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Texas Fashion Collection: glitz, glamour and history

By Cass Brunner and Nancy Cochran LeMay

The apparel is straight out of a clotheshorse's wildest dreams.

A Givenchy pantsuit topped in hot pink mink, an ensemble worn by Audrey Hepburn in the movie Charade, rack upon rack of priceless couture by the world's top designers, ball gowns, miniskirts, shoes, hats, you name it — to walk into the Texas Fashion Collection is like stepping into the biggest, most fantastic closet you've ever seen.

This collection of some 10,000 fashion items makes learning about fashion history a joy for UNT fashion design students. And the collection itself is making history at UNT in 1997.





This year marks the 25th anniversary of the donation of the collection to the university. Today the Texas Fashion Collection is considered the most comprehensive collection of 20th-century fashion design in the Southwest.

Suitable celebration

A special exhibition, *Suiting the Modern Woman* (May 1 to July 1 at the UNT Art Gallery), celebrated the 25th anniversary in high style by offering a historical look at women's suits through this century.

Suits borrowed from some of Texas' savviest power dressers rounded out the exhibit and added a contemporary, typically Texan element. Ann Richards, Barbara Bush, Mary Kay Ash, Mercedes Bass, Molly Ivins and many more well-dressed Texans were represented in the show.

Needless to say, the gala opening was attended by some of the collection's most "well-heeled" supporters from Texas.

Accolades come from far and wide as well.

"The Texas Fashion Collection is now a collection of indisputable national importance with professional direction. It is a matter of real distinction for the University of North

Texas," says Richard Martin, curator of the Costume Institute at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Early years

The collection's Texas roots go back more than half a century when Stanley Marcus, now chairman emeritus of Neiman Marcus, and his brother Edward set aside garments each season to honor their aunt, Carrie Marcus Neiman.

This high-fashion nucleus, which included garments by top designers, later became the Dallas Museum of Fashion, operated by the Dallas Fashion Group.

Since the Texas Fashion Collection became part of UNT in 1972, the university has actively sought donations of historical and modern significance.

The collection is preserved according to museum standards in a custom-designed, 4,000-square-foot, climate-controlled facility in Scouler Hall. Used by fashion students, faculty, designers and historians, the TFC is a rich resource for study and inspiration. It even has its own World Wide Web site at <http://www.art.unt.edu/sova/tfc>.

Fashion items

The collection includes some of the most elegant clothing in the world, as well as such rare items as a topless bathing suit (circa 1964) by Rudy Gernreich.

Garments by dozens of famous designers grace the racks, ranging from Giorgio Armani to Diane Von Furstenberg,





with more than 650 examples of work by four major designers: Cristobal Balenciaga,

Hubert Givenchy, Oscar de la Renta and Norman Norell.

Major donors to the collection include Mercedes Bass of Fort Worth, designer Victor Costa and Claudia Heard de Osborne, a Texan who traveled in Europe in the 1950s and '60s and provided most of the Balenciaga works, including the collection's most valuable item: an original evening dress in black velvet with white ermine tails.

Garments from the collection have appeared in exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth Museum of Science and History and JCPenney international headquarters.

This spring, Neiman Marcus incorporated a preview of the *Suiting the*

Modern Woman exhibition into its 90th anniversary celebration, showing selected ensembles at its Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston stores.

Future plans

UNT hopes to have a permanent exhibition space on campus in the future.

"We have plans for an expansion of the University Art Gallery, which includes a space designated exclusively for the Texas Fashion Collection," says D. Jack Davis, dean of



Texas Fashion Facts

Major designers represented:

Adrian, Armani, Cristobal Balenciaga, Geoffrey Beene, Bill Blass, Pierre Cardin, Oleg Cassini, Chanel, Oscar de la Renta, Christian Dior, Perry Ellis, James Galanos, Hubert Givenchy, Halston, Anne Klein, Ralph Lauren, Vera Maxwell, Molyneux, Norman Norell, Emilio Pucci, Yves St. Laurent, Pauline Trigère and dozens more

Includes dresses worn by:

Lauren Bacall, Greer Garson, Audrey Hepburn in Charada, Holly Hunter in Broadcast News, Carol Lombarde, Ann Richards, Ivana Trump

Oldest item:

1820s muslin dress in good condition, which is rare for a garment that old

Largest item:

Ball gown by Christian Dior with more than 25 yards of pink tulle and net (1950s)

the School of Visual Arts.

Campus exhibitions would be developed periodically for the new gallery, once it is built.

"Getting the collection in museums and public places has been important to build public awareness," says Myra Walker, associate professor of visual arts and TFC director. "But it would be wonderful to have a permanent gallery on campus."

The collection has come a long way since its start as the Marcus brothers' unique idea to pay tribute to their aunt, who co-founded Neiman Marcus with their father, Herbert Marcus.

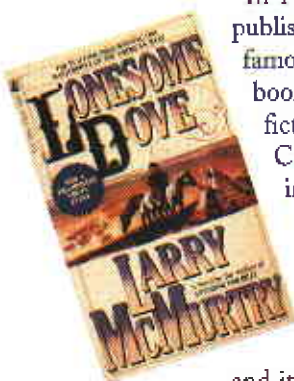
"The legacy and vision of Neiman Marcus as an arbiter of fashion taste is captured in the broad range of the Texas Fashion Collection," Walker says. "The depth of the holdings could not be duplicated if one were to begin collecting now." ★



McMurtry to visit this fall

In the late 1950s, a young student named **Larry McMurtry** listed his goals in a campus literary magazine as teaching, "with perhaps a little writing on the side." He was then an English major at North Texas State Teachers College.

Writing, as it turned out, was no avocation.



In 1985, the well-known Texas author published his 10th and perhaps most famous novel, *Lonesome Dove*. The book won the 1986 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and numerous other awards. CBS-TV adapted *Lonesome Dove* into an Emmy Award-winning miniseries in 1989.

McMurtry's 20 novels and collections of essays also include *The Last Picture Show*, *Texasville*, *Terms of Endearment*,

and its sequel, *The Evening Star*, all made into films. He is currently writing *Comanche Moon*, the fourth and final installment of the *Lonesome Dove* tetralogy. His 12th novel, *Anything for Billy*, is slated to be produced as another Hollywood film.

But with all his success since college days, he has not forgotten his roots.

McMurtry ('58), a Distinguished Alumnus, will return to his alma mater for a visit this fall.

Sept. 30, 1997... McMurtry fall visit schedule

◆ Benefit reception and dinner in his honor, 6:30 p.m., University Union Silver Eagle Suite. Tickets: \$150 per person, or \$250 per couple, with proceeds benefiting scholarships for the UNT Honors Program. Hosted by the College of Arts and Sciences. Call (940) 565-2497 for information.

◆ Free public lecture, 8 p.m., Auditorium Building (open seating; doors open at 7 p.m.)

◆ "Meet the Author" reception, 9:30 p.m., University Union Silver Eagle Suite. Public welcome.



Alumni in the School of Community Service are invited to "A Night of Dinner, Dancing and Unity" at Dallas' Renaissance Hotel, 2222 Stemmons Freeway, to raise funds for the school's new **Joyce Ann Brown/Popo Gonzalez Scholarship Fund**. The event is set for Sept. 6, from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. It also includes a silent auction.

Tickets are \$75 per person. Businesses and organizations can reserve tables for 10 at rates that include advertisement space in the evening's program. For information call (940) 565-4664, or write to: University of North Texas, School of Community Service, Joyce Ann Brown/Popo Gonzalez Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 311340, Denton, Texas 76203-1340. Reservation deadline is **Aug. 15**.

◆ **Mark McBride**, a Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science student from Wills Point, Texas, became the 1,000th graduate of TAMS at commencement ceremonies May 9. **Dev Kumar**, also a member of the TAMS class of 1997, placed sixth in the 1996-97 Westinghouse Science Talent Search, the nation's premier program to recognize student research projects in science, mathematics and engineering. **Kumar, who is from Dallas**, was one of 40 Westinghouse finalists from around the nation and the only Texan.

◆ Construction is under way on the new **Music and Fine Arts Education Building**, a 100,000-square-foot facility located just off Interstate 35-E near Fouts Field. The \$15 million building is expected to open in spring 1999. To learn more about naming opportunities — gifts to the project that involve engraved names on bricks, plaques, etc. — contact the college's director of development, Deanna Dunham, at (940) 565-3707.

◆ Graduate student **S. Wayne Foster** in the College of Music won the prestigious first **Dallas International Organ Competition** in April at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas. He took home the first prize, \$25,000, plus the \$5,000 audience prize. His award includes an engagement to play a new work with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

◆ Jazz alumni and others will gather on campus Nov. 14-15 for a celebration in honor of the **50th anniversary of jazz at UNT**. Anniversary events include a kick-off party; Golden Anniversary Luncheon with guest speaker **Leon Breeden**, jazz director from 1959 to 1981; alumni jam session; and the highlight event, the jazz