

Institution: DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY
Unit of Assessment: 34 - Art & Design
Title of case study: Horrockses Fashions
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact described in this case study takes the form of contributions to: 'economic prosperity' and 'cultural life'. Economic beneficiaries include: museums (those institutions where the Horrockses' exhibition was shown as well as those lending to the show), and takes the form of revenue from entrance fees, loan fees, profits from merchandising and book sales benefiting both the V&A and venues that sold the book on the back of the exhibition. This research therefore contributed to the economic viability of these institutions. Brookmann Home re-launched the Horrockses Fashions brand as a bed-linen range in 2011 (the launch was felt to be very timely and helped by the monograph's publication and exhibition). Contributions to cultural life include benefits to community groups and individuals, dealers and collectors of vintage fashion.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research outlined was completed by Dr Christine Boydell (Principal Lecturer in Design History, DMU1999-to date) on the ready-to-wear firm Horrockses Fashions. Boydell specialises in the history of 20th century textiles and dress; previous work has included a monograph and exhibition on the textile designer Marion Dorn (1996) and an edited collection of essays with Schoeser, <i>Disentangling Textiles</i> (2003). In her previous job at the University of Central Lancashire (1988-99), she used the Harris Museum & Art Gallery's dress collection for teaching, including their large collection of Horrockses Fashions. This led to the idea (jointly formulated by the assistant curator Jane Graves and Boydell) of an exhibition, 'Our Best Dresses', at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston in 2001-2 (curated by Boydell who was then based at DMU). Initial research, using the collection, some archival sources and interviews were done to support the show. As a result of this project Boydell was approached by the Fashion & Textile Museum (FTM), London in 2008 to curate another exhibition on the firm – 'Horrockses Fashions: Off-the-Peg Style in the '40s and '50s' (9 July – 28 October 2010 and touring in 2011 and 2012). This new exhibition involved sourcing objects and writing all the text (labels, text panels, brochure), and, in addition led to a single-authored monograph by Boydell with the same title published by V&A Publishing to coincide with the exhibition. In order to secure the publisher, a proposal was compiled which went through their rigorous peer review process before being accepted for publication. Both exhibition and monograph required extensive new research, drawing on primary material which had not been studied before, including museum collections and business archives. It also involved extensive interviews with designers, business personnel and consumers.</p> <p>The publication and exhibition shed light on a number of under-researched areas in the field of fashion studies. There is limited work on women's ready-to-wear fashion for the middle-market and there are few studies that attempt to assimilate the whole process of ready-to-wear in a coherent and investigative format. Few scholars have addressed the place of fabric design in the fashion system and there is little work on the end user. The monograph addresses all these issues, scrutinizing the different elements that make up the ready-to-wear industry providing an integrated examination of the fashion system, addressing the work of the manufacturer, fashion and textile design education, fashion and fabric designers, advertisers, photographers, journalists, retailers and those who purchased the products and thus provides an important contribution to an understanding of ready-to-wear fashion. The monograph has been described as 'a well-rounded and inter-disciplinary investigation of both the production and consumption of clothes in the 1940s and 1950s...' and praised 'as highly accessible' and a 'good scholarly read' (Turney, 2012).</p> <p>A conference paper, 'Horrockses Fashions and cotton ready-to-wear 1946-1960', was delivered at the University of Leeds International Textiles Conference in 2009. It develops the argument that Horrockses Fashions was a key player in the elevation of cotton as a fashion fabric in the post-war period. It adds to scholarship in two previously neglected areas of fashion studies: ready-to-wear and fabrics for fashion.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boydell, C. (2010) <i>Horrockses Fashions: Off-the-Peg Style in the '40s and '50's</i>, London, V&A Publishing. [single authored monograph and peer reviewed].

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- Boydell, C (exhibition curator) 'Horrockses Fashions: Off-the-Peg Style in the '40s and '50s', Fashion and Textile Museum, London, 9 July - 28 Oct 2010. [Touring exhibition drawn from original show and curated by Boydell – Basildon Park (National Trust) 11 June – 31 Aug 2011 (extended to 3 Oct): National Museums of Scotland, National Museum of Costume, Dumfries 1 April -31 Oct 2012].
- 2009 'Horrockses Fashions and cotton ready-to-wear 1946-1960' Ars Textrina International Textile Conference – *Natural fibres: A World Heritage*, University of Leeds [peer reviewed and abstract published] http://ulita.leeds.ac.uk/docs/Ars_Textrina/Abstracts2009.pdf (accessed 15/08/13).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of the monograph and exhibition has been widespread, with large numbers visiting the exhibition, good monograph sales (5621 as of July 2013) and significant volumes of related merchandise being produced and effectively retailed. The key areas of impact are in the areas of economic prosperity and cultural life. The monograph and exhibition were featured extensively in the press during 2010 and helped bring the subject of the research to a wider audience. For example, monographs were given as a gift to new subscribers of the BBC *Homes & Antiques* magazine and as a competition prize by the US magazine *Threads* in Nov 2010. Features on Horrockses appeared in the press throughout the summer of 2010, Boydell was interviewed and quoted in various articles, including in *Lancashire Life* – an article which resulted in a number of readers sending reminiscences of their Horrockses dresses which were published in subsequent issues. She was also interviewed about the research on the BBC's Woman's Hour & Weekend Woman's Hour.

Fashion & Textile Museum (FTM), London [Exhibition venue] 9/7/10-24/10/10: The Museum charges an entrance fee, which is an important part of their revenue stream. During the exhibition's run, the museum received more visitors than any show before or since (11,000 compared to their average of 8,000). The demographic of the audience was broad and introduced new groups to the museum (e.g. pensioners). It also drew in revenue from a variety of educational events linked to the exhibition: curator and designer talks, exhibition highlight talks, specialised group visits and practical creative workshops, including designing and printing aimed at the 7-16 age group. Revenue was also gained from merchandise sold in their shop, ranging from the Horrockses' publication (£24.99), to tea towels (£10), bags (£10 and £5) etc. The popularity of the exhibition has led to a tour of a smaller version to two venues (National Trust Basildon Park [April-Nov 2011], National Museums Scotland Shambellie House [April-Oct 2012]) for which the FTM receives a fee.

A short film to accompany the show was produced, which was shown at FTM and posted on Youtube, which has provided increased exposure for FTM. Evidence of the beneficial impact on visitors could be seen on the comment-wall where visitors were encouraged to post photographs and comments of their Horrockses memories. The exhibition was also praised in numerous online reviews and comments on blogs, from both the UK and overseas.

Basildon Park, National Trust: The exhibition has been hired by several museums including the National Museum of Costume, Dumfries, and the National Trust's Basildon Park. The National Trust ran the exhibition for their summer season 2011, where it was noted that visitor figures were up by 20% compared to the same period in 2010. The Trust charged an entrance fee and sold related Horrockses' merchandise in their shop. They held several events while the exhibition was on, including a 1950s weekend, a curator talk (6/7/11 to 35 people) and a talk by one of Horrockses' designers – all involving additional revenue for the Trust.

V&A Enterprises/V&A Museum: The monograph *Horrockses Fashions: Off-the-peg style in the '40s and '50s* was published by V&A Publishing, which is part of V&A Enterprises, the business arm of the V&A Museum, and includes publishing, product design, licensing, digital development and film – all their profits are returned to the Museum. The monograph retailed at £24.99. First print run was in March 2010 (4000 copies) and a second print run was required in June 2010. It has sold 5621 copies (@ end July 2013), with 450 overseas sales.

As a direct consequence of the research (monograph and exhibition), V&A Enterprises launched a range of Horrockses merchandise to coincide with the monograph's publication, including

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accessories, clothing, cards and stationery. The majority of designs used came from the archive of one of Horrockses' designers [text removed for publication]

To coincide with the monograph's launch, the V&A's shop had a large display of monographs and merchandise. Their merchandise was also sold at the Fashion & Textile Museum during the exhibition's run. The V&A Museum provided FTM with loans for the exhibition. The monograph has received positive reviews in non-academic publications and from individual readers on blogs and Amazon.

Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston: [text removed for publication]

As a result of publicity for the monograph and exhibition, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery have secured several donations of Horrockses Fashions and the numbers of visitors viewing their Horrockses collection have increased. They receive revenue from monograph sales and from Horrockses postcards for sale in their shop. The Preston Embroiderers' Guild contacted Boydell for help with their Preston Guild (an event that happens every 20 years) project, which is inspired by the research.

Brookmann Home: Dawsons Home Group (now Brookmann Home) designs and sources bed linen for some of the country's major retailers. In 2010, they approached Boydell via the Harris Museum & Art Gallery to discuss their idea of re-launching the Horrockses Fashions brand through a range of bed-linen inspired by Horrockses dresses. They believed that with the forthcoming monograph and exhibition such a launch was timely. Boydell was contracted to act as consultant via DMU and provided information on sources of original designs, relevant contacts (such as designers and collectors) and brand values.

The brand was re-launched in May 2011 and the brand's website includes extensive passages and images from Boydell's monograph. Boydell was interviewed by the press at the launch of the brand. The success of the brand has resulted in expansion into kitchen linens via Ulster Weavers. [text removed for publication]

Boydell provided information as to the best way to promote the brand as a valuable commodity before the sale. Boydell's expertise is noted in the sales package.

Fashion industry: The exhibition featured on the Worth Global Style Network website (an online trend analysis and research service) – four pages on the site featured print inspiration and illustrations taken at the exhibition. This inspiration could be seen on the catwalk – both the Prada and Stella McCartney Spring 2011 collections featured prints that appear to have been inspired by the exhibition. High street retailer Monsoon featured a dress that was clearly inspired by an example featured in the monograph (p.88) and the exhibition.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All links accessed 15/08/13.

Evidence for widespread dissemination in the Press. Copies of all cited articles can be made available upon request, and the interview on Woman's hour can be accessed via

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p007l55h>

Many other examples of dissemination via the press are available. For example, see:

http://saga.inbro.net/seeinsidebrochure/SAGA-Magazine_May-2010/The-features/The-jof-of-frocks/pages_66-67;

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/magazine-13990827>;

http://www.vam.ac.uk/channel/magazine/back_issues/no_22_summer_2010/;

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00swqs0> (BBC Radio 3's *Nightwaves*);

<http://blog.mydeco.com/2010/07/12/the-return-of-the-horrockses/>; <http://www.oldham-chronicle.co.uk/news-features/8/news-headlines/42971/celebration-of-iconic-40s-dresses>

Reviews. Both the monograph and exhibition have received numerous positive reviews from non-academic writers in various formats, for example:

- 'I was lucky enough to visit both the *Horrockses Fashions off the peg style in the '40s and '50s* at The Fashion and Textile Museum and the *Grace Kelly Style Icon* at the V&A. Both exhibitions were great, but I have to say that inspiration wise, the Horrockses rocked.'
http://frkbustad.blogspot.co.uk/2010_07_01_archive.html
- 'It's a must for fashion and textile designers and fans of print and pattern from the 50s.'

http://thewomensroom.typepad.com/the_womens_room/2010/07/see-this-horrockses-fashions.html (an online community blog run by fashion industry professionals)

- <http://intransit.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/27/at-london-museum-fashions-that- evoke-mad-men-era/> – from the New York Times
- ‘An excellent monograph... What sets it apart from the standard fashion history text is the inclusion of the stories of the individual designers who worked for Horrockses... Beautifully illustrated, this monograph works on both a surface ‘coffee table’ basis, and for those who enjoy a good read’ or ‘a wonderful source of information not only about this particular firm but also about both the British ready-to-wear industry in the 1940s and 1950s and post-war British society.’ <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Horrockses-Fashions-Off-Peg-Style/dp/185177601X>
- ‘Boydell’s writing style is efficient, meticulously researched and very interesting to the fashion layperson. For the fashion industry professional, therefore, it would probably be Nirvana.’ <http://australianwomenonline.com/monograph-review-horrockses-fashions/>

See also: <http://creative-idle.blogspot.com/2010/09/horrockses-fashions.html>; <http://creative-idle.blogspot.com/2010/09/horrockses-fashions.html> (which lists various other posts);

<http://jemsy14.wordpress.com/2010/07/17/horrockses-fashions-its-all-about-the-kitsch-patterns/>;

<http://myvintagevows.blogspot.com/2010/07/horrockses-vintage-fashion-exhibition.html>;

<http://www.luxsure.fr/2010/07/04/horrockses-fashions-at-the-fashion-textile-museum/>;

<http://blog.artsthread.com/2010/09/horrockses-fashions-off-the-peg-style-in-the-40s-and-50s/>;

<http://www.wornthrough.com/2010/12/23/summer-days-gone-by-horrockses-off-the-peg-fashions-in-the-40s-and-50s/>; <http://blacktulipsewing.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/off-peg.html>

Other reviews can be made available upon request.

The Fashion and Textile Museum. The Curator of the Fashion & Textile Museum is prepared to verify the evidence cited in this case study. The film can be accessed via

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NQsa-tbEQM> – this film had received 3,535 hits by 14/8/13.

Basildon Park, National Trust. Evidence that the exhibition went to Basildon Park can be seen via this link: <http://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news/news.php?id=981260>. The House & Collections Manager is prepared to verify the evidence cited in this case study. Evidence that the exhibition went to the National Museum of Costume in Dumfries can be seen at

<http://feastbowl.wordpress.com/category/our-museums/national-museum-of-costume/>

V&A Enterprises/V&A Museum: The Head of Publishing, Victoria & Albert Museum is prepared to verify the evidence cited in this case study.

Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston: The Business Development Manager or the Head of Arts & Heritage are prepared to verify the evidence cited in this case study.

Brookmann Home: Brookmann’s former brand manager describes Boydell’s input on their website: ‘Inspired by Christine Boydell and her monograph, “Horrockses Fashions Off-the-Peg Style in the ‘40s and ‘50s”, and the inspirational Pat Albeck, one of the original Horrockses designers, I began to see how fabulous it would be to share the delicious colourful floral and abstract patterns that Horrockses Fashions were famed for.’ She is happy to verify the evidence cited in this case study.

Please see <http://www.horrocksesfashions.co.uk/home.asp> for the brand’s website and blog, and http://www.ulsterweavers.com/horrockses_collections/ for evidence of the expansion into kitchenware.

Fashion Industry: The WGSN is a subscription-based service so links cannot be provided. However, printouts of the relevant pages and images of the cited dresses and prints can also be provided on request.