

Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume

Then and Now



Picture source – Patricia Harris



Picture source – Pat Sparrer

- 1975** Louise Hawley Stone gifted a \$1000 bond to establish a fund in support of the Textiles and Costume Section (at that time, the Textile Department).
At the request of Curator Katherine B. Brett, Patricia Harris was asked to form a committee to grow the initial gift. The purpose of the funds was to contribute to the purchase of outstanding textiles and costume to enhance the quality of the worldwide ROM textiles and costume collection.
- 1975-1990** The Textile Endowment Fund Committee (TEFCO) composed of docents and a few friends successfully presented events and lectures, even after the four textile galleries were closed for Expansion and Renovation (1978-1982). By 1989, with no gallery for exhibitions or to present events and lectures, and the committee questioning “Why bother acquiring artifacts which will remain in the dark, accessed only to specialized scholars?”, it was disbanded.
- 1987-9** The new curator, Alexandra Palmer, was fascinated by the collection of couture garments and asked “What was going on in Toronto and who are the ladies who wore these clothes?”
- 1996** A new committee, the Textile and Costume Committee (TEXCO), convened to join the clamor for a gallery, specific to the special needs for exhibiting Textiles and Costume.
- Christmas 1999** Tired of hearing her continuous chorus for a gallery, William Harris presented Patricia with a surprise present – a donation to ROM for a new Textile and Costume Gallery. Thrilled and astonished, she courageously responded, “That is only half of what we need - We need an endowment to provide for rotating exhibitions!”
- 2002** When new ROM Director, William Thorsell, was shown items in the textile and costume collection, he was captivated by handsome late 18th C. embroidered French gentlemen’s court ensembles. From then on, in his fund raising appeals for Renaissance ROM, he championed the need for a special public exhibition space for textiles and costume.

- 2002 - 2006** As the construction of the Daniel Libeskind Crystal unfolded, the Textile and Costume Committee refocused itself to growing an endowment. The Burnham Brett Endowment for Textiles and Costume, named for three outstanding ROM curators, was established to support rotating exhibitions and programs in the new gallery.
- 2006** Following the lead of other groups, the Friends of Textiles & Costume (FTC). This group was comprised of ROM Members, who for a fee in addition to their annual ROM Membership, became a Friend. The special Friends' donations purchased items requested by Textile and Costume staff to relieve their workload. Unspent funds were subsequently transferred to the Burnham Brett Endowment.
- April 16, 2008** The Patricia Harris Gallery for Textiles & Costume opened to fanfare at the top of the Michael Lee- Chin Crystal. It is a glorious, unconventional space requiring imaginative display techniques. Patricia Harris stated that she looked "forward to the Gallery becoming alive with excited students, members of fashion & art communities and the public at large".
- 2008 to present** At the time of the opening Dr. Alexandra Palmer commented that having a dedicated space would allow for the exhibition of the depth and breadth of the ROM's significant collection of textiles and fashion arts from around the world and across time. This has been clearly been the case from the very beginning as the rotation of items through the Gallery included:
- a gold and silver overdress made of a textile originating in Egypt
 - exploring the use of paint, ink and dye in textiles around the world
 - the evolution of creating cloth through the ancient technology of weaving
 - the oldest surviving archaeological textiles
 - neoclassical luxurious silk textiles promoting personal and cultural prestige, Marie Antoinette's Court dress
 - Chinese textiles and costumes
 - the art of weaving to shape, draping and tailoring
- Besides the rotation of collection items, specialized exhibitions in the Gallery have included:
- Riotous Colour, Daring Patterns: Fashions & Textiles 18th to 21st Centuries
 - BIG!
 - Fashion Follows Form: Designs for Sitting
 - Cairo Under Wraps: Early Islamic Textiles
 - Viva México! Clothing & Culture
 - Art, Honour, and Ridicule: Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana
 - Christian Dior
- Going Forward** The Friends of Textiles & Costume continues today, supporting staff and the ROM's collection. The Burnham Brett Endowment has been able to contribute to the installation of several highly acclaimed exhibitions in the Gallery. The fund continues to grow with a goal of \$1m capital fund to sustain exhibition funding. This goal is in sight.
- At the same time, the upcoming Iris van Herpen: Transforming Fashion continues with the goal of exhibiting fashion arts and the 2019 Chintz *Exhibit Cloth that Changed the World: the painted and printed cottons of India* would fulfill the commitment to exhibiting the depth and breadth of the ROM's significant collection of textiles from around the world and across time.
- With such determination of ROM volunteers, staff and members, leading to the gift of the Harris family, it is no wonder we acknowledge 10 years of the opening of the Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume.