

KMAC Couture

RUNWAY FOR THE ROSES

In recognition of the 150th running of the Kentucky Derby in 2024, the 12th edition of KMAC Couture will honor one of Louisville's most famous institutions and most notable traditions. For generations, the pageantry and fashion that accompanies the annual Run for the Roses has been a grand celebration of what many refer to as "the most exciting 2 minutes in sports." While it is an event that brings together many different cultures from around the globe, it showcases a particularly exotic grandeur and snazzy decadence that could only come from Kentucky. Like the Derby, KMAC Couture is set in the heart of the Spring season, and this year's theme looks to the resplendence of the time-honored event that occurs each year under the twin spires of Churchill Downs, along with the bright colors, hats, flowers, mint juleps, and horses that make our city and region one of the most unique in the world.

The rose has a place throughout art history as a symbol for power, royalty, beauty, love, sensuality, and mysticism. Soon after the first race in 1875, the rose quickly became the official flower of the Kentucky Derby. Every year, for over a century, at America's most historic track, a lush garland of 554 red roses continues to be draped over the greatest equine champions.

This year, KMAC encourages designers to think about and create an extraordinary wearable artwork that harmonizes with the sartorial image of Louisville on the first Saturday in May. The strongest submissions will incorporate an element of wonder or surprise. With 150 years of fashions to inspire your design, a look could allude to the original formal wear of the Derby, the over the top Edwardian opulence of long dresses and wide brimmed hats for women (often trimmed in feathers or even completely stuffed birds, or adorned with ribbons and flowers) and dark, well fitted suits for men that featured various combinations of top hats, bowler hats, bow ties, ascots, and high buttoned up collars. While some of these styles are still referenced today, there have been many updates throughout the years to match the modern era, particularly with the infusion of bright colors for men and dresses with more contemporary silhouettes.

We look forward to seeing you on April 13, 2024 for KMAC Couture Runway for the Roses.

Joey Yates, KMAC Museum Curatorial Director