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DRESS BEHIND BARS: PRISON CLOTHING AS CRIMINALITY

Juliet Ash, tutor in Dress and Textiles Design History at the Royal College of Art has explored prison clothing over the last 200 years. Prison clothing unlike other forms of dress are not decided upon in the same way as fashion. Ash provides a unique insight through the voices of the incarcerated. How prison clothing stripped identity and regulated bodies, a humiliating anti-fashion that was created according to the thinking at the time.

Ash explores themes of this unique form of clothing and discovers that prison uniforms tended to take on a new symbolism with political weakness or whenever a countries power is threatened. Ash discovers that the famous prison stripes were abolished in 1904 when American power was at its zenith. A more recent example under the Bush administration are the vivid orange jumpsuits at Guantanamo Bay, a time of crisis and fear in America.

A fascinating book that explores a unique area of clothing, the book uncovers a phenomenon in dress and symbolism that has an impact on our catwalks and contemporary culture in numerous ways.

