



Dolce and Gabbana fur coat,
ca. 1990s. Toronto Metropolitan
University FRC2009.01.226AB.
Donated by Kathleen Kubas.

INSIDE A DOLCE & GABBANA FUR COAT

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This Dolce & Gabbana fur coat from the Toronto Metropolitan University Fashion Research Collection (FRC2009.01.226 A+B) is a breath of fresh air amongst the functional but drab black coats often seen in the long Canadian winter.

The thick, luxurious fur used in this garment has beautiful gradations in colour, shifting from light to dark on the sleeve, to a deep gray on the front. The fur is long and lustrous, and incredibly smooth to the touch. In consultation with a furrier, the fur has been identified as long-haired rabbit. Rabbit fur is distinguishable by its flat, smooth look and medium-length guard hairs (note 1). It is also known as a good "imitator" because depending on how rabbit is treated, it can resemble other varieties of fur. Rabbit is naturally brown and white, though it is often dyed in processing. Interestingly, rabbit is commonly used as both lining and self, which means that this garment could be worn inside-out. Rabbit fur is not a particularly strong or hardwearing textile, and generally speaking it is more affordable than other kinds of fur. This makes it a somewhat unusual choice for a designer label like Dolce & Gabbana. Four large snaps close the garment, concealed on the inside and then concealed on the outside under the hair of the fur. The snaps run about midway down the jacket, and there is a small slit between the first row of buttons and the second. This slit allows the wearer to button only the bottom row of snaps, allowing the floral leather pattern to be visible when the collar is folded over.



Dolce and Gabbana fur coat, ca. 1990s. Toronto Metropolitan University FRC2009.01.226AB. Collar detail. Donated by Kathleen Kubas.

The hand-painted leather on the inside of the coat is what makes this garment truly remarkable. The painted floral pattern is based on a background of warm beige, and the colours that appear in the floral pattern are red, yellow, grass green, bright pink, black and gray. The flowers themselves are yellow and pink, while the stems are green. Soft, fluid brushstrokes of gray fill the areas without flowers. Though the paint used is not watercolour, the technique used to paint the garment seems to imitate the medium. The floral pattern in each coat would subtly differ, making this piece one-of-a-kind.

There are belt loops on the inside of the garment, which seemed unusual at first. There is a belt that accompanies the garment, made of the same fur as the jacket and stitched onto an inner panel of the same painted leather as the garment. There are no belt loops on the exterior of the garment. This coat is in fact reversible. The wearer could choose the fur side as the right side of the garment, or turn it inside out to reveal the floral pattern, cinching the waist with the contrasting fur belt.



Toronto Metropolitan
University

Dolce and Gabbana fur
coat, ca. 1990s. Toronto
Metropolitan University
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Belt detail. Donated by
Kathleen Kubas.

It is difficult to assign a specific year to this coat. A search of [firstView](#) and *Vogue* archives did not show this coat on any Dolce & Gabbana runway between 1996-2008 (note 2). The collection of spring/summer 2007 featured hand-painted textiles, but the coat seems to be more suitable to be worn for cooler weather. If the coat was in fact from 2007, perhaps it was intended to be worn on the cooler nights of early spring or late summer.

The style of jacket is such that it would hit the upper-thigh on the wearer. The notched collar folds generously at the notch (5" or 12.7 cm), allowing the wearer to show off the beautiful painted interior. The collar measures 3 1/2" wide (8.89 cm). At the neckline of the garment there is a 1 1/4" (3.175 cm) pale yellow Petersham ribbon that runs from notched collar to notched collar. At centre back, stitched onto the ribbon is a black label that reads "Dolce & Gabbana Made in Italy" in white letters. There are side seam pockets on either side of the jacket (measuring 5" at the opening, 12.7 cm) that are lined with a pale yellow silk that appears to be printed with the floral pattern. The interior of the garment is comprised of many small rectangular panels that appear to be serged together. It is difficult to say whether the interior was painted before the panels were sewn together, but my guess is that the panels were first laid out as they would match along the seams, then painted and then attached. It appears in certain areas at though the artist left room for seam allowance when designing the floral pattern, as where some of the serging lines meet the painted edges do not quite match up.



Dolce and Gabbana fur coat, ca. 1990s. Toronto Metropolitan University FRC2009.01.226AB. Textile detail. Donated by Kathleen Kubas.

The jacket is accompanied by a suede skirt in the same gray as the fur of the coat. It has a tied waist and wraps around the body. The skirt is mid-calf length. The label on the skirt reads: By PAUW Amsterdam, Copy Protected, Size 2. Though the skirt is not by the same designer, the items were donated as a set and were likely worn together by the donor Kathleen Kubas.

What is surprising about this garment is that it is quietly demure and elegant compared to the quintessential Dolce & Gabbana look of tight black dresses, red lipstick, and visible undergarments. According to Simona Reinach, a Professor of Fashion Theory and Fashion Design, the Dolce & Gabbana woman is: "unbiased and brazen...a woman who simultaneously reveals and conceals brassieres and corsets, lace, lingerie, and veils, and who is disturbing in her impetuous sensuality—a provocative woman proud of her body" (note 3).

The label was established in 1985 by Domenico Dolce & Stefano Gabbana. Both Italian, Dolce hails from Palermo and Gabbana from Milan. Their greatest influence is Southern Italy, and components of life in the south are visible in nearly every collection as journalist Renata Molho noted when she said: "They bring together the most disparate evocations...but the one constant in their work is the South. The Mediterranean prevails as a leitmotif" (note 4).



Dolce and Gabbana fur coat, ca. 1990s. Toronto Metropolitan University FRC2009.01.226AB. Label. Donated by Kathleen Kubas.

When I learned of the origins of this painted fur coat, I was initially surprised to find that it was designed by Dolce & Gabbana. It is a far cry from sexy, and a remarkably bright and light piece of clothing for the label. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes easier to see how this piece does have a place within their collections. Its gorgeous floral pattern is, to me, reminiscent of an Italian summer. The fur is incredibly luxurious, just as one would expect a D&G fur coat to be. The intricacy of the floral pattern and the fact that it is hand painted is a testament to the attention of detail in the work of Dolce & Gabbana.

As proven by Stefano Gabbana and Domenico Dolce, the timeless fur coat does not need to be devoid of originality. This fur coat's beautiful design is classic because of its artisanal details and luxurious, natural textiles. It gets its one-of-a-kind quality from its hand-painted panels that transform this coat into a true work of art.

NOTES

1. For more information on fur types, see "Rabbit - Orylag" in The Vintage Fashion Guild Fur Resource, <http://vintagefashionguild.org/fur-resource/rabbit-coney-lapin-orylag/>. Other fur resources are listed in the references.
2. The coat was donated to the Toronto Metropolitan University Fashion Research Collection in 2009 and therefore dates prior to that year. The Dolce & Gabbana label was founded in 1985.
3. Reinach, Simona. "Dolce & Gabbana." The Berg Fashion Library, 2005, n.p.
4. Franca Sozzani. Dolce & Gabbana. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999: 7.

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