Thierry Mugler — Couturissime

Press release

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WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS
From September 30th, 2021 until April 24th, 2022, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris will present Thierry Mugler, Couturissime, initiated, produced and circulated by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) in 2019.

This major and unparalleled exhibition will retrace the work of Thierry Mugler, a singular artist who has revolutionized the worlds of fashion, haute couture and perfume throughout his distinguished career.

The stage offered by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs for Mugler’s exceptional creations will mark the return of this visionary artist to Paris, where his fame began nearly five decades ago. From ready-to-wear and haute couture silhouettes to stage costumes, photographs, films and unpublished archives dating from 1973 to 2014, Thierry Mugler, Couturissime will showcase the fascinating universe of this creator and his multiple collaborations in the fields of entertainment, music and cinema. Curated by Thierry-Maxime Loriot, a collective scenography with the MMFA will include digital performances by entertainment and audiovisual professionals.
The Musée des Arts Décoratifs is delighted to pay homage to this multidisciplinary icon. Far from a classic retrospective, *Thierry Mugler, Couturissime* will encapsulate the life and energy that defined the historic collaborations between Thierry Mugler and his creative alter-ego Manfred. The exhibition will be presented in the newly renovated Christine and Stephen A. Schwarzman Fashion Galleries of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. From the 1970’s until 2002 when Mugler turned the page on fashion, the creator established himself as one of the most daring and innovative couturiers of his time, creating silhouettes of remarkable potency often hailed as the embodiment of the 1980’s through the lens of fashion. In the 1990’s, Mugler galvanized the renaissance of *haute couture* through his bold collections and spectacular understanding of scenography, exemplified in his fashion shows and catwalks, which included the use of grandiose photography and the most iconic models of the day. The exhibition, organized in several acts like a classic opera, thematically blends costumes, animated projections, photographs and music, creating varying atmospheres that personify the numerous projects Mugler has championed since the end of the 1970’s. Displayed on two floors of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the exhibition’s opening aquatic theme evokes an eccentric world of fantasy-inspired *fauna* in which excess abounds, from the ocean’s surface to the depths of the sea. The following segment highlights two flamboyant silhouettes from Mugler’s *Insectes* Collection of 1997/1998 — futuristic silhouettes with high, piercing shoulders, plunging décolletés, and surreal hourglass waistlines. The first exhibited silhouette includes a black velvet sheath and train adorned with butterfly wings created by the Maison Lemarié, covered in iridescent scales and embroidered with crystals, costume diamonds, feathers and horsehair, all representative of the extravagance of Mugler’s *couture*. The second installation depicts Nymphs donning scalloped glass and shell bustiers alongside extravagant organza jellyfish evoking the imagery of Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The theme of Science Fiction succeeds the animal and aquatic kingdoms as animated super heroines, industrial design and futuristic automobiles become new sources of inspiration.
Surprising creatures, robots and chassis, all aerodynamic in their design, are wrought in innovative yet emblematic materials, foreseeing the evolution of transhumanism. Here, Mugler has cleverly proposed removable or “convertible” sleeves, “bumper” bustiers and “radiator” belts, transporting the visitor back to Mugler's Maschinenmensch (machine-human) Collection unveiled in 1995 for the 20th anniversary of the founding of his fashion house: a fully articulated robotic armor which required no less than six months of intensive preparation. Apart from fashion design, Thierry Mugler distinguished himself in the world of perfumes with the 1992 release of his scent “Angel,” an olfactory revolution that launched the trend of high-end perfumes, as demonstrated at the end of this segment of the exhibition, where aroma becomes synonymous with infinity and dreams.

From the end of the 1960’s, fashion photography asserted itself as an art form, replacing illustrations which had once reigned supreme. Beginning on the second floor, Thierry Mugler, Couturissime gives pride of place to this artistic medium with numerous rare prints signed by artists and photography greats including Guy Bourdin, Jean-Paul Goude, Karl Lagerfeld, Dominique Issermann, David LaChapelle, Luigi & Iango, Sarah Moon, Pierre et Gilles, Paolo Roversi, Herb Ritts and Ellen von Unwerth, while also highlighting the timeless collaboration between Thierry Mugler and photographer Helmut Newton. This room is dedicated to the photographic achievements of Mugler himself who, in 1976, began photographing his own visual campaigns, playing on the glamour and beauty of his muses, from Jerry Hall to Iman, in exotic locations such as Greenland, the Sahara Desert, and the rooftop of the Paris Opera House.
In the late 1970's, Mugler created his acclaimed “Glamazon,” a chic, modern, glamorous urban woman whose style was selected in direct opposition to the flower power, hippie fashions of the time. In black and white décor, Mugler’s crystal creations arouse the temptations of eroticism and fetishism, with exposed creations that combine latex and vinyl, subversive materials that Mugler elevated to the level of classics.

Music takes pride of place with George Michael’s song and music video “Too Funky,” which Mugler directed in 1991. The fashion ensembles for the video were worn throughout the 1990’s by top models of the day, including Eva Herzigova, Linda Evangelista, Emma Sjöberg, Estelle Lefebure, transgender model Connie Girl, and performers Joey Arias and Julie Newmar, the first “Catwoman.” It also pays tribute to the eight-time Oscar-winning American costume designer, Edith Head. Mugler’s catwalks launched the phenomenon of celebrities-as-models, inviting Hollywood celebrities such as Diana Ross, Tippi Hedren and Sharon Stone to participate as models, staging elaborate backgrounds and producing original soundtracks for their walks.

Finally, the exhibition showcases costumes designed by the artist for the stage, including works devised for the theatrical production of Macbeth presented by the Comédie-Française at the Festival d’Avignon in 1985. Mugler’s design for the character of the first witch, along with his original sketches displayed in life-sized proportions on the wall and a multimedia installation by Michel Lemieux (4D Art), are just a few examples of the designs intended to transport the visitor back to this tragic Shakespearean world.

Thierry Mugler, Couturissime is an opportunity to discover and rediscover the brilliance of this artist, and in turn, dancer, man of the stage, photographer and designer – an artist who marked his time by revolutionizing the world of fashion through his creations with sculptural morphologies that are both futuristic and elegant. Mugler’s distinctive style transcends fashion, having influenced generations of artists to this very day.
Useful information

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— Thanks
Maison Mugler for the restoration of the haute couture heritage presented

Partners of the international tour:
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Open Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am–6 pm
→ general entrance fee: €14
→ reduced entrance fee: €10
→ free admission for under 26

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