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LOVE IN FINE FASHION Wedding Dresses from the McCord Museum

Montreal, November 18, 2014 – From November 20, 2014, to April 12, 2015, the McCord Museum will present the exhibition ***Love In Fine Fashion***, featuring some thirty elegant wedding dresses and an equal number of accessories, shoes, bags, gloves, stockings, garters and caps dating from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, all from the Museum's extensive Costume and Textiles collection, which includes 150 wedding dresses.

"Since weddings are about a love story, we've organized the exhibition in the form of a narrative," said Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. "The highly original scenario uses a series of common French and English expressions, many of which refer to clothing, to tell a story and weave a common thread through the exhibition," she added. Sixty-three figures of speech were selected to recount a universal love story. Following a pleasant meeting, the young man *presses his suit* with the young lady before *unveiling his true feelings*, for she *is a true gem* and, under the circumstances, will want to *see life through rose-coloured glasses*. Full of unexpected turns and twists, the emotional narrative unfolds in a space designed by Richard Lacroix that puts the main focus on the exceptional collection itself.

Wedding dresses are perhaps one of the most cherished articles of clothing. Brides save them as mementos of the occasion, while descendants treasure them as heirlooms. Along with their accessories, they tell the tale of a couple's hopes and aspirations, and their lives together.

Every item on display has borne witness to a true love story, beyond the one constructed for the exhibition. The oldest among them—a cap and collar—date back to 1816, while the most recent are a 2008 wedding gown created by Helmer Joseph and a dress by Marie Saint Pierre from the same year, worn as a wedding dress by a young woman who loved the design. A grande dame of mid-20th century Montreal fashion, Gaby Bernier, is represented by one of her creations, as are designers Serge & Réal, with a dress created for a lavish 1984 Montreal wedding, and Michel Desjardins, whose elegant silk duchesse satin dress dates from 2006.



Wedding dress, 1957
Veil, 1957
© McCord Museum



Armand Houle and his wife, Marie
Thérèse Therrien
1896
Quéry Frères
© McCord Museum

The exhibition is divided into eight themes that form the backbone of the story, which evolves along with the idiomatic expressions that express the sweethearts' shifting sentiments. Their initial meeting is **haute en couleur** [colourful] (zone 1). He thinks she is **fine comme une soie** [fine as silk--lovely] (zone 2). Is she **la perle rare** [that rare pearl--the one] (zone 3)? And are they **cut from the same cloth** (zone 4)? For she does not always **fait dans la dentelle** [wear kid gloves] (zone 5). **Quelle tournure prendront les choses** [How will things turn out] (zone 6)? For things can **come apart at the seams** (zone 7). But she is not **à la traîne** [hemming and hawing] (zone 8). Will their union be **couronnée** [crowned] with success?

Expensive gowns from the salons of fashionable dress designers rub shoulders with dresses sewn by talented "petite couturières" like the woman who created Marthe Gendron's 1941 dress from a photo cut out of *Vogue* magazine. Sometimes the bride herself made her dress, like Nina Larionoff, a Russian immigrant of Polish origin, who created a green silk gown cut on the bias for her second wedding, in 1936. The exhibition will feature an incredible variety of gowns, from beautiful high-collared lace dresses circa 1907, accessorized with a train, to short dresses from the 1920s and even crocheted cotton mini dresses from the hippie days of the 1970s. Every one was made to fulfil the dreams of the young woman who would wear it, regardless of the era or her future husband's fortunes. The series of expressions will help draw attention to details in the clothing and refinements like lace flounces, embroidery, buttonholes and beaded fringe, which can be seen with the aid of a magnifying glass.

As always, nothing is too good for a bride on her wedding day, so visitors will see dresses of silk satin, taffeta, lace, tulle, faille and organza. In the 19th century, women often purchased the most beautiful dress of their lives for the occasion. After the wedding, they would alter it slightly to be able to wear it again, as did Bridget Delaney, a bride from 1872, who added a fuchsia chenille cord to her white dress. Furthermore, white was not the only colour option for wedding dresses. The exhibition will feature gowns of green, deep purple, pink, blue, white, yellow and even one in plaid.

Ten of the women who owned these gowns and accessories were researched and their individual stories have been woven into the presentation, including that of Virginie de Saint-Ours, whose elegant boots are on display. Married in 1868, she then travelled through Europe for her honeymoon, only to have her husband suddenly die the following year. Each personal history is a reflection of the institution of marriage in that era.

Love In Fine Fashion was curated by Cynthia Cooper, Head, Collections and Research, and Curator, Costume and Textiles.

The McCord Museum would like to thank its partners, the Ritz-Carlton Montreal and the Société de transport de Montréal (STM).



Wedding dress
1904
© McCord Museum



Wedding shoes
1927
© McCord Museum

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's social history, both past and present, as well as its people, artists and communities. It is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costumes and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual artworks, and textual archives, totalling more than 1,440,000 artefacts. With its contemporary perspective on history, the McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that captivate visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. ***McCord Museum, Our People, Our Stories.***

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Photographs available at <http://bit.ly/1zYrJ6h>

Interviews can be arranged with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and Cynthia Cooper, Head, Collections and Research, and Curator, Costume and Textiles.

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Wedding dress
1870-1880
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