculdade de Ciências Sociais/UFG) e Rita Andrade (FAV/UFG- coordinator).

Suzana Avelar presented a project accomplished by the Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (SENAI) for the development of dress made of bobbin-lace (the communities from Piauí) in a partnership with Brazilian designers like Walter Rodrigues.

Maria Cristina Volpi presented a research project in the archives of the Museu D. João VI, in the Escola de Belas Artes/UFRJ. It is a study about the collection of fans from the museum done by the professor and her students.

Maria do Carmo Teixeira Rainho presented how the public archives work in Brazil and made specific comments about the Arquivo Nacional/RJ and research projects related to iconographic and textual documentary collections in a dialog with similar material presented by Daniela Calanca and related to the Italian reality.

Maria Claudia Bonadio presented a post-doctorate research project about the dress collection archive at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo/MASP that is on course and showed a strong Italian influence on its formation basis as an answer to the questions about the Italian influence in Brazil appointed by Daniela Calanca.

Manuelina Duarte presented the current scenario of public policies related to the cultural heritage in Brazil, making clear the difficulties to access the data basis for those who dedicate to study and research dress in Brazil.

The partnership between Unibo, UFG and USP brought a space for discussing fashion, dress and heritage and created a rich dialog between Brazilian professors and researchers and the University of Bologna, represented by the professor Daniela Calanca, who proposed the working up of a common research project with Brazilian researchers with the general objective of promoting the cultural exchange between Brazil and Italy. The project is established by the initial participation of Daniela Calanca, representing the UNIBO and Maristela Novaes and Rita Andrade, representing the UFG. The first meeting happened on June 12th, 2013, when the general terms of a project that reaches a more specific configuration were established, whose general theme consists of FASHION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE and the main specific research themes are: 1. Dress, Fashion and Cultural Heritage; 2. Cultural Institutions and Fashion Archives; 3. Fashion Routes; 4. Fashion and Local Development; and 5. Fashion and Cultural Exchange.

The project comprises research actions in archives (of newspapers, magazines, public archives, etc) and museums (of costume, immigration, etc.), bibliographic searches (the history of immigration, commerce, industry, etc), from the involved counties, besides the organization of seminars and publications related to the investigated themes.

The partnership brought an impulse in the collaboration between the Brazilian and foreigner institutions as a way to broaden the scientific production on the research on dress, especially about the questions of interest for the field of the cultural heritage in Brazil. Above it al, it provoked the interest of the graduation and post-graduation students to broaden their perspectives of studying and researching in the fashion field.

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¹ Stallybrass, P. (2008), *O casaco de Marx: roupa, memória e dor*, Tradução de Tomaz Tadeu,

² Prown (1982, p.01) highlights that the material culture is a study form crafts, values, ideas, attitudes, beliefs from a society at a certain time.

³ The event organization committee was composed of the professors: Dr. Regina Sanchez, (Post-Graduation Program in Textile and Fashion/USP - <http://each.uspnet.usp.br/site/pos-programas.php?item=txm>); Dr. Rita Andrade, (Coordinator of the Seminar. Post-Graduation Program in Art and Visual Culture - <http://www.fav.ufg.br/culturavisual/>), Master Quéfren Crillanovick, and Master Maristela Novaes, (Graduated in Fashion Design - <http://www.fav.ufg.br>).

⁴ Foucault. M. *A ordem do discurso*. 8 Edição. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1996.