



museum of arts and design

MAD'S SPRING 2017 EXHIBITIONS TO FOCUS ON FASHION

Counter-Couture: Handmade Fashion in an American Counterculture

Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story

fashion after Fashion

NEW YORK, NY (January 10, 2017) – This spring, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents a series of exhibitions showcasing three dynamic moments in fashion that emphasize history, practice, and critique. *Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story* is the first major survey in over 20 years of the designer's iconic career. *Counter-Couture: Handmade Fashion in an American Counterculture* will spotlight handmade fashions from the 1960s and 1970s, while *fashion after Fashion* will examine contemporary fashion as a conceptual and critical practice through works by Eckhaus Latta, ensamble, Lucy Jones, Ryohei Kawanishi, Henrik Vibskov, and SSAW Magazine.

“As a museum with roots in studio craft practice, we are excited to expand our lens to look at fashion—from the couture to the conceptual—as a creative field that has long been invested in craftsmanship, expressiveness, and the symbolic,” says Shannon R. Stratton, MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator. “Our spring chapter explores how fashion practices can have at their bedrock the qualities that we associate with contemporary art and craft. Throughout these exhibitions, audiences will appreciate fashion designers as expert craftspeople, masters of allegory, witty inventors, and sociopolitical artists.”

Counter-Couture: Handmade Fashion in an American Counterculture

March 2–August 20, 2017

Counter-Couture: Handmade Fashion in an American Counterculture celebrates the handmade fashion and style of the 1960s and '70s. Often referred to as the hippie movement, the Counterculture swept away the conformism of the previous decade and professed an alternative lifestyle whose effects still resonate today. Moved by the rejection of a materialist and consumerist interpretation of the American Dream, Counterculture youths embraced ideals of self-sufficiency and self-expression. Against the backdrop of Vietnam War protests and the civil rights movement, hippies, flower children, and other idealistic young people shunned the cultural standards of their parents, embraced the struggle for racial and gender equality, used drugs to explore altered states of consciousness, and cultivated a renewed dimension of spirituality.

The pursuit of a personal style proved a transcendental tool toward self-realization, enlightenment, and freedom from conventions. *Counter-Couture* exhibits garments, jewelry, and accessories by American makers who crafted the very reality that they craved, on the margins of society and yet at the center of an epochal shift. The works on display encompass the ethos of members of a generation who fought for change by sewing, embroidering, quilting, patchworking, and tie-dyeing their identity. Putting the handmade at the center of their daily revolution, they embraced and contributed to

establishing a folk sensibility in a seminal moment for the development of American Craft.

Counter-Couture: Handmade Fashion in an American Counterculture was organized by the Bellevue Arts Museum and curated by Guest Curator Michael Cepress. It was secured for the Museum of Arts and Design by William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator Shannon R. Stratton with the support of Assistant Curator Barbara Paris Gifford.

Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story

April 4–August 6, 2017

Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story pays homage to craftswoman, designer, and businesswoman Judith Leiber as an enduring icon of the American handbag and fashion industries. The exhibition follows her trajectory from handbag apprentice in Budapest at the outbreak of World War II to venerated female entrepreneur, spotlighting her most iconic works—such as her trademark animal-shaped minaudières—while also exhibiting both her more traditional and experimental forms. The exhibition will examine the practice and the person behind Leiber’s cult-like clutches, which are a wardrobe staple of First Ladies and red carpet starlets.

Judith Leiber spent 65 years in the handbag industry. As the only female pattern-maker at that time, and with the unusual ability to make a handbag from start to finish, she brought a distinctly European training and skill set to the United States, where handbags were made with assembly-line skills division. This allowed her not only to succeed as a designer, but also to revolutionize the meaning of handbag craftsmanship for the American consumer.

Leiber’s handbags run the gamut from finely crafted leather pieces and textile-based bags to the fantastical Swarovski crystal-encrusted creations for which she is best known. Inspired by a lifelong admiration of art, travel, and opera, her bags include Art Deco-influenced hardware, materials such as Lucite and seashells, and references to the artwork of Piet Mondrian, Georges Braque, and Sonia Delaunay. Leiber also collaborated with visual artist Faith Ringgold on a collection of handbags inspired by Ringgold’s quilts.

As Leiber’s reputation flourished, designers and suppliers sought her out, offering interesting materials, particularly textiles. Thus, many of her handbags are constructed with obis from Japan, Parsi ribbons from India, and fabrics from Iran and Africa. From the earliest days of her eponymous company, Leiber pushed the boundaries of handbag design. This innovative drive is epitomized by her famed sparkling minaudières, born from a technique used to salvage a group of damaged metal frames, and propelled into popularity by the design of her imaginative animal- and food-themed clutches.

Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story includes handbags that encompass the history of Leiber’s internationally renowned company, Judith Leiber Handbags, which she founded in 1963 at the age of 42, through 2004, when she designed her last handbag. Although biographical in nature, the exhibition also explores the gendered significance of the handbag in twentieth-century Western culture, and the centrality of immigrant entrepreneurship to the fabric of New York.

Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story is curated by MAD’s Assistant Curator Samantha De Tillio, with the support of Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy.

fashion after Fashion

April 27–August 6, 2017

Eckhaus Latta, ensæmble, Lucy Jones, Ryohei Kawanishi, Henrik Vibskov, SSAW Magazine

In 2015, fashion trend forecaster and authority Li Edelkoort declared “the end of Fashion as we know it,” and in her “manifesto for the next decade” provided “ten reasons why the fashion system is obsolete.” In doing so, she echoed a sentiment shared by fashion industry insiders, journalists, pundits, and scholars alike—from reporter Teri Agins, author of the 2000 book *The End of Fashion*, to fashion theorist Barbara Vinken, who coined the term “postfashion” to describe the contemporary zeitgeist. As the world of fashion continues to evolve, the term “fashion” itself demands redefinition.

fashion after Fashion presents the work of six designers who are thinking—and making us think—about fashion anew. The exhibition features some of the most innovative work being produced in the context of contemporary fashion, focusing on commissioned, site-sensitive installations to offer an experience that is as immersive and affective as it is mentally stimulating. Encompassing sculptures, installations, and video pieces by Eckhaus Latta, ensæmble, Lucy Jones, Ryohei Kawanishi, Henrik Vibskov, and SSAW Magazine, it presents fashion as an expanded field of practice that is determined by concept and context, and whose practitioners work collaboratively and creatively between and across areas of design and art.

The exhibition’s use of “fashion” (in the lowercase) signals a more reflective, concerned, attentive, creative process that is not determined solely by commerce, the market, and trends. Independently and collectively, the practitioners included in *fashion after Fashion* call into question the state and nature of Fashion (in the uppercase) and challenge some of its main constructs, including the myth of the individual star designer, short-lived and commodity-driven products, gendered dressing, ideal bodies, and waste. Their work demonstrates the need to diversify the term “fashion” in order to encompass new types of contemporary practice that acknowledge intention, ideas, and process and offer greater creative potential to both the designer and the consumer.

Lucy Jones considers body types that would typically be left out of fashion practices and conversations. Eckhaus Latta works in more liminal and virtual spaces—the New York of real people and things, beyond the “fashion city” of runways and fashion weeks. Henrik Vibskov refocuses attention on the body in movement and on relationships between fashion and time. Ryohei Kawanishi delves into the fashion system to offer new perspectives. SSAW challenges norms of body and gender, and ideals of beauty. And ensæmble raises questions about origins, authorship, and the nature of fashion’s objects.

fashion after Fashion is co-curated by Dr. Hazel Clark and Ilari Laamanen in collaboration with the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York and Parsons School of Design, The New School, New York, with support from MAD’s Assistant Curator Barbara Paris Gifford and Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields, presenting artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill to their work. Since the Museum’s founding in 1956 by philanthropist

and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, fostering a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. The Museum will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee 60th Anniversary this year.

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