

At the Palace of Holyroodhouse – A Royal Wedding : The Duke and Duchess of Sussex

It's a love story – the American actress met her prince and he was charming – so charming that, reader, she married him. It is the stuff of romantic daydreaming, and it happened right in front of our eyes.

The whole wedding day was televised minute by minute, just as the wedding of the groom's own mother and father many years before. The difference was that then the day was officially declared a holiday, but both weddings were held on days which dawned bright and perfectly sunny.

Now you can catch a little taste of royalty and the romance that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex shared with us all last year. Their wedding outfits are being displayed in Edinburgh at the Palace of Holyroodhouse this summer in a small three room exhibition curated by Caroline de Guitaut.

One of the first visits the royal couple made after they became engaged was to Edinburgh when they held a reception at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Their Royal Highnesses were very keen to show off the outfits here in Edinburgh. This is the only place other than London that the display is being mounted.

You may recall that it was on 13 February 2018 that the royal

couple first visited Edinburgh and was greeted by the Lord Provost on the Castle Esplanade.



The Rt Hon Lord Provost of Edinburgh Frank Ross greeted the royal couple when they arrived in Edinburgh in February 2018. The intention behind the exhibition is to explain and demonstrate what it takes to put together a couture ensemble like this – not something too many people experience.

The deceptively simple dress, worn by the then Ms Meghan Markle, was designed by British designer Claire Waight Keller who is Artistic Director at the fashion house Givenchy. It was clear that the bride had a strong sense of what she wanted, and we can see the simplicity in the first sketch which the designer provided for her and which is on show at the start of the exhibition. The wedding took place in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle which has dramatic architecture as the backdrop.

The Duchess appears to have favoured a timeless style of dress but one which had a modern feel to it. The Duchess told Ms de Guitaut during the planning for this exhibition that after she met with Claire Waight Keller she immediately knew that she wanted the designer to make her wedding dress. She went back to see Prince Harry and told him who the designer was going to

be.

The dress is quite sculptural and actually quite complicated to make, although the end result is a look of simplicity. There are only six well-placed seams in the creation.

The designer sketched something first of all for approval and then the dress was made in toile at the Givenchy atelier in Paris, where the team work with cotton to begin with. There are many of these made during the making of a couture outfit and they gradually become the shape which the real dress will eventually be made from.

The fabric for the dress was decided upon only after the first fitting and Clare decided to have a completely bespoke fabric made. The exclusive double-bonded silk cady was made in Como in Italy. This is woven on both sides of the loom which produces a very finely woven fabric and it has a real luminosity in it. The actual dress began to come together after several fittings, and at one point 50 people were working on it.

The floating hemline is a key part of the dress and a signature of the Givenchy style. At the front of the dress the hemline is lifted just above the shoes making it look as though it floats. There are three-quarter length sleeves which apparently involved some very scientific measuring to ensure that they ended in correct place!

The boat neckline was a real feature of the finished article, although it is clear from the sketch that it had a V-neckline in the first draft. The seams extend towards the back of the dress, from where the train flows in soft round folds, cushioned by an underskirt in triple silk organza.

Caroline explained : "As visitors come through the exhibition there are some visuals here explaining the process of design and some of the practicality of what goes into making such a garment. There is a multimedia guide and visitors will listen

to Their Royal Highnesses describing what went into the planning of their wedding, all aspects of their wedding not just the dress.”

So expect to hear first hand the royal couple describing the thought process behind the wedding plans and how they wanted to make the wedding feel – very intimate and personal to them. In a recording made for visitors to the exhibition, The Duke and Duchess (known as the Earl and Countess of Dumbarton in Scotland) discuss their plans for the wedding, including the choice of outfits, music and flowers. The Duchess says, “A great level of detail went into the planning of our wedding day. We knew how large the scale of the event would be, so in making choices that were really personal and meaningful, it could make the whole experience feel intimate.”

There is also an interview with Clare Waight Keller to listen to when walking round the exhibition.

Clearly it was well known that this would be a global event, but they wanted to include as many people as possible in the day, particularly the people of the Commonwealth – and this is shown best in the bridal veil. Prince Harry was appointed Commonwealth Youth Ambassador and this is a key part of his role in the Royal Family. The Duchess was keen to include reference to what will be a role she shares in the veil, and did so with some of the flowers embroidered on it.



In the foreground you can perhaps spot the Californian poppy and the thistle just two of the flowers embroidered on to the veil. PHOTO ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter

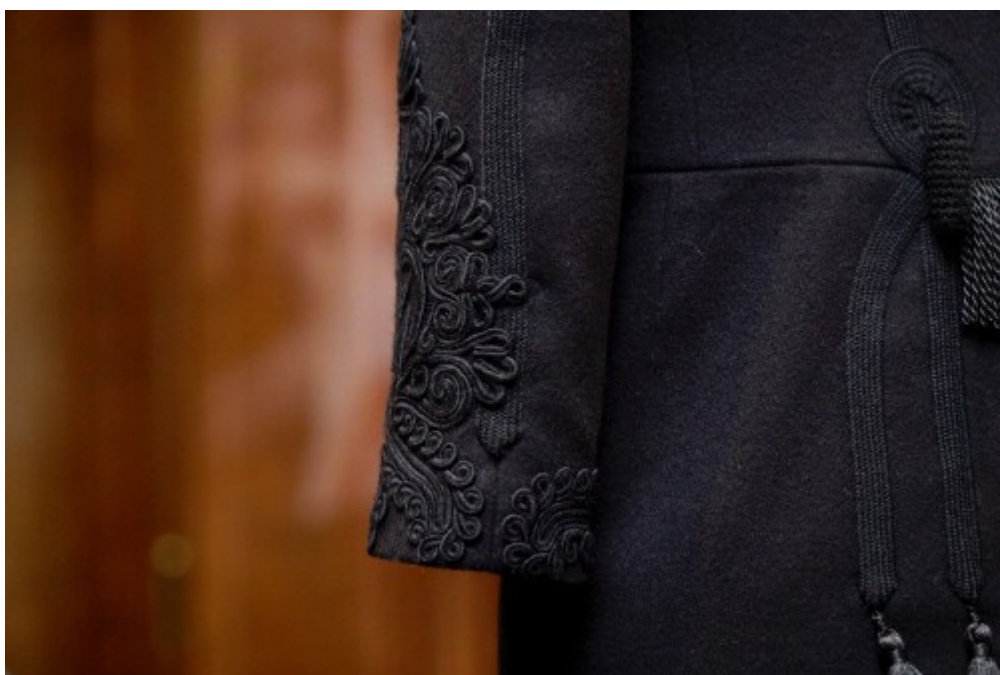
There is a massive glass display case in the second room to accommodate the beautiful bridal veil which is five metres long. It is made from silk tulle and embroidered with flowers of 53 countries including the Scottish thistle, the Californian poppy to remind us that this is where the Duchess was born and wintersweet which grows in the grounds of Kensington Palace. Ears of wheat positioned at the front of the veil are also included as these symbolise love and charity. The embroiderers had to wash their hands every 20 minutes to keep the tulle and the thread pristine, and this alone represents hundreds of hours of work.

The impression that the veil gave on the day, particularly when viewed from behind, was of a flower meadow billowing behind the bride. It is very airy, delicate and natural and the dramatic look was shown off when the bride ascended the steps to the chapel. The technical drawings for the veil are included in the exhibition, although the detail can really only be enjoyed by getting a close up look.

The bride's veil was held in place by a diamond and platinum bandeau tiara, lent to Her Royal Highness by Her Majesty

The Queen. On public display for the first time, the tiara is formed as a flexible band of eleven sections, pavé set with large and small brilliant diamonds in a geometric design. At the centre is a detachable brooch of ten brilliant diamonds. Both the bandeau and brooch were bequeathed to Her Majesty by her grandmother Queen Mary in 1953. There is a portrait of Queen Mary in the same room at Holyrood where she is looking down on the two mannequins wearing the wedding outfits.

Clare Waight Keller also designed the outfits worn by the bridesmaids which are high-waisted ivory silk with short puff sleeves and a double silk ribbon at the waist tied in a bow. The dress on display is the one worn by Princess Charlotte one of the bridesmaids. Her shoes are also shown here. They were made by Aquazurra and embroidered with her initials and the date of the wedding.



The detail on one of the sleeves of the wedding outfit worn by Prince Harry

The male wedding outfits are no stranger to drama and detail. The Duke of Sussex wore the frockcoat uniform of the Household Cavalry (the Blues and Royals) specially commissioned for the occasion and made by tailors at Dege and Skinner on Savile Row. The epaulettes with their large gold embroidered crowns depict the rank of Major. In the recording for visitors, The

Duke says, 'I chose the frock coat as a uniform, with permission from my Grandmother, because I think it's one of the smartest Household Cavalry uniforms. It's one of my favourites, and I was very fortunate to be able to wear that on the day.'



The wedding outfits are on display all summer at the Palace of Holyroodhouse
HRH the Duke of Cambridge had a matching outfit and Prince

George also wore a miniature version on display here too. His initials GC are embroidered on the shoulder straps.



Prince George's outfit

A replica of The Duchess of Sussex's bridal bouquet made from artificial flowers has been created for the exhibition. The bouquet was designed by florist Philippa Craddock and included sweet peas, lily of the valley, astilbe, jasmine, astrantia, sprigs of myrtle and forget-me-nots, the favourite flower of Diana, Princess of Wales. The myrtle sprigs came from a shrub at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, grown from a cutting brought from Germany by Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria. Sprigs from the bush have been included in the bouquets of all royal brides since the 1850s.



This exhibition is part of a visit to the Palace of Holyroodhouse from 14 June to 6 October 2019.

To book tickets or for visitor information, please visit www.rct.uk or telephone +44 (0)303 123 7306.