

News Release

The Museum at FIT Presents ***Food & Fashion*** September 13–November 26, 2023



Moschino, chocolate bar gown, fall 2014. © The Museum at FIT.



Cynthia Rowley, corn and tomato printed dresses, 1993. Gift of Cynthia Rowley. © The Museum at FIT.



Delvaux, french fries and burger miniature leather bags, 2017. Gift of Delvaux. © The Museum at FIT.

The Museum at FIT (MFIT) presents [*Food & Fashion*](#), an exciting and timely exhibition that explores the impact of food and food culture on fashion design. ***Food & Fashion*** includes over 80 garments and accessories by designers including Chanel, Moschino, and Stella McCartney. It is co-curated by Melissa Marra-Alvarez, MFIT’s curator of education and research, and Elizabeth Way, the museum’s associate curator of costume.

In 2023, *The New York Times* reported that food motifs are “the new florals” in fashion. Food and fashion are both central to our daily lives, speaking to people’s most basic needs, while also expressing individual and cultural identities. This exhibition examines how food has influenced fashion design from the 18th century to today and how food themes and motifs are used to comment on topics such as luxury, gender, consumerism, sustainability, social activism, and body politics.

News Release



Moschino, "Over 20 Billion Served" ensemble, fall 2014. Gift of Moschino. © The Museum at FIT.



Judith Leiber, tomato rhinestone minaudière, 1994. Gift of Judith Leiber, Inc. © The Museum at FIT.



Chanel, "Brasserie Gabrielle" ensemble, fall 2015. Gift of Chanel. © The Museum at FIT.

The exhibition begins in the introductory gallery with a section titled "A Day of Food as Fashion," where visitors travel from breakfast to dinnertime, exploring the prevalence of food themes in our clothes. The first four sections, presented as intimate tableaus, include "The Fashion Kitchen," "The Market," "The Fast Food Diner," and "The High Fashion Restaurant." The fifth section, "The Camera Eats First," looks at social media as the omnipresent space where food and fashion come together throughout the day.

The exhibition continues in the main gallery, which is designed to invoke an expansive "food hall" that includes stalls exploring 10 themes. The first is "Haute Couture/Haute Cuisine," which looks at the history of these twin aspects of French luxury and features a sumptuous candy pink damask gown, circa 1765. "Dressing to Dine" illustrates the ways that mealtimes dictated the dress of elites who wore specialized gowns for tea, dinner, and cocktail hour. "A Feast for the Eyes" delves into how food, fashion, and art have collided in contemporary fashion design. It includes examples by Comme des Garçons, whose spring 2018 dress features Giuseppe Arcimboldo's 1590 food portrait of Emperor Rudolf II, and Stephen Jones's delectably surrealist peanut butter-and-jelly-sandwich hat. "The Fashion Cookbook" shows how fashion designers have expanded their brands through cookbooks that channel their aesthetics and values.

News Release



Silk damask robe à l'anglaise, circa 1765. © The Museum at FIT



Comme des Garçons, printed dress, spring 2018. © The Museum at FIT.



Stephen Jones Millinery, "Elsa Schiaparelli," a sandwich of sheepskin with embroidered peanut butter and jelly, autumn/winter 2017 haute couture and prêt-à-porter collection.

"We Eat What We Are" examines how cultural representation is expressed through food and dress. Both are distinctive expressions of national and ethnic communities. On view is an ensemble by Tremaine Emory of Denim Tears, who partnered with Sky High Farms Workwear on a collection celebrating the Black American foods he grew up eating in Jamaica, Queens, such as okra and black-eyed peas. An ensemble by the Singapore-based brand Reckless Ericka draws on the country's renowned food culture by depicting chili crab and durian as part of their "Singapore Food Series." Japanese designer Issey Miyake marked the 20th anniversary of his Soho store with a "bento box" of pleated accessories rolled as sushi. Other featured designs are by the Italian duo Dolce & Gabbana, Chinese American designer Sandy Liang, and the Mexico City-based Carla Fernandez.

News Release



Perry Ellis, picnic suit, spring 1990. Gift of Perry Ellis. © The Museum at FIT.



Reckless Ericka, 2019. Photograph courtesy of Reckless Ericka. Shot by Raymond, Capsule Productions.



Issey Miyake Pleats Please, “bento box” of accessories, 2018. © The Museum at FIT.

“Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice?” unpacks the relationship between food and gender identities, specifically sweets and femininity. Junya Watanabe’s spring 2001 pearl and dessert-printed dress expresses the connection between sweets and the complex idealization of femininity. Other pieces featured include Judith Leiber’s ice cream and donut rhinestone minaudière, the Shoe Bakery’s layer cake platform pumps, and a tiered chiffon dress by Jean Dessès resembling a decadent dessert.

“Activism and Protest” examines the ways in which fashion takes cues from food movements to address the need for social justice and activism. Rick Owens partnered with the United Farm Workers’ Union for his spring 2020 collection to highlight the ways food workers have resisted exploitation. Sustainability is explored in “Growing Alternative,” which explores how slow fashion is inspired by slow food, embracing techniques such as regenerative farming. Mimi Prober’s spring 2021 “Garden and Plate” collection, for example, uses avocado and pomegranate-dyed fabrics. “Fashion From Your Fridge” highlights how technologies have supported? sustainability, transforming food-waste materials into fashion fabrics. A 1920s gown features sequins made from fish gelatin, while Marina Hoermanseder’s fall 2020 collection features Piñatex, a leather alternative made from pineapple waste.

News Release



Mimi Prober, spring 2021, collection. Photo by Patrick Anderson. Courtesy of Mimi Prober.



Rick Owens, United Farm Workers T-shirt ensemble, spring 2020. Gift of Rick Owens. © The Museum at FIT.



Comme des Garçons, dessert-printed dress, spring 2001. © The Museum at FIT.

“Consuming Bodies” explores fashion’s complex relationship with food as it relates to “the fashionable body.” A preference for thinness ruled the 20th century; however, the contemporary brand Chromat directly challenges the idea that only thin bodies are beautiful. Its fall 2018 show featured diverse bodies with models eating Flamin’ Hot Cheetos as they strutted down the runway.

Food & Fashion is a multifaceted look at how intertwined these genres are and what they can express about our culture and society. Bon appétit!

The exhibition is accompanied by the book **Food & Fashion** (Bloomsbury, 2023) and a symposium scheduled for November 3.

The Museum at FIT is a proud partner of Bloomberg Connects, a free digital guide to cultural organizations around the world that makes it easy to access and engage with arts and culture from mobile devices, anytime, anywhere. The Bloomberg Connects app, available for download from Google Play or the App Store, makes the museum accessible for onsite or offsite visits through photographs, audio, and video features that offer insights into the world of fashion and design. For **Food & Fashion**, the app will feature an audio tour led by the exhibition curators.

News Release

Food & Fashion has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT and The Coby Foundation. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit www.arts.gov. Additional support was provided by The Coby Foundation and The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

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About The Museum at FIT (MFIT)

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. 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.

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. All visitors are requested to [review the latest safety guidelines and protocols](#). For more information and the latest MFIT updates, [visit fitnyc.edu/museum](http://fitnyc.edu/museum); [register for the MFIT newsletter](#); and follow the museum on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

About the Fashion Institute of Technology

A part of the State University of New York, FIT has been a leader in career education in art, design, business, and technology throughout its history. Providing its over 8,000 students with an uncommon blend of hands-on, practical experience, theory, and a firm grounding in the liberal

News Release

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 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, 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. Calvin Klein, Michael Kors, Reem Acra, Brian Atwood, Dennis Basso, Francisco Costa, Norma Kamali, 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, *Elle*.

Visit fitnyc.edu.

About the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT

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.