

"Fashion Independent" Opens at Phoenix Art Museum

Written by Arizona Foothills

The Phoenix Art Museum has recently kicked off its latest exhibition- *Fashion Independent: The Original Style of Ann Bonfoey Taylor*. This exclusive fashion design exhibition explores the wardrobe, style and vision of a great American tastemaker.



"Ann Bonfoey Taylor was beautiful, fashionable, intelligent, fun and a marvelous hostess, who entertained friends, family and international dignitaries," commented Dennita Sewell, curator of fashion design, Phoenix Art Museum. "Yet her accomplishments went far beyond being a renowned hostess; she was also an Olympic skier, championship tennis player, licensed pilot, flight instructor during World War II, successful skiwear designer and a skilled sportswoman."

Of Taylor's many talents, fashion was her greatest passion. Throughout her life, she demonstrated exceptional judgment about clothes; her original style was classic and sophisticated but with great flair. She was regularly interviewed and photographed for fashion and lifestyle magazines from the 1930s to the 1970s and during that time, she assembled a custom-made wardrobe of day and evening wear by the most gifted 20th-century designers.

In 2008 the Taylor family donated Ann's extraordinary wardrobe to Phoenix Art Museum. Comprised of 200 pieces, the collection includes 60 full ensembles and additional accessories from the most masterful fashion designers of the era including:

Charles James

James dressed the most fashionable American, British and French women of his generation. Notoriously fickle and sometimes ill-tempered, he only made clothes for those he liked and who possessed a presence and figure he appreciated. Taylor had a number of coats, suits and gowns custom-made by him from 1949 through 1953. Working with James established her as one of the best-dressed and most distinguished tastemakers of the era.



Cristóbal Balenciaga

Coco Chanel once said that Balenciaga was one of the only couturiers in Paris who could make a garment from start to finish. While Chanel suits prevailed among the luncheon set during the 1960s, women of utmost distinction like Taylor arrived in Balenciaga.

As a young designer, Balenciaga opened boutiques in San Sebastián, Madrid and Barcelona that catered to Spanish royals and the aristocracy. During the Spanish Civil War, he immigrated to Paris, where he launched his couture house in 1937. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, his impeccable tailoring and unpretentious, flattering designs transformed the way women dressed.

Hubert de Givenchy

Givenchy opened a fashion house in Paris in 1952. He based his novel collection on the American trend for separates; even eveningwear consisted of interchangeable pieces. His designs appealed to young women of fashion including Audrey Hepburn whom he dressed in some of her most iconic roles.



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Madame Grès

Called “the sphinx of fashion” by the fashion press, Grès constructed her persona as carefully as her garments. Her well-off family discouraged an early desire to become a sculptor, so she turned to fashion instead.

Grès approached her designs with the passion of a true artist. In the mid-1960s, when ready-to-wear collections gained popularity, she remained devoted to couture. She continued to drape every style personally on a mannequin until she retired in the 1980s.

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