



Wedding Dresses 1775-2014

3 May 2014 – 15 March 2015 (Media preview: 30 April 2014)

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The V&A's spring 2014 exhibition will trace the development of the fashionable white wedding dress and its interpretation by leading couturiers and designers, offering a panorama of fashion over the last two centuries.

Wedding Dresses 1775-2014 will feature over 80 of the most romantic, glamorous and extravagant wedding outfits from the V&A's collection. It will include important new acquisitions as well as loans such as the embroidered silk coat design by Anna Valentine and worn by The Duchess of Cornwall for the blessing after her marriage to HRH The Prince of Wales (2005), the purple Vivienne Westwood dress chosen by Dita Von Teese (2005) and the Dior outfits worn by Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale on their wedding day (2002).

Displayed chronologically over two floors, the exhibition will focus on bridal wear. Most of the outfits were worn in Britain, by brides of many faiths. Alongside the dresses will be accessories including jewellery, shoes, garters, veils, wreaths, hats and corsetry as well as fashion sketches and personal photographs. Garments worn by bridegrooms and attendants will also be on display. The exhibition will investigate the histories of the garments, revealing fascinating and personal details about the lives of the wearers, giving an intimate insight into their occupations, circumstances and fashion choices.

The opening section of the exhibition will feature some of the earliest examples of wedding fashion including a silk satin court dress (1775) and a 'polonaise' style brocade gown with straw bergère hat (1780) lent by the Chertsey Museum. The preference for white in the 19th century will be demonstrated by a white muslin wedding dress decorated with flowers, leaves and berries (1807) recently acquired by the V&A, and a wedding outfit embellished with pearl beads design by Charles Frederick Worth (1880). As the 19th century drew to a close historical costume influenced fashion. A fine example will be a copy of a Paris model designed by Paquin Lalanne et Cie made by Stern Brothers of New York (1890) for an American bride.

Designs from the 1920s and 1930s will illustrate the glamour of bridal wear which was now influenced by evening fashions, dresses were slim-hipped and made from richly beaded textured fabrics and slinky bias-cut satin. During the Second World War when clothing restrictions were introduced, brides needed to make imaginative and practical fashion choices. They used non-rationed fabrics such as upholstery materials, net curtaining and parachute silk, or married in a smart day dress or service uniform. On display will be a buttercup patterned dress made in light-weight upholstery fabric by London dressmaker Ella Dolling (1941).

Wedding Dresses 1775-2014 will also explore the growth of the wedding industry and the effect of increasing media focus on wedding fashions. Improvements in photography in the early 20th century encouraged photojournalism and society weddings were reported in detail in the national press and gossip columns. Two of the most spectacular wedding dresses on show will be the Norman Hartnell dress made for Margaret Whigham (later Duchess of Argyll) for her marriage to Charles Sweeny (1933), and the Charles James ivory silk satin dress worn by Barbara 'Baba' Beaton for her marriage to Alec Hambro (1934). These dramatic dresses will be seen alongside archive film and news clippings of the occasions as examples of society 'celebrity' weddings.

The mezzanine level will feature wedding garments from 1960 to 2014, taking the exhibition right up to date with Spring/Summer 2014 designs by Jenny Packham and Temperley Bridal. Emphasising the glamour and spectacle of weddings today, key designers will include Vivienne Westwood, John Galliano, Christian Lacroix, Lanvin, Vera Wang, Jasper Conran, Bruce Oldfield, Osman, Hardy Amies, Bellville Sassoon, Mr.Fish, John Bates and Jean Muir, with millinery by Philip Treacy and Stephen Jones. This section will explore the changing social and cultural attitudes to the wedding ceremony and marriage in the late 20th century and will feature examples of innovative and unconventional wedding outfits including dresses designed by Gareth Pugh and Pam Hogg for the weddings of Katie Shillingford (2011) and Mary Charteris (2012).

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Notes to Editors

- *Wedding Dresses 1775-2014* has been curated by Edwina Ehrman, Curator of Textiles and Fashion at the V&A.
- The exhibition takes place in the V&A Fashion Gallery (Gallery 40), from 3 May 2014 – 15 March 2015.
- The V&A is open daily 10:00 – 17:45 and until 22:00 every Friday.
- A version of the exhibition previously toured to Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria, Australia (2011), Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (2011-12), National Museum of Singapore (2012) and Western Australian Museum, Perth, Australia (2012-13).

Ticket Information

Tickets: £12 (concessions available)

V&A Members go free

For bookings visit www.vam.ac.uk (booking fee applies) or call 020 7420 9736

Exhibition Publication

An accompanying exhibition book, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashions* by Edwina Ehrman (V&A Publishing) will be available at £25 in paperback.

Exhibition Merchandise

A range of exclusive product including brand collaborations and special commissions will be available at the V&A Shop from May 2014. Alongside a capsule collection of bridal jewellery and fashions inspired by the exhibition, the V&A Shop will stock a considered selection of wedding gifts, books and accessories.

For PRESS information on the book and related product contact Julie Chan on +44 (0)20 7942 2701 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk

For further PRESS information about the *V&A Wedding Dresses 1775-2014* exhibition please contact Alice Evans in the V&A press office on +44 (0) 20 7942 2508 or email a.evans@vam.ac.uk

A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

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