

# Papercity

STYLE | FASHION | SOCIAL

DALLAS OCTOBER 2015

FALL  
FASHION

Hotel  
STORIES

BAG SNOB

TINA  
CRAIG

HOME+ART

Designers'  
FAVORITE  
ROOMS

A NEST FOR

Birdie Box

KELLY  
WEARSTLER



SPECIAL SECTION  
CATTLE BARON'S BALL

PHOTOGRAPHY MOLLY DICKSON FOR SISTERBROTHER MANAGEMENT. ART DIRECTOR MICHELLE AVIÑA. STYLE EDITOR FRANCINE BALLARD. VERSACE ALPACA FUR COAT, PRICE UPON REQUEST AT THE VERSACE BOUTIQUE. AGENT PROVOCATEUR MAXENE DRESS \$590, AT THE AGENT PROVOCATEUR BOUTIQUE. PHOTOGRAPHER ASSISTANT JUSTIN LEVERITT. STYLIST CARLOS ALONSO PARADA FOR ON SET MANAGEMENT, ASSISTANT STYLIST GABE ORTIZ FOR ON SET MANAGEMENT. HAIR AND MAKEUP GABBY ROSENBERG FOR SISTERBROTHER MANAGEMENT. SHOT ON LOCATION AT LE MERIDIEN DALLAS, THE STONELEIGH. MODEL AZLIN FOR DRAGONFLY, DALLAS.

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# DAMENANCY

A NEW EXHIBIT OF THE LATE **LIVE-WIRE PHILANTHROPIST** NANCY HAMON’S EARLY FASHION SKETCHES REVEALS A YOUNG GIRL DESTINED TO TAKE DALLAS SOCIETY BY THE HORNS. BUT FIRST, THERE WAS HOLLYWOOD, OUTRAGEOUS PARTIES AND A MISSING FINGER.

BY REBECCA SHERMAN. PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY JAKE AND NANCY HAMON PAPERS, BYWATERS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, HAMON ARTS LIBRARY, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY.

## The

late Nancy Hamon had many faces: philanthropist, hostess and salty broad who didn’t mince words. Hamon famously once told a bartender at a museum ball, who squeezed a tiny piece of lime into her drink, “I have emeralds bigger than that.” When she lost a finger to a blender in the 1980s, special-effects designer Carlo Rambaldi — who created *ET* — fabricated the missing digit and, at her request, permanently bent it to look like she was holding a cocktail. When her husband, wildcatter Jake L. Hamon Jr., died in 1985, leaving her his oil empire to run (*Fortune* magazine estimated his worth at \$200 million), she set out to spend the largess, saying she wanted to die broke and bounce her last check. She ended up giving much of it away.

And now, an exhibition of never-before-seen fashion sketches by Hamon, who died in 2011 at age 92, reveals she was an illustrator, as well. The exhibit, through December 13 at SMU’s Hamon Arts Library, celebrates the library’s 25th anniversary in October, with a show of its benefactor’s watercolor and pencil drawings, rendered during her late teens and early 20s. “Mrs. Hamon loved art and fashion and was known as a legendary philanthropist in the arts and education, but it’s a little-known fact that she did these sketches,” says archivist Emily George Grubbs, who discovered them while cataloging the Jake and Nancy Hamon papers, which Hamon’s estate left to SMU a year after her death. The drawings were made between 1933 and 1942, likely in her hometown of San Antonio. “They speak very well to the time period and are very well executed. Some are quite modern,” Grubbs says. “I think it’s safe to infer that she was sketching herself in several of the pieces — there is a strong resemblance.”

Nothing in Hamon’s papers indicates that the adolescent aspired to be a fashion designer, but the sketches reveal a bent for the theatrical that would later become her hallmark. In the 1940s, Hamon eventually made her way to Hollywood to become a dancer and actress. She landed in a handful of movies, including *The Heat’s On* (titled *Tropicana* in the UK) with Mae West and Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra, and spent a year in Honolulu performing as leading lady opposite Carl Reiner in the army’s special services acting troupe. After the war, Hamon returned to Texas and married her wildcatter, turning her attention — and Jake’s money — towards charitable fund-raising and party-giving that left an indelible mark on Dallas for the better.

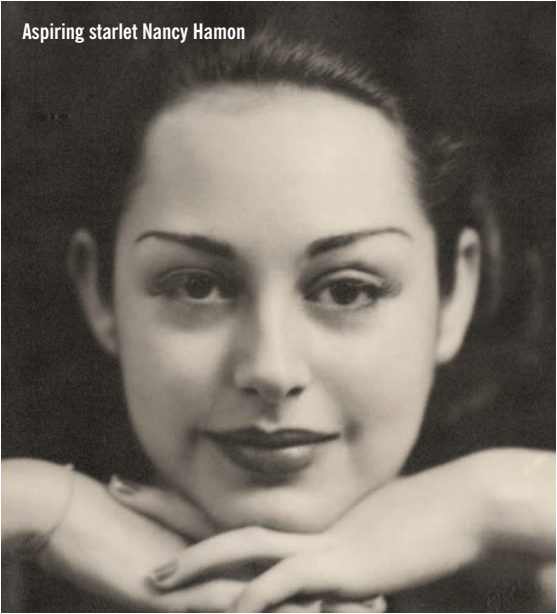
Nancy Hamon was a born entertainer. In the four decades before her death, the oil widow threw some of the most outrageous



Jake and Nancy Hamon at their Bal de Fête, 1959



Nancy Hamon's fashion sketches



Aspiring starlet Nancy Hamon



Jake and Nancy Hamon at their Lucky Lindy party, 1951

### “FASHION DESIGN SKETCHES BY NANCY B. HAMON”

On view September 24 – December 13; housed in the Jerry Bywaters Special Collections in the Hamon Arts Library, SMU, 6100 Hillcrest Ave., 214.768.2894, [smu.edu](http://smu.edu).



HAMON FAMOUSLY ONCE TOLD A BARTENDER AT A MUSEUM BALL, WHO SQUEEZED A TINY PIECE OF LIME INTO HER DRINK,

“I HAVE EMERALDS BIGGER THAN THAT.”

Nancy Hamon at her Silent Movies party, 1961

parties Dallas has ever seen. Her lavish masquerade balls included one with circus performers and an elephant, and another with jazz legend Louis Armstrong. In the late ‘80s, Hamon chartered the luxury ship *Sea Goddess* and treated 100 friends to a cruise to Spain and Morocco. She hosted politicians, presidents’ wives and celebrities, danced the tango and wore millions of dollars of jewels without apology. But after Jake died, Hamon donated more than \$70 million over the next 26 years to a wide array of recipients, including the Dallas Museum of Art, the Dallas Historical Society, UT Southwestern Medical Center, the Salvation Army, the Dallas Public Library, Booker T. Washington School for the Visual and Performing Arts, the African American Museum at Fair Park and the Dallas Zoo.

Her long-standing relationship with SMU included a \$5 million principal gift to establish the Jake and Nancy Hamon Arts Library, renovate the Meadows Museum Plaza and acquire a massive outdoor sculpture by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa. The Jake and Nancy Hamon collection of papers, which is available to researchers, not only reveals her larger-than-life persona but offers insight into Dallas’ cultural and social history. In addition to the sketches, there are 36 boxes of correspondence and photos, notably personal letters from U.S. presidents Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Jake had strong political connections, but the commanders-in-chief were also a part of the couple’s social fabric, as shown through the collections’ personal invitations and photographs. Seventy-five scrapbooks document the couple’s parties, travel and philanthropy. While Nancy Hamon left Hollywood behind, she imported the glamour and glitz to Dallas, bringing Julie Andrews, Maurice Chevalier, Greer Garson, Jim Backus and Louis Armstrong to her fund-raisers. She lived out her last years in a penthouse atop the residences at the Mansion on Turtle Creek, surrounded by a museum-worthy collection of art that included works by Rouault, Vlaminck and Magritte, rare Greek icons and statues and ancient Chinese artifacts. An in-demand hostess well into her 80s, she threw high-spirited dinner and cocktail parties in her Versailles in the sky, with everyone singing, dancing and sometimes playing boogie-woogie on her two grand pianos at once. For those who knew this side of Nancy Hamon, and almost everyone did — her entertaining was chronicled in detail in the social pages for more than 40 years — SMU’s exhibit of her simple but beautifully rendered fashion sketches gives us a glimpse into the private, dreamy side of a young woman destined to live an extraordinary life.