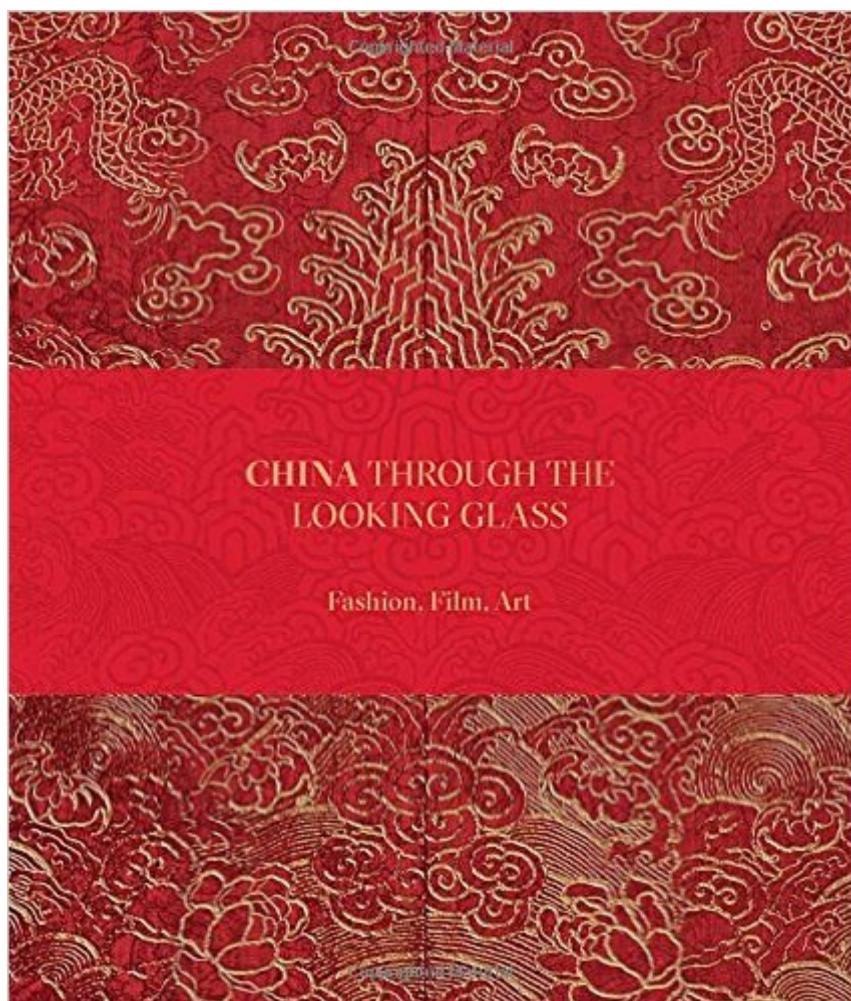


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# China: Through The Looking Glass



## Synopsis

A lavish exploration of the evocative and complex fashions inspired by Chinese culture. For centuries, China's export arts—jade, silks, porcelains, and, more recently, cinema—have fueled Western fantasies of an exotic East and served as enduring sources of inspiration for fashion. This stunning publication, which accompanied one of the most successful exhibitions in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's history, explores the influence of Chinese aesthetics on designers, including Giorgio Armani, Christian Dior, Jean Paul Gaultier, Karl Lagerfeld, Ralph Lauren, Alexander McQueen, and Yves Saint Laurent. Drawing upon Chinese decorative arts, cinema, and costume—notably imperial court robes, the close-fitting cheongsam, and the unisex Mao suit—their designs are fantastical pastiches of anachronistic motifs. As in the game of telephone, the process of cultural translation transforms the source material into ingeniously original fashions that are products solely of the designers' imaginations. In a similar way, contemporary Chinese film directors render fanciful, highly stylized evocations of various epochs in China's history—demonstrating that China's imagery is equally seductive to artists in the East and further inspiring today's designers. Juxtaposing modern fashions and film stills with their forebears in fine and decorative arts and historical dress, this book reveals the rich and ongoing creative dialogue between East and West, past and present.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

With nearly every major exhibition that opens at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York these days, we are being blessed with the simultaneous publication of impressive catalogues. And such is

the case with the Costume Institute show titled "China Through the Looking Glass: Fashion, Film, Art" that debuted in early May. The show examines the influence of Chinese aesthetics in general and clothing in particular on western counterparts and, in turn, western notions and re-imagined representations of the Central Kingdom. The 256-page catalogue that accompanies the exhibition is a masterpiece itself, as becomes clear from the outset with covers that replicate both the look and texture of a classic red-and-gold Chinese brocade and pages that are folded in on themselves in the traditional Chinese manner. The recent New York Times review of the exhibition focused on its sponsorship by MMA's Costume Institute and the beauty of the clothes on display. The catalogue, however, offers a broader perspective, as experts were engaged to write chapters on subjects like "Toward an Aesthetic of Surfaces," "Imagery of Chinese Dress," "Cinema's Virtual Chinas," "Emperor to Citizen," and "Empire of Signs." The concluding chapter, meanwhile, presents a conversation between the couturier John Galliano with the Costume Institute curator Andrew Bolton. The Chinese gowns pictured in the catalogue, especially recent couture, will be quite a revelation for the western reader and museum-goer, and the catalogue documents that there is much to celebrate in the dynamic between the West and East. To take but one example, consider the manner in which designers from both have represented the vocabulary of Chinese blue-and-white porcelains.

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