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Exhibition

MOLFORT'S: NOW THOSE ARE SOCKS!

Can Marfà Knitted Fabrics-Mataró Museum
From 10 November 2017 to 30 June 2018

■ Julià Guillaumon

Molfort's was sock manufacturer that led the way in Spain in the introduction of *rational advertising*, a new strategy using scientific methods as the basis for promoting industrial products that emerged in the 1930s, drawing on practices in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. Molfort's was set up in Mataró in 1927 and made its name with a spectacular launch campaign, a stand at the Barcelona International Exhibition of 1929 that recalled the work of Fortunato Depero for Campari, and a print advertising campaign built around two concepts: elegance ("La parte inferior del hombre adquiere mayor distinción" [The bottom garment for the man who buys distinction]) and saving ("Deu ralets ben gastats" [Ten ralets well spent]¹). The brand also sent persuasive messages to women: "s'ha acabat el sargir" [no more darning].

All of the techniques of rational advertising were employed to advertise Molfort's socks: the brand image (two dogs tussling over a sock) and logo; advertisements in the print press (designed by the Czech Karel Černý and the Catalan Josep Morell); comic strips drawn by celebrated artists and illustrators (Benejam, Benigani, Calsina, Castanys, Clavé, Grau Sala, Junceda, Kalders, Opisso, Passarell, Shum); a customer magazine; publicity on posters, banners, shop windows, hoardings, trams and illuminated signs; the branded van that led the publicity caravan of the *Volta a Catalunya*, and a character that became



uniquely associated with the brand: a wading bird presented either as a hotel bellboy or as a cyclist. Considerable work was also put into the branding of the products themselves: distinctive labels, wrapping paper, packaging, business gifts and stands at trade fairs.

The exhibition *Els mitjans Molfort's i la publicitat racional* [Molfort's socks and rational advertising] recreates this now forgotten world. For many, the name Molfort's is associated with the tales of Jep and Fidel from Madorell, which appeared in the comic book *Cavall Fort*. The exhibition concludes with an area on the relaunch of the Molfort's brand in the 1960s in the broader context of a Catalan cultural revival, through the work of the publicist Rovira Bruill. ■

¹ The *ral*, or its diminutive, *ralet*, was a coin worth one quarter of a *peseta*.

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1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers

■ Neus Ribas

The history of clothing and textile design has become an increasingly popular area of research in recent years, spawning numerous studies and projects. To give this research a platform, and to enable experts and enthusiasts to learn more about the various themes currently being investigated in Spain, the Textile and Fashion Study Group – affiliated to the Design History Foundation – has organised the 1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers. This new event, which will feature contributions from more than 40 researchers and scholars, will be held on 17 and 18 November at the Terrassa Textile Museum and Documentation Centre, with the support of the Barcelona Design Museum, Terrassa City Council and the Institute of Industry.

For this inaugural edition a generalist approach has been taken, and papers have been received on a wide range of themes. The work presented will cover subjects as diverse as textile collecting, the history of clothing, textile art, major designers, anthropology, popular dress, and more... Given the large number of presentations, the event will be split into two sessions, the first focusing on fashion, the second specifically on textiles, to be held on Friday 17, from 9.30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Colloquium will begin with a talk by Lesley Miller, Senior Curator for Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, on the subject *Interwoven stories: 30 years of textile research*.

The provisional programme can be viewed on the website of the Design History Foundation, where those interested in attending may also register for the event. ■

<http://www.historiadeldisseny.org>



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Exhibition catalogue

DRESSING THE BODY. Silhouettes and fashion, 1550-2015

Teresa Bastardes Mestre and Sílvia Ventosa Muñoz

Barcelona Design Museum, 2017

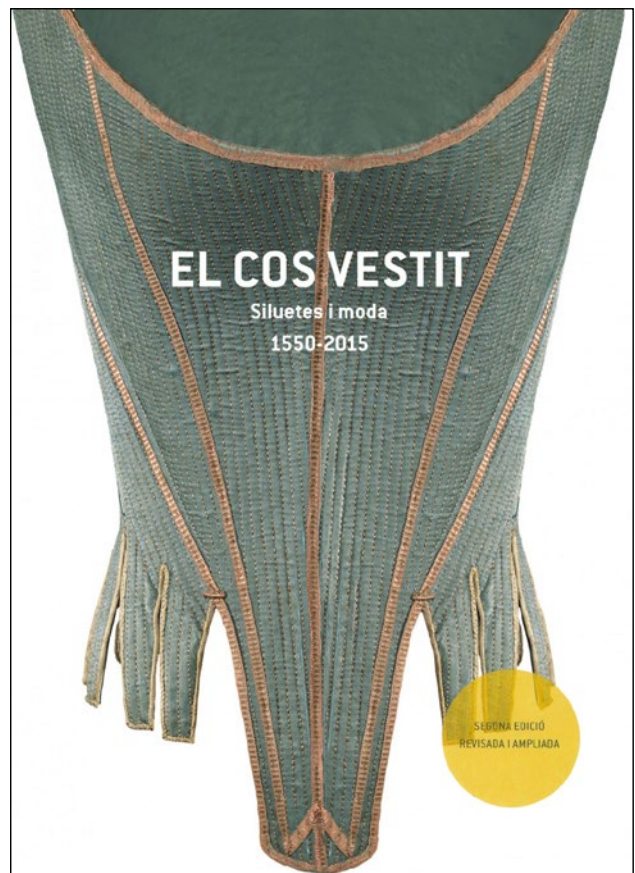
ISBN 978-84-9850-964-9

■ Assumpta Dangla

The Barcelona Design Museum is home to the permanent exhibition “Dressing the body. Silhouettes and fashion, 1550-2015”, for which an updated exhibition catalogue has recently been published. The central theme is a reflection on the body’s function as “a support for the clothing that gives it meaning and the individual’s first inhabited space”, explain Teresa Bastardes and Sílvia Ventosa, the exhibition’s curators. The discourse goes beyond materials and designers to look at how clothes alter the shape and appearance of our bodies.

The catalogue touches on many of the sociological aspects of fashion and discusses the five ways in which dress modifies our appearance: increasing, reducing, elongating, profiling and revealing. This critical approach takes on particular significance in a modern society that so closely aligns personal image with identity and social communication. Pilar Vélez, the Design Museum’s director, opens the exhibition catalogue by setting each collection in its context, explaining its origins, its value, and the effort expended by the museum in conserving its exhibits.

The main body of the catalogue charts the history of clothing and fashion from the mid-sixteenth century to the present, structured by the changes in silhouette that define distinct periods: from the slimming attire of the knight and courtesan it moves on to the liberation of the body with the French Revolution, the extravagant and voluminous dress that gained favour among the middle classes, the bustle that drew focus to the rear of a lady’s dress, the deformities suffered by women as a result of the s-silhouette... We next learn about the disappearance of the corset,



the new silhouettes of haute couture, how ready-to-wear reveals the body, and how contemporary fashions profile, cover or reveal parts of the body. Each section combines a visual summary with descriptions of the items on display and is completed by the presentation of a contemporary design that draws on the forms of the past.

There is also an interesting chapter on Spanish fashion designers, with an extensive selection of photographs presented alongside biographies written by the fashion historian Laura Casal-Valls, and an obligatory look at the structure worn under

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clothes; the corsets, hoop skirts, bustles, brassieres and other items that shape the female silhouette and are among the most prized pieces in the Design Museum's permanent collection.

The catalogue features texts by a variety of important figures known for their involvement or interest in fashion. It begins with a quotation from Balzac's *Traité de la vie élégante* and ends with an

extract from the work of Zygmunt Bauman, and each contribution reminds us that clothes and fashion form part of our individual and social identities. The catalogue gives us the keys to interpreting this unique collection at the Barcelona Design Museum and to viewing the history of clothing from a different perspective, at the centre of which are the forms of the body. ■