

Dior's Fashion Show Opens at the Pushkin

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“Inspiration Dior” is on at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts until July 24. **Alexander Zemlianichenko**

The bright garden paintings by European masters fanned French doyen of fashion Christian Dior’s imagination and form a unique exhibit that opens on Thursday alongside more than 100 of his dresses.

Dior’s delicate bejeweled gowns and slim-waisted jackets hang beneath mirror-covered ceilings in Moscow’s state-run Pushkin Museum, paying tribute to the designer who died in 1957 at the age of 52 after changing the landscape of women’s fashion.

“The best way to describe this exhibit is with Christian Dior’s own words: ‘The history of Parisian fashion is not a vanity fair, but a representation of culture,’” said veteran Pushkin Museum director Irina Antonova.

Paintings by Klimt, Renoir, van Gogh and others that nourished Dior’s inspiration are on loan

from the Louvre, Musee d'Orsay, the Versailles Museum and Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery. The "Inspiration Dior" exhibit runs until July 24.

"It is not easy to imagine a fashion designer's house coming to a museum," said Christian Dior chief executive Sidney Toledano.

"But [the Pushkin Museum] was super-responsive to combining paintings and costumes," he said, standing beside green and white cocktail dresses from the 1950s, reminiscent of the fruit bouquets by Cezanne.

He and Bernard Arnault, chief executive of LVMH — the world's largest luxury brand and owner of Dior — jetted into Moscow with many of their designers and models for the exhibit, which also features an aromatic perfume installation.

The lavish exhibit comes a month after the fashion house was engulfed in a racism scandal that led to the sacking of its top designer John Galliano.

Toledano said that within minutes of opening the exhibit's preview, art connoisseurs asked him to show it in New York, Rome and Paris.

"It is the first time so many dresses, so many pieces, are all together in a museum like that, which is one of the biggest in the world," he said.

The exhibit was also set up to continue Christian Dior's relationship with luxury-loving Russia, which he visited in 1931 during Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's reign — a rare trip for a foreign designer.

"This beauty teaches us etiquette, something our country lacks. It is almost a type of school for us," said film actress Renata Litvinova as she strolled beside white ball gowns encased in glass.

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