

TRAVELING EXHIBITION

THE LITTLE BLACK DRESS AT 100



The Little Black Dress – For a full century, one garment has remained an icon of style, sophistication, and cultural expression: the little black dress. From its debut in the 1920s, Coco Chanel's revolutionary design reshaped the fashion landscape, proving that simplicity—when executed brilliantly—can be endlessly powerful.

The little black dress—affectionately known as the LBD—has captivated the world for over a century. From Audrey Hepburn's iconic silhouette in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* to Tina Turner's fearless stage presence, and from 1990s red carpet glamour to today's cutting-edge reinterpretations, the LBD remains a symbol of elegance, boldness, and reinvention.

Included in the exhibition are a reproduction of Chanel's model 817 from 1926, a dress only known to exist as a fashion rendering; as well as dresses by Charles James, James Galanos, Halston, Norman Norell, Bill Blass, Howard Greer, Jo Copeland, Sophie Gimbel, Calvin Klein, Jacqueline de Ribes, Thierry Mugler, and Nelly Don.

Stripped of distraction, black challenges designers to showcase masterful tailoring, luxurious fabrics, and striking silhouettes. Its power lies in versatility. Whether styled for work, nightlife, celebration, or everyday sophistication, the LBD effortlessly adapts to any moment. Black is also deeply expressive. It can signify reverence or rebellion, modesty or seduction, respect or provocation. Cultural, social, and personal lenses shape how we interpret it, making the LBD a powerful medium for identity and expression.

From Chanel's groundbreaking centennial design to Christian Dior's assertion that black is eternally chic, the little black dress has long been a shorthand for style, sophistication, and empowerment. It is at once modest and alluring, timeless and ever evolving.

The Little Black Dress at 100 brings together extraordinary garments from multiple collections, spanning haute couture to ready-to-wear. This exhibition invites visitors to explore the enduring legacy of a single dress that continues to inspire, empower, and enchant across generations.

The exhibition has been co-organized by the Wichita Art Museum, The Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, and Kansas State University's Historic Costume and Textile Museum.

For more information, visit:

www.eusa.org/exhibition/the-little-black-dress

Left Images: Thierry Mugler (French, 1948–2022), *Black-and-White Polka Dot Dress*, c. 1990; silk habotai; Courtesy of Kansas State University, Historic Costume and Textile Museum, Gift of Richard D. Rees in loving memory of Janet Lee Rees. Photo: Kirk Eck. Installation view of *Little Black Dress at 100* at the Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas, June 28–November 30, 2025; Image courtesy of the Wichita Art Museum. Photo: Kirk Eck. Howard Greer (American, 1896–1974), *Silk Grosgrain Suit*, c. 1950; silk grosgrain, silk satin, silk velvet; Courtesy of Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, Gift of the Estate of Anne Katherine Innes Phillips. Photo: Kirk Eck.

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THE EXHIBITION IN YOUR GALLERY

Exhibits USA® allows venues to work with our team of interpretive specialists to customize the exhibition based on spatial limitations. If your institution plans to augment or edit the exhibition you are hosting, please notify us of your plans so we can work together on bringing the best exhibition to your venue.

SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES

When you host an Exhibits USA® exhibition, you will receive a range of support to present the exhibition to—and engage with—your community, all developed by our team of museum specialists in collaboration with the project's curatorial partners.

THESE INCLUDE:

- A marketing and publicity kit with digital images and cutlines, logos, and a sample press release.
- A programming guide with extensive educational resources and program/activity planning ideas for host venue staff and teachers.
- Custom-designed interpretive panels, object labels, gallery guides, and/or other interactive engagement tools.
- A registrar's packet with instructions and documents for condition reporting, and installing and de-installing the exhibition.
- Custom-built crates for easy handling and maximum protection, along with instructions for proper packing.
- On-call logistical support.

Above: Installation view of *Little Black Dress at 100* at the Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas, June 28–November 30, 2025; Image courtesy of the Wichita Art Museum. Photo: Kirk Eck.

Curator: Co-organized by the Wichita Art Museum, The Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, and Kansas State University's Historic Costume and Textile Museum

Organized by: Exhibits USA®

Content: 32 dresses on forms

Duration: 7-week display

Out-of-Region Rental Fee: \$13,000

In-Region Rental Fee: \$8,000
(In-region states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas)

Shipping expense: Exhibitor is responsible for payment of outgoing shipping.

Security: Intermediate

Run. ft.: estimated 800sq ft at a minimum

Number of Crates: 7 Estimated

Total Weight: TBD

Insurance: The exhibition is fully insured by Exhibits USA® at no additional expense to you, both while installed and during transit.

DATES AVAILABLE:

The Little Black Dress at 100 is touring June 2027 through May 2032. The dates below reflect 7-week exhibition periods. Dates are subject to change; please contact MoreArt@maaa.org or (816) 800-0925 for current availability.

January 28–March 16

April 6–May 25

June 16–August 11

September 1–October 20

November 20–January 7