

Textilmuseum St.Gallen

Collecting Fashion. From T-Shirts to Haute Couture October 24, 2025 – May 25, 2026

From 24 October 2025 to 25 May 2026, the Textile Museum St.Gallen will be presenting the exhibition *Collecting Fashion. From T-shirts to Haute Couture*. It sheds light on the multifaceted practice of collecting fashionable garments and textile objects.

BETWEEN COLLECTING AND ACCUMULATING

Is one's wardrobe a deliberate collection of fashionable items or a more or less random accumulation of clothing? What motivates people to build up a textile collection? What makes a textile object valuable or worthy of collecting? For some, it is monetary value or a question of prestige. For others, it is the emotional attachment or associated memories that count. Still others see utility value as the decisive factor: clothing that can not only be archived but also worn.

Conscious collecting is more than just accumulating and storing. It is a specific, orderly compilation based on individual criteria such as a particular theme, aesthetics or the history of objects. Collecting fashion sustainably means prioritising quality over quantity, favouring certain pieces over others and preserving them in the long term through repair, care and restoration. Fashion always moves in a tension between covering and revealing, belonging and distinction, zeitgeist and timelessness. Those who collect therefore decide which of these facets will be preserved for the future.

The opposite of consciously preserving clothing is the subject of artist Andrea Vogel's multimedia installation: carelessly discarded items of clothing that end up as rubbish on the street. In her three-part work, she shows the unexpected places where textiles can turn up and what can be created from what appears to be waste. The title of the work, *Die Lumpensammlerin* ('The Rag-picker', 2024/25), alludes to a historical profession, when between the 17th and 19th centuries, sheets of paper were made from used textiles.

A second artistic position, *L'Étreinte* ('The Embrace', 2020–2025) by Geneva-based photographer Rebecca Bowring, deals with the legacy of collections. What happens to a collection when the collector is no longer there? After the death of her mother, the artist was confronted with the material traces of a loved one, including a collection of valuable silk scarves and paper doilies, symbols of her generosity and hospitality. In search of the essence of the person, she created new, fragile memories and textile embraces.

FROM T-SHIRTS TO HAUTE COUTURE

The four private collectors Rosmarie Amacher, Marcus Gossolt, Beata Sievi and Reto Salis Gross collect out of passion. In the exhibition *Collecting Fashion. From T-Shirts to Haute Couture*, they allow visitors a glimpse into their carefully curated collections. The pieces on display were selected in close collaboration with the collectors and represent defining moments in fashion history as well as biographical milestones in the lives of their owners. What unites them is their appreciation for textile craftsmanship, special manufacturing techniques, high-quality materials and the social value inherent in clothing.

Haute couture seamstress Rosmarie Amacher owns an extensive collection of Swiss dresses and costumes, which are preserved as part of the Swiss Textile Collection she founded.

Beata Sievi, corset artist and fashion expert, has recently expanded her collection of historical lingerie and corsets with numerous pieces in order to document techniques, stories and materiality. For both of them, the collection pieces are cultural and historical treasures that provide insights into textile and fashion history and must be preserved for future generations of textile enthusiasts.

St. Gallen-born designer Marcus Gossolt collects unique T-shirts, while Reto Salis Gross, a dentist by profession, collects men's clothing from the 1920s to the 1940s. For both of them, the function and historical significance of individual pieces are paramount. They wear their collectibles in everyday life and use them as an expression of their identity.

In personal interviews, the collectors answer questions about their fascination, motivation and the associated challenges and obligations. Why do they want to own so many things? Which kind of relationship do they have with the objects? And how did they come to pursue this activity? The testimonials are supplemented by photographs showing the collections in their storage locations, whether in the living room, basement or a corner of the office. This gives visitors an insight into the diversity, organisation and preservation conditions of the collections.

THE COLLECTION OF THE TEXTILE MUSEUM ST.GALLEN

The textile industrialist and collector Leopold Iklé (1838–1922), one of the founding members of the Textile Museum St.Gallen, once put it this way: 'Given the diversity of the industry and the changing fashions, all good examples will be useful sooner or later.' This idea continues to shape the Textile Museum's self-image to this day. Since its foundation, it has seen itself as a repository of knowledge and a source of inspiration. A place where embroidery, fabric samples, pattern books and photographs are collected, preserved and constantly reinterpreted.

The current exhibition highlights this ambition and displays unique pieces from the collection. On display are the first item of clothing ever acquired, as well as a printed wool dress from the 1860s, which is being presented to the public for the first time. These historical highlights are complemented by new acquisitions from 2024, including a self-sewn wedding dress from the 1970s, made from fabrics and embroidery by St. Gallen textile

manufacturers – a symbol of the living connection between past and present.

Special attention is also paid to the 1920s, which stand out in the collection for their bright colours and the combination of Art Deco forms with traditional and fairy-tale motifs. During this period, textile manufacturers combined traditional craft techniques with machine embroidery and experimented with new, colourfast dyes – as can be seen in the expressive textiles and unique aprons that are also on display in the exhibition.

Today, the Textile Museum intentionally focuses on the present. The emphasis is on historical and contemporary garments that were manufactured or worn in Switzerland. The aim is to open up new perspectives on the textile history of Eastern Switzerland and to make previously unheard voices – especially those of individuals and communities that have been underrepresented until now – visible and audible.

On the ground floor, questions about value and fascination, abundance and responsibility are directed back to the visitors. Interactive stations allow them to explore their own collecting behaviour. In collaboration with a style consultant, a wardrobe full of specific questions and tips was created for this purpose. On the basis of these, visitors can analyse their own style and, after their visit, possibly reorganise their wardrobe at home into a more specific textile collection.

Collecting Fashion. From T-Shirts to Haute Couture shows that collecting is more than just preserving: it is a lively dialogue between the past and the present, and between society and the individual, which constantly gives rise to new stories and opens up fresh perspectives.

Duration	October 24, 2025 – May 25, 2026
Location	Textilmuseum St.Gallen, Vadianstrasse 2, 9000 St.Gallen, Schweiz
Curation	Sina Jenny
Scenography and exhibition graphics	Jaira Peyer
Collection curation	Luba Nurse
Research assistance	Claudia Merfert, Liliane Vogt
Lenders	Rosmarie Amacher (Swiss Textile Collection), Marcus Gossolt, Reto Salis Gross, Beata Sievi

Press Contact

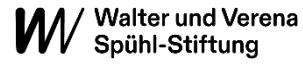
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