

Clothing the Pandemic: A Virtual Exhibition of Covid-19 Face Masks from Around the World

December 2021 – December 2022



Hidden Van der Helst III, based on a Portrait of Adriana Jacobusdr Hinlopen by Lodewijk van der Helst, 1667, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Photocollage Volker Hermes, 2020, Courtesy of the artist [@volker.hermes](http://www.volkerhermes.de)

The virtual exhibition was financed by a grant from the ICOM Costume Solidarity Project, Clothing the Pandemic: Resiliency, Community & Unity Expressed Through an International Collaboration of the COVID-19 Facemask Project.

A project led by ICOM Costume in collaboration with, ICOM CC (International Committee for Conservation), ICME (International Committee for the Museums and Collections of Ethnography) and The National Committee ICOM Canada.

Exhibition on view
www.clothingthepandemic.museum

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Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, makers, artists, and designers around the world have transformed face masks from essential protective devices into dynamic expressions of our lived experiences. Masks have become iconic symbols of the pandemic, representing humanity's resilience, community, and unity during this global crisis. Mask-making has allowed many to channel their creative and design energies, while also providing moments of purpose, calm, and healing during these turbulent times.

Over 100 masks have been curated into six major themes: Art & Intervention; Politics & Protest; Solidarity & Communities; Body & Spirit; Innovation & Sustainability; and Fashion & Pop Culture. Experience face masks in ways you may not have imagined: as expressions of joy, heroism, activism, cultural pride, and as symbols of hope and unity.

This virtual exhibition is an international collaboration among numerous museum curators who have collected face masks for their institutions to document the material culture of the pandemic from 2020–2021.



1. Czarina Wilson 'Tonga Flag Nifo Gold' (Limited Edition) Prototype face mask, Tongan/New Zealand (Art & Intervention) ©Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa All Rights Reserved
2. Rahul Mishra 'Butterfly people mask' (Art & Intervention) ©Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore
3. AI WEIWEI 'Mask' (Politics & Protest) © Trustees of the British Museum



4. Don Kwan's "Chinese Take-out Mask" (Politics & Protest) ©Royal Ontario Museum/Paul Eekhoff with permission from the artist
5. Andrew Gn 'Mask' (Body & Spirit) ©Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. Gift of Pauline Chan
6. Nathalie Bertin 'Faith Mask' (Body & Spirit) Photo © ROM with permission from the artist ©Royal Ontario Museum/Paul Eekhoff
7. José Hendo Designs, Ugandan bark-cloth face mask (Innovation & Sustainability) ©National Museums Scotland
8. Maarkta Mask (Fashion & Pop Culture) ©Judith Szalatnyay/Kiscell Museum Budapest
9. Louis Vuitton Monogram Tapestry Bandana Face Mask (Fashion & Pop Culture) ©Westminster Menswear Archive

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of most (if not all) international museums in response to public safety and health measures. ICOM Costume Committee conceived the project of a virtual exhibition of face masks to maintain connections between museum professionals and the public, as well as to encourage the collection, interpretation, and display of objects related to this pivotal moment in time. Museums in Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, and Oceania were invited to join this effort.

The face mask has become the iconic symbol of the pandemic, representing humanity's resilience, community, and unity during this global tragedy. This virtual exhibition highlights the importance of museum collections as sources of inspiration that embrace current events and celebrate contemporary fashion and design. Freely accessible to visitors around the world, the exhibition presents masks that document key moments of contemporary history and capture the united global challenge against the virus, which will resonate for years to come.

The project description is available on ICOM Costume website here:
<https://costume.mini.icom.museum/the-project/>

Recordings of workshops and international conference on ICOM Costume YouTube:
 Clothing the Pandemic, ICOM Solidarity Project 2021 - YouTube

We-map accessible on the ICOM costume mini site under the project menu:
<https://costume.mini.icom.museum/pandemic-collections-around-the-world/>

A complementary research blog presents a selection of masks and reports on their making:
<https://facemasks.hypotheses.org>

Images available for download here:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/nbbqfl6t8mlh2e1/AACIQI-0cuJNOqEyWfTRPmwa?dl=0>