



NEWS

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Exhibitionism: 50 Years of The Museum at FIT Special Exhibitions Gallery February 8–April 20, 2019

Exhibitionism: 50 Years of The Museum at FIT celebrates the 50th anniversary of what Michael Kors calls “the fashion insider’s fashion museum” by bringing back 33 of the most influential exhibitions produced since the first one was staged in 1971. Taken entirely from the museum’s permanent holdings, more than 80 looks will be on display. From *Fashion and Surrealism* to *The Corset* to *A Queer History of Fashion*, the exhibitions are known for being “intelligent, innovative, and independent,” says MFIT Director Valerie Steele. “The museum has been in the forefront of fashion curation, with more than 200 fashion exhibitions over the past half century, many accompanied by scholarly books and symposia.”

Founded in 1969 as The Design Laboratory and Galleries at FIT, it became The Museum at FIT in 1994, and was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 2012. From the beginning, MFIT served multiple audiences, including students, designers, and the public. In 1971, its first director, Robert Riley, organized a show featuring the work of designer Gilbert Adrian; when MGM heard about it, the company donated costumes that Adrian had created for stars like Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo. For his 1976 exhibition on the French couturier Paul Poiret, Riley also acquired important ensembles for the museum’s collection, such as a fantastical “Persian” ensemble worn for a 1919 fancy dress ball.



Adrian, dress worn by Greta Garbo in *Camille*, 1936, USA, gift of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc. Featured in *Adrian* (1971).



Paul Poiret, fancy dress ensemble, 1919, France, gift of Mrs. Kathryn Colton. Featured in *Paul Poiret, King of Fashion* (1976).

Fashion and Surrealism, organized in 1987, was another of FIT's most influential exhibitions. It was organized by Richard Martin, Harold Koda, and Laura Sinderbrand, who also collaborated on exhibitions such as *Three Women* (1987), featuring Madeleine Vionnet, Clare McCordell, and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. When Martin and Koda moved uptown to the Costume Institute, Dorothy Twining Globus took over at MFIT, hiring Steele as chief curator.



Harry Gordon, paper dress, 1968, England, gift of Stephen Pietri. Featured in *Fashion and Surrealism* (1987).



Madeleine Vionnet, dress, 1930, France, museum purchase. Featured in *Three Women* (1987).



Corset, circa 1889, USA. 2009. Featured in *The Corset* (2001).

Since 1997, Dr. Valerie Steele has curated a number of thematic exhibitions exploring topics of sexuality, gender, and identity, including *The Corset: Fashioning the Body* (2001) and *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (2008). Together with senior curator Fred Dennis, she organized the pioneering exhibition *A Queer History of Fashion: From the Closet to the Catwalk* (2013).



Rick Owens, ensemble, fall 2008, France, gift of Rick Owens. Featured in *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (2008).



Versace, suit, 1991, Italy. Featured in *A Queer History of Fashion* (2013).

MFIT Deputy Director Patricia Mears has gravitated more toward connoisseurship with exhibitions such as *Madame Grès, Sphinx of Fashion* (2008), and *American Beauty: Aesthetics and Innovation in Fashion* (2009). In 2016, curator Colleen Hill organized the imaginative exhibition *Fairy Tale Fashion*, which illustrated 15 classic fairy tales using fashions such as an 18th-century red hooded cape.



Madame Grès, evening gown, 1971, France, gift of Ms. Mica Ertegun. Featured in *Madame Grès: Sphinx of Fashion* (2008).



Norman Norell, evening set, circa 1958, USA, gift of Lauren Bacall. Featured in *American Beauty* (2009).



Chado Ralph Rucci, *Tabernacle Infanta* evening gown, fall 2003, USA, gift of Chado Ralph Rucci. Featured in *American Beauty* (2009).



Cape, late 18th century, England. Featured in *Fairy Tale Fashion* (2016).



Comme des Garçons, ensemble, spring 2015, Japan. Featured in *Fairy Tale Fashion* (2016).

Exhibitionism will also feature exhibitions originally displayed in the museum's Fashion and Textile History Gallery. These include *Black Fashion Designers* (2016), curated by Ariele Elia and Elizabeth Way; *Denim: Fashion's Frontier* (2016) and *The Body: Fashion and Physique* (2017), curated by Emma McClendon; and *Force of Nature* (2017), curated by Melissa Marra.



Duro Olowu, ensemble, fall 2012, England, gift of Duro Olowu. Featured in *Black Fashion Designers* (2016).



Roberto Cavalli, ensemble, 2002–2003, Italy, gift of Roberto Cavalli. Featured in *Denim: Fashion's Frontier* (2016).



Chromat, ensemble, spring 2015, USA. Featured in *The Body: Fashion and Physique* (2017).



Alexander McQueen, dress, fall 2009, England. Featured in *Force of Nature* (2017).

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a book of the same name, edited by Dr. Valerie Steele and Colleen Hill and published by Skira. Lavishly illustrated with looks from the show and photos of past installations, the book features essays by MFIT curators that provide greater context for each of the exhibitions featured. The publication will be available in February 2019.

The Museum at FIT

The Museum at FIT, which is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is the only museum in New York City dedicated solely to the art of fashion. The museum has a collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present. The museum's mission is to educate and inspire diverse audiences with innovative exhibitions and projects which advance the knowledge of fashion. Visit fitnyc.edu/museum.

The museum is part of FIT, an internationally recognized leader in career education in design, fashion, business, and technology for nearly 75 years. Providing an uncommon blend of practical experience and theory on a foundation of arts and sciences, FIT, a college of the State University of New York (SUNY), offers a wide range of affordable programs that foster innovation, collaboration, and a global perspective. FIT draws on its New York City location to provide a vibrant, creative environment for learning, exploration, and research. The college offers nearly 50 programs and grants AAS, BFA, BS, MA, MFA, and MPS degrees, preparing students for professional success and leadership in the new creative economy. In 2019, the college will celebrate its 75th anniversary. To learn more visit fitnyc.edu.

The Couture Council is a philanthropic membership group that helps support the exhibitions and programs of The Museum at FIT. The Couture Council Award for Artistry of Fashion is given to a selected designer at a benefit luncheon held every September. For information on the Couture Council, call (212) 217-4532 or email couturecouncil@fitnyc.edu.

Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, noon–8 pm; Saturday, 10 am–5 pm. Closed Sunday, Monday, and legal holidays. Admission is free.

Exhibitionism: 50 Years of The Museum at FIT has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT.