



FIRST U.S. BALENCIAGA EXHIBITION IN TWO DECADES DEBUTS

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DALLAS—The first U.S. exhibition in more than 20 years of the pioneering fashion designs of Cristóbal Balenciaga will be presented at the Meadows Museum Feb. 4 through June 17. *Balenciaga and His Legacy: Haute Couture from the Texas Fashion Collection* will showcase 70 of the Spanish-born designer's works spanning his most creative period from 1949 to 1968. The Meadows is the only venue for the show.

The exhibition will explore Balenciaga's legacy from the perspective of the women he dressed, the buyers and fashion editors who helped him build an international brand and other important designers he influenced. Stage designer Winn Morton has recreated an opulent setting for the exhibition, including a monumental backdrop evoking the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, flanked by architectural elements that recall the original House of Balenciaga. The setting reflects the refinement and luxury of *haute couture* and pays homage to the materials, craftsmanship and details which are intrinsic elements of Balenciaga's designs. Here museum visitors will discover a collection of rarely seen Balenciaga gowns, hats and other ensembles. The exhibition and study have been organized by the Meadows Museum at SMU, in collaboration with the Texas Fashion Collection, School of Visual Arts at the University of North Texas, Denton.

Outside of Spain, the Meadows—part of SMU—has one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art in the world. Five years ago its curators toured the Texas Fashion Collection. After seeing so many Balenciaga gowns, they inquired about a show at the Meadows. Balenciaga was born in Guetaria, Spain, and many of his couture designs were inspired by a distinctly Spanish style, from his bullfighter "bolero" jackets to his use of *madroños*, an ornamental trim of tassels, to his *Goyaesque* shapes and colors.

"Balenciaga is arguably the most innovative, influential, admired and recognized Spanish haute couture designer of the 20th century," said Dr. Mark A. Roglán, director of the Meadows Museum, "and his work was and still is highly praised by his peers, including Chanel, Dior, Givenchy and Oscar de la Renta. The public is in for a dazzling exhibition that will further the appreciation and understanding of fashion and design. We are excited to partner with UNT, and

to assist the Texas Fashion Collection in furthering its goal of building a museum to showcase this unique collection."

There have been only two solo exhibitions of Balenciaga's work in the U.S. The first was the groundbreaking *World of Balenciaga* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1973, which was curated by former Vogue editor Diana Vreeland. The second, titled simply *Balenciaga*, was at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York in 1986. The Meadows exhibition follows on the heels of a yearlong retrospective, *Balenciaga Paris*, at the Musée de la Mode et du Textile in Paris.

This new exhibition relies on the stories of Balenciaga's most devoted Texas clients to examine his lasting influence, which is still seen today on runways. Claudia Heard de Osborne, a Texas oil heiress and international socialite, had a close friendship with him. From her student days at the University of Texas at Austin, de Osborne maintained a long friendship with Edward Marcus, a member of the Neiman Marcus retail family. Because of him, she donated her Balenciaga gowns to the Texas Fashion Collection before her death in 1988. The other woman whose gowns will be on display is Neiman Marcus fashion buyer Bert de Winter. Her prophetic sense of style in the 1950s helped shape Dallas as a fashion mecca.

Balenciaga's cult of perfection influenced a generation of designers. Designs by Hubert de Givenchy and Oscar de la Renta donated to the Texas Fashion Collection from philanthropist and fashion icon Mercedes T. Bass also will be in the exhibition. In addition, there will be a dress by Oscar de la Renta on loan from Mrs. Laura Bush, which she wore to the January 2005 Presidential inauguration, and an elegant black Givenchy suit worn by Audrey Hepburn in the film *Charade*.

"This will be an intimate look at a very private man," said Myra Walker, the guest curator of the show and director of the Texas Fashion Collection. "We have focused on the relationship between couturier and client, and by extension the fashion industry mid-20th century, which is considered the Golden Age of haute couture. Balenciaga lived through a period of fashion history rich in creativity and invention."

On Saturday, Feb. 10, the Meadows Museum will host a symposium about Balenciaga's legacy, with guest lecturers Harold Koda, from the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Pamela Golbin, curator from the Musée de la Mode et du Textile at the Louvre in Paris; Jean Druessedow, Kent State University in Ohio; and Maggie Eckardt, a former Balenciaga model from 1961 to 1965.

The Texas Fashion Collection is housed in a 4,000-square-foot climate-controlled space on the UNT campus. To honor their aunt, Carrie Marcus Neiman, Stanley and Edward Marcus founded the collection in 1938 and it eventually merged with the Dallas Museum of Fashion to create the extensive Texas Fashion Collection. The collection was donated to UNT in 1972 and grew from 3,000 items to more than 15,000 today. To learn more about the Texas Fashion Collection, go to www.tfc.unt.edu.

The Meadows Museum, a division of SMU's Meadows School of the Arts, contains works from the 10th to the 21st century, including Spanish masterpieces by El Greco, Velázquez, Ribera,

Murillo, Goya, Miró and Picasso. To learn more about the museum, go to www.meadowsmuseumdallas.org.

The Meadows Foundation provided major funding for the exhibition and for an accompanying catalogue, *Balenciaga and His Legacy*, written by Walker and published by Yale University Press, UK. Additional sponsors include Modern Luxury magazine, NBC-5 and WRR 101.1 FM.

Admission to the Meadows Museum is \$8 per visitor and free to museum members, children under 12, and SMU students, staff and faculty. Museum hours are Tues. - Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thurs. until 8 p.m.; and Sun. 12 to 5 p.m. Free parking is available for museum visitors in the garage under the building.

Note to Editor: Accompanying the news release is a CD with high resolution images of the fashion on display at the exhibition, *Balenciaga and His Legacy: Haute Couture from the Texas Fashion Collection*. Please credit each image "The Texas Fashion Collection, School of Visual Arts at the University of North Texas; photo by Michael Bodycomb."