

Liverpool Film Seminar

2011 – 2012 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Pamela Church-Gibson (London College of Fashion)

Cinema in Peril: Stardom, Celebrity Culture and Luxury Brands

This paper will continue the arguments that the author has developed in her recent research. She suggests that the only way to understand the changes in contemporary culture is through an interdisciplinary approach, that looks *sideways* across every aspect of visual culture at a new intermingling of images, and which confronts the reasons for this changed landscape – not just the phenomenon of celebrity culture itself, but the worrying alliance forged between celebrity and the fashion industry, in particular the global luxury brands. There is a new tranche of work on 'celebrity studies' and, indeed, a new academic journal of the same name; it does not however look at the nature of the new alliances, which have, in fact, created this new dominance and ubiquity of celebrity culture.

This paper – as befits a Film Seminar – will look at the way in which the new power and centrality of celebrity and fashion actually affects not only the content and the casting of contemporary mainstream cinema; arguably, it now dictates what films can be made, and whether or not they achieve widespread distribution. The existing theories around 'stardom' need to be reworked. It will focus on Anglo-American cinema and 'celebrity' – obviously, Hindi cinema has extraordinarily powerful 'celebrities' who can and do dictate style across the Indian sub-continent and within the Hindi diaspora. However, the power of these celebrities is limited to those particular spheres of operation. One of the most disturbing factors of contemporary celebrity culture is its very whiteness, and the fact that it has created yet another form of western imperialism.

Biography:



Pamela Church Gibson is Reader in cultural and historical studies, Course Director of the MA in Film and Fashion at the London College of Fashion, and Principal Editor of the refereed journal *Film, Fashion and Consumption*. She has published extensively on film, fashion, fandom, history and heritage.

Edited anthologies include *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (OUP, 1998) and *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Power, Pornography* (BFI Publishing, 2004). She recently published *Fashion and Celebrity Culture* (Berg, 2011) and two essays on the 'celebrification' of the contemporary art world, in *Look at Me: Celebrity at the Venice Biennale* (eds. Sich & Schieren, Arnoldsche, 2011) and *The Artist as superstar: Tracey Emin and Paolo Vezzoli* in the anthology *Art and Fashion*, ed. Marco Pedroni, Milan (forthcoming).

Her next project will look at the targeting of 'young adult' women, the schisms this has caused within contemporary feminism, and the extraordinarily lucrative nature of the 'franchise films' and linked merchandise aimed so successfully at this particular demographic.