



News Release

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First major V&A exhibition to celebrate masculine attire: iconic looks by legendary designers and rising stars alongside historical treasures and acclaimed artworks

Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear

In partnership with Gucci

Sainsbury Gallery

19 March – 6 November 2022

vam.ac.uk/masculinities | [#ArtofMenswear](https://twitter.com/ArtofMenswear)

Opening March 2022, *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* will be the first major V&A exhibition to celebrate the power, artistry and diversity of masculine attire and appearance. The show will trace how menswear has been fashioned and refashioned over the centuries, and how designers, tailors and artists – and their clients and sitters – have constructed and performed masculinity, and unpicked it at the seams.

Fashioning Masculinities will present around 100 looks and 100 artworks, displayed thematically across three galleries. Contemporary looks by legendary designers and rising stars will be displayed alongside historical treasures from the V&A's collections and landmark loans: classical sculptures, Renaissance paintings, iconic photographs, and powerful film and performance. From looks by **Harris Reed**, **Gucci**, **Grace Wales Bonner** and **Raf Simons**, to paintings by **Sofonisba Anguissola** and **Joshua Reynolds**, contemporary artworks by **Robert Longo** and **Omar Victor Diop**, to an extract from an all-male dance performance by **Matthew Bourne's New Adventures**, the exhibition will showcase the variety of possible masculinities across the centuries from the Renaissance to the global contemporary. Outfits worn by familiar faces will be interspersed throughout, from **Harry Styles**, **Billy Porter** and **Sam Smith**, to **David Bowie** and **Marlene Dietrich**. Innovative creations and diverse representations will highlight and celebrate the multiplicities of masculine sartorial self-expression, dressing beyond the binary.

Claire Wilcox and Rosalind McKeever, co-curators of *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*, said: “Masculine fashion is enjoying a period of unprecedented creativity. It has long been a powerful mechanism for encouraging conformity or expressing individuality. Rather than a linear or definitive history, this is a journey across time and gender. The exhibition will bring together historical and contemporary looks with art that reveals how masculinity has been

performed. This will be a celebration of the masculine wardrobe, and everyone is invited to join in."

Fashioning Masculinities will open with a **Craig Green** SS2021 ensemble of a deconstructed suit, alluding to the construction and deconstruction of both the masculine body and conventions of masculinity, a theme that will be central throughout the show. The three main galleries – *Undressed*, *Overdressed*, and *Redressed* – will follow, with the exhibition design by JA Projects. *Undressed* will explore the male body and underwear in a utopian dreamscape, whilst *Overdressed* will take visitors into the elite masculine wardrobe in a sumptuous, immersive space with courtly grandeur, featuring oversized silhouettes, abundant colour, and lavish materials. The third section, *Redressed*, will explore the construction and dissolution of the suit, with the exhibition design conveying the idea of an urban reawakening.

About the Exhibition:

Undressed will explore the male body and underwear, looking at how classical European ideals of masculinity have been perpetuated and challenged over the centuries. Plaster casts of the **Apollo Belvedere** and the **Farnese Hermes** – which highlight a tradition of depicting idealised male bodies draped in textiles that reveal more than they conceal – will be juxtaposed with modern and contemporary representations of the body, from prints and photography by **David Hockney**, **Lionel Wendt**, **Zanele Muholi** and **Isaac Julien**, to a **Calvin Klein** advertisement.

Also on display will be a film of **Matthew Bourne's** *Spitfire* (1988) performed by New Adventures dancers, which takes place in the world of men's underwear advertising and mail order catalogue photography, whilst contemporary ensembles will highlight how designers are appropriating sheer fabrics to create ensembles, alluding to a new honesty about menswear. Fashion's fascination with the body has seen it support changing masculine ideals from evoking classical drapery, to sculpting flesh – as seen in garments by **Jean-Paul Gaultier** and **A-COLD-WALL*** – to celebrating body diversity. This will be exemplified in the exhibition by excerpts of *Arrested Movement* by **Anthony Patrick Manieri**, an inclusive portrait series and awareness initiative celebrating and promoting positive body image.

Undressed will end with **Auguste Rodin's** *Age of Bronze* sculpture, and *Tiresias*, a performance by **Cassils**, in which the artist melts a neoclassical torso carved in ice with their body heat.

The second gallery, *Overdressed*, will explore the elite masculine wardrobe, epitomised by oversized silhouettes, lavish materials like silks and velvet in daring colours, and symbolic patterns to express status, wealth and individuality. Drawing synergies across the centuries, the section will feature armoured breastplates to silky smoking suits, sweeping capes to ribbons and lace, including **Grinling Gibbons'** wooden carving imitating a Venetian needlepoint lace cravat, displayed alongside real lace, and a **Dolce & Gabbana** cape juxtaposed

with a **Sofonisba Anguissola** painting. The section will also include grooming, with makeup and shaving equipment.

Historically, menswear was full of pattern and colour, and a section on scarlet and pink will highlight the return of this masculine colour to popularity. Aristocratic sitters in oil paintings by **Joshua Reynolds** and **Jean-Baptiste Perronneau** will be displayed alongside pink ensembles by **Harris Reed** and **Grace Wales Bonner** among others. Nearby, a custom **Randi Rahm** ensemble – a suit and full-length embroidered cloak with a hot pink lining – worn by **Billy Porter** at the Golden Globes in 2019, will complement the selection.

Internationally traded textiles, imported silks and floral patterns, reflect their wearers relationship to the world. Through the lens of contemporary fashion, from **Kim Jones for Fendi** and **Alessandro Michele for Gucci** to **Rahemur Rahman, Ahluwalia** and **Orange Culture**, *Overdressed* will show how historic ideas begin to shift, with a full rainbow of masculine outfits on display.

The third gallery, *Redressed*, will piece together the modern masculine uniform of the suit, from **Beau Brummell** to the contemporary runway. *Redressed* will open with a reflection on English country tailoring and the origins of the suit – with historic garments from the V&A collection shown alongside contemporary reimaginings, including a kilt by **Nicholas Daley** – before exploring how military attire influenced civilian dress.

In the twentieth century an abundance of mass-produced suits bred creativity as Mods, Teddy Boys and all manner of subcultures looked to define their styles through tailoring, explored in the exhibition through garments and photography. A section on leather will show how designers like **Tom Ford for Gucci** and **Donatella Versace** took their interest in leather to a new place, whilst a series of frock coats from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day will include examples by **Prada**, **Alexander McQueen** and **Raf Simons**. *Redressed* will also include paintings as well as extensive photography showing changing styles and attitudes, from **Oscar Wilde**, **Claude Cahun** and **Cecil Beaton** to **The Beatles** and **Sam Smith**.

Robert Longo's 1981 drawing from the series *Men in the Cities* will introduce the final part of the section about the dissolving of the suit. A new wave of fashion designers from **Rick Owens** to **JW Anderson** to **Comme des Garçons** to **Lesiba Mabitsela** are slashing away at conventions, both for menswear, and masculinity.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* please contact Sophie Steel on s.steel@vam.ac.uk / 020 7942 2279 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* runs from 19 March – 6 November 2022.
- Adult tickets £20. Tickets are on sale now at vam.ac.uk/masculinities
- The exhibition has been co-curated for the V&A by Claire Wilcox and Rosalind McKeever with Marta Franceschini.
- The exhibition will be accompanied by a new V&A publication, edited by Rosalind McKeever and Claire Wilcox with Marta Franceschini. RRP £40.
- The exhibition designer is JA Projects, with graphic design by Studio Hugo Blanzat and lighting design by Studio ZNA.
- The exhibition is the latest in the V&A's series of revelatory fashion exhibitions and follows *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* (2019) and *Mary Quant* (2019), *Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion (2016 – 17)*, *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (2016 – 2017), *Shoes: Pleasure and Pain* (2015 – 2016) and *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s* (2013 – 2014).
- The V&A's fashion collection is designated as the UK's National Collection and is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of dress in the world.

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Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition sponsor Gucci.

About Gucci

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Gucci is part of the global luxury group Kering, which manages the development of a series of renowned Maisons in fashion, leather goods, jewelry and watches.

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