

The Met acquires designer jackets from NUS law don



Among the pieces going to the Costume Institute are rare finds

Carmen Sin

The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has acquired five jackets and a suit from David Tan, in what the National University of Singapore law professor believes is the first

contemporary menswear donation to the museum by a Singaporean.

The outgoing from Tan's closet include a gold embroidered Balmain jacket from Fall/Winter 2017, a Louis Vuitton crossed-lapel white blazer from late designer Virgil Abloh's final collection and a silk three-piece from Dolce & Gabbana, circa Spring 2015.

These will fatten the institute's superlative collection, thought to be the world's largest for con-

temporary fashion.

Tan reckons his Maison Margiela by John Galiano number might even be exhibited at the museum's 2027 retrospective for the controversial British fashion designer, whose oeuvre is the theme for the next Met Gala.

Tan's Galiano contribution is a rare, deconstructed anthracite blazer with waxed accents and ruffle detail from 2021.

Should it be displayed at the

2027 show, it would be the ultimate payoff for the 56-year-old professor.

Tan says he began collecting designer jackets some 20 years ago with the idea of one day giving them to museums around the world to be exhibited in his lifetime.

And the Met's Costume Institute is the "holy grail" of fashion museums – a dream, he adds.

His other donations to the Met

are a Gucci x Balenciaga Hacker Project cotton canvas blazer and a Dsquared2 by Dean and Dan Caten jacket featuring a quilted orange nylon overlay evocative of American prison jumpsuits.

Asked about the rare pieces in his Met donation, Tan says: "I would consider the Balmain jacket and the Dolce & Gabbana suit among my most precious."

"Not only is the craftsmanship exquisite, but the same outfits were also seen on my favourite sporting icons: (Brazilian footballer) Neymar (when he was presented with the Ligue 1 Player of the Year award in 2018) and (Chinese badminton player) Lin Dan (in his eponymous coffee-table book by Dolce & Gabbana)."

They would have fit in well at the Met's exhibitions in 2026 and 2018 – Costume Art and Heavenly Bodies: Fashion And The Catholic Imagination respectively, he adds.

Tan devotes some time to jacket sourcing every day. He says: "In addition to placing orders directly with the relevant brands after the runway shows, I would also scour resale websites like TheRealReal and Grailed, and even eBay, a few times a week for these rare gems."

He had hired a private client stylist from e-tailer Farfetch to source around the world for the Louis Vuitton piece in a size 44, he says. It was eventually found in a Los Angeles boutique.

Two of his previous donations to the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, are on display at the museum's Radical Aesthetics exhibition.

One is a Comme des Garçons Homme Plus long tasselled jacket from the Spring/Summer 2020 runway. The other is a Noir Kei Ninomiya jacket comprising black belts stitched together from the Spring/Summer 2025 runway, which was a special order placed through local multi-brand retailer Club 21.

In early 2026, he donated 82 jackets worth over \$350,000 to Singapore's National Collection.

Of his serial donations, Tan says: "My friends often joke with me that I can maximise my investments by consigning my jackets to Christie's or Sotheby's. While I view the jackets as collectible art, I do not acquire them to make a profit."

"Perhaps it is early legacy planning. I would like to place them in the best museums around the world and hopefully see them on exhibition while I'm still alive."

National University of Singapore law professor David Tan with his donated items, which include a red jacket from Dolce & Gabbana (above, far right). ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

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