

Grace Kelly: Style Icon

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Grace Kelly in an Oleg Cassini dress, 1955.



The spectacular wardrobe of Grace Kelly, one of the most popular actresses of the 1950s, is on display at the V&A this spring. Featuring dresses from her films *High Society* and *Rear Window*, as well as the gown she wore to accept her Oscar in 1955, the display examines Grace Kelly's glamorous Hollywood image and enduring appeal. It also explores the evolution of her style as Princess Grace of Monaco, from the outfit she wore to her first meeting with Prince Rainier in

1955 to her haute couture gowns of the 1960s and '70s by her favourite couturiers Christian Dior, Balenciaga, Givenchy and Yves St Laurent.

Grace Kelly: Style Icon is arranged in three sections. 'The Actress' looks at Grace Kelly's acting career and her film costumes. Three costumes designed by MGM's designer, Helen Rose, for Grace Kelly's performance in *High Society* (1956) are on show, including a Grecian-style bathing robe and an exquisite embroidered chiffon evening gown. A black chiffon dress worn by Grace Kelly in *Rear Window* (1954) designed by Edith Head, Paramount's chief costume designer, is also on display. Alongside these are film clips of Kelly's performances and original film posters and magazines from the period.

Both on and off screen, Grace Kelly was an ambassador for classic simple American fashions such as shirtwaist dresses. She became known for her impeccable, ladylike accessories and fondness for neat hats and short white gloves. Many examples of these are on display together with spectacles and sunglasses, which she helped to make the essential fashionable accessory of the day, and the original Hermès 'Kelly bag'.

The next section of the display, 'The Bride', presents the dress Grace Kelly wore for the announcement of her engagement to Prince Rainier of Monaco and the clothes designed for her trousseau and dazzling wedding of 1956.

In May 1955 Grace Kelly attended the Cannes Film Festival. To publicise the event French magazine *Paris Match* arranged a photo shoot with the actress and Prince Rainier. On display is the floral silk taffeta dress that she wore for this first meeting. Although later described in the press as 'Dior inspired' the dress was in fact an 'easy to sew' outfit from a McCall's Pattern book.

Other highlights of this section are the belted shirtwaist dress by Branell of New York, which Grace Kelly chose to wear for the official announcement of her engagement to Prince Rainier, and the lace bodice and skirt she wore for her civil marriage ceremony in 1956. Archive film footage of their religious wedding is also shown.

The final section of the display, 'The Princess', examines how Grace Kelly's sense of style developed in her new role as Princess of Monaco. It presents haute couture outfits created by Parisian couturiers for her official royal engagements such as the purple gown by Yves St Laurent worn in 1981 to a benefit gala for London's Royal Opera House, where she met Lady Diana Spencer and Prince Charles.

Spanning the great changes in fashion across the 1950s, '60s and '70s, this section includes eight dresses by Christian Dior, an opulent beaded jacket by Balenciaga, the striking 'Mondrian dress' designed by Yves Saint Laurent in 1965 and two-piece suits by Coco Chanel, together with jewellery by Van Cleef and Arpels. These are shown alongside photographs and film footage of Princess Grace at both public and private functions.

The wardrobe of Princess Grace is on loan to the V&A from the Palace Princier, Monaco through the Grimaldi Forum with additional loans from the Balenciaga Museum in Spain and private lenders. H.S.H. Prince Albert said: *"My mother treasured her clothes and would have been delighted to have them exhibited at the V&A. Throughout her life she exuded effortless elegance, whether she was appearing at the most spectacular public occasion, or a simple family gathering."*

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Notes to Editors

Admission: £6 (£4 concessions). Book in advance online at www.vam.ac.uk or call 0844 209 1770 (booking fees apply).

The exhibition has been curated for the V&A by Jenny Lister, V&A Fashion Curator, and is designed by V&A Design.

To accompany the display V&A Publishing has produced a new fully illustrated book, *Grace Kelly Style* (£19.99 HB). It includes essays by Jenny Lister, Kristina Haugland and Samantha Erin Safer. For further press information about the book contact Julie Chan on 020 7942 2701 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk

For further PRESS information about the exhibition contact Rebecca Ward for the V&A Press Office on 020 7613 3306 or email press@rebeccaward.co.uk (not for publication).

A selection of high resolution press images are available to download from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>

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