



News Release

Couture gowns worn by Princess Margaret, Margot Fonteyn and Jennifer Lawrence go on display at the V&A for largest ever Christian Dior exhibition in the UK

Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams

Supported by SWAROVSKI

With further support from American Express

The Sainsbury Gallery

2 February – 14 July 2019

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“There is no other country in the world, besides my own, whose way of life I like so much. I love English traditions, English politeness, English architecture. I even love English cooking.”

Christian Dior



The V&A opens the largest and most comprehensive exhibition ever staged in the UK on the House of Dior – the museum’s biggest fashion exhibition since *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* in 2015. From 1947 to the present day, *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* traces the history and impact of one of the 20th century’s most influential couturiers, and the six artistic directors who have succeeded him, to explore the enduring influence of the fashion house.

Based on the major exhibition *Christian Dior: Couturier du Rêve*, organised by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, the exhibition is reimagined for the V&A. A brand-new section explores, for the first time, the designer’s fascination with British culture. Dior admired the grandeur of the great houses and gardens of Britain, as well as British-designed ocean liners, including the Queen Mary. He also had a preference for Savile Row suits. His first UK fashion show took place at London’s Savoy Hotel, and in 1952 he established Christian Dior London.

The exhibition investigates Dior’s creative collaborations with British manufacturers, including Dents (gloves), Rayne (shoes) Lyle & Scott (knitwear) and Mitchel Maer (costume jewellery). It also focuses on his most notable early British clients, from author Nancy Mitford to ballet dancer Margot Fonteyn. A highlight is the Christian Dior dress worn by Princess Margaret for her 21st birthday celebrations, on loan from the Museum of London following conservation work. The exhibition also brings to life Dior’s spectacular fashion shows staged in the UK’s most luxurious stately homes, including Blenheim Palace in 1954, of which several ensembles are now in the V&A’s collection.

Drawn from the extensive Dior Archives, the exhibition presents over 500 objects, with over 200 rare Haute Couture garments shown alongside accessories, fashion photography, film, vintage perfume, original make-up, illustrations, magazines, and Christian Dior's personal possessions. It also showcases highlights from the V&A's world-class Couture collections, including the iconic *Bar Suit*, gifted to the museum by the House of Dior in 1960 with the help of Cecil Beaton.

The exhibition highlights Christian Dior's total design vision, encompassing garments, accessories and fragrances. Flowers are emblematic of the Couture House and have inspired silhouettes, embroidery and prints, but also the launch of Miss Dior in 1947, the first fragrance created alongside the very first show.

From horticulture to global travel and historicism, the show reveals the sources of inspiration that defined the House of Dior's aesthetic. From the daring designs of Yves Saint Laurent to the rational style of Marc Bohan, the flamboyance of Gianfranco Ferré, the exuberance of John Galiano, the minimalism of Raf Simons, and Maria Grazia Chiuri's feminist vision of fashion, the exhibition shows how each successive artistic director has stayed true to Dior's vision of Haute Couture, while bringing their own creative sensibilities to the House.

Oriole Cullen, Fashion and Textiles Curator at the V&A, said: "In 1947, Christian Dior changed the face of fashion with his *New Look*, which redefined the female silhouette and reinvigorated the post-War Parisian fashion industry. The V&A recognised Dior's important contribution to design history early-on in his career, acquiring his sketches and garments from the 1950s onwards. The influence of Christian Dior's design was all-pervasive and helped to define an era. In their own individual ways, each of the House's successive artistic directors have referenced and reinterpreted Dior's own designs and continued the legacy of the founder, ensuring that the House of Christian Dior is at the forefront of fashion today. More than seventy years after its founding, the V&A's exhibition celebrates the enduring influence of the House of Dior and reveals new research about Dior's relationship with Britain."

Nadja Swarovski, Member of the Swarovski Executive Board, said: "We are delighted to support the V&A's staging of this spectacular Dior exhibition, following our support for the shows in Paris and Denver, Colorado. The histories of Swarovski and Dior have been intertwined since the 1950s, when my grandfather worked alongside Monsieur Dior himself to develop the Aurora Borealis crystal. It is wonderful to honor the incredible heritage of the House of Dior and to celebrate its enduring influence, which is beautifully captured in this breathtaking show."

Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams brings to the V&A an in-depth and wide-ranging study of the unique Haute Couture garments since 1947. Across 11 sections, the exhibition showcases the exquisite skill and craftsmanship of the ateliers and successive designers from the House of Dior:

- ***Christian Dior*** offers an extended biography on Christian Dior (1905–57), from family life to his early career as a gallery owner and the founding of the House of Dior in 1946. It encompasses Dior's extensive travel, the global success of his Couture House and the development of Dior perfumes.

- **The New Look** focuses on Dior's famed *Bar Suit* from his ground-breaking first collection in 1947 and considers how subsequent Dior designers have reinterpreted it over the years.
- **The Dior Line** showcases ten defining looks made between 1947 and 1957, Christian Dior's own tenure at the House.
- **Dior in Britain** uncovers Christian Dior's personal love of England and his British client's reciprocal love for his fashion. Focusing mostly on Dior's lifetime, it highlights early Dior fashion shows staged in country houses and grand hotels around Britain, the Dior London company and British clients.
- **Historicism** examines the influence of historic dress and decorative arts in the House of Dior's designs from 1947 to today, encompassing Dior's love of the 18th century, and the Belle Époque fashions worn by his mother, Madeleine Dior.
- **Travels** explores how travel and different countries and cultures have consistently inspired the various designers at the House of Dior.
- **The Garden** highlights the importance of flowers and gardens as a source of inspiration to the House, from garments to perfume.
- **Designers for Dior** spotlights the work of the subsequent six key artistic directors since Christian Dior's death in 1957.
- **The Ateliers** showcases toiles from the Dior Ateliers in a stunning 'cabinet of curiosity' style installation.
- **Diorama** examines the breadth of the House of Dior, from accessories including costume jewellery, hats, shoes and bags, to illustrations, miniature dresses and archive lipstick and perfume, bottles, collected in a kaleidoscopic display. This section spotlights the key creative partners of the House from the past 70 years, including Roger Vivier, Stephen Jones, René Gruau, Serge Lutens and Swarovski, Christian Dior's first choice for crystals to embellish his creations.
- **The Ballroom** celebrates the fantasy of the Ball, evoking the lavish interiors of the great houses of Britain. Showcasing 70 years of stunning formal evening wear, this section reveals the incredible skill of the Haute Couture ateliers.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* runs from 2 February – 14 July 2019. Tickets from £20. All concessions: £15.
- The exhibition is based on *Christian Dior: Couturier du Rêve*, organised by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, curated by Olivier Gabet and Florence Müller.
- The exhibition has been curated for the V&A by Oriole Cullen and is accompanied by a new V&A publication.
- The exhibition designer is Nathalie Crinière.
- *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* is the latest in the V&A's series of major fashion exhibitions, including *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*; *The Glamour of Italian Fashion: 1945-2014*; *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-1957*. In 2017, the V&A staged a retrospective on Cristóbal Balenciaga, and in 2018 the V&A opened *Fashioned From Nature* – the first UK exhibition to explore the complex relationship between fashion and nature from 1600 to the present day.
- The V&A's fashion collection is designated as the UK's National Collection and is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of dress in the world.

Social Media

Twitter: @Dior @V_and_A

Instagram: @Dior @vamuseum

Facebook: @Dior @victoriaandalbertmuseum

For further PRESS information about *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* please contact Laura Mitchell on l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 4509 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

About Swarovski

Swarovski delivers a diverse portfolio of unmatched quality, craftsmanship, and creativity. Founded in 1895 in Austria, the company designs, manufactures and markets high-quality crystals, genuine gemstones and created stones as well as finished products such as jewellery, accessories and lighting. The Swarovski Crystal Business is run by the fifth generation of family members and has a global reach with approximately 3,000 stores in around 170 countries, more than 27,000 employees, and revenue of about 2.7 billion euros in 2017. A responsible relationship with people and the planet is an integral part of Swarovski's heritage. The global Swarovski Waterschool education program has reached 500,000 children on the world's greatest rivers, and the Swarovski Foundation, set up in 2013, works to support culture and creativity, promote human empowerment, and conserve natural resources to achieve positive social impact.

Swarovski and Dior have a longstanding history of collaboration. In 1956, Swarovski worked with Monsieur Dior to create a unique crystal with rainbow-like effects called Aurora Borealis. Since then, the partnership has grown ever stronger, with each of Dior's artistic directors using Swarovski crystals to realize their vision.

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