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The Art of Ballet

Around 1930s, ballerina style became a wave in the fashion industry. The introduction of ballerina flats, leotards, tights, arm warmers, legwarmers, and tutu are the signature of what “Fashion’s Modern Muse” is like. This museum exhibit shows how “beauty and grace” are portrayed by a woman while performing an artistic dance through their creativity. The way ballet is interpreted is to show emotion through dancing and expressing feelings with the movement to show firmness and flexibility. The exhibit was created to show how ballet entered the fashion world and impacted it. The fashion curator of this fashion exhibit is Rosemary Harden. The exhibition Ballerina: Fashion’s Modern Muse is located in the Fashion Institute of Technology museum and it started in February 11 until April 18, 2020.

The setting is designed with warm tones to help emphasize the theme which is “Modern Muse” meaning femininity and the colors are mostly touched with bright tones and on the pink side. This exhibition was created with sophistication to show the elegance of ballet and the importance of modernity. There are eight exhibitions shown in the museum which makes it a small exhibit and it is categorized by the style of the clothing pieces, the names are The Neo-Romantic Revival, Ballerina As Bird, From Costumier to Couturier, New York City Ballet and Fashion Today, Ballet Colors and Materials, Leotards and Tights as Fashion, Ballerina as Woman of Style, and Ballet Style Footwear. These exhibits were shown to furtherly explain what goes behind every clothing piece and to also mention the designer. A display method that were used for the fashion objects are using a box glass to protect from damages and reserve the dresses and another display method is matching the color schemes of the clothing pieces. The exhibition is traditional because each exhibit shows the modern culture from 1930s to 1980s and the underlying theme is modernity of “Ballet is Woman” according to choreographer George Balanchine and how it impacted the fashion industry as well as fashion magazines. There is a collection narrative that brings the collection together because it compacts the beauty of ballet and the lavishness of it. In addition, it holds a high position in the fashion culture because it inspired and influenced it in ways such as being called a “muse” of elegance. In my own perspective, the exhibit focuses on the artistic side because it was about the significance of ballet and the descriptive details of each clothing piece and what it means. For example, the Ballet Colors and Materials exhibit shows that the hue of pink is always associated ballet but was also mentioned the “lack of racial diversity.” There is a deliberate intention to try to educate museum goers on the garments’ design processes, inspiration, and social and cultural values, and forging a more engaged viewership because in the exhibit video, it was thoroughly detailed with information that is about ballet and how it changed the fashion industry mentioning some artistic performers like Anna Pavlova. The exhibition was created to educate and furtherly explain the creativity behind it from dancing to fashion and the current to latest clothing piece designs. The item I chose for this exhibition is the “Ballet Style Footwear” because it is a big part of ballet and the signature design speaks for itself which is known by many even to those who know the bare minimum about the artistic dance. The pointe shoe became famous in 1940s which was worn by the most influential ballerina Anna Pavlova. The shoe is made for ballerinas to create an illusion that the dancers are floating in the air. This relates to contemporary fashion because these costumes were inspired in the women’s fashion which includes some designs of the costumes like tutus and leotards. The role that the garment play within the exhibition is to let the dancers move freely with the costumes that were made for ballet which enhances the movements, and we can learn from it by seeing the artistic vision of the choreography and to witness the dancers in unison.

Fashion is considered art from all sorts of categories such as painting, dancing, architecture, and etc. The styles of ballet which are classical, neoclassical, and contemporary are part of the category. In my perspective, the exhibit was successful and worth going because there are in depth details of ballet and its modernity which were well explained. The exhibit enhanced my understanding of fashion as an aesthetic experience and I would recommend it to other people because there are more history to it and it embodies the representation of women and class.