

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Skirball Cultural Center presents the U.S. Debut of  
*Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion***

The exhibition chronicles the fashion icon's career from the 1970s to today, interweaving her personal history as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor while showcasing special artifacts and stories bringing perspective to her lasting legacy.

**October 17, 2024 - August 31, 2025**



Diane von Furstenberg. Credit: Mirelle Roobaert.

**LOS ANGELES, CA (October 1, 2024)**—The **Skirball Cultural Center** announces details of the U.S. debut of [\*\*\*Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion\*\*\*](#), an exhibition exploring the remarkable life and work of fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg. This

multidisciplinary exhibition invites visitors to discover the extraordinary milestones of von Furstenberg's career, from the 1970s to the present day. *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* opens to the public on **Thursday, October 17, 2024**, and will be on view through **August 31, 2025**.

"We are thrilled to bring this powerful exhibition to Los Angeles, showcasing not only von Furstenberg's iconic designs but also her enduring message of female empowerment," says Skirball Cultural Center President and CEO Jessie Kornberg. "Jewish connection to garment industries and needlepoint trades spans continents and generations. Past exhibitions like the retrospective on Rudi Gernreich or the textile art of Aram Han Sifuentes celebrated these connections. *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* builds on that work with new vigor and a new dimension - the creative energy and conquering spirit of one extraordinary woman."

"When my hometown, the City of Brussels, came to me and said they wanted to present an exhibition of my work at the Brussels Fashion and Lace Museum curated by Nicolas Lor, I was honored," says von Furstenberg. "It was very emotional to have this just down the street from where I went to school as a young girl. Now, I am touched that the Skirball Cultural Center is bringing the show to another city very close to my heart, Los Angeles."

*Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* includes a selection of items drawn from the DVF archives along with ephemera, fabric swatches, media pieces, and information on her philanthropic work.

The U.S. debut of *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* exclusively includes:

- New artifacts that shed light on von Furstenberg's biography as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and a war refugee, offering additional perspective on the factors that shaped her life and work.
- 75 items, 29 of which are exclusive to the Skirball's presentation.
- A spotlight on Diane's mother Lily Nahmias featuring audio, images and text that explore her experience as a member of the resistance and a Holocaust survivor, including a reproduction of the letter she sent her parents after the Nazis imprisoned her.
- Garments from Greco-Roman drapery to kimonos, dance uniforms, and fellow designers that explore the connections between these historical pieces and the designs of Diane von Furstenberg.

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The exhibition *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* is organized into four sections, the first of which explores the origins of her iconic wrap dress through a selection of items and sculptures that showcase the inventiveness of the dress and its historical context.

Section two examines von Furstenberg's bold designs and sources of inspiration through three lenses: nature, art, and freedom. Nature is an important motif in her work and playful animal prints and floral patterns have been featured in her designs throughout her career. Art holds a similar prominence for her, with many prints inspired by or made in collaboration with artists such as Jackson Pollock, Konstantin Kakanias, and Andy Warhol.

Also explored in this section is von Furstenberg's deep personal connection to the theme of freedom. Having given birth to von Furstenberg just 18 months after she was liberated from a Nazi concentration camp, her mother referred to her as her "torch of freedom."

The theme of freedom is a unique part of von Furstenberg's design ethos, epitomized in her wrap dress which became a symbol of liberation.

Section three entitled "The American Dream", follows a twenty-six-year-old Diane von Furstenberg in 1972 with the launch of her brand and shows the remarkable success she achieved.

A pivotal factor in her commercial success lies in her vision for women: resilient, confident, and fiercely feminine. Often serving as her own muse, she featured herself prominently in ad campaigns and marketing. In the early stages of her career, she traversed the United States to meet and help women try on her designs. This approach enabled her to develop a lasting connection with the public, listening to their aspirations and concerns and translating them into clothing that continues to resonate with women more than half a century later.

The final section, "WeAr(e)Able Stories," is a play on words merging two expressions, Wearable Stories and We Are Able. It encapsulates the power von Furstenberg gives to women through her brand and her advocacy.

Beginning with a dress, von Furstenberg sought to liberate and empower women. Since then, she has used her voice to advocate for gender equity and human rights on a global

scale.

For more information about *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion*, please visit: <https://www.skirball.org/museum/diane-von-furstenberg-woman-fashion>.

### **About Diane von Furstenberg**

Diane von Furstenberg is a fashion designer, founder of her eponymous brand, and the creator of the iconic wrap dress. A philanthropist, she established the DVF Awards with the Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation in 2010 to honor and empower women leaders worldwide, an event approaching its 15th anniversary in 2024. An author, she has written several books, including *Diane: A Signature Life*, *The Woman I Wanted to Be*, which was translated into 8 languages, and *Own It: The Secret to Life*. The recipient of countless prestigious awards, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2019 and she received the *Chevalier de la Légion D'Honneur* from France in 2020, the *Commandeur de l'Ordre de la Couronne* from her native Belgium in 2021, and the Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Woman of Leadership Award in 2022. Diane currently serves on the boards of Vital Voices and the CFDA and in 2023, she was the subject of *Woman Before Fashion*, a book published by Rizzoli, which followed the exhibition dedicated to her life and career at Brussels's Fashion & Lace Museum. In 2024, she was the subject of the documentary *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge*, which premiered as the opening selection at TriBeCa festival before officially launching on Hulu and Disney+ internationally.

### **Curatorial Acknowledgments**

**Nicolas Lor**, Head of Exhibitions and Publications at the Fashion & Lace Museum in Brussels, is the originating curator of *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion*, which he developed for the Fashion & Lace Museum. In 2013, his first research work on material and historical matters in fashion (textiles and fabrics) brought him to collaborate with the most famous luxury houses in Paris: Chloé, CHANEL, Maison Margiela, and Christian Dior Couture. Between 2018 and 2021, Lor worked as Fashion Archivist for the Christian Dior Couture house, where he researched and preserved rare pieces of fashion. Additionally, Lor participated in the acclaimed traveling exhibition *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams*, curated by Florence Muller and Oriole Cullen, a project that was initially presented in Paris in 2017. Lor is known for his research into Chinese costume and Chinese fashion design. In 2017, he curated *The new momentum — China contemporary fashion at the Shanghai Textile Museum*. His work on Chinese fashion continued with the exhibition *Future Fashion Spaces – Reimagined*, co-curated with Pooky Lee in Shenzhen, as well as

with the online exhibition *Symbioses*. Lor has written several papers for fashion and cultural journals or magazines, including *Pièce détachée*, *Koï Magazine*, and *TTT Magazine*.

**Cate Thurston**, Chief Curator, joined the Skirball team in 2015 and is the coordinating curator for *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion*. She is also the co-curator of the Skirball exhibition "*I'll Have What She's Having: The Jewish Deli*, which is currently traveling on a five-city national tour. Thurston previously curated the acclaimed exhibition *Notorious RBG: Ruth Bader Ginsburg (2018)*. She was the managing curator for the Skirball's presentations of *Blacklist: Hollywood's Red Scare (2023)*, *Sara Berman's Closet (2018)*, *Future Aleppo (2018)*, *Paul Simon: Words & Music (2017)*, *Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming American (2016)*, and the curator for *The Unauthorized History of Baseball in 100-Odd Paintings: The Art of Ben Sakoguchi (2016)*. Prior to joining the Skirball, Thurston worked at the Autry Museum of the American West for five years in a variety of exhibition, education, and visitor experience-related positions, culminating in a hybrid curatorial role. Thurston holds a B.A. in American History from Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire and an M.A. in History from California State University, Northridge.

The exhibition *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* and its related educational programs at the Skirball Cultural Center are made possible through lead support from David Geffen Foundation, Alicia Miñana and Rob Lovelace. Additional supportive donors include, Sandy and Hank Abouaf and Family, Pamela and Jeffrey Balton, Willow Bay and Bob Iger, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Stephanie and Harold Bronson, CNL/Patina-V Mannequins, The Eisner Foundation, Fischer Family Foundation, The Richard E. and Harriett F. Gold Charitable Fund, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary, Elissa and Bill Oshinsky, The Marcia Israel Foundation, In Memory of Patti Silver, The Steve Tisch Foundation, U.S. Bank, Visionary Women, Annette and Herb Wolas, and The Zimelis Family.

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### **About the Skirball**

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

### **Visiting the Skirball**

The Skirball is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00 pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10:00 am–5:00 pm; closed Mondays and holidays. Reservations are recommended for General Admission and the permanent exhibition Noah's Ark at the Skirball, which requires timed entry and is ticketed separately. Tickets for *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman Before Fashion* are \$18 for adults, and \$15 for seniors, full-time students, and children 2-17 years old. The Skirball is always FREE for Members and children under 2 years old. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit [skirball.org](http://skirball.org).

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