

Up Close and Personable *Curator's Notebook*

What a wonderful opportunity for our students to work on an inventory of the Mount Mary College Historic Costume Collection. Thanks so much to the Friends of Fashion for making this possible. We were able to hire fashion design students Danielle Dudley, Jaci Rehberg, Kristin Jutzronka, Jessica Schroeder, and Stephanie Antonetti. This was a terrific learning experience for them; they were able to see many beautiful garments, fabrics, and techniques. We were also able to supplement their income. They were a delight to work with, and expressed an interest in working more on the project.

We worked this summer in the storage area in the basement of Kostka Hall. This area houses garments from the 1860s to the present; it includes our wedding gowns, shoes, hats, and ready-to-wear collection. We completed the shoes and the hanging garments except for three racks of 1990s. Next summer we hope to finish the boxed garments, hats, and rolled textiles.



Jessica Schroeder and Stephanie Antonetti at work on the 1980s evening wear

An inventory of the collection was the first step recommended by our conservation consultant Howard Mailand, who we were able to hire through a Conservation Assessment Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Science. A former classmate, Ann Coppinger, wrote her Master's thesis on conducting an inventory in a museum fashion collection; she shared her recommendations with me. She is now the head conservator at the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Also, I had experience working on part of the inventory of the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian.

Our inventory steps include starting with racks at one end of the room, moving through each one to the other end of the room. One student calls out the garment number and short description to the student scribe. An example would be: 2002.03.04, 1970s black embroidered chiffon evening gown. The student moves the garment to a new padded hanger and moves the accession tag to the left sleeve. The final step by a third student is to enter the garment record in the database.

Mount Mary's Collection has grown organically, and like many collections, has several recordkeeping systems that aren't on speaking terms with each other. We had a card catalog until 1984, a handwritten sheet until 1994, a now-defunct computer system until 2000, and a new computer system since 2001. As a part of the inventory, we are entering the data into one database. It will be possible for me to find objects and donors with a simple query! The current system relies on my memory alone. Did a donor give us a Dior gown? Where is it? Which of the nine rooms in three buildings houses it? Additionally, we will be able to answer the question: how many pieces are in the collection?

Now Showing: *Signature Style*

Four Fashion Designers: Emilio Pucci, Claire McCardell, Valentina, and Mary McFadden

Many designers have a signature style: we can instantly tell their garments from those of any other designer. It is the response of the artists to the world they live in. Their work expresses how they think and solve problems and create. The designers' life experiences shape their designs.

Our exhibition examines the work of four very different designers working at different times and places. Emilio Pucci was an Italian nobleman whose prints defined the jet-set of the 1960s and 1970s. Claire McCardell developed the "American Look" of casual sportswear in the 1940s and 1950s. Valentina dressed New York actresses such as Katherine Hepburn and Greta Garbo in severe simplicity in the 1930s and 1940s. Mary McFadden was known for exotic ensembles from the 1970s to her retirement in 2002.

This exciting Mount Mary College Historic Costume Collection exhibition runs from August 1 through January 2011. The exhibition is in Stiemke Hall on the second floor of Notre Dame Hall. It is open to the public at no charge from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm weekdays.

A second installation opening February 1, 2011, will feature the designs of Calvin Klein, Charles Kleibacker, Ceil Chapman, and Ungaro. Part of the Calvin Klein archives are housed at Mount Mary College; his garments are menswear-inspired. Charles Kleibacker worked in custom couture with a timeless simplicity. Ceil Chapman was Marilyn Monroe's favorite designer; she focused on highlighting the curves of a woman's body. Ungaro specializes in draped floral prints.

Elizabeth Gaston, Curator, Mount Mary College Historic Costume Collection

*"Things have a signature,
if you use your eyes."
—Nancy Mitford*



Cotton dress,
Claire McCardell,
1948



Silk jersey
dress, Pucci,
1970



Navy pleated
polyester gown,
Mary McFadden

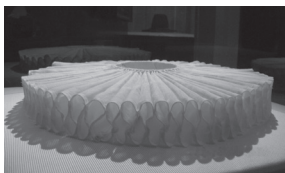


Mustard
crepe gown,
Valentina,
1935

Exhibits That Define Fashion Moments



Yves St. Laurent exhibit
(by chrisfreeland2002's) photostream
found on www.flickr.com



The ruff, historic, as exhibited at
the MOMU



The ruff, contemporary, as exhibited
at the MOMU

Museum exhibitions on fashion frequently inspire designers as well as explain fashion moments, both past and present. This summer offered a rich array of exhibitions located across the globe. For me, London, Paris, and Antwerp offered a feast for the eyes and the imagination.

In London, the Somerset House hosted the Maison Martin Margiela Exhibit, which originated in Antwerp Belgium, where Margiela graduated from the fashion department of the Antwerp Academy. Margiela is known for his deconstructivist approach to fashion and for repurposing materials—a sensitivity very much in vogue today. A conceptual designer, well-versed in classic tailoring, he often found ways to show the inside of a garment in order to expose its construction and all that fashion seeks to hide or make effortless. Margiela believes that his work should speak for itself and so he characteristically avoided all public appearances; he retired in 2009.

The Grace Kelly exhibit at the Victoria & Albert Museum examined the archetypal style of this celebrity icon. Her polished image projected an aura of mystery, for although her public image was warm and proper, there was also a very guarded private persona beneath the surface. The exhibition adds little new to our knowledge of Grace Kelly but reinforces our yearning for what we perceive as a simpler time. The look has provided inspiration for the likes of Janie

Bryant, the costume designer for *Mad Men*, Tommy Hilfiger, and Hermès (the classic Kelly bag). Princess Grace liked to say that she was as loyal to her old clothes as she was to her old friends; she saved almost everything she ever bought—a poster child for the resurgence of investment dressing. Thank Kelly if you're enjoying the shirtwaist dress and sheath dress and coat or jacket ensembles returning to the marketplace.

Across the channel in Paris, the hot ticket was for the Yves Saint Laurent show staged at the Petit Palais. Beautifully curated, the exhibit probed both his inspiration and his contributions. Individual vignettes highlighted fashion moments in Saint Laurent's vast repertoire—his androgynous take on the pant suit; collections inspired by the Ballets Russe, Morocco, and Bohemian peasants; tributes to artists including Pablo Picasso, Cocteau, Mondrian, Van Gogh, Matisse, Braque, Bonnard and others—each story contributing to his genius. Other galleries paid tribute to his many muses (Catherine Deneuve, Jacqueline de Ribes, Jerry Hall, Loulou de la Falaise), and to his love for color. The final gallery consisted of tiered platforms with a selection of some of his most beautiful evening gowns prompting my friends and me to pick our favorites and imagine how it would feel to wear them. On the wall of that same gallery was a floor-to-ceiling collection of variations on the tuxedo—all in black. Saint Laurent liked to begin his designs with a carefully crafted shoulder from which a beautiful sleeve followed. Watch for a renewed focus on the shoulder and a revival of the pantsuit as the fall season unfolds.

The Decorative Arts Museum at the Louvre is in the midst of a two-part exhibition entitled *The Ideal History of Contemporary Fashion*. Part I features garments from the 1970s and 1980s including the work of YSL, Issey Miyake, Kenzo, Sonia Rykiel, Claude Montana, Thierry Mugler, and Jean Paul Gaultier; it runs through October 10. Part II will highlight influential designers of the 1990s and 2000s; it will open November 25 and run through May 2011. Curator Olivier Saillard also wrote a book on which the exhibit is based. He focused on ready-to-wear rather than couture fashions to illustrate the strong influences from the street that characterized fashion during this time. While signage was minimal and only in French, the actual video from designer catwalks helped to recount the story.

continued: *Exhibits That Define Fashion Moments*



Mode Museum, Antwerp

As if to emphasize the lingering recession, the always conceptual Mode Museum (MOMU) in Antwerp just closed its exhibition *Black: Masters of Black in Fashion and Costume* where they explored the many meanings of black. Garments dated from the middle ages to the present, with old and new often juxtaposed in the same vignette. The exhibition explored the many emotions

and symbolic meanings associated with black from mysterious to theatrical; sacred to foreboding; and as a symbol of wealth and nobility to one expressing the aesthetic of a variety of counter cultures. Exhibits at the MOMU are curated in a way that allows the viewer to meander through the museum and study all angles of the garments shown; most garments are not behind glass. The lighting and informative signage creates a cerebral experience, and once again their timing is spot on in defining the current fashion moment.

Sandra Keiser, Chairperson, Mount Mary College Fashion Department

Message from the Advisory Board Chairperson

Greetings to all our Friends of Fashion members:

July 1 started a new fiscal year for Mount Mary Friends of Fashion. We are looking forward to an exciting year full of fun and wonderful events. Our committees are working hard so that we can enjoy another successful year.

Fiscal 2009 closed June 30. Because of our efforts and the wonderful support of our members, we were able to contribute \$25,000 to the Historic Costume Collection. Curator Elizabeth Gaston is already putting the funds to good use for desperately needed storage units, which is enabling us to continue to preserve the wonderful collection we have amassed. The collection serves as a valuable resource for students, researchers, and the community.

But much more work is needed. We are in the second year of our two-year challenge grant from an anonymous foundation. The grant will provide \$20,000 to the Historic Costume Collection that Friends of Fashion must match with net revenue. We

are confident we can meet this challenge again this year, but we need your support to reach our goal.

New this year is our Mount Mary Friends of Fashion Facebook Page. Yes, we are joining the social circles on Facebook. Please visit the page for news of upcoming events and the status of our preservation project. This is a work in progress—please visit often as we work on providing the most current information possible.

As always, the Friends of Fashion Advisory Board welcomes your comments and suggestions. We are most grateful for your continued membership and thankful for the support you provide both in terms of dollars and time. We welcome new members with open arms.

Summer is almost over but the warmth of our friends will guide us as we enter into the fall and winter of our year. For that, we are extremely grateful.

Lina S. Cicero, Chair, Mount Mary Friends of Fashion Advisory Board

Kohle Yohannan

Kohle Yohannan is a cultural historian and curator. He is the author of *Claire McCardell: Redefining Modernism* (1998), *John Rawlings: 30 Years in Vogue* (2001), *Valentina: American Couture and the Cult of Celebrity*, and he recently contributed to Rizzoli's *In Vogue: The History of the World's Most Famous Fashion Magazine*. He has collaborated on exhibitions at the Museum of F. I. T., The Museum of the City of New York, and at The Costume Institute at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art, where, along with Harold Koda, he co-curated and authored *The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion*. He is currently working on a book and exhibition of fashion photography of the 20th century at The Annenberg Space for Photography with Abbott Miller of Pentagram as well as an upcoming exhibition and monograph on fashion photographer George Hoyningen-Huene.



Fashion Forward

Fall's Recessionary Tale

The lingering recession has confounded economists and consumers alike. In response, designers (who are sometimes attributed with socio-economic instincts) are offering mixed messages for fall. Some are heralding that the recession is over, offering fur, sparkle, and bling. Others are suggesting a return to the genteel style and quiet polish of investment dressing. The result is a season filled with a range of options that should offer something for everyone.

The season's color primer anoints black as the new black; it's a natural for investment dressing. Camel speaks to the genteel style of old money. Going green is still in vogue with sustainable and military references. Also on the radar are purple (to the manor born), red, turquoise (Pantone's pick for color of the year), blue, and orange.

A new appreciation for tailoring is key. Suits, jackets, coats, and vests are all great investments, particularly when designed with subtle waist shaping and a well-defined shoulder. Interpreted in a plaid or tweed, classic tailoring references old school propriety; in leather or techno fabric, it invokes a new modernism. For added drama, plaids and tweeds can be paired with prints, mixed with other plaids, or re-colored in a novel way.

Fur, fake fur, suede, shearling, and leather all make fashion statements. Leather stands out, especially when cut to utilize the natural edge of the hide. Fur, fake fur, and shearling are used as trim on coats and jackets, and add warmth when lining boots and booties.

Patterns include modern digital prints, engineered to the scale of the garment; re-colored and re-scaled animal prints; and collaged combinations of mismatched prints.

Chunky knits prevail in the sweater category with stylized cables, dropped stitch patterns, and asymmetric silhouettes competing for attention. Intarsia patterns carry forward the mixed pattern theme.

The 1950s and the early 1960s inspire fuller skirts and darted bodices to fit a fuller bust. Gone from most runways are anorexic waif-like models; they are replaced by a more curvaceous and shapely figure. For evening, many designers evoked the classicism of the 1920s interpreted in luxe fabrics including velvet, lace, and metallic.

If you intend to buy only a few key items, consider outerwear. Watch for fit and flare coats that mimic the new jacket silhouette. The returning anorak makes a great investment for more casual and functional warmth. Capes and ponchos help to weather the transition from fall to winter temperatures.

And for those who intend to ride out this season with minimal purchases, look to accessories. Boots are perhaps the most exciting category of the season. Booties that can be worn with slim-cut pants feature peep toes or oxford lace-up styling. Duck boots feature waterproof materials for rain or slushy snows. Over the knee boots, wedge heel boots, and motorcycle boots all have fashion credibility. From spike-heeled to flat, fur-lined to lace textures, riding boots to ski boots, there is definitely something for everyone.

Other accessory notes include top handle bags, statement necklaces, pearls, metallic evening bag, and equestrian belts—all of which work great to update a classic wardrobe.

Sandra Keiser, Chairperson, Mount Mary College Fashion Department

Friends of Fashion

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 Mount Mary College
 To contact us, e-mail hessbua@mtmary.edu

Fashion Exhibitions

I Do! Chicago Ties the Knot

Wedding gowns and traditions
Chicago History Museum
Through January 3, 2011

His and Hers

The relationship between gender
and fashion over the past 250 years
The Museum at FIT, The Fashion
Institute of Technology
November 30, 2010 – May 2011

Inspired Design: Playful and Provocative Adornment

From BAYZLI Studio, artists Skye
and Peter Ciesla
Mount Mary College Marian Gallery
Through October 22, 2010;
Monday-Friday, 9:00 am to 7:00 pm;
Saturday and Sunday, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Membership News: We Need You!

Annual membership dues are an important part of the yearly revenue for the Friends of Fashion. If you have not renewed your membership this year, please consider joining us now.

Memberships received now will be valid until June 30, 2011.

Please complete this form with your check payable to
Mount Mary College Friends of Fashion and return to:

Sister Aloyse Hessburg
Mount Mary College
c/o Development Office
2900 N. Menomonee River Parkway
Milwaukee, WI 53222

Friends of Fashion Annual Membership Levels:

Full Time Student \$15 | Trend Setter \$35 | Private Label \$50
Pret-a-Porter \$100 | Haute Couture \$500

Opportunities for corporate giving are available.

Contributions are tax deductible to the limits of the law.

My (our) gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.

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