

More than Uniform

A live project developed in collaboration by Royal Museums Greenwich and maker-historian Dr Jo Horton FRSA, Caird Research Fellow 2021-2022, the National Maritime Museum.

The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre, Royal Museums Greenwich, holds a myriad of inspiring and significant historic objects, including an important but under investigated collection of WRNS (Wrens) uniforms and related items from those who served in World War One and World War Two. Within the Centre there is a state-of-the-art conservation centre, large stores, substantial Learning Department and a large accessible exhibition and workshop space. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/prince-philip-maritime-collections-centre>

An internationally recognised study centre, part of Royal Museums Greenwich that sits alongside the Cutty Sark, National Maritime Museum, Queen's House, and Royal Observatory this resource is increasingly being used by fashion, textile and costume designers and historians.

The Project Brief:

You are invited to create textile, fashion, or costume design work in response to key themes inspired by Wrens in wartime (World War One and World War Two) and post mobilisation in relation to the National Maritime Museum digital collections, archives (including objects generally not on public view) and Caird Library.

The submission judging panel will be made up of Royal Museums Greenwich curators, Dr Horton, and industry guest judges.

The selected finalists will receive:

- 1) Mentoring by Dr Jo Horton FRSA (academic, textile designer and maker-historian)
- 2) A behind the scenes experience of The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre
- 3) Exhibition display at The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre in June 2022

Entries are welcome from Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students of Textile Design, Fashion Design, Costume Design and History of Dress in creative response to the following suggested but not exclusive themes:

- 1) **Up-Keep and Appearance:** mending, alteration, adaptation, gender, tailoring, shape, construction, sewing tools and techniques
- 2) **Acknowledgement and Celebration:** etiquette, discipline, recognition, display, rules, and regulations, rank, awards, memorabilia
- 3) **Form and Function:** activities, roles, responsibilities, action, and adventure, widening opportunity and occupations (clerical, communication, mechanical, surveillance and more)
- 4) **Reaction and Response:** recruitment, evolution, uniform design, post-service fashion and clothing choices of Wrens
- 5) **Recreation:** understanding of historic uniform manufacture via period re-construction, tailoring and decoration techniques
- 6) **Identity and Diversity:** legacy, culture, society, transformation

Submission details and timeline:

Stage 1:

Submissions for stage 1 will be digital portfolios. Submissions should be presented as no more than 6 slides (PPT) or pages (PDF):

- Three slides/pages should show concept, research and development, sampling/prototyping with technical annotation.
- Three should show a final textile product/detailed proposed final design or capsule collection of textile samples.
- Videos of sketchbooks and/or work in progress film documentation are encouraged but must be of a suitably reduced file size and incorporated as functioning links. Photographs of textile samples and final product/collections should be clear and show both detail and overviews of designs.
- A separate written explanation of your creative vision of no more than 300 words should be attached as a word document. Please include why your work should be selected and its importance in telling the story of wartime Wrens and their legacy, acknowledging themes such as changing society, independence, diversity, and equality celebrated in Women's History Month and International Women's Day. Please include your contact details (name, telephone number and email address) in this document.

The preferred app for submission of work is www.wetransfer.com

Submissions should be clearly labelled with name, course and level, university with documents saved as Surname first followed by initials.

Last date for receipt of submissions is midnight Tuesday 3rd May 2022.

Submissions should be emailed to: jhorton@rmg.co.uk

Stage 2:

After judging, finalists will be notified via the email address they provide by **midnight on Monday 9th May 2022.**

Finalists will be offered online mentoring appointments with Dr Horton and given the opportunity to refine/prepare selected work for exhibition at The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre, Royal Museums Greenwich.

The exhibition will run from **30th May-3rd June 2022.** Details on arrangements for delivery of work to The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre for set up on Saturday 28th May 2022 plus collection/return will be confirmed nearer the date, as will other associated opportunities that will elevate your professional profiles and the work of the Royal Museums Greenwich.

Context:

Dr Horton is conducting detailed material culture focused research into WRNS uniform of the early-mid twentieth century at the Caird Library, National Maritime Museum. The aim of this research, in the centenary year of the Association of Wrens is to understand how personal adaptation of uniforms may have influenced a) perception of WRNS appearance and b) uniform functionality in increasingly diverse and demanding roles for women during wartime, in the context of changing society and experiences. She is interrogating individual experiences of wearing uniforms during wartime, and how public, private, and personal-physical responses to uniform, may potentially have shaped the fashion and/or clothing identities of Wrens post-service, their ambitions, and attitudes, and ultimately the rest of their lives.

A part of this research is oral histories, so Dr Horton has invited contributions from individuals and/or their families to garner private perspectives on WRNS uniform (from dress to specialist workwear) worn by Wrens of different cultures, backgrounds, physicality, interests, and occupations. All types of WRNS uniform are relevant from officer and ratings uniforms (at home and overseas) and mess dress, to those associated with mechanical and outdoor roles such as overalls, boiler suits, bell-bottomed trousers, despatch riders and mail boat uniforms.