

## news

### ***Immortal Beauty* Exhibition Displays Rare Artifacts from Three Centuries of Fashion History for the First Time**



**PHILADELPHIA** – From a fragment of 16th century Italian velvet to an evening dress by New York designer Alexander Wang from 2012, the first large-scale, retrospective exhibition of highlights from the [Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection](#) (FHCC) in Drexel University's [Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design](#) will trace the arc of fashion history over the course of more than three centuries.

***Immortal Beauty: Highlights from the Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection*** will feature select artifacts from the museum-quality collection of more than 14,000 notable garments, accessories and textiles, one of the finest and oldest research collections in the nation.

The exhibition will be on display from Oct. 2 – Dec. 12 in the Westphal College's Leonard Pearlstein Gallery (3401 Filbert St.). The gallery is free and open to the public, Tuesday – Sunday from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

A public opening reception will take place on Friday, Oct. 2 from 6 – 9 p.m. in the Gallery. An exclusive press preview will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 10:30 a.m. and will include a tour of the exhibition and a look at the Collection, as well as photo and interview opportunities.



The exhibition of more than 75 items will largely focus on international high style of the 20th century. Examples include garments by Charles James, Gabrielle Chanel, Halston, Oscar de la Renta, Christian Dior, Mary Quant and Elsa Schiaparelli. Other notable pieces include couture by Philadelphia natives James Galanos and Ralph Rucci, and garments worn by women of style such as American socialite Babe Paley and Princess Grace of Monaco.

*Immortal Beauty* also will showcase the Collection's historic ties to the University. Formed in the late 1890s by A.J. Drexel, the founder of Drexel University, the Collection has always served as an educational resource for Drexel students, and some of the most exquisite items came from the estate of Drexel's granddaughter, Minnie Drexel Fell Cassatt. Four of her couture garments, by makers such as Callot Soeurs and Jacques Doucet, will be on display.

Even the title of the exhibit was inspired by Drexel: the phrase "immortal beauty" comes from a speech given by Drexel's first president, James A. MacAlister (1891-1913),



during the dedication of the then Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry, referencing the artwork purchased for what was then referred to as the Museum of the Drexel Institute.

*Immortal Beauty* is organized by **Clare Sauro**, curator of the Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection at Drexel University.

“The items were selected both for their historical significance and aesthetic beauty,” said Sauro. “They reflect the breadth of the Collection and demonstrate its strengths, while giving a remarkable overview of more than 250 years of fashion change.”

The mission of the Collection is to educate and inspire through the documentation, exhibition and preservation of historic costume. Previously open by appointment only, the Collection has recently been made available to the public through educational events. These “Fashion Friday” and “Style Saturday” viewings each include an in-depth presentation on a particular aspect of fashion history, such as the legacy of 1920s fashion, and a private viewing of the Collection. A special gallery tour of the exhibition is scheduled for Oct. 15 in conjunction with DesignPhiladelphia. Tickets may be purchased [here](#).



*Immortal Beauty: Highlights from the Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection* is made possible by a generous grant from the Richard C. von Hess Foundation. The Foundation provides support to a wide variety of major museums and cultural organizations for conservation, exhibitions and publications and awards the prestigious von Hess Travel Scholarship to an outstanding fine arts student each year at both the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the University of the Arts.

“The FHCC is a collection of enormous historic and aesthetic significance, but has only been seen by a select few,” said Sauro. “Thanks to the generosity of the Richard C. von Hess Foundation, we will be able to share this important collection with a much larger audience.”

Sauro joined Drexel in 2008 and has more than 15 years of experience in the field of historic costume and museums. She previously served as an assistant curator of costume at the Museum at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) one of the only specialized museums of fashion in the world. During her tenure at Drexel, Sauro has contributed to the exhibitions *Rest Your Feet* (2008) and *A Legacy of Art, Science & Industry: Highlights from the Collections* (2013.) In 2011, she curated the exhibition *Brave New World: Fashion & Freedom, 1911-1919*, in conjunction with the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA.)

Sauro is a frequent lecturer on the history of fashion and is regularly interviewed and consulted by journalists and scholars. In addition to her role as curator, she teaches courses in the history of fashion to students in Drexel’s Westphal College. Sauro’s current research includes fashion from 1919 to 1939, and the role of the artifact in education.

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