

Appearance at work through the prism of images



Finale nationale du concours des Meilleurs Apprentis de France : cuisine froide ©David Desaleux

Call for article proposals for No. 13 of the journal *Images du travail, Work of Images* (scheduled for release in September 2022)

Issue coordinated by Michèle Dupré and Anne Monjaret

If there are plenty of researches in the humanities and social sciences on work and work clothes, in different studies of work and activities, they remain mostly fragmented and are not the subject of reflection per se, apart from a few recent publications (for example Francequin, 2008 ; Villelongue, 2011 ; Barbier et al, 2016 ; Rennes, Lemarchant et Bernard, 2019). However, we are observing a growing interest in the subject that goes beyond the academic and scientific sphere. Indeed, this is shown by three exhibitions in autumn 2020, one in Italy and the other two in France, each taking up the issue in a different way¹: the first exhibited photographs showing different types of workwear worn in a variety of professional contexts and sectors, the second one focused on « the blue overalls» and the third focused on presenting "Model Clothing" including the well known blue overalls.

¹ The exhibition "Uniform - into the work/out of the work - workwear in the images of 44 photographers" in Bologna at THE MAST - Manifattura di Arti, sperimentazione e tecnologia, Arts, Experience and Technology - 25/1-20/9/2020; The exhibition "Blue overalls" at the initiative of the association "Le Non Lieu", inaugurated on 18/09/2020 in Roubaix and which was accompanied by a day of study at the National Archives of the World of Work. The exhibition "Model Clothing" presented at the Mucem between 29/06-6/12/2020.

History, sociology and anthropology have made it a whole-of-study subject. Since long, numerous photographers are interested themselves in men and women at work, staring at moments, making portraits or pictures of groups, capturing bodies and men/women wearing clothes. Sometimes researchers and photographers collaborate in order to carry out their work (Hersant, Baron, Le Tirant, 2013).

This is the case with people involved in the CRAVAT² collective research program conducted since 2018 within the TIPO team at the Max Weber Centre in Lyon. This program is focussed on the garment at work, not treated in a synchronic or diachronic way to understand its evolutions, but as a mean of analysis crystallises (social, institutional, legal) norms and constraints, a division of work, career paths, interactions at work or aesthetics³.

Open to various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, this issue continues and expands the questioning initiated by this research group by looking at appearance at work through the prism of images.

Here we propose to focus on a broad understanding of work, namely all activities carried out in the various sectors of activity, public or private: primary sector (agriculture, fishing, mines, forests), secondary sector (manufacturing industries, construction), tertiary sector (market and non-market services).

By choosing to deal with appearances at work, we want to broaden the theme beyond clothing at work itself. This perspective allows us to take into account the way the social actor uses his body, dresses it, protects it and thus plays on its appearance and trends tendencies (Goffman, 1973 ; Le Breton, 2018 ; Bartholeyns et al., 2015).

We do not, however, include body appearance here in the sense of physical appearance (weight, height and look⁴), emphasizing instead the large variety of clothes that "responds to symbolic modalities of organization under the aegis of the social and cultural affiliation of the actor. These are temporary, largely dependent on fashion effects." (Le Breton, 2018, p. 96).

Appearances at work become an entry to understand the ways of being at work as well as outside of work. It is not a question of restricting ourselves to the wearable use of work within the professional activity, but also of taking into account those clothes outside work.

In addition, we would like in this issue to have a well-operated distinction between workwear (uniforms, personal protective equipment, clothing related to different activities), clothing at work that broadens the look to the city clothes worn at work, and appearances at work that beyond the dress code will take into account other elements that complement the work wear.

The appearance also refers to the work of images, both literally and figuratively, and in this it seemed relevant to us to articulate both appearance and images, to grasp their interrelation. On the one hand, it may be interesting to think about appearance at work as a work on self-image. In what social game does it take place?

On the other hand, it will be important to cross the theme of appearance at work with that of images whether fixed or animated and to question how they were produced, used, valued, disseminated by the respondents as well as by the researchers to talk about appearances at work. Who's taking the pictures? Where do these images come from? (company, employees, researcher). How does appearance resurface on a field? How does it become an object in its own right?

² CRAVAT : Consortium de Recherche Autour du Vêtement Au Travail – collective research around the clothes at work.

³ These work components are studied through research fields located in the public as well as in the private sector, in industry or crafts. The associated legal approach provides a better understanding of the effects of the normative and institutional aspects of work. Finally, this program gives a central place to photography, in order to make visible, for the academic community, but also for a wider audience, the different facets of work that clothing allows to decipher.

⁴ «Physical appearance - weight, height and look - is the main motive for young people to the forms of ostracism they complain about » (Galland, 2006, p. 151).

This issue aims to question the appearance from an analysis of the images, to approach the garment at work by the image. With this in mind, we encourage everyone to clearly explain the conditions of their investigation as well as their methodological approach. These images with multiple origins are survey data that need to be questioned. Do researchers make their own images, use an existing corpus, call on a photographer or filmmaker, like the CRAVAT team, who explores the conditions for the realization and interpretation of the images produced on this research to understand the role they play in collective research.

Thus neither photography nor film should be considered mere illustrations. We may look at them in conjunction with the text produced by the different members of the research team. Articulating text and images allows "to clarify the meaning of the visual data used by the researcher and to reproduce their context of production, a fundamental condition for scientific use of images" (Chauvin, Reix, 2015, p. 35).

It should be noted that the images used for the demonstration should preferably be reproduced in the article. The Journal Images of Work, Work of Images (ITTI) being electronic, it allows the enhancement of all these media. The author will, however, have to ensure that the rights of use and distribution are available.

The axes

The study of the manner to wear clothes at work through the prism of images, allows to question and understand differently the worlds of contemporary work (the plurality of norms, the relationship of individuals to socio-professional determinants, the changes at work in professional groups, or even the changes of the work themselves) and how the work garment can account for them, making visible scenes and behind-the-scenes of these worlds.

Three axes can be identified, each of the proposals for articles for this thematic issue can be included in one of them:

Axis 1

Rules, norms and transgressions: how do images reflect the relationship to the organisation and the institution?

Rules and norms, such as transgressions that can result from them, reflect different types of relationships to the organization and institution of work. Appearances and clothing at work sometimes meet rules imposed by labour organizations (internal regulations, safety and hygiene rules, codes of good practice of professional trade unions).

This is the case in chemistry for operators who are potentially exposed to chemicals or in the food sector but also for example for dancers. Appearances and clothing at work also refer to norms developed in collectives of work that may have changed over time, sometimes freeing themselves, depending on the sector of activity, from a certain formalism. We are thinking, for example, of the journalists of *Le Monde*, described by Eugenie Saitta Lavoisier (2005), who abandoned the tie suit in the 1990s "for free will in the choice of clothing".

Moreover, these outfits, both male and female, and the logos, which they often wear, are part of a "visual identity" (Heilbrunn, 2006, p. 4), the image that the company gives of itself to its employees, to the people with whom it collaborates, to the audiences it targets. Serving to promote the company, they are marketing tools, images, which show its notoriety, its rank in the value chain considered and above all that allow to recognize it without further discourse.

The dissemination of these representations on various media (posters, newspapers or internal films, circular or national press, social networks, etc.) also helps to share a certain idea of the professions exercised within it.

This axis aims, on the one hand, to identify the constraints imposed on the outfits at work according to the activities carried out, but also the freedoms that individuals or groups arrogate at the margins to change their appearance, to create a self-image in their relations with others and the company. The axis also aims to document the images produced by the company itself to signify belongings, as well as to explore the role that these images may have in resolving a conflict associated with circumventions or even violations of the rules concerning the wearing of work clothes.

Axis 2

Practices and languages: how do images help structure collectives?

In this axis, we can discuss how collectives will use appearances at work to construct images of the profession, the trade union action and how the images in return will be able to be used as media carrying demands or collective actions.

The stagings will be designed to demonstrate membership in a professional group. Accessories will not be additions to clothing, but strong ingredients in a language that seeks professional recognition by peers. We think, for example, of the bare boots and torsos of the young archaeologists described by Marc-Antoine Kaeser (2018) and their ways of posing on photographs, which become a tool to affirm their integration into this environment of archaeology. We also remember these young workers, met during the fieldwork in the chemical sector, proud to pose with their protective equipment, in their work environment, images that, once exhibited in a collective place (changing and dining rooms), show the insertion into the group.

Collectives can also produce images that, by playing with the garment at work, carry claims about working conditions. We think, for example, of the calendar of the workers of the Chaffoteaux and Maury factory photographed undressed in their work clothes, in "empty boxes", simple and effective figurative idiom, to signal their disagreement with the announced closure of their company (their "box"). Or those bus drivers in Nantes who, opposed to the management's ban on wearing Bermudas despite the heatwave, show up for work in skirts, returning gendered assignments to their advantage.

These advocated actions undoubtedly use the power of image and social networks to spread their actions far beyond the sphere of work. The iconographic language here reveals its immediate superiority by its ability to capture the eyes. It is for the men and women at work an opportunity to spread their actions far beyond the sphere of work.

Finally, certain costumes, such as the costumes of seamstresses during the Sainte-Catherine, their patron saint's day (Monjaret, 2015), allow on special occasions to create a separate positioning that allows speaking. On these occasions, photographic shots encourage the group to play scenes that express in a language of derision their resentment.

Appearances, clothes from/at work and images will therefore be examined in their mutual relationships as languages in their own right in the service of plural strategies to be analyzed.

Axis 3

Traces and legacies: how do individual or collective portraits at work make sense in the off-duty over time?

We will focus here on visual archives that deal with the appearance at work outside the field of the activity itself in the long time of the company's history as well as the family history.

The focus will be on the roles and meanings conferred on these archival images in the present time.

What do we keep as a record of the professional past of our elders? Photographs? Movies? Where do we find them? Exhibited on walls or viewed at family meetings, kept in family albums or in bulk in reel and slides boxes or in a museum fund. What do we learn from these sources about men's and women's clothing at work and off-work (Bard, 2007), from the appearances depending on context, gender variations, seasons or circumstances, clothing trends as well as differences in social class?

The portrait gallery of "bosses", with impeccable posture and setting, anchors the company in a past that sometimes combines with a family past. It becomes the way to stage the transmission of a heritage from generation to generation.

How do today's generations seize all these legacies? And why do it? What do the images of the grandfather as farmer, craftsman, sailor or worker, of grandmother as peasant, seamstress or saleswoman provoke in us? What is the point of these evocations of a family professional past? We think of the experience of Victor Doyen, who began to become so passionate about the blue overalls worn in the past in his family that he is becoming a collector and eventually began a family "search for identity" from the recovered photographs showing the outfits his forefathers wore. Victor Doyen says he is dressing up a memory by appropriating the history of his family. Other experiences probably deserve to be revisited.

We can also evoke the reversals in history represented by the recovery of this working-class history by fashion, which, by drawing inspiration from old work clothes to create new collections, plays on these appearances like this sentence taken from the presentation site of a professional clothing brand: "With Heritage, we enter the world of gentleman workwear."

This axis therefore seeks to question the way in which families, but also professionals, seize memories of work through those of appearances, and this from private or public visual sources.

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How proposals are submitted

We are waiting for proposals that take up the terms of this appeal and thus allow us to begin this reflection collectively.

Proposals for articles in french or english language of 3000 signs are expected by **19 April 2021**. In this text of intent, the axis of the project, the subject of the research (with the provisional title), the problematic, the methodology deployed and the expected results will have to be clearly formulated.

Proposals should be addressed simultaneously to:

- Michèle Dupré, labour sociologist, researcher, Max Weber Centre - TIPO team: michele.dupre@msh-lse.fr

- Anne Monjaret, ethnologist, research director - CNRS, IIAC (CNRS-EHESS): anne.monjaret@ehess.fr

- Writing the review: imagesdutravail@gmail.com

The response to the proposals will be given **in May**. The delivery date for the articles, written only in french language (a maximum length of 30,000 to 50,000 signs) from the selected proposals is **15 September 2021**. This first acceptance does not apply to a final agreement. Each article will be subject to a double blind assessment.