

EVENTS/CAUSES

Jean Paul Gaultier creates multimedia exhibition to challenge fashion exhibit world

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

French fashion label Jean Paul Gaultier is looking to draw attention to itself by being the first brand to display a fashion exhibit in the Dallas Museum of Art.

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The exhibit, titled “The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk,” is the brand’s first presence in a museum. The exhibit comprises 130 ensembles from the brand's 35-year history and will be held Nov. 13 - Feb. 12 at the Dallas Museum of Art.

“By acknowledging the importance of fashion as design through hosting this exhibition, the Dallas Museum of Art is simply fulfilling its mission to bring to the public a broad spectrum of art in a variety of media,” said Kevin Tucker, coordinating curator for The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier and the Margot B. Perot Curator of decorative arts exhibition at the [Dallas Museum of Art](#), Dallas.

“We hope this will not only energize our existing audiences, but also bring new ones to the museum who will have the opportunity to see the Gaultier exhibition, as well as the museum's global collections and diverse exhibition program,” he said.

The Gaultier exhibit was organized by the [Montreal Museum of Fine Arts](#) and will travel from the Dallas Museum of Art to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Fundación Mapfre – Instituto de Cultura in Madrid and the Kunsthal Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

Material swirl

The avant-garde style of the label reflects an understanding of multicultural societal issues and looks to shake up established norms in fashion and society, according to the Dallas Museum of Art.

Indeed, the exhibit itself seems to follow the same theme.

Described as a multimedia installation, the exhibit includes six different sections such as “The Odyssey of Jean Paul Gaultier,” “The Boudoir,” “Skin Deep,” “Punk Cancan,” “Urban Jungle” and “Metropolis.”

Sketches, stage costumes and excerpts from fashion films, runway shows, concerts, videos, dance performances and television programs account for a majority of the exhibit.

The designer’s connection to music, film and dance is also portrayed through items such as corsets worn by Madonna during her 1990 tour.



Artwork from the likes of Andy Warhol, Erwin Wurm, Mario Testino, Steven Meisel and Inez van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin are also part of the fashion exhibit.

The exhibit also features 30 animated mannequins, one resembling Mr. Gaultier himself, which are displayed throughout the exhibit to surprise visitors with spontaneous commentary.

“For me, Gaultier's work, like that of Vivienne Westwood’s, celebrates life through a visceral kind of energy and a sense of spectacle that is full of unexpected sources of influence, thereby making it undeniably exciting and ideal for the Dallas Museum of Art's first major foray into the world of contemporary fashion,” Mr. Tucker said.

Display power

The talking mannequins reflect the brand’s innovative and often surprising style and help to differentiate this exhibit from the various other fashion displays that have taken off in museums worldwide.

Indeed, perhaps the most well-known display was this past summer’s Alexander McQueen exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum.

The Savage Beauty exhibit was the most-visited among the exhibitions curated by the Met's Costume Institute since its inception in 1946 and drew in 23,000 new members to the Met during its three-month run ([see story](#)).

Additionally, Louis Vuitton held a museum exhibit dedicated to its luggage pieces in China that helped to explain the brand's history to the area's emerging consumers ([see story](#)).

Other brands have gone a different route and created their own museums entirely.

For example, Gucci ended its year-long 90th anniversary celebration with the opening of a branded museum in the Palazzo della Mercanzia located in Italy ([see story](#)).



Experts believe that by using a museum-like experience to showcase luxury goods, brands are using museums to emphasize notoriety and quality assurance ([see story](#)).

“I expect there are equally as many museum curators and directors looking at the success of recent exhibitions of fashion,” Mr. Tucker said. “For fashion designers, it offers them further exposure for their work and the imprimatur of the museum's program.

“For museums, it presents a great opportunity to engage the public in what is immediate, personal and visually provocative in the realm of contemporary fashion,” he said.

Final Take

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