



STUDIES IN STYLE

A NEW SPACE AT BAL HARBOUR SHOPS
EXPLORES FASHION AS AN ART FORM.

By Nila Do Simon
Photography by Nick Garcia

While style is difficult to define, fashion can be simpler to explore. And that's exactly what the innovative Fashion Project seeks to do through its curatorial projects and public programs that celebrate and delve into the culture of ready-to-wear, runways, haute couture and its players.

Located on the third level of Bal Harbour Shops, Fashion Project offers a series of exciting, innovative fashion exhibitions through art installations, film series, discussions and other mediums. The first cultural space of its kind inside a major U.S. retail center, the venue is the brainchild of Cathy Leff, the former director of The Wolfsonian-Florida International University Museum and now consultant to the Whitman Family Development, the company that owns the legendary Bal Harbour

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A LA MODE
Fashion Project founder Cathy Leff in front of (from left) an original 1912 Ballets Russes costume by Léon Bakst; a circa 1938 headress attributed to Jean Cocteau and a 1935-38 evening cape by Elsa Schiaparelli; and the 2011 Bird dress by Felicity Brown.

Shops. Challenged by Matthew Whitman Lazenby (the president and CEO of Whitman Family Development) to offer the community an informative curriculum that also fits the chic standards of Bal Harbour Shops, Leff realized there was only one topic that could satisfy both—one that was obvious and prevalent at every boutique in the mall.

"Bal Harbour Shops is known for luxury fashion, and it made sense to have a space dedicated to celebrate it," says Leff. "There's already an audience who is coming here with an interest in fashion."

In charge of curating the exhibits slated for the upcoming season is Judith Clark, a London-based curator and exhibition-maker whom Leff and Lazenby hand-picked from various candidates and offered her 1,000 square feet to fulfill their vision. On exhibit through Aug. 10 is *FP02: Morphing*, a semicontinuation of the inaugural show, *FP01: The Exhibition*, though completely transforming it. Using the exact same pieces from *FP01*, Clark reconfigured, reinterpreted and restyled the costumes and imaginative dresses to demonstrate how the same objects can have different stories. Or, as Clark puts it: "In museums you never get to see the objects presented differently. We are exploring ideas around display by experimenting with various ways of presenting the same [items]."

Opening Aug. 15 is the *FP Summer Series*, which will transform the space into a film viewing room conceived by designer Tui Pranich to showcase a series of fashion films. This will be curated by Nat Chediak (director of programming for the Coral Gables Art Cinema) to whom Leff gave carte blanche to broadly interpret this series, something she believes is essential to Fashion Project's success.

"There are so many different lenses through which you can look at fashion," adds Leff. "We just don't want to talk about fashion itself, but also look at it through a multidisciplinary lens and use this curatorial space to anchor it." 9700 Collins Ave., 3rd Floor, Bal Harbour, 786.245.2200, balharbourshops.com/fashionproject