



Christian Dior by Marc Bohan  
Evening dress  
Silk jersey, ostrich feathers  
Spring 1968  
France  
Gift of Lauren Bacall

# Lauren Bacall

## THE LOOK

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Lauren Bacall: The Look** has been organized by the graduate students in the Fashion Institute of Technology's MA program in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice, with support from Sarah Byrd, Colleen Hill, and Ariele Elia.

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#### We would like to thank the many people who helped make this exhibition possible:

Dr. Joyce F. Brown, President, Fashion Institute of Technology

From the School of Graduate Studies: Dean Dr. Mary E. Davis; Associate Chair Denyse Montegut, Instructor Sarah Byrd, Associate Professor Lourdes Font, Chair of Graduate Exhibition Design Brenda Cowan, Assistant Professor Christina Lyons, and Marjorie Phillips

From The Museum at FIT: Director Dr. Valerie Steele; Deputy Director Patricia Mears, Associate Curator Colleen Hill, Assistant Curator Ariele Elia, and Publications Coordinator Julian Clark; Senior Curator Fred Dennis; Senior Conservator Ann Coppinger; Nicole Bloomfield and Marjorie Jonas of the Conservation Department; Museum Photographer Eileen Costa; Museum Registrar Sonia Dingilian and Associate Registrar Jill Hemingway; Exhibition Manager Michael Goiffa; Boris Chesakov and Gabrielle Lauricella of the Exhibitions Department; Lynn Sallaberry and Thomas Synnamon of the Costume Department; Curator of Education Tanya Melendez and Associate Curator of Education Melissa Marra; and Media Manager Tamsen Young

From the Precollege Program: Michele Nagel

From Communications and External Relations: Cheri Fein, Carol Leven, and Smiljana Peros

From the Gladys Marcus Library's Special Collections at FIT: Karen Trivette Cannell and April Calahan

Graphic Designer, Matthias Kern

Special Thanks to: Design Mentors Isabella Bruno, Danae Colomer, and Asal Shakeri; and Joshua Green at Archive Images

The Museum at **FIT**

SEVENTH AVENUE AT 27TH STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

Cover: Richard Rutledge/Vogue; © Condé Nast

# Lauren Bacall

## THE LOOK



March 3 – April 4, 2015

The Museum at **FIT**





Norman Norell  
Evening set  
Cashmere, silk jersey, sequins  
Circa 1958  
USA  
Gift of Lauren Bacall

## LAUREN BACALL: THE LOOK

Legendary fashion editor Diana Vreeland said of Lauren Bacall, "She's perfect all over and yet she looks like nobody else." Celebrated throughout her life as a model and an actress of stage and screen, Bacall was also a consummate lover of fashion. *Lauren Bacall: The Look* is the first exhibition to trace the development of her distinctive look and to highlight her stature as an arbiter of style.

Bacall was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1924. Her mother taught her how to look her best on a limited budget, by emphasizing simple silhouettes and quality garment construction. As a young girl, Bacall admired designer fashions in the windows of the stores along Fifth Avenue; a few years later, she wore them as a model. She was introduced to Vreeland in 1942 and started appearing in *Harper's Bazaar*. "I began to be aware of fashion," Bacall remembered of her time at the magazine. "I noticed what she [Vreeland] wore, which were always the simplest things."

In 1943, Vreeland featured Bacall on the March cover of *Harper's Bazaar*. Her piercing stare and defined features caught the attention of film director Howard Hawks. She was soon cast in Hawks' film *To Have and Have Not* (1944) opposite Humphrey Bogart, whom she married in 1945. Warner Brothers, the film's studio, dubbed Bacall and her sultry gaze "The Look." In public appearances to promote the film, she wore clothing that emphasized her tall, slender frame—sharply tailored suits, menswear-inspired ensembles, and elegant evening gowns. These styles became key aspects of her look.

By the early 1950s, Bacall was a major Hollywood star, and she had begun to develop relationships with leading fashion designers. She regularly attended presentations by couturiers in Paris, including Christian Dior and Hubert de Givenchy. Bacall later quipped, "From the day I could afford it, I shopped too much."

One of Bacall's most notable relationships was with American designer Norman Norell. Bacall loved the comfort and refinement of Norell's designs, and he publicly endorsed the relaxed sophistication of Bacall's style. He created many of her costumes for the stage and screen. One example is a pink ensemble worn by Bacall in the film *Sex and the Single Girl* (1964), styled similarly to the numerous Norell garments that she selected for her personal wardrobe.



Emanuel Ungaro  
Pantsuit  
Silk damask  
Circa 1973  
France  
Gift of Lauren Bacall



Norman Norell  
Coat and two-piece dress designed for  
*Sex and the Single Girl*  
Wool, rhinestones  
1965  
USA  
Gift of Lauren Bacall

But Bacall was by no means exclusive to Norell. She continually updated her wardrobe to incorporate the changing modes of fashion and eagerly embraced a new generation of designers. In 1968, she hosted a CBS television special, *Bacall and the Boys*, which presented the Paris fall collections to an American audience. Bacall interviewed four leading couturiers: Marc Bohan of Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin, Yves Saint Laurent, and Emanuel Ungaro. Promoting the special, Bacall said, "This will be the real fun of the program . . . the clothes I wear will be created especially for me by the four designers."

Several garments modeled by Bacall in the special are now part of the collection at The Museum at FIT, including a bright pink, molded minidress by Pierre Cardin. "You can always spot a Cardin," she said. "He has great originality and yet his designs are usable and comfortable." Bacall's penchant for easy glamour is exemplified by a sweeping, feather-trimmed evening gown by Marc Bohan.

Bacall had known Yves Saint Laurent from his days at Dior during the late 1950s. She purchased several of his garments, including a "le smoking" ensemble and a beaded evening ensemble complete with tunic and shorts. Another of the garments on view in the exhibition is a silk damask Emanuel Ungaro pantsuit from 1974. It demonstrates Bacall's devotion to classic silhouettes, and its wide-legged trousers are similar to styles she first wore during the 1940s.

As costume designer Theoni Aldredge told *Vogue* in 1981, "Lauren Bacall has such a style of her own that I found it difficult to impose a new style on her." With her relaxed self-confidence, Lauren Bacall affirmed her fashion sensibility with each role she played, on stage or off. *Lauren Bacall: The Look* honors the individuality and audacious attitude of a woman whose style endures and continues to influence fashion today.



Pierre Cardin  
Dress  
Dyneel (Cardine)  
1968  
France  
Gift of Lauren Bacall



Yves Saint Laurent  
Evening set  
Silk organza, sequins, beads  
Fall 1969  
France  
Gift of Lauren Bacall