



SUPPORT THE MUSEUM

COUTURE COUNCIL

An elite membership group, the Couture Council helps to support the exhibitions and programs of The Museum at FIT. Members receive invitations to exclusive events and private viewings. Annual membership is \$1,000 for an individual or couple and \$350 for a young associate (under the age of 35). For more information, write to couturecouncil@fitnyc.edu or call 212 217.4532.

DESIGN MEMBERSHIP

Through the Design Membership program, designers and other industry professionals gain unique access to the Museum's holdings for the purposes of research and inspiration. Current members include fashion and home furnishing designers, manufacturers, merchandisers, and forecasters. The benefits of Design Membership include: assisted appointments to view objects from the costume, textile, and accessory collections; access to view and photograph approximately 100,000 textile swatches; and access to the Françoise de la Renta Color Room. Individual and corporate memberships are available at \$425 and \$1,250, respectively. For more information, call 212 217.4578.

TOURS AND DONATIONS

Every six months, a changing selection of garments, accessories, and textiles from the Museum's permanent collection is put on display in the Fashion and Textile History Gallery, located on the Museum's ground floor. Tours of the Fashion and Textile History Gallery and of the Special Exhibitions Gallery may be arranged for a sliding fee of approximately \$350. Donations of museum-quality fashions, accessories, and textiles are welcomed. For more information about tours, call 212 217.4550; about donations, call 212 217.4570.

DAPHNE GUINNESS was co-curated by Valerie Steele and Daphne Guinness, with Fred Dennis. Exhibition design by Ken Nintzel. Graphic design by Jen Pressley.

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Seventh Avenue at 27th Street
New York City

DAPHNE GUINNESS

September 16, 2011–January 7, 2012

HOURS:

Tuesday–Friday, noon–8 pm

Saturday, 10 am–5 pm

Closed Sunday, Monday, and legal holidays.

Museum information line: 212 217.4558

For more information, visit fitnyc.edu/museum

Cover: Alexander McQueen, catsuit, silk mesh with silver bugle beads and sequins.



DAPHNE GUINNESS



SEPT. 16, 2011–JAN. 7, 2012

There have been many exhibitions about individual fashion designers, but surprisingly few on fashion icons. Yet in order for a look to become fashionable, to move off the runway and into real life, it has to be worn by individuals of great personal style. Daphne Guinness is the very image of rarified personal style. She is fearless about wearing the most extreme fashion, and has been an inspiration to many designers, but she is no mere clothes horse. A serious collector of couture, she is also a creative force in her own right. This individualism, often described as eccentricity, is at the heart of Daphne’s appeal. Equally important is her respect for the art of fashion. She has famously said:

“We need better things, not more. We should not pollute the world with meaningless, unused things when we can make and support things of rare and precious beauty.”

“People who collect clothes get a bad rep because they’re told it’s all vanity,” says Daphne. Historically, it is quite true that collections of fashion have rarely been accorded the respect given to collections of art—or even collections of cars or stamps. Yet Daphne’s collection is no mere assemblage of couture clothes, on a par with Imelda Marcos’s thousands of shoes or the closets of a Saudi princess. It is not simply that her collection includes important couture looks by the greatest designers of our time, she has also acquired cutting-edge garments by young designers. Everything in her closets reflects her knowledge of and respect for the art of fashion.

“What draws me to fashion is art ... and certainly not fashion as status symbol,” says Daphne. “This exhibition is done for the benefit of those out there, students or otherwise, who share this love.”



Top row, left to right: Alexander McQueen, evening jacket with eagle epaulettes, black taffeta, and metal, worn with Christian Lacroix, evening dress, purple silk satin, silk ribbon and jet beads; Gareth Pugh, dress and hooded coat, sliced silver metallic; Daphne Guinness, day dress, grey cotton with ribbon trim.

Bottom row, left to right: Azzedine Alaïa, evening dress, black silk jersey; Alexander McQueen for Givenchy, evening dress, hand-painted ombré silk charmeuse; Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, jacket, white sequins with feathers.

The exhibition DAPHNE GUINNESS begins with an introductory gallery featuring a selection of Daphne’s notoriously vertiginous shoes, and then the main gallery is divided along a central axis into six sections, each devoted to an aspect of Daphne’s style:

- DANDYISM is devoted to Daphne’s “absolute passion for men’s clothes” — especially crisp white shirts and tailored jackets (“In my next life, I’ll be a tailor”). “There is so much cross-dressing in Shakespeare,” says Daphne. “I’m inspired by that.”
- ARMOR features clothing that alludes to Daphne’s love of armor. “I think it’s very beautiful to be able to cover yourself in metal,” she says. “I love the color and the way it reflects. But it is also a protection.”
- CHIC looks at Daphne’s perfectly simple little black (and white and gray) dresses and suits. Classically elegant, they reflect the influence of her mother and grandmother. As Daphne says, “I don’t do event dressing, because every day is an event.”
- EVENING CHIC continues the theme of classical elegance, as interpreted by Daphne. “I like structure,” she says, “... with a bit of chaos.”
- EXOTICISM refers to Daphne’s penchant for sartorial drama, often described as eccentricity. “Fashion today is becoming more beige,” she says. “By that I mean, everyone and everything is starting to look the same—almost like a Mao uniform. We should be flying the flag for individuality.”
- SPARKLE evokes Daphne’s words: “I’m like a magpie—I love anything that sparkles!” It also alludes to Daphne’s love of plumes. The couturier Valentino always teases her that he can tell where she’s been because of the trails of feathers and beads.