

EDUCATION

The Museum at FIT combines culinary art, haute couture in new exhibition

July 3, 2023



For the 20th anniversary of his Soho store, late Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake created a "bento box" of pleated accessories in 2018, on view as part of The Museum at FIT's "Food & Fashion" presentation. Image credit: The Museum at FIT

By AMIRAH KEATON

Garments from French fashion house Chanel, Italian fashion label Moschino and British fashion label Stella McCartney will grace a new exhibition marrying the worlds of gastronomy and style.

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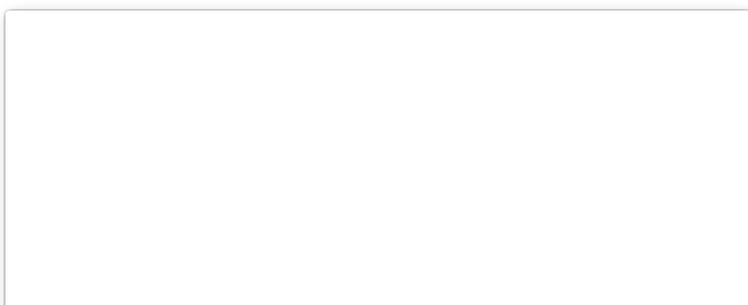
Set to captivate fashion enthusiasts and culinary aficionados alike, The Museum at FIT is presenting "Food & Fashion," an effort set to explore the deep interconnections between both industries. Opening on July 15, 2023, the unique sensory experience features more than 80 designer garments and accessories, bringing together the two seemingly distinct worlds of culinary art and haute couture.

Exploring food's influence on fashion

Taking place at New York City's only museum dedicated solely to the art of fashion, "Food & Fashion" promises to examine the ways in which food has influenced fashion design from the 18th century to the present day.

Helmed by Melissa Marra-Alvarez, curator of education and research at MFIT, and Elizabeth Way, the museum's associate curator of costume, the exhibition will hone in on how food themes and motifs are used to convey messages about luxury, gender, consumerism, sustainability, social activism and body politics.

The exhibition is thoughtfully divided into different galleries, each offering a unique perspective on the relationship between food and fashion.



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In the introductory gallery, visitors embark on a journey from breakfast to dinner, exploring the prevalence of food themes in clothing. Intimate tableaus such as "The Fashion Kitchen," "The Market," "The Fast Food Diner," and "The High Fashion Restaurant" provide an immersive experience.

The main gallery, designed to mimic a traditional food hall," features stalls that explore 10 themes in total.

These include "Haute Couture/Haute Cuisine," which examines the history of French luxury, and "Dressing to Dine," showcasing specialized garments worn during mealtimes.

"A Feast for the Eyes" highlights the collision of food, fashion, and art, featuring creations by Comme des Garons and Stephen Jones, while "The Fashion Cookbook" explores how fashion designers have expanded their brands through cookbooks that reflect their aesthetics and values.

The exhibition continues on to address important cultural and social aspects.

"We Eat What We Are" explores the expression of cultural identity through food and dress, featuring designs by Tremaine Emory and Reckless Ericka. "Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice?" unpacks the relationship between food, gender identities, and femininity, showcasing creations by Junya Watanabe and Judith Leiber.

"Activism and Protest" examines how fashion draws inspiration from food movements to advocate for social justice, featuring collaborations between, for instance, Rick Owens and the United Farm Workers' Union.

"Food & Fashion" also emphasizes sustainability and body positivity. "Growing Alternative" explores the connection between slow fashion and slow food, highlighting designers like Mimi Prober who use natural dyeing techniques.

"Fashion From Your Fridge" showcases technologies that transform food waste into fashion fabrics, featuring innovative materials like fish gelatin sequins and Piatex made from pineapple waste. The section "Consuming Bodies" challenges traditional beauty standards, with Chromat's diverse body representation on the runway.

"Food & Fashion" presents a multifaceted exploration of the intricate relationship between food and fashion. The exhibition invites visitors to consider how these two realms intertwine and reflect our culture and society.

Partnering with the Bloomberg Connects, leaders at MFIT are providing an audio tour led by the museum's curators. Exhibition assets will remain accessible to those both on and offsite via Bloomberg's downloadable app.

Accompanying the exhibition is the book "Food & Fashion" by British publishing house Bloomsbury, edited by the museum's curators.

A symposium scheduled for Nov. 3 provides a channel for further discussions.

"Food and Fashion" at MFIT

Nestled within FIT's campus ([see story](#)), the museum provides the showcase with an ideal setting.

By bringing together garments, accessories, photographs, illustrations and culinary creations, the museum with a reputation for curating innovative showcases aims to bridge the gap between two seemingly unrelated domains, using fashion to help do so.

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"Food & Fashion" invites visitors to appreciate the rich history, cultural influences, and imaginative possibilities that arise when food and fashion intersect.

Through this exhibition, which runs through Nov. 18, 2023, MFIT endeavors to ignite conversations and celebrate the harmony that exists between these two essential aspects of human culture.

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