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Images available upon request.

Yves Saint Laurent Retrospective Comes to the United States

DAM is the only U.S. venue for the exhibition highlighting the fashion icon’s entire career

(Denver, Colo.) – A dazzling overview of Yves Saint Laurent’s entire creative output is coming to the United States. The Denver Art Museum (DAM) and Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent present Yves Saint Laurent: The Retrospective, a complete overview of the designer’s 40 years of creativity on view March 25, 2012, through July 8, 2012. The DAM is the only U.S. venue for the exhibition. Combining photographs, drawings, films and other multimedia elements with a selection of 200 haute couture outfits, the exhibition creates an immersive environment for visitors to see firsthand the development of Saint Laurent’s style and the historical foundations of his work. Organized thematically, the multifaceted presentation melds design and art to explore the full arc of his career, from his first days at Dior in 1958 through the splendor of his final runway collection in 2002. Curated by Florence Müller and overseen by Pierre Bergé, Yves Saint Laurent premiered in Paris in 2010 at the Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, and will be on view in the Anschutz and Martin and McCormick galleries in DAM’s Hamilton Building.

“We’re thrilled to bring the stunning style and design of Saint Laurent to the United States,” said Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. “His designs revolutionized the fashion world just as the masters he drew inspiration from revolutionized the art world. This exhibition showcases the exquisite designs of an artist.”

During his 40 years of designing, Saint Laurent (1936–2008) transformed the female wardrobe by borrowing the tuxedo, the trouser suit, shorts and the safari jacket from men’s clothing, transferring these symbols of power from one gender to the other. He empowered women with this new form of clothing, turning traditional menswear into haute couture. He represented women’s evolving role in society ahead of any other designer, setting the hit styles of the day.

“This exhibition demonstrates the impact of Saint Laurent’s work on the history of fashion and the present-day relevance of his style,” said exhibition curator Florence Müller. “His creations achieved an ingenious symbiotic relationship between setting style and recognizing popular trends that made them not only wardrobe necessities, but also reflected women’s changing role in society.”

Drawing inspiration from the World War II era (Scandal Collection, 1971), his imaginary travels (Africa, China, India, Japan, Morocco, Spain and Russia) and his dialogue with art (Van Gogh, Matisse, Mondrian, Picasso and Tom Wesselmann, among others), Saint Laurent was forever turning fashion into celebration. He said, “My primary concern has always been respect for my craft, which is not exactly an art, but which depends on an artist for its existence.”

The development of the Saint Laurent style and the fundamentals of his oeuvre are presented in a visually rich and dramatic way that walks visitors through his life and designs.

Birth of a Revolutionary Couturier
The exhibition starts with a display of Saint Laurent’s designs for Dior, including the 1958 “Trapeze” collection. With this collection, Saint Laurent anticipated the freedom movement of the 1960s.

A Gender Revolution
In this section, visitors can see how Saint Laurent created a gender revolution by allowing women to express themselves freely, melding the flair of a man’s suit with the seductiveness of woman’s clothing.

Yves Saint Laurent and Women
Another area displays the clothing of the historic women who wore and supported Saint Laurent, including Betty Catroux, Catherine Deneuve, Loulou de la Falaise, Françoise Giroud, Princess Grace of Monaco, Nan Kempner, Paloma Picasso, Diana Vreeland and H.R.H. Duchess of Windsor.

Creating a Furore
Celebrating the revolutionary style Saint Laurent gave couture, a section is dedicated to his 1971 Scandal Collection which transported people back to the 1940s and a time of war and occupation. The press denounced but the customers adored this collection.

The Enchantment of the Exotic
In this area, the imaginary world of Saint Laurent is explored—especially a focus on his whimsical travels to China, India and Russia to create his collections using exotic materials, furs and feathers.

Dialogue with Artists and Writers
The art world takes center stage in a section that draws direct lines between the designer and the artists he admired. In 1965, Saint Laurent launched a collection inspired by Piet Mondrian, the early 20th century painter known for his distinctive style of lines and bold color combinations on flat surfaces. Mondrian’s work clearly inspired Saint Laurent in the first of many of the designer’s intersections with the art world.

The Last Ball
The magic of night and fashion is the focus of The Last Ball section, a succession of exquisite evening dresses from the glory days of haute couture.

Le Smoking
In this section, visitors are given a close look at 40 years of Saint Laurent creations through a wall of more than 30 tuxedos. The first ever “Le Smoking” (the French term for tuxedo) from 1966 faces a variety of other tuxedos, each representative of a fundamental work by Saint Laurent.

The Colors of Yves Saint Laurent
In this section, guests will move through the collision of colors Saint Laurent famously used in his designs with vibrant examples from his collections and hundreds of fabric samples.

This is a special ticketed exhibition. Tickets include an audio guide. DAM members have the first opportunity to purchase discounted tickets starting January 13, 2012. Tickets go on sale to the general public January 20, 2012. See the programming guide or www.denverartmuseum.org for ticket price details.

Yves Saint Laurent: The Retrospective is organized by the Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent in collaboration with the Denver Art Museum. Significant support is provided by Jana and Fred Bartlit, Mike Leprino Family Foundation, Neiman Marcus, Elisabeth and William Armstrong, Fine Arts Foundation, CBS Outdoor, and Grey Goose. Additional funding is provided by the citizens who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and the generous donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign. Promotional support is provided by 5280 Magazine, CBS4, and The Denver Post.

The Denver Art Museum is located on 13th Avenue between Broadway and Bannock Streets in downtown Denver. Open Tuesday–Thursday and Saturday–Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Friday 10 a.m.–8 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving and Christmas. A separate ticket is required for Yves Saint Laurent. For information in Spanish, call 720-913-0169. For more information, visit www.denverartmuseum.org or call 720-865-5000.

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