

# The Jewish Link of New Jersey

## Fashion as Art in The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum

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If you love fashion elegance and have warm, nostalgic feelings about late 20th-century glamour, or you like to peek into the lives of the upper crust, you can indulge your fantasies at The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Enter the life and wardrobe closet of Countess Jacqueline de Ribes, an internationally known style icon in her day, who was dressed by designers and then became one, leading her design business from 1982 to 1995. The exhibit: Jacqueline de Ribes, The Art of Style will be on view until February 21. The collection includes her haute couture ensembles, ready-to-wear outfits and fancy-dress ball gowns. Docent tours are given Tuesday through Friday at 2 p.m., or you can join a private group tour on Wednesday, February 17, given by Englewood artist and art educator Sheryl Intrator Urman, who will also take the group to look at fashion through the ages in select paintings from the museum's collections.

The Costume Institute has developed a multimedia style in its exhibits, mixing displays of fashion with photography and video to show context, and music and light to give the exhibit a sensory, performance-art quality. Urman said the Institute's treatment helps turn fashion into art from its practical, utilitarian beginnings, and gives you a feeling of being included. "You're not just on your own, the way you look at a painting," she explained. "You're seeing slide shows about who Jacqueline de Ribes was and how she related to the celebrities in her social circles. You see the mannequins in her dresses, but the background is lit up with photos of her in these outfits, or of the time period. It's making fashion into an experience."

Previous exhibits drew viewers who were fascinated by the mysterious culture of the East in China Through the Looking Glass, or the urban contemporary in-your-face style of designers like Charles James and Alexander McQueen. Urman thinks viewers are attracted to this exhibit by beauty they can relate to. "These clothes evoke the last decades of the 20th century, and women of a certain age remember these styles. We can look at them and remember wearing blouses with ruffles like these, or maxi skirts with velvet patches. It's elegant, stylized clothing that maybe we could never afford, but we can remember when these styles were in vogue and influenced what we did wear."

While The Costume Institute shows fashion as art, Urman will also take her group to look at fashion in art. “We’ll be looking at Goya’s paintings of royalty in rich velvets and satin sashes. We’ll see the empress Josephine and how she influenced fashion, and we’ll look at paintings with white, gauzy dresses that were part of, and may have helped spur the French revolution. We’ll see how the impressionists began painting everyday life to rebel against the academic art world, and they captured the beautiful clothes women were wearing in their new style of art. And we’ll look at how the ideal female figure has changed over time by seeing how women were painted and what they were wearing.”

For more information about The Costume Institute, visit:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/jacqueline-de-ribes>.

For information about the February 17 tour given by Sheryl Intrator Urman visit:

[http://www.artforlearning.com/2016\\_Flyer\\_fashion\\_De\\_Ribes.pdf](http://www.artforlearning.com/2016_Flyer_fashion_De_Ribes.pdf), or [contactartforlearning@yahoo.com](mailto:contactartforlearning@yahoo.com).

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