

Abstract for consideration for the Association for Dress Historians Research Day,
Saturday 16 February 2013

Uncovering hidden treasures in silver trunks: the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection



Zandra Rhodes at her Studio with UCA student interns, Rochelle Minors and Lauren Hunt. Photo: A. Robinson

Hidden away in silver trunks at the Zandra Rhodes Studio are over 5,000 dresses spanning fifty years of British Fashion and including designs worn by clients such as Elizabeth Taylor, Freddie Mercury, and Diana, Princess of Wales.

The Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection, with an accompanying Open Education Resource (OER), will provide unique online access to images of 500 of the designer's most iconic garments, for use in study and research by the next generation of fashion and textile

designers, and fashion historians. Zandra Rhodes, in conjunction with her Production

Manager, Frances Diplock, has personally selected the garments which span her career and feature both stand-out pieces such as the vibrant yellow wool evening coat (a copy of which is in the V&A museum) and her 'dinosaur coat'; as well as hidden gems which have not been seen since their catwalk debut.

The project is a collaborative venture between the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and the Zandra Rhodes Studio and is funded by JISC (2011-2013). Zandra Rhodes trained at one of UCA's founder colleges, the Medway College of Design, and was made the University's first Chancellor in 2010.

Each of the dresses, from Zandra's first collection in 1969 onwards, have their own unique Style Number, however aside from this the cataloguing was undertaken from scratch. The cataloguer (Courtauld History of Dress MA, 2001) worked closely with the Production Manager, who has an extensive knowledge built up from working for Zandra since 1976; controlled lists were created for Textile Design Names, Collection Names and Seasons, Studio techniques and so on, forming a unique resource in their own right.

Additional research is currently being undertaken by the Project Manager and Cataloguer which will form the OER component. This paper will provide a preview of the Digital Study Collection and OER, before their official launch in Spring 2013!

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