



## MEDIA ALERT

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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## Australian fashion designer Martin Grant gifts more than 200 elegant and timeless designs to National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia



**5 July 2024:** Today, the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) announced that celebrated Paris-based Australian fashion designer Martin Grant has generously gifted the institution more than 200 designs from his own personal archive. A leading figure globally, Martin Grant is known for his reinterpretation of wardrobe classics, creating timeless and elegant designs that exemplify his refined understanding of structure and volume.

The gift encompasses more than three decades of Grant's career, with designs spanning from the early 1990s, when he established his eponymous label in Paris, through to his recent and acclaimed autumn-winter 2019 collection. Offering an unprecedented insight into his creative process and milieu, the gift also includes a large gift of archival material; press clippings, runway footage, sketches and photographs.

Upon arrival in Paris in the 1990s, Grant was championed by the late Andre Leon Talley, former editor-at-large at US Vogue, who described his designs as 'precise, sharp and full of grace' and commended the 'linear elegance' and 'couture vocabulary' of his self-taught draping and tailoring skills.

Throughout his illustrious career, Martin Grant's clients have included his muses Cate Blanchett and Lee Radziwill, as well as Juliette Binoche, Emmanuelle Devos, Tilda Swinton, Blake Lively, Cameron Diaz, Kate Hudson, Emma Stone, Eva Longoria, HH Sheikha Moza and Queen Rania of Jordan.

The gift will form the basis of an NGV-exclusive exhibition surveying Grant's body of work, held at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. Developed in close collaboration with the designer, the exhibition will reflect his design sensibility and aesthetic through fashion, photography, drawings and reference material.

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Martin Grant's designs reflect his refined understanding of structure and volume. With an emphasis on form, each garment is constructed to maintain a direct relationship to the body as a sculptural form. His working method is focused on the development of a design through the direct manipulation of fabric on a dressmaker's mannequin. Designs rarely begin as a detailed two-dimensional sketch but emerge from an image held in Grant's imagination.

Highlights from the gift include glamorous cocktail wear and evening gowns in monochromatic hues and dramatic patterns. *Look 5, dress* from the designer's 2014 spring-summer collection features a graphic diamond jacquard conceived by Grant, while the dramatic *Look 30, dress* from autumn-winter 2004 shows his mastery of structure and volume.

Grant's signature outerwear – including expertly tailored jackets, peacoats and trench coats that balance minimalism with a playful approach to proportion, underpinned by rigorous pattern-cutting – are also a feature of the gift. *Look 1, Coat* from 2008 autumn-winter 2008-09 featuring an exaggerated collar, narrow silhouette and immaculate finishing has become a classic style that Grant revisits in differing lengths and fabrics.

The gift also illustrates Grant's clever recalibration of historical silhouettes and period references into contemporary daywear. *Mary Poppins coat* references the designer's formative Melbourne years during which he was inspired by a blend of late-Victorian and 1950s styles. Similarly, *Look 26, Jacket and skirt*, 2011 autumn-winter collection evokes the bohemian ease of the 1970s with fluid lines and colour-blocked pleating. These ideals of comfort and function, combined with elegance, has formed the basis of Grant's design vocabulary and carries through into his more casual shirtdresses and jumpsuits.

Throughout his career Grant has preferred to work with a restricted colour palette, with classic fabrics such as felted wool and silk satin, and with very limited use of surface embellishment. This concerted restraint is underpinned by beautiful detailing and immaculate finishing.

The gift builds on the NGV's longstanding relationship with Grant, whose work was celebrated in the landmark NGV 2005 exhibition, *Martin Grant: Paris*, the designer's first major Australian retrospective. This gift transforms the NGV's holdings of Grant's work, dramatically enhancing its initial collection of approximately 30 designs.

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said:** 'With a deep appreciation for the traditional techniques that sit at the heart of bespoke tailoring and couture practices, Martin Grant has established himself as a longstanding and beloved figure of both Australian and global fashion culture. This incredibly generous gift of more than 200 works to the NGV Collection is truly transformative. It brings extraordinary depth and comprehensive breadth to our representation of Martin's work and makes ours the most significant holdings of his works anywhere in the world.'

**Martin Grant said:** 'The National Gallery of Victoria houses the largest and richest fashion collection in the southern hemisphere. To have my own body of work represented in this collection in Melbourne, the city of my birth, is a true privilege and an honour.'

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## ABOUT MARTIN GRANT

Martin Grant began his career as a young fashion designer in Melbourne in the early 1980s. He was part of a thriving independent fashion scene and an active participant in the Fashion Design Council parades, which were known for their innovative approach to the presentation of contemporary Australian fashion. After seven years of successfully running his own fashion label in Melbourne, Grant formally undertook studies in sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts. Travelling to the United Kingdom in 1990, Grant then worked for two London-based fashion houses before making the decision to move to Paris. In 1992, Grant re-established his fashion label and four years later opened his own boutique in the Marais district. In 2003 Grant was invited to join Barney's New York's as Artistic Director of the Barney's Private Label, a tenure he held for 10-years and in 2014 he designed uniforms for Qantas. Grant's recent collections, address industry excess, seeing him revisiting his archives and focusing on not only designing but problem-solving.

Further information on Martin Grant's works in the NGV Collection is available via the NGV website:  
<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/11273/>

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## IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/hykf7tns6tnrnoq4rt3y7/AOqkHmCYcComv0Ao3HIUywo?rlkey=7nyhuef7q6ksu7884r7503nh0&dl=0>

**Image credit:** **Martin Grant, Paris** (manufacturer), **Martin Grant** (designer), *Look 1*, 2020, pre-fall 2020; **Martin Grant, Paris** (manufacturer), **Martin Grant** (designer), *Look 43, dress and petticoat*, 2017, spring-summer 2017; **Martin Grant, Paris** (manufacturer), **Martin Grant** (designer), *Look 22, dress*, 2017, autumn-winter 2017; **Martin Grant, Paris** (manufacturer), **Martin Grant** (designer), *Look 18, shirt and trousers*, 2019, pre-fall 2019; Images courtesy of Martin Grant

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