

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Louis Vuitton, Cond Nast to back fashion exhibition marking sesquicentennial of New York's Metropolitan Museum

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Influenced by American Vogue editor in chief Anna Wintour, New York's Metropolitan Museum has put on a rapid succession of fashion exhibitions with support from brands such as Louis Vuitton to fund the Costume Institute's mission and operations. Image credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art

By STAFF REPORTS

Fashion brand Louis Vuitton has signed on to sponsor a spring 2020 exhibition put on by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art that tracks 150 years of fashion to coincide with the institution's sesquicentennial celebrations.

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Titled "About Time: Fashion and Duration," the exhibition runs May 7 through Sept. 7 next year, hosted by the Met's Costume. New York-based magazine publisher Cond Nast will provide additional support.

"This exhibition will consider the ephemeral nature of fashion, employing flashbacks and fast-forwards to reveal how it can be both linear and cyclical," said Max Hollein, director of the Met, in a statement.

"As such, the show will present a nuanced continuum of fashion over the museum's 150-year history," he said.

Gala time

The Costume Institute Benefit, better known as the Met Gala, will precede the exhibition.

To be held May 4, the gala evening's co-chairs will be Louis Vuitton designer Nicolas Ghesquire, actors Lin-Manuel Miranda, Emma Stone and Meryl Streep, and Cond Nast artistic director and American *Vogue* editor in chief Anna Wintour.

The gala is the Costume Institute's main source of annual funding for exhibitions, publications, acquisitions and capital improvements.

The gala event at the Met's Fifth Avenue location on 80th Street attracts Hollywood stars dressed to the nines and New York society types both vetted by Ms. Wintour as well as screaming crowds and photographers.

Three days later, the exhibition kicks off to more mainstream scrutiny after the critics and celebrities have had their say.

In the museum's own words, the exhibition "employing Henri Bergson's concept of *la dure* (duration) will explore how clothes generate temporal associations that conflate past, present, and future. Virginia Woolf will serve as the 'ghost narrator' of the exhibition."

A linear chronology of fashion comprising black ensembles will run through the exhibition, reflecting the progressive timescale of modernity, and bringing into focus the fast, fleeting rhythm of fashion.

A series of counter-chronologies will interrupt this timeline, composed of white ensembles that predate or postdate those in black, but relate to one another through shape, motif, material, pattern, technique or decoration, the museum said.

For example, a black princess-line dress from the late 1870s will be paired with an Alexander McQueen "Bumster" skirt from 1995, and a black bustle ensemble from the mid-1880s will be juxtaposed with a Comme des Garons "Body Meets Dress Dress Meets Body" dress from 1997, according to the write-up on the museum's site.

The **exhibition** will feature approximately 160 examples of women's fashion dating from 1870 the year of the Met's founding and the start of a decade that witnessed the development of a standardized time system to the present.



Surreal, by photographer David Bailey, 1980. Image credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo copyright: David Bailey

Object of the show

Most of the objects in the show will come from the Costume Institute's collection, including gifts made as part of the Met's 2020 Collections Initiative in celebration of the Museum's 150th anniversary.

The Met said the exhibition will conclude with a section on the future of fashion, linking the concept of duration to debates about longevity and sustainability.

"Fashion is indelibly connected to time," said Andrew Bolton, Wendy Yu curator in charge of the Costume Institute, in a statement.

"It not only reflects and represents the spirit of the times, but it also changes and develops with the times, serving as

an especially sensitive and accurate timepiece," he said.

A publication by Mr. Bolton will accompany the exhibition and feature a new short story by Michael Cunningham.

Inspired by Virginia Woolf's novels *Orlando* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, the story will recount a day in the life of a woman, while evoking a span of 150 years, a duration the reader understands through changes of clothes and circumstance, according to the Met.

THE EXHIBITION nicely ties in with Louis Vuitton's focus and leadership in fashion and the Met's increasingly bold attempts to tie the present with the past with corporate patronage.

It helps that the Met's anniversary is a convenient excuse.

"Through a series of chronologies, the exhibition will use the concept of duration to analyze the temporal twists and turns of fashion history," Mr. Bolton said.

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