



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

Lauren Bacall

THE LOOK

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The Museum at **FIT**

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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
Dyrel (Cardine)
1968
France
Gift of Lauren Bacall



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