Katharine Hepburn inspires runway fashion show
CT Historical Society & Clinton Crossing showcase Hepburn influences


Over the course of her career, Katharine Hepburn (1907-2003) portrayed fiercely independent women and dressed the part, on screen and off. Decades before pants became part of mainstream fashion for American women, Hepburn blazed her own fashion trail, insisting on comfort and style in her personal wardrobe. Carefully negotiating her own long and successful career, Hepburn also controlled her own image and the women in the audience responded to her unique look. From glamorous gowns to athletic-influenced sportswear and khaki pants, Hepburn’s independent spirit and sense of style influenced countless women, fashion designers, and the informal, elegant approach to American style seen on today’s runways. In recognition of her role in shaping women’s fashion, Hepburn was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America in 1985. During the award presentation, designer Calvin Klein said of Hepburn, “She’s never been afraid to be comfortable. And for that reason fashion designers all over the world have a great deal to be grateful for.”

In an era when most Hollywood starlets conformed to a standard feminine “look,” Katharine Hepburn refused to dress the part. The publicity still of Hepburn wearing blue jeans with a mink coat, taken on the RKO lot in 1932, captures the image that irritated the studio executives trying to mold their new, expensive star. When they forced the issue by taking away her pants, she simply walked around the lot in her underwear until they were returned. Her independent spirit, unconventional style, and Yankee thriftiness had their roots in her unusual upbringing in Connecticut and were evident throughout her long life. Her style, once considered eccentric, is now classic and continues to inspire.

“What women wear today has been immeasurably influenced by Katharine Hepburn’s strength of personality and insistence on wearing what she wanted”- Jean Druesedow, Director of the Kent State University Museum and exhibit curator.

On May 10, Mother’s Day Weekend, the Connecticut Historical Society (CHS), inspired by its Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen exhibit, presents Kate Couture: A Hepburn-Inspired Fashion Show. CHS will join forces with Clinton Crossing Premium Outlets, the Miss Connecticut Scholarship Corporation, and the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center for a light-hearted, fashion-focused look at Hepburn. Hosted by WTNH’s Ann Nyberg, the CHS auditorium will be transformed into a couture catwalk celebrating Kate’s continuing influence on the way American women dress.

In addition, there will be a raffle featuring Kate-themed prizes from the Saybrook Point Inn and Spa, Ann Taylor, Hartford Stage, Ted’s Montana Grill, and more. Tickets include refreshments, gift bags and admission to the Hepburn exhibit. Tickets are $25 each and can be purchased online at www.CHS.org/Hepburn or onsite at the Connecticut Historical Society. For more information, please call (860) 236-5621 x289 or email jennifer_steadman@chs.org.
“No matter how free women get, they always seem to get tied into asinine clothes.”

– Katharine Hepburn

CHS is located at 1 Elizabeth Street in Hartford. For more, visit chs.org.

Kate Couture: A Hepburn-Inspired Fashion Show
May 10, 2014
Two shows: 11:00 am & 2:00 pm
Connecticut Historical Society
One Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105
CHS.org/Hepburn

About the Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen exhibit

With a stage and film career that spanned six decades, Connecticut native Katharine Hepburn is an American icon. Her sense of style influenced countless women, fashion designers, and the informal, elegant approach to American style seen on today’s runways. The exhibition, organized by Kent State University Museum, features stage costumes from The Philadelphia Story and Coco; screen costumes from films like Adam’s Rib and Stage Door; an ensemble of her signature tailored beige trousers and linen jackets; as well as vintage posters, playbills, photos, and other Hepburn-related artifacts. CHS supplements the show with stories about her life in Hartford and Old Saybrook and items from its own collection.

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About the Connecticut Historical Society (@ConnHistSoc):
Founded in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society is a non-profit museum, library, research and education center. CHS strives to inspire and foster a life-long interest in history and ignite a passion for learning about history through research assistance, exhibitions, tours and programs for all ages. Visit chs.org or call 860-236-5621.

About Clinton Crossing Premium Outlets:
Clinton Crossing Premium Outlets, Connecticut’s only upscale outlet center, features 70 stores from the world’s finest designers and name brands, offering savings of 25% to 65% every day including Adidas, Banana Republic, Brooks Brothers, Calvin Klein, Coach, Cole Haan, DKNY, Dooney & Bourke, Elie Tahari, J.Crew, Kenneth Cole, Michael Kors, Polo Ralph Lauren, Saks Fifth Avenue Off 5th, Talbots, Tommy Hilfiger and more.

About Miss Connecticut:
The Miss Connecticut Scholarship Corporation is a non-profit organization that awards scholarships to outstanding young women to help advance them academically and professionally. The Miss Connecticut Pageant is an official preliminary of the Miss America Pageant, the nation’s leading achievement program and the world's largest provider of scholarship assistance to young women.

About The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center:
The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center is a non-profit performing arts organization located in an historic theatre/town hall on Main Street in Old Saybrook. Originally opened in 1911 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Center has been renovated with public funds from the Town of Old Saybrook and donations raised by the Trustees of the Center. It includes a 250-seat theatre and a small museum honoring Katharine Hepburn, Old Saybrook’s most celebrated resident. As befits an organization born of such a public/private partnership, programming is eclectic, offering something for all ages and income levels on the Connecticut shore and in the lower river valley.

About Ann Nyberg:
Ann Nyberg is WTNH-TV’s longest serving Anchor~Reporter in station history. Ann anchors the 6 and 10 o’clock nightly newscasts. Ann has been voted “Best News Anchor” for a decade in “Connecticut Magazine’s reader’s poll, and hosts her own show “Nyberg” seen weekly on News 8. Nyberg is a founding Board of Trustees member of the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook, Connecticut. Nyberg’s website networkconnecticut.com, spotlights people and places all over the state.