

ZAMPATTI POWERHOUSE

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Large print guide

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Zampatti Powerhouse
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ZAMPATTI POWERHOUSE

Carla Zampatti AC OMRI (1938–2021) was a fashion designer, business leader, philanthropist, mentor and working mother, who migrated from rural Italy to outback Western Australia in 1950.

In 1965, Zampatti established the Sydney fashion house and brand loved by generations of Australian women. The simple, strong, elegant lines of Zampatti's designs evident from her early beginnings evolved from the youthful spirit of the 1960s and 70s to the relaxed sophistication of more recent decades.

This is the first exhibition to acknowledge Zampatti's manifold achievements. A longstanding supporter of local manufacturing, her impact extended beyond the fashion industry to embrace many roles — fostering multicultural success, guiding corporations, and supporting arts, cultural and charitable institutions.

Zampatti Powerhouse is proudly supported by the NSW Government through the Blockbuster Funding initiative.

Powerhouse expresses gratitude to the Zampatti family and the many lenders, donors and interviewees who contributed to the exhibition.

EARLY WORK

‘There couldn’t have been a more exciting time to set up as a fashion designer. It was 1965, and the swinging 60s had well and truly arrived.’ *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from ‘Como’ coat)

‘Como’ jacquard coat

Autumn–Winter 1970

Rayon and cotton jacquard, nylon faux fur

Lent by Gaye Moon, Sydney

‘I bought this coat at the Red Geranium boutique when I was working at the Roselands Centre in Western Sydney in my teens. It did have matching pants but who knows where they are now! I remember putting quite a few of Carla’s designs on lay-by in those days.’

Gaye Moon

‘Free Spirit’ maxi dress

Autumn–Winter 1972

Printed cotton velveteen, rayon braid
Lent by Kim Williams, Coledale, NSW and Katrina Marshall, Austinmer, NSW

‘My mum, Barbara Marshall, thought she had found the greatest treasure when she spotted this dress in a second hand shop in the 1980s. When she passed away, we kept the dress because it was so special to her. My teenage daughter has her eye on this dress and it will be passed on through the family.’

Kim Williams

‘Manyana’ cowl neck top and wide leg pants

About 1967

Printed acetate damask by Tennyson Textile Mills

Lent by Templin Museum, Boonah, QLD

This dress was donated to the Templin Historical Museum, Queensland, among a bag of ‘rags to be cut up for buttons and zippers’, says Templin Historical Museum curator Karen Douglas. ‘The colours and feel of the fabric immediately caught our eye and screamed 1960s’.

‘Wave’ mini dress

Spring–Summer 1967

Printed cotton

Lent by Yvonne Dite, Melbourne

‘I was wearing this dress when I first met my husband Bruce in 1968. At 73 years old, I still wear the dress at least once a year for our wedding anniversary. It wasn’t until 2019 that I realised this was a Carla Zampatti dress, so I wrote and shared my story with her. I nearly fell through the floor when Carla called me!’

Yvonne Dite

‘Apple Blossom’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1973

Cotton voile

Lent by Suzanne Richards, Sydney

‘Every time I wear this dress I feel like it’s Christmas! I’m 82 and still love it.’

Suzanne Richards

‘Milan’ playsuit

About 1972

Printed brushed nylon jersey

Lent by Anne McEncroe, Sydney

‘My friend talked me into it. It was the most expensive article of clothing I ever bought; I think it was \$35. I felt really special and everywhere I wore it, people told me how fabulous I looked.’

Anne McEncroe

‘Cubist’ shift dress

Autumn–Winter 1974

Printed acrylic jersey

Lent by Margaret Amey, Adelaide

‘We moved to Hong Kong in the mid 1970s. I wore the dress on many social occasions as it was a perfect dress for the tropical weather there. Once, when I was on the Star Ferry crossing Victoria Harbour, I was stopped by a lady and asked where I had bought my dress. “It’s a Carla Zampatti and it’s Australian,” I replied very proudly.’

Margaret Amey

‘Mondrian’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1976

Printed polyester viscose jersey

Gift of Maureen Diamond, Kenmore, QLD, 2022

‘I wore this dress to dinner parties and BBQs in the 1970s. I kept it in the back of the wardrobe as it was a favourite and because of Carla Zampatti’s growing reputation.’

Maureen Diamond

‘Monaco’ shirt maxi dress

About 1975

Printed cotton

Lent by Linda Lyon, Sydney

‘The long sweeping lines of this dress really suited me as I’m tall. I felt elegant wearing it. For a while, long dresses went out of fashion, but I still loved it and gradually I started wearing it again. To this day, people will say to me, “I love your dress!” It is such a good dress for Sydney summers — being cotton and colourful.’

Linda Lyon

‘City’ brocade vest and pants

About 1968

Nylon brocade

Lent by Irene Robinson, Korora, NSW

‘I really loved wearing my Zampatti outfit. I wore a light golden brocade blouse underneath the vest and tucked into the pants. I also wore golden boots and a small golden shoulder chain handbag. I must have looked pretty good!’

Irene Robinson

‘Montana’ shirt dress

Autumn–Winter 1976

Tricel (cellulose triacetate) velour jersey

Gift of Annette Morgan, East Maitland, NSW, 2022

‘After travelling throughout Europe, I returned home to Newcastle in 1976 and bought this dress to wear to my sister’s wedding. It came from Smartee Boutique, the “smartest” boutique in town at the time.’

Annette Morgan

‘Cherie’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1973

Printed cotton

Lent by Pamela Mathews, Perth

‘I bought this at a small boutique in Mends Street, South Perth in 1973 and wore it to my cousin Warwick’s wedding at the Tawarri Reception Centre, Dalkeith WA.’

Pamela Matthews

‘Diana’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1973

Printed cotton voile

Lent by Pamela Jupp, Canberra

‘This dress was bought at the Carla Zampatti outlet, Surry Hills, in 1973. I wore it only once or twice to parties as it was a bit risqué for a newly-minted health professional in the 1970s.’

Pamela Jupp

‘Ascot’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1972

Printed cotton voile by John Kaldor Fabricmaker

Worn by Ngaire Young

Lent by Monica Dinnar, Sydney

‘In the early 1970s we lived in Tasmania. My mum bought this dress in Sydney and would have worn it to the many parties my parents attended in those days. Mum always held onto this dress because she thought it was positively gorgeous.’

Monica Dinnar

‘Florentine’ coat and dress

Autumn–Winter 1972

Cotton velveteen, polyester crepe, cotton lace

Lent by Leigh Scully, Sydney

‘My mother Leigh purchased the dress to wear to a wedding that she attended at the Sebel Town House Hotel in Elizabeth Bay. At the time, Leigh was enjoying being a young working woman, having completed her teaching qualifications, and delighted in purchasing dresses. As this dress was more formal it has hardly been worn.’

Tess Scully

LASER AND BLOUSON

‘The city is my lifestyle and the Carla Zampatti Laser is my car. Never before in the world has a woman fashion designer done this.’ *Carla Zampatti*

(Clockwise from car)

Ford Laser, Carla Zampatti edition 1985

Purchased from Mark Kimmorley,
Gold Coast, QLD, 2022
Number plate lent by Steve Angeli,
Adelaide

‘I was the third owner of the car, taking it on as a COVID project. I learned to drive on a KB model Ford Laser and always had an interest in obtaining and doing some work on one. I absolutely love it. It gets lots of attention from people, many of whom remember the Carla Zampatti special edition.’

Mark Kimmorley

During the early 1980s Carla Zampatti was approached by Ford Australia to design the interior of the new Ford Laser aimed specifically at the women’s market. She changed the car’s colour palette and visually slimmed the car by using a second tone. She also incorporated a sunroof, vanity mirror and wool-blend seating emblazoned with her signature. The Laser was not considered a racy car but, in the designer’s own words, she ‘made it as racy as it could be’.

‘Aspect’ drape midi dress 1981

Silk damask
Worn by Denise Hartley
Lent by Bridgena Hartley, Sydney

‘In 1981 I was doing work experience with Carla and she was very kind and supportive to me. My mother went into the Kent Street store and Carla personally selected this limited edition sample dress for her.’

Bridgena Hartley

‘Arc Mirror’ sunglasses 1987

Plastic, glass
Gift of Arianne Martin, Sydney, 2022

Cowl neck dress About 1983–85

Polyester viscose jersey
Lent by Robyn McNamee, Canberra

‘I wore this dress on many occasions, one being the Housing Industry Association Awards in July 1985 at Canberra’s Lakeside Hotel (now QT). As well as being a statement piece it was versatile and comfortable. I could wear it during the daytime with boots or in the evening with heels. I loved the batwing sleeves, the cummerbund tie waist and the cowl neckline.’

Robyn McNamee

'City Lights' maxi dress

Autumn–Winter 1985

Silk damask

Lent by Robyn Fox, Sydney

'I wore this dress to my graduation ball at the Sydney Hilton in May 1985. The expense was more than worth it for such a lovely dress.'

Robyn Fox

GRAPHIC

‘Simplified, strong, dominant lines with dramatic impact — that’s my style.’
Carla Zampatti

(Left to right)

‘Luxe’ stripe coat and chemise

Spring–Summer 2013

Rayon polyester nylon twill

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘On Spot’ shift dress

Spring–Summer 1975

Printed polyester jersey

Purchased, 2022

‘In Vogue’ jacket and pants

Autumn–Winter 2019

Printed polyester satin-backed crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Carla let her prints bring a lot of the wow-factor to her collections — the signature graphic black and white stripes, spots and animal prints. She also loved bold, blown-out florals. She would allocate colours to prints like a painter.’

Jillian Davison

‘Arezzo’ petal gown

Spring–Summer 2015

Printed polyester applied on nylon net, polyester grosgrain

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Legacy’ maxi dress

Spring–Summer 1974

Printed polyester jersey

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Spot On Bowed Beauty’ top and pants

Spring–Summer 2019

Printed polyester crepe de Chine

Lent by Judy Fargher, Adelaide

‘I have worked for Carla since 1989 and always loved wearing her black and white pieces, particularly over summer. The polka dot outfit was so eye catching for the festive season. I can only thank Carla for her amazing ability to make someone feel so special when wearing her clothes.’

Judy Fargher

‘Carla’ plunge halter and flare pants

Spring–Summer 1973

Polyester jersey, cotton gabardine

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

Carla Zampatti wore these pants in a 1974 newspaper story ‘From Girl Friday to clothes tycoon’. The writer Lana Wells described her as ‘as one of Australia’s leading fashion designers’ who is ‘tearing around the trendy terrace house that is her office, showroom and boutique’ in Surry Hills.

PROFESSIONAL

‘Women, if they feel fantastic, can move mountains.’ *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from heads)

Busts, *In Memoriam* series

by Dame Elisabeth Frink

1981–83

Bronze

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

‘My favourite object is a sculpture, a head by Elisabeth Frink. I first saw it in London and fell in love with it. Eventually I got to meet the artist. In fact, we became friends and I admired her strength, her determination. Her art is very strong, very individual and very powerful.’

Carla Zampatti

‘Blue Diamond Dream’ jacket

Spring–Summer 2020

Acetate and polyester crepe

Worn by Carla Zampatti and Allegra Spender
Lent by Allegra Spender MP, Sydney

‘My first major TV appearance was on Q&A — which I found very intimidating. I went to Mum’s house and found this jacket in her wardrobe. It was perfect — I felt I was channelling her indomitable spirit when I wore it. The colour also referenced my teal campaign colours. It was my staple through the campaign and when I wore it on election night, I knew Mum would have been proud.’

Allegra Spender

Shawl detail jacket and pants

Autumn–Winter 2021

Acetate and polyester crepe

Gift of Christine Holgate, Sydney, 2022

‘Carla strongly encouraged me to give evidence at the Australia Post Senate inquiry in April 2021. This meant I would give evidence against the former prime minister and expose him and the chairman of Australia Post for gross bullying. Carla said to me, “Darling, you must go and you must look fabulous.” It was Carla’s idea to wear this white jacket. White has been worn by women through the ages when they have stood up and made a statement.’

Christine Holgate

‘Raven’ handkerchief skirt

About 1980

Wool crepe

Lent by the Hon Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, Brisbane

‘In my wardrobe I have a store of beautiful “Carlas” collected across decades. Tucked away where I always know to find it, is a black wool crepe wraparound skirt that has been my constant companion for 40 years across 50 countries! Always the first thing into my suitcase because it folds flat and comes out perfectly ready for anything — walking in the park, going for dinner or to the opera, exploring galleries.’

Quentin Bryce

‘St Moritz’ jacket and dress

About 1995

Wool crepe, metal

Lent by Maggie Poynter, Kiama, NSW

‘Cobalt Siren’ jacket

Autumn–Winter 2021

Acetate and polyester crepe

Worn by Georgie Gardner

Lent by Nine Network, Sydney

‘My responsibility as a news reader is to disseminate information with authority and accuracy while exhibiting warmth and empathy. My “go to” jackets for more than 25 years have been Carla. Much like the woman, they are classic, elegant and enduring. They are effortless to wear, meaning I can focus on the job with confidence. Wearing Carla is a memento of my fearless and fabulous friend.’

Georgie Gardner

‘The Emerald City’ coat

About 1976

Wool and polyester blend

Gift of Carolyn Monk and Tracey Turner, Atherton, QLD, 2022

‘I purchased this coat dress at a garage sale in Atherton, Queensland, in 2019 from a lady who had worked in a budget car rental company — I think it was in Perth. She absolutely loved it and wore it for work back in 1976 as the company colour was green.’

Carolyn Monk

‘The Chelsea’ cape jacket, top and pants

Autumn–Winter 2019

Acetate and polyester crepe, polyester crepe de Chine

Lent by Ita Buttrose AC OBE, Sydney

‘Carla Zampatti was the most wonderful, determined, independent and practical woman. She wanted her clothes to make women feel good and to give them confidence. Her designs were classic, flattering and feminine in colours to suit every mood. They ticked all my fashion whims and wishes. Carla was also my friend — loyal, funny and unforgettable. Every time I wear her clothes, I think of her.’

Ita Buttrose

Classic ruby jacket

Autumn–Winter 2011

Viscose, nylon and elastane (ponte)

Lent by the Hon Julia Gillard AC, Adelaide

‘It’s impossible to forget that moment on 10th March 2011, standing before the US Congress, confirming that the US had no better friend than Australia. It was an important moment for both countries and for me personally. I was the fourth Australian Prime Minister ever to address Congress, and I am sure my Carla Zampatti jacket helped make me stand out.’

Julia Gillard

HOT HOUSE FLORALS

'I design for a woman who is not afraid of something a little daring.'
Carla Zampatti

(Anti-clockwise from red tiered maxi)

Red tiered maxi dress

Autumn–Winter 2021
Printed polyester georgette
On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'I Caught the Bouquet' gown

Spring–Summer 2019
Printed silk georgette
On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Seychelles' bikini, sarong and cover-up

About 1975
Printed polyester jersey
Lent by Pamela Girdlestone, Sydney

'This fabulous bikini ensemble oozed beach holiday fun and was perfect for my holiday in Surfers Paradise, the place to go in the 70s. It was my first Carla Zampatti outfit — I was 22 and have been wearing Carla's designs ever since.'

Pamela Girdlestone

'Heather' dress

1975–76
Printed polyester chiffon
Worn by Barbara Tevelein
Lent by John Tevelein, Melbourne

'My late wife Barbara purchased this dress in Sydney around 1975. I was an army officer at the time and I remember that she wore it to military balls in Melbourne and Hobart, and maybe in London in 1977 when she studied at Le Cordon Bleu cooking school.'

John Tevelein

'Blossom' wrap top and wide pants

1972
Printed viscose polyester
Lent by Sharon Whatman, Sydney

'At Mark Foys in 1972, I was on the wooden escalators and spied this outfit. I craned my neck, continued up a couple of floors but was forced to turn around. I had a closer look and couldn't resist. It was too expensive for a 20-year-old receptionist so I probably put it on lay-by.'

Sharon Whatman

'Gardenia' strapless dress

Spring–Summer 1992
Printed cotton voile
Lent by Dahlia Brigham, Sydney

'This is my very first and only designer dress, bought in 1992 at the Double Bay Carla Zampatti store. It was way above my budget but I fell in love with this beautiful dress. The occasion was the celebration of my son's bar mitzvah, a very happy and memorable day for my family. I felt like a princess.'

Dahlia Brigham

'Moonyene' midi dress

1973

Printed polyester chiffon

Lent by Sylvia Westerhof, Sydney

'I wore the dress in 1974 on a ship to Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] to meet up with my parents. It was such an adventure. I also wore it to functions I organised to promote Givenchy perfumes, including one at the Sydney Opera House the week after it opened in 1973. The gown has always had a special place in my heart, that's why I never let it go.'

Sylvia Westerhof

PRINCESS

‘Fashion is simply the expression of the need that we have for change — the kind of change that lends a little bit of glamour.’ *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from ‘The Royal Princess’ gown)

‘The Royal Princess’ gown

2013

Silk brocade

Lent by HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, Copenhagen

Princess Mary of Denmark posed for her official royal portrait in 2015 wearing a dress Carla Zampatti had made for her two years earlier for The Australian Women’s Weekly 80th anniversary cover shoot. Zampatti commented, ‘At the end of the shoot she asked if she could keep the dress and I was delighted. She looks so beautifully regal in the official portrait. I am so proud.’

‘Naples’ evening maxi dress

Autumn–Winter 1983

Silk taffeta

Lent by Susan Cowan, Sydney

‘This is the first of many Carla creations I have acquired in the last 40 years but it is still my most precious. I grew up in housing commission with a hand to mouth existence. It must have taken me three months of wages to pay off the lay-by but finally the proud day came that I got to take it home and I have cherished it ever since. It became a symbol of what I could achieve if I worked hard.’

Susan Cowan

‘Establishment’ jacket

Autumn–Winter 1981

Silk taffeta

Gift of Margo Pulsford, Surfer’s Paradise, 2022

‘I have kept this evening jacket from my time working at GTV Channel 9 in Melbourne. I wouldn’t normally have worn anything so low cut but I just loved the jacket so much. I was in my 30s so I guess I could get away with it.’

Margo Pulsford

Cobalt petal gown

Spring–Summer 2014

Nylon machine embroidery, nylon and spandex net, silk organza

Gift of Carla Zampatti, 2017

Lent by National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

‘Something unusual in lace is always bound to catch my eye. I was taken with a treatment of lace like nothing I had ever seen before: cut into the elegant shape of orchids, with their fragile petals attached to skin-coloured net. It was enough to trigger the first rush of ideas. One of the new outfits that emerged was among the most romantic I’ve ever designed.’

Carla Zampatti

‘Audrey’ mini dress

Autumn–Winter 2010

Polyester taffeta

Lent by Keiley Bucton, Port Macquarie, NSW

‘My mother surprised me with this last Christmas, and it was the most beautiful dress I’d ever laid eyes on. For the rest of Christmas Day, I wore the dress, celebrating this legendary fashion designer. The dress had popped up on my mother’s Facebook page, in an ad from a vintage shop in Newcastle.’

Keiley Bucton, HSC student

Rose dupion blouse

1988

Silk dupion

Worn by Florence Zietsch

Lent by Lisa Paulsen, Tracy Zietsch and Nicole Trotter, Sydney

‘Our beautiful mother, Florence (Flo) Zietsch wore this top to my wedding at Sacred Heart Church, Pymble in 1989. I remember she was absolutely thrilled with her “Carla”. She teamed it with a black silk taffeta skirt. Mum always had a great sense of style despite not having a lot of money.’

Nicole Trotter

‘Bardot’ fleur-de-lis gown

Autumn–Winter 2013

Machine embroidered nylon tulle, polyester net

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Fleur’ gown

About 1990

Acetate velvet, acetate taffeta

Worn by Nona Willis (nee McGirr)

Lent by Catherine Worsnop, Melbourne

‘My mother, Nona Willis, was thrilled to discover this stunning evening dress at the iconic Georges of Collins Street. Nona wore the dress to my wedding and reception at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne in 1990.’

Catherine Worsnop

Pearl ‘Exposé’ corseted tuxedo gown and pants

Spring–Summer 2017

Polyester rayon twill, acetate and polyester crepe

Lent by Susan Cowan, Sydney

‘Midnight Romance’ gown and cover-up

Spring–Summer 2019

Sequined polyester viscose velvet, polyester satin, polyester viscose chiffon

Lent by Jennifer Morrison, Sydney

Jennifer Morrison wore this gown to a state dinner at the White House on 20 September 2019. Carla Zampatti enthused, ‘When you see someone wearing something of yours and they are looking wonderful and feeling wonderful, like Jenny Morrison, it’s magical.’

‘The Bellissima’ ballgown

Autumn–Winter 2019

Silk organza, acetate polyester crepe, metallic goldwork and beading

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

CARLA'S WARDROBE

'To pass inspection it needed to do more than just fit okay. It had to make me feel really special — proud — to wear it.' *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from 'Red Siren' suit)

'Red Siren' jacket and pants

Autumn–Winter 2021

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

'My first collection was a pantsuit. It was a fashion statement, away from the little dress which we'd all been wearing in the 50s and early 60s.'

Carla Zampatti

Cobalt marabou jacket

Spring–Summer 2014

Marabou (turkey feathers)

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

'Military Precision' jumpsuit and marabou jacket

Autumn–Winter 2018

Acetate and polyester crepe, metal, ostrich feathers and marabou (turkey feathers)

Jumpsuit on loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

Jacket lent by Elena Notte, Sydney

'I love wearing a jumpsuit. A jumpsuit, if it suits you, makes you taller and slimmer because it's so neat, it follows your bodyline, there's no extra layer or fuss. The extra layer is a floating bit that doesn't interfere with the actual silhouette. That's what I love and it's also very comfortable.'

Carla Zampatti

Writing table and chair,

Louis XV revival

Late 19th century

Wood, metal, leather and cotton

Maker unknown

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

Carla Zampatti would often start thinking through her collection at this desk in her circular library while listening to music that stirred her imagination, 'When I design, I set my spirits soaring by turning on some classical music. Bach for his innovation, Mozart for his sensuousness, Beethoven for the aura he exudes, commanding attention with every note, and Vivaldi for his joyous sound and flair.'

'The Milano' gown

Autumn–Winter 1972

Wool crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate, Sydney

'The bare look is definitely here to stay. It's more comfortable, more flattering and shows off your suntan. Women are proud of their bodies — they're not embarrassed by their natural form any longer. They should be proud to show it off. I never wear a bra anymore.'

Carla Zampatti

‘The Jasmine Garden’ gown

Spring–Summer 1972

Printed polyester georgette

Style as worn by Carla Zampatti

Purchased, 2022

‘Pandora’ frill top and skirt

Spring–Summer 2008 (top),

Spring–Summer 2010 (skirt)

Polyester taffeta

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate,
Sydney

‘The Temptress’ tank gown

Autumn–Winter 2019

Polyester georgette, polyester sequins

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate,
Sydney

‘Carla’s favourite colour was yellow. She would try to put it in her collections. Her car was yellow. The walls of the carpark at the Kent St headquarters were yellow. I was Carla’s retail manager for many years — she even had yellow walls in some of our boutiques at one stage.’

Wendy Abi-Arrage

GODDESS

'I like drama played out along classical lines, with the stress on simplicity and timeless elegance.' *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from long-sleeved 'Marrakesh' gown)

'Marrakesh' gown

1978

Viscose crepe jersey

Lent by Ranwi Morris, Magenta, NSW

'I didn't want a traditional wedding so I chose to get married at the El-Alamein Memorial Fountain at Kings Cross. And for the dress, I chose this beautifully flowing gown because it's so unpretentiously elegant, and it made me feel so special. That was in 1978. I also wore this gown to my son's wedding just five years ago. This dress holds some very special memories for me.'

Ranwi Morris

'Sea Nymph' gown

Autumn–Winter 2013

Polyester georgette, silver lamé

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Marilyn' gown and jacket

Autumn–Winter 1979

Viscose crepe jersey

Lent by Diane Frost, Sydney

'When we decided to get married with just six weeks notice, my mother took me to Carla Zampatti's shop in Double Bay to find a wedding dress. On the big day, my husband surprised me by organising three Rolls Royces to drive us from Cronulla to The Rocks. We were accompanied by waves and toots all the way!'

Diane Frost

'Jasmine' gown

Spring–Summer 2012

Polyester georgette

Style worn by Miranda Kerr

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'I've been wearing Carla's beautiful dresses since I was a teenager, both in campaign shoots and on the runway, so there are many moments I can recall. One dress in particular that stands out to me is the amazing soft blue chiffon evening gown I wore to the Women of Style Awards in 2015. It's so timeless and elegant.'

Miranda Kerr

'Art Deco' ankle length dress

Spring–Summer 2011

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'She designs classically and classic designs always endure.'

Ita Buttrose

'The Blue Diamond Serenade' gown

Spring–Summer 2020

Polyester satin

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

ANIMAL

‘I work partly on instinct, partly on feeling.’ *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from silver sequin ‘Wild About You’ gown)

‘Wild About You’ gown

Spring–Summer 2019

Zebra sequined polyester fabric,
polyester georgette

Lent by Giovanna Cunico, Sydney

‘Seduction’ suit

Autumn–Winter 2019

Printed polyester satin

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion
Archive, Sydney

‘Animal Attraction’ gown

Autumn–Winter 2019

Printed polyester chiffon

Lent by Lou Hunter, Sydney

‘Carla’ cape, bandeau top and pants

Spring–Summer 2016

Cotton blend brocade, glass bugle
beads, metallic thread

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion
Archive, Sydney

In 2016, Carla Zampatti invited the designers of Sydney brand Romance Was Born to style her collection show. Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales commented, ‘the cape we made for Carla was a beaded animal print cape with her name in bold on the back. She loved animal print and strong bold statements.’

‘Seduction’ dress and rosette

Autumn–Winter 2021

Printed polyester satin

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion
Archive, Sydney

Carla Zampatti designed and wore animal prints throughout her career. Her daughter Allegra Spender mused ‘she was very feline and she loved lying in the sun. It was one of the ways to rejuvenate herself.’

‘Isabella’ gown

Spring–Summer 2002

Printed silk georgette

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion
Archive, Sydney

‘The Magic of Milan’ coat

Autumn–Winter 2019

Printed modacrylic and polyester fur

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate,
Sydney

Carla Zampatti often wore this jacket, as she did with sunglasses, exuding cool confidence. Her daughter Bianca Spender thought that it ‘was quite a tactical move — to create another layer of mystery.’

BLACK, RED, CREAM

'Red is a magic colour which has impact. It has a richness that makes blondes look interesting and brunettes sensational.' *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from black 'Winged Goddess' outfit)

'Winged Goddess' polo top and pants

Autumn–Winter 2018

Acetate and polyester crepe

Style worn by Nigella Lawson

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'I fell in love with Carla Zampatti's clothes the very first time I came to Australia. They're exquisitely cut, look glamorous and elegant but, at the same time, are always comfortable and infinitely wearable. Carla didn't just make clothes, she created classics. And along with her timeless chic, she gave the devoted wearers of her clothes the greatest gift of all: confidence.'

Nigella Lawson

Parisian lace gown

Spring–Summer 2012

Machine embroidered polyester net

Lent by Melody Ng, Sydney

'I bought this dress for my wedding in 2013. I skipped a work meeting to go to the sale at the Carla Zampatti warehouse. What sold me was how comfy it was and that it was handwashable!'

Melody Ng

'Cold Shoulder' dress

Autumn–Winter 2011

Sequined nylon, nylon and spandex mesh

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Demure and Daring' evening dress

Spring–Summer 2010

Acetate and polyester crepe

Style worn by Samantha Armytage

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'This is my 2019 Logies dress, which Carla very generously made bespoke for me. It is one of my favourite dresses to wear, ever. On the night, I felt like a movie star. It is so timeless, elegant and discerning and yet, somehow, modern and sexy at the same time. That was the genius of Carla Zampatti.'

Samantha Armytage

'The Corsage' dress

Autumn–Winter 2019

Acetate and polyester crepe, nylon crin (polypropylene net)

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Petal' gown

Spring–Summer 2011

Silk organza

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Midnight Duchess’ gown

Autumn–Winter 1995

Wool crepe

Lent by Tanya Davis, Adelaide

‘I bought this dress for my 21st birthday party. My first designer dress, it made me feel confident and beautiful. At the time my mother said to me, “This is the kind of dress you could wear well into your 40s”, which I thought was ridiculous as I couldn’t imagine being 40. When Carla passed, I vowed to wear it again. I was amazed that it still fitted and was on trend 25 years later.’

Tanya Davis

‘Fashion Flare’ top and pants

Autumn–Winter 2017

Acetate and polyester crepe

Lent by the Hon Linda Burney MP, Sydney

‘As a Labor MP, there was never a question about what colour I would wear for my official portrait as the first Aboriginal woman elected to the House of Representatives. To me, red is the most powerful of colours. It is also my favourite colour, it suits me. Red is the Labor colour — strong. The simplicity of Carla’s style, her choice of block colours, meant that you could invest in her clothes.’

Linda Burney

‘Lily’ asymmetric back gown

Spring–Summer 2013

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

Diamond cut halter sheath dress

Spring–Summer 2014

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Palermo’ knit cardigan

Autumn–Winter 1978

Moercriil (kid mohair, acrylic and nylon boucle knit) by Hercofil

Lent by Diane Frost, Sydney

‘In 1979, I spotted Carla’s batwing sleeve cardigan which I had to have. I wore the cardigan to many nightclubs with hot pants, 6-inch chunky shoes and no bra — with the occasional nipple popping through, as you did in those days.’

Diane Frost

‘Dakota’ caped sleeve dress

Autumn–Winter 2013

Wool and elastane blend

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Red Lily’ dress

Spring–Summer 2020

Acetate and polyester crepe

Lent by Lisa Wilkinson AM, Sydney

‘To me, Carla and her designs were always the epitome of pared-back, effortless and completely timeless style, like my red crepe dress. I’ll never forget the first Carla piece I ever bought — it was back in the late 70s. I was 19 and it was the perfect, elegant black dress you could wear to any occasion. In fact so timeless was that piece, I still wear and get compliments about it today.’

Lisa Wilkinson

‘The Kellie’ gown

Spring–Summer 2011

Bamboo and viscose polyester

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Be My Bow’ gown

Autumn–Winter 1994

Wool crepe, silk taffeta

Lent by Maggie Poynter, Kiama, NSW

‘I wore this dress to accept my award for Best International Travel Consultant in NSW in 1994.’

Maggie Poynter

‘Hollywood’ ballgown

Spring–Summer 2009

Polyester taffeta

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Grace’ gown

Spring–Summer 2010

Silk organza

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Endless Elegance’ gown

1986

Viscose crepe jersey

Gift of Yaffa Gould, Sydney, 2022

‘I fell in love with the dress when I saw it in 1986. It was on sale so I bought on impulse and wore it to a ski club dinner dressed up as Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany’s. My friend was equally enamoured with the dress and wore it to a couple of balls.’

Yaffa Gould

‘Teardrop’ layer dress

Spring–Summer 1994

Silk chiffon, nylon millinery wire

Lent by Kay Colquhoun-Thomson, Sydney

‘I’ve worked for Carla for nearly 30 years, mainly at the Chatswood store. I’m also a ballroom dancer and won a gold medal in this dress, for dancing the Rumba at the Arthur Murray Dance O Rama National Ballroom and Latin Competition in 1995.’

Kay Colquhoun-Thomson

JUMPSUIT

'I always come back to the jumpsuit, reinventing a little each time. I love the simplicity of dressing in just one garment.' *Carla Zampatti*

(Anti-clockwise from blue 'Royal Train' jumpsuit)

'Royal Train' jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 2015

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Alisa Lace' jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 2016

Acetate and polyester crepe, sequined nylon lace

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Venice' coat, sleeveless jumpsuit and belt

Autumn–Winter 1994

Wool crepe, leather, metal

Lent by Maggie Poynter, Kiama, NSW

'My collection of "Carlas" has been my companion through work and play including this jumpsuit worn to the office and to the owner's surprise 50th birthday party.'

Maggie Poynter

Belted utility jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 1975

Cotton

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

'Jumpsuits were among my most successful attention grabbers. I discovered their appeal early in my career. In fact, one of my first fashions shows in 1968 featured both a long and short version.'

Carla Zampatti

'Grace' jumpsuit and belt

About 1983–85

Polyester viscose jersey, leather, metal

Lent by Robyn McNamee, Canberra

'I wore the purple jumpsuit to many different events: race meetings, business luncheons, and sometimes to school pick-up after these events! I loved the fact I could dress it up with heeled boots for a glamorous look or rockstar casual for the daytime. The bold, vibrant purple shade appealed to me as it's one of my favourite colours.'

Robyn McNamee

‘Titania’ jumpsuit

Autumn–Winter 2016

Acetate and polyester crepe,
nylon mesh

Lent by Tina Arena AM, Melbourne

‘My jumpsuit was personally fitted by Carla. It was part of my message in 2015 when I was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame. I was calling out ageism in the music industry especially as it affects women. The media focused on the “bold” neckline, but age is no barrier to looking good and that jumpsuit looked great.’

Tina Arena

‘Selene’ caped jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 2017

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

Marta Dusseldorp modelled this design when she was the face of the Specsavers/Carla Zampatti collaboration in 2017. She reflects that Carla was ‘a fierce woman (in dark sunglasses) who understood what it took to envelop other women with her effortless courage. Carla’s vision will always endure as it comes from truth, ease, timelessness and practicality. Her life-force was that of an immortal goddess, she will always be missed. Not to mention her smile.’

‘Studio 54’ jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 2014

Acetate and polyester crepe,
sequined polyester and spandex

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

‘Must Have You’ jumpsuit

Spring–Summer 2019

Acetate and polyester crepe,
polyester taffeta

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Estate,
Sydney

‘La Vie Boheme’ jumpsuit

Autumn–Winter 2017

Acetate and polyester crepe

On loan from the Carla Zampatti Fashion Archive, Sydney

Delta Goodrem wore this design to the Adelaide Supercars Championship in 2017. She reflects that ‘Carla always recognised the beauty of each person’s personality. She was a trailblazer and had an incredible gift of inspiring women to feel their best and to shine. I’m deeply honoured to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Carla. Her legacy is timeless.’

Zampatti Powerhouse was realised in a collaboration between external creative partners and a multi-disciplinary team of Powerhouse staff from the museum's collections, curatorial, design, digital, digitisation, production, programs and publishing teams.

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