

The Impossible Slippers at the FIT Museum Exhibit – Fairytale Fashion

Musarat Merchant

New York City College of Technology

The Impossible Slippers at the FIT Museum Exhibit – Fairytale Fashion

Fairytale Fashion is the name of the magical exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) Museum. Current events, fashion shows at that time such as the “Dolce & Gabbana Fall 2014 collection” and Disney movies released between 2014 to 2015 motivated Colleen Hill, the curator of this exhibit to put together a show of stunning high fashion items in 2016, that were inspired by fairy tales (Stover, 2016). The theme of this exhibit was to show a direct relationship between high fashion items and dress in fairytales, where even in the 21st century we have not forgotten our fairytales and how even today we “value fantasy over function” as we see that in the items displayed in the exhibit. (Hill, 2016)

The Impossible Slippers by Noritaka Tatehana

These glass slippers were the item that stands out in this whole Fairytale Fashion exhibit as it perfectly ties into the theme of the exhibit. This version of Cinderella’s glass slipper is so unique because it has a “heel-less silhouette” so it is a challenge in wearing it and there is minimal function as the theme states “fantasy over function”. (Hill, 2016). More importantly, what makes it stand out is the shoe’s complicated shape that is 3D – printed acrylic which makes it innovative and hence gives a futuristic fantasy look. (See Figure: 1)

Symbolism of the Glass Slipper

As the curator says in her book *Fairytale Fashion* “Dress plays a crucial role in fairytales, signaling the status, wealth or vanity of particular character and symbolizing their transformation.” (Hill, Mears, Sampson, & Vaclavik, 2016). Even in this item, the glass slipper symbolizes three things, first being “fragile femininity” how Cinderella was as delicate and fragile as a glass (Stover, 2016). Second is the color is clear and it reflects the purity of Cinderella's heart as she was selfless and worked as a maid and obeyed her stepmother’s orders

even after her father died. Third, it symbolizes connection, or fitting together as the slippers fit perfectly to Cinderella and how in a symbolic way, she was a perfect match for her prince charming!

Cinderella Movie 2015 by Disney. Today Show revealed that Saks Fifth Avenue which is known for its outstanding window displays had decorated all of its store windows for Disney's film promotion of Cinderella in 2015. All the items used in the making of the film, from Cinderella's gowns to her glass slippers, everything was beautifully displayed in the windows of Saks Fifth Avenue in 2015 for the movie's fans too see. (See Figure: 2).

Cinderella at the MET Gala, 2019. Zendaya dressed up as real-life Cinderella by wearing Tommy Hilfiger designed smart version of Cinderella gown and of course she wore the glass slippers too! (See Figures 3 and 4). Symbolically, she was "fully committed to the Disney princess theme" and was even seen leaving her glass slipper behind at the pink carpet of MET Gala, 2019 (Saunders, 2019).

Conclusion: Dress is a communicator, so what you choose to wear shows who you are as a person. "Fashion is not simply a display of glamour; it seems to suggest. Rather, it is a multifaceted storytelling medium in its own right." (Millar, 2016). Fashion communicates nonverbally, so we as readers of these fairytales can easily get an idea of the role of a character through their dress. Fairytales "are an expression of hope and fantasy intertwined with the idea that dreams can possibly come true." (Honig, 2016). Cinderella's fragility, femininity and purity are what makes the glass slippers such an important part of her dress. If it wasn't for these glass slippers, her prince would have never found her and her dreams would have never come true. Fairytales in a way teach us the good and the bad from a young age, they give us a basic understanding of ethics - how good character is rewarded and how a bad character is punished.

Moreover, the theme of the exhibit makes pure sense as we have been listening to these fairytales from centuries so every item inspired by these fairytales is an antique itself, which is why we value fantasy more than comfort and functionality when it comes to fairy tale high fashion.

References

- Hill, C. (2016). Fairytale Fashion Exhibit at FIT Museum. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from https://exhibitions.fitnyc.edu/fairy-tale-fashion/?url=cinderella/cinderella_noritaka_tatehana-1
- Hill, C., Mears, P., Sampson, E., & Vaclavik, K. (2016). *Fairy tale fashion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Honig, M. (2016, January 19). Fairy Tale Fans Will Love This Fantastical Fashion Exhibition. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://observer.com/2016/01/fairy-tale-fans-will-love-this-fantastical-fashion-exhibition/>
- Millar, W. (2016, March 8). Fairy Tale Fashion at the Museum at FIT. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://nuvomagazine.com/art/fairy-tale-fashion-at-the-museum-at-fit>
- Saunders, N. (2019, May 7). All the Crazy Moments You Missed at the 2019 Met Gala. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/celebrity/latest/g27391984/best-moments-met-gala-2019/>
- Stover, L. (2016, March 18). Into the Woods with the Fashion Institute of Technology. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/fashion/fairy-tale-fashion-institute-of-technology.html>
- Today Show. (2015, March 16). Fans of 'Cinderella' flock to see the movie's costume in store window. Retrieved June 16, 2020, from <https://www.today.com/style/disneys-cinderella-costume-saks-fifth-avenue-window-display-t8751>

Figures

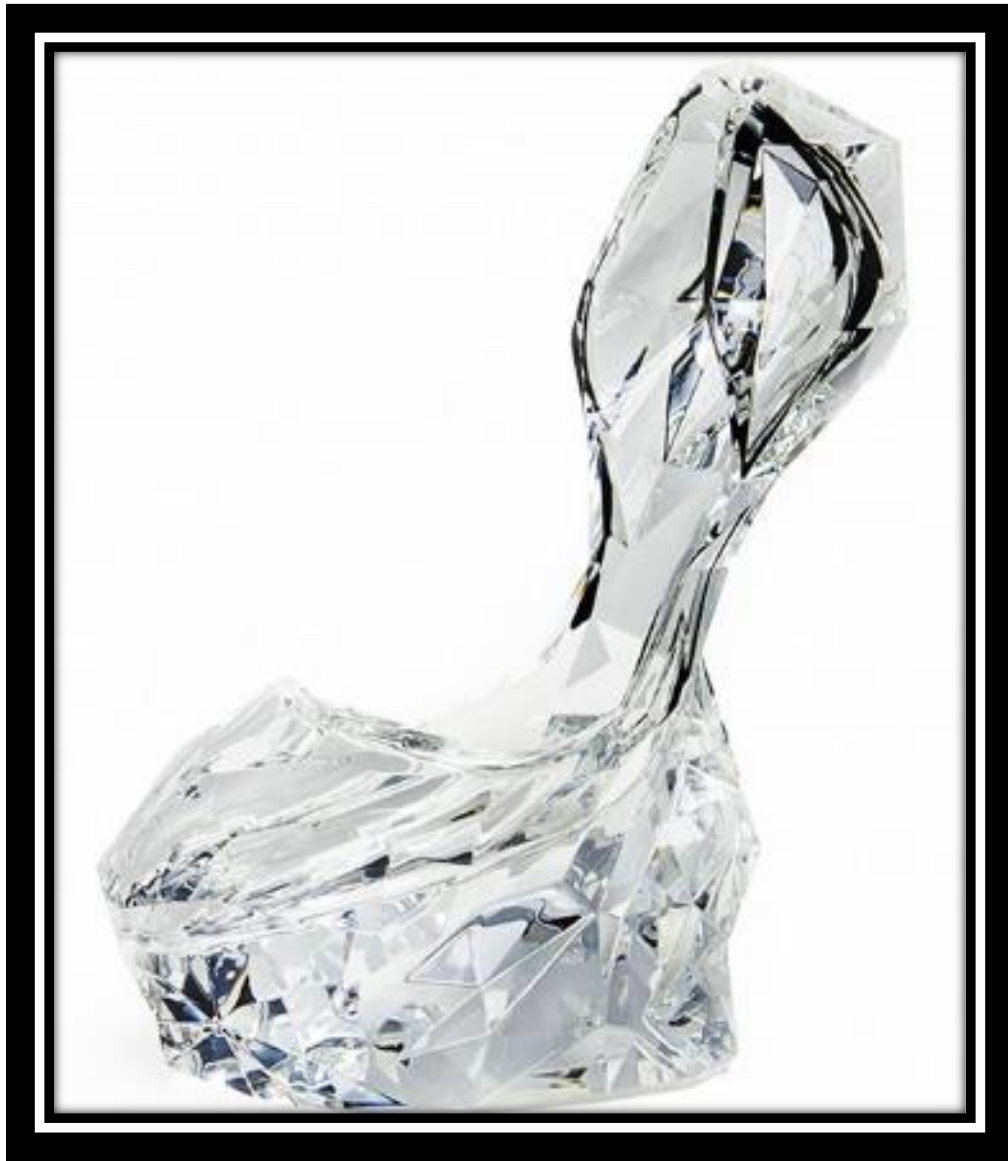


Figure 1. Cinderella inspired, The Impossible Slippers by Noritaka Tatehana.

Image Courtesy: The Museum at FIT.

Retrieved from: https://exhibitions.fitnyc.edu/fairy-tale-fashion/?url=cinderella/cinderella_noritaka_tatehana-1



Figure 2. Saks Fifth Avenue displaying the original princess gown and glass slippers (on the swing) used in the remake of Cinderella movie in 2015 for promoting this Disney film.

Image Courtesy: Saks Fifth Avenue

Retrieved from: https://media2.s-nbcnews.com/j/newscms/2015_12/455111/2d274907994524-cinderella-dress_6e04d85f27f955f13789f5f4628aaca6.fit-560w.jpg



Figure 3. Zendaya dressed up in a Tommy Hilfiger version of Cinderella gown was lighting up the pink carpet at Met Gala 2019. She wore glass slippers and was holding a carriage purse

Image Courtesy: Harper's Bazaar Magazine / Getty Images

Retrieved from: https://hips.hearstapps.com/hmg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/images/hbz-met-gala-2019-moments-you-missed-zendaya-cinderella-gettyimages-1147438878.jpg?crop=1xw:1xh:center,top&resize=980:*



Figure 4. Zendaya's Cinderella glass slipper left on the pink carpet of Met Gala, 2019.

Image Courtesy: Harper's Bazaar Magazine / Getty Images /Angela Weiss

Retrieved from: https://hips.hearstapps.com/hmg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/images/zendaya-glass-slipper-1557214320.jpg?crop=1xw:1xh:center,top&resize=768:*