



## News Release

### New Exhibition Exploring the Intersection of Fashion and Fine Art Opens This Winter at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT)

*Art X Fashion* Features 140 Garments, Accessories, Textiles, and Artworks from the Late 18th Century to Present



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**NEW YORK, NY**—A comprehensive exploration of the symbiotic relationship between the world of fashion and fine art opens this winter at **The Museum at FIT (MFIT)**. Featuring more than 140 objects, including garments, accessories, textiles, photographs, and original artworks drawn from MFIT's permanent collection, *Art X Fashion* challenges the traditional hierarchies of visual culture, presenting fashion and art each as parallel, potent expressions of social, intellectual, and creative forces. **Curated by Dr. Elizabeth Way**, curator of costume and accessories at MFIT, the exhibition is **on view from February 18 to April 19, 2026**, and reflects MFIT's mission to advance the understanding and appreciation of fashion's critical role in culture.

The core of *Art X Fashion* lies in its profound engagement with the eternal question: "Is fashion art?" The exhibition explores the ways that fashion has always been a partner, not a follower, of fine art, highlighting typically overlooked integrations throughout history. This includes examples of how the two disciplines have worked together to create European styles, from the drama of



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Rococo and Neoclassical grandeur to the unsettling world of Surrealism, to the shock of Pop Art and postmodernism.

Among the responses to this famous question is that of art and fashion historian Dr. Christopher Richards (Brooklyn College), who suggests that if fashion has innovative forms, exquisite craftsmanship, and cultural impact, then it is art. The pillars of his argument are illustrated through garments by **Martin Margiela**, **Rei Kawakubo**, and **Iris van Herpen**, demonstrating innovation, and **Charles Frederick Worth**, **Paul Poiret**, and **Elsa Schiaparelli**, showcasing craftsmanship. The cultural impact of fashion is seen through the power and legacy of **Christian Dior's New Look** and examples of **1970s punk**.

The exhibition additionally highlights how fashion is utilized as an expressive tool for artists, such as **Salvador Dalí**, **Pablo Picasso**, and **Sonia Delaunay**, alongside designers like **Scott Barrie** and **Hussein Chalayan** who root their concepts deeply in their art education, while **Fabrice Simon** and **Ralph Rucci** are both painters as well as designers. Contemporary figures such as **Cat Chow**, **Mary Ping**, and **Tavares Strachan** exemplify the fluid, modern boundary that exemplifies how these worlds can merge. Artists have also used fashion as a tool for artistic identity, which is demonstrated in the exhibition through examinations of figures like the 19th-century artist-flâneur, strolling the streets of Paris, who is an essential character of the modern Euro-American cultural world. This character was embodied by artists such as **Édouard Manet**, **Edgar Degas**, **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**, and **Gustave Caillebotte**, who recognized the power of fashion to blend in and observe, but also to express modernity on their canvases. By fashioning models in kimonos, Chinese ao jackets, and ancient Greek and medieval inspired costume—a break from popular 19th-century styles—these artists defined artistic and bohemian dress and made a lasting impact on the looks that came to be considered “artsy” in the 20th century.

*Art X Fashion* equally surveys the ways in which fashion has been inspired by fine art. Through examples from designers such as **Gianni Versace** and **Franco Moschino**, the exhibition spotlights ways that fashion has used odes to Pop Art classics as a means of commenting on consumer and celebrity culture. These replications of famous artworks on garments and accessories democratized these priceless masterpieces for a mass audience, lending value, recognition, and even humor to fashion pieces, but also adding cultural capital to the artworks. In some cases, such as with **Grace Wales Bonner**, the application of fine art to fashion extends the message of the original artist.

The exhibition also considers how designers interpret the aesthetics and themes of fine art into their own creative processes, resulting in designs that transcend their inspiration and produce new ideas. For example, **Yves Saint Laurent** famously recreated the color blocks of **Piet Mondrian**, but the couturier masterfully applied the flat motif to the three-dimensional body. **Eric Gaskins'** lush beadwork creates an astounding trompe-l'oeil effect in homage to the brushwork of **Franz Kline**, and **Christian Francis Roth** intricately fits boldly colored, abstracted pattern pieces together, invoking **Henri Matisse's** fauvist palette and energy. These pieces illustrate the



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designer as a parallel artist who deeply engages with and reinterprets the fine art source material through their own skill and creativity.

**Art X Fashion** culminates by tracing the long history of collaborations between artists and fashion designers. Among the examples is **Louis Vuitton**, who may be most known for engaging artists, such as **Takashi Murakami** and **Yayoi Kusama**, to create designs bridging luxury fashion and contemporary art. Another approach is that of **Isabel and Ruben Toledo**, who transformed the relationship between art and fashion into a decades-long romance and lifestyle, regularly collaborating on art, fashion, costume design, and more. Other examples of partnerships between designers and artists that have produced evocative results include **Vivienne Tam** and **Zhang Hongtu**'s investigation of Chairman Mao Zedong's iconography and **Thebe Magugu**'s partnership with **Phathu Nembilwi** that celebrates South African women and culture.

**Art X Fashion** demonstrates the sustained integration of fashion and art. Time and again we have seen fashion design operate as a considered visual articulation of social ideas and individual creativity, drawing from the same foundation as fine art. As a growing creative, cultural, and economic entity, fashion has increasingly engaged the attention of the fine art world, a relationship which will only continue to evolve and makes the eternal question "Is fashion art?" all the more important in this moment. "This exhibition will garner strong opinions and spark lively dialogue, but whether you decide that fashion is art or not, fashion's strong and mutual relationship with fine art is undeniable," said Way.

### **Art X Fashion Symposium**

Friday, March 27, 10 am–5 pm  
Katie Murphy Amphitheatre

**Art X Fashion** is The Museum at FIT's 35th symposium, planned in conjunction with the exhibition **Art X Fashion**. The history of fashion's entangled relationship with the world of fine art has many points of convergence, from art as fashion inspiration to fashion's presentation in art spaces to artists utilizing garment forms. Speakers include fashion designer **Christian Francis Roth**, **Dr. Émilie Hammen**, director of Palais Galliera, Paris, and **Dr. Alexandra Schwartz**, curator of modern and contemporary art, craft, and design arts, at the Museum of Arts and Design.

### **About MFIT**

The Museum at FIT, which in 2022 received its second accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, is the only museum in New York City dedicated solely to the art of fashion. Best known for its innovative and award-winning exhibitions, the museum has a collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present. Like other fashion museums, such as the Musée de la Mode, the Mode Museum, and the Museo de la Moda, The Museum at FIT collects, conserves, documents, exhibits, and interprets fashion. The museum's mission is to advance knowledge of fashion through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. Visit [fitnyc.edu/museum](https://fitnyc.edu/museum).



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The museum is open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from noon to 8 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. For more information and the latest updates, visit the museum's website at [fitnyc.edu/museum](http://fitnyc.edu/museum). To subscribe to the Museum's newsletter, [join our mailing list](#). Follow MFIT on [social media](#).

### About FIT

A part of the State University of New York (SUNY), FIT has been a leader in career education in art, design, business, and technology throughout its history. Providing more than 8,000 students with an uncommon blend of hands-on, practical experience, theory, and a firm grounding in the liberal arts, the college offers a wide range of affordable programs that foster innovation and collaboration. Its distinctive curriculum is geared to today's rapidly growing creative economy, including fields such as computer animation, toy design, production management, film and media, and cosmetics and fragrance marketing. Internationally renowned, FIT draws on its New York City location to provide a vibrant, creative community in which to learn. The college offers nearly 50 majors and grants AAS, BFA, BS, MA, MFA, and MPS degrees, preparing students for professional success and leadership in the new creative economy. Among notable alumni in fashion are Calvin Klein, Michael Kors, Norma Kamali, Reem Acra, Brian Atwood, Stephen Burrows, Dennis Basso, Francisco Costa, Nanette Lepore, Bibhu Mohapatra, Ralph Rucci, John Bartlett, Peter Do, Daniel Roseberry, and Michelle Smith. Other prominent graduates include Leslie Blodgett, creator of bareMinerals; international restaurant designer Tony Chi; and Nina Garcia, editor-in-chief of *Elle*. Visit [fitnyc.edu](http://fitnyc.edu).

IMAGE CREDIT: Versace, cotton and silk jacket referencing *Marilyn Monroe* (1967) by Andy Warhol, 1991, Italy ©The Museum at FIT

### Media contact:

Steven Bibb, (212) 217-4715  
[steven\\_bibb@fitnyc.edu](mailto:steven_bibb@fitnyc.edu)

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