

# **The Brilliant 1980's**

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The Brilliant 1980's is an exhibit from the Fashion Museum in Riga, Latvia from the months of May 2019 to October 2019. This exhibit features iconic designs from this time period and really shows off the fashions from this recognizable era. Filled with extravagant colors, sparkles, unique and wild patterns, and memorable silhouettes, this exhibit displays its timeless pieces on mannequins to really get a true visual of what the garments looked like on. The mannequins are also highlighted with a spotlight to really allow the sparkles to shine and the colors to pop to allow the audience to get the full effect of details in each garment. Groups of mannequins are displayed together with similar garments/garments from a specific designer. For example, there is a section featuring a collection by designer Jean Paul Gaultier that shows off his most famous collection from fall-winter 1986. His collection presents Russian

Constructivism. Accessories such as

shoes, sunglasses, earrings, bracelets, and hats are displayed in cases with other items from the 1980s such as a rotary phone and 80s fashion magazines. Another cool display is a vanity with makeup palettes with the bright, fun colors that were popular to wear on the



eyes, along with other items that would be on a vanity like earrings and colorful jewelry boxes.

Yves Saint Laurent is also featured in this exhibit with a cocktail dress inspired by Shakespeare's



literature and art consisting of influences from Aragon, Cocteau, Apollinaire, Matisse, and the Cubists. The dress has pink, yellow, purple and blue, along with ruffles and bows. Another display is inspired by Princess

Diana when she brought hats back into style by wearing them at the royal court. The hat is paired with a Royal magazine, as well as a flashy necklace. When looking at the displays, it true feels like you are walking into the 1980s and experiencing the fashion of the time. I think the name of the exhibit, The Brilliant 1980s, is a very fitting and exciting name. When I think of 1980s fashion, I think of neon, exciting colors, shoulder pads, big hair, blue eyeshadow, and pink blushed cheeks. The theme that stands out to me in this exhibit is flashy glitz and glam. The fun garments and colors truly help to build this theme and express the colorful, flashy 1980s.



After looking over this exhibit, I find the theme that the major theme here is celebrating the revival of fashion and success. In the 1980s, it is stated that the middle class grew to be wealthier, and “status and its’ attributes mean more”. Because of this great uproar of prosperity brought about from the 1980s, I believe this is reflected in the iconic, flashy clothes they wore. Especially the garments and style we think of when remembering this era. Hence, the sparkles, the shine, the bright and happy colors, the funky patterns, and the exaggerated silhouettes. Going along with this idea of great prosperity and revival of fashion, the motto of the 1980s seems to be quite fitting. “More is more” is what this exhibit calls it. The audience can visually see what this quote is describing when looking at all of the garments and accessories in this exciting, flashy exhibit. You can also clearly understand this motto in 1980s makeup and hairstyles alone. One particular display in this exhibit, I find, really embraces the theme of success. The display features a powerful neon pink dress with large, puffy sleeves and a big flower tied on the waist. This dress symbolizes success for women and shapes a new image of women as a leader. It sets

up a new idea that by day, women are successful leaders in the corporate world, but by night, they are “seductive” and “dangerous” in



their radiant clothing. This time period is significant for its growth of success and this idea is reflected through its loud garments that speak for themselves and boast its prosperity and accomplishments, especially for women and the working women. Going along with the theme of success and shining brilliance, another great display from this exhibit that helps to reinforce the theme is showed off in a box where the hat worn in the Royal Court by Princess Diana is placed on top of a fashion magazine. This is such a cool piece to see, not only because it belonged to



Princess Diana herself, but the hat is a nice hot fuchsia pink that seems to be made

of silk. The hat also features designs that resemble pink roses and leaves around the top. The silk material that makes up the hat shows off wealth, while the flowers resemble class, which again, reinforce the theme of success shown throughout the exhibit. Along with the hat and the high fashion magazine, a pair of shiny black and metal earrings lay on top as well as what I assume to be a prestigious fragrance. The earrings would most likely represent a well decorated individual

who may want to show off their great wealth, as well as the fragrance. The flashy clothing, accessories, and makeup of this era could also be considered a form of conspicuous consumption. The way I see it displayed in this exhibit is the flashier and more colorful the garments are, the wealthier they look, which seems to be a look that was very much desired. During the 1980s, it seems to me that celebrities were greatly influencing styles too. Like Princess Diana's hat, other celebrities were having clothing pieces designed for them that were



just as  
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Designer Arnold  
Scaasi has a few  
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the theme of success and wealth that the exhibit is trying to present with the 1980s. This exhibit features four garments made by him. The first being a silver, shiny, full length skirt with a matching jacket and a white undershirt. This design also includes matching shiny gloves. The second garment includes a silver, metallic jacket with puffy sleeves along with a matching silver dress. The third piece is a black, long sleeved sequin dress with gold diamond details around the mid-section, the chest, and the sleeves. The fourth and final dress is a brilliant, royal purple color with a large matching purple bow in front with beautiful draping. This dress also features an interesting design around the chest that creates a really square shape with complementary quarter

sleeves. All of the garments designed by Arnold Scaasi indeed fit the glitzy, sparkly fashion period and are truly fit for this exhibit. Scaasi design evening gowns for celebrities such as Joan Crawford, Ivana Trump, Lauren Bekol, Elizabeth Taylor, Catherine Deneuve, and Princess Yasmin Aga Kahn. Besides celebrities, Scaasi also designed dresses for first ladies, including Mamie Eisenhower, Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, and Laura Bush. After designing such iconic and beautiful garments for multiple important figures and celebrities, Arnold Scaasi's name took off. He then became a famous and prestigious designer for this era and also was in very high demand, and eventually represented the higher society/status in New York. The garments displayed in this exhibit truly make you feel like you are looking into a part of history in such a glamorous time period and it really makes you feel like you are taking a trip back in time.

Another display that speaks out to the average person of the time rather than just the rich and famous exclusively, includes a display filled with garments that a full of everyday activities. For example, this display shows off clothes that people would wear on an average day or doing athletic activities such as yoga or running. Besides success, another big idea of the 1980s was individuality and exploring sexuality. Other popular garments, besides the extravagant ones, include corsets, leather pieces, and body-conscious dresses, which we now know as "bodycon" dresses. In this display in particular, the first mannequin wears a pair of acid wash jeans along with a hot pink sweater with a vibrant, loud pattern, in which this mannequin in particular really screams 1980. The next mannequin features a black jacket with the iconic padded shoulders and gold detailing, a gold scarf, and a type of black suit, which is still quite glam, but a little more toned down to what the average person may wear or be able to afford. The next mannequin is a simple monochromatic blue sweater where the length goes clear down to the mid-thigh, along with a pair of the same royal blue-colored slacks. While this outfit is rather simple compared to



the others, it still makes a loud statement with such a bold color.

The last mannequin is wearing bright red pants that seem to be made of vinyl, along with a cropped, patterned puffer jacket, and a red hat to complete the look. This seems to

resemble streetwear worn today, and honestly looks kind of like an outfit that you would see on the streets today. All of the garments shown in this display are definitely bold and bright, but much tamer than garments created for celebrities, however, you can still see that even with normal people, that extravagance and bold style was key.

Overall, I really enjoyed looking at and diving into this exhibit. The 1980s is probably my least favorite fashion era, but once I saw the glamorous side that did not necessarily involve shoulder pads, obnoxious makeup, and over teased hair, I genuinely liked it and felt glamorous looking at it myself. It was empowering knowing that this was an era of female success and rise to the top of the professional work environment and that it was reflected into their clothes to make a power statement. I feel like the way the garments were displayed helped to develop the theme of success too. Garments that were from certain designers were chosen and put together to portray prosperity, and the way they used light to shine onto the garments to make them feel like they were in action gave an invigorating and euphoric touch to the senses. It seems that each section of the exhibit laid out different ways that the 1980s were prosperous, such as by creating a section for Arnold Scaasi who designed clothes for the rich, wealthy, famous, and successful. Also, the section for the royal Princess Diana, creates a dignified and noble feel, especially



because the hat displayed was a piece she actually wore. Also, of course, the Yves Saint Laurent garment adds another luxurious and exclusive touch. Overall, I find the overall goal of this exhibit is to show off the wealth and success that was created during the 1980s through the glamour, shine, and influences of big names and designs, and I believe that the exhibit executed this theme perfectly. It absolutely feels like you are a 1980s superstar while looking at all the displays and garments being shown off. The displays that were put together are indeed appropriate to the ideas of wealth, success, prosperity, and women empowerment of this era. This exhibit is very impressive and captivating, and all displays were very extravagant and exciting, just like the 1980s.

## **Sources Cited**

The Brilliant 1980's - Fashion Museum - Google Arts & Culture. (2019, October). Retrieved December 04, 2020, from <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-brilliant-1980-s/bQliknixlfDhJQ>