



# All that Glitters

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## A CENTURY OF RAZZLE-DAZZLE

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## All that Glitters

In the 1850s, it was fixings; in the 1890s, conceits; and in the 1990s, bling. But whether you call it puttin' on the ritz or gussying up, you'll be bedazzled at the San Bernardino County Museum's "All that Glitters: a century of razzle-dazzle." This special exhibit of objects and images from the museum's history division collections opens January 19, 2008 in the museum's Fisk Gallery.

Adornment has been part of the human condition since prehistoric times. But whether arm-lets or armor, fancy accessories were unique and hand-fashioned until the time of the Industrial Revolution. It was only during the reign of Queen Victoria that jewelry and other accessories could be made in quantity and thus become available for more than just the wealthy.

"This exhibit will feature artifacts from the history division's permanent collections including jewelry and accessories used as adornment from the 1840s into the 1950s," said Curator of History Michele Nielsen. "All that glitters may not be jewelry alone, and not all of our artifacts in this exhibit glitter, but they have important historic meaning, as visitors will discover."

In the early Victorian era, sentimental motifs abounded: hearts, bows, love knots, flowers, birds, and jewelry made from the hair of a loved one. With the death of Victoria's husband, Albert, in 1861, jewelry of black enamel, jet, and onyx came into demand. Gold discoveries in the United States led to increased availability; combined with discoveries of ancient civilizations, there was a revival of Etruscan, Egyptian, and Renaissance styles. The construction of the Suez Canal only fueled the interest in Egyptian-styled accessories.

The late Victorian period, 1880 to 1901, became known as the Aesthetic Period, a direct response to the indulgent and formal styles of earlier decades. Fun and light-heartedness returned to jewelry, with griffins and dragons, butterflies, salamanders, moons and stars. Diamonds became available from mines in South Africa. Artistic merit became more prized than the intrinsic value of the gemstones.

Art Nouveau, from the 1880s until World War I, took inspiration from the natural world. Its inspiration was function over form, and the synthesis of arts and crafts.

The end of the first World War marked the start of popularity of "costume jewelry." Building on the Art Nouveau aesthetic (rather than monetary) perception of jewelry, the trend was for

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# All that Glitters *(continued)*

entirely non-precious jewelry using silk tassels, embroidered beadwork, and sequins. By the 1920s, synthetic plastics such as Bakelite made jewelry even more affordable.

The glamor and extravagance of the twenties gave way to economic hardship in the 1930s, and accessory design became more traditional, providing both reassurance and secure investments. This conservatism expressed itself in “good taste”, and soft, streamlined looks took the place of hard-edged Art Deco design.

During World War II, labor and material shortages meant that even costume jewelry was not widely available. But the war also brought a greater distribution of wealth and increased independence for women. Ready-to-wear clothing choices increased, and the importance of design was recognized as a means to sell products. New materials and mass production allowed jewelry and accessories designers to respond quickly to changing tastes. Unusual motifs, such as ballerinas, clowns, and cats, were introduced. The “New Look” of the 1950s (which started in 1947) included costume jewelry with theatrical qualities.

In All that Glitters, museum visitors will see hat pins and hair combs, brooches and bracelets, watches and waistcoats. The exhibit will also include images from the history division archives showing men, women, and even infants bedecked in the styles of their times. Whether it be mutton-leg sleeves and bodices covered with jet passementerie, or military lapel pins on tailored suit jackets, whether it glitters or not, the objects in the exhibit will illuminate a century of social history as filtered through razzle-dazzle.

The San Bernardino County Museum is at the California Street exit from Interstate 10 in Redlands. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays and holiday Mondays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$6 (adult), \$5 (student or senior), and \$4 (child aged 5 to 12). Children under five and Museum Association members are admitted free. Parking is free. For more information, visit [www.sbcountymuseum.org](http://www.sbcountymuseum.org). The San Bernardino County Museum is accessible to persons with disabilities. If assistive listening devices or other auxiliary aids are needed in order to participate in museum exhibits or programs, requests should be made through Museum Visitor Services at least three business days prior to your visit. Visitor Services' telephone number is 909-307-2669 ext. 229 or (TDD/TTY) 909-792-1462.

