

Royal Style: Royal Dress & Appearance Medieval to Modern

Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 March 2020

11.00 – 16.00

Course Leader: Dr Benjamin Wild

Seminar Room 1, Sackler Centre, Level 1



In 2016, Queen Elizabeth II remarked, “I have to be seen to be believed”. Her maxim is apt to describe royals throughout history whose appearance has been paramount in the projection, maintenance and diminution of their authority. Through clothing, portraiture, literature, and social media, this course explores how the clothing and dress of royalty has changed to reflect their shifting social and political roles. Drawing attention to key periods, designers, garments and their wearers the course will consider how the wardrobe of today’s rulers has evolved over the past thousand years.

Programme

Saturday 14 March

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| 10:30 - 11.00 | Welcome and Registration |
| 11.00 - 11.50 | Looking the Part: How to be Royal
Throughout history rulers have set themselves apart by what they wear. We introduce the topic of royal dress and appearance by considering the colours, cloths, and clothing laws that enabled rulers to look the part. |
| 11.50-12.00 | Break |
| 12.00 - 13.00 | Dynastic Dress: Enter the Tudors
The practice and display of royal authority changed considerably between the late-medieval and early modern periods. Here, we think about surviving medieval dress and Tudor dress, and their depiction in portraits, to explore how dynasts used dress to convey their spiritual and political authority. |
| 13.00 - 14.00 | Lunch Break (not provided) |
| 14.00 – 15.00 | Frivolity vs. Form: The Monarch’s New Clothes
Successful challenges to hereditary monarchies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mark a decisive turning point in the exercise and display of royal dress. The change was perhaps greater in England, where, after Charles I’s execution, Charles II championed a new wardrobe that would show royalty to be virtuous rather than vain. |
| 15.00 - 16.00 | Gorgeous Georgians: Sartorial Symbolism |

As royal authority was eroded by the establishment of democratic institutions and the beginnings of industrialisation, rulers' dress became more important as a means to convey an authority that was now largely symbolic. Georgian royal and courtly dress was consequently bright, bold and all about bravado.

Sunday 15 March

- 11.00 – 11:50** **God's Anointed: Continuity & Change in the Royal Coronation**
George IV's coronation was probably the most spectacular of any monarch, arguably even outdoing Emperor Napoleon's in 1804. Changes to coronation traditions during the nineteenth century reveal much about the challenges facing royals at the beginning of the modern age.
- 11.50 – 12:00** **Break**
- 12.00 – 13:00** **Martial Prowess: Warfare & Royal Wardrobes**
Royals continue to hold military positions and wear military uniforms, but the almost ceaseless conflict of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emphasised how this was largely symbolic. The ravages of war promoted further changes in royal wardrobes as calls for political reform required their wearers to appear relatable and relevant.
- 13.00 – 14:00** **Lunch Break (not provided)**
- 14.00 – 15:00** **Thoroughly Modern Victoria: Technology & The Royal Look**
Industrialisation created new technologies that changed the way royals – and their subjects – dressed, but it also changed how they were seen. Photography created opportunities for royals to curate their appearance and to seem, importantly, less aloof and more approachable.
- 15.00 – 16:00** **Happy Ever After? Monarchy, Media & Royal Matrimony**
As royals occupy a politically neutral and largely symbolic status, their dress has become a more critical means for them to express their ideas and intentions. The critique of outfits on social media arguably shows how royal dress and appearance is more important than ever. As Elizabeth II has remarked, she has to be seen to be believed. Contemporary interest in royalty is best demonstrated by The Royal Wedding, a global event that demonstrates the need for modern monarchies to appear proximate to their subjects.

Dr Benjamin Wild

Dr Benjamin Wild, FRHistS, is a Lecturer in Contextual Studies (Fashion) at Manchester Fashion Institute. He has published widely on the subject of fashion and material culture. Benjamin's book *A Life in Fashion: The Wardrobe of Cecil Beaton* was published by Thames & Hudson in 2016. His next book, *Carnival to Catwalk: Global Reflections on Fancy Dress Costume* is forthcoming from Bloomsbury.

***Programme is subject to change