

PRESS RELEASE

A CANADIAN EXCLUSIVE

THE EXHIBITION *ELEGANZA: ITALIAN FASHION FROM 1945 TO TODAY* OPENS AT THE McCORD MUSEUM ON MAY 26, 2016

Montreal, May 24, 2016 – The McCord Museum is pleased to announce a Canadian exclusive, the exhibition *Eleganza: Italian Fashion From 1945 to Today* will be featured at the Museum from **May 26 to September 25, 2016**. Organized by London's Victoria and Albert Museum and presented by Holt Renfrew, this exciting exhibition shows the work of celebrated designers who changed the world of Italian fashion in the period following the Second World War to today.

The exhibition presents an overall portrait and history of key moments in the rise and evolution of Italian fashion, including the handmade clothing of the *sarta*, the neighbourhood dressmaker, luxurious Italian couture and the highest quality ready-to-wear. It also highlights the outstanding craftsmanship, techniques, materials and skills that forged Italy's reputation and place at the top end of the international fashion industry.

"We are delighted to be the only museum in Canada to present this magnificent exhibition. Fashion is at the heart of our interests. The McCord Museum is internationally renowned for having the largest collection of Canadian fashion and costume in the world. This exhibition confirms and highlights our unique expertise in costume presentation," says Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum.

Organized chronologically, the exhibition is divided into five themed sections: *The Birth of Italian Fashion*, *Hollywood and Celebrity*, *Tailoring*, *Made in Italy* and the *Cult of the Designer*. The public will discover gowns and suits by Emilio Pucci, Valentino, Walter Albini, Gianni Versace, Giorgio Armani, Fendi, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Marni and pieces by emerging talents, along with shoes, bags and many other accessories, as well as photographs, magazines, drawings and film clips. The exhibition features around 130 objects, including almost 100 garments epitomizing the glamour and influence of Italian fashion from 1945 to today.

The Birth of Italian Fashion

In 1945, Italy was recovering slowly from the turmoil of the Second World War and trying to rebuild. The government wanted to boost the economy and focussed on the fashion industry with help from the United States through the Marshall Plan. In 1951, Giovanni Battista Giorgini organized Italy's first internationally recognized fashion shows, which from the following year were staged in the Sala Bianca, a beautiful gallery in the Pitti Palace in Florence. These fashion shows brought together influential Italian designers, who would soon be recognized abroad, and numerous buyers and fashion journalists eager to see the latest collections. These events launched Italian fashion onto the world stage. Visitors browsing through this section will have chance to appreciate the work of creators who took part in these first fashion shows, among them Simonetta.

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Exhibition Poster © McCord Museum, 2016



Photograph by Gian Paolo Barbieri for Gianfranco Ferré advertisement, Fall/Winter 1991. Model: Aly Dunne. © GIANPAOLOBARBIERI



Dolce & Gabbana, leather ankle boots with gold, white and pink embroidery, 2001. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Hollywood and Celebrity

During the 1950s and 1960s, many Hollywood films were made in Rome's Cinecittà studios. Productions such as *Roman Holiday* and *Cleopatra* showed Italy as a picture postcard destination. Soon images of Hollywood celebrities shopping in Florence, strolling the streets of Rome and vacationing on the Amalfi coast went around the world in the pages of fashion magazines or gossip columns. A number of Italian fashion houses designed for actresses such as Audrey Hepburn, Ava Gardner and Elizabeth Taylor when they were filming on location in Rome. They created made-to-measure gowns for these new ambassadors of Italian fashion who were photographed on and off set wearing the latest Italian styles. As a result of this media attention, a generation of Italian designers extended their influence and publicized their work internationally. Visitors to this section will see a delicate evening dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in the film *War and Peace* (1956); a garment (1963) by the designer Irene Galitzine, creator of the palazzo pyjama; as well as a bikini by Emilio Pucci (1968), renowned for his colourful prints.

Tailoring

Italian tailoring, known for being light and elegant, was popularized by Italian actors such as Marcello Mastroianni, who wore perfectly fitting suits in the film *La Dolce Vita* (1960). Italian suits feature precise cut, exact fit and flawless finishing. The smallest details, the shape of a pocket or sleeve, often differ from one region to another, making it possible to distinguish a suit made in Rome from one created in Naples. This section highlights many Italian suits, including one made by Rubinacci (1954), owned by Italian producer, director and actor Vittorio De Sica.

Made in Italy

In the early 1970s, the popularity of haute couture gave way to enthusiasm for the mass-production and standardization of the latest fashions. By the 1980s, designer ready-to-wear was booming and became a new form of fashion expression. Milan, with its nearby clothing and textile factories, and its position as the central hub for Italian advertising and its fashion press, became Italy's new fashion capital. This decade saw the success of the *Made in Italy* marketing campaign which promoted a variety of products – cinema, art, food, film, design and, above all, fashion, ensuring that *Made in Italy* became a guarantee of quality and style. The fashion houses Max Mara, Krizia, Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace and, later, Moschino as well as Dolce & Gabbana helped promote and revolutionize ready-to-wear in Italy. Italian specialists in knitwear, such as Missoni and Laura Biagiotti, and luxury leather goods labels, including Gucci and Trussardi, also became part of this trend, elevating the standards of ready-to-wear quality. Achille Maramotti (Max Mara), Gianfranco Ferré and Giorgio Armani are among the designers highlighted in this section, with creations dating from 1982-83, 1986 and 1989 respectively.

Cult of the Designer

Fashion has become increasingly international since the 1990s. Many designers celebrated for their talent have enabled Italy to maintain its reputation and influence in the world of fashion and design. They offer an expanding range of products sold on all continents, whether it be clothing, furniture or hotel interiors. The fashion houses featured in this final section all cater to a loyal clientele, emphasize Italian production and aim for the best quality, three features that give Italian designers a competitive advantage. At the conclusion of the exhibition, visitors will have a chance to see dramatic couture gowns designed by Valentino, Giambattista Valli and Armani Privé along with stunning ensembles by Gucci, Prada and Roberto Cavalli. Superb accessories will also be displayed, such as an extravagantly ornate pair of Dolce & Gabbana boots trimmed with beads, rhinestones and metallic embroidery (2001).

In addition

A conversation about the exhibition, film screenings and two *After Hours at the McCord* events will be offered as part of this exhibition. The description and full schedule are attached to this document.

Extended hours

During the summer period until September 22, 2016, the McCord Museum will be open on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and exceptionally every Thursday evening until 9 p.m. Please note that admission will be charged according to the applicable rates.

An *Eleganza* contest!

In conjunction with the exhibition, the McCord Museum will invite the public to enter the *Eleganza* contest at the Museum. The prize, valued at approximately **\$7,000** and offered courtesy of **Air Transat and Holt Renfrew** will include:

- 1- **A Transat package** Rome, Florence and Venice, for two people, departing from Montreal or Toronto (retail value of approximately \$5,000):
 - 2 roundtrip airline tickets on Air Transat, departing from Montreal or Toronto in economy-class;
 - 7 hotel nights, double occupancy, including 7 breakfasts;
 - Roundtrip transfers between the airport and the hotel as well as train tickets between cities comprised in the itinerary;
 - 3 visits.

- 2- **A Holt Renfrew gift basket and gift card** with an invitation to the store for an elevated shopping experience (value of \$2,000).

Exhibition visitors can submit entries for the contest between May 26 and September 25, 2016.

A tempting offer at the Café Bistro

The McCord Museum Café Bistro presents a light and fresh summer menu, specially designed for *fashionistas!* Visitors will be able to savour the cuisine of Julien-Leblanc Traiteur at lunch time with a complimentary glass of rosé every Wednesday, from May 25 to September 28, 2016, with the purchase of a main course from the menu.

About the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design, with collections unrivaled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's history, as recounted by its people, artists and communities living in the city's past and present. The McCord Museum is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costumes and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual artworks, and textual archives, totalling more than 1,451,000 million artefacts. The McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that engage visitors from Montreal, Canada, and beyond by offering them a contemporary look at the world. The McCord Museum also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. ***McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.***

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Photographs available at <http://ow.ly/4mUC1K>

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HOLT RENFREW





ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THIS EXHIBITION

Conversation about the exhibition

Thursday, May 26, 2016, 6 p.m.

J.A. Bombardier Theater, McCord Museum

Find out more about the rise of Italian fashion after World War II during this talk by Sonnet Stanfill, Acting Senior Curator, Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Stanfill will share insights into how the exhibition was created and the themes it explores. She'll also relate stories about North America's role in developing the distinguished Italian fashion houses.

Screenings of the documentary *Made in Italy* (53 minutes)

Wednesdays, June 1, July 13, August 24 and September 14, 2016, 6 p.m.

J.A. Bombardier Theater, McCord Museum

The documentary *Made in Italy*, by the European channel Arte, traces the development of Italian fashion since the 1940s in Rome and Milan. The film evokes the great names of couture – Simonetta, Gucci, Versace and others – and shows how the rapid rise of small family businesses led to the global influence of the Italian clothing industry. This documentary is in French.

After Hours at the McCord – Montreal Dolce Vita in the McCord Museum's Urban Forest

Thursday, June 9, 2016, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

After Hours at the McCord, presented by National Bank, will move outdoors to Victoria Street, offering downtown's largest summer happy hour and sporting a distinctive Italian flair! It's your invitation to celebrate the beginning of warm summer evenings as the solstice approaches. Open to everyone who loves culture, music and a chic aperitif on a terrace. It's all part of *The Urban Forest* experience – an oasis in the heart of the city. Popular DJ Don Mescal will supply the tunes until 9 p.m.

The evening also offers an ideal occasion to explore the exhibition *Eleganza: Italian Fashion from 1945 to Today* and to join one of the two exclusive tours of 20 to 30 minutes each:

6 p.m.: *Made in Italy in Piedmont: Mesh*

7 p.m.: *Made in Italy in Tuscany: Leather*

A third tour, entitled *The Pow-Wow: The Other Dolce Vita*, will be conducted at **8 p.m.** and will focus on the Museum's permanent exhibition *Wearing our Identity – The First Peoples Collection*.

In addition to these tours, visitors will be treated to Italian cocktails and nibbles, take part in a "flirting" workshop and learn a few Italian gestures, try their hand at *bocce*, indulge in a few (temporary) tattoos inspired by Neapolitan tradition, and have their photo taken on a Vespa! A draw will also be held that will see the lucky winners take home Air Transat gift certificates for a trip to Rome or Calabria. And the first 300

people to arrive will receive a gourmet gift. Many other surprises await participants as well! For more details, please visit the event's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/events/1393823070643656/

Free for Museum Members. Advance tickets \$16 on Eventbrite and \$20 on site. Drink included. In case of rain on Thursday, the event will take place the next day, on Friday. In case of rain on Friday, the tickets will be transferred to **After Hours at the McCord – Montreal is fashion**, which will be held on **Thursday, September 22, 2016, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.** inside the McCord Museum. No refund.

Coming in August

The exhibition *Eleganza: Italian Fashion from 1945 to Today* will be included in the Mode & Design Festival program, which will run from August 15 to 20, 2016. For the occasion, the McCord Museum will hold a fashion sketch activity for festival-goers.