



A sheath dress, circa 1925, offers a lesson in style.

## Costume Drama

CLARE SAURO, CURATOR OF THE DREXEL HISTORIC COSTUME COLLECTION, RECOUNTS ITS PAST AND OFFERS A GLIMPSE AT ITS FUTURE. AS TOLD TO ALEXANDRA LESHNER

“The Drexel Historic Costume Collection was founded a few years after the Drexel Institute of Science and Technology, in the late 1890s. A.J. Drexel strongly believed in education through art, and he set aside a small fortune for the purchase of fine and decorative arts. Textiles and garments were some of these early acquisitions. I estimate there to be more than 12,000 objects in total, including a coral-encrusted Givenchy gown donated by Princess Grace of Monaco. Most of the early donations had a Drexel family connection, but today they are usually from alumni or interested supporters from the Philadelphia region. The collection is used as a research resource for Drexel students, as seen in this photo from a costume history class in 1954. Mary Carter, a professor in the department of home economics and a onetime curator of the DHCC, appears to be discussing the 1920s silhouette and therefore using the long 1890s dress on the left as a comparison. Carter was methodical and ran the collection according to the established museum standards of the day. Through her efforts, the DHCC received many important garments and was nationally recognized for its excellence. In January 2013, we moved to our new facilities in The URBN Center on Market Street. The collection is housed in a controlled environment, and through these preventive measures we hope to ensure that the objects will be available to researchers for generations to come. We plan to mount semiannual mini-exhibitions in our display area starting this fall.” *For information about tours, research, and donations, contact [dhcc@drexel.edu](mailto:dhcc@drexel.edu).* **PS**