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# art & culture.





**What's on at the**

# **Museum of Fine Arts**

**Montreal shows its true colors with fashion in a powerful exhibition of works by Thierry Mugler.**

*Natalie Davis*







## A few fun facts about Thierry Mugler

He presented his first haute couture collection at the Ritz in Paris in 1992

He's the first and only French designer to own his own manufacturing facilities

He was the first creator to organize a fashion show open to the public - 6,000 people paid to attend the one-hour event at the Zénith in Paris



The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is a local landmark to Montrealers and those visiting our beautiful city. The museum, founded in 1860 was actually one of the first museums in North America to build up an encyclopedic collection worthy of its name. Today it houses over 43,000 works from Antiquity to present day. With a variety of mediums, from paintings to sculptures, graphics arts to photographs, there is sure to be something that will catch your interest.

The museum makes a point to vary their collection with limited time exhibitions. Currently, the main focus at the museum is on the *Thierry Mugler: Couturissime* exhibition. This exhibit is being presented for the first time by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and it will go on to do a world tour. The exhibit focuses on the work of French creator Thierry Mugler. The exhibit reveals the multiple worlds of this artistic figure, a visionary couturier, a director, a photographer, and a perfumer.



# THIERRY MUGLER

## COUTURISSIME

March 2 to September 8, 2019





The exhibit brings together more than 150 garments that were made between 1973 and 2001 - as well as a wealth of unpublished archival documents and sketches. Some of the garments are being shown here for the very first time! The exhibit also features over one hundred photographs by world-renowned fashion photographers such as Helmut Newton, David LaChapelle, Dominique Issermann, Paolo Roversi, Guy Bourdin and Richard Avedon.

If you're wondering about Thierry Mugler, the man the show is all about, fear not: I'm about to give you a quick background on him. He was born in 1948 in Strasbourg, France. At a young age, the Gothic architecture of the Alsatian city's cathedral had a profound impact on him and he joined the Ballet of the Opéra national du Rhin. After travelling the world, both on his own and with the ballet in the 1960s, he then split his time between London and Amsterdam, and journeyed to India to learn Kathakali. Mugler created his first collection, Café de Paris, in 1973, which he infused with "classic Parisian elegance". At the time, bohemian unstructured looks were all the rage in fashion, and this collection instead

returned to body-conscious and precisely defined shapes. He really shook things up by presenting such things as muslin dressed trimmed with fox fur and snakeskin miniskirts.

The following year, Mugler launched his own label. *Thierry Mugler: Couturissime* follows the path of this remarkable creator who changed the face of fashion with morphological and futuristic cuts, as well as glamorous, sculptural and elegant silhouettes. The exhibition, with a focus on the contrast between light and dark and absolute opposites, showcases themes of a "Hollywood" brand of perfectionism, dreams, exotic creatures, science fiction, and eroticism. One of the things that stood out most to me while walking through this exhibit was the innovative use of certain materials into high fashion, like metal, faux fur, vinyl and latex.

On top of using innovative materials, Mugler sought to showcase his work in new and interesting ways. An iceberg in Greenland, the dunes of the Sahara, the wings of the Chrysler building, the rooftop of the Paris Opera House.





“The French creator who made of his fashion an ode to the spectacular is being showcased in a solo exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.”

Manon Garrigues, Vogue Paris



This creative use of materials isn't actually so surprising when you consider the fact that he created the stage costumers for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and for Cirque de Soleil's *Zumanity*. He's also dressed some more avant-garde celebrities, like David Bowie, Liza Minnelli, and Lady Gaga. Really, throughout the course of his career, he's worked with an astounding number of renowned creatives.

If you're interested in fashion, there's another exhibit at the museum that perfectly compliments *Thierry Mugler: Couturissime*, which is *Montreal Couture*. This exhibit “pays tribute to the talent of 10 local creators and

collective”. This is the first exhibit to bring together the creations of Marie Saint Pierre with her timeless cuts that perfectly join style and function, Philippe Dubuc who had a debut collection that completely reinvented menswear, and Denis Gagnon, known for his haute couture approach: three Quebec fashion icons.

You'll also be able to explore the distinct work of stylish Helmer Joseph, who's Haitian roots really show through in his work, as well as creator Ying Gao who is known for mixing industrial design, architecture, robotics, and sensory experimentation with interactive media. Also featured in this exhibit is Nathon Kong, who's







high-end custom men's suits are all the rage in Montreal and Markantoiné Lynch Boisvert, who is more focused on a movement led by young Montreal designers who are breaking down geographic barriers with their creativity. Finally, the new-to-the-spotlight duo Fecal Matter, formed by Montrealers Hannah Rose Dalton and Steven Raj Bhaskaran. No, we're not a fan of the name of the duo either, but they combine fashion, music and performance.

Another exhibit on at the museum include *A Model in the Studio, Montreal 1880-1950*. This exhibition focuses on representations of live models by Quebec and

Canadian artists. Most of the works in this exhibition have never before been shown or are new acquisitions to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. From the first sketches to the completed piece, something of the artist's personality is revealed in the lines of the models depicted.

Interested? Be sure to join the fashion crowd at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts between now and and September 8<sup>th</sup> for *Thierry Mugler: Couturissime* and *Montreal Couture*, and until May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 for *A Model in the Studio, Montreal 1880-1950*. For more information, visit [www.mbam.qc.ca](http://www.mbam.qc.ca)





# Interview with Akilah Newton, founder of Overture with the Arts

***Natalie Davis***

Overture with the Arts is a Montreal-based non-profit organization that offers education in music, dance, drama, and vocal training. At Overture with the Arts, they believe that this sort of program helps kids find a creative outlet for self-expression and builds confidence and poise. To date, about 40,000 youth have benefitted from their after-school programs and school tours. Akilah clearly has a deep appreciation for the performing arts, which started while performing in an elementary school production of *Annie*, the musical. She continued to nurture her interest with training in music, drama, dance, and stage production, going on to earn her Bachelor's degree in Arts, Music, and Entertainment Management.

When I asked Akilah about what path led her to starting Overture with the Arts back in 2009, she had an interesting story to share. The turning point for her was when she was managing a Performing Arts Centre in downtown Montreal that turned out to be a scam. The scam in question had astronomical registration fees, and the company was misleading people by implying that children who signed up for their classes would have the opportunity to audition in front of casting directors in Hollywood. They were recruiting families into their scam under the guise of promising fame.

Obviously, this sort of deceitful setup didn't sit well with Akilah and she had no desire to be associated with



*Photo by Naska Demini*

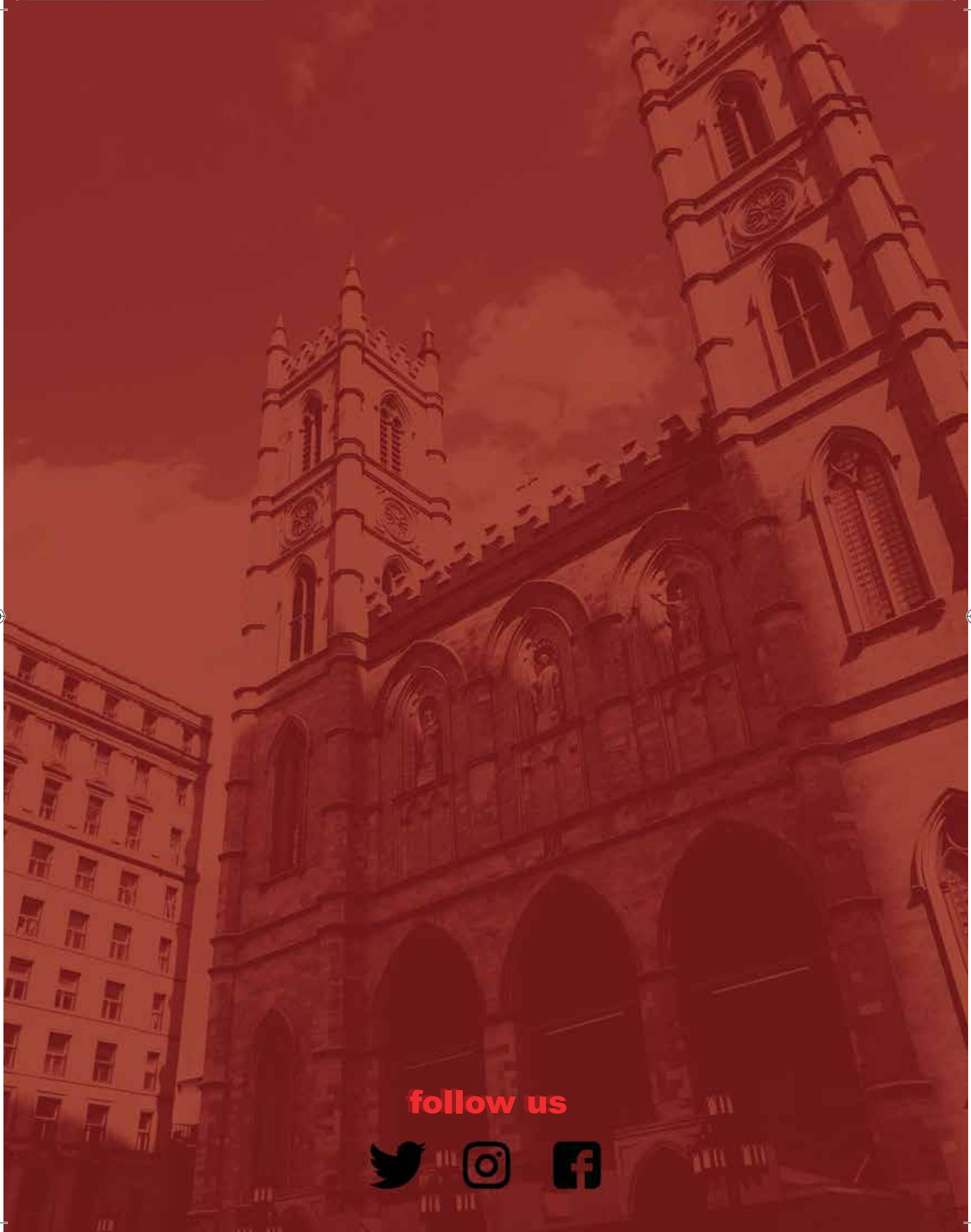
a company like that. She quit her job, and she decided that she wanted to start an arts organization that offered high quality programs that were accessible to youth from all socio-economic backgrounds. On April 23, 2009, Overture with the Arts was born.

When asked about what the most rewarding part of her labor of love was, Akilah said that it brings her so much joy to see students performing - as cheesy as it sounds. She's so proud of them because they work so hard, and it's so rewarding to see them get steps closer to their dreams.

The West Island has such a vibrant art scene, and Akilah doesn't think that it gets enough recognition. She thinks it's wonderful to be able to promote local talent and provide performance opportunities, both in the west island and into downtown Montreal. By giving a platform to emerging artists to showcase their talent, Overture with the Arts hopes that the West Island will one day have a booming art scene, similar to that of downtown Montreal.

For more information, visit [www.owta.org](http://www.owta.org)





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