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Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Estate of Katharine Hepburn for entrusting this legacy to the Kent State University Museum. Realizing that the garments in the exhibition would need context, Dr. Christopher P. Sullivan collected movie stills, playbills and memorabilia related to Katharine Hepburn’s 66-year career which he most generously gave to the museum. Publicity for this venue has been overseen by Effie Tsengas, Communications and Marketing Director for the College of the Arts and Brittani Peterson, Marketing Associate. Since 2010, a number of institutions have hosted the exhibition and we gratefully acknowledge the museum personnel and talented interns who helped bring the exhibition to life at each venue.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Kent State University Museum staff for always meeting the challenges of a travelling exhibition.

Jean L. Druesedow, Director  
Kent State University Museum

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Katharine Hepburn (1907–2003) is one of the most honored actresses in the history of American film, with twelve Academy Award nominations and four Academy Awards for Best Actress, as well as many other national and international honors. In a 1967 interview, George Stevens, who directed Alice Adams, Quality Street and Woman of the Year, called Katharine Hepburn “the most inspiring person I ever met in my life . . . I never knew anyone in any way related to Kate in intelligence, dignity, beauty of spirit, generosity and lack of criticism . . . she was always for accomplishment of some kind.” During her sixty-six-year career Hepburn consistently performed on both stage and screen. She took her career in hand early in her professional life, learned from each failure, and continually sought meaningful and challenging projects. Katharine Hepburn knew the importance of costume in defining character and drawing the audience into the story, and how her personal style could be best interpreted in a role. Hepburn was very conscious of the tools of the costumer’s craft and had a sure sense of what would work for her. Edith Head, quoted in the Spring 1976 issue of Liberty, said, “One does not design for Miss Hepburn, one designs with her . . . She’s a real professional, and she has very definite feeling about what things are right for her, whether it has to do with costumes, scripts, or her entire lifestyle.”

Fortunately, Broadway producers and Hollywood studios assigned the finest costume designers to her productions. Woodman Thompson, Howard Greer, Valentina, Cecil Beaton, and Jane Greenwood, among others, costumed Hepburn for the stage, while Walter Plunkett, Adrian, Irene, Orry-Kelly, Muriel King, Margaret Furse, Edith Head, Pat Zipprodt and Noel Taylor were among those who worked with her in film and television. For her private wardrobe Hepburn patronized cutting edge fashion designers such as Elizabeth Hawes, Claire McCardell and Valentina in New York. If she was particularly fond of a costume, she might have it replicated for her personal wardrobe and, perhaps, change the color, fabric or detailing. It was no accident that many of the costume designers also worked in high fashion since many of the productions starring Katharine Hepburn were set in contemporary times, and audiences expected to see the very latest fashions on stage and in the movies. That she chose to wear slacks instead of dresses and skirts in many of her publicity images, established her first as a fashion rebel, and then as an icon. “I realized long ago that skirts are hopeless,” she said in the Turner Pictures 1993 documentary All About Me, “anytime I hear a man say he prefers a woman in a skirt, I say, ‘Try one. Try a skirt.’” It was this personal sense of style that transcended the decades of her career to influence the fashion choices available to women today. In presenting Hepburn with the 1985 Council of Fashion Designers of America’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Calvin Klein said, “she has truly epitomized the ultimate American woman. She’s vibrant, she’s outspoken, she’s hardworking and she’s independent and, fortunately for all of us, she’s never been afraid to be comfortable.”

Katharine Hepburn did not set out to collect her costumes. She told Louis Botto, the longtime editor of Playbill, in a mid-1970s recorded interview that she didn’t know why she had not kept more, that “It would have been interesting,” but she immediately followed that comment by noting that costumes took special care. Upstairs in her New York City home was a closet reserved for costumes she had worn on stage and screen. The contents of this closet were separated from her other wardrobe, and when the townhouse was closed, these special garments were inventoried, carefully packed and placed in a Connecticut warehouse. In accordance with her wishes, the collection was to be given at the discretion of her estate executors to an educational institution, and now is housed at the Kent State University Museum. Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen includes costumes for the stage, for film and television, and for publicity or private life selected from this collection. The costumes are augmented by film stills, posters, playbills and related objects from the Kent State University Museum collection with important loans from Dr. Christopher P. Sullivan’s private collection.
Theatre Costumes

LEFT: Howard Greer (1896-1974), costume for Hepburn as “Stella Surrege” in The Lake (1934); KSUM 2010.12.53, Gift of Estate of Katharine Hepburn

TOP RIGHT: Publicity photo of Hepburn as “Stella Surrege” in The Lake (12/26/1933 - 2/1934)

The earliest example in the Hepburn collection from the theatre is the wedding gown from *The Lake*. Howard Greer designed this costume, of duchess lace and satin, that Katharine Hepburn wore as “Stella Surrege” for the ill-fated 1933 production at the Martin Beck Theatre. It was after seeing Hepburn’s performance in the Broadway opening that Dorothy Parker was quoted saying, “she ran the gamut of emotion from A to B.” Tormented by the producer/director, Jed Harris, Hepburn had lost her confidence during rehearsals and regained it only slowly during the run of the play. She later said that *The Lake* was the most important lesson of her life, and that it had taught her “what it takes to be an actor, what it takes to be a star. You are the person responsible for what happens to you and to the play.”

Having made a series of box office flops, and with her career at its nadir, Katharine Hepburn was delighted when Philip Barry presented her with the outline of a play that suited her perfectly, *The Philadelphia Story*. During the summer of 1938 they worked together on the script and asked the Theatre Guild to produce the play. Both Hepburn and her then beau Howard Hughes invested in the production. *The Philadelphia Story* was a great theatrical success. Knowing that any number of actresses would want to play “Tracy Lord” in a film version, and suspecting that no one would want to cast Hepburn, since she had been labeled “box office poison,” Howard Hughes purchased the movie rights and gave them to her. This gift enabled Hepburn to negotiate the terms for the MGM film with Louis B. Mayer. Valentina designed Hepburn’s costumes for the 1939 stage production of *The Philadelphia Story*. Hepburn saved the pink organza wedding dress in her personal collection, and thirty-four years later she asked Patricia Zipprodt to use the dress in the 1973 television film of Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie* for the scene where “Amanda” entertains the “Gentleman Caller.” Although Hepburn remarked that the dress had to be “considerably let out,” in fact the alteration added only about 2 ½” to the bodice of the underdress.
Valentina did only one other Broadway play for Katharine Hepburn, *Without Love*, which opened at the St. James Theatre on November 10, 1942. Inside her copy of the souvenir program, Hepburn placed a sketch of one of the Valentina gowns in the Hepburn collection. The bodice and sleeves are draped to enhance Hepburn’s slender figure, and the skirt is made of multicolored panels of silk organza. The gown has an ingenious tie belt that begins at an angle at the side fronts, wraps around and ties in front. Below is a photographer’s proof from the Vandamm Studio of Hepburn in the costume in the Theresa Helburn Theatre Guild Photography Collection, Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collections.


*RIGHT:* Publicity photo of Hepburn as “Jamie Coe Rowan” in *Without Love* (11/10/1943); courtesy of Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collections
Katharine Hepburn did a number of watercolor sketches of herself in various roles. This sketch of herself as “Coco Chanel” captures the essence of her approach to the role in the 1969 production of *Coco*. The late Ray Diffin said that she was “quite willful” and initially uncomfortable because she had never done a musical. To make her more at ease with the part, the producers took her to Paris to meet Chanel. She wasn’t getting along with Cecil Beaton, who she felt would never achieve Chanel’s simple elegance, so she bought complete couture ensembles with her own money. She wore the black wool ensemble, a sleeveless dress under a coat, in performance.

It must have been challenging to wear, because there was no allowance for the needs of a performer singing and dancing under hot stage lights. There were, however, multiple sets of detachable white collars and cuffs to keep the look fresh through eight performances a week.

*ABOVE:* Self-portrait of Katharine Hepburn as “Coco Chanel” (1970), watercolor on paper; KSUM 2010.12.58, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

*LEFT:* Publicity photo of Katharine Hepburn as “Coco Chanel” (12/18/1969 - 10/3/1970); KSUM 2010.3.53, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan
The majority of Hepburn’s movie costumes were returned to studio wardrobe stock after filming, and she didn’t purchase any until those made for her late television films designed by Noel Taylor. She told Louis Botto in the mid-1970s that occasionally she was given something. The earliest film costume in her collection is the “gypsy costume” from *The Little Minister*, designed by Walter Plunkett for RKO in 1935.

She also kept a costume from the 1937 RKO *Stage Door* designed by Muriel King, whom she patronized as a private couture client. That costume was worn in a melodramatic scene where Hepburn inserted a line from *The Lake*, “The calla lilies are in bloom again . . .” In the October 1937 issue of *Photoplay*, Gwenn Walters’ “Fashion Letter” highlighted the costume saying that a call from the actress had King “swooping through the air to design her clothes” for the film, and describing this dress as “layers of rounded petals” of gray marquisette with a “wide belt of magenta suede buttoned in front.” In the scene Constance Collier, as the drama coach “Miss Luther,” encourages Hepburn’s “Terry Randall.” Off-screen, Constance Collier and Katharine Hepburn were good friends, and Collier did coach Hepburn as she prepared the role of “Rosalind” in the 1950 Theatre Guild production of *As you Like It*.

“A star practically always asks for a designer, if she has any sense,” said Katharine Hepburn when asked if she had a say in the designers with whom she worked. For MGM’s 1949 production *Adam’s Rib*, she told Louis Botto that Mainbocher had been scheduled to do the costumes. When the studio received his cost estimate, it was so expensive that both the studio and Hepburn thought it was too much, so she suggested Walter Plunkett. He had already done costumes for nine Hepburn films plus the dramatic “Moth” costume for *Christopher Strong*. Plunkett later wrote to Hepburn that he had done more films for her than for anyone else, and was honored to have done so many. Although she thought that period costumes were “very much his dish,” she said that he had made her “marvelous dresses” for *Adam’s Rib*, “quite unlike anything I had worn before.” Designed to accent Katharine Hepburn’s 20” waist, this black silk evening gown is a perfect example of Walter Plunkett’s skill at enhancing Hepburn’s slender figure and is one of the most spectacular in her collection.

*Below: Publicity Photo by Clarence Sinclair Bull of Spencer Tracy as “Adam Bonner”, Katharine Hepburn as “Amanda Bonner”, David Wayne as “Kip Lurie”, Eve March as “Grace” in *Adam’s Rib*, MGM (1949); KSUM 2010.3.304a, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan*

*LEFT (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):* 1. Walter Plunkett (1902-1982), costume for Hepburn as “Babbie” in *The Little Minister*, RKO (1934); KSUM 2010.3.304a, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn 2. Publicity photo of Hepburn as “Babbie” in *The Little Minister* released December 28, 1934; KSUM 2010.3.208, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan
Margaret Furse designed three productions for Katharine Hepburn: *The Lion in Winter* in 1968 for which Hepburn won her third Oscar, *A Delicate Balance* in 1973, and *Love Among the Ruins* where Hepburn played opposite Laurence Olivier directed by George Cukor. Both stars and the director won Emmys for this made-for-television movie. Katharine Hepburn said that she and Margaret Furse “just got on well,” and it is apparent from their exchange of letters that they had an excellent collaborative relationship. On hearing that she would be doing the clothes for *A Delicate Balance*, Furse wrote to Hepburn, “I’m so glad you are coming back [to London] and that we are going to be involved again in the costume lark! They tell me you are doing all the work for me. I’m so glad because I don’t think I know how to do them and will gladly share a screen credit with you!”

Noel Taylor (1913 – 2010), the last costume designer with whom she worked, costumed Katharine Hepburn beginning with *Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry* in 1986. This made for television movie was the beginning of a friendship that Noel Taylor described as “perfection, she knew what she liked and I knew what she liked . . . she became my best friend.” One of her wardrobe attendants from Vancouver, where *The Man Upstairs* was filmed in 1992, sent a note to Hepburn writing, “I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you. Your tenacity, your great integrity, and your sense of humor . . . were and will remain, for me, an inspiration . . . . Your total professionalism, and the great care you took with the costumes, made my job a pleasure.”
Clothes for Publicity and Private Life

More than thirty pair of slacks from Hepburn’s wardrobe, most in shades of beige and brown came to the Kent State University Museum. In addition, there is enough yardage of beige wool cavalry twill for another pair. Those in the exhibition were custom made either in theatre shops such as Brooks Van Horne or Ray Diffin, or in department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue. Although the look is casual, Katharine Hepburn knew precisely what would work for her public image and her private life. There is no doubt that she used these garments, for many are patched and worn. A publicity still of Hepburn wearing blue jeans with a mink coat, taken on the RKO lot in 1932, captures the look that so irritated the studio magnates trying to mold their new and expensive star into the studio ideal. When they took her dungarees away during filming, she simply walked around the lot in her underpants until they gave her back her denim jeans. As George Stevens remembered, “She was never personally much on ornamentation, off the camera. She Jimmy Deaned before Jimmy Dean ever thought of it, with slacks. Kate was the first blue jeans woman. How she anticipated this era today ([1967] I don’t know, but she wore blue jeans and it was unheard of, and a sweater.”

Katharine Hepburn’s taste is evident in the costumes she kept in her personal collection. There is an emphasis on fluid line, on exquisite fabrics and quality workmanship. There is the sure knowledge of what a costume should do for a dramatic character, or for her professional image or her personal use.

Above: Publicity photo of Katharine Hepburn wearing dungarees and a mink coat on the lot at RKO (ca. 1932), Judy Smelson Collection
Below: Slacks in the wardrobe of Katharine Hepburn, KSUM (left to right) 2010.12.110 (seated), .105 (upside down), .104 (white), .101 (lying down), .95 (red), .103 (seated), .109 (jodhpurs); Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn
(1) **Photo collage from *The Trojan Women*, Josef Shaftel Productions (1971),** costume design by Nicholas Georgiadis and Annalisa Nasalli-Rocca, Katharine Hepburn as “Hecuba,” KSUM A2010.3.172, .174, .175, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Katharine Hepburn was known throughout her career for doing her own stunts. In her biography of the actress, Anne Edwards recounts an incident during the 1976 filming of this picture about an eccentric junkyard proprietress, “Miss Pudd,” and two children who repair a hot air balloon and go sailing away. A stuntman dressed as Hepburn’s character was ready to grab a rope hanging from the balloon as it rose. “That man doesn’t look a thing like me at all,” said Hepburn, and went past him into the shot, grabbed the rope and was lifted off the ground until the crew pulled her down.

(2) **Original poster: *Olly, Olly Oxen Free*, Universal (1978);** costume design by Edith Head, KSUM A2010.3.5, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Hepburn received her first Academy Award for her portrayal of “Eva Lovelace” in *Morning Glory*. Pandro Berman had intended the script for Constance Bennett, but Hepburn convinced him that she should do the part.

(3) **Banner for *The Warrior’s Husband*, Morosco Theatre (1932),** costume design by Woodman Thompson, Katharine Hepburn as “Antiope,” Gift of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Shannon Rodgers, the founding benefactor of the Kent State University Museum, made the ornamentation for the costumes for this play about a Greek Amazon, that was Hepburn’s first starring role. After this Broadway show, both Shannon Rodgers and Katharine Hepburn found themselves in Hollywood – Shannon to work for Cecil B. DeMille, and Katharine Hepburn to make her first film.

(4) **Mini poster for *Morning Glory*, RKO (1933),** starring Katharine Hepburn, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Adolphe Menjou, KSUM A2010.3.237, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(5) **Photo collage including *Spitfire*, RKO (1933),** costume design by Walter Plunkett, Katharine Hepburn as “Trigger Hicks;” *Break of Hearts*, RKO (1935), costume design by Bernard Newman, Katharine Hepburn as “Constance Dane Roberti;”; *A Bill of Divorcement*, RKO (1932), costume design by Josette de Lima, Katharine Hepburn as “Sydney Fairfield,” *Christopher Strong*, RKO (1933), costume design by Howard Greer and Walter Plunkett, Katharine Hepburn as “Lady Cynthia Darrington.” KSUM A2010.3.202, .209, .200, .201, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan
A Bill of Divorcement (lower right) with John Barrymore and Billie Burke, was Katharine Hepburn’s first film. She recalled that director George Cukor “presented” her to the movie-going public by having her simply “float” down the stairs at her first entrance. The amazing “Moth” costume (lower left) from Christopher Strong was the first costume Walter Plunkett designed for Hepburn although Howard Greer did the rest of the clothes in that film. Plagued with mediocre scripts after her initial success, Hepburn consented to play what she described as a “sort of mountain spirit” in Spitfire (upper left) if she could take a leave from her RKO contract and return to Broadway. Although Bernard Newman’s costumes in Break of Hearts were dramatic (above right), Hepburn considered it a “dull film.”

One of the least successful of Hepburn’s early films, Break of Hearts was both an artistic and box office failure. A story of the romance and unhappy marriage of a famous but alcoholic conductor (Boyer) and a promising but unknown composer (Hepburn) evoked little emotion from the audience. Hepburn added it to her list of “very dull movies.”

During pre-production discussions, Hepburn may have wanted someone other than Walter Plunkett to design her costumes, because the producer, Pandro Berman, telegraphed her that the director, John Ford, insisted that one designer do all the clothes for Mary of Scotland under his personal supervision. Pandro Berman asked Hepburn to meet with Walter Plunkett in New York to plan her wardrobe for the film.

Walter Plunkett designed the costumes for Little Women. Keeping in mind how sisters might share clothing, he made parts interchangeable. Hepburn remembered that he “washed all those materials over and over again” to give them a worn look. In Little Women, Plunkett taught Hepburn how to sit in a hoop skirt – she also had to jump a fence wearing one.

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When asked about Walter Plunkett’s period costumes, Hepburn said that they were “very much his dish.” She described his costumes for *Mary of Scotland* (upper left) as “marvelous.” There were twenty-two different costumes spanning 1869 – 1890 in *A Woman Rebels* (lower right). At least one of them, a paisley challis robe, Vivien Leigh wore (after Plunkett added mink trimming) in *Gone with the Wind* when she fell down the stairs. In spite of Walter Plunkett’s delightful early nineteenth century costumes, Hepburn added *Quality Street* (lower left) to her list of “dull” movies made early in her career at RKO.

(10) Original window card for *Quality Street*, RKO (1937), starring Katharine Hepburn, Franchot Tone and Eric Blore, KSUM A2010.3.17, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan


(12) Photo collage of five film stills from *Summertime*, Lopert Films, United Artists (1955), costume designer unknown, KSUM A2010.3.121, .122, .123, .124, .125, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

In *Summertime*, Hepburn as “Jane Hudson,” a lonely secretary from Akron, Ohio, finds fleeting romance with a handsome but married Italian played by Rossano Brazzi. *Summertime* was beautifully photographed on location in Venice. It was the stunt fall into the Grand Canal (coupled with other swims that Hepburn later acknowledged) that caused her a lingering eye infection.

(13) Original poster for *Summertime*, Lopert Films, United Artists (1955), KSUM A2010.3.9, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(14) Original lobby card for *The Rainmaker*, Paramount (1956), starring Katharine Hepburn, Burt Lancaster and Wendell Corey, KSUM A2010.3.13, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(15) Film still for *Stage Door Canteen*, Principal Artists Productions, United Artists, Group (1943), KSUM A2010.3.104, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

*Stage Door Canteen* was made to support the war effort during World War II. The actors, for the most part, play themselves and donated their services.

(16) Photo Collage from *Dragon Seed*, MGM (1944), costume design by Valles supervised by Irene, Katharine Hepburn as “Jade Tam” and Walter Huston as Ling Tan, KSUM A2010.3.106, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Pearl Buck’s novels had great currency during World War II. *Dragon Seed* focused on the Chinese peasant’s struggles against Japanese occupation. The politics of the time gave the film version of the novel a boost at the box office.
(17) **Costume for *The Little Minister*, designed by Walter Plunkett, RKO (1934)**, Katharine Hepburn as “Babbie,” KSUM 2010.12.1a-d, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

In this scene from *The Little Minister* Katharine Hepburn as “Babbie,” a Scottish aristocrat, dresses as a gypsy. Walter Plunkett provided a bright red cotton petticoat that would not have been evident in the black and white film, to support the characterization developed by Katharine Hepburn.

(18) **Costume for *Stage Door*, designed by Muriel King, RKO (1937)**, Katharine Hepburn as “Terry Randall,” KSUM 2010.2ab, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn (reproduction belt)

In this scene from *Stage Door* the character “Terry Randall,” learns of the suicide of one of the other actresses living in the same boarding house. Although distraught, “Terry” gives a heartfelt and successful performance encouraged by Constance Collier as “Miss Luther.”

(19) **Mini poster from *Stage Door*, RKO (1937)**, KSUM A2010.3.378, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Because the early films were in black and white, studio publicity departments colored the costumes in posters and publicity materials in any eye-catching way – regardless of the colors of the actual costumes. This is apparent in the lobby cards for *State of the Union* and *Adam’s Rib* as well as this mini poster.

(20) **Ensembles worn for publicity shots for *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, Columbia (1967)**, Katharine Hepburn’s personal wardrobe, KSUM 2010.12.11a-c, .107, .40, .106, Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

The ensembles used in publicity shots for *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?* show signs of wear beyond a single photography session. Both are very much what Katharine Hepburn wore as a matter of personal taste as well as public image.

(21) **Original lobby card for *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?*, Columbia, (1967)**, KSUM A2010.3.2, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

This was the last of the Spencer Tracy/Katharine Hepburn films. The production schedule was developed to meet the necessities of Tracy’s health, and was finished only 15 days before his death.

(22) **Photo collage of film stills and publicity photos for *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?*, Columbia (1967)**, costume design by Joe King, Jean Louis Wardrobe Supervisor, Katharine Hepburn as “Christine Drayton,” KSUM A2010.3.148, .158, .160, .162, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan
(23) Original lobby card from *State of the Union*, MGM (1948), costume design by Irene, Katharine Hepburn as “Mary Matthews,” KSUM A2010.3.15, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(24) Costume from *State of the Union*, MGM (1948), designed by Irene, KSUM 2010.12.3, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

As the character “Mary Matthews” in *State of the Union*, Katharine Hepburn is fighting to recapture her husband’s affections from “Kay Thorndyke,” the character played by Angela Lansbury. In this scene, she has discovered that her husband has almost given in to seduction, and prepares to put him out of the conjugal bed. Irene supervised the Costume Department at MGM after Adrian’s departure.


“Amanda Bonner,” played by Katharine Hepburn, and her husband “Adam Bonner,” played by Spencer Tracy, are lawyers arguing opposite sides of the same case in *Adam’s Rib*. This evening gown is worn for a dinner party scene where, running late, “Amanda” rushes out to ask “Adam” to fasten her dress in back. When asked by Louis Botto about her work with designers, Hepburn said that Plunkett and Adrian were friends and had the “same sense of smell” about what a costume should do.

(26) Original lobby card for *Adam’s Rib*, MGM (1949), KSUM A2010.3.14, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(27) Mini poster for *Without Love*, MGM (1945), KSUM A2010.3.254, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Katharine Hepburn followed her stage success in *The Philadelphia Story* with another Philip Barry play, *Without Love*, in the role of “Jamie Coe Rowan,” produced by the Theatre Guild in 1942. In 1945, she agreed to do the film version with Spencer Tracy for MGM. Irene supervised the costumes.

(28) Photo Collage of films starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, including *Desk Set*, 20th Century Fox (1957), costume design by Charles LeMaire, Katharine Hepburn as “Bunny Watson”(upper left); *Keeper of the Flame*, MGM (1942), costume design by Adrian, Katharine Hepburn as “Mrs. Christine Forrest”(upper right); *The Sea of Grass*, MGM (1947), costume design by Walter Plunkett, Katharine Hepburn as “Lutie Cameron” (lower right); *Woman of the Year*, MGM (1942), costume design by Adrian, Katharine Hepburn as “Tess Harding” (lower left), KSUM A2010.3.228, .230, .101, .229, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan

(29) Painting by Paul Clemens of Katharine Hepburn as “Lutie Cameron Brewton” in *The Sea of Grass*, Oil on Canvas, Lent by Christopher P. Sullivan
Director John Huston had strong ideas about Hepburn’s character in *The African Queen*, and wrote to her that “as the story progresses we should see the ripe fruit burst out of the husk.” He included costume sketches on the side of the letter. When Huston and Hepburn met with Doris Langley Moore to look at Mrs. Moore’s extraordinary collection of period garments, the early 20th century undergarments intrigued Huston -- particularly a combination with split drawers. Hepburn wrote that she “wandered around in the combination feeling a perfect ass and showing mine.” Ultimately the costume list did not include the combination.

Katharine Hepburn sketched this dress noting details of the silk organza fabric, the construction, and how the skirt “simply floated.” She patronized Valentina for her private wardrobe, and it is no surprise that the dresses the couturier made for her stage performances for *The Philadelphia Story* and *Without Love* suited Hepburn’s slender and graceful figure perfectly.

There are two nearly identical raw silk jumpsuits by Valentina in Katharine Hepburn’s personal costume collection now housed at the Kent State University Museum: one in natural colored silk and this green one that is very like the one in the image from the stage production. Hepburn may have had Valentina make them for her personal use, or they may have been replacements for the originals and made during the run of the show. Louis Botto was in the audience one evening and remembered the audible gasp from the audience when Katharine Hepburn entered wearing the red silk costume. The original pleated white gown worn under the coat had been from Valentina’s own wardrobe. The pale pink silk organza gown is the wedding dress from the stage production.
(35) Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt of Katharine Hepburn in costume as “Tracy Lord” on the set of the Broadway play, *The Philadelphia Story*, 1 January 1941, photographed for Life magazine, KSUM A2010.3.376, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(36) Photo collage from *The Philadelphia Story* on stage at the Shubert Theatre, Miss Hepburn’s costumes by Valentina, Katharine Hepburn as “Tracy Lord,” Van Heflin as “Macaulay Conner,” Frank Fenton as “George Kittredge,” and Joseph Cotton as “C.K. Dexter Haven,” KSUM 2010.3.197, .198, .199, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan

(37) Two drawings in pen and ink of Katharine Hepburn as “Tracy Lord” in *The Philadelphia Story*, signed Susi Pearlman ’40, KSUM 2010.12.59, .60, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

(38) Photo Collage of stills from the television film of *The Glass Menagerie*, Norton Simon, Inc, Talent Associates (1973), costume design by Patricia Zipprodt, Katharine Hepburn as “Amada Wingfield,” Michael Moriarty as the “Gentleman Caller,” and Sam Waterston as “Tom,” KSUM A2010.3.184, .182, .181, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan

For the dinner party scene in this television version of Tennessee Williams’ play, Katharine Hepburn wore the pink wedding dress designed by Valentina for the 1939 stage version of *The Philadelphia Story*. She also convinced Patricia Zipprodt to use the *Stage Door* grey marquisette dress for “Laura” in the same scene, because the script described both dresses as coming from a trunk of gowns “Amanda” had worn in her youth. This was Katharine Hepburn’s first film for television.

(39) Self-portrait by Katharine Hepburn in the role of “Coco Chanel,” (c. 1970) KSUM 2010.12.58, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

Katharine Hepburn sometimes sketched herself in the roles she played and captured the essence of her interpretation of the character.

(40) Costumes for *Coco*, Mark Hellinger Theatre (1969), designed by Chanel and Cecil Beaton, Katharine Hepburn as “Coco Chanel,” KSUM 2010.12.68ab, .92, .97, .20 Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

Hepburn wore this black wool Chanel couture ensemble on stage to underscore her characterization. The jewelry attaches to the white jacket with Velcro and Hepburn later wore some of it in *A Matter of Gravity*. (The jacket was originally worn with navy wool slacks.) The “soft” clothes, like the dressing gown and the white silk jacket, designed by Cecil Beaton, were made at Ray Diffin’s studio in New York.

(41) Costumes for *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, Embassy Pictures (1962), designed by Sophie Devine of Motley, Katharine Hepburn as “Mary Tyrone,” KSUM 2010.12.7ab, .8, 9, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn
Three women made up the design group known as Motley: Margaret Harris, her sister Sophie Harris Devine and Elizabeth Montgomery. The costumes for *A Long Day’s Journey Into Night* are by Sophie Devine. Hepburn kept three costumes from her outstanding performance as “Mary Tyrone” in the film version of Eugene O’Neill’s play. One is made of pale yellow and green floral voile trimmed with cream-colored satin ball fringe. The Tyrone family’s Irish heritage is made subtly apparent through the designer’s use of Irish linen with Irish crocheted lace for the lavender costume. The dressing gown was used in the 1956 film *The Iron Petticoat* with trimming added for this production. The fragmented wedding gown came to the museum as part of the Hepburn collection.

(42) Original lobby card of *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, Embassy Pictures (1962), KSUM A2010.3.10, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Katharine Hepburn was nominated for an Academy Award for her performance in this Sidney Lumet film.

(43) Eastern Saudi Arabian robe, possibly intended by designer Margaret Furse for Katharine Hepburn as “Eleanor of Aquitaine” in *The Lion in Winter*, Avco Embassy (1968), KSUM 2010.12.73a, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

The similar robe worn in the film is a light grey. Katharine Hepburn had this robe and a black one like it in her collection.

(44) Original poster for *The Lion in Winter*, KSUM A2010.3.374, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(45) Photo collage of film stills for *The Lion in Winter*, Avco Embassy (1968), KSUM A2010.3.167, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

In a letter to Katharine Hepburn after *The Lion in Winter* filming was finished, Margaret Furse wrote, “Thank you again for the lovely trips we took and for all your help and all the fun we had on the picture. It seems to me looking back that you dreamed up half the ideas for your costumes and then took me on cultural tours, a fine way to be a designer on a film!”


The leopard print caftan and jumpsuit was made in New York at Bergdorf Goodman while the other costumes were made in London.

(47) Original poster for *A Delicate Balance*, American Express Films (1973), KSUM A2010.3.3, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(48) Costumes for *Love Among the Ruins*, ABC Circle Films (1975), designed by Margaret Furse and Germinal Rangel, Katharine Hepburn as “Jessica Medlicott,” KSUM 2010.12.19a-e, .18a-f, Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn
Margaret Furse designed this outrageous red costume specifically to enhance the comedy of the courtroom scene where the behavior of Hepburn’s “Jessica Medlicott” completely nonplusses Sir Laurence Olivier’s “Granville-Jones.” Furse, who was suffering from breast cancer, died before this television film was completed, and Germinal Rangel shares the film credit for the costumes. In an interview with Louis Botto in the mid-1970s, Hepburn discussed costume design, and remarked that, “the great combination, when you just see things the same way, is terribly important. It’s the one thing that matters because I think a person could be brilliant but they could be bad for you; Valentina was brilliant and good for me and I just latched on to her. Maggie Furse, in England, was very good for me and we just got on well.”

(49) Costumes for The Corn is Green, Warner Bros., Television (1979), designed by David Walker, Katharine Hepburn as “Miss Lilly Moffat,” KSUM 2010.12.25ab, .24a, .23ab, .26a, .21, .111, .22, Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

The first television film of the Emlyn Williams play The Corn is Green was made in Wales. During the production, Katharine Hepburn kept a diary published later by TV Guide. On the day the designer, David Walker, and a fitter came to see her for the first time, she suddenly realized that the period of the film, the 1890s, was all about the hourglass figure, and she no longer had an 18-inch waist. After putting on a corset, she recorded this conversation with David Walker:
“I’ll look fat.”

“Oh, no, my dear, not fat. The corset. Well, it is just a question – you see you are not fat at all. It is just a question of pushing things into a different position.”

(50) Costume for The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley, Canon Films, Northbrook Films (1984), designed by Ruth Morley, Katharine Hepburn as “Grace Quigley,” KSUM 2010.12.27ab, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

In an article in The New York Times on Sunday, November 27, 1983, Peter Kaplan wrote, “Katharine Hepburn, watching the shooting on her latest film, The Ultimage Solution of Grace Quigley, was sitting in the rear of a long hearse. . . She sat, as she has been photographed sitting for the 50 years of her movie stardom, in a kind of boyish squat, hugging her knees, her feet tucked under her. She wore tan trousers, a blue shirt buttoned to her neck, a red scarf, and a beat-up coat.” In the same article, Ruth Morley, the costume designer, told Kaplan “I had to make Katharine Hepburn seem like a washed out, down, seedy old lady. It was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done.”

(51) Original poster for The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley, Canon Films, Northbrook Films (1984), KSUM A2010.3.4, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(52) Original insert by Al Hirshfield for The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley, Canon Films, Northbrook Films (1984), KSUM A2010.3.6, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan
(53) Costumes for *Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry*, Schaefer/Karpf Productions; Gaylord Production Co. (1986), designed by Noel Taylor, Katharine Hepburn as “Margaret Delafield,” Charles Frank as her son “Chipper;” KSUM 2010.12.34, .33ab, Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

Noel Taylor designed five of the last films Katharine Hepburn made beginning with *Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry*. Taylor described working with Katherine Hepburn as “perfection, she knew what she liked and I knew what she liked . . . she became my best friend.” Hepburn purchased the entire wardrobe made for this film.


(55) Evening dress from the personal wardrobe of Katharine Hepburn, designed by Valentina possibly used for the ingénue in *A Matter of Gravity*, KSUM 2010.12.155., Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn


(57) Couture Ensemble by Pierre Balmain, Paris, from the personal wardrobe of Katharine Hepburn, possibly used as the prototype for costumes for both *A Matter of Gravity* and *West Side Waltz*. KSUM 2010.12.163a-c, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

Jane Greenwood, who costumed Hepburn’s last two Broadway appearances, said in a 1998 interview taped for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, that, although certainly amenable to the designer’s suggestions during discussions for the 1976 production of *A Matter of Gravity*, Hepburn was difficult to costume because she had a collection of clothes that she referenced and “knew so much about clothes and herself.” Distinguishing between the costumes for these last two stage performances is difficult as many are modelled on the Pierre Balmain couture original in Hepburn’s collection.


(60) Original poster for *On Golden Pond*, Universal (1981), KSUM A2010.3.377, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(61) Two photo collages showing Katharine Hepburn wearing slacks, KSUM A2010.3.321, .313, .360, .313, Gifts of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn
Katharine Hepburn in beige slacks with her legs casually draped over furniture or tucked under her is an enduring image, and one that continues to influence women’s clothing. Slacks suited Katharine Hepburn and she usually chose to wear them for publicity shots (top) and those such as Terrence Spencer’s photo of her standing on her head, done for an article in Life magazine on her “comeback” after Spencer Tracy’s death, published on January 5, 1968. Many of her roles were of physically active characters as in *Undercurrent* where she is in riding clothes.


Katharine Hepburn decided at a young age that skirts were hopeless. “Anytime I hear a man say he prefers a woman in a skirt I say, ‘Try one, Try a skirt.’”

(63) Left: Photo collage of stills from *Alice Adams*, RKO (1935), costume design by Walter Plunkett, Katharine Hepburn as “Alice Adams,” KSUM A2010.3.384, .385, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

Katharine Hepburn purchased many of the costumes for *Alice Adams* in New York with a number of them coming from the salon of Hattie Carnegie. Walter Plunkett then adapted them, with Hepburn’s input, for the film. She said that she added the black velvet bows to make the dress “tacky.” She received an Academy Award nomination for this role.

(64) Center: Photo collage of stills from *Rooster Cogburn*, Universal (1975), Miss Hepburn’s costumes by Edith Head, Katharine Hepburn as “Eula Goodnight,” KSUM A2010.3.80, .89,.91,.94, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

*Rooster Cogburn* paired Katharine Hepburn with John Wayne for the first and only time. Hepburn said, “When I leaned against him (which I did as often as possible, I must confess – I am reduced to such innocent pleasures), thrilling. It was like leaning against a great tree.”


Based on the play by Jean Giraudoux, the script was updated by Bryan Forbes. “Countess Aurelia” and other Parisian eccentrics set about saving the world from corruption and greed by doing in the corporate perpetrators.

Hepburn in *Alice Adams* with Fred MacMurray (1935)
VITRINES WITH HATS AND BOA


(67) Center: Gardening hat from Katharine Hepburn’s personal wardrobe probably worn for publicity photographs by John Bryson/Sygma in the Ladies’ Home Journal Special, “Katharine Hepburn American Classic,” 1993. Hepburn preferred this kind of large brimmed straw hat to protect her from the sun. She wore a very similar hat on location in Africa when filming *The African Queen*. KSUM 2010.12.63, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

(68) Right: Hat from *Rooster Cogburn*, Universal (1975), costume design by Edith Head, Katharine Hepburn as “Eula Goodnight,” KSUM 2010.12.17, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn


(70) Photo collage of stills from the film *Suddenly Last Summer*, Columbia (1959), costume design by Oliver Messel, Katharine Hepburn as “Mrs. Violet Venable,” Elizabeth Taylor as “Catherine Holly,” and Montgomery Clift as “Dr. Cukrowicz;” KSUM A2010.3.137, .138, .139, .149, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(71) Ensemble, dress and coat, 1959, Label: Norman Hartnell, a copy of the white silk ensemble worn by Katharine Hepburn as “Mrs. Violet Venable” in the film *Suddenly Last Summer*, Columbia (1959), KSUM 2010.12.6ab, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn. According to Katharine Houghton, when her aunt liked a particular costume, she would have it made for her personal wardrobe.

(72) Costume for *The Iron Petticoat*, MGM (1956), designed by Yvonne Caffin, Katharine Hepburn as “Captain Vinka Kovelenko,” KSUM 2010.12.5a-c, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

(73) Original poster for *The Iron Petticoat*, MGM (1956), KSUM A2010.3.11, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(74) Original lobby card for *The Iron Petticoat*, MGM (1956), KSUM A2010.3.12, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

(75) Photo collage of stills from *The Iron Petticoat*, MGM (1956), costume design by Yvonne Caffin, Katharine Hepburn as “Captain Vinka Kovelenko,” KSUM A2010.3.129, .132, .133, .134, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

The original sketches for Hepburn’s uniform for *The Iron Petticoat* showed the color as dark green. She wrote to the producers, “My experience with color has led me to think very dark green would be awfully dreary throughout the picture. I thought a sort of olive drab much better. . . I don’t know what film you are using and have no idea about colors, especially dark ones – very unsteady on Eastman and not too becoming to me.” She knew what would work best for her, and the final costume was olive drab.

(76) Mini poster for *Holiday*, Columbia (1938), costume design by Robert Kalloch, Katharine Hepburn as “Linda Seton,” KSUM A2010.3.248, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan
(77) Color enlargement from *Bringing Up Baby*, RKO (1938), Miss Hepburn’s gowns designed by Howard Greer, Katharine Hepburn as “Susan Vance,” KSUM A2010.3.379, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

78) Photo collage of Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant: left, a scene from the film version of *The Philadelphia Story*, MGM (1940), costume design by Adrian, Katharine Hepburn as “Tracy Lord;” right, a scene from *Sylvia Scarlett*, RKO (1935), costume design by Muriel King, Katharine Hepburn as “Sylvia Scarlet,” a.k.a. “Sylvester,” KSUM A2010.3.226, .212, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan

(79) Photo collage of stills from the film version of *The Philadelphia Story*, MGM (1940), costume design by Adrian, Katharine Hepburn as “Tracy Lord,” Cary Grant as “C.K. Dexter Haven,” James Stewart as “Macaulay Connor,” KSUM A2010.3. 299, .300, .301, .302, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan

After a string of box office failures, the Independent Theatre Owners Association took out ads in the Hollywood Reporter declaring Hepburn “box office poison.” Her film career faltered – as did her Broadway career – until her great success on stage in *The Philadelphia Story*. She later said that “Tracy Lord” had given her back her career. Gilbert Adrian did the costumes for one other Hepburn film, *Woman of the Year*, her first with Spencer Tracy.

VITRINE WITH MAKEUP AND SHOES

(81) Make-up, wigs and shoes used by Katharine Hepburn on stage and in film. KSUM 2010.12.33, .34, .116ab, .117ab, .118, 120 – 126a-n, 129a-x, 130 a-f, 131-133, 135-142a-c, 143a-c, 144ab,145a-c, .146, 147ab, .148, Gift of the Estate of Katharine Hepburn

Katharine Hepburn once commented to Greta Garbo, “I bet it takes us longer to look as if we hadn’t made any effort than it does for someone else to come in beautifully dressed.” In a number of photographs, you can see layers of eyelashes – sometimes as many as three – that Hepburn used to accent her eyes. Before meeting Chanel, Hepburn said that she was “scared to death to meet her. I had worn the same clothes for forty years, literally, even the shoes.” There are six pair of identical custom-made shoes in the collection by either John Lobb or De-Fabrizio. While Katharine Hepburn was known for her casual appearance, the casualness was carefully created and maintained as part of her public image.

(82) Movie magazines with Katharine Hepburn on the cover; KSUM 2010.3.33,.34, Gift of Christopher P. Sullivan

In the first years Hepburn was in Hollywood, the studios tried to mold her into the ideal starlet of the day. It would be difficult to recognize Katherine Hepburn on either cover on these fan magazines. However, Hepburn would not allow her look or personality to be dominated, and she ultimately prevailed. As she said, “I never was a victim of the time I lived in. In fact, I was a success because of the times I lived in. My style of personality became the style.”

VITRINE WITH PLAYBILLS

(80) Playbills and souvenir programs for stage productions starring Katharine Hepburn, KSUM A2010.3.22, .23, .24, .25, .31, .36, .37, .40, .375, Gifts of Christopher P. Sullivan; KSUM A2010.5.1, Gift of Lyle Jones; KSUM A2010.6.1, Gift of Alex Gildzen