



Two models are seen from the Costume Institute exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, during "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty" press preview May 2, 2011, in New York. The exhibition celebrates the late Mr. McQueen's extraordinary contributions to fashion. "Savage Beauty" featured approximately 100 ensembles and 70 accessories from Mr. McQueen's prolific 19-year career. By Paola MESSANA

Back to the Future

In the crazy world of fashion, there is a gargantuan appetite for fashion-focused exhibitions right now and they have proved hugely popular. *TQatar* explores the work of fashion designers and couturiers reaping the benefits of being recognized as art.

BY ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE

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house's nine designers, Stella McCartney and Phoebe Philo among them. "Paris Haute Couture showing at the Musee Galliera, Paris until July is for the first time ever exhibiting a hundred haute couture pieces by such design luminaries as Poiret, Lanvin, Balenciaga, Givenchy, Gres, Lacroix, Alaia, to name a few. The retrospective is supported by Swarovski whose crystals adorned many a Worth creation in 1900.

Is this new obsession a money-spinning marketing tool? Christian Dior CEO Sidney Toledano told *Vogue*: "Customers look for more today, they want to hear about the brand history - they need to understand more." "Dior: 60 years of Parisian Chic," which ran until April was a homage to Monsieur Dior. The pop-up exhibition at Harrods, which cashed in over GBP 100,000 on its first day, featured a giant dolls house, furniture made from Dior fragrance bottles and a journey through the history of the brand via vintage outfits worn by Elizabeth Taylor, Princess Diana and Audrey Hepburn.

"It's very different from cheap marketing sponsorship which goes against art," says Jean-Louis Froment, art director at Chanel. He has just finished curating Chanel's *Le Train Bleu* exhibition held in March in Guangzhou following showings in Beijing and Shanghai. Culture Chanel No.5 then shows until June at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris exploring the legend of the fragrance that was launched 92 years ago. These ran hot on the heels of the "Chanel Little Black Jacket" exhibition that was explored by Karl Lagerfeld and stylist extraordinaire Carine Roitfeld at the Saatchi Gallery in Autumn 2012. Not to be outdone, following showings in Tokyo, New York, Taipei and Hong Kong, Giorgio Armani celebrated the fifth anniversary of opening Armani/Ginza Tower in Tokyo with his exhibition *Eccentrico*. He wanted to "pay tribute to my love of Japanese culture and aesthetics, which have often inspired me in my work."

But an exhibition at the Met until the end of May explores the inextricable links between fashion and art with *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*. This vital relationship between fashion and art is highlighted from the mid-1860s to the mid-1880s, when Paris was the style capital of the world, off the peg clothes were conceived and there was a proliferation of fashion magazines. As the Met puts it, "those at the forefront of the avant-garde-from Manet, Monet, and Renoir to Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Zola-turned a fresh eye to contemporary dress, embracing *la mode* as the harbinger of *la modernité*."

The question is, are catwalk shows and advertising campaigns no longer enough for fashion houses to keep customers and gain new ones? Impressionist painter Edouard Manet has the last word when he said in 1881, "the latest fashion is absolutely necessary for a painting. It's what matters most." He was famously the only impressionist painter to use black in his paintings - fashion's most enduring shade.



American pop star Madonna displays the outfit, designed by French Jean-Paul Gaultier as she leaves the Cannes Festival Palace after the screening of her movie "In Bed with Madonna", 13 May 1991 in Cannes.

From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk exhibition to London's Barbican in April 2014. Madonna's conical corsets from the 1990 *Blonde Ambition* tour and those worn by Kylie Minogue and Dita Von Teese will be among more than 140 couture and ready-to-wear pieces.

"Maybe future hope does, in fact, lie with exhibitions," fashion historian Colin

McDowell writes in *The Business of Fashion*. "Despite exaggerated claims for its importance, the fact is that fashion itself is of little interest to most women in the world and hardly exists as a concept at all for most men."

The notoriously closed world

of fashion is opening up through digitisation, live streaming of shows and talented fashion bloggers.

Exhibitions go a step further in debunking fashion's myth. "Valentino: Master of Couture," this March at Somerset House in London enabled visitors to walk the catwalk in front of an audience of Valentino-clad mannequins but more importantly witness the master's craft of couture gown detail dating from the Fifties. Marking the house's 60th anniversary last year Chloe Attitudes held at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, unearthed its archive to display dresses by the

The "Tokyo-Pop" bodysuit worn by musician and actor David Bowie on the "Aladdin Sane" tour is displayed at the "David Bowie is" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) museum in central London on March 20, 2013.
PHOTO/Leon Neal



A collection of corsets with paintings by Edouard Manet (left, center and rear) and Aguste Renoir (rear) in the exhibition "Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity" February 19, 2013 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. AFP PHOTO/Stan HONDA



BREAKING ALL RECORDS as the most-visited show ever, organized by the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2011, was "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty," which celebrated the exceptional contribution to fashion by the late designer. The show ran a week longer than planned and had the Met's biggest grossing opening day ever. The following year, the retrospective 20 Years of Christian Louboutin broke records at the Design Museum in London averaging 910 daily visitors - the highest ever for the museum.

In the wake of the 40th anniversary of Bowie's Ziggy Stardust album, the exhibition David Bowie Is at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, his first-ever retrospective, broke records before even launching, by selling 26,000 tickets, the highest ever in advance bookings for the museum. Featuring a feast of fashion and music that still influences today, and sponsored by fashion house Gucci, iconic pieces are displayed such as the Kansai Yamamoto-designed Ziggy Stardust bodysuit from 1971 and the McQueen-designed Union Jack coat of 1997 for the Earthlings album cover. His then wife, Angie Bowie told US *Vogue*, "It was July 1973... The concept was the beginning of glam rock.... shiny velour bomber jackets with Stirling Cooper trousers in blue, pink, and gold.... platform boots and makeup."

Talking of glam rock, the Tate in Liverpool is showing "Glam! The Performance of Style" until May and happily delving into the genealogy of the 1971-75 movement explored in all its glorious mirror balls and strobe and stage lighting to a soundtrack of Bowie via fashion spreads and a focus on the most famous fashion outlet at the time, Barbara Hulanicki's Biba in High Street Kensington. Noddy Holder from the band Slade remembers to the *Guardian*, "Look at Lady Gaga and Paloma Faith, they're glam rock all over again."

That was the prelude to punk on which The Met is hosting "PUNK: Chaos to Couture," until August this year. Vivienne Westwood, the pioneer of punk with Malcolm McLaren, obviously features, so do her "disciples" McQueen, Galliano and Gaultier. Punk's influence on ready-to-wear and even haute couture is explored via original garments from the seventies until now.

In their heyday, the theatricals of designers such as McQueen and Galliano unfailingly held their fashion audiences enthralled at their shows. Putting such clothes in an exhibition draws a wider public who can engage with the pieces, learn their references and history and appreciate the craftsmanship and detail involved. In the same vein, Gaultier will bring the "Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier:"



A Union Jack coat designed by Alexander McQueen and worn by musician David Bowie is displayed at the "David Bowie is" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) museum in central London on March 20, 2013. Running March 23 to August 11. AFP PHOTO/Leon Neal