

# BATA SHOE MUSEUM

Dr. Alison Matthews David  
Assistant Professor,  
School of Fashion,  
Ryerson University

Trained as an Art Historian at Stanford University, Dr. Alison Matthews David has found her true calling as a scholar of the History of Textiles and Dress. Her current work examines gender, material culture, and technology, with a focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 2010 she was awarded a Standard Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC) for her book project ***Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present*** which will come out with Bloomsbury in 2015. The book examines the intersections between dress and medical histories and explores the theme of clothing causing bodily harm to both its makers and wearers by leaching chemical toxins, transmitting contagious disease, and causing accidents, including fire and entanglement. As part of the SSHRC project, she is co-curating an exhibition with Elizabeth Semmelhack, Adjunct Professor in the School of Fashion and Senior Curator at the Bata Shoe Museum. The exhibit, ***Fashion Victims: The Pleasures and Perils of Dress in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century***, opens in June 2014.

She regularly conducts research in European museums and archives, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Wellcome Medical Archives Museum of London, and the Musée de la Mode et du Textile in Paris and held a Gervers Fellowship at the Royal Ontario Museum. She started her career at the University of Southampton in the UK and now teaches the history and theory of dress, including graduate students in Ryerson's MA Fashion program, the first graduate degree of its kind in Canada.

Dr. Matthews David has also published a number of articles and essays on topics from Tailoring for the Victorian Horsewomen to Fashion in *Anne of Green Gables*, including: "Mercurial Styles, Persistent Toxins: Materiality, 'Mad' Hatters, and Mercury Poisoning in the Felt Hatting Trade," in ***Russian Fashion Theory***, "Fashion's Chameleons: Camouflage, "Conspicuousness," and Gendered Display during WWI," in ***The Spaces and Places of Fashion*** (Routledge, 2009), "Made to Measure? Tailoring and the 'normal' body in nineteenth-century France", in ***Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal***, "Vogue's New World: American Fashionability and the Politics of Style," in the *Vogue* Tenth Anniversary Special Issue of ***Fashion Theory*** and "War and Wellingtons: Military Footwear in the Age of Empire," in ***Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers***, Berg (2006).

Forthcoming publications include articles in the ***Journal of Design History*** (Oxford University Press) on the origins of the fashion mannequin and a special issue of ***Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*** on Emotional Objects, on the "Holocaust of Ballet-Girls" who were burnt when their light gauze and tulle tutus were set alight by gas footlamps. She is currently collaborating with colleagues in Ryerson's Physics Department and the Royal Ontario Museum to use X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy technology (XRF) to scientifically detect toxic elements like arsenic and mercury in historical garments.