

# PRESS RELEASE

DRESS, FASHION AND TEXTILES



## OPENING SEPTEMBER 25, *CHRISTIAN DIOR* BRINGS HAUTE COUTURE TO THE McCORD MUSEUM

**Montreal, September 22, 2020** – The McCord Museum will host the travelling exhibition *Christian Dior* on its only Quebec stop, from September 25, 2020, to January 3, 2021. Presented by Holt Renfrew Ogilvy and produced by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, this major exhibition covers the period from the launch of the House of Christian Dior in 1947 until his death in 1957. It offers a captivating look into the creative process and inner workings of the leading Paris haute couture during the 1950s. The iconic lines of the «New Look,» along with the luxury textiles and romantic embroideries that made Dior’s reputation, are presented in an elegant, glamorous setting. In addition, various complementary cultural activities enhance the visitor experience.

From sumptuous day wear to elegant afternoon dresses and ball gowns, the exhibition invites visitors to discover the exquisite artistry, intricate detail and inspired luxury designs made by the key figure of the golden age of haute couture. Dior’s style, which featured enormous full skirts and ultra-feminine corseted silhouettes, quickly made his reputation. His fashions were desired, worn, and even copied by women around the world.

«Following *Eleganza: Italian Fashion From 1945 to Today* and *Balenciaga, Master of Couture*, we are thrilled to present *Christian Dior*, an homage to the brilliant couturier who revolutionized postwar fashion. Produced by the Royal Ontario Museum, this exhibition is in line with our vocation as a museum for fashion and provides an opportunity to showcase the most beautiful Dior dresses from our Dress, Fashion and Textiles collection. We are also using the exhibition to create a dialogue with the public by organizing various online events about fashion and Christian Dior,» notes Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum.

Laid out in seven distinct thematic zones, the exhibition presents extraordinary outfits and numerous objects that enable visitors to explore every step of the creative process, from the sketch to the final dress. After introducing the designer and his fashion house, the journey begins with a look at the haute couture ateliers, where the various stages of creating a garment are illustrated in drawings, photographs and patterns. This is followed by three zones devoted, in turn, to daytime ensembles, late afternoon dress, and evening wear. The final zones are dedicated to the craftspeople who worked with Dior and another to all the accessories designed by the couturier, shoes and jewellery, and perfumes loaned by the Dior Héritage Paris archival collection.

«Dior’s impact on the silhouette of the late 1940s and 1950s was unprecedented, and the cut of his garments and their craftsmanship were exquisite. Each garment tells the story of a creative process inspired by yards of luxury fabric and a wealth of expertise. This exhibition provides an exceptional opportunity see the work of this renowned couture house up close and relive a pivotal decade in fashion,» adds Cynthia Cooper, Head, Collections and Research, and Curator, Dress, Fashion and Textiles.

The exhibition features some 51 garments, including 40 from the extensive fonds of Christian Dior couture in the Royal Ontario Museum's (ROM) permanent collection and 11 dresses from the McCord Museum's Dress, Fashion and Textiles collection, along with one hundred or so objects, photographs and videos from the era chronicling the peerless expertise of Paris haute couture in the 1950s, an industry whose reputation was revived post World War II by the House of Christian Dior. Among the garments on display are four dresses that belonged to Margaret Rawlings Hart (1910-2007), a Montrealer with a keen appreciation for Dior creations. These exquisite outfits recall Montreal's role as a fashion hub during the postwar period and the tremendous popularity of the Dior brand from the moment it appeared in the city. In fact, in the early 1950s, Holt Renfrew negotiated an exclusive license for the Canadian market that enabled it to produce House of Dior models in its Montreal workshops.

«Christian Dior's revolutionary fashions captured the excitement of postwar modernity and have stood the test of time,» says Josh Basseches, ROM Director & CEO. «Few people have had as great an influence on shaping the modern aesthetic as Christian Dior. His standing among contemporary fashion designers remains central to this day. We are pleased to offer Montreal audiences a rich and stimulating exhibition featuring such an iconic creative force.»

## DIOR, FROM SKETCHES TO DRESSES: MADE BY HELMER JOSEPH

To mark the occasion, the Museum offered an established Montreal designer the unusual assignment of recreating period designs from the House of Dior. Having original House of Dior patterns from the late 1950s in its possession, the Museum called on the exceptional expertise of Helmer Joseph, commissioning him to execute three gowns in the haute couture tradition, using period techniques and similar materials.

For over 20 years, Haitian-born Montreal designer Helmer Joseph was trained and honed his expertise in the French haute couture tradition. He has filled a variety of roles in the profession, working on contract for houses like Louis Vuitton, Dior and Chloé. He is very well versed in the techniques and expertise of the major fashion houses. This project was an ideal opportunity to revive this highly specialized expertise and document the process of creating these unique models. One dress and three muslin toiles will be on display at the Museum from September 25 to early November.

This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of donors Pascale Bourbeau, Bitá Cattelan and Patricia Saputo. The Museum would also like to thank the ESG-UQAM École supérieure de mode, Sergio Veranes Studio and Textiles Couture Elle.



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## MUST-SEE ACTIVITIES

A number of cultural activities are being organized for visitors and fashion lovers. To enable as many people as possible to participate, some will be available both on-site and online.

On Wednesday, September 30, at 6 p.m., *Fashion from all perspectives - Access to luxury*, a conversation with Never Was Average, a group of culture shifters and facilitators, will raise different questions on the role of luxury in the midst of the current social and economic crisis. Online only, limited places.

The International Festival of Films on Art (FIFA) and the McCord Museum are joining forces once again to present a program of documentaries about Christian Dior and fashion.

- *Christian Dior: The Man Behind the Myth* (in French), by Philippe Lanfranchi, October 3, at 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- *The Drawings of Christian Dior* (in French), by Loïc Prigent, October 10, at 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- *Bouquet final*, (in French), by Erwan Augoyard and Sophie Kovess-Brun, October 17, 1:30 p.m.

On Wednesday, October 28, at 6 p.m., at the Museum and online, *Creative Streak: Creator and Material*, a panel discussion about the ways in which luxury textiles influence the work of fashion creators, will feature designers Helmer Joseph and Elisa C. Rossow, along with moderator Stéphane Le Duc, editor-at-large of Dress to KILL magazine and lecturer at the ESG-UQAM École supérieure de mode.

In addition, two virtual talks will be presented in November:

- *Conversation with Vincent Leret*, Director of Heritage at Parfums Christian Dior, a virtual lecture on Wednesday, November 18, 12 p.m.
- *Conversation with Dr. Alexandra Palmer*, Nora E. Vaughan Senior Curator, Global Fashion & Textiles, at the ROM, virtual lecture on Wednesday, November 25, 12 p.m.

Lastly, the Museum is offering interactive tours of the exhibition. Mediators will lead private, 30 minute guided tours for 2 to 6 people from the same household, offering insights into Christian Dior and the world of haute couture. Participants must reserve their tours online, in advance.

For more details on all activities, please visit the McCord [Website](#).



Fashion from all perspectives: Access to luxury  
Photographer: Schaël Marcéus | Ideation: Tania Doumbe Fines and Hanna Che |  
Graphic designer: Paula Youwakim



Christian Dior: The Man Behind the Myth



Name: *Palmyre*  
Line: Profilée Autumn-Winter 1952  
Occasion: Evening dress  
Atelier flou: Simone  
Mannequin: Alla  
Textiles: Celanese acetate satin by Robert Perrier; 35 various gold thread, beads, Swarovski crystals, embroidery by Ginisty et Quénonlle  
ROM 970.286.3  
Gift of Mrs. M. James Boylen  
Photograph by Laziz Hamani



Name: *Delphine*  
Line: Aimant Autumn-Winter 1956  
Occasion: Cocktail dress  
Textiles: Silk gros de tours, silk faille  
ROM 961.87.3  
Gift of Mrs. Harry Davidson  
Photograph by Laziz Hamani

## OPENING HOURS AND ADMISSION FEES

Due to current safety measures, the number of visitors inside the Museum at any time is limited. It is recommended that visitors purchase their tickets in advance through the Museum's virtual Admission Desk.

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### Admission

Adults: \$19 | Seniors: \$17 | Students (ages 13-30): \$14 | 12 and under: Free | Indigenous people: Free  
Wednesday evenings: Free (\$9.50 for big temporary exhibitions)  
First Sunday of the month: free for Quebec residents.

*The McCord Museum sincerely thanks BMO Financial Group for free admission on Wednesday evenings and the J. A. DeSève Foundation for free admission for children 12 and under.*

## COVID-19: NEW MEASURES FOR A SAFE VISIT

The Museum adheres to strict hygiene measures to ensure a safe and pleasant visitor experience. For more information on the safety measures in place, please visit the Museum's [Website](#).

## McCord Museum, A Museum of Fashion

The McCord Museum holds the largest collection of Canadian garments and accessories. Its Dress, Fashion and Textiles collection consists of over 20,000 items made or worn in Canada over the past three centuries. The custodian of many examples of mid-20th century high fashion by Montreal, Canadian and international designers and couturiers, the McCord preserves the heritage of the development of Montreal's apparel industry and retail clothing sector. In the fall of 2019, the McCord Museum launched EncycloFashionQC, a unique online reference tool providing access to over 500 entries documenting who's who in the Quebec fashion industry, from the 19th century to today.

## ABOUT THE McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is the museum of all Montrealers, a social history museum that celebrates life in Montreal, both past and present—its history, its people, and its communities. Open to the city and the world, the Museum presents exciting exhibitions, educational programming and cultural activities that offer a contemporary perspective on history, engaging visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It is home to over 1.5 million artefacts, comprising one of the largest historical collections in North America, organized into the following departments: Dress, Fashion and Textiles; Photography; Indigenous Cultures; Documentary Art; Material Culture; and Archives.

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Interviews possible with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and Cynthia Cooper, Head, Collections and Research, and Curator, Dress, Fashion and Textiles.

### PRESS KIT

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