



NEWS

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Beyond Rebellion: Fashioning the Biker Jacket

March 4 - April 5, 2013
The Museum at FIT

The Fashion Institute of Technology's School of Graduate Studies and The Museum at FIT present *Beyond Rebellion: Fashioning the Biker Jacket*. Organized by graduate students in the Fashion and Textile Studies program, the exhibition explores the genesis of the biker jacket and its evolution into a high-fashion garment. *Beyond Rebellion: Fashioning the Biker Jacket* traces the rise of the black leather jacket from utilitarian outerwear to iconic symbol of rebellion, function, and "cool." Clothing from leading labels such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Yves Saint Laurent, and Rick Owens is featured.

The biker jacket emerged in the early twentieth century as a protective garment to shield motorcycle riders from the elements. Over the years, the mystique of the motorcycle jacket has attracted not only bikers, but also movie stars, young adults, and fashion designers.



Schott, *Perfecto* jacket, black leather, circa 1980, USA. Museum purchase. P89.29.1



Yves Saint Laurent (Stefano Pilati), jumpsuit, black leather, fall 2009, France. Gift of Yves Saint Laurent. 2010.90.1

The exhibition opens with a *Perfecto* jacket by the American outerwear company, Schott. The Perfecto style, introduced by Irving Schott in 1928, featured durable black leather horsehide, exposed zippers, metal snaps, and an asymmetrical front closure. By the 1950s, due in part to its appropriation by motorcycle gangs—associations fostered by movies such as *The Wild One*—the jacket had become an emblem of the outlaw biker. Other objects in this introductory section will show how the *Perfecto*'s iconic classic design and early history influenced fashion designers. This is exemplified by a 2009 Yves Saint Laurent jumpsuit that integrates characteristic design elements of the biker jacket, such as an asymmetrical front and exposed zippers.



Jean Paul Gaultier, jacket, black leather, faux fur, suede, and grey wool, 1987, France. Gift of Anne M. Zartarian. 2000.23.10



Comme des Garçons (Rei Kawakubo), jacket and skirt, black leather, pink gingham and tulle, spring 2005, Japan. Museum purchase. 2005.49.1

The exhibition's second section includes work by fashion designers inspired by the countercultural groups that adopted the biker jacket as an expression of social defiance. Punks and leathermen utilized design details such as metal embellishments and construction that exposed or exaggerated the body as a marker to stand out from the rest of society. Featured is a high-end jacket by Jean Paul Gaultier that incorporates a metal spike on each elbow and stitching details on the shoulders that recall armor and exaggerate the size of the upper body

The final section explores avant-garde reinterpretations of the classic biker jacket that push the boundaries of its original symbolism and design. A 2005 Comme des Garçons ensemble from the *Biker + Ballerina* collection juxtaposes a sculptural masculine black leather jacket with a girlish pink gingham and tulle skirt. While the "Biker Ballerina" ensemble and the Perfecto jacket of the 1950s serve very different functions and appeal to different consumers, the allure and mystique of the jacket remains.

Fashion Institute of Technology

Students in the Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice MA program in FIT's School of Graduate Studies have collaborated with The Museum at FIT to present ***Beyond Rebellion: Fashioning The Biker Jacket***. The School of Graduate Studies provides advanced professional education in seven distinctive areas, promoting excellence in the post-baccalaureate study of fashion, business, art, and design. The school offers programs leading to the MA, MFA,

and MPS degrees, and is dedicated to advancing research in the creative industries and fostering innovative collaborations that link students and faculty with industry and professional partners worldwide.

The Museum at FIT, which is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is part of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). It 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 www.fitnyc.edu/museum.

Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) is a State University of New York (SUNY) college of art, design, business, and technology that has been at the crossroads of commerce and creativity for nearly 70 years. With programs that blend hands-on practice, a strong grounding in theory, and a broad-based liberal arts foundation, FIT offers career education in more than 45 areas, and grants associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. FIT provides students with a complete college experience at an affordable cost, a vibrant campus life in New York City, and industry-relevant preparation for rewarding careers. Visit www.fitnyc.edu.

Museum Hours

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