

Media information

For immediate use

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Hartnell to Amies Couture By Royal Appointment

16 November 2012 – 23 February 2013

- **Fashion and Textile Museum celebrates the impact of royal celebrity on 20th century British fashion**
- **A major retrospective of London couture design by Norman Hartnell, Hardy Amies, and Frederick Fox**
- **Features exceptional examples of British couture rarely seen in public before**

'Hartnell to Amies: Couture By Royal Appointment' celebrates the timeless elegance of London couture and explores how the Queen's patronage of ground-breaking British designers helped to establish London as an international fashion centre after the Second World War.

Whilst the English have been renowned for their tailoring since the 18th century, there was little typically British couture until Norman Hartnell opened in 1923. His elegant gowns attracted royal and aristocratic customers. Known for the design of the Queen's wedding dress in 1947 and Coronation Dress of 1953 – the iconic dress of the mid-twentieth century – Hartnell (1901–79) expressed the characteristics and the quality of British high fashion and set the standard for generations to come.

This exhibition begins with the opening of Norman Hartnell's first salon in 1923 and British high society's 'Bright Young Things', before discussing the advent of Hardy Amies (1909–2003) and Frederick Fox (1931–) amongst the leading couturiers of the post-war years and the fashionable world of London dress-making and millinery.

It explores Hartnell's long career, his landmark art-moderne House of 1935, war-time Utility designs and his well-known fashions of the 1950s and 1960s; particularly the glamorous and romantic eveningwear embellished by Hartnell's famous in-house embroiderers.

Sir Hardy Amies' career began as designer at Lachasse, noted for its tailored suits. He was in tune with Christian Dior's New Look, by 1951 Princess Elizabeth ordered from him, and as Queen Elizabeth II did so for the next five decades. Amies became a successful menswear designer in 1959 with the first recorded men's catwalk show. The clothes were fashionable and affordable, and the bespoke tradition continues today.

'Hartnell to Amies' also highlights the milliner's role in London couture through the work of Australian-born designer Frederick Fox; his most famous designs are the hats he created for Queen Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and many celebrities worldwide. The process and craft involved in hat-making will also be explored.

The exhibition ends with a discussion of the design house in the current fashion industry and the resurgence of British heritage brands, traditional tailoring and dressmaking.

Celia Joicey, Head of Fashion and Textile Museum, says:

'In the Jubilee year, we are delighted this exhibition celebrates the important role the Royal Family play in promoting British fashion: we hope it will introduce the work of Norman Hartnell, Hardy Amies, Frederick Fox and their contemporaries to a new generation.'

Dennis Nothdruff, Curator of Fashion and Textile Museum, says:

'The creativity and craftsmanship of these designers is breathtaking and deserving of contemporary attention. With over 50 examples from private lenders we will be featuring British couture rarely seen in public before.'

Michael Pick, Guest Curator of 'Hartnell to Amies' says:

'The consummate skills of Hartnell, Amies and Fox in dressmaking, tailoring and millinery – seen worldwide through the patronage of the Royal Family – helped to re-assert Britain's reputation as an international centre for fashion after the Second World War.'

Supported by Newham College of Further Education, the exhibition provides an opportunity to draw contemporary inspiration from the craft and construction techniques of these master designers. Furthermore, it will promote the pattern cutting, sewing and other tailoring skills practised by generations of craftspeople working in the British couture fashion industry.

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Notes to editors

1. The exhibition is organised by the Fashion and Textile Museum and curated by Dennis Nothdruff and Michael Pick. Exhibition dates 16th November – 23rd February 2013.
2. The Fashion and Textile Museum is at 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF. Exhibition opening times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm; Last admission 5.15pm. Ticket prices: £7 adults, £5 students and concessions, free entry for under 12s
3. The biography of *Hardy Amies* by Michael Pick (280 pages, ACC Editions, Nov 2012, ISBN: 9781851496754) will be available in the exhibition shop together with the monograph *Be Dazzled! Norman Hartnell*.
4. The Fashion and Textile Museum is the only museum in the UK solely dedicated to showcasing developments in contemporary fashion, as well as providing inspiration, support and training for those working in the industry. Founded by iconic British designer Zandra

Rhodes, the museum is owned by Newham College London – one of Europe's largest further education colleges.

5. **Michael Pick** is Guest Curator of 'Hartnell to Amies: Couture By Royal Appointment'. His many books include *Norman Hartnell: Sixty Years of Glamour* and he is currently writing an illustrated biography of Hardy Amies. He has written for *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *'Apollo*, *Tatler*, *Harpers & Queen*, and *British Vogue*, and is a former director of the famous antiques firm of Stair & Company.
6. **Dennis Nothdruff** is Curator of the Fashion and Textile Museum, where his exhibitions include 'Catwalk to Cover: A Front Row Seat', 'Foale and Tuffin Made in England' and 'Tommy Nutter: Rebel on the Row' which focused on the history of Savile Row and men's tailoring in the 1960s and 1970s.
7. The exhibition is accompanied by a display of Norman Parkinson's photographs of the London Society of Incorporated Designers, a selection of which is featured below. This display is made possible with the kind support of the Norman Parkinson Archive.

For further press information please contact: Alison Lowe, Press Officer, Felicitas Ltd, representing Fashion and Textile Museum, Tel: + 44 (0)20 7377 6030, Email: Alison@felicitas.co.uk

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Norman Hartnell



Norman Hartnell



Hardy Amies