

# About Time

Inside the Met's Latest Exhibit



In honor of the museum's 150th Anniversary, "About Time: Duration and Fashion," examines the cyclical nature of fashion.

By Niamh Molumby

An 1895 dinner dress (left) and a 2004 Comme des Garçons outfit (right) (The Costume Institute/The Met, 2020)

A silk 1895 dinner dress with large, puffed leg-o'-mutton sleeves is paired with a similarly silhouetted Comme des Garçons ensemble with a deconstructed bodice from 2004. A drapery 1928 evening dress shines next to a spider web-covered John Galliano dress from 1997. Dior's famous "Bar Suit" from his "New Look" from 1947 stands beside a Junya Watanabe leather jacket from 2011, both with a similar hourglass silhouette. All of these garments show us how fashion has changed through the last century and a half, and how it's stayed the same.

"About Time: Fashion and Duration," the latest exhibit from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, is a fitting celebration of the cultural landmark's 150 years of operation. "The 1870s, the decade of The Met's formation, witnessed major developments in the global standardization of time that, like the culture of fashion, became inseparable from the ideology of modernity," the exhibit's online description states. "Fashion is indelibly connected to

time—it not only reflects and represents the spirit of the times but also changes and develops with the times, serving as an especially sensitive timepiece."

The exhibit has two adjacent displays fashioned around clock faces on the floor. Each "minute" on the clock represents a time in fashion, with a pair of garments on display. The first garment exists within a chronological timeline, while the second is a "disruption," a garment that mimics

the style of a previous time while existing within its own. All of the clothes on display are either black or white, emphasizing their silhouettes and the eras they either represent or harken back to. The sole exception to this two-way timeline, a white, upcycled Viktor & Rolf dress from spring/summer 2020, represents our future in fashion. The words of writer Virginia Woolf “ghost narrates” the exhibit.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors must reserve a ticket and time slot to see the exhibit, and only 25 percent of capacity will be allowed in at a time. Additionally, this exhibit debuts without an accompanying Met Gala. However, in some ways this is relevant to its message.



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“It also offers a chance to reflect how fashion, art and culture can inspire and inform, as well as make connections across cultures and times — notions that take on new urgencies in these uncertain times,”

says director Max Hollein.

While the last few months have altered our perception of time, and our futures seem uncertain, looking at the past for answers may seem

## A Look Back

While the Met goes back in time with fashion, let's do the same with some of their past exhibits.

2019/2020



In Pursuit of Fashion:  
The Sandy Schreier  
Collection

2019



Camp:  
Notes on Fashion

2018



Heavenly Bodies:  
Fashion and the  
Catholic Imagination