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Review of Chicago History Museum, Digital Collection: Costume and Textile Collection

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[Chicago History Museum, Digital Collection : Costume and Textile Collection](#)



2012

Url: <http://digitalcollection.chicagohistory.org/>

[Visited Oct'12] The Chicago History Museum's *Costume and Textile Collection* features 50,000-plus artifacts from the mid-18th century to the present. Its focus reflects its urban origins: many of its contents were worn by "former presidents and first ladies, sports stars, celebrities or everyday people." Otherwise the items' connections to Chicago are via dressmakers, milliners, and manufacturers. The collection is particularly strong in 20th-century items, women's wear, and pieces designed by Charles James. Images and metadata are of high quality and vetted by the museum. Full item records include a reference URL, the capability of sharing images (not functioning at time of review), a choice of download sizes, and for some items--such as a Versace dress of silk jersey printed with faces of Marilyn Monroe and James Dean--multiple views of the bust and torso, and a full-length view. Viewers have the option of zooming in and out on images to an extent that allows stitch-level viewing. Another special feature of the collection is video footage of CT scans of designer Charles James's garments.

Also offered is additional information concerning provenance, e.g., Artists/Makers, Place of Origin, Dimensions, and Exhibition History. Often a curatorial statement places an object into context; e.g., a statement about a Christian Dior hat donated and worn by dancer/choreographer Ruth Page explains how the designer was highly involved with the fashion choices of his most favored and wealthy clients. Other fields include Description, Owner, and a Rights statement for those wishing to license images for personal use. The museum plans monthly additions to the initial 1,382 digital images, with the aim of fully digitizing the collection. Undoubtedly, undergraduate students will find this collection invaluable in their study of fabric construction, costume history, and design.

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower- and upper-level undergraduates; two-year technical college students.

Reviewer: [R. Tolley-Stokes](#), East Tennessee State University

Recommendation: Highly recommended

Readership Level: Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates, Two-Year Technical Program Students

Interdisciplinary Subjects:

Subject: [Reference - Social & Behavioral Sciences](#)

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