

18 September 2013

Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion

NGV International | 18 October 2013 - 2 March 2014 | Admission fees apply



This October, the National Gallery of Victoria will showcase the glamour and modernity of the Art Deco period through the work of fashion's most influential photographer, Edward Steichen, and stunning Art Deco fashion garments and accessories. The exhibition *Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion* is the first Australian survey of Steichen, widely considered to have created the first modern fashion photo.

The exhibition will feature over 200 of Steichen's original vintage photographs, drawn from the vast archives of Condé Nast where he was chief photographer for their most prestigious magazines *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* during the 1920s and 30s, alongside more than forty exquisite Art Deco fashion items from the NGV Collection and select private collections.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said that *Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion* is the first major Australian retrospective dedicated to Steichen's iconic Condé Nast work.

"Steichen's evocative images are regarded as among the most striking in early-to-mid-20th century photography and his fashion work in particular revolutionised the genre of fashion photography. This exhibition provides a rare opportunity to view such a large body of his work and to see up close the intricate details of outstanding Art Deco fashion items that highlight the interplay between fashion and photography," said Mr Ellwood.

The exhibition will present Steichen's pioneering modernist fashion photography and celebrity portraiture, produced during his fifteen year career as chief photographer for esteemed Condé Nast publications *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*. During this period he put his exceptional talents and prodigious energy to work, creating a legacy of unequalled brilliance as he photographed the world of high fashion and stars of contemporary popular culture including Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Charlie Chaplin, Katherine Hepburn, Clara Bow, Louise Brooks, Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper, Winston Churchill and George Gershwin.

Steichen's images transformed fashion photography and influenced generations of photographers, capturing the sophistication of the newly liberated 'modern woman' and encapsulating the chic beauty and avant-garde style of the Art Deco movement. Renowned as an innovator and master of lighting, his practice bridged the transition from photography's early soft-focus, pictorialist style to clean, crisp modernism.

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Echoing the aesthetics of Steichen's photographs, this exhibition will also celebrate the fashion borne of the period with over forty exquisite Art Deco garments and accessories by leading designers of the day including Chanel, Lanvin, Madeleine Vionnet, Madame Paquin and Callot Soeurs. The elegance of old Hollywood glamour and high end fashion will be seen through a range of pieces - including swimsuits, coats, evening gowns, beach pyjamas, dresses, hats, bags and shoes, as well as an early example of Chanel's little black dress.

Art Deco style developed in response to changing lifestyles and ideals following the First World War. Typically characterised by sleek, geometric lines, rich colours and luxurious adornments, these new forms represented a shift away from traditional values; in fashion, hemlines rose and hairstyles became shorter, culminating in the infamous mid-twenties flapper style.

Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion will also display rare copies of *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* that demonstrate the way Steichen's photographs appeared on the magazine page.

Two catalogues will accompany the exhibition: *Art Deco Fashion*, a magazine-style volume that charts the development of the modern silhouette and highlights some of the leading designers of the period, and *Edward Steichen: In High Fashion - The Condé Nast Years, 1923-1937*, a lavishly illustrated 288 page publication that focuses on Steichen's legendary *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* work.

The opening weekend of *Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion* will celebrate the Art Deco era with a special day of programs on Saturday 19 October inviting visitors to learn the Charleston and join experts at a free forum that will discuss the enduring legacy of Edward Steichen. For full details visit ngv.vic.gov.au.

The exhibition is organised by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography (FEP), in collaboration with the National Gallery of Victoria.

Edward Steichen & Art Deco Fashion is on display at NGV International from 18 October 2013 to 2 March 2014. Open 10am–5pm, closed Tuesdays. Admission fees apply: Adult \$12 | Concession \$10 | Family \$30.

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Image caption: Edward Steichen, American 1879–1973, emigrated to United States 1881, worked in France 1906–23, *Model wearing a black tulle headdress by Suzanne Talbot and a brocade coat with black fox collar* 1925, gelatin silver photograph, Courtesy Condé Nast Archive, © 1925 Condé Nast Publications