



## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

**THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS**  
**KATHARINE HEPBURN**  
**DRESSED FOR STAGE & SCREEN**  
**OCTOBER 19, 2019 – JANUARY 12, 2020**

PITTSBURGH, PA, September 26, 2019 — The Frick Pittsburgh will present *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage & Screen* at The Frick Art Museum from October 19, 2019 through January 12, 2020. Drawn from the collection at the Kent State University Museum this exhibition presents an exciting look at a range of costumes and fashions that were instrumental in shaping some of the most memorable characters Hepburn portrayed over her long career. Included are costumes from the stage productions of *The Philadelphia Story* (1939), *Without Love* (1942), and *Coco* (1969), as well as the classic films *Stage Door* (1937), *Adam's Rib* (1949), and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1962), and television movies such as *Love Among the Ruins* (1975). Additionally, Hepburn's "signature look," an ensemble of tailored beige trousers and linen jackets, will be featured alongside vintage posters, playbills, photos, and other artifacts and ephemera that illustrate Hepburn's exceptional career. The exhibition will remain on view through January 12, 2020.

## **ABOUT KATHARINE HEPBURN**

It's difficult to imagine a more iconic persona than that of Katharine Hepburn (1907–2003). The adjectives often used to describe her—independent, spirited, confident, quick-witted—all conjure an embodiment of modern, 20th-century womanhood. Universally recognized as one of the greatest actresses of all time, Hepburn received 12 Best Actress nominations from the Motion Picture Academy, taking four awards home for performances in *Morning Glory* (1933), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), *The Lion in Winter* (1968), and *On Golden Pond* (1981).

Unsurprisingly, Hepburn grew up in a household with progressive parents. Her mother was the president of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and an outspoken social reformer, and young Katharine grew up surrounded by women's rights parades and political debate. Her father was also a dynamic personality—a medical doctor and an athlete, who was supportive of his wife's important work outside the home.

Katharine Hepburn's outspoken and opinionated personality may seem to be in contrast to her identity as a long-limbed glamorous Hollywood beauty, who dated Howard Hughes and was known to wear three pairs of false eyelashes, but Hepburn was, after all, an actress, a master at crafting her image on screen—and off. (The exhibition features one of her makeup kits with examples of the false eyelashes, which she used to bewitching effect.) In addition to her stellar career on stage and screen, Hepburn became known for her distinct style—wearing trousers at a time when it still raised eyebrows. Her preference for relaxed, casual, but chic clothing led to a 1985 Lifetime Achievement award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

## **ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

The exhibition features 37 costumes, along with other items of clothing, related to Ms. Hepburn's career on stage and screen. Additional items include pieces from her personal wardrobe, accessories, cosmetics, photo collages of film stills, movie posters, lobby cards, and press books. All of the costumes and accessories are originally from Ms. Hepburn's personal collection and were given as a bequest to the Kent State University Museum. More than a dozen different designers are represented, including Howard Greer (1896–1974), Edith Head (1897–1981), Valentina (1899–1989), Muriel King (1900–1977), Sophie Devine of Motley (Audrey Sophia Harris 1900–1966), Norman Hartnell (1901–1979), Irene (1901–

1962), Walter Plunkett (1902–1982), Ray Diffin (1922–2012), Ruth Morley (1925–1991), and Jane Greenwood (b. 1934).

Famed costume designer Edith Head once said, “One does not design for Miss Hepburn, one designs with her. She’s a real professional and she has very definite feelings about what things are right for her, whether it has to do with costumes, scripts, or her entire lifestyle.”<sup>1</sup> Hepburn understood both what worked for her physical attributes and what would help her to portray the character. (A hat that Edith Head created for the film *Rooster Cogburn* is included in the exhibition.)

Exhibition highlights include an evening gown designed by Muriel King that Hepburn wore as aspiring actress Terry Randall in *Stage Door*, a wonderful ensemble film about young women studying acting in New York, in which Hepburn shares billing with Ginger Rogers and Lucille Ball. She wears the grey silk net and crepe de chine dress during an emotional breakthrough performance in the film.

One of Katharine Hepburn’s favorite designers was the Russian émigré Valentina Schlee, known simply as Valentina. Valentina was an important New York-based designer, known for wearing her own designs and cultivating an air of exotic glamour. Her dress shop was a fashionable mecca for young women, who would scrimp and save to own a Valentina dress. Her glamorous clientele included Greta Garbo as well as Hepburn, who wore Valentina both on stage and in her personal life. Valentina’s designs accentuated Hepburn’s small waist and long legs, creating an elegant, sophisticated silhouette, which was particularly suitable for the 1940 stage production of *The Philadelphia Story*, in which Hepburn played strong-willed socialite Tracy Lord. Three of Valentina’s original designs for *The Philadelphia Story* are featured in the exhibition—including Tracy Lord’s pink silk organza, chiffon, and crepe de chine wedding gown, a thoroughly modern green jumpsuit in raw silk, and a striking ensemble featuring a red silk coat belted over a pleated white Celanese dress, which reportedly caused audible gasps from the audience when Hepburn took the stage.<sup>2</sup>

Two Walter Plunkett designs are also featured in the exhibition. An aspiring actor, Plunkett was appointed head of costume design for RKO studios in 1926, and later worked for MGM. He first worked with Hepburn on her second film, *Christopher Strong*, creating an unforgettable body-clinging gold lamé moth costume. (A striking photograph of Hepburn in this costume is included in the exhibition.)

Thereafter, he worked on many films with her. Plunkett developed a reputation as a specialist in period films and was known for his meticulous research. His friendship with Hepburn was such that he often attended opening night of her stage performances. For the 1934 film *The Little Minister* Plunkett

designed a silk, velvet, and cotton gypsy costume. Although the film is black and white, the playfully colorful costume, featuring a red petticoat helped Hepburn to better embody her character—a Scottish aristocrat in gypsy costume. A few years after *The Little Minister*, Plunkett took on perhaps his most famous project—the costumes for *Gone with the Wind*. (Hepburn had reportedly recommended he read the novel after its publication in 1936.) Plunkett collaborated with Hepburn to bring many characters to life, including Amanda Bonner, the lawyer married to Spencer Tracy’s Adam Bonner in *Adam’s Rib* (1949). Plunkett’s striking silk evening gown, a draped column of black, with off-the-shoulder sleeves and an elongating train pooling at its feet, was created for a dinner party in the film. Like so many effective designs for Hepburn’s lithe, boyish build, the gown accentuated her long legs and small waist. In a famous scene in the movie, Hepburn, wearing the dress and full of exuberant energy, asks Tracy’s character to do up the back.

During this holiday season, *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage & Screen* provides a perfect opportunity for family and friends to spend time together—either rediscovering the magic of Katharine Hepburn’s star quality, or discovering for the first time the legacy of an iconic performer. Installed in a chronology that allows for an understanding of the progression of Hepburn’s career and spanning over five decades—from the 1933 play *The Lake* to the 1986 television movie *Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry*, *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage & Screen* is a rich and entertaining look at the clothes that created indelible characters, along with the importance of fashion in crafting the image of perhaps the greatest female actor of the twentieth century.

<sup>1</sup> Samelson, Judy. *Katherine Hepburn: Rebel Chic*. Skira Rizzoli, 2012, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Samelson, Judy. “The Clothes That Helped Make Kate Great: Hepburn Costume Exhibit Is an Eye-ful in Ohio.” *Playbill*, 31 Dec. 2010.

## **ADMISSION**

Adult non-members \$15; Senior/Student/Military \$13; Youth 6–16 \$8; Youth 5 and under free.

Members of The Frick Pittsburgh receive free admission.

## **EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT**

Lent by the Kent State University Museum.

The Pittsburgh presentation of *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage & Screen* is made possible by UPMC Health Plan.

## **ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH**

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, historic objects, and buildings. The Frick experience includes The Frick Art Museum, the Car and Carriage Museum, Clayton, the Frick family Gilded Age mansion, and six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens. Also included are an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (designed by renowned architects Alden & Harlow), a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Frick Pittsburgh is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets.

The Frick is open 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday; 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday; and is closed Mondays and major holidays. The public should call 412-371-0600 for information, or visit the Frick online at [TheFrickPittsburgh.org](http://TheFrickPittsburgh.org).

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