



VALENTINA Working in New York City from the mid-1920s until 1957, Valentina Sanina Nicholaevna Schlée (known professionally as Valentina) was one of a very small, select coterie of mid-century female designers who achieved commercial success and maintained influential careers during the formative years of American fashion.

Working for a carefully chosen, exclusive clientele, Valentina turned out exquisitely cut and constructed evening, cocktail, and day ensembles that were commissioned and crafted in the manner of the French haute couture; every Valentina creation was made to order and was subject to multiple meticulous fittings and hand-finishing until the designer deemed the resulting garment worthy of her label. Known for her floor-gracing, draped, silk jersey gowns; body-skimming evening dresses with low-cut backs; deep décolleté; and bolero evening ensembles, Valentina also designed pared-down day dresses, linens, and undecorated cocktail dresses—all of which exuded a frank, forward-looking minimalist aesthetic.

Early Life and Marriage

Born in 1904 in the Kiev region of Russia, Valentina escaped the revolution in the late teens with her new husband and soon-to-be business manager, George Schlée, arriving in America in 1923 after several years spent in Paris, Athens, and various other European cities. Much like the French designer Coco Chanel, who offered as many versions of her colorful past as her admirers cared to indulge, Valentina was prone to invent and embroider her early life as it suited her. As a result, Valentina's origins are shrouded in mystery. But as one delves further, it becomes increasingly clear that this mystery is largely of her own making.

While U.S. immigration records indicate that she and her husband were affiliated with a traveling dance troupe known as the *Revue Russe*, Valentina was not above stretching that period to “her time in Paris with [dance impresario] Diaghilev.” One account of her life after escaping Russia finds her dancing as part of a cabaret act with the *Chauve Souris* theater group in Paris. And while the *Chauve Souris* and the *Revue Russe* were hardly Diaghilev, one thing is certain: Valentina's early training as a performing artist played a critical role in the forma-

tion of her talent for costuming actors as well as her uniquely dramatic personal style. Graced with an undeniably compelling natural beauty, and enhanced by a theatrical presence, Valentina became as famous for the disciplined elegance and reductive simplicity of her clothing as she was for her meticulously crafted public persona. Self-created in virtually every aspect of her existence, Valentina offered an exotic beauty and charmingly mangled English that played to her favor in America, adding a veil of dazzlingly misleading allure to an already intriguing personality.

Formation of Valentina Gowns

In operation from 1928 to 1956, *Valentina Gowns, Inc.*, was preceded by two early businesses, one the mid-1920s operating under the spelling “Valentena,” and another venture called “Valentina & Sonia.” Both of these concerns had folded by 1928 when *Valentina Gowns* was formed on more solid ground—this time backed by the Wall Street lawyer and financier Eustace Seligman. With George Schlée as business manager and Schlée's extended family employed in the workrooms, what became the most exclusive and most expensive American house of couture actually began as a rather simple, family-run business under the shrewd and watchful eye of the firm's only designer, Valentina.

Providing a formidable livelihood for the entire Schlée family, Valentina and George lived with great flair and panache on the swelling coffers of an almost immediate success. Within the first decade of business, Valentina's client list read like a who's who of blue-book society. With customers ranging from Park Avenue matrons to stars of the stage and silver screen, Valentina soon claimed Millicent Rogers, Lillian Gish, Gloria Swanson, Katharine Hepburn, Jennifer Jones, and even White House wives among her loyal following. Eleanor Lambert, the pioneer fashion publicist who represented Valentina for more than twenty-two years, claimed that Valentina was the dominant fashion designer of the 1930s and 1940s.

Designs for Stage and Screen

From the early 1930s on, Valentina designed costumes for Broadway productions, operas, and (by the early 1940s) Hollywood films. Drawing on her experience in

theater, she was keenly aware of the character-specific, problem-solving needs of performers. Not surprisingly, Valentina's costume design quickly gained renown for helping to define a character's role without challenging an actor's stage presence. Aptly summing up Valentina's contribution to theater design, the drama critic Brooks Atkinson noted that "Valentina has designed clothes that act before ever a line is spoken." From Lily Pons to Rosa Ponselle to Gladys Swarthout, Valentina dressed and accessorized the world's most sought-after opera divas of the mid-twentieth century. Her stage and screen credits include longstanding working relations with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, Norma Shearer, Paulette Goddard, Ginger Rogers, and Jennifer Jones, to name but a few. Her designs for and association with the reclusive film star Greta Garbo (who lived in the same Upper East Side apartment house as the Schlées) inspired endless sensationalistic journalism, but perhaps Valentina's most influential and highly publicized work was for Katharine Hepburn, whom she dressed in 1939 for Hepburn's starring role in the stage version of *The Philadelphia Story*. The white crepe, corselet-tied gown Hepburn wore was widely copied by designers at every price point across the nation for years.

In many ways, Valentina's work influenced fashion well beyond the scope of her limited elite clientele. In the 1940s, fashion editors coined the phrase "a poor-man's Valentina" to describe an affordable, simple, well-cut black dress devoid of any decoration. One of the first designers to promote monochromatic dressing, opaque and black stockings, and simple, short dresses for formal eveningwear, Valentina launched fashion trends that immediately trickled down to the masses. If Valentina's most recognizable calling card was simplicity, it should be remembered that hers was a carefully studied, highly disciplined simplicity. Her signature fragrance, "My Own," which was in production by the 1950s, was remembered by one ardent admirer as "Just like Valentina. Deceptively simple. But wildly complex." This carefully measured restraint during a time when floral appliqué, sequins, and pussycat bows were the ubiquitous choice of American dressmakers lent Valentina's designs a cool, modernist edge and earned her the respect and patronage of many of the most celebrated names in art, theater, and society. Wary of obvious fads and proudly declaring herself an American designer, Valentina insisted that true style and well-designed clothing were, in their ideal form, timeless, and she duly advised women to "Fit the century. Forget the year!"

In 1957, Valentina Gowns closed its doors—an event that coincided with the end of Valentina's marriage to George Schlée. The business was jointly owned and run, and it was George's role to manage the business while Valentina created—a two-person performance that simply could not be accomplished by Valentina on her own. In retrospect, however, it appears that Valentina's career might have run its course. By the late 1950s, both in the

press and on the streets, the sophisticated ladies of café society were reluctantly giving way to the youth-driven and fast-approaching 1960s, which would witness the imperious and haughty glamour of the preceding era slowly fading away like the lingering scent of a once ravishing perfume. From the very beginning of her career, up until her very last days, Valentina had remained at the very top of the most competitive, most exclusive, and perhaps least understood area of twentieth-century fashion history—American couture. She died in New York City in 1989 at the age of ninety.

See also **Film and Fashion; Hollywood Style; Theatrical Costume.**

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Koble Yohannan

VALENTINO Valentino Garavani (1932–) was born in Voghera, a city in Lombardy, on 11 May. Even as a young man he was fascinated by fashion and decided to study design in Milan. When he was seventeen he discovered the extraordinary shade of red that would remain a design element throughout his career at a premiere of the Barcelona Opera.

Early Career

In 1950 Valentino went to Paris, where he studied design at the schools of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*. He obtained his first position as a designer with Jean Dessès. In 1957 Valentino went to work in Guy Laroche's new atelier, where he remained for two years. His training in France provided him with both technical skill and a sense of taste. In 1959 he decided to return to Italy and opened his own fashion house on the via Condotti in Rome with financial assistance from his family. In November he made his debut with his first couture collection, displaying 120 luxurious outfits notable for their stoles and draped panels that emphasized the shoulders. The *Sunday Times* of London was quick to take note of the new designer, singling him out for the refined lines of his tailoring and the sophistication of his garments.

In 1960 Valentino met Giancarlo Giammetti, who became his business administrator. At this time he moved his fashion house to via Gregoriana, 54. Valentino quickly became the favorite designer of the movie stars who were often found at Cinecittà, known as the new Hollywood during the years of Italy's economic boom. One of the first stars who wore Valentino's clothes was Elizabeth

Taylor, who was in Rome for the filming of *Cleopatra*. In 1960 Valentino signed an agreement with a British firm, Debenham and Freebody, to reproduce some of his couture designs. That same year he designed costumes for Monica Vitti in Michelangelo Antonioni's film *La Notte*. In 1963 Valentino's summer line was photographed on the set of Federico Fellini's film *8 1/2*.

Valentino's collection for fall–winter 1961–1962 featured twelve white outfits inspired by Jacqueline Kennedy. But what secured Valentino's fame was the success of his first fashion show on the runway of the Sala Bianca in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence in July 1962. For the first time French *Vogue* dedicated its cover to an Italian designer.

International Success

Valentino's fall–winter collection for 1963–1964 was inspired by wild animals. American *Vogue* published a photograph of the contessa Consuelo Crespi wearing one of his zebra-patterned models, which anticipated his op art and pop art-inspired collection of spring–summer 1966. The 1966 collection has become famous for its prints and geometric designs, its stylized animals, and its large dots. That same year Valentino started a lingerie line and stunned his audience with a winter show that included pink and violet furs. Ethel Kennedy chose a Valentino dress for her meeting with Pope Paul VI in June 1966.

In 1967 Valentino received the Neiman Marcus Award in Dallas, which spurred him to further develop his creative ideas. The award was the direct impetus for his first men's collection, Valentino Uomo. The designer's accessories, especially his handbags with a gold "V," became essential items for the elegant women of the jet set. In 1968 Valentino introduced his famous Collezione Bianca, a spring–summer line of white and off-white garments that included suits, wraps, coats, and legwear in white lace. The show took place at a critical moment in international fashion and helped alleviate the crisis in haute couture—a crisis due to changes in international society in 1968 when people started looking at less exclusive models. In March of that year Valentino opened a store in Paris, followed by one in Milan in 1969. In October 1968 he designed Jacqueline Kennedy's dress for her wedding to Aristotle Onassis. He was the most acclaimed designer of the moment and expanded his circle of clients to include Paola di Liegi, Princess Margaret of England, Farah Diba, the Begum Aga Khan, Marella Agnelli, Princess Grace of Monaco, Sophia Loren, and many other well-known women.

Valentino lengthened hemlines and introduced folk and gypsy motifs in the early 1970s. He started his first boutique line in 1969. It was originally produced by Mendes, although ready-to-wear production was turned over to Gruppo Finanziario Tessile (GFT) in 1979. Valentino also opened a prêt-à-porter shop in the center of Rome in 1972. Throughout the 1970s his designs alternated between slender suits and harem pants coupled

with maxi coats. These designs often evoked a Liberty and art deco atmosphere, as in his 1973 collection inspired by the art of Gustav Klimt and the Ballets Russes. In 1974 he opened new stores in London, Paris, New York, and Tokyo (in the early 2000s there are twenty-five stores throughout the world). In 1976 he decided to show his boutique line in Paris, while keeping his couture line in Rome. Valentino launched his first perfume, named Valentino, in 1978. The following year he introduced a line of blue jeans at a famous discothèque, Studio 54 in New York City, which was publicized through an advertising campaign photographed by Bruce Weber.

The collections of the 1980s were characterized by sarong skirts gathered on the hip, draped garments, ruched fabrics, breathtaking necklines, and dramatic slits in a range of colors that emphasized the famous Valentino red, together with black and white. In 1982 the designer presented his fall–winter collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1986 he introduced Oliver, a more youthful line named after his faithful dog, which he used as a logo. Three years later, Valentino decided to show his couture line in Paris, a series of garments inspired by ancient and modern art.

Valentino's collections of the 1990s integrated the themes of revival and self-reference—flounces, embroidery, and dots—partly as a way of emphasizing his thirty years in fashion, which were celebrated in several short films, exhibitions, and books. In January 1998, after a difficult period, Valentino sold his brand to the Holding di Partecipazioni Industriali SpA (HdP) group run by Maurizio Romiti, although Valentino remained the creative director. In 2002 HdP sold the fashion house to Gruppo Marzotto.

Elements of Style

Valentino has paid his own personal tribute to contemporary fashion, inventing a recognizable look, modern yet sophisticated, which balances tradition and innovation through the image of an iconic femininity that is both classic and chic. Valentino's designs have as a common denominator the technical precision of fine tailoring, which he applies not so much for the sake of innovation but rather to provide a sense of stylistic continuity. Bows, ruching, and draping are distinctive features of many of his designs, together with the famous Valentino red. All these features are used strategically, serving to give the brand its mythic quality. Valentino's fabrics are printed with flowers, dots, and his own initial, which has doubled as a logo since the 1960s, highlighting the interplay between ornamental texture and effective communication.

A forceful interpreter of the lines and ambiance of the nineteenth century, with references ranging from the neoclassical with its fine drapery through the Second Empire with its crinolines, Valentino plays with the idea that his garments serve as a kind of aesthetic memory, a modern reference to a different time. Because of the designer's

ability to work with tradition, he has found a unique, although elitist, stylistic solution that has satisfied sophisticated women throughout the world.

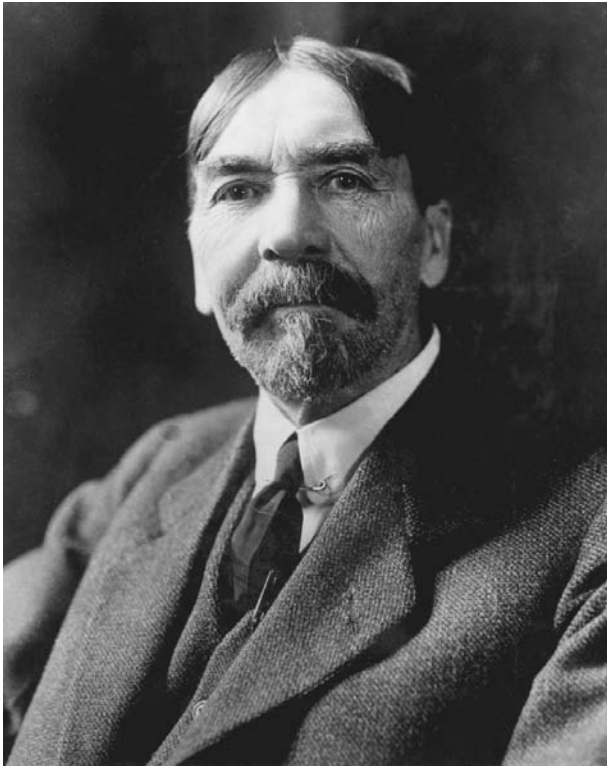
See also **Celebrities; Italian Fashion; Vogue.**

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Aurora Fiorentini

VEBLEN, THORSTEIN A North American economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) was an unrelenting critic of late nineteenth-century industrial society and in particular of the hierarchy of values asso-



Portrait of Thorstein B. Veblen. In scrutinizing the leisure class, economist Veblen studied fashion trends and their relationship with the desire to display wealth. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ciated with its dominant group, which Veblen named the *leisure class*. Clothing and fashion, he argued, were important as a way in which this group competed among themselves for prestige and social status.

Veblen sought to understand the aims and ambitions of the leisure class by uncovering the economic motives that were at the center of their actions and values. In his classic text, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (1899), he concluded that the economic activity of the leisure class is driven by a way of life given over to either the maintenance or the acquisition of “honorable repute.” The key to gaining status, argued Veblen, is for the households within the leisure class to dispose publicly of their wealth according to the principles of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. Adherence to these principles shows that a household and its members are able to consume without participating in the “demeaning and unworthy” activities attached to the “the industrial process.”

Although Veblen scrutinized a wide range of expenditures—including houses, food, gardens, and household pets—he singled out clothing for special consideration. As he observed, “no line of consumption affords a more apt illustration than expenditure on dress” (p. 123). This is because clothing is a social necessity and to be in public is, by necessity, to be clothed. By being on show, clothing becomes a prime indicator of its wearer’s “pecuniary repute” (p. 123), and since, in modern industrial society, clothing is a universal item of consumption, it is difficult for anyone to ignore the pressures of competitive emulation. Dress, therefore, is ideally placed as a vehicle with which to assert superior status in relation to one’s peers within the leisure class, as well as collectively displaying the superiority of this class over all others. Veblen concluded that dress has only a tentative connection to protection and bodily comfort, observing that “it is by no means an uncommon occurrence, in an inclement climate, for people to go ill clad in order to appear well dressed” (p. 124).

Dress and Conspicuous Consumption

Veblen argued that a prime function of dress within the leisure class is to display the wearer’s wealth by their consumption “of valuable goods in excess of what is required for physical comfort” (p. 125). According to Veblen the most immediate form of conspicuous consumption is *quantity*, or the possession of items of clothing (for instance shoes or suits) far beyond the requirements of reasonable daily wear. However, dress in the leisure class is also subject to considerations of *quality*. Ability to pay can also be demonstrated by the ownership of garments distinguished by the expensiveness of their materials, such as the goat hair used to weave pashmina shawls. Time-consuming methods of garment construction, and therefore expense, can, Veblen argued, insinuate itself into the esteem in which its wearer will be held. The comparison between a handmade garment and a machine-made one

is almost always in favor of the former. Finally, the *scarcity* of a garment can also be a factor in adding to the repute of its wearer. An original item from the studio of a famous designer, or a garment bearing the label of a chic fashion house, carries more prestige than an undistinguished item of clothing.

One final way that members of the leisure class exhibit pecuniary strength is always to appear in fashionable, up-to-date clothing. Veblen observed that “if each garment is permitted to serve for but a brief term, and if none of last season’s apparel is carried over and made further use of during the present season, the wasteful expenditure on dress is greatly increased” (p. 127).

Conspicuous Leisure

Veblen’s exploration of the dress of the leisure class extends beyond the ways in which individuals consume items of clothing and engages with the very forms and styles assumed by these garments. As he wrote, “Dress must not only be conspicuously expensive; it must also be ‘inconvenient’” (p. 127). This is because, within the competitive logic of the leisure class, overt displays of wealth can be supplemented by wearing clothes that show the person in question “is not engaged in any kind of productive labour” (p. 125). Veblen uses this idea of conspicuous leisure to great effect in explaining the enormous differences in the form taken by men’s and women’s clothing at the end of the nineteenth century.

In scrutinizing contemporary men’s clothing for evidence of the principle of conspicuous leisure, Veblen argued that there should be an absence on the male garments of any evidence of manual labor such as stains, shiny elbows, or creasing. Rather, elegant men’s dress must exhibit signs that the wearer is a man of leisure. As he states, “Much of the charm that invests the patent-leather shoe, the stainless linen, the lustrous cylindrical hat, and the walking stick ... comes of their pointedly suggesting that the wearer cannot when so attired bear a hand in any employment that is directly and immediately of any human use” (p. 126).

The dress of the women of the leisure class, while embodying the salient principles of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure, is also influenced by the inferior social position they occupy within the leisure-class household. It is the job of the woman, argued Veblen, “to consume for the [male] head of the household; and her apparel is contrived with this object in view” (p. 132). By wearing garments that are both expensive and inconvenient, such as ornate dresses, corsets, and complicated hats, women show that they do not need to work and so increase the “pecuniary repute” in which the head of the family is held. Veblen was one of the first modern thinkers to relate the appearance of women to their weak social and economic position.

Although Veblen’s analysis of dress and fashion has proved fruitful in social and historical contexts beyond

what he originally envisaged, he always considered his study to be an explanation applicable primarily to what took place within the leisure class, not as a universal theory of dress. Strongly influenced by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, Veblen believed that in the future men and women would progress beyond the restless changes of dress styles encouraged by “pecuniary culture.” In their place would emerge a set of relatively stable costumes similar to those Veblen imagined had existed in ancient Greece and Rome, China, and Japan.

See also **Fashion, Theories of; Fashion and Identity.**

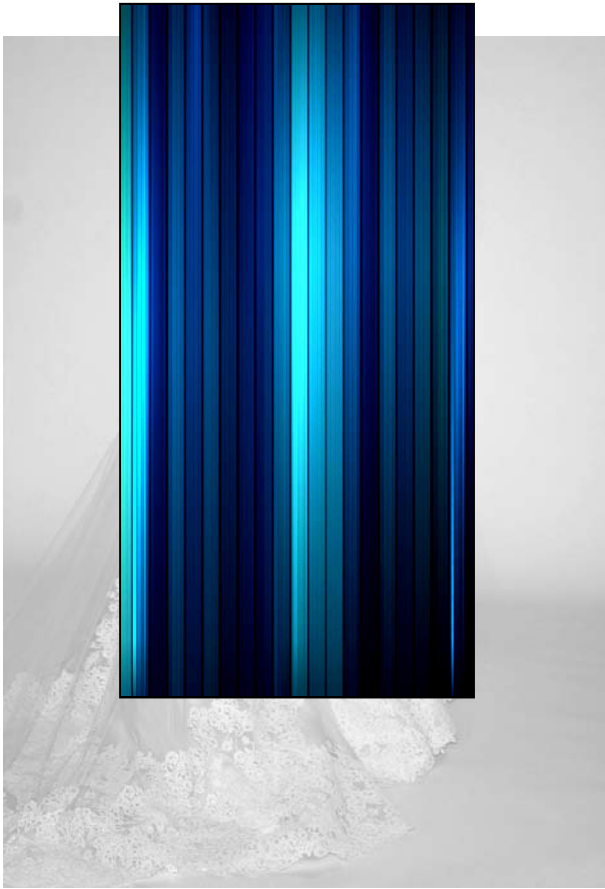
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Michael Carter

VEILS *Veils, veiled, and veiling* emphasize different aspects of related “English” terms. As a noun, a veil is a piece of fabric draped as a head and upper or full body covering that functions as an item of dress. Whether an item of clothing or adornment, veils are physically used to cover and conceal, yet simultaneously draw attention to some visual aspect of the wearer. As a verb, “to veil” refers to the act of veiling or covering and concealing some visual or social aspect of the wearer, yet possibly, still inadvertently, revealing their identity. As an adjective, veiled, differentiates between the identity of the wearer who dons a veil or head covering or veils and covers and others who don’t in the a variety of social contexts.

Derivative terms for veils, veiled, and veiling and their meanings exist in other European languages such as in French (*voile*) and Latin (*vela* and *velum*). And elsewhere comparable terms are used for items of dress that function in a similar manner, that is, as a piece of fabric draped as a head and upper or full body covering, that covers and conceals, yet reveals the identity of the wearer



Woman in wedding dress with veil. In many religions such as Christianity and Judaism, veils are frequently worn as part of a bride's wedding ensemble. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

and that differentiates between those individuals that choose to cover and those that do not.

Historical Overview

The historical precedence for head coverings is vast, and references to veils, veiled, and veiling are complex. As El Guindi (1999) reviews, "veiling is a rich and nuanced phenomenon, a language that communicates social and cultural messages, a practice that has been present in tangible form since ancient times, a symbol ideologically fundamental to the Christian, and particularly, the Catholic, vision of womanhood and piety, and a vehicle for resistance in Islamic societies, and is currently the center of scholarly debate on gender and women in the Islamic east. In movements of Islamic activism, the veil occupies center stage as symbol of both identity and resistance."

Consequently, the use of the terms veils, veiled, and veiling and their comparables in other languages and cultures suggests many connotations. However, an understanding of the function and meaning of head coverings worn as veils is highly dependent on personal, social, and cultural perspectives. Frequently these views carry many

ethnocentric and misogynistic representations and interpretations. Regardless of the linguistic terms used, generalizations are generational and there exist gender associations, varied social contextual variables, and cultural differentiations in veils, and veiling practices. The following descriptive and interpretive examples provide some insights in the range of people who veil or cover and are veiled or covered and the customs and cultures that govern veiling and covering practices.

Personal Identity

Historically, the terms *veils*, *veiled*, and *veiling* are associated with gendered and generational status. Though not the exclusive domain of women, as an article of dress, veils are associated with "being" female. They are typically draped fabric or head and/or body coverings that are generally the clothing or adornment form worn to differentiate female gender identity from males. Whether self-imposed or otherwise, customs associated with being female vary across cultures. For example, women in "western" cultures seldom wear veils while men rarely will wear them. In contrast, in the Middle East, men and women may frequently wear similarly draped garments that cover their heads, upper and lower bodies, but women may distinguish themselves by covering a portion of their face to conceal their identity in more public spaces. The *abaya* is one such example that is worn in many Arabic-speaking countries. Other examples, more culturally specific in historically Persian cultures are the *chador* worn in Iran and the *chaadar* worn in Afghanistan.

Age-related use of veils, veiled, and veiling practices across cultures frequently defines the transitions between stages of the female life cycle that reference physiological development and change as it relates to social status. One critical period is between youth and puberty. Veils, veiled, and veiling are often synonymous with the notion of symbolic space and specific rites of passage such as during puberty and coming of age ceremonies. Young Afghan girls begin wearing *chaadars*, veils, or head coverings to signal their change in status from a young nonmenstruating girl to a menstruating young woman, a young woman who is now of marriageable age. They may even wear them "prematurely" to appear more mature than their physiological development or chronological age.

The *dupatta* worn by Pakistani and Indian women also are gendered and generational examples of head coverings worn by young women on the Asian subcontinent. Few women would venture in public without one, and when traveling abroad the dupatta is still worn with either indigenous or local dress. The dupatta in these instances may be shawl- or scarf-like, a draped two-dimensional form.

Somali women wear a variety of head coverings or veils that differentiate the gender and age of the wearer. A *khaamar*, a scarf-like item, is worn singularly or in combination with a shawl-like garment or *gaarbo saar*. A more religious head covering is *hijab*, and the most religious

form is the *nikaab*, which completely conceals the entire face except for the eyes.

In direct contrast to Arab custom, Tuareg men from Algeria, rather than women, wear veils. However, they often leave their face uncovered when they travel or are with their family.

Social Constructions

In addition to personal statements of gender and generational identity found geographically, closely linked social constructions are nearly inseparable from familial and marital status, geographic location, religious affiliation, memberships, and special associations.

Wearing a veil and following local customs that govern female space in both the domestic and public environment may express familial status as well as female position within a family. In a Gujarati village in India, veils, or *saddo*, are worn, and the custom of veiling or *ghughut* is practiced. As Tarlo describes, “ghughut is a form of deference and respect performed by women largely to men” (1997; 160). The local term for many variations of veiling is *laj* or “doing shame.” Laj variations, the way and degree in which the face, head, and body are covered, communicate a female’s relationship to the males in the family but also the status of the family in the community.

Veils, veiled, and veiling may also suggest a change in marital status. During a Christian wedding ceremony a bride wears a veil. The bride’s father “gives her away” wearing a veil that covers her face as part of her bridal ensemble. The bride and groom recite vows then the groom uncovers the bride’s face. Also at times of death, widows, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century wore a black shroud, veils or head coverings, that covered their face, and honored a deceased husband.

In a Jewish marriage ceremony, the tradition of veiling the bride is traced back to the reference to Rebecca in Genesis “Rebecca took her veil and covered herself” upon first meeting Isaac. Popular legend attributes the custom to the Biblical story of Jacob and his wives. After working for seven years for permission to marry Rachel, Jacob was tricked on his wedding day into marrying Leah, Rachel’s sister (she was wearing a veil) instead. To avoid such a mishap, according to legend, the groom “checks” to be sure that it is, indeed, his bride, before her veil is lowered over her face.

These examples of familial and marital status portray veils and veiling practices as a means to control personal symbolic space such as modesty or *haya*—an Arabic term that encompasses many concepts, including self-respect and scruples, in addition to modesty. This is especially evident in faith-based markers of female identity. For example, during calls to prayer, Muslim women wear hijab, head and upper body coverings, as they pray either in the private domestic sphere or when praying in more public, yet segregated, mosque settings. In contrast, dur-

ing confirmation ceremonies, young Christian girls dress modestly wearing white veils expressing their purity as they recite their acceptance of faith in church. In a similar fashion, religious women or nuns have worn various styles of veils or head coverings as part of their ensemble or habit, communicating purity, modesty, and devotion.

Veils, veiled, and veiling may also convey the geographic differences of the wearer. Traditionally, though not exclusive to Middle Eastern and Eastern cultures, urban and rural differences were evident in the use of veils, veiled, and veiling practices. In rural areas veils, veiled, and veiling were less evident among known kin groups but as travel permitted, women in more urban settings tended to veil, cover, and conceal themselves wearing *chaadarees* or *burqas* to “protect” themselves, their virtue, modesty, and purity, and their families from unknown or unrelated males (Daly 2000).

Socioeconomic distinctions highlight the aesthetic choices of veils, veiled, and veiling practices. The Pakistani woman’s dupatta elaborately decorated with beads, sequins, and embroidery is a sign of social status, wealth, and prestige when worn.

Contemporary Examples

Early twenty-first century examples of veils, veiled, and veiling practices focus on Muslim women and their appearance. Throughout the twentieth century, veils, veiled, and veiling practices vacillated between issues resulting from personal, social, and cultural constructions of identity. Several examples are worth noting because of reform movements and the politicization of gender, religion, and nationality. At the beginning of the twentieth century, political leaders in Turkey and Afghanistan struggled to define women’s national identity through control of their appearance in public contexts. Conservative leaders struggled to maintain customary practices that reinforced Islamic Sharia codes of conduct, while other progressive leaders initiated political reforms that not only permitted, but also encouraged Muslim women to eliminate head coverings as a sign of modernity. For the duration of the century and with each new regime, religious and political leaders alike revisited “the woman question.”

By the end of the twentieth century, veils, veiled, and veiling practices resurfaced as a source of contention in the geopolitical and national realm. Now the woman question became aligned with sophisticated discrimination and human rights issues in diaspora immigrant communities where Muslim women live and also in their countries of origin. In addition, Islamists fought for women’s inability to choose, while feminists fought for the same women’s ability to choose whether or not to wear a veil. The Taliban in Afghanistan became the most strident example of female control, forcing both Islamic and Pushtunwali strict codes of conduct regardless of religious affiliation. In the United States, female Muslim

refugees struggled to maintain gender, religious, and national head covering practices in the wake of anti-Islamic dress codes. Other countries such as France, Iran, and Pakistan lobbied to self define their own head and body covering practices.

See also **Burqa; Chador; Hijab; Wedding Costume.**

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M. Catherine Daly

VELCRO. See **Closures, Hook-and-Loop.**

VELVET Velvet is a pile fabric in which an extra warp (lengthwise) yarn creates a raised uncut loop or cut tuft on the fabric surface. Velvet is first encountered in low, uncut pile examples in Chinese silk *qirong jin* or *rongquan jin* that date to Warring States (403–221 B.C.E.), Qin (221–206 B.C.E.), and Western Han (206 B.C.E.–23 C.E.) dynasties. More consistent with velvet's allure of tactile seductiveness are the resplendent, late-medieval cut-pile velvets of Italy and Spain made possible by the rapid development of draw loom technology supported by discerning patrons. Parallel achievements were seen in Ottoman Turkey, Persia, and later in Mughal India.

The prodigious repeat sizes and lavish use of precious materials—fine and dense silk, and, for the most sumptuous versions, added gilt-silver wefts (yarn running

crosswise) worked flat or in loops—are pervasive in fifteenth-century European depictions portraying sacred and secular elites dressed in vestments, gowns, and mantles of giant, serpentine pomegranate and artichoke designs. The velvets of Bursa and Istanbul made for fifteenth-century caftans, cushions, and tent panels for the sultans display similar splendor. In Persia, by contrast, where cut velvet seems to have originated, the long reign of the Safavid dynasty favored narrative designs of hunt scenes and literary genre figures, the rich coloristic effects made possible by intricate pile-warp substitutions.

The European capital-intensive velvet industry was closely allied with merchant banks and the courts, and flourished first in Italy (Florence, Genoa, Venice, and Milan), then elsewhere, particularly in France (Tours, and above all Lyon). Closely controlled velvet qualities developed, and were assigned dozens of specialized French terms to distinguish the types—some are still current. They ranged from plain velvets, sometimes given added value by stamped designs and other finishes, to patterned ones by varying pile heights and introducing two or more pile warp colors.

In the early modern period, wealthy patrons continued commissioning large-scale custom designs for special occasion outfits, while stock styles of smaller repeat patterns were used in standard dress velvets. A number of them were woven for Western customers in China, where interest in the structure had reawakened, and spread to Japan. Great numbers of these small-scale designs survive in art and textile fragments and show floral sprig, bird, and animal motifs subordinated into lattice-type patterns.

From the middle of the eighteenth century and into the next, silk velvet appeared in men's apparel (especially waistcoats) and luxury carriage interiors, but women's fashion abandoned stately velvet in favor of lighter fabrics. Through the nineteenth century, Lyon in particular, produced elaborate, fine velvets woven by hand on Jacquard looms, designed to win prizes at world fairs, and promoted in fashions of the emerging Parisian couture houses.

Plain, patterned, and printed silk velvets and the longer-piled relation, plush, were featured in glamorous opera coats during the early twentieth century. Cotton and rayon frequently substituted for scarce and expensive silk, and most plain velvets are now woven double on power looms, creating two fabrics sharing a pile warp, subsequently separated by horizontal cutting blades. In the late twentieth century, China exported quantities of inexpensive silk velvets, and innovative textile designers eagerly applied new looks with earlier methods, such as burn-out and resist dyeing for fashion accessories.

See also **China: History of Dress.**

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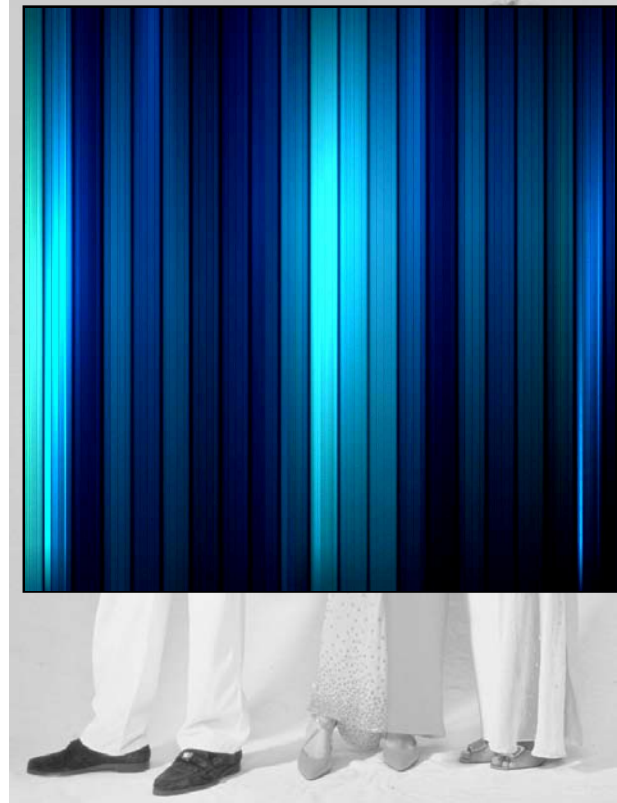
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Désirée Koslin

VELVETEEN. See **Weave, Double; Weave, Pile.**

VERSACE, GIANNI AND DONATELLA Gianni Versace (1946–1997) was a defining figure in the world of design in the 1980s and 1990s. He dressed the inde-



Gianni Versace, with models Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell. In the 1980s and 1990s, designer Gianni Versace dressed celebrities in his well-renowned, daring, and bold fashions. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

pendent spirits, celebrities, and the rich, young, and fearless. His exclusive clique personified his ideals of men's and women's ready-to-wear and couture clothing. He also created accessories, linens, and a collection for the home inspired by his preference for the baroque style. Versace's knowledge was encyclopedic and his sense of history prophetic; his genius was the successful linkage of fashion and culture.

Following Versace's tragic death in July 1997, his sister Donatella was catapulted into the international limelight. Only three months later, no longer her brother's muse and collaborator, she assumed creative direction over the development of a dozen highly demanding collections. An earlier agreement between brother and sister had established that she would be the one to carry on his work if it were ever necessary. As a result the signature Versace Atelier collection was presented as usual in Paris in 1998.

Donatella Versace was born in Reggio Calabria, in southern Italy in 1955. She was one of four children born to a businessman and an accomplished seamstress. During Donatella's childhood, Gianni designed clothing for his younger sister, who became the embodiment of his

standards. After she completed her studies in Italian literature at the Università di Firenze to supplement her sense of culture, she followed Gianni to Milan, where he had established his career. Initially he sketched his first ready-to-wear collections for the manufacturing firms of Genny, Complice, and Callaghan.

Donatella arrived with the intention of shaping her brother's public image through deft management of his public relations. When he established his signature company in 1978, she became his spirited muse-in-residence. Santo Versace, an older sibling, assisted in the organization of the business, which he continues to direct.

As the house's driving creative force since 1997, Donatella has forged on to energize her international team of fashion designers. Her entrance-making gowns, as well as practical, elegant ready-to-wear clothes and men's wear maintained a high profile in her design studios and corporate offices in the center of Milan. The Versace family estates are located in nearby Como, within an hour's drive from the Milan corporate headquarters.

Business Innovations

Donatella's larger-than-life approach to creating fashion mirrored her brother's maxim that fashion must fuse with the media, the performing arts, celebrity, vitality, and sexuality. Donatella staged the audacious, high-powered Versace runway shows after Gianni's death, enlisting the friendship and devotion of many of the supermodels. Her brother had initiated successful advertising campaigns with photographers and artists beginning in the late 1970s: Richard Avedon and Andy Warhol, among others, shared his flamboyant taste for self-promotion. Donatella continued in this vein, preferring to work with such photographers as Steven Meisel and Bruce Weber. The company continued to unleash dynamic, sexually charged media campaigns in the early 2000s as it expanded its share of the luxury trades.

Gianni Versace's penchant for extreme styling and unconventional choices of sumptuous and radiant fabrics combined themes from his studies in art history with new technology. The Versace label was more focused on the modern career woman in the early twenty-first century, a change reflected in the variety of garments it produced. Donatella's hallmarks included flashy materials fluidly draped. She presented herself on the international stage as the model of an invincible woman. Donatella also launched the fragrance Versace Woman in 2001.

Personal Image

During their adolescence and early adult years, brother and sister remained loyal to each other. Gianni created vibrant garments for Donatella that embodied his personal rationale of expression. The freedom to dare, to make personal choices, was one of the Versace duo's resonant manifestos. During their nineteen years of collaboration, Versace consulted his younger sibling in all important decisions. Her bravura and dedication made

her an integral part of the company as it developed. In early 2000 she epitomized the liberation he sought as a designer. Gianni paid tribute to Donatella when he named his 1995 perfume Blonde to honor her trademark long, platinum locks. Surrounded by revelers, her frequent tours of nightspots provided her with access to the younger generation. In due course, Donatella became chief designer for Versace's Versus collection, where she further empowered her success with their dual vision of bold patterns and high glamour infused with sex appeal, designed for a younger clientele. While Donatella was independent in her thinking, she was also committed to her brother's enduring legacy. She continued to style flashy and extreme ready-to-wear clothing as well as a couture line, as she did during her apprenticeship with Gianni and in her position as an accessory designer and creator of a line of children's clothing in 1993.

Donatella's camaraderie with celebrities, including Elton John, Elizabeth Hurley, and Courtney Love, reflected her belief in the significance of uncompromising friendships. Madonna, Jon Bon Jovi, Sting, and Trudy Skyler were among her closest confidantes. Like her older brother, she combined music with the media and the spectacle of contemporary urban life. Donatella's designs affirmed sensuality, employing short skirts and plunging necklines as devices of freedom. "Fashion can be freedom or it can be a way to live with no freedom," she avowed in *Interview*.

Donatella married the former model Paul Beck, with whom she had two children—Allegra, her uncle's beneficiary, born in 1986, and Daniel, born in 1991.

Donatella Versace reveled in the attention she received in fashion and popular lifestyle magazines. She pursued visibility at all levels of society and was always ready to convey the glamorous extravagance that identified her company. Her fashion edicts remained consistent: "If I want to be blonde, I am not going to be a medium blonde. I am going to be totally blonde. If I am going to wear heels, they are not going to be two inches high. They are going to be much higher than that. It's the freedom of extremes that I love" (*Interview*). Her confident design ethic mirrored that of her late brother, who became a creative genius in high-end apparel and of bold gestures in the media.

See also Avedon, Richard; Celebrities; Fashion Photography; Italian Fashion; Madonna; Meisel, Steven; Supermodels.

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Gillian Carrara

VICTORIAN FASHION. See Europe and America: History of Dress (400–1900 C.E.).

VICUNA. See Alpaca.

VIKTOR & ROLF The Dutch saying, *Doe normaal, dan ben je al gek genoeg* (literally, Just be normal, then you are crazy enough) sheds light on the work of design team Viktor & Rolf. Viktor Horsting (b. 1969) and Rolf Snoeren (b. 1969) met while they were students at the Arnhem Academy of Art, the Netherlands, in 1988. They both sought to escape the boredom they experienced while growing up in small, quiet, suburban towns in southern Holland. “We had nothing to relate to, never saw glamour except for fashion magazines, and longed to escape to those dream worlds,” Horsting once said to an interviewer. By pushing the boundaries of what defines fashion, Viktor & Rolf inspired a new generation of Dutch fashion designers and helped to expose the international fashion media to a country known more for wooden clogs than high fashion.

Viktor & Rolf are characterized in Stephen Gan’s *Visionaire 2000* (1997) as “fashion’s biggest fans and its toughest critics.” While their works celebrate the detailed craftsmanship of tailoring and consistently reference classic silhouettes from the legendary couturiers Cristóbal Balenciaga, Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, and Yves Saint Laurent, they also critique the twentieth- and twenty-first century’s fashion industry, tackle the stereotypes of fashion, and expose its vulnerabilities to a runway audience.

The Early Experiments

Viktor & Rolf’s first collection won the grand prize at the *Salon européen des jeunes stylistes* (1993), a fashion festival in the southern French city of Hyères. When deconstruction was the trend, Viktor & Rolf reconstructed by piling layers of men’s button-down shirts to form ball gowns. The following year they suspended flashy gold garments adorned with oversized ribbons and excessive decorations from the ceiling in their installation *L’Apparence du vide* (1994) at the Galerie Patricia Dorfman, Paris, which sought to critique the aura and hype surrounding fashion. In another experiment, sleek marketing for *Viktor & Rolf, le parfum* (1996) served to critique the superficial, banal beauty of fragrance advertising. The neatly packaged, limited-edition (2,500) perfume bottles were deliberately designed so that they could not be opened. The bottles sold out at the Parisian boutique *Colette*. In *Launch* (1996), presented at the Torch Gallery in Amsterdam, Viktor & Rolf’s dream world of the fashion process was realized on a small scale. They explained that, with a doll-sized runway, sketch and draping session, and photo shoot setup, “we created the ultimate goals we wanted to achieve in fashion (but felt unable to). These miniatures represented some of the most emblematic situations in fashion we wanted to become re-

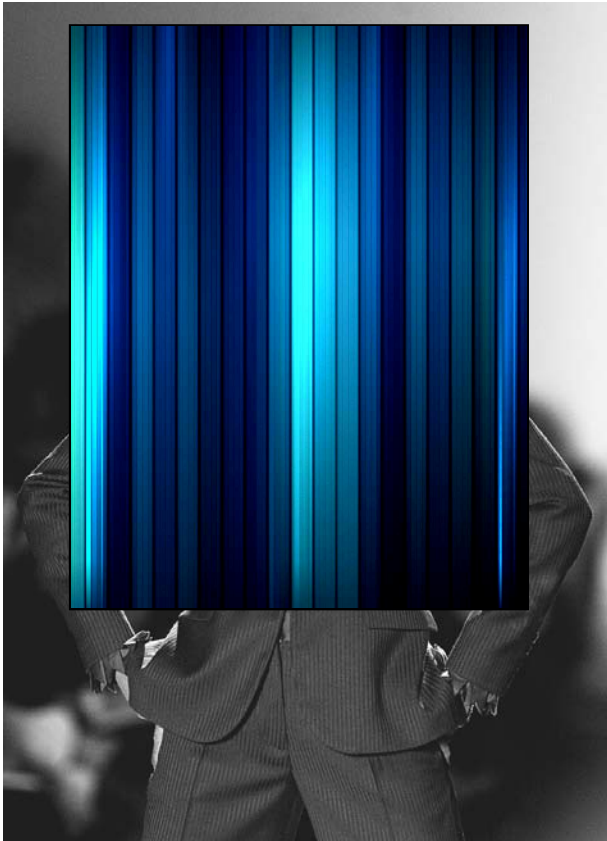


Viktor Horsting (left) and Rolf Snoeren. The Dutch fashion duo are well known for their innovative, unusual clothing designs and inventive runway performances. MARTIN BUREAU/AFP/Getty Images. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ality” (Personal interview, 23 December 1999). Their dream was realized soon thereafter in the form of an haute couture collection.

The Haute Couture Collections

Viktor & Rolf brought an intellectual approach to the fashion process via art. They pursued haute couture because they found it to be “the most sublime” aspect of fashion. With Dutch government support and the Groninger Museum, the Netherlands, as their sole client, Viktor & Rolf were able to develop creatively without the pressure of maintaining profitability that most young designers experience. In their second spring/summer 1998 collection at the Thaddeus Ropac Gallery in Paris, Viktor & Rolf created their signature “atomic bomb silhouette”—exaggerated on top and pencil-skinny on the bottom. The clothes were dedicated to the millennium (fit either for the biggest celebration ever or apocalyptic destruction) and were deformed with silk balloons, streamers, and other brightly colored party elements. The Viktor & Rolf label was recognized by the Fédération de la couture, the umbrella organization that oversees the Parisian haute couture houses and their events. This prestigious invitation for inclusion occurred even though Viktor & Rolf did not conform to the organization’s rules and guidelines. Viktor & Rolf presented their entire fall/winter 1999–2000 collection on the shoulders of one model, Maggie Rizer. As she stood on a revolving platform, Viktor & Rolf layered, in nine successive stages à la Russian-doll style, precisely-engineered jute dresses decorated with Swarovski crystals. Through this mechanism they attempted to showcase their feelings about haute couture as a precious and unattainable jewel.



A model poses in an outfit by Viktor and Rolf. Critical of the twentieth- and twenty-first century's fashion industry, Dutch designers Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren tackle the stereotypes of fashion. © REUTERS/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Viktor & Rolf in the Twenty-first Century

The fashion media's attraction to their exaggerated silhouettes and noteworthy runway performances has always played an integral role in the shaping of the Viktor & Rolf brand identity. With no advertising campaigns, no self-standing boutiques, and no mass-produced clothes to sell, their early relationship with the public depended heavily on the generous amounts of press coverage they received each season. (Close collaborations with photography teams Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, as well as Anouschka Blommers and Niels Schumm, also helped further their vision.) The media's acknowledgment of Viktor & Rolf as a leading avant-garde haute couture label was instrumental to the commercial success of their ready-to-wear line. Their first collection sold immediately to sixty stores worldwide during its launch in February 2000.

Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren understand that a fashion designer's public image is nearly as important as the clothes that are created. Oftentimes referred to as "the Gilbert & George of fashion," the two present themselves as mirror images of each other: matching dark-

rrimmed glasses, closely trimmed dark hair, and a serious demeanor despite the humor in their shows. They performed a tap-dance finale with tuxedos, top hats, and canes to "Putting on the Ritz" and "Singin' in the Rain" for their spring/summer 2001 collection. Additionally, they used themselves as models for the launch of their fall/winter 2003–2004 men's wear collection, *Monsieur*, as they synchronized changes into looks depicting clichés of traditional men's wear.

Viktor & Rolf continue to push the boundaries of fashion in ready-to-wear by using the catwalk as a stage for performance art. Models were cast as walking shadows, for example, in their "Black Hole" collection (fall/winter 2001–2002) when they were covered head-to-toe in black silhouettes and black makeup. Two years later (fall/winter 2003–2004) their models appeared as fair-skinned, red-haired clones of the actress Tilda Swinton.

Through their shows Viktor & Rolf try to bring fantasy, beauty, and magic back to fashion as they forge a path for the viewer to enter their dream. "For us," explains Rolf Snoeren, "it's always about escaping reality, so in that sense the clothes are meant to show beauty first. Beauty and hope. Because cynicism, you know, kills everything."

See also **Fashion Designer**; **Fashion Shows**.

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Angel Chang

VINTAGE FASHION The trend for "vintage" clothing as fashion exploded in the 1960s. Prior to this, the trading and wearing of old clothing had different connotations. All levels of trade in old clothing were well supported by the increasing speed of fashion change from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the growth in consumer availability of these trends. As the commercial constituency for fashion increased, the growth in trade of old clothing was incremental as the quantity

of these goods increased. The original ragpickers collected items that others had disposed of and returned them back to the economic cycle. Consequently, the ragpicker was allied with other outsiders, or members of the underclass. Karl Marx was later to define the philosophy of artistic bohemianism by its links to this social underclass. Bohemians, he believed, were vagabonds whose position was characterized by economic necessity *or* (crucially) romantic interpretation. This ambivalence between necessity and choice is essential to an understanding of vintage clothing.

The link between fashion and old clothing made the clothing a definitive indication of one's social status—the line and fabric of a jacket from a period too recent to be fashionable *or* classic immediately indicated that the wearer was drawn from the lower classes. It was a stigma that people were painfully aware of. The ethos of “make-do-and-mend” allowed the lower classes to position the wearing of old clothing as thrifty and, during wartime, patriotic. However, it was very specifically old clothing that was passed down through families. It was, most certainly, rarely purchased. Consumers of old clothing were, then, considered to be those seeking to give an impression of higher social status, the destitute, or actors, and consequently were treated, in some ways, as suspiciously as those who sold them the garments.

Prior to the mid-1960s old clothing had not been widely positioned within traditional retailing environments, its traders preferring the market stall, auction, or pawnbrokers as a venue for selling. The retailing of old clothing has been viewed in diametrically opposed lights—as a criminal activity for laundering money, as good business practice, and, from the advent of charity shops, as an altruistic pastime. Most cities in the United Kingdom had large warehouses that distributed second-hand clothes, and despite the falloff in trade in the late twentieth century, many still have significant export markets. As trade in old clothing fell, the practice of wearing old clothing rose and became known as “vintage,” moving from the market place to the upper market boutique.

In London, dress has been persistently retailed as vintage since the early 1970s. Shopping guides of the mid-1970s note numerous vintage retailers, some offering in-house tailoring with vintage fabric, predating in practice (although quite possibly not in philosophy) the work of designers such as Martin Margiela, Russell Sage, Alice Temperley and Jessica Ogden. However, it was still not considered a wholly acceptable practice, and the clothing was predominantly worn by consumers affecting a rebellious challenge to the mores and propriety of previous generations.

The duality between thrift and economy on the one hand, and subversive practice on the other, made vintage fertile as a signifier for bohemian morality and practice, notably in the 1950s and 1960s. The hippie lifestyle was positioned as anticonsumerist, which sartorially was com-

municated through the wearing of old clothes. This interpretation continued throughout the following decades, as seen in the political stance of the Women's Environmental Network in the 1990s, but also in the work of designers such as Helen Storey, Komodo, and to a degree, Vivienne Westwood and the Punk movement.

The twenty-first century trend for vintage clothing has its roots more specifically in bohemianism—in the performance of individuality and artistic (rather than aristocratic) elitism. A number of specialist boutique retailers in London have acquired significant profile and status. A number of these (Virginia, Sheila Cook, Steinberg and Tolkein) are regularly credited and quoted in fashion magazines, and a steady flow of celebrities list them in “my favorite store/best-kept secret” questionnaires in Sunday supplements. Across Europe and North America, vintage retailers are no less conspicuous for their domination of fashion headlines. The owners of Resurrection and Mayle (New York) and Decades and Lily (Los Angeles), are considered important “women of fashion” and costumers to the stars. The vintage revival in the United States is due, in no small part, to the eclectic image that stylist and vintage retailer Patricia Fields created for Sarah Jessica Parker's character Carrie in the HBO comedy *Sex and the City*.

Retailers such as Selfridges, TopShop, and Jigsaw in London, A.P.C. in France, and Barneys and Henri Bendel in New York have all picked up on the trend, incorporating vintage offers or vintage-inspired collections into their ranges. Wearing vintage has become a distinguishing marker of cultural and economic capital—it's unique, it's expensive, and so on—that privileges the individual. More than money, it is free time that is required to invest in the laborious process of seeking, finding, repairing, and selling old clothing. In the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond, that free time was available predominantly to those who were wealthy or who were engaged in work that was flexible—principally, therefore, creative. Because the vintage garment is unique, it also suggests that the wearer is individual, separate from the increasingly and obviously shallow process of fashion.

Interestingly, many Hollywood celebrities have embraced vintage principally because it is outside fashion—suggestive either of anticonsumerist philosophy or of individual choice. Actresses allied with independent cinema such as Chloë Sevigny appear to have adopted the “trash” aesthetic to distinguish themselves from mainstream fashion. Sevigny's protégé designers Imitation of Christ are proponents of an anticorporate philosophy not dissimilar to Westwood's in the early 1970s. On the other hand, Nicole Kidman, one of the most prominent wearers of vintage in contemporary Hollywood, tends to purchase from retailers who position their stock as antique—timeless and culturally valuable—highlighting her sense of personal, individual style, which is supposedly sincere, authentic, and equally as timeless as the clothing she prefers.

One of the most pointed criticisms of vintage is that it is detrimentally nostalgic, particularly in its influence over contemporary design. Alongside the retailers, a cluster of designers have been steadily drawn toward old clothing, either literally, in the reworking of found fabrics or garments, or indirectly, in their plunder of the annals of dress history to create a modernized antiquity for the post-modern consumer. Designers as diverse as Ralph Lauren, John Galliano, Alexander McQueen, Donna Karan, and Miuccia Prada are all known to have invested heavily in vintage clothing to use as resource material. However, it is not necessarily a nostalgic practice since the selection of pieces is informed by the contemporary. Crucially, it is not necessarily the garment itself, but its positioning in a contemporary debate and context that reinvigorates the memories and meanings the garment contains.

See also **Actors and Actresses, Impact on Fashion; Bohemian Dress; Secondhand Clothes, Anthropology of.**

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Alice Cicolini

VINYL AS FASHION FABRIC Vinyl is a plasticized variation of Polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Although PVC is hard, with the addition of plasticizers it can be made pliable enough, for example, to coat fabrics in any thickness.

In 1926, Waldo L. Semon, a scientist working for BF Goodrich, accidentally discovered this compound

while trying to form a synthetic rubber. At first he thought that the rubbery gel he created would work as a bonding agent to adhere rubber to metal. However, through further experimentation he found he had invented a highly versatile plasticized vinyl that, in the early 2000s, has hundreds of uses.

To present his discovery to the company, Semon applied the gel to curtains, creating a waterproof vinyl-coated shower curtain. It stirred a sensation! Vinyl was quickly adapted to umbrella and raincoat fabrics for its waterproof properties. Vinyl was also used to coat wires. Commercialized in 1931, the new technology was highly successful. During World War II, vinyl was turned to wartime use, and so it wasn't until the 1960s that vinyl again became a fashion item.

The 1950s were times for conformity, particularly in clothing. By the 1960s the public was ready to have fun with fashion, and clothes reflected the radical social change of that decade.

In the mid 1960s couture designers André Courrèges, Pierre Cardin, and Paco Rabanne, noted for their modern and futuristic looks, seized upon the high-tech look of these fabrics. Vinyl-coated fabrics not only gave a new surface appeal to their designs, but lent a modern structural look to the designers' new vision of architectural shapes rather than fluid draped lines. Modern clean-lined geometric shapes characterized their designs. Garments were cut to suggest simple geometric forms, boxy with hard edges, angular straight lines, or circular in shape.

André Courrèges, who claimed to have invented the miniskirt, made vinyl fashionable with his miniskirts, helmets, A-line dresses, and suits. Inspired by astronaut boots, he used vinyl in his "Moon Girl Collection" to create the shiny white boots that accessorized his designs. The "Courrèges boot" was mid-calf length with open slots at the top and a tassel or bow in front. Soon the look was being copied everywhere. Popularized by teenagers wearing the boots on discotheque television shows, they were soon called "go-go boots" after the go-go dancers who wore them.

At the same time in England, the "Mod" fashion look first appeared on London's King's Road and Carnaby Street. The op art and pop art movements inspired the trendy English designer Mary Quant. She popularized the miniskirt, high vinyl boots, and shoulder bags. She used vinyl-coated fabrics to create what was called the "wet look" not just in raincoats, but in tight miniskirts and dresses as well.

Through the years vinyl coating was able to take on matte and textured surfaces to look more like leather for a cheaper alternative. Vinyl can also be produced in almost any color or can be crystal clear.

The downside of vinyl for cloth is that it does not "breathe." It also does not readily break down when discarded, lasting for decades. However, it can be recycled and converted to new applications.

After its first trendy appearance, vinyl's popularity in rainwear was only occasional because the vinyl coating rendered the fabric unbreathable. Wearing the coat, or other article of vinyl clothing, can become very uncomfortable, keeping heat and moisture trapped next to the skin. Also, although the fabric is waterproof, the garment isn't. In a heavy downpour water can get in through the seams. In the early twenty-first century, hi-tech fabrics and new construction methods have taken over the waterproof category in clothing, but the use of vinyl in other areas continues to grow.

See also **High-Tech Fashion; Rainwear; Umbrellas and Parasols.**

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Mary Ann C. Ferro

VIONNET, MADELEINE Born in Chilleurs-aux-Bois in 1876, Madeleine Vionnet was apprenticed to a dressmaker while still a child. She began her career in fashion working for makers of lingerie, as well as dress-

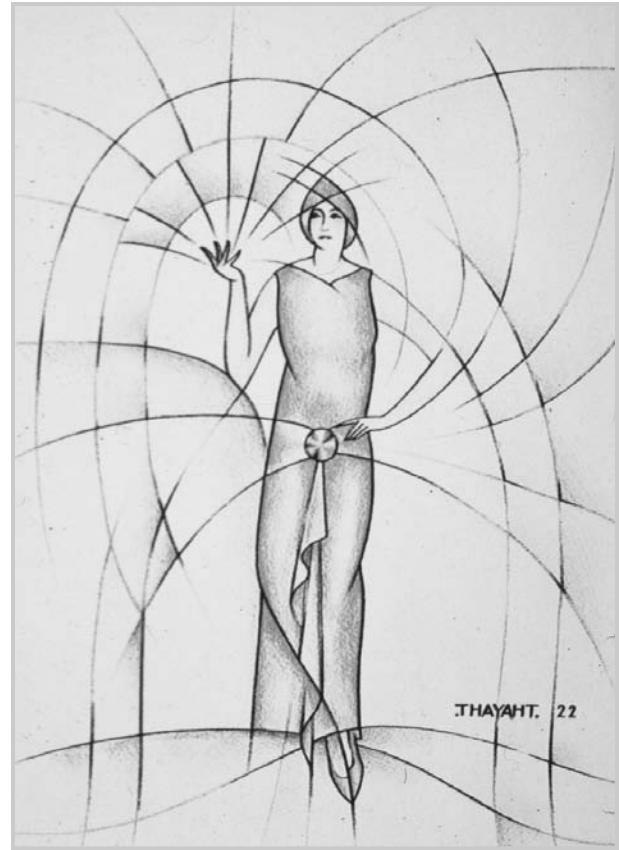


Illustration of a Vionnet dress. Madeline Vionnet helped to instigate fashion's exploration of private and public. Many found her designs controversial, and her main clients were stage performers. PHOTO BY JOHN S. MAJOR. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

makers and couturiers in London and Paris. These early experiences of craft skills and, in particular, the relationship between body and fabric involved in making undergarments, influenced the future direction of her own designs. She learned to respect the intricate skills of craftspeople, who were able to produce delicate effects through, for example, drawn threadwork and fagoting, which created spatial patterns by moving and regrouping the fabric's threads. This fascination with minute detail and the possibilities of fabric manipulation formed the foundation of her approach. Her background in the couture trade was fundamental to her later status, since it distinguished her as a craftsperson who was knowledgeable about the various dressmaking skills and decorative trades that supported designers. She was therefore not only tutored in practical skills but was also aware of the status and treatment of young women who worked in the ateliers.

Birth of Vionnet's Design Philosophy

Around 1900 Vionnet moved to Callot Soeurs's celebrated couture house in Paris. There she began to understand the significance of garment design that sprang

from draping fabric directly onto a live model, rather than sketching a design on paper and then translating it into fabric. This approach necessarily focused attention on the body and its relationship to the way fabric was draped and sculpted around its contours. Vionnet exploited this technique to the full. For Vionnet, draping—in her case on a miniature, eighty-centimeter mannequin—became crucial to her design philosophy. It enabled her to think of the body as a whole and to mobilize the full potential of the springy, malleable, silk crêpes she came to favor.

At Callot Soeurs these methods were combined with an acute awareness of fashion and style, as skillful designers and saleswomen sought to mold couture's elite tastes to each client's particular figure and requirements. Vionnet encountered high fashion and learned its seasonal rhythms, while she experimented with the dressmaking skills she had acquired over the years. An example of this was her adaptation of Japanese kimono sleeves to Western dress, which produced deeper armholes that made the silhouette less restrictive and enabled the fabric to flow and drape around the upper body. This early innovation incorporated several of what were to become Vionnet's trademarks. For example, her use of Asian and classical techniques freed fabric from established Western dressmaking methods that tended to fix the cloth, and therefore the body, into position. Her focus upon draping and wrapping rather than cutting and tailoring to the figure enabled her to achieve maximum fluidity, enhancing movement and flexibility. Her concentration on experimental construction techniques tested the boundaries of design and dressmaking and allowed her to create clothing that derived its significance from subtle reconfigurations of cloth, rather than from dramatic surface decoration. For Vionnet minute attention to detail was paramount.

Vionnet's career may have started during the late nineteenth century when fashion was predicated upon exaggeration, novelty, and decoration, but there were already intimations of new types of femininity and clothing that would enable greater physical freedom. These came partly from utopian dress reform movements, but also from other designers, such as Fortuny, who used historical dress as a source for comfortable yet luxurious dress.

Daring Designs

When Vionnet moved to the house of Doucet in 1907, she became more daring in her display of the female figure, inspired by avant-garde dancer Isadora Duncan's barefoot movements and by her own desire to strip fashion to its essential elements: fabric and body. She insisted that Doucet's models walk barefoot and corsetless into the couturier's salon for his seasonal fashion show. Her dramatic exposure of the models' skin enhanced the fall of the fabric as they moved and brought sudden focus onto the natural figure.

Vionnet helped to instigate modern fashion's exploration of private and public, with her designs' reliance

upon a sophisticated interplay between sheer and opaque fabrics draped to swirl about the skin. Many found her work too controversial, and her main clients were stage performers, used to their public roles and more ready to experiment with avant-garde fashions. The *déshabillé*, a fashionable and fluid garment previously worn in private, became acceptable, if still daring, for entertaining at home. In Vionnet's hands its light drapes created a shimmering cocoon reminiscent of lingerie. For example, the French actress Lantelme was photographed in 1907 in a loose tea gown, the pastel tones and matte glow of its layered chiffon illuminated by beading and sequins.

Classical Influences and Cutting on the Bias

In 1912 Vionnet opened her own house in the rue de Rivoli. It was closed, however, at the outbreak of war in 1914, and Vionnet moved to Rome for the duration. Her experience there, as well as her studies of ancient Greek art in museum collections, became another crucial aspect of her work. Classicism, both as an aesthetic and design philosophy, provided Vionnet with a language to articulate her belief in geometrical form, mathematical rhythm, and the strength of proportion and balance as a basis for the garments she created.

During the late teens Vionnet focused on the process of wrapping lengths of fabric onto the body in the style of the Greek chiton. Through these experiments she exploited the advances made in fabric technology during World War I that had produced yarns that could be made into more supple fabrics, and she had extra wide lengths of material created for her to allow even greater drape. Vionnet was thus able to push her examination of construction methods that not only draped but twisted fabric still further than before; moreover, she formulated the potential of the bias cut for which she is so often remembered. To do this she cut the fabric diagonally, across the grain, to produce a springy, elastic drape. Although cutting on the bias had been used for accessories and had been applied to fixed, molded dress forms, it had not been used this extensively for the body of a garment. Vionnet took an experimental leap forward in her desire to release both fabric and figure from the tight-fitting ethos of traditional Western dressmaking.

Vionnet reduced the use of darts, often eliminating them completely and therefore allowing bias-cut fabric to hover freely around the body. She also introduced lingerie techniques—such as roll-tucked hems or fagoting to disguise the line of a seam—to both day and evening wear. Her designs aimed for simplicity of overall form and impact, while they frequently employed complex construction techniques.

One of the most dramatically minimal of her designs was a dress from 1919–1920, now in the collection of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It demonstrates Vionnet's search during this period of her career for new ways to push the boundaries of the fabric while maintaining tight control over the ul-

timate hang of the garment. In this example she used four rectangles of ivory silk crêpe, two at the back and two at the front, held together at one point to form the shoulders of the dress. The rectangles hang down the body from these two points, to form two diamond forms of mobile fabric at front and back. Vionnet, in the act of turning the geometric shapes onto the diagonal for the final dress, swung the weave onto the bias. Thus the dress is stripped of dressmaking's usual devices to nip and sew the material for a "fit" with the body beneath; Vionnet instead used the movement released in the fabric to flow and drape around the wearer as she walked and danced. The deep drape of the fabric created vertical bands of light flowing down the figure. These elongated the silhouette, which was first blurred and then brought into relief as the wearer's movements caused the swathes of fabric to shift and form anew.

In Vionnet's hands the bias cut was a means to rethink the relationship between fabric and flesh. She constantly tested the methods she had learned during her early career, and her attention to anatomy led to her use of bias cutting not just to allow material to cocoon the figure, but to produce sophisticated forms of decoration. She varied the direction of the material's grain to encourage light to bounce off contrasting matte and shiny pattern pieces. The complexity of her construction techniques meant that her designs came alive only when worn or draped on the stand. They were conceived for the three dimensions of the body and cut to smooth over the figure: evening dresses dipped into the small of the back; day dresses slid under the clavicle to form a soft cowl neckline; and bias-cut fabric draped artfully to allow for the curve of the stomach or the arch of hip bones.

Futurist Influences

Such effects were only enhanced as the wearer moved, and Vionnet's interest in contemporary art, and in particular futurism, served to develop this exploration of movement as a further expression of modernism. The illustrations that artist Thayaht produced for the *Gazette du bon ton* in the 1920s expound futurism's view that art should represent the dynamics of the body in movement. His drawings show women in Vionnet outfits, with lines tracing the curves of the dress into the surrounding environment to suggest the flow of the body, and the fabric, as they walked. He wanted to express the sensation of the space between body and material, and between the material and the space the wearer inhabits, as alive with friction and loaded with the potential to blur air and matter.

Vionnet's approach explored women's modern lives and sought to express an adult, liberated femininity. Like modern artists she was interested in the integrity of the materials she used. She also exploited technology by experimenting with new ways to dye fabric, and she was driven to create clothes that broke away from highly decorative, constraining forms of fashion that relied upon historical notions of femininity. However, while she de-



"My efforts have been directed towards freeing material from the restrictions imposed on it, in just the same way that I have sought to liberate the female form. I see both as injured victims...and I've proved that there is nothing more graceful than the sight of material hanging freely from the body."

Madeleine Vionnet, quoted in Milbank 1985.

scribed her clothing as appropriate for any body size or shape, its revelatory exposure of the natural form, and the prevailing ideal of youth and athleticism, meant her designs can be seen as part of the twentieth century's shift toward bodies controlled from within, through diet and exercise, rather than through restrictive undergarments.

Classicism and Ornamentation

In 1923 Vionnet moved her couture house to 50 avenue Montaigne, where its salons were decorated in a classically inspired, modernist manner that formed a suitable backdrop to her work. The salon used for her seasonal shows contained frescoes that showed contemporary women clad in some of her most popular designs, intermingled with images of ancient Greek goddesses. Thus clients could measure themselves against classical ideals and see Vionnet's designs through the prism of a revered, idealized past. This placed her designs, which could seem so daring in their simplicity, within the context of classical antiquity's noble precedent and articulated the link between her own focus upon mathematical harmony and that of the past.

The various ateliers that produced her collections showed the diversity of her output and her ability to imbue a whole range of different types of clothing, from sportswear to furs, lingerie, and tailored clothes, with her ethos of creative pattern-cutting and subtle, supple silhouettes. Her daywear also relied upon the material's inherent properties and the possibilities to be explored in her integration of construction techniques and decoration. Discreet day dresses were pintucked in neat rows, whose spacing gently pulled fabric in toward the figure at the waist and curved diagonally across the body from shoulders, across the bust, around the hips, and round toward the small of the back to shape the dress. Thus Vionnet's garments were given shape while maintaining smooth, uncluttered silhouettes, and the tucks of materials created a pattern on the fabric's surface.

During the 1920s, when heavy beadwork and embroidery proliferated, Vionnet was committed to search for methods of ornamentation that took part in shaping the whole garment. Narrow pintucks were used to form

her signature rose motif, its size subtly graduated to pull dresses toward the wearer's figure. For Vionnet such exact craftsmanship enabled her to challenge traditional methods continually. Even when she used beadwork, most famously on the 1924 Little Horses dress, she demanded an innovative approach. She commissioned couture embroiderer Albert Lesage to explore new ways to apply bugle beads to bias-cut silk, so that the flow of the fabric would not be interrupted and the images of glittering horses inspired by the stylized, representational forms on Grecian red figure vases would not be distorted by the beads' weight. Even thick furs and tweeds could be given greater fluidity and form through her manipulation of their drape and use of pattern pieces cut to sculpt and form around the figure.

Business Growth

Vionnet's couture house grew during the 1920s, and she opened a branch in Biarritz to provide everything from spectator sportswear and travel garments—a growing market as women led increasingly active lives—to her supple evening wear for dinners and dances. By 1932 her Paris establishment had grown, despite the impact of the Great Depression, to twenty-one ateliers. Her attitude toward her employees was as enlightened as her design approach. She remembered her own path through the studios' hierarchy and ensured that workers, while paid the same as in other couture houses, were provided with dental and medical care, had paid breaks and holidays, and were given help with maternity leave and proper teaching in her favored design techniques, such as bias cutting.

Vionnet set up her company, Vionnet et cie, in 1922, and with the support of her backers, she pursued a series of business schemes. These included several attempts during the mid-twenties to capitalize on America's reliance upon Parisian fashion for new trends and Vionnet's popularity there, through a number of deals with companies to produce ready-to-wear. Although innovative, these ventures were brief and did nothing to stem the tide of copyists, both in the United States and in France, who cost the couture industry large sums of money each season by plagiarizing original models and mass producing them at lower prices. This practice damaged Vionnet's profits and also reduced the cachet of particular outfits, since couture clients were paying, at least in part, for exclusivity. Despite Vionnet's involvement with a series of couture organizations pledged to track down copyists, and a landmark case in 1930, when Vionnet and Chanel successfully sued a French copyist, this plagiarism was a recurrent problem that haunted the couture industry.

Legacy and Influence on Fashion Design

The last collection Vionnet produced was shown in August 1939 and acknowledged the current vogue for romantic, figure-enhancing styles. Fragile-looking black laces were traced over palest silver lamé, with appliquéd velvet bows to pull out and shape the lighter weight lace

overdress and add fashionable fullness to skirts. Vionnet closed her house on the outbreak of World War II. Her work had been hugely influential in both Europe and the Americas during the period between the wars. While she sought to stand outside fashion and create timeless clothing, her liquid bias cut became a defining emblem of 1930s sophistication and style and inspired Hollywood designers to use bias-cut gowns to create iconic images of actresses such as Jean Harlow. Her experiments with fabric control and manipulation and the advances she made in testing the boundaries of fabric construction left a complex legacy which has inspired designers as diverse as Claire McCardell, Ossie Clark, Azzedine Alaïa, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and John Galliano.

When Vionnet died in 1975, her place within the history of fashion in the early twentieth century was assured. Perhaps because of the lack of drama in her private life and her unwillingness to give many interviews, she was less well known than some of her contemporaries. However, Vionnet's focus on experimentation and her desire continually to redefine the relationship between body and fabric provided women with clothing that expressed the period's dynamic modernity.

Vionnet embraced the dressmaking skills she had learned as a child apprentice and elevated them to new levels of complexity, yet she always strove to produce finished garments that preserved, and indeed celebrated, the integrity of the materials she used and the natural shape of the wearer's body. She viewed couture as a testing ground for the new identities that the twentieth century created. Her clients became living embodiments of modern femininity, clad in garments inspired by contemporary art, Asian wrapping techniques, and classical antiquity. In Vionnet's hands these elements were united into dramatically simple silhouettes. Vionnet's intimate knowledge of cutting and draping enabled her to create clothing that expressed the dynamism and potential of women's increasingly liberated lives.

See also **Cutting; Embroidery; Film and Fashion; Lingerie; Tea Gown.**

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Rebecca Arnold

VOGUE *Vogue* is fashion's bible, the world's leading fashion publication. It was founded in 1892 as a weekly periodical focused on society and fashion, and was subscribed to by New York's elite. Condé Nast (1873–1942) bought the magazine in 1909 and began to transform it into a powerhouse.

Vogue delivered beautifully presented, authoritative content under the leadership and watchful eyes of a few talented editors-in-chief. One of the most notable, Edna Woolman Chase, became editor in 1914 and remained at its helm for thirty-eight years, until 1952. Caroline Seebohm, Nast's biographer, credits Chase with introducing new American talents to the fashion audience. Chase gave full coverage to European, and especially Parisian, fashions, but her approach also suggested that American women might exercise a certain independence of taste.

Chase's successor, Jessica Daves, served as editor in chief from 1952 to 1963 and is remembered primarily for her business acumen. She was followed by the flamboyant Diana Vreeland, whose eight-year tenure (1963–1971) documented "Youthquake," street-influenced youth fashions, and space age and psychedelic fashions. Vreeland's successor was her colleague Grace Mirabella, who served as editor-in-chief from 1971 to 1988. Mirabella was the antithesis of Vreeland; her watchwords for fashion were functionality and affordability. Whereas Vreeland wrote in 1970, "In the evening we go east of the sun and west of the moon—we enter the world of fantasy," Mirabella countered, in 1971, "When you come to evening this year, you do not come to another planet." Mirabella approached the "antifashion" 1970s with a levelheaded stance that addressed a growing constituency of the magazine: the working woman.

Anna Wintour became editor-in-chief of the magazine in 1988 and combined a shrewd and appealing mix of high and low. Her first cover for the magazine, in November 1988, featured model Michaela in a jeweled Lacroix jacket—worn with blue jeans.

A controlling interest in Condé Nast Publications was acquired in 1959 by S. I. Newhouse, who subsequently became the sole owner of the corporation. There are now more than twelve editions of *Vogue*: American, Australian, Brazilian, British, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Taiwanese, Chinese, and Korean. *Teen Vogue* was launched in 2003. (Nast inaugurated the international editions with British *Vogue* in 1916 and French *Vogue* in 1920.)

Nast's original "formula" for *Vogue* was based on service, which Seebohm translates as disseminating fashion information to his readers as efficiently and clearly as possible. Clarity did not exclude creativity, and the magazine became well known for its own stylish look. *Vogue*'s most famous art and creative directors were M. F. (Mehmed Fehney) Agha, who started at *Vogue* in 1929, and Alexander Liberman, who joined the staff in 1941.

The magazine has employed the foremost illustrators and photographers of its times. (The first photographic cover appeared in 1932; color printing was introduced in the following year.) Its glossy pages maintain the highest standards for the visual presentation of fashion. *Vogue* is still the stuff that many dreams are made of.

See also **Fashion Editors; Vreeland, Diana.**

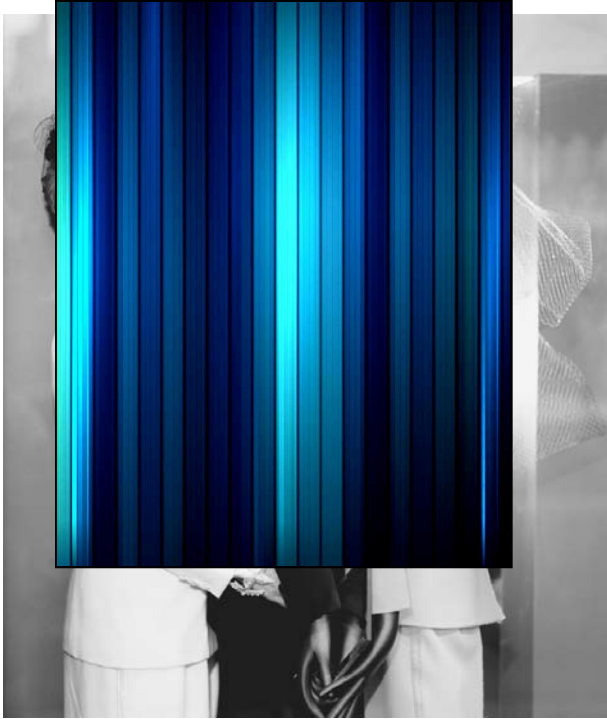
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Laird Borrelli

VON FURSTENBERG, DIANE Diane von Furstenberg was born Diane Simone Michelle Halfin in Brussels, Belgium, in 1946. Her introduction to fashion was as an assistant to a photographer and filmmaker's agent in Paris, her first job on leaving the University of Madrid and graduating in economics from the University of Geneva. Familiar with the 1960s jet-set life, she married Prince Egon von Furstenberg in 1969 and moved with him to New York. They were a glamorous couple, luminaries of society columns, and attended celebrity parties and balls. However, in keeping with the burgeoning feminist movement of the early 1970s, and wishing to be financially independent, von Furstenberg realized the significance of women's emergence into the world of work. She capitalized on women's desire for simple, wearable clothes that were flattering but also smart. From 1970 to 1977 she became the owner-designer of the Diane von Furstenberg Studio, which produced easy to wear polyester, cotton, and silk knit dresses in her signature prints. Her iconic wrap dress, however, which first appeared in 1973, established her reputation as the designer of the moment and promoted her name into a worldwide brand.

Von Furstenberg's wrap dress was practical, versatile, and sexy. Manufactured at the Ferretti factory in Italy, the dresses were initially stored and the orders processed in the dining room of her home. Cut to flatter, the dress wrapped in front and tied at the waist and was made from drip-dry cotton jersey. She remembers in her autobiography, "I had no focus groups, no marketing surveys, no plan. All I had was an instinct that women wanted a fashion option beside hippie clothes, bell-bottoms, and stiff pant-suits that hid their femininity."



Diane von Furstenberg. Sexy, flattering, and also easy-to-wear, von Furstenberg's styles responded to women's changing desires and needs in the era of women's liberation.

In 1975 she brought out a scent, Tatiana, named after her daughter. She expanded into home furnishings with The Diane von Furstenberg Style for Living Collection for Sears, and in 1977 she reorganized the company to deal solely with licensees for the fashion line, luggage, scarves, cosmetics, and jewelry. By the end of 1979 the combined retail sales of all the products bearing the von Furstenberg name came to \$150 million. The extent of the licensing deals undermined the quality of the brand, however, and she closed her business in 1988.

The 1990s predilection for 1970s fashion meant that the wrap dress achieved cult status and was eagerly sought after from vintage shops. Following her success on the QVC home-shopping channel, von Furstenberg and her daughter-in-law, Alexandra, relaunched the business in 1997 and put the wrap dress back into production, this time in silk jersey with a new range of colors and prints.

Diane von Furstenberg will always be identified with the wrap dress; it typifies the era of women's sexual and political liberation. Its reemergence is evidence of the continuing desire of women for simple, one-stop dressing that is both flattering and versatile.

See also **Fashion Designer; Fashion Marketing and Merchandising.**

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Marnie Fogg

VREELAND, DIANA Diana Vreeland (1903–1989) was, and continues to be, an iconic figure in fashion history, whose distinctive personal style and penchant for fantasy influenced her work at *Vogue* and the exhibitions she organized at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Diana Vreeland was born in Paris in 1903 to Emily Key Hoffman and Frederick Young Dalziel. The Dalziels moved to New York in 1904, where the socially eminent family enjoyed a prosperous lifestyle. According to Vreeland's biographer, she was a vivacious child who was interested in fantasy and the transforming powers of artifice from a very young age. In 1924, Diana married Thomas Reed Vreeland, a socially prominent banker. The couple moved to London in 1929, where they remained until 1933. In London Vreeland started her career in fashion by opening a lingerie shop in the city, and her frequent visits to Paris familiarized her with haute couture. As a patron of designers such as Jean Patou, Elsa Schiaparelli, Madeleine Vionnet, and Mainbocher, Vreeland's flair for dressing, combined with her social standing, made her the subject of commentary in the social pages and in magazines such as *American Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Town and Country*.

Harper's Bazaar and Vogue

The Vreelands moved back to New York in 1935. Diana began her first job in fashion editorial work at *Harper's Bazaar* in 1937. She was promoted to the position of fashion editor in 1939, working under editor-in-chief Carmel Snow, and remained at the magazine until 1962. Vreeland first came to the readership's attention with her 1936 column entitled "Why Don't You?" The feature encapsulated her personal belief in the ability of fashion to transform women by offering such extravagant and fantastic suggestions to her readers as "Why don't you ... Turn your child into an Infanta for a fancy dress party?" (August 1936) and "Why don't you own, as does one extremely smart woman, twelve diamond roses of all sizes?"



"Mrs. Vreeland is unquestionably the Madame de Sévigné of fashion's court: witty, brilliant, intensely human, gifted like Madame de Sévigné with a superb flair for anecdotes that she communicates verbally rather than in epistles, Mrs. Vreeland is more of a connoisseur of fashion than anyone I know" (Beaton, p. 359).

(January 1937) Vreeland honed her editorial skills at *Harper's Bazaar* by working closely with such photographers as Richard Avedon and Louise Dahl-Wolfe to implement her ideas and transfer her imaginative vision to the fashion pages.

Vreeland became publicly known as the archetypal fashion editor, famous for such proclamations as "Pink is the navy blue of India" (Donovan). Her inimitable persona was further popularized when she was parodied in the 1957 film *Funny Face*.

In 1962, Vreeland moved to American *Vogue* as associate editor. In 1963, Sam Newhouse, the owner of Condé Nast, promoted her to editor-in-chief in an effort to re-energize the magazine. Having complete control over the look of the magazine, she imbued its pages with her distinctive style and flair for the fantastic. During Vreeland's tenure, the magazine's editorial spreads presented a popular audience with exoticism, aristocratic glamour, and such atypical models (atypical because of their youth, multicultural appearance, and unisex body types) as Veruschka, Penelope Tree, Twiggy, and Lauren Hutton. Vreeland firmly believed that the magazine had the ability to transport the reader, just as clothing had the ability to transform the wearer. The mundane realities of life did not interest her.

The Costume Institute

By the late 1960s, Vreeland's extravagant fashion editorials were deemed out of touch with the times and her position at *Vogue* was terminated in 1971; she was replaced by Grace Mirabella. In 1972, Vreeland became involved with the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the museum's acclaimed collection of historic costumes. Vreeland's fashionable and colorful personality was perceived as an opportunity to revitalize the costume exhibitions. Vreeland was brought in with the title of special consultant and acted as a creative director for twelve exhibitions from 1972 through 1985. Through these highly popular exhibitions, which included "Balenciaga," "The Eighteenth-Century Woman," "Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Design," "The Glory of Russian Costume," "La Belle Époque," and "Yves Saint Laurent," Vreeland succeeded in placing her distinctive stamp upon the museum world. She transferred her unique style of fashion marketing to the museum gallery, taking inspiration from the runway, retail trends, fashion editorials, and her own fertile imagination. Her costume exhibitions were spectacular sensory experiences; as she herself admitted in her autobiography, she was interested more in effect than historical accuracy.

In 1976, she received the medal of the Legion d'Honneur from France for her contributions to the fashion industry. In 1984, she published her memoirs, entitled *D.V.* Vreeland died in New York City in 1989, but her status as an icon has had a lasting influence on the world of fashion. In 1993, the Costume Institute celebrated her memory with an exhibition entitled "Diana



Diana Vreeland, 1973. Vreeland stands with a Balenciaga coat at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Vreeland, Immoderate Style." She was the subject of a one-person off-Broadway play entitled *Full Gallop* in 1995. The repeated reexamination of Vreeland's impact on fashion attests to her impact as an arbiter of style who fostered the visibility of fashion on a popular level.

See also Avedon, Richard; Dahl-Wolfe, Louise; Fashion Editors; Fashion Icons; Fashion Magazines; Fashion Models; Fashion Museums and Collections; Vogue.

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Michelle Tolini Finamore

VUITTON, LOUIS Born in 1821 in Anchay, France, Louis Vuitton worked as an apprentice for the packing-case maker M. Maréchal, where he created personal luggage for Empress Eugénie before setting up his own business in 1854. Vuitton's career as a craftsman trunk maker quickly brought him an ever-expanding roster of clients, requiring him to move to workshops at Asnières, on the outskirts of Paris, in 1859. The workshops remain at the original site, and this is where all the luggage and accessories are still made. Annexed to the workshops is the family home, which is now a museum.

Vuitton's first innovation was to pioneer a gray, waterproof canvas (Trianon), which was stretched across the poplar wood structure of the trunk, eliminating the need for a dome-shaped lid, which had been essential for repelling rain from the trunk during transit atop a horse-drawn carriage. This innovation enabled porters to stack trunks one on top of the other, allowing travelers to take more luggage with them on trips.

Vuitton's success in the luxury luggage market was due to his willingness to modify and custom-build luggage that was adaptable to new forms of transportation. For example, cabin trunks for ocean liners were designed to fit under daybeds so as to maximize use of space. Yet what the luggage contained was never a secondary concern, but of equal value in the definition of first-class travel. To meet the needs of these elite travelers, Vuitton devised the wardrobe trunk with interior drawers and hanging space with the advice of the couturier Charles Frederick Worth.

As the company prospered, its products were widely imitated, forcing Vuitton to change the canvas design from a striped to a checkerboard (or Daumier) design. His son Georges created the famous monogram canvas in 1896. The design was intended primarily to combat commercial piracy, although its orientalist, decorative design also reflected the fashion for all things Japanese at the end of the nineteenth century. Beyond the initials that feature as a tribute to his father, Georges's design bears three abstracted flowers, based upon a Japanese *mon* or family crest that, not unlike a coat of arms, was traditionally used to identify items made for and owned by a particular family.

International stature was assured for the company by the opening of a London store in 1885, a French store opposite the Grand Hotel in 1871, and distribution in America through Wanamaker's department store in 1898. Design awards at the Exposition Internationale d'Industrie et des Arts Decoratives of 1925 secured the company's reputation for grand luxe in the art deco style.

Later in the twentieth century, handbags, wallets, and other small leather goods became increasingly important parts of the company's product line, as luxe travel with numerous trunks and suitcases became largely a thing of the past. In 1997, the company hired the American fashion designer Marc Jacobs to design accessories and clothing. A commercial and critical success, the ready-to-wear collections have been central to the continued success of Louis Vuitton. Limited edition pieces produced in collaboration with other creative artists have resulted in some of the wittiest and shrewdest reworkings of brand identity. Fashion designer Stephen Sprouse (2001), British fashion illustrator Julie Verhoeven (2002), and Japanese artist Hideo Murakami (2003) have created some of the most popular designs.

The Stephen Sprouse collaboration was inspired by a visit Marc Jacobs made to Charlotte Gainsbourg's apartment, where he noticed a Louis Vuitton trunk that had once belonged to her father, the French singer Serge Gainsbourg. Gainsbourg had so disliked the status implied by the canvas design that he had tried to erase the symbols with black paint. Yet as the design is produced as a woven jacquard, he only made the design appear subtler, and in turn, more sophisticated. Sprouse was inspired to add graffiti over the monogram canvas in fluorescent colors as an ironic act of defilement. Yet the graffiti design only served to reinforce the status of the brand and its association with street credibility.

The consumption of luxury brands by American hip-hop performers, termed *bling-bling*, created a new and younger market for Louis Vuitton. This new market was memorably represented by the performing artist Lil' Kim, who posed on the cover of the November 1999 issue of *Interview* magazine naked, her body painted with the Louis Vuitton monogram.

Because they are such desirable status symbols, Louis Vuitton products are subject to intense counterfeiting, which the company vigorously combats. Vuitton remains the most prestigious and easily recognized brand of luggage.

See also **Leather and Suede; Logos.**

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