

Press release

DRESSED. 7 WOMEN – 200 YEARS OF FASHION

Press conference: 24 February 2022, 11am
Opening: 24 February 2022, 7pm
25 February until 28 August 2022



Anne Löhn (1944), Shirt/mini dress, Issey Miyake PleatsPlease, 1997; Handbag, Alessandro Mendini, Studio Alchimia, 1987, MK&G, photo: Anne Schönharting

Our wardrobe is among our most personal possessions. Nothing is closer to our bodies. Alongside its purely practical function, clothing is also a nuanced means of communication and self-expression. The exhibition DRESSED. 7 WOMEN – 200 YEARS OF FASHION presents seven fashion-conscious women and their wardrobes, ranging from the nineteenth century to the present day. The spotlight is on the personalities and biographies of the wearers, who reveal themselves to be both performers and consumers of fashion. Whether haute couture, daywear, protest gear or avant-garde trends – what they choose to wear is every bit as diverse as their lifestyles. Their wardrobes tell of the status-consciousness of high-society wives, of an existence marked by illness, of “power dressing” for projecting confidence in the executive suite, of Hamburg’s punk scene, and of the aesthetics of resistive aesthetics embraced by an art and design collector.

Rather than basing the selection on status or celebrity, the protagonists cover the greatest possible variety of women’s lifestyles and their expression through fashion. Around 150 garments and accessories from the Fashion and Textiles Collection at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MK&G) illuminate seven different walks of life and 200 years of fashion, women’s liberation and contemporary history. The fashion items were produced by famous designers, couturiers/couturières and fashion ateliers such as Maison Worth, Elsa Schiaparelli, Yves Saint Laurent, Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo and Martin Margiela as well as by anonymous

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OPENING HOURS
Tue–Sun 10am–6pm
Thu 10am–9pm

ADMISSION
€12/reduced €8
Thu after 5pm €8
under 18 free

TICKETS
tickets.mkg-hamburg.de

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tailors and seamstresses. They are supplemented by biographical testimonies, photographs and documents.

Senator Dr Carsten Brosda says of the exhibition: “The history of clothing is the history of man. The history of fashion is the history of our social self-image. “Dressed” tells both the story of individual lives and the spirit of the times. The exhibition traces our understanding of aesthetics, the relationship between no-go's and avant-garde, do's and don'ts and as a whole is a symbol of possibilities. With the exhibition “Dressed”, the MK&G once again sensitises us to the social value of clothing in a time of material hyperconsumption.”

“The idea of approaching not only fashion history but also the former wearers through the seven wardrobes on display immediately excited me”, remarks Tulga Beyerle, director of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. “The narrative also goes beyond that and deals with a topic that is still relevant today: the changing role of women in society.”

SEVEN PERSONALITIES – SEVEN WARDROBES

The earliest apparel ensemble, which once belonged to ELISE FRÄNCKEL (1807–1898), consists mainly of accessories and reveals the up to date fashion sense of the senator's wife from Oldenburg in Holstein around 1820. The wardrobe of the diplomat's wife EDITH VON MALTZAN FREIFRAU ZU WARTENBERG UND PENZLIN (1886–1976) includes elegant daywear and exquisite afternoon and evening attire from the years 1895 to 1950. The life and clothing of ERIKA HOLST (1917–1946) were shaped by war and her illness with tuberculosis. Dating from 1935 to 1945, her wardrobe contains mostly daywear. The Hamburg gallery owner and museum founder ELKE DRÖSCHER (b. 1941) wore almost exclusively prêt-à-porter models by Yves Saint Laurent between 1968 and 1986, opting for a form of “power dressing”. INES ORTNER (b. 1968), active in Hamburg's punk scene since the mid-1980s, combines an interest in fashion with a socio-critical stance in her “self-constructed”, in some cases anarchic clothing objects. ANGELICA BLECHSCHMIDT (1942–2018), editor-in-chief of German *Vogue* from 1989 to 2002, clad herself in high-end products from international fashion houses as befitting her position. Her “work uniform” consisted of little black dresses in combination with chunky costume jewellery. The art and design collector ANNE LÜHN (b. 1944) has over the years donated individual pieces from her wardrobe to MK&G. The often asymmetrical garments created by an international design avant-garde display an aesthetic of resistance.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FASHION

The seven wardrobes selected for the show shed light on the development of fashion since the early nineteenth century. The items on view can be seen in one sense as an abstract succession of generations. The Second World War marked a clear turning point in terms of women's opportunities, as revealed by the marital status and occupation of the various women portrayed. Women born after 1940 were no longer confined to the role of mother, wife and housewife but were able to pursue their own professional goals. The garments also tell of contemporary political and social developments: The rigid corset disappeared after the First World War, roughly concurrently with the rise of women's suffrage. The proliferation of

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trousers in women's fashion from the 1970s onwards went hand in hand with the women's liberation movement. And in the 1980s, an increasing plurality of clothing styles reflected developments in society at large.

CLOTHING AS AN ARCHIVE

The design of the exhibition is inspired by the concept of an archive. Reference is thus made to the museum's mission of collecting and research but also to the archival function of clothing itself, which serves as a material witness to the history of design, technology and trade. At the same time, garments perpetuate the traces of individual bodies, movement and use, providing immaterial clues to the wearer's aura and calling to mind notions of femininity, beauty and chic as well as personal and collective memories.

CLOTHING AS OBJECT OF DAILY USE

Garments are everyday items inscribed with signs of their use and of the body that wears them and bearing the marks of material wear and tear and of storage. These visible marks are just as unwelcome in private wardrobes as they are in museum collections – and yet they prove to be extremely valuable as evidence for object-based research. The exhibition therefore also shows objects with clear signs of wear and provides information about their state of preservation.

CLOTHING AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Clothing norms and dress codes depend on factors such as age, gender, body shape, occasion, location, status and social group. We already start learning in childhood how to navigate this maze of rules and find the right mix for ourselves between conformity and individuality. As demonstrated by the biographies recounted here, fashion and a preoccupation with how we look is even today primarily a topic for women and people who read as female. Women are judged more by their appearance than their male counterparts and are held to account more harshly for ostensible "mistakes" in how they present themselves. The role dress plays in social communication cannot be overestimated. Its effect is immediate. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we send and receive signals with our clothed bodies – not to communicate is impossible.

FASHION HOUSES AND DESIGNERS REPRESENTED

The exhibition provides a detailed look at high-quality items of clothing in the MK&G collection along with glimpses of the creative work of a wide range of both anonymous makers and famous national and international fashion designers, couturiers/couturières and ateliers, including Georges Dœuillet, Romeo Gigli, Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons, Alice Lanot, Emilienne Manassé, Maison Martin Margiela, Issey Miyake, Rick Owens, Prada, Yves Saint Laurent, Elsa Schiaparelli, Worth, Yohji Yamamoto and others.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue of the same name, published by Hirmer Verlag Munich, edited by Tulga Beyerle and Angelika Riley, and with essays by Claire Beermann, Tulga Beyerle, Joanne Entwistle, Birgit Haase, Peter Kempe, Ingrid E. Mida, Angelika Riley and Maria Stabel, and photographs by Anne Schönharting. In German with two essays in English,

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ca. 250 pages, ca. 475 colour illustrations, 90 of them full-page plates,
49.90 Euro.

Ingo Offermanns (Hamburg) is responsible for the graphic design of the catalogue and exhibition. The exhibition architecture is the work of designer and scenographer Katleen Arthen (Berlin).

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

As part of the exhibition, the MK&G is organising numerous analogue and digital guided tours, including the exhibition tour "With Pen and Paper" – a drawing workshop on the seven wardrobes on display with the artist Anne Pflug. You can participate in the exhibition via the MK&G's social media channels: Which favourite piece of clothing should be preserved for posterity? The best photos and stories that are shared with MK&G links can be seen digitally in the exhibition shortly afterwards. More information on the event programme on the website under [Calendar](#).

The exhibition is made possible by funds from the Exhibition Fund of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, the Hubertus Wald Foundation and the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation.



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