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ON THE COVER: DANIEL CRAIG STARS AS JAMES BOND IN SKYFALL

PHOTO: SONY PICTURES

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FASHION SHOW

WHETHER IT'S AN ANTIDOTE TO THE ECONOMIC
CLIMATE OR THE OPPORTUNITY TO INDULGE
OUR LOVE OF POPULAR CULTURE, EXHIBITIONS
PROFILING FASHION DESIGNERS ARE IN VOGUE

KATHLEEN WHYMAN
MANAGING EDITOR
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Animated mannequins and a moving catwalk are bringing couture to life at The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk, currently on display at the de Young Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco (FAMSF), US.

Designed to be a creation in its own right, as a contemporary installation rather than a fashion retrospective, the exhibition features 140 ensembles spanning 35 years from the French designer's couture and ready-to-wear collections. Having previously profiled the work of Vivienne Westwood, Yves Saint Laurent and Cristóbal Balenciaga, the museum is a fitting venue for another master of design.

FAMSF curator of costume and textile arts Jill D'Alessandro says, "Gaultier catapulted onto the fashion scene with his unconventional approach that drew inspiration from television, film, music and street culture. For the last four decades he has

remained a catalyst for our times. This dynamic exhibition is a truly multimedia extravaganza complete with animated mannequins, runway clips and video

excerpts from his extensive film and music collaborations. It succeeds in capturing the raw, sometimes chaotic energy that defines our contemporary lives and Gaultier's world."



A costume sketch by Gaultier for
Luc Besson's film *The Fifth Element*



Gaultier's Calligraphie gown from his Cages collection is a heady combination of energy and elegance

FASHION FUSION

Aiming to fuse the energy of street culture with haute-couture craftsmanship, the multimedia installation is broken down into six thematic sections tracing Gaultier's influences, from Paris to science fiction.

These include The Odyssey of Jean Paul Gaultier, which welcomes the visitor with singing mannequins, created by JoliCoeur International, and a special cameo by the designer; The Boudoir showcases Gaultier's work with corsetry and his collaboration with Madonna. The highlight of this section is two iconic corsets from the singer's 1990 Blonde Ambition World Tour, which launched the cone bra into fashion iconography; and Metropolis, which concludes the exhibition with a presentation of Gaultier's work for film, performance pieces and his relationships with pop icons, such as Kylie Minogue and Tina Turner.

D'Alessandro says that the exhibition has been highly attended and is wildly popular. "Visitors are in awe of the beauty of

his work as well as the innovative nature of the exhibition, including the animated mannequins," she says. "We've tried to capture the playfulness, the whimsy, the humour and the raw energy of Gaultier's world."

However, there's also a serious message behind the exhibition. "Clothing, or fashion, has historically been used for social and political means," D'Alessandro explains. "As Gaultier says, his 'main influence is what's happening today. Fashion must correspond to the aspirations of the moment and reflect current events. Designers are the catalyst of their time; their role is to translate the evolution of society.' This is why Jean Paul Gaultier is one of the most influential designers of the past few decades and why he warrants an exhibition."

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

When FAMSF featured the Vivienne Westwood exhibition, organised by the Victoria & Albert, London, in 2007, the museum was at the forefront of an inter-



Visitors are encouraged to sketch, make mood boards, drape mannequins and touch the fabric

"YSL was an artist and designer who possessed an insatiable curiosity for the world around him"



The Retrospective boasts 200 haute-couture garments, drawings and objects from YSL's 40-year career

national trend of high-profile fashion exhibitions. "Dress is integral to the human experience," D'Alessandro says. "I see it as no coincidence that the up tick of fashion exhibitions, many dedicated to 20th century designers, has occurred in the first decade of the new millennium – a time for contemplation of the century past."

The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk was organised by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada, in collaboration with the Maison Jean Paul Gaultier. It was first shown at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, then the Dallas Museum of Art, USA. When its run at FAMSF ends in August, it will move to Fundación Mapfre – Instituto de Cultura, Madrid, Spain, then Kunsthall Rotterdam, the Netherlands in 2013.

YVES SAINT LAURENT

Earning the prestige of being the only US venue to host Yves Saint Laurent: The Retrospective is a real coup for Denver Art

Museum (DAM), especially as this is its first exhibition dedicated to a fashion designer.

Showcasing 200 haute-couture garments, photos, drawings, personal objects from his studio and film archives, the exhibition explores Saint Laurent's 40-year career, from his time at Dior in 1958 through to his collection of evening dresses from 2002. For DAM, The Retrospective provides the perfect opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to examining creativity in all its manifestations.

"Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) said his craft 'depends on artists for existence'," explains Lindsey Housel, master teacher for architecture, design and graphics, and manager of digital engagement programs at the DAM. "YSL connected fashion, art and design in a revolutionary way. He drew inspiration from many artists, including Piet Mondrian, Picasso, Matisse and Van Gogh, and there's appeal in showcasing the connection between these art forms. YSL was an artist and designer who possessed an



YSL designed this short cocktail dress as a tribute to Pop artist Tom Wesselmann

insatiable curiosity for the world around him and then desired to translate that into fashion. His talent for design thinking and execution and his ability to consistently push boundaries is an appealing story and one that's present in all great artists."

STYLE IT UP

As well as highlighting YSL's talent, the exhibition also aims to inspire creativity in its visitors. Videos show YSL at work and hands-on, interactive spaces, including the Fashion Studio, encourage visitors to sketch, drape fabric on mannequins, make mood boards and feel the fabrics YSL used in his haute-couture collections.



- Created by Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent and previously displayed at Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, France, and the Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, Spain, the exhibition is designed to provide a dynamic path through YSL's life and designs.

It's broken down into nine areas: Birth of a Revolutionary Couturier; A Gender Revolution; Yves Saint Laurent and Women; Creating a Furor; The Enchantment of the Exotic; Dialogue with Artists and Writers; The Last Ball; Le Smoking, profiling YSL's trademark design; and The Colors of Yves Saint Laurent, which also includes hundreds of fabric samples.



An eye-catching YSL evening dress, inspired by artist Henri Matisse

The Retrospective is on display in the DAM's Hamilton Building, which was specially created for international travelling exhibitions. "The architectural elements of the Daniel Libeskind-designed building complement perfectly the revolutionary designs of Saint Laurent," says Housel.

The time felt right for the museum to provide a focused exploration of a designer's career.

"With all of the excitement and interest around fashion designing in popular culture and on TV, there seems to be an increased awareness of fashion design," says Housel. "It's an incredibly relevant subject – something we all experience in our daily lives in an intimate way. It's been exciting to see just how popular the YSL exhibition has been and how interested in design our visitors are."

RED ALERT

Twenty years of red soles are being celebrated at the Design Museum, London, UK in an exhibition marking the anniversary of French shoe designer Christian Louboutin's first boutique in Paris.

Visitors are shown how Louboutin's luxury shoes, with their instantly recognisable glossy red soles, are a fusion of fashion, craftsmanship, engineering and sculpture. A selection of shoes from collections spanning 20 years and personal mementos from Louboutin's archive, including early sketches and designs, are used to showcase Louboutin's artistic personality, his career and the sources of his creativity.

These include shoes inspired by performance, cabaret and the showgirl; fantasy and fairy tale; art and architecture; film; landscape and travel. A Fetish room features a collaboration of photography between Louboutin and artist David Lynch, with images of partial nudity. The room can be bypassed if felt to be unsuitable.



Displays featured in the Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art reveal whether the two icons were cut from the same cloth



- ◀ Mirrored display stands reflect the trademark red soles of Louboutin's shoes
- ▲ Each shoe's intricate flourishes tells the story of a true love affair and focus on detail
- ▶ Along with the hundreds of pairs on display, comes a real insight into his design process

The exhibition also celebrates Louboutin's design process through every stage, revealing how a shoe is constructed, from the initial drawing and first prototype through to production in the factory.

SHOE IN

Curator Donna Loveday didn't hesitate when she received a call from Louboutin's office in London suggesting a collaboration. "Fashion is an important strand within our exhibition programme and I immediately saw the opportunity for the first UK retrospective exhibition of Louboutin's work at the Design Museum," she says.

Loveday worked with Louboutin to define the narrative for the show and select content. "I undertook a period of research, finding out as much as I could about the designer, his philosophy and design process. A storyline was presented to Christian and we worked with exhibition designers Household to bring this story to life.

"The challenge for the curator is the scale of the object with which you are working," she continues. "How do you display shoes, divorced from the wearer, in a static exhibition environment, and allow a focus on the construction and detail of each shoe? How do you successfully convey the artistic personality and creative vision of the designer? This exhibition attempts to successfully combine both elements within a dramatic and immersive exhibition environment."



"How do you display shoes, divorced from the wearer, and convey the creative vision of the designer?"

Louboutin is in good company, as the museum has staged a number of fashion exhibitions, including showcases of the milliner Philip Treacy, fashion photographer Tim Walker and designers Matthew Williamson and Hussein Chalayan. The 2003 exhibition of shoe designer Manolo Blahnik remains one of the most popular.

SCREEN IDOLS

Film director, screenwriter and producer Baz Luhrmann has created a series of films for an exhibition on designers Elsa Schiaparelli and Miuccia Prada at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), USA.

The Met's Spring 2012 Costume Institute exhibition, Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations, explores the affinities between two Italian designers from different eras. It features 100 designs and 40 accessories by Schiaparelli (1890–1973) from the late 1920s to the early 1950s, and by Prada from the late 1980s to the present, drawn from The Costume Institute's collection and the Prada Archive, as well as other institutions and collections.

Eight short videos created by Luhrmann, in which Prada talks with Schiaparelli, who

is played by actress Judy Davis, animate the entry gallery and the seven sections of the exhibition. In the films, "Schiap" and Prada talk at a dining table. The dialogue uses paraphrased excerpts from Schiaparelli's autobiography *Shocking Life* and Prada's filmed remarks. Visitors will have the impression of eavesdropping on a meeting of two great fashion minds.

Inspired by Miguel Covarrubias's 'Impossible Interviews' for *Vanity Fair* in the 1930s, the exhibition aims to show how they explore similar themes through different approaches. The seven themed galleries are: Waist Up/Waist Down; Ugly Chic; Hard Chic; Naïf Chic; The Classical Body; The Exotic Body; and The Surreal Body.

"Juxtaposing the work of Elsa Schiaparelli and Miuccia Prada allows us to explore how the past enlightens the present and how the present enlivens the past," says Harold Koda, curator in charge.

"The connection of the historic to the modern highlights the affinities, as well as the variances, between two women who constantly subverted contemporary notions of taste, beauty and glamour," adds curator Andrew Bolton. ●