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FASHION

FIT TELLS FAIRYTALES THROUGH FASHION

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The Museum at FIT boasts dresses and accessories from top designers inspired by fairytales.

While Manhattan is not the first setting one would choose for a fairytale, the Museum at FIT made dreams come true in this land far far away—from the West Coast that is—and created an exhibit of clothing and accessories from top designers that were inspired by famous fairytales such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, the Little Mermaid and Alice in Wonderland. The exhibit is called Fairy Tale Fashion, which opened on Jan. 15 and ends on April 15.

According to the museum's [website](#), the exhibit was organized by associate curator Colleen Hill, and features more than 80 objects placed within dramatic, fantasy-like settings designed by architect Kim Ackert. The designers in the exhibit range from the outlandish, such as [Alexander McQueen](#) and [Hideki Seo](#), to the elegant, such as [Dolce and Gabbana](#) and [Prada](#).

The exhibit starts with a narrow hallway introducing the idea and work behind it all and opens into a giant room with drapes guiding visitors into different sections and fairytales.



Altuzarra

In the hallway are un-photoshopped photos by **Kirsty Mitchell** that take one's breath away. Models that resemble porcelain dolls wear dresses made of flowers, butterflies and books; their powerful expressions are somber and haunting. This is the first time Mitchell's photos have been displayed in the US and they show the central message of the exhibit—fashion is often used to symbolize a character's transformation, vanity, power or privilege in a story.

Once inside the main room of the exhibit, one sees red cloaks inspired by “Little Red Riding Hood”. An **Altuzarra** cloak catches the eye with a long velvet train and shimmering Swarovski crystals. This **cloak** is from the Fall 2010 line that explored the crossover between fairy tales and modern life.

The next draped off section of the exhibit displays dresses inspired by snakes. While it's no secret that snakeskin is widely loved and valued in the fashion industry, the exhibit emphasizes the fairytale aspects of snakes that make them seem like such majestic creatures. The exhibit says snakes are feared for their sly, venomous nature, but can also symbolize strength and rejuvenation.

This complex perception of snakes is shown in the gowns on display. A dress from Alexander McQueen's spring 2010

line has the

eerie angles and edges that snakes possess while flaunting the strong and rejuvenating patterns of their scales and skin.

Next to the dresses inspired by snakes, are outfits inspired by fairies. The appearance of fairies is rarely described in fairytales, so designers get creative freedom to use their imaginations when recreating these creatures in their fashion.

Prada's spring 2008 collection featured illustrations by the renowned artist **James Jean**. The exhibit says Jean's fairies are both beautiful and sinister. Prada placed his art on dark, silk shirts and capris, creating an outfit that showed the delicateness that fairies possess, but also the darkness that they can create.

When thinking of fashion in fairy tales, the mind instantly goes to “Cinderella”. Without her glass slippers and magnificent dress, she never would have found her happy ending. After the section with fairies and snakes comes a main room showing bits and pieces of Cinderella's story through the eyes of designers.

Because this story—arguably the most famous and well known fairytale of them all—couldn't be contained to just one section, there are multiple examples of attempts designers have made to create the famous glass slipper and royal dress sprinkled throughout the entire exhibit.



Alexander McQueen



While Cinderella's dress is most famously known from the fairytale, the exhibit shows off dresses from the evil stepsisters that could put Cinderella's to shame. The exhibit says that although many illustrations of Cinderella's stepsisters portray them as unattractive and unfashionable, the original author of the fairy tale, **Charles Perrault**, wrote that they “cut a grand figure.”

Dresses by **Anne Fogarty** and **Blumarine** cut more than just a grand figure. Fogarty's dress is charming, simple and elegant. The ankle length, wine velvet dress has little detail with a ribbon tied right below the bust and a long ruffle starting at mid calf. The vintage feel from the dress should be no surprise since it was made around 1970.

Blumarine's dress has a more regal feel, boasting a gold flowered cloak. The dress coming down to mid-thigh creates a modern royalty vibe and the dress is from Blumarine's fall 2014 line.

When it comes to the glass slipper, **Noritaka Tatehana** not only made a **shoe** that appeared to be glass, but made a shoe that would be as impossible to walk or run in as Cinderella's glass slippers were. Rightfully named "Impossible Slippers," Tatehana made 3D printed acrylic slippers that are towering and heelless making it appear as fragile and impossible to walk in as slippers made of actual glass.

Another fairytale that wouldn't be the same without a very important set of shoes is "The Wizard of Oz" which had its own section after Cinderella's. Dorothy's ruby shoes were inspiration for both Noritaka Tatehana and **Christian Louboutin** when they made ruby studded shoes of their own, yet both came out quite different.



The part of the exhibit that oozed the creepiness from the fairy tale itself was the Snow White section. Snow White is shown lying in a glass coffin, donning a stunning **Alice + Olivia (Stacey Bendet)** rhinestone-studded gown from their fall 2014 collection. A hooded figure, draped in a black velvet cloak, looks over the coffin. The exhibit says that this is Snow White's evil stepmother disguised in a cloak from **Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche** made around 1973. Behind the scene is a painting of a dark and eerie forest.

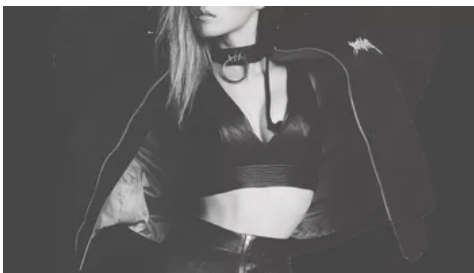
Even accessories have been inspired from this fairytale. The famous poisoned apple influenced the designer, **Judith Leiber**, to create a handbag that looked as enticing as the apple from the story. The bag is called Minaudiere and looks like an apple covered in Austrian crystals. When the crystals catch the light and sparkle, it becomes impossible to look away and makes the viewer feel like they are spellbound.

There are far more dresses and designers in the exhibit that capture the art of storytelling that fairy tales possess such as a Rapunzel **dress** from Alexander McQueen and a Sleeping Beauty **dress** from **Marchesa**, but the only way to really appreciate the power and beauty of these dresses is to travel to the far away land of Manhattan and see them in person.

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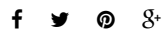
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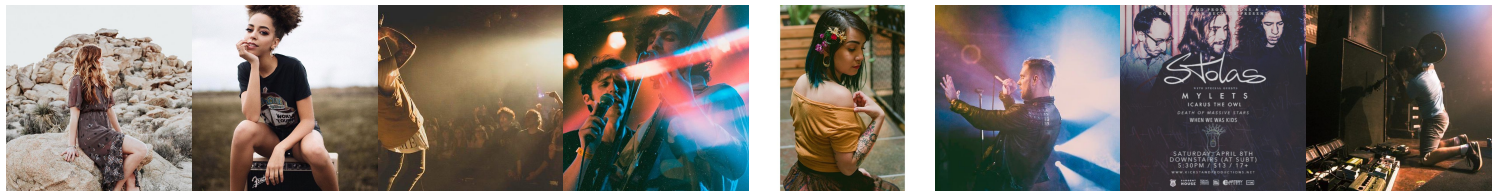
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