



The Journal of Dress History
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The Journal of Dress History is the academic publication of The Association of Dress Historians (ADH) through which scholars can articulate original research in a constructive, interdisciplinary, and peer reviewed environment. The ADH supports and promotes the study and professional practice of the history of dress, textiles, and accessories of all cultures and regions of the world, from before classical antiquity to the present day. The ADH is Registered Charity #1014876 of The Charity Commission for England and Wales.

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The Editorial Board of The Journal of Dress History encourages submissions for publication consideration from students, early career researchers, independent scholars, and established professionals. If you would like to discuss an idea for an article, book review, or exhibition review, please contact Dr. Jennifer Daley at journal@dresshistorians.org.

The Journal of Dress History is designed on European standard A4 size paper (8.27 x 11.69 inches) and is intended to be read electronically, in consideration of the environment. The graphic design utilises the font, Baskerville, a serif typeface designed in 1754 by John Baskerville (1706-1775) in Birmingham, England. The logo of The Association of Dress Historians is a monogram of three letters, ADH, interwoven to represent the interdisciplinarity of our membership, committed to scholarship in dress history. The logo was designed in 2017 by Janet Mayo, longstanding ADH member.

Obituary

Sanda Maria Miller, 1942-2021

Dr. Sanda Miller was born in Romania in 1942 and died in London on 5 February 2021. She was an art and fashion historian, critic, journalist, and TV and radio broadcaster. She undertook her BA (Hons) 1968-1972 in Philosophy and Fine Art at Birkbeck College, London, and she frequently noted how important Philosophy was to the rest of her working life. Her MA (1973-1975) on the Venetian Quattrocento was undertaken at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London. She did her doctorate on Constantin Brancusi part-time at the Courtauld during 1979-1989. Sanda worked at London University, Open University, Canterbury College of Art, and Wimbledon School of Art before becoming Senior Lecturer in the History and Theory of Dress (1994-2011) and finally Research Fellow at Solent University, Southampton. In recent years she taught at the Istituto Marangoni, London, and Milano Fashion Institute. These settings blended into a series of knowing stories about the academic mission and encounters with various workplace trends and personalities, and Sanda clearly influenced a vast array of student minds along the way.

Typical of Sanda's public lectures on dress is one that I found on the "Fanariot Courts of the Danubian Principalities," delivered at the Anglo-Turkish Society (London) in 2011. The topic and the group indicate her cosmopolitanism as well as a precocious interest in non-mainstream fashion histories, the interface of multi-cultural societies and cross-cultural encounters. She gave other public papers on Dada (absurdity being one of her favourite topics); the relationship of religion and art (she was profoundly interested in her Jewish background and had been studying kabbala mysticism); papers on Henry Moore and Le Corbusier

(modernist practice was a passion); Chanel and craft (the intellectual apparatus for defining the difference between art and craft was another); and the relationship of taste, fashion, and the periodical. She presented “To be *de bon ton*: The critical vocabulary of fashion” at one of Valerie Steele’s innovative conferences at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology New York in 2007: this was the occasion on which Sanda and I first met. We see from these papers Sanda was a true humanist thinker and something of a polymath, which gave her work on fashion and dress a depth and contextual richness often lacking elsewhere.

Sanda was very proud of her early work as a journalist and broadcaster and she carried her Press Pass to the end. For BBC Radio 3 she had worked with producer Piers Plowright on a series of art documentaries, from *The Arnolfini Betrothal* to Stanley Spencer. She also wrote and produced several art programs for British TV. Her writing in the national press was extensive and ranged from *The Financial Times* to *The Daily Telegraph*. She was very proud of having interviewed Jack Lang (French Minister of Culture) for *The Times* and for her profile of Eugene Ionesco for *The Sunday Times*. For much of her working life she wrote for the specialist art press: *Art Scribe*, *Art Monthly*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *ArtPress*, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, *Artforum*, *The New European*, *Art Press France* (she was London correspondent). Although much of this writing was not about fashion, part of it was, and she performed the important role of placing fashion as a topic at the heart of cultural debate. Particularly notable here was her work for *Apollo*: incisive reviews of exhibitions and books including “Schiaparelli” (2004); Paula Rego and clothing (2006); Paris exhibition of menswear “l’homme pare” (2006); Balenciaga (2006); Brancusi and his women (2007); Poiret (2007); Music, Fashion and Modernity (2008); Valerie Steele’s book and exhibition *Gothic Dark Glamour* (2009) and FIT’s *Seduction* (2009); Diaghilev (2011); Djurda Bartlett’s book *Fashion East* (2011); Yamamoto (2011); Capucci (2011); Aileen Ribeiro’s *Facing Beauty* (2012); “Impossible Conversation: Schiaparelli/ Prada” (2012); and “Impressionism and Fashion” (2012). Sanda was always current: she was invited to write about contemporary art including the work of her friend Riccardo Cinalli. She wrote pithy reviews for *Art History* and *Fashion Theory*: for the latter she wrote the useful essay *Fashion as Art: is Fashion Art?* (2007); and an extended review of Aileen Ribeiro’s *Facing Beauty* (2013). At the time of her death, Sanda had other unfinished projects including a history of “Beautiful Clothes;” “Bad Boys” of the Italian Renaissance, and “Tales from Transylvania.” The working titles indicate her range and sense of humour. Sanda gave service very widely: she worked with several academic groups in Italy including Università Cattolica del Sacre Cuore (Milan), and she was a member of The Association of Dress Historians and The Advisory Board of *The Journal of Dress History*.

Sanda's books include *Constantin Brancusi: A Survey of His Work* (Oxford University Press, 1995), which was followed by a second book on the sculptor with Reaktion (2010). *Fashion Writing and Criticism* and *Fashion Journalism: History, Theory, Practice* were co-authored with me and published by Bloomsbury in 2014 and 2017. These books were constructed at Sanda's kitchen table when she explained to me her innovative teaching of over 30 years. I declared the ideas should be in print and we worked together for several years to bring this suite to press. Sanda asked me to co-author her final work, *Images on the Page: A Fashion Iconography* (2021) but I declined, saying this should be her story, and we are now lucky that the book was able to be published shortly after her death. *Images on the Page* is in many ways a fitting tribute to Sanda, as it encapsulates her great passions, art history and the iconography of dress. In preparing its preface just before she unexpectedly passed away, I told Sanda that I would use it as a vehicle to say thanks to her for the extraordinary feeling, erudition, and joy concerning both art and fashion that she had always shared with me. She had made it her recent life's mission to bring the fields more closely together, underpinned by the intellectual apparatus and practical skills drawn from her multi-faceted roles as art historian, critic, writer, broadcaster, and keen observer of the city and people.

Sanda was a very stylish woman: she loved clothes and was proud of her appearance, as she was of her flat which was decorated simply with Lalique glass, comfortable sofas, and modern art. She dressed in a very up-to-date but simple manner that echoed the avant-garde modernity she so admired. There was nothing she loved more than a good *vernissage* with lots of old friends and funny stories. A favourite place was the Chelsea Arts Club where she knew many of the regulars and more tales were recounted. She also loved attending the Romanian Cultural Institute in London where she was something of a star. I well remember her jaunty feather hat newly purchased for a conference in New York: Sanda said it was suitable for "flâning" as she called it. There was nothing conventional about Sanda. On a trip to Paris, her long mink coat (that she never dared wear in London) became entangled in her high heel on an escalator: saying nothing, Sanda took the lining in hand and simply ripped the offending piece out.

The loss of Sanda has caused me a pain I had not previously encountered. No more hysterical conversations; no more visits to her airy flat in Putney with the "water only" fat free cooking and copious amounts of champagne; no more books to compose. I also mourn the passing of a particular type of post-war intellectual. One who had grown up knowing the suffering of war and dislocation. One who pursued ideas for their own sake, had not suffered fools and had built their own career through sheer determination and loads of charm. One who chose to work in areas that were generally yet to be proven. And one whose wicked sense of humour and delight in scholarship live on in the pages of her books.

Sanda is survived by her greatly loved daughter Dr. Giulia Miller and her family.



Image:

Sanda Miller with the artist Ricardo Cinalli (left) and Edmundo Erba (right), London, England, 2020. Photo supplied by Peter McNeil and courtesy Ricardo Cinalli.

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Distinguished Professor Peter McNeil is an award-winning design historian who works at University of Technology Sydney. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. For a decade he was Professor of Fashion Studies at Stockholm University where he worked to establish the dignity of this topic in the European university system. More recently he was Academy of Finland (FiDIPro) Distinguished Professor, Aalto University (2014–2018) for “Costume Methodologies.” Publications include: *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources, Renaissance to the Present Day* (4 Volumes, 2009); *“Pretty Gentlemen:” Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-century Fashion World* (2018).