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Archival intimacies: Participatory media and the fashion histories of US women of colour

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the critical and curatorial aims, materials and methods that underpin a digital fashion archive devoted to the histories of US women of colour called Of Another Fashion. It argues for the utility of participatory media in efforts to create not only new historical records of minoritized fashion histories but also new systems of record-keeping. Of Another Fashion does more than simply add to the history of US women's fashion. Relying heavily on the ethics of sharing and co-creation intrinsic to participatory media practices, it is shaped by a techno-feminist approach to the historiography of US fashion histories in which commitments to cooperation and difference are central.

KEYWORDS

digital archive
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US fashion history
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In July 2010, I began collecting fashion objects that are generally left out of traditional museum displays, research archives and fashion scholarship. The personal and professional photographs, magazines, garments and retail packaging I gathered reflect the fashion histories and bodies of women of

colour who are either from or had immigrated to the United States. As of this writing, 300 or so photographs (mostly contributed by private individuals) and as many personal fashion histories are viewable online at OfAnotherFashion.tumblr.com.

I want to underscore that this project is not about discovering the fashion histories of US women of colour. 'Discovery' suggests that these histories needed to be dug up and brought into public light. In fact, the fashion histories of women of colour have always been a part of the public history of the United States, although established institutions of fashion knowledge production and preservation have mostly ignored them. The critical and curatorial neglect by fashion scholars and museum professionals is the major but not the sole reason these minoritized public histories have been 'invisible in plain sight' for so long. The guiding purpose of *Of Another Fashion* is to put the history of women of colour's practices of image-making and self-presentation at the centre of our focus and, by so doing, recalibrate the lens of US fashion history to take into critical account issues of race, class and power. My hope for *Of Another Fashion* is that it helps us to see not only fashion and fashion preservation differently but also the multiple and complex relationships women of colour have to fashion, style and beauty.

The idea for *Of Another Fashion* came to me after reading a May 2010 article in the *Washington Post* detailing the transfer of 1000 or so objects of the Black Fashion Museum founded by Lois K. Alexander Lane to the Smithsonian Institution. I was immediately struck by Lane and her legacy that includes the Museum (established in 1979 with the help of a National Endowment for the Arts grant) as well as the Harlem Institute of Fashion (in 1966). More crucially, though, I was struck by the fact that I had not heard of her before. After an informal survey of my network of fashion intelligentsia in New York City, I was shocked to find that few were aware of Lane, one of the most fascinating local figures of New York fashion history. (Although Lane was an Arkansas native, she settled in New York City in the 1960s to pursue a master's degree in retailing, fashion and merchandising at New York University. Her thesis examined the historic role of African Americans in Manhattan retailing.)

But our collective ignorance might be forgiven if we consider that, to date, there are no scholarly studies of Lane, the Museum or the Institute. This is not to say that there is no literature at all. Lane self-published a book called *Blacks in the History of Fashion* (Lois K. Alexander Lane, 1982). Its many pages of photocopied news articles and blurry photographs about the Museum, Institute and the A-list of Black fashion designers and fashion public are wonderful historical resources. But the book documents rather than analyses or interprets the political, cultural and social significance of Lane's life's work. In addition to *Blacks in the History of Fashion*, there are a small number of exhibition catalogues and pamphlets that are scattered in various libraries throughout the United States, as well as a smattering of brief mentions and footnotes in a handful of academic books and articles. The general neglect of Lane and her work by fashion scholars effectively sidelines (deliberately or not) a vital part of US fashion history.

The critical and curatorial neglect of non-white fashion histories like those represented by the Black Fashion Museum has far-reaching implications. Fashion, particularly women's fashion, is a stage for articulating and debating gender roles, sexual mores, bodies, the economy and the nation. Which fashion histories are deemed worthy of preservation and serious study, what kinds of clothes count as 'fashion' and whose bodies count as

'fashionable' express important ideas about beauty, modernity, freedom, culture, belonging and nationality.

Consider, for example, a series of exhibitions exploring the relations of fashion to the nation that opened within months of each other in 2009 and 2010 – around the same time I began conceiving *Of Another Fashion: 'Night and Day'* (Museum at FIT, 3 December 2009–11 May 2010); *'Fashion and Politics'* (Museum at FIT, 7 July–7 November 2009); *'American Woman, Fashioning a National Identity'* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, 5 May–15 August 2010); and *'American High Style: Fashioning a National Collection'* (Brooklyn Museum, 7 May–1 August 2010). As impressive and informative as many of these exhibitions were, the shared emphasis on formal politics, designer fashion and eveningwear implicitly defines 'American fashion' almost exclusively in terms of the experiences, histories and bodies of bourgeois white women. What is more, the general archival scene of major fashion exhibitions such as these – their prestigious institutional settings and the professional expertise of museum curators and staff – creates an aura of scholarly authority and objectivity that endows this version of 'American fashion' with the imprimatur of official knowledge. As such, what is on display in so many fashion museum exhibitions and their catalogues are not only the exhibited objects but also a system of knowledge and power.

These exhibitions and others like them are part and parcel of a larger complex of archival institutions and practices that have enormous power to shape and define the collective memory about our national sartorial past. In this way, they are more than sites of knowledge. They are technologies of knowledge production that produce as much as preserve fashion history. (We can also think of them as technologies of knowledge *reproduction* insofar as they facilitate and support the production of other exhibitions, books, scholarly essays and university course syllabi.) The general critical and curatorial neglect of non-white US fashion histories rests on largely unquestioned assumptions – cloaked in the guise of scholarly objectivity and neutrality – about what counts as fashion, taste, beauty and the ideal American woman.

Contesting the tunnel vision of too many fashion studies and archives, *Of Another Fashion* intends to promote and support, borrowing Verne Harris' words, 'oppositional memory [...] against systematic forgetting' (Harris 2002: 205). The images and stories that are represented in the digital archive offer an oppositional memory of not only fashion and style but also an opposing viewpoint of the lived experiences of US women of colour with respect to fashion. The women of colour represented in *Of Another Fashion* have lives and interests, desires and experiences that go beyond any easy identification. What public knowledge there is of women of colour's relationships to US fashion history is limited to the nominal media coverage of high-profile instances of cultural appropriation and labour exploitation. But these fashion stories do not encompass the full scope and meaning of women of colour's experiences as fashion producers, consumers and innovators.

The histories collected in *Of Another Fashion* illustrate in vivid terms and intimate detail that women of colour have participated in US fashion culture in a myriad of complex ways. Consider the example of the flapper, an iconic figure, a young forward-thinking woman in the 1920s who danced, smoked and generally ignored rules of etiquette. Seen in public places, she dressed fashionably in short drop-waist dresses, cut low for evening; she symbolized the changes in young women's roles at the time. US cultural

productions of the flapper typically imagine her as a white woman (in the image of Zelda Fitzgerald and Norma Talmadge, for example). Yet the series of photographs of African American, Korean American, Japanese American, Mexican American and Native American young women now collected in *Of Another Fashion* donning similar looks suggest just how long women of colour have been participating in American fashion trends (Figures 1 and 2). To erase non-white women from the cultural memory of the Jazz Age, a period of great if uneven cultural exchanges and encounters, is to whiten not only the history of the flamboyant flappers but also this national era. *Of Another Fashion* provides an alternative historical visual and sartorial account of this period.

Of course not all women in the United States in the 1920s wore flapper-style fashions. One particularly striking photograph I found while researching this collection shows a young Mexican American woman named Maria Alatorre in dark dungaree trousers, a light striped button-down shirt and a necktie. The only indication that Alatorre is influenced by the prevailing popular culture is her hair, which is cut in a short bob (Figure 3). This image of a queer woman of colour quickly became one of the most popular in the collection. And for good reason. It powerfully demonstrates the historical role women of colour have played in challenging the normative racial and gender presentations of femininity that are typically represented and reinforced by mainstream fashion institutions of knowledge and memory.



Figure 1: Fashionably dressed in twenties style, Mexican Americans Eloise and Hortensia Arciniega (wearing the cloche hat) pose with an unidentified man in Long Beach, California, 1928 (Credit: Los Angeles Public Library).



Figure 2: R. Yoshihara in a photography studio. Los Angeles, California, 1927 (Donor: Cheryl Motoyama).



Figure 3: Maria Alatorre, gunslinger. 1925
(Credit: Los Angeles Public Library).



Figure 4: Nancy Green in a store bought dress.
Detroit, Michigan, 1940s (Donor: Precious J. Green).

For women of colour before the mid-twentieth century, participating in the mainstream of fashion consumerism was itself a radical act. At the turn of the century when retail sites, especially department stores, held out the promise of economic and social independence for white women as consumers and workers, Asian American women were prohibited from participating in these sites in either capacity. Historically associated with cheap and servile labour, they were deemed a degrading presence in retail shops (Belisle 2003: 70). Cheryl Motoyama's grandmother Alice Ishizaki defied this standard policy of racism when she applied for a job and was subsequently hired to work at the makeup counter of a Los Angeles area department store. (Her family cannot recall whether it was a Bullock's or Broadway store.) Precious Green's grandmother Nancy Green was also an enthusiastic participant in mainstream outlets of fashion consumerism (Figure 4). Her impeccable style was, her granddaughter guesses, all store bought. As Precious Green shares about her grandmother, 'Sewing has never been in her skillset'.

Jet-setting sisters such as Alice Kyere's 'air hostess' sister and my mom's sister, a foreign exchange student to Illinois in the 1960s, brought gifts home that kept their sisters in Ghana and Vietnam in the latest American fashions (Figures 5 and 6). Wei-Kuo Liang did not need to wait for gifts. As a China Airlines 'stewardess', Liang enjoyed the 'freedom to see the world' and, in her daughter's words, '[expand] her life and fashion horizons' (Figure 7).

As well as purchased and gifted fashion garments, my mom tells me that she and her friends relied on the much-coveted Sears catalogues that



Figure 5: Alice Kyere in a lace mini dress given to her by her sister. Ghana, 1974 (Donor: Ama Kyere).



Figure 6: Nguyen Thi ThoDa at Song Ba river on a college field trip. She's wearing an outfit bought by her older sister at Sear's whose catalogues circulated widely in Viet Nam. Hue, Viet Nam, 1966.



Figure 7: Wei-Kuo Liang in a green and gold flower print red mini dress she bought in New York. She's posing at Hoover Dam on her way to Las Vegas, 1970 (Donor: Gracie O).



Figure 8: Lisa Henderson's great aunt in a dress she made. Statesville, North Carolina, late 1920s (Donor: Lisa Henderson).

circulated in Viet Nam. Although items were rarely purchased from mail order catalogues due to cost and shipping time, they served as valuable fashion reference books and sewing guides for many young Vietnamese women.¹ Indeed, the fashion histories of many women of colour are also sewing histories. Women like Lisa Henderson's great aunt, Diana Velez's mother Luz Celenia Perez-Velez, and Motoyama's grandmother Alice Ishizaki were talented and prolific dress-makers, creating much of their wardrobe out of both necessity and choice (Figures 8–10).

Motoyama's family fashion history is reflective of a much larger Japanese American history of fashion that, like the black fashion histories Lane takes great care to memorialize, has been severely underexplored and underappreciated. The photographs I found of Japanese American women teaching fashion design classes, organizing fashion shows and opening beauty salons all while imprisoned in internment camps during World War II powerfully demonstrate the significant role of fashion, style and beauty as personal and collective tools for resisting the everyday violence of state-sanctioned racial profiling and xenophobia.

After the war ended, many Japanese American women drew on their skills and talents to launch fashion labels, retail businesses and, in the case of Riye Yoshizawa, a fashion school called The Modern School of Fashion in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo (Figure 11). Although unknown to most US fashion historians, Yoshizawa was a local celebrity designer in Los Angeles from the 1930s to the 1950s. Commenting on one of Yoshizawa's fashion shows, an executive for the Bullock's department store once praised: 'Each garment

1. Writings on my own family's fashion history in Viet Nam and as refugees have been published on my co-authored research blog, *Threadbared*, as well as in 'Blog Ambition: Fashion, Feelings and the Political Economy of the Digital Raced Body' (2011).



Figure 9: Luz Celenia Perez-Velez in a photography studio in the Bronx, New York. 1952 (Donor: Diana Velez).



Figure 10: Alice Ishizaki in a dress she made. Los Angeles, California, 1930s (Donor: Cheryl Motoyama).



Figure 11: Riye Yoshizawa's fashion design class. Manzanar Internment Camp, California, 1943 (Credit: Ansel Adams and Library of Congress).

looked as though it had been molded to the figure' (Faris 1988: SB4). This is an accurate description. Yoshizawa characteristically cut fabric while it was draped on the woman's body the dress was being made for.

In the spotlighting of minority fashion histories and experiences, *Of Another Fashion* is a practice and art of oppositional memory that is unique in some ways (which I will discuss later in the article) but one that also has important historical antecedents. As an alternative site of public history, it has strong historical continuities with '[t]he walls and walls of images in southern black homes' that bell hooks likens to 'private, black-owned and – operated, gallery space' (2003: 390). hooks recalls, 'To enter black homes in my childhood was to enter a world that [...] asserted our collective will to participate in a non-institutionalized curatorial process' (2003: 392).

As with hooks' makeshift galleries, *Of Another Fashion* is a site of visual resistance, a public space organized around minoritized people's power to self-create and self-manage perceptions of themselves. Evidenced over and over again in the *Of Another Fashion* collection of photographs and stories are instances, however circumscribed and limited, of the power and pleasure in self-display, in fashion and in everyday life. Some of my favourite stories are those involving amateur and accidental modelling.

Numerous contributors joyfully recount lovely, if short-lived, instances in which their grandmothers', mothers' or aunts' sense of style was publicly recognized and affirmed. Joseph Jewell's mother, Barbara Taylor Jewell, became an accidental hair model after a photographer took notice of her unique style from her freshman photograph at Clark College (Figure 12). Cheryl Motoyama recalls that her grandmother Alice Ishizaki was delighted to be mistaken for a Japanese movie star in a local newspaper article (Figure 13). The many photographs Motoyama has donated to the archive of her luminescent grandmother suggest how easy it would have been to make this mistake. As an

alternative fashion historical archive, the images and stories that constitute *Of Another Fashion* challenge the frames through which institutionalized sites such as fashion magazines, museums and traditional archives see and know US women of colour.

As well as institutionalized ways of seeing, *Of Another Fashion* also challenges minoritized ways of seeing. In a talk I gave about this digital archive at New York University in March 2013, a young black male student told me he was surprised to discover I was not black. As other students – black, Asian, Latino and white men and women – nodded along with him, he continued to explain that he thought the term ‘women of colour’ did not include Asians. The long history and enduring consequences of the model minority stereotype that position Asian Americans as ‘honorary whites’ and thus not ‘real’ people of colour who experience racism help to explain the assumptions of these NYU students. *Of Another Fashion* provides many entries into discussions about race through the lens of fashion. It explores the visual, material, subjective and historical complexity of the category of ‘women of colour’, particularly with respect to fashion that challenges how dominant society sees women of colour as well as how people of colour see each other and themselves.

To remedy the archival blind spot left by the normative whiteness of fashion exhibitions and scholarship, it is necessary to expand the curatorial and critical frames for how we conceive of ‘fashion’ and ‘fashionable bodies’ that go beyond and sometimes supersede institutional practices and structures of knowledge production like the traditional museum. In a keynote lecture at the



Figure 12: Barbara Taylor Jewell in her freshman class photograph at Clark College (now Clark-Atlanta University). Atlanta, Georgia, 1947 (Donor: Joseph O. Jewell).



Figure 13: Alice Ishizaki, Japanese ‘movie star’. Los Angeles, California, 1930s (Donor: Cheryl Motoyama).

Tate Museum in London in 1999, the renowned British cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggests that we are already in the era of the 'post-museum'. For Hall, the age of the 'post-museum' is not one in which we are seeing 'the necessary end of all museums' but one in which 'the museum as a concept' is being radically transformed. He argues that the museum is being relativized. 'It is certainly true that the museum remains a very privileged, well-funded site, which is still closely tied to the accumulation of cultural capital, of power and prestige' but 'it is only one site and no longer enjoys the privileged position that it had historically' (Hall 2001: 21). More than ten years after Hall's lecture, in this moment in which participatory media are increasingly sites of knowledge production and consumption, the relativization of the museum that Hall foresaw has only been accelerated and intensified.

Social media are incredibly important tools for *Of Another Fashion*. They make it possible for me and the contributors to forge old and new connections between the visual past and present in ways that reimagine the racial and gendered coordinates of American fashion as well as US visual culture more broadly. It is impossible to overstate the role that social media plays in *Of Another Fashion* – and my sense is that I do not even fully understand how far-reaching the informational, emotional, social and cultural networks of this project extend through participatory media. This project relies as much on Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr as it does on university library archives, government archives and rare and out-of-print books and magazines. Most crucially, though, it relies on the networked public as a source for material contributions as well as 'subjugated knowledge' – a term Michel Foucault (1980) uses to describe systems of knowledge that are present but which have been disqualified as inadequate, as naïve, as too local. My understanding of 'subjugated knowledges' is also informed by Judith Jack Halberstam's elaborations. She explained that subjugated knowledge is more than 'knowledge that has been suppressed and that we must dig deep to find. [Instead] it's a form of thinking that has been suppressed'. Indeed, the idea that women of colour might be fashion icons and innovators, that they might be *beautiful*, has proven to be quite unthinkable in the dominant imaginaries and memories of the fashion industry and the institutional sites of fashion preservation and fashion knowledge.

Of Another Fashion draws on social media practices like blogging, microblogging, hypertext linking, crowd-sourcing and open access file sharing. I believe *Of Another Fashion* demonstrates the utility of participatory media in efforts to create not only new historical records of minoritized people but also new systems of record-keeping. With *Of Another Fashion*, I want to do more than simply add to the history of US women's fashion. Relying heavily on the ethics of sharing and co-creation intrinsic to participatory media practices, I hope to offer a techno-feminist historiography of US fashion histories in which commitments to cooperation and difference are central. As a result of this techno-feminist approach, *Of Another Fashion* is an archive that is dynamic, collaborative and multi-perspectival.

I describe *Of Another Fashion* as a dynamic archive, first, because it is an ever-changing collection. Unlike traditional physical exhibitions in which a pre-selected collection of objects is presented as static displays, new photos and stories are added to this digital archive – sometimes daily. The addition of new materials also destabilizes the individual and collective meanings of these materials. Audiences renegotiate their understanding of the fashion histories presented on the site with each visit, taking into account new photographs, new family stories and new reader comments.

Audience-to-audience, audience-to-contributor and audience-to-curator interactions are another reason *Of Another Fashion* is a dynamic archive. The multiple conversations that happen on the site as well as behind the screen constantly reshape and reframe the project. Ann Temkin, the chief curator of painting and sculpture at the MoMA in New York, once observed, 'in a museum [...] we are dedicated to preserving the fiction that works of art are fixed and immortal' (Temkin 1999: 50). This fiction is impossible to maintain in the context of *Of Another Fashion*. The stories and images I am collecting are always changing. I get new information about existing photographs, new ones to consider and corrections about source information.

This dynamism in terms of the collection and the collaborative relationships between the audience, contributor and curator (these categories overlap considerably) undermines traditional ideas of curatorial control. Indeed, a foundational principle that guides *Of Another Fashion* is to support and enable people of colour to self-manage their own perceptions. While I do choose among the objects contributed to the archive and make decisions about what photographs to post and when, I work closely with contributors to ensure that their photographs and family histories are represented in ways that are authentic to them. As a result, I hesitate to edit the narratives that contributors write or transcribe unless it is absolutely necessary for clarity. Moreover, photographs are not digitally corrected in any way. In the rare instances in which contributors have asked me to remove their photographs or to revise the narratives, I have done so. Because the role of the viewer and the curator, the consumer and producer of knowledge, are blurred and flexible and because individuals who visit the site frequently take on multiple roles, the fashion histories that are being told here are necessarily unfinished and, in many ways, always just beginning.

The roles of the critic and the fan are also potentially transformed by digital histories. I think of myself as the curator of this site. I choose which photos to include and when to post them – all with the goal of illustrating the complex texture of the material, lived and performative histories of women of colour through fashion. Yet, contributors and visitors also participate in the curatorial process. One example that is representative of the dynamic and collaborative nature of this archive happened in the early months just after I launched the site. I found a beautiful photograph of fashionable African American co-eds watching a football game at Howard University in a number of different locations on the Internet (Figure 14). None of the sites and users that posted the photo had much information about it but many included a link to The Black History Album website. So when I posted the photo, I credited the Black History Album.

Weeks later, Hilary Scurlock, the great granddaughter of Addison Scurlock, the photographer who, as it turns out, is responsible for this gorgeous photo, e-mailed me. She said she had been following the project for a few weeks and was delighted to see this photo included but was disappointed that her great grandfather had not been credited. She was very clear that she was not upset but that she just wanted to set the record straight. From her, I learnt a lot more about Addison Scurlock as well as about his sons who took over their father's studio. I also discovered many more photos of middle-class black life in the pre- and post-Civil Rights era in Washington, DC that I would not have found without Hilary Scurlock's generative intervention.

But one does not have to have Scurlock's remarkable family history to contribute to the archive. *Of Another Fashion* aims to spark in all viewers a



Figure 14: Howard University coeds watching a football game at Griffith Stadium. Washington, DC 1920s.

creative and personal interaction with these historical archives. I hope the collaborative nature of the collection will enable viewers to make personal, multiple and flexible connections with these histories – perhaps by seeing themselves and/or their sisters, aunts, wives, mothers, cousins and grandmothers in the collection.

The dynamism, collaboration and multiple perspectives of this collection significantly disrupt certain ideas we have about the museum in which principles of organization and provenance are generally quite rigid and centralized. Moreover, *Of Another Fashion's* reliance on crowd-sourcing and co-creation demonstrates the expansive diversity of the art community and the meanings of art. *Of Another Fashion* frees fashion from the institutional control and oversight of museums – in effect, it reminds us that art and aesthetic practices from self-fashioning to the work of cultural memory are not the sole preserve of any institutional body. The vibrancy and diversity of aesthetic practices that are too often pushed to the margins of society due to racial, gender and class differences are spotlighted in *Of Another Fashion*.

But in relying so heavily on the technologies, skills and values of social media, my methodology touches on what some have identified as social media's two major points of vulnerability: authority and authenticity. For these critics, the Internet and especially the participatory arenas of the Internet are neither the 'creative commons' of cyber-utopian fantasies nor the 'marketplace of ideas' that dominate neo-liberal dreams. Rather, it is a morass of misinformation created, circulated and consumed by amateurs, forgers, narcissists and countless other informational double-dealers who intentionally or accidentally traffic in half-truths and hoaxes. Authority and authenticity, according to techno-sceptics, are in short and diminishing supply online.

Digital histories, when they are at their best, do more than supplement dominant histories. They disrupt and change how we do history and how we imagine the potential of the Internet. Numerous scholars have discredited technological myths about the Internet's colourblindness and, related to it, the digital age's post-racism (among many others, see Wendy Hui Kyong Chun [2008], Jessie Daniels [2009], Lisa Nakamura [2002, 2008] and Peter Chow-White [2008]). However, the de-politicization of the Internet continues in popular media, marketing literature and among many users. In its focus on the experiences and cultural practices of women of colour (women who are stratified across class, sexuality, language, region, race and national origin), subjugated histories like those that constitute *Of Another Fashion* challenge dominant ideas about the Internet's colourblindness and in so doing re-politicize digital cultural publics as productive sites of struggle over meanings about the relations of technology and culture and society.

The fashion histories that are being recovered and reconstructed online do not follow the traditional model. They are not linear and unidirectional but instead are connected to and constituted by an array of other visual, textual and audio sources through a multidirectional and decentralized system of re-blogging and hypertext linking. In this way, social media technologies and techniques are more than 'aids' for communicating histories; they enable new modes of thinking and meaning-making that transform how we understand fashion history as well as the dominant techno-racial discourses about the Internet.

Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig (2005) have suggested that George Landow's understanding of hypertext might be extended to characterize all digital histories. According to Landow, hypertext 'emphasizes that the marginal has as much to offer as [...] the central, in part because hypertext does more than redefine the central by refusing to grant centrality to anything [...] for more than the time a gaze rests upon it. In hypertext, centrality, like beauty and relevance, resides in the eye of the beholder' (Landow 1997: 89). Following Landow, hypertext does not so much reverse the relations of centre and margin as it makes these distinctions irrelevant. This has broad social implications for our understanding of the relations between different forms and modes of information, the relations between the organization of information and the organization of people and finally the relations among people who are neither subjects nor objects of history but co-creators of a multi-textual, multimodal and open-ended historical record.

As a new arrangement of knowledge and power, hypertext linking provides both a method and a metaphor for *Of Another Fashion* that aptly describe the multi-perspectival and multi-source networks that constitute the archive. Because the co-creators of *Of Another Fashion* are frequently older men and women of colour who contribute family photographs and heirloom objects that they have been actively or unintentionally collecting for a long time, this project draws in people from communities who have been historically unable to access the Internet for a variety of social and technical reasons. It is not unusual for potential donors to contact me by phone and ask me to walk them through the process of scanning images or attaching image files to e-mails. When digital communication is impossible or too inconvenient, they have sent me their photographs through regular mail and I have scanned them myself. *Of Another Fashion* is a hybrid space of online and offline sites of information and communication that attempt to bridge several digital and social divides.

In some ways, *Of Another Fashion* is an accidental digital project. Initially, I planned to mount a physical exhibition of the objects I collected. I still hope

that is possible in some capacity. But significant obstacles including funding and the age and fragility of many of the photographs and garments make displaying the entire collection impossible or even harmful. Through digital means, I am able to include even the most fragile objects. Indeed, their fragility enhances the archive's message of what is in danger of being lost – their compromised condition being the physical manifestation of the curatorial, critical and, in some cases, community neglect of these sartorial and visual histories.

In addition to the visual, textual and material forms of information that constitute *Of Another Fashion*, this project includes and is informed by emotional knowledges. As I have already mentioned, the sartorial and social histories of women of colour are largely absent in traditional fashion museums, archives and libraries. Any documentation that exists of these histories is mostly found in private photographs, personal remembrances and family folklore scattered across the country. As a result, the fashion histories of women of colour are constituted less by 'cold hard facts' than by the 'soft' but no less compelling evidence of family memory and personal feelings. Contributors to *Of Another Fashion* frequently do not know the production dates, designer names or design styles of the visual and material objects they send to me. Sometimes they do not even know the exact date or place a photo was taken or a garment was worn. Other details, like which department store Alice Ishizaki became the first Asian American employee of, remain unresolved. But what they often do know – and what is more salient to *Of Another Fashion* as a historical record – is their mother's (for example) attitudes about fashion and style, her dress practices and their own feelings about these aspects of their family history. Emotion plays a key role in my own relationship with this site as well. Not only am I the creator and a contributor to the archive, I am an openly enthusiastic fan of it as well. The feelings that academics are trained to temper, if not entirely tamp out, for the sake of the myth of scholarly disinterest are foundational elements of this project. Whereas archival institutions are technologies of power that operate through a complex set of distancing mechanisms from the language and effects of expert knowledge to the numerous processes of gatekeeping that serve to restrict public access, *Of Another Fashion* is an intimate historical record linked together as much by electronic streams as by emotional ones.

As an 'archive of feelings' rather than facts – to borrow a phrase from queer performance scholar Ann Cvetkovich – *Of Another Fashion* produces an alternative mode of historical knowledge articulated through the registers of emotion. And because affective histories are speculative rather than authoritative, open-ended rather than closed, they invite us to imagine the experiences as well as the desires and fantasies (since we are talking about fashion) of women whose lives have been traditionally excluded from the official repositories of history. The affective transforms our relationship with the analytic process. As I have noted, I come to *Of Another Fashion* from a multiplicity of locations: as an unabashed fan and a trained critic, a contributor and a curator. In many ways, fan knowledge is subjugated knowledge in the context of the academy, where universalist knowledge is routinely valorized as objective and situated knowledge is regularly dismissed as identity politics. But the fiction of objectivity and archival coherency that many museums and other institutions of knowledge depend on for their authority not only obscure the exclusions that constitute and maintain this fiction but also reproduce these exclusions in their wilfulness against self-reflexivity and against engaged scholarship. Social

media and digital technologies enable a different kind of archive and mode of scholarship that challenges the grand narratives of fashion histories. What is more, their associated practices expand the possibilities of what materials and resources can be drawn on in the making of a fashion archive as well as what materials can legitimately constitute an archive. In so doing, they enable cultural memory work *Of Another Fashion*.

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