

Media information

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KNITWEAR

CHANEL TO WESTWOOD

19 September 2014 – 18 January 2015

- **New exhibition of inspirational 20th century fashion knitwear**
- **A major retrospective including 1920s Chanel jersey, vintage woollen swimwear, post-war Hollywood-style knits, 1950s cocktail sweaters, 1960s crochet, 1970s Bill Gibb, 1980s Vivienne Westwood and 1990s Julien MacDonald**
- **The exhibition charts the influence of the art movements Pop, Punk and Deconstruction alongside new knitwear technologies and design innovation**

KNITWEAR Chanel to Westwood, the Fashion and Textile Museum's major autumn exhibition, presents over 150 inspirational knitwear pieces from the collection of Mark and Cleo Butterfield, on show to the public for the first time. Opening 19 September 2014, the exhibition presents highlights from designs by Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel and rare crocheted evening dresses from the 1930s to late 20th century innovations by Vivienne Westwood.

Head of the Fashion and Textile Museum, Celia Joicey said: *'Decade by decade, this incredible collection charts over 100 years of knitwear history. It is the first exhibition of its kind to explore not only key designers but also technical innovations in hand, machine and industrial knitting. Knitwear in fashion is often taken for granted, but this exhibition is an opportunity to celebrate knitwear centre stage and to inspire future design directions.'*

Curator of the Fashion and Textile Museum, Dennis Nothdruff said: *'Knitwear is imbued with narrative and memory. This exhibition is a way of accessing other people's stories, in particular the fashion sensibilities of collectors Mark and Cleo Butterfield through their iconic and personal pieces. Highlights include rare Chanel cardigan suits, 1930s swimwear, vibrant Missoni patterns and 1970s Bill Gibb as well as conceptual garments by Comme des Garçons, Vivienne Westwood and Julien MacDonald.'*

Exhibition structure

The exhibition begins by exploring the role knitting and crocheting played in the creation of functional garments, undergarments and accessories in the early 20th century. Women's attitudes to dress changed during World War One and, for the first time, knitted sportswear became an option for modern women who required clothing that was more flexible and chic.

Into the 1920s, the exhibition traces Chanel's introduction of stylish, practical clothing made from jersey, which was traditionally a machine knit fabric used

to make men's undergarments. Chanel's easy-wearing twinsets reflected the modernist styles coming out of Paris and her chic fashions influenced a generation of designers. Whilst the knitted day dress was popular during the 1920s and 1930s, as a practical and smart addition to a woman's wardrobe, knitted and crocheted evening dresses were also part of the glamorous, sophisticated eveningwear trend. Featuring metallic yarns, deco colouring and exotic details, these pieces represent the café society that grew up in Paris, London and New York.

Moving on to the Second World War and the era of 'make do and mend', clothing restrictions and rations meant that women had to find creative ways of recycling garments; sweaters were unravelled and the recycled yarn was then knitted into multi-colour jumpers that made a feature of the variety of wools used. By the 1940s, the influence of Hollywood stars saw knitting become more fashionable than functional with the cocktail sweater popular throughout the 1950s, a glamorous knit with a defined waist and embellishments such as embroidery and beading at the neck and shoulders.

The crocheted mini-dress or mini-skirted suit became a staple of the 1960s youth quake style, with patterns becoming available so that young women could create their own quite inexpensively. Fashion designers such as Rudi Gernreich and André Courrèges became leading avant-garde designers, embracing knit and jersey fabrics in their futuristic designs.

The novelty knit appeared in the 1970s featuring bright colours and kitsch motifs as popularised by Fiorucci and Kenzo. The 1970s were also a fertile era of fashion design, Ossie Clark, Biba, Rae Spencer Cullen for Miss Mouse, Bill Gibb and Mary Quant all used knitted fabric to great effect. Leading into the 1980s, when designer fashion exploded in a mix of alternative and high street brands, with Vivienne Westwood, Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons, Zandra Rhodes and Sonia Rykiel all creating unique and sophisticated knitwear collections.

The 1990s collections of Julien MacDonald challenged the idea of the knitted garment. His experimental use of unorthodox materials electrified fashion, leading to jobs with Chanel and Givenchy before the creation of his eponymous label.

The exhibition celebrates knitwear in fashion through the decades in the following key sections: A Functional Art; Freedom and Fashion; Les Sportives; Chanel's Influence; Glamorous Night; Stylish Everyday; Made Do and Mend; Knit American Style; Fashionable Folk; The Fair Isle; Cocktail Hour; Crochet Your Way; The Future Starts Here; The Novelty Factor; Designing the 1970s; 1980s Excess; Animal Rainbow; and, A New Era.

Visionary Knitwear – new directions

Fashion and Textile Museum, Mezzanine Gallery

Visionary Knitwear is a display of bold knitting designs from the 21st century, selected by Sandy Black, Professor of Fashion and Textile Design and Technology at London College of Fashion. Shown alongside 'KNITWEAR Chanel to Westwood', the exhibits will highlight the best of visionary knitwear, both on and off the catwalk, produced by designers who are influential throughout the fashion industry. The display acknowledges in particular the role of UK fashion education in their training.

Knitwear in Fashion Photography

Fashion and Textile Museum, Ground Floor Gallery

A selection of fashion photographs by Norman Parkinson from the Norman Parkinson Archive. This display charts the increasing prominence of knitwear in 20th century fashion with iconic images commissioned by magazines including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* and *Queen* as well as by knitwear companies.

Education programme

In a new partnership between the Fashion and Textile Museum and The Knitting and Stitching Show, the exhibition and displays will be supported by an exciting learning programme aimed at encouraging a range of audiences to engage with fashion knitwear.

Anna Baptiste, Marketing Manager of the Knitting and Stitching Show, said: *'The Knitting and Stitching Show is excited to partner with the Fashion and Textile Museum, particularly in celebration of their KNITWEAR IN FASHION exhibition this autumn. This collaboration brings the skills and passion of both organisations together, providing visitors with access to some of the best known designers, experts and processes in the world of textiles and fashion.'*

In September, a Teachers' Resource Pack will be launched at the Museum providing a sense of history and ideas for new techniques. In October, KNITWEAR curators Sandy Black and Dennis Nothdruff present a keynote lecture on the history of knitwear at The Knitting and Stitching Show in Alexandra Palace (8–12 October 2014) alongside a series of fashion workshops delivered by the Museum. Enthusiasts will also be offered the chance to win tickets to both events.

Notes to editors

1. The exhibition is organised by the Fashion and Textile Museum and curated by Dennis Nothdruff, Curator of the Fashion and Textile Museum, with Mark and Cleo Butterfield. The 'Visionary Knitwear – new directions' display is curated by Sandy Black, Professor of Fashion and Textile Design and Technology at London College of Fashion and the author of *Knitwear in Fashion* (Thames & Hudson) and *Knitting: Fashion, Industry, Craft* (V&A). 'Knitwear in Fashion Photography' is selected by Alex Anthony from the Norman Parkinson Archive.
2. Exhibition dates 19th September 2014 – 18th January 2015.
3. The Fashion and Textile Museum is at 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF. www.ftmlondon.org @FashionTextile
4. Exhibition opening times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm; Thursday until 8pm; Sunday until 5pm last admission 45 minutes prior to closing. Monday closed.
5. Ticket prices: £8.80 adults, £6.60 concessions, £5.50 students, inclusive of 10% donation. Under 12s are free Booking information: online or call **0844 248 5076**
6. 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. The Museum is located in the only building in Europe designed by award-winning Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta (1931–2011).

For further press information and images please contact:

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Exhibition images



l to r: Coco Chanel in striped knitted jersey, Alex Stewart Sasha, 1929 © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS. Sleeveless, side buttoned, heather grey knitted ensemble, US *Vogue*, February 1947 by Horst P. Horst © CORBIS / Condé Nast; Wenda Parkinson in a hand-knit cashmere twinset, *Vogue* 1951 © Norman Parkinson Ltd / Courtesy Norman Parkinson Archive



l to r: Early version of the twinset: Long loose cardigan with matching sweater, c.1922. Attributed to Chanel; Silk jersey knee-length duster coat, c.1919. Duster coats were typically cut large to protect the clothes underneath; 1970s Gold pleated disco top knitted in metallic yarn, designed by Diane Leslie; Images © Fashion and Textile Museum / C20 Vintage



l to r: Raquel Welch, 1967 by Norman Parkinson © Norman Parkinson Ltd / Courtesy Norman Parkinson Archive; Jerry Hall wearing Jap & Joseph, *Vogue*, 'Jamaica Blue', May 1975 © Norman Parkinson Ltd / Courtesy Norman Parkinson Archive; 1980s Body-con top by Pam Hogg in colour block panels of double jersey © Fashion and Textile Museum / C20 Vintage