

My Fashion Scrapbook



by Nora Comtois



Do Clothes Speak?

On the day of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, he fell into First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's lap, his blood staining her pink skirt-suit. She refused to change on the flight back, saying, "I want them to see what they have done," marking one of her first visible political statements. The bright pink outfit, possibly a nod to former First Lady Mamie Eisenhower's signature "Mamie Pink", was from Chanel's Fall/Winter 1961 collection. Due to the tradition of First Ladies wearing only American brands, Kennedy's dressmaker sewed a replica. The square-shaped jacket and suit-like design contrasted with her feminine silhouette, while the bodycon skirt and pink color accentuated her femininity. This outfit now symbolizes Kennedy's emotional strength during this American tragedy.

Kettler, Sara. "Why Jacqueline Kennedy Didn't Take Off Her Pink Suit after JFK Was Assassinated." Biography.com, A&E Networks Television, 16 June 2020, <https://www.biography.com/news/jacqueline-kennedy-pink-suit-jfk-assassination>.



Fig. 1. Art Rickerby, John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy Getting Off the Plane, Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963. *People*.

<https://people.com/jackie-kennedy-pink-suit-jfk-assassination-what-to-know-7502920>.



Fashion & Power

Dolce & Gabbana's Fall 2018 menswear collection featured several looks in velvet fabrics adorned with intricate brocade designs, with several in gold. This choice was not only visually striking but also historically significant as gold-brocaded silk velvet was one of the most luxurious fabrics in the Italian Renaissance, and a symbol of wealth and status. Being an Italian brand, Dolce & Gabbana's fabric choice feels especially fitting. Moreover, the use of gold brocade amplifies the sense of opulence, perfectly reflecting the brand's luxurious status. The blend of historical fabrics with modern tailoring bridges the past and present, enabling the brand to showcase its Italian heritage within a contemporary context.



Fig. 2. Dolce & Gabbana, Fall 2018 Menswear Collection.



Fig. 3. Dolce & Gabbana, Fall 2018 Menswear Collection.



Fashion & Black

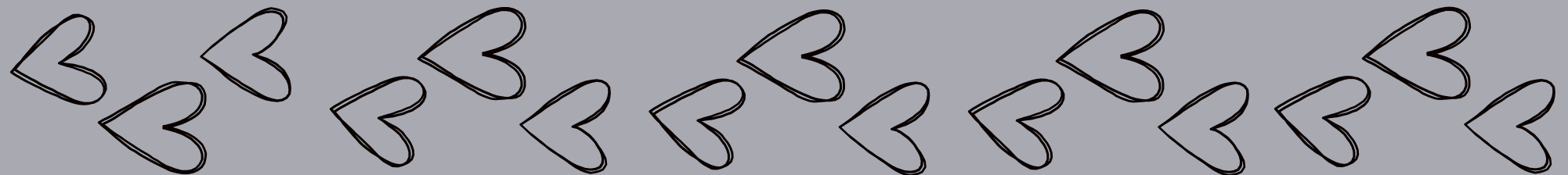
Rodarte's Fall 2023 ready-to-wear collection embraced a dark and gothic aesthetic. Models were adorned with dark eye makeup, including sharp cat-eye eyeliner (reminiscent of the black cat motif), and black lipstick. Their pale, vampiric skin and accentuated cheekbones were complemented by dark hair. The collection featured flowing drapery reminiscent of witch's cloaks and long, body-skimming black dresses with dramatic sleeves trailing behind, evoking the elegance of Morticia Addams. Both common aesthetic references in goth, black-and-white looks drew inspiration from pilgrim fashion with collars and bonnets, while other looks incorporated Victoriana with lace, high collars, and long veils. Velvet flower designs echoed the gothic motif of decaying flowers, while sleeves shaped like bat wings further intensified the collection's dark nature.



Fig. 4. Rodarte, Fall 2023 Womenswear Collection.



Fig. 5. Rodarte, Fall 2023 Womenswear Collection.



Antico Setificio Fiorentino

Ermisino is a fabric preserved in the archives of Antico Setificio Fiorentino, renowned for its luxurious qualities. Its historical significance is reflected in several paintings in the Uffizi Gallery, where portraits of noblewomen are depicted in opulent dresses crafted from fine silk fabrics, likely including ermisino. An example is Agnolo Bronzino's painting *Eleonora di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni*, in which Eleonora wears an ornate gown made from richly patterned fabric. While not explicitly identified as ermisino, the gown's sheen and elaborate design align closely with the characteristics of this fabric, underscoring its connection to Renaissance elegance.



Fig. 6. Agnolo Bronzino, *Eleonora di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni*, ca. 1545, Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy.



Fashion & Gender

The mini skirt movement of the 1960s shows how fashion can challenge traditional gender roles and reflect evolving cultural values around femininity and body autonomy. Unlike the conservative clothing of earlier decades, which concealed a woman's figure, the mini skirt did the opposite, defying the belief that women's clothing had to be modest to uphold respectability. Although critics deemed it scandalous, its provocative nature was both controversial and empowering. By revealing more of their bodies, women rejected the idea that their value was tied to propriety or the male gaze. More than just a garment, the mini skirt symbolized a younger generation's rebellion against restrictive, patriarchal norms and aligned with broader cultural movements advocating for individualism, equality, and freedom.



Fig. 7. Larry Ellis, Women from the British Society for the Protection of Mini Skirts Protest Outside the Dior Show, London, England, 1966. *Good Intention*. <https://goodintention.co/blog/the-history-behind-the-iconic-miniskirt-protest/>.



Fashion & Body

Beyond influencing what we wear, fashion trends have shaped how we alter our bodies to align with shifting beauty ideals. The “heroin chic” aesthetic of the 1990s embodies this dynamic, characterized by extremely slender, often emaciated bodies with minimal curves. Styling focused little on accessories and embellishments, drawing attention on this physique. Model Kate Moss, with her waif-like figure, sharp cheekbones, and minimalist beauty, became synonymous with this style. In this image, she dons a signature piece from the aesthetic: a slip dress. Its body-skimming fit and spaghetti straps highlight the natural lines of her body, showcasing a lean physique. Worn without a bra, the dress emphasizes her body’s contours, reinforcing the delicate figure idealized at the time.



Kornblum, Henna. “Throwing out the Heroin Chic Throwback.” L’Officiel Monaco, L’Officiel, 23 May 2022, www.lofficielmonaco.com/art-and-culture/throwing-out-the-heroin-chic-throwback.

Fig. 8. Ron Galella, Kate Moss at the Met Gala, 1995, New York, New York. *Vogue UK*.
<https://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/kate-moss-slip-dress>.

Hortense Mitchell Acton & the Callot Soeurs

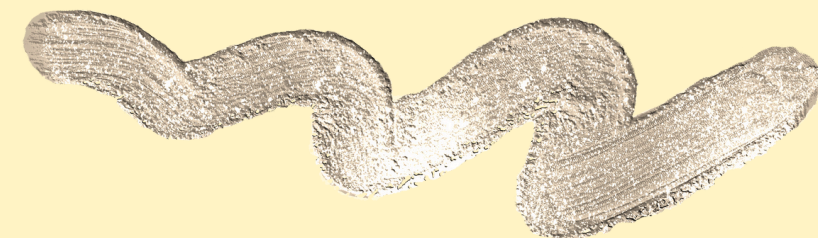
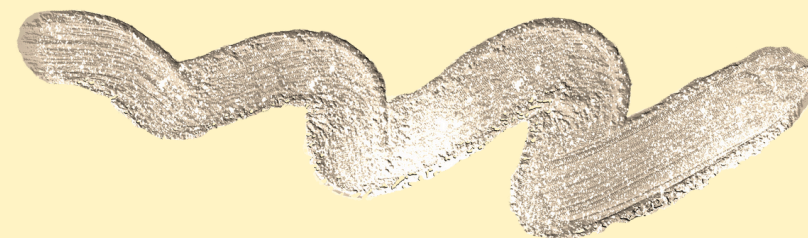
The drop waist style gained popularity in the 1920s, particularly during the flapper era. The waistline sat lower on the hips, rather than at the natural waist, while the neckline featured simple straight lines. The fit draped from the shoulders, creating a loose, androgynous silhouette. This marked a departure from the corseted, hourglass figures that dominated fashion in previous decades, reflecting the cultural shift toward greater freedom and mobility for women. The sequined, cream dress shown in the image, along with several other dresses owned by Hortense Mitchell Acton, feature a lowered, uncinched waist, aligning with the flapper era's embrace of the drop waist. This suggests Acton's awareness of emerging trends and highlights her status as a true fashion forward individual.



Fig. 9. Callot Soeurs. Summer 1929 Womenswear Collection.



Fig. 10. Callot Soeurs. Summer 1929 Womenswear Collection.



Futurism & Marchesa Casati

In my opinion, Emma Stone's portrayal of Cruella and Marchesa Luisa Casati share strikingly similar styles. Like Casati, who sought to be a living work of art, Cruella is a fashion designer in the film; both women use fashion as a means to defy convention and ignite rebellion, embodying the femme fatale archetype. Their aesthetics are defined by pale skin contrasted with dramatic, dark eye makeup, with Cruella's red hair before her transformation mirroring Casati's fiery locks. Their affinity for exotic animals and statement fur pieces further unites their styles, especially with Cruella's iconic Dalmatian coat serving as a provocative symbol. Both women use their theatricality to captivate and manipulate others, turning their personas into instruments of power.



Fig. 11. *Cruella*. Directed by Craig Gillespie, 2021.

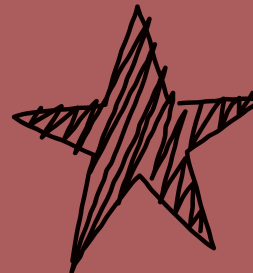
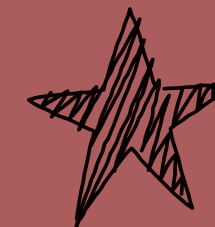


Fig. 12. *Cruella*. Directed by Craig Gillespie, 2021.



Museum of Costume and Fashion

The Uffizi Museum's Costume and Fashion exhibit showcases this dress, titled "Wedding Gown in Silk." Created in 1836 in an Italian workshop, it belonged to Angiola Polese and was worn for her wedding to Giuseppe Ascione that same year. I found it fascinating that the gown is gold rather than white, as white wedding dresses didn't become common until later. The dress features puffed gigot sleeves which were voluminous and designed to contrast the small waist and create a more flattering shape. The basque waistline, a popular 19th-century detail, accentuates the waist and elongates the torso, enhancing the overall silhouette. Intricate peony and daisy designs add a delicate touch.

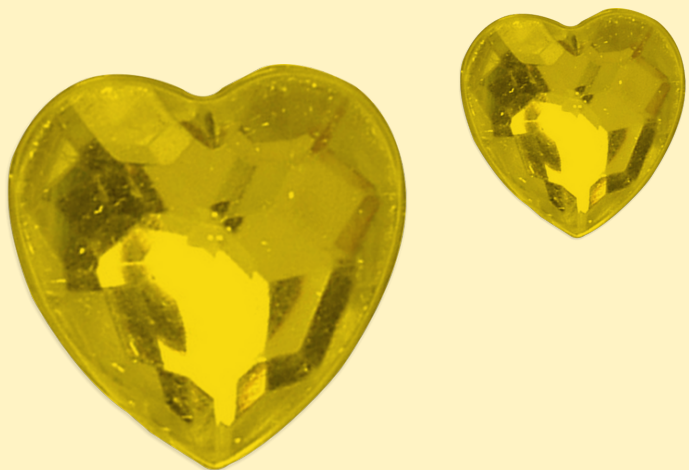


Fig. 13. Wedding Gown in Silk, 1836,
Museum Costume and Fashion
Museum, Pitti Palace, Florence, Italy.
<https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/abito-da-sposa#description>.



Fashion & Art

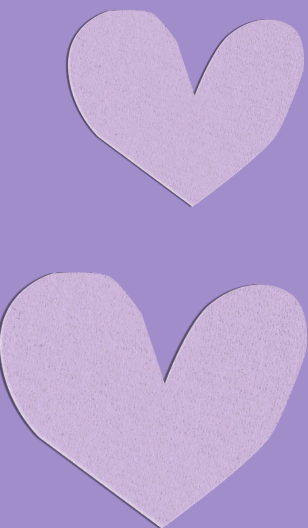
Viktor & Rolf's Haute Couture Spring 2023 show at Paris Fashion Week presented gravity-defying designs that challenged conventional views of how clothing should interact with the body, transforming garments into sculptures that redefined the relationship between the wearer and space. The collection featured dresses in unconventional orientations—upside-down, sideways, and seemingly floating—creating optical illusions. These surreal elements evoked the dreamlike essence central to the surrealist movement started by Elsa Schiaparelli. Viktor & Rolf's avant-garde collection blurs the lines between wearable clothing and high art, prompting viewers to reconsider the purpose of fashion as something beyond mere functionality, existing purely for aesthetic appreciation.



Fig. 14. Viktor & Rolf, Haute Couture Spring 2023 Womenswear Collection.



Fig. 15. Viktor & Rolf, Haute Couture Spring 2023 Womenswear Collection.



Museo Villoresi

Natalie Portman's long-standing partnership with Dior as the face of the Miss Dior fragrance since 2010 highlights how fashion brands use celebrities to reinforce identity, enhance prestige, and build emotional connections with consumers. Portman embodies the grace and elegance that Dior associates with Miss Dior, while her Hollywood status adds an extra touch of glamour. Beyond her acting career, her activism and personal values further strengthens her role as an aspirational figure, deepening emotional resonance with consumers. Portman's ongoing presence in campaigns fosters familiarity and trust with the audience, ensuring that the perfume remains an iconic symbol of sophistication and modern femininity. This solidifies Miss Dior as more than just a fragrance, but a timeless emblem of allure.



Fig. 16. David Bellemere, Natalie Portman for Miss Dior Fragrance Ad, 2015. *Elle*.
<https://www.elle.com/beauty/a12153049/natalie-portman-miss-dior-film/>.



Fashion & Work

Elle Woods, the iconic character from *Legally Blonde*, defies traditional gender norms and workwear expectations by choosing to wear pink. Often associated with softness and frivolity, pink becomes a deliberate statement against the belief that women must dress in muted or masculine styles to be taken seriously in professional environments. While her male colleagues in law school and the workplace often don more subdued tones and suits, Elle remains true to her personal style with her feminine outfits, proving her success is not defined by convention. She challenges the notion that femininity and professionalism cannot coexist, demonstrating that women can embrace their authentic selves and thrive in competitive, high-pressure careers.



Fig. 18. *Legally Blonde*. directed by Robert Luketic. 2001.



Fig. 18. *Legally Blonde*. directed by Robert Luketic. 2001.



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Viktor & Rolf. Haute Couture Spring 2023 Womenswear Collection.