Primary Maker: William J.
Title: Beach hat
Date: 1960
Medium: Raffia, velvet, silk, feathers, wire, silk
Dimensions: Overall (approx.): 17 × 23 in. (43.2 × 58.4 cm)
Credit Line: Purchase, Coaching Club Acquisition Fund
Object Number: 2017.63.1

Object Name: Beach hat
Classification: CLOTHING AND FASHION

Curatorial Remarks:
William John “Bill” Cunningham, the beloved New York Times photographer, was born in Boston and moved to New York City in 1948. Although Cunningham was renowned as a photographer and journalist, he began his career as a milliner and worked passionately in that field for almost two decades. He opened his first millinery shop, William J., on East 52nd Street around 1950, and relocated to 44 West 54th Street in 1954. He moved his shop to 57th Street in about 1960. Cunningham’s most striking millinery designs incorporated unusual naturalistic forms and ornament.

Physical Description:
Woven straw and raffia hat with conical crown and wide, flared brim; exterior decorated with salmon-colored velvet ribbon (located immediately above brim); crown adorned with approximately two dozen dyed orange feathers that
project from top, feathers sewn into top and secured, probably with glue. Label attached to underside of crown marked “WILLIAM J / 56 WEST 57th St. NEW YORK”; upper part of crown interior also adorned with ivory, silk, camellia flower.

Related Objects: