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The Met Costume Institute: Evolution, Metamorphosis, and Cultural Phenomenon

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(Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute: Evolution, Metamorphosis, and Cultural Phenomenon

Sponsor: Linda Welters (Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute is much more than just a stagnant collection of historic dress artifacts – it's a living, breathing cultural entity that has served as a gateway into the history of fashionable dress and accessories for men, women, and children. Unlike other museums that house these historic fashion items, the Met Costume Institute has evolved into a cultural phenomenon with its connection to *Vogue*, the Met Gala, and the thematic exhibitions that are displayed once or twice a year. By investigating the evolution and metamorphosis of the Met Costume Institute, this research aims to understand and identify how its exhibitions and Gala diverged from the world of staid historic costume and transformed into the mainstream cultural event that it is today. Numerous interconnected factors are applicable in having shaped this phenomenon, such as the prominence of fashion in culture, the rise of celebrity culture, and media in the digital age. This research is not only important in understanding the influence of fashion in popular media, but more specifically, in how fashion museum culture can affect the modern vernacular and behavior in society.