

HOW CLOTHING CAN GENERATE POLITICAL COMMENTARY:

A DISCUSSION OF THE FAU LIBRARIES EXHIBITION, *T-SHIRT AS POLITICAL VEHICLE*



Simone Clunie
FAU University Libraries
SFA Annual Meeting
Miami, FL
May 10, 2019

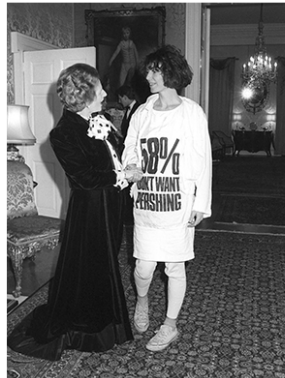
INFLUENCED BY...



[Home](#) [About Us](#) [What's On](#) [Visit Us](#) [Shop](#) [Support Us](#)

T-SHIRT: CULT – CULTURE – SUBVERSION

Exhibition Dates: 9 February 2018 – 6 May 2018



Explore the T-shirt in the 20th Century through this inspirational exhibition; charting the history, culture and subversion of the most affordable and popular item of clothing on the planet. **T-SHIRT: CULT – CULTURE – SUBVERSION** highlights the multi-faceted role of this humble garment. From men's underclothes to symbol of rock and roll rebellion, through punk and politics to luxury fashion item, T-shirts broadcast who we are and who we want to be.

The exhibition will feature a private collection of Vivienne Westwood t-shirts from the early days of Let it Rock, Sex, and Seditious, through to the designers most recent collections, Active Resistance to Propaganda and Climate Revolution. This group of rare objects will form a central installation of the exhibition, accompanied by an introduction to the historical biography of the T-shirt and an insight into its technological advances, mapped through sections focusing on contemporary design.

Curated and organized in partnership with The Civic, Bamsley.

Join our mailing list

Join our mailing list to be first to know about new exhibitions, events, courses, exclusive offers and more. The museum will not share your data with any third party to contact you, in line with our Privacy Policy.

[SUBMIT](#)

Fashion and Textile Museum

Open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 11am–6pm
Thursdays until 8pm
Sundays, 11am–5pm
Last admission 45 minutes before closing
Closed Mondays

TICKETS
£9.90 adults / £8.80 concessions / £7 students
Children under 12 are free

Contact Us

83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF
T: 020 7407 8664 | E: info@ftmlondon.org

Fashion and Textile Museum is part of Newham College London

Follow Us!



- United Kingdom's Fashion and Textile Museum 2018 exhibition
- Two collections from FAU faculty member
- Other library collections holdings:
 - Life Magazine: 1937-1949
 - General collection

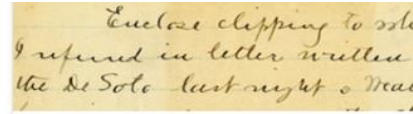
COLLECTIONS...



Recorded Sound Archives

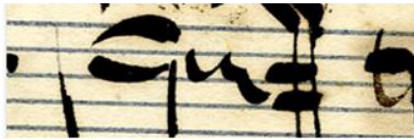


JCBA (Jaffe Center for Book Arts)



Rare Books and Manuscripts

<https://library.fau.edu/special-collections>



Music Performance and Education



University Archives



Marvin & Sybil Weiner Spirit of America

FAU FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Home Repositories Collections Digital Objects Accessions Subjects Names Classifications Q

Dr. Jane Caputi Collection--Political Circus

Collection Identifier: UAFP0009

Florida Atlantic University Libraries | Dr. Jane Caputi Collection--Political Circus

FAU FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Home Repositories Collections Digital Objects Accessions Subjects Names Classifications Q

Dr. Jane Caputi Collection--Political Sideshow

Collection Identifier: UAFP0010

Florida Atlantic University Libraries | Dr. Jane Caputi Collection--Political Sideshow

SPONSORED BY FAU UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES & THE CENTER FOR WOMEN, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES



FAU HOME / DOROTHY F. SCHMIDT COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS / WGSS



Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Faculty



CENTER FOR WOMEN, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES

PEOPLE INVOLVED



Lynnette Connor,
Access Services



Annaleah Morse,
Special Collections

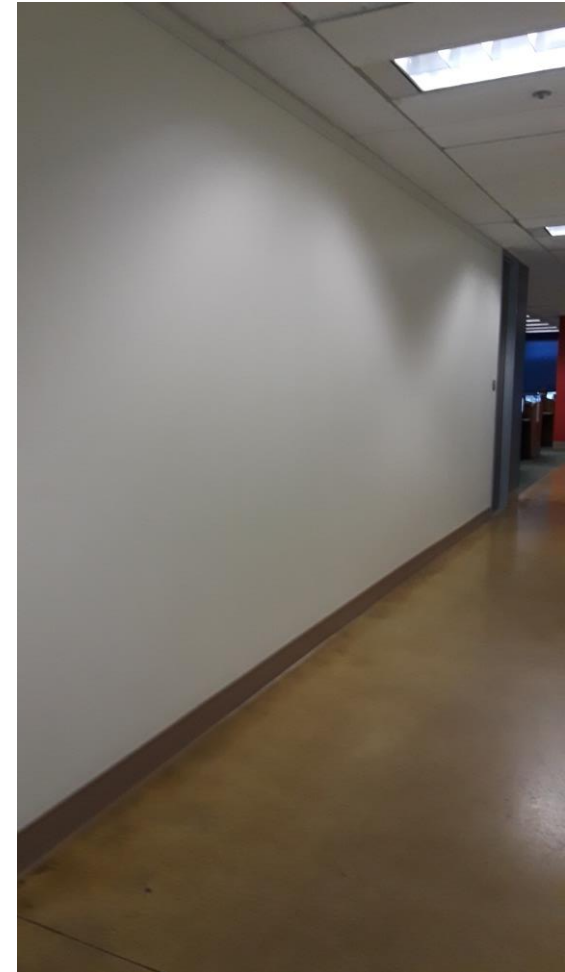


Florance Davidson,
Access Services

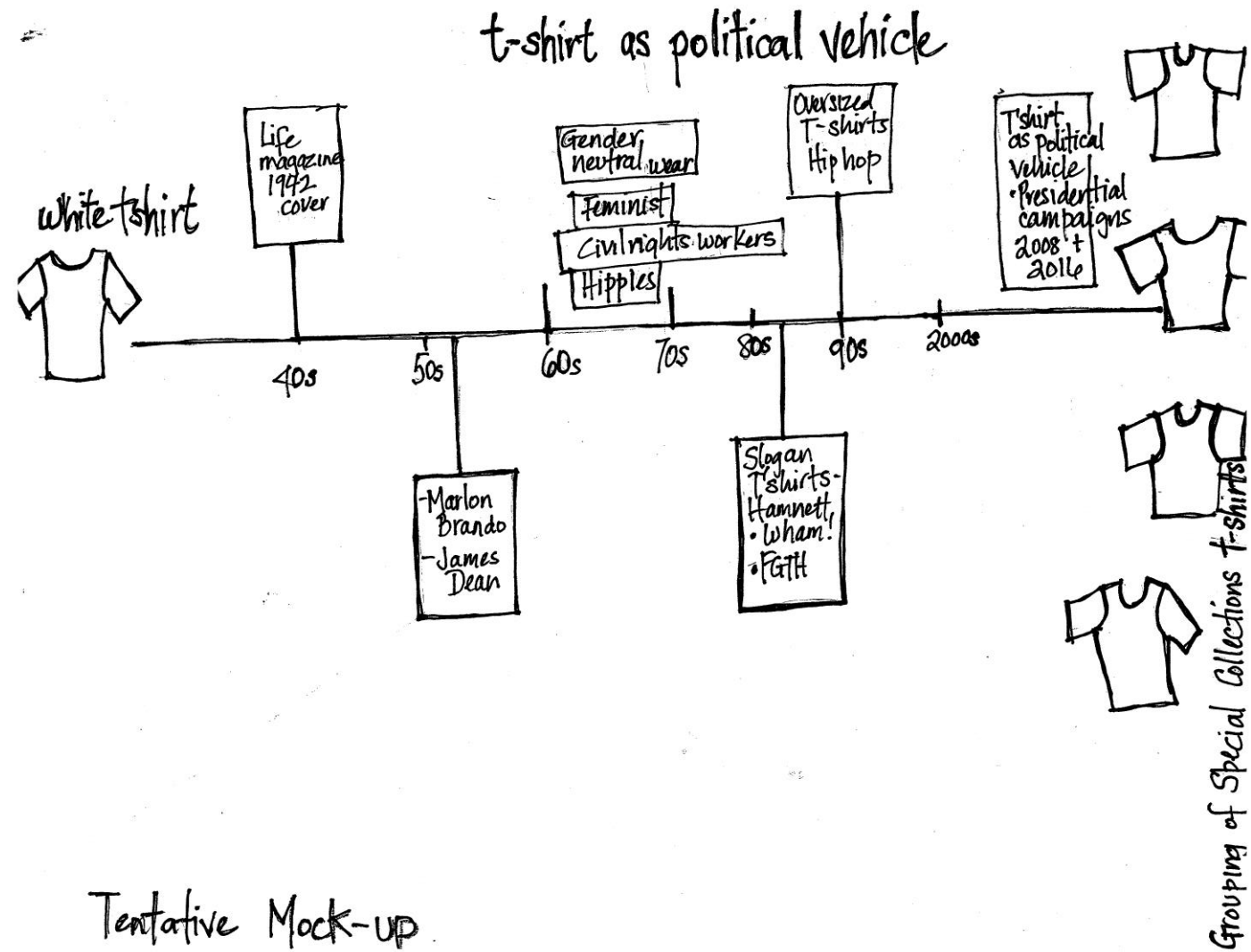


Daniel Scheide,
Special Collections

THE SPACE....




Exhibition layout as a timeline: mixture of decade text blocks and images



Tentative Mock-up

POSTCARD ANNOUNCEMENTS



**T-Shirt
As Political
Vehicle**

Exhibition Dates
October 22- December 7, 2018


Location
S.E. Wimberly Library
1st Floor West

From support to contempt, the 2008
and 2016 presidential campaigns
turned out many voices and
many political tees.



Join us as we explore S.E. Wimberly
Libraries Special Collections department
"T-Shirt as Political Vehicle."

Exhibition runs from
October 22- December 7, 2018



FLORIDA ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITY
Libraries



FAU
CENTER FOR WOMEN, GENDER
AND SEXUALITY STUDIES
Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
Florida Atlantic University

WEB BANNER

T-Shirt as Political Vehicle

Exhibition Dates
October 22-December 7, 2018

S.E. Wimberly Library, 1st Floor West



EXHIBITION DESIGN: T-SHIRT HISTORY TO NOW....



Historical Overview

Given the ubiquity of the t-shirt in contemporary life, it is difficult to imagine a time when it was considered exclusively an undergarment and relegated to certain professions. In the late 19th century, t-shirts evolved from the altered union suit/long johns worn by miners and stevedores, “... when a number of garment makers experimented with methods that ...allow[ed] the fabric to stretch over the head and then snap back into shape”.¹

In the early 1900s, the short-sleeved, round necked t-shirt became associated with the high seas as the undershirt for military uniforms. T-shirts were sold to the general public in the 1920s, but did not catch on until after World War I & II when millions of American servicemen returned to civilian life bringing their ‘skivvies’ with them. Wearing t-shirts as outer garment had become the standard when servicemen recognized how useful they were in different climates and environmental conditions. Back in the USA, the same reasoning applied for those who farmed and generally worked outdoors.

Slowly, the t-shirt was accepted as a normal staple of men’s outerwear. In the 1950s, it became a symbol of working class masculinity influenced by popular culture, and became part of the American tradition of individualism and rebellion against authority. During the social and revolutionary politics of the 1960s the t-shirt became casual wear. The hippie movement and feminists used the t-shirt as a quintessential gender-free article of clothing.

The creation of plastisol inks for printing on textiles introduced colorful graphics in 1965, and the t-shirt became a billboard for catchy slogans and market advertising during the 1970s. Additionally, t-shirts were torn, slashed, and displayed as radical attire by the Punk movement.

In the 1980s, the t-shirt as a political vehicle entered the national and international spotlight through visual media like newspapers, magazines and television with the introduction of music videos. Continuing into the nineties and 2000s, music and the music industry expanded the t-shirt’s influence with the oversized t-shirt, the “tall tee”, which was associated with hip-hop.

Now, as casual or formal wear, t-shirts are entrenched in every part of contemporary life worldwide. They are used anywhere from plain sleepwear to marketing sports teams, cartoon characters, or universities, to espousing political views or just expressing one’s individuality. This exhibition looks briefly at the history of the t-shirt through the influence of each decade, starting with 1940 and in the 2000s.



¹ Kelly, Pagan. Who Made that Shirt? New York time September 22, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/22/magazine/who-made-that-t-shirt.html>

EXHIBITION DESIGN



EXHIBITION DESIGN

Slogan T-shirts

Before social media memes permeated our consciousness, human beings used analog methods to display social and political values to the world. Slogan t-shirts were first initiated with a 'political' message by American Presidential Candidate, Thomas E. Dewey for his 1948 campaign slogan "Dew it for Dewey".

Various social and environmental causes saw the rise of the t-shirt as a political medium in the 1970s. In the 1980s, fashion designer Katherine Hamnett appeared in the newspaper shaking Margaret Thatcher's hand while wearing a t-shirt protesting nuclear missile placement in the UK. This helped make 'protest' t-shirts more prominent. Her oversized t-shirts with large block lettered slogans also became iconic symbols of the 1980s thanks to exposure in music videos by the pop duo, Wham! and the rock band, Queen. Exploding onto the pop music scene, Hamnett's t-shirts like *Choose Life* became associated with the AIDS epidemic. The circulation of these images in the media through newspapers, magazines or music videos made these messages a worldwide phenomenon.

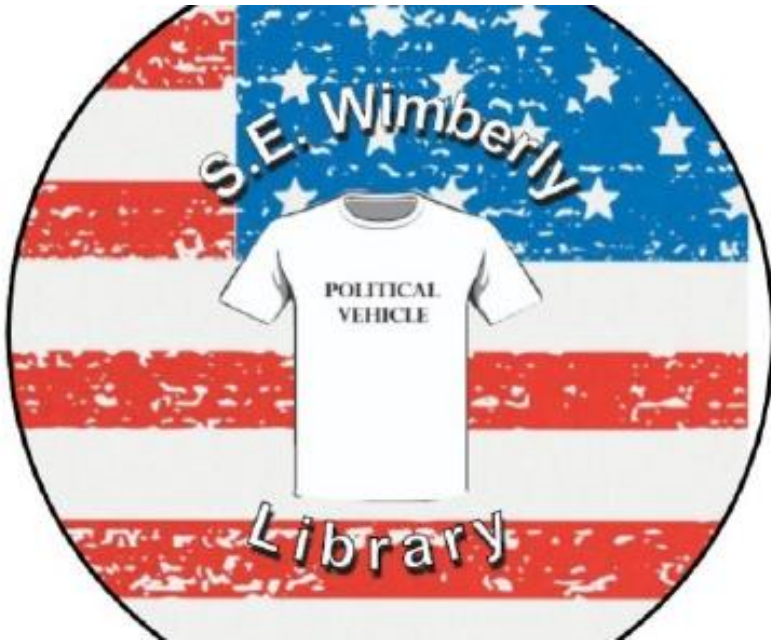
Whether casual, street wear or high fashion, the t-shirt has many meanings, particularly when partnered with explicitly political messages that can change a blank, unisex white t-shirt into a uniform for political affiliation. As a political vehicle it was used by presidential candidates such as Shirley Chisolm, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. In today's political climate, the t-shirt has been revived allowing people to express their political dissent or inclinations with ease.

During the campaigns of 2008 and 2016, it was no different.

Sponsored by FAU Libraries' Special Collections and the Center for Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, *T-shirt as Political Vehicle* focuses on t-shirts produced during the presidential campaigns of 2008 and 2016. They ran the gamut in tone from respectful to offensive as people conveyed their support or contempt for a candidate. Issues like sexism, racism, homophobia and ageism came to the fore and the argument of freedom of expression was used to defend these choices. Is there a line which people should or shouldn't cross in expressing their political affiliation? Who decides?







PINS, PINS AND MORE PINS.....

THE PAST IS PRESENT....

Past

- T-shirt (developmental history)
- Use of other collection items: LIFE Magazine
- Use of print collection: images & research

Present

- Contemporary uses of the t-shirt; investigating issues like racism, ageism, homophobia, etc.
- Use in popular and political culture
- Use as a teaching aid; support curricular material



THANK YOU!