

MALEORDER: ADDRESSING MENSWEAR

GRAINGER AT THE POTTER MUSEUM OF ART

BY Naomi Cass

THE GRAINGER MUSEUM picked up the thread of male identity in February, in a collaborative project at the University's new Ian Potter Museum of Art.

The exhibition, MaleORDER: Addressing Menswear, led contemporary fashion off the catwalk and gave our most innovative designers the opportunity to have their work considered within the broader context of contemporary ideas. The exhibition provided audiences with a "longer look" at current design, ranging from conventional suits to conceptual and crafted works.

Robyn Healy, Senior Curator, Fashion and Textiles at the National Gallery of Victoria, curated the exhibition with Naomi Cass, the University's Cultural Development Officer. Robyn Healy has worked with costume collections for many years, specialises in 20th century fashion and frequently lectures and publishes in the field. Ms Healy said, "This exhibition is about fashion ideas, using the Grainger Museum as a tool for inspiration, articulating clothing in a contemporary art space, promoting fashion beyond the racks of the department store and challenging the Male Order by addressing menswear."

Selected designers were invited to take inspiration from Percy Grainger and to conduct their research at the University's Grainger Museum. From

New Zealand, Sydney and Melbourne, the artists were: Jenny Bannister, Fool, Mark McDean, Queen, Kitten Reinhardt, Todd Robinson, Glen Rollason, S!X, t'art, Vixen, World and Martin Grant who is now resident in Paris.

Best known as an international pianist and composer, Grainger was a great innovator in the fields of musical composition, championing modern links between folk, classical and jazz, composition for bands, pioneering electronic music and, not least, he was an innovator in the field of clothing.

Grainger designed towelling garments for himself and his wife Ella and there is many a bemused recollection of him crossing Royal Parade wearing such clothes on his visits from the United States to develop the Museum in the 1930s.

The designers were inspired by Grainger's biography and his collection which contains many engaging decorative objects worn by men, from North America, the Sepik River area of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and New Zealand (Maori and British). Of particular interest are his notes and drawings made during visits to ethnographic museums. Grainger is clearly drawn to the crafted object: his notations, objects and robust attempts at traditional beading demonstrate a keen interest in the material culture of many communities.



Percy Grainger wearing his home made towelling clothes in London, c. 1910. (Photo: Roger Quilter's niece. Grainger Museum Collection.)

Presented in dramatic fashion, with an accompanying audio composed by Ros Bandt and Roger Alsop, MaleORDER was located on the second level of the Potter Museum. A small installation from the Grainger Museum was presented on level one, as well as a large selection of male portraits from the University collection.

This exhibition not only brought new audiences to the Potter Museum, it presented Percy Grainger in a new and engaging context and provided a springboard for innovation in contemporary design. ■

Naomi Cass is the University of Melbourne's Cultural Development Officer.