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FASHION IS A DISCIPLINE AND AN ART

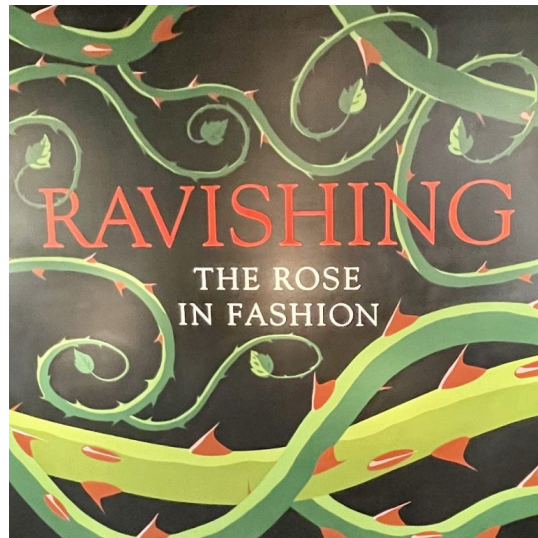
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Review: “Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion”



BY LIBERTY IMHOFF · NOVEMBER 16, 2021



“Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion”, © Manic Metallic 2021

*“Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What’s Montague? ...O, be some other name!
What’s in a name? that which we call a rose
By Any Other Name would smell as sweet”*

Romeo and Juliet, Act-II, Scene-II, Lines 38-49

Juliet Capulet’s famous scene in which she declared that names are irrelevant and do not define the person behind them (in this case, her lover Romeo Montague) has been quoted ad nauseam by many a literary aficionado, and we’re adding to the literary pile – this

time, in support of our recent walkthrough of the Fashion Institute of Technology's exhibition, "Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion".



(l-r): Thom Browne & Noir Kei Ninomiya; Dolce & Gabbana and Patrick Kelly (two suits); Claudia Gisèle Ntsama & Yves Saint Laurent for Christian Dior; all photos © Manic Metallic 2021

The rose occupies a complex position in our hearts and minds. It is seen as the ultimate show of romance when a man brings home a bouquet of red roses to his partner. Then there are the rose-petaled baths, which are viewed as a true show of luxury when paired with candles and a glass of wine. White roses are given a veneer of innocence and purity, while yellow roses are symbolic of joy and friendship.

For all of their associations with seduction and beauty, however, roses always reserve the right to defend themselves from those that would do them harm via the use of thorns. And in this way, maybe we all have a lesson to learn from this elegant flower – a lesson of setting boundaries. Beautiful things must be cherished, valued, and protected.



Photos from the "Rose Garden Of Hats"; all photos © Manic Metallic 2021

Similarly, these lessons of the rose transfer to our treatment of fashion. The designers whose works – of which over 130 were present – received inclusion in the "Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion" exhibition understand that wisdom particularly well. Upon entering the exhibit, visitors were greeted with what was called a "Rose Garden Of Hats" organized into rose-themed groups such as miniatures and straw hats. Included were hats from well-known fashion houses such as Schiaparelli, Balenciaga, and Yves Saint Laurent; famous

department stores such as Bergdorf Goodman, Henri Bendel, and Saks Fifth Avenue; and international milliners such as Caroline Reboux and Mr. John. Examples of the work can be seen above.



Photos of persons wearing rose-adorned items; photo © Manic Metallic 2021

Situated along the wall of this section were around 75 original photos of persons wearing both real and artificial roses in various ways. The intention here was to show how these roses interacted with the body when donned. Something that was of value to learn from this exhibit portion was the origin of the words 'corsage' and 'boutonnière'. The **corsage**, meaning "bodice" in French, was the place on a woman's garment where flowers were pinned; this was often on the left side because of proximity to the heart. The **boutonnière**, which was known as a favor, was a combination of single roses or buds that men often wore with fern leaves in the top buttonhole of their coats or jackets.



(l-r) Comme des Garçons; Charles Jeffrey Loverboy & Kenzo; Dries Van Noten, NIHL, & Duro Olowu;
all photos © Manic Metallic 2021

Moving into the primary portion of the exhibit – the “Rose Garden Of Fashion” – exhibition attendees were treated to a display of over fifty ensembles which were grouped based on color and were either made from fabrics containing rose patterns, inspired by the form of the rose, named for the rose, or were decorated with artificial roses.

With “Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion”, the curators took what could have been a fairly lightweight subject (roses) and gave it what turned out to be a studied examination through the eyes of both themselves and the designers present in this exhibition. With some art – which, Manic Metallic has always believed that fashion is art – it is enough to relish in its presence and allow the work to wash over you. This is not one of those exhibitions. This is a show in which we’d advise attendees to read every museum label presented along with each ensemble. Taking in the designers’ inspirations and points of view here makes the exhibition experience so much richer. And, by extension, it makes the visitor richer for having shown up to see it.

The Fashion Institute of Technology’s “Ravishing: The Rose In Fashion” is open to the public for viewing through November 28, 2021, at the Museum at FIT in New York City.

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