

# MUSÉE BOURDELLE

5 JUILLET  
17 NOVEMBRE

PARIS 15<sup>E</sup>  
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#BACKSIDE

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE



Vis de dos - Jean-Loup Saffr, Kim Indrinski, Top et jupe Marine Sillon, New York, 1997 © Estate of Jean-Loup Saffr

Avec le soutien du  
CRÉDIT MUNICIPAL  
DE PARIS  
MODERNE DEPUIS 1872

3  
musée Bourdelle

PALAIS  
GALLIERA  
1911-1913

PARIS  
MUSÉES

# **BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE**

**5.07–17.11.2019**

## CONTENTS

PRESS RELEASE	3
EXHIBITION DESIGN	4
PRESENTATION	
Exhibition of the permanent collections	5
Exhibition in the Portzamparc Wing	9
THE BOOK	17
EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK	
Looking back, by Harold Koda	18
The bare back, by Alexandre Samson	21
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	23
EVENT: PARIS MUSÉES OFF	24
THE MUSÉE BOURDELLE	25
THE EXTENSION PROJECT AT THE PALAIS GALLIERA	26
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	27

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

Palais Galliera  
Anne de Nesle, Caroline Chenu  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 56 52 86 08  
[presse.galliera@paris.fr](mailto:presse.galliera@paris.fr)

Pierre Laporte Communication  
Alice Delacharlery  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 45 23 14 14  
[alice@pierre-laporte.com](mailto:alice@pierre-laporte.com)

### **PRESS VISUALS ON REQUEST**

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## PRESS RELEASE

The Palais Galliera presents *Back Side/Dos à la mode*, a Palais Galliera off-site exhibition at the Musée Bourdelle which focuses on clothing seen from behind.

In a society that is obsessed with people's faces, *Back Side/Dos à la mode* is an original and unexpected theme. By addressing our body's relationship to clothing from a social and psychological point of view, the exhibition questions the perception we have of our own and other people's backs.

The back is a reminder of our limitations: it is hidden from view and to some extent from touch. Yet, fashion consistently decorates it, burdens it, or reveals it. On this flattest part of our body, messages and patterns are unambiguously displayed without our ever seeing the glances they attract.

The back in fashion: from the majestic train of a court gown to the weight of a backpack; the sensuality of a plunging backline to complicated fastening systems. This exceptional exhibition of clothing and accessories from the collections of the Palais Galliera presents over a hundred items from the 18<sup>th</sup> century up to the present day. And to complete the exhibition, a selection of film extracts and photographs.

The exhibition spreads across the Great Hall of Plasters, the contemporary Portzamparc extension and Antoine Bourdelle's studio. The models on display establish a dialogue between fashion and sculpture, a dialogue with the works of this great master of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Back Side/Dos à la mode* gives us a new take on the works of Bourdelle: we look with new eyes at the powerful, muscular backs and the slender outlines of his sculptures.

### **CURATOR**

Alexandre Samson, director of haute couture since 1947 and contemporary creation

With the support of:

CRÉDIT MUNICIPAL  
DE PARIS   
MODERNE DEPUIS 1637

**HANS BOODT.**  
MANNEQUINS

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition will grace the space of the Portzamparc wing. It has been designed to harmonise with the building's architecture, volumes and colours (white, black and pale grey), creating new depths of perspective.

The works are exhibited on platforms of different height. Fashion and sculpture are presented on the same level. The positioning of some articles does not allow them to be appreciated in their entirety, for which mirrors offer a reflection of the front. Appreciation of the articles is facilitated by the absence of display cases, with just a few exceptions.

The presentation is thematic: visitors are guided from one theme to another.

### EXHIBITION DESIGN

Jean-Julien Simonot



© Jean-Julien Simonot



# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## PRESENTATION

### PLASTER HALL

The Plaster Hall presents five silhouettes by contemporary creators. Under the gaze of immense statues, each tackles the characteristics of clothes seen from behind, among which surprise, nudity, humour and motif.



1

1 Givenchy by Clare Waight Keller, "Thaïs", leotard, skirt and belt worn by Cate Blanchett, Haute Couture, spring-summer 2018  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
Givenchy/Azentis



2

2 The Row, Evening dress, Prêt-a-porter, spring/summer 2018, private collection  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
The Row/Azentis



3

3 Martine Sitbon, Dress, Prêt-a-porter, autumn-winter, 1997-98, contemporary re-creation, 2018  
© Aurélie Dupuis/Archives  
Martine Sitbon/Azentis

## **PAINTING STUDIO: THE SCULPTED BACK**

The painting studio presents an installation in tribute to Alexander McQueen that places the focus on the back through a creation that is part jewel, part armour and part sculpture. This piece questions the human anatomy and its metamorphosis.



4 Givenchy by Alexander McQueen, "Rose Corset", Haute couture, spring-summer 2000 © Givenchy

## BOURDELLE'S STUDIO: THE BACK REMODELLED

Antoine Bourdelle's studio is devoted to one of the most important collection in contemporary fashion: the 1997 spring-summer collection for Comme des Garçons by Rei Kawakubo. Two sculptural silhouettes in stretch Vichy, stretched by the inclusion of padding on the hips and back, invite viewers to question the notion of the ideal body by offering a new approach to natural physical deformations.



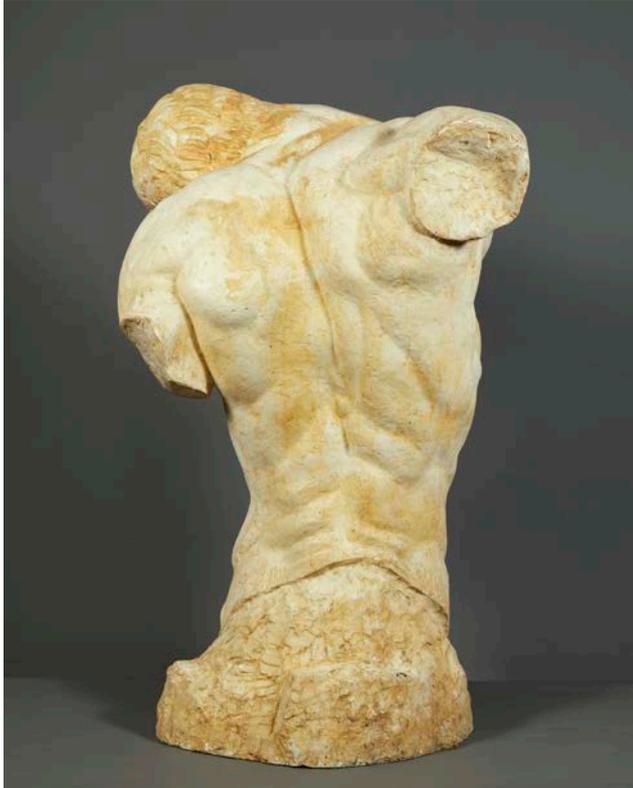
5

5  
Comme des Garçons,  
Ensemble, Prêt-a-porter,  
spring-summer 1997, from  
the collection "Body Meet  
Dress, Dress Meets Body",  
Archives Adrian Appiolaza  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
Comme des Garçons/Azentis

## THE POLYCHROME ROOM: THE LANGUAGE OF THE BACK

The Polychrome Room that leads to the Portzamparc extension presents an installation of linguistic expressions linked with the back in French, English, Italian, Spanish and Japanese. Associated mostly with the notions of labour, treachery, submission or fatigue, these mostly negative expressions face the bust of the Dying Centaur (1914).

A few expressions in English: Behind your back / With your back to the wall / Pat on the back / Get your back up / Stabbed in the back / Break your back / Turn your back / You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.



6  
Antoine Bourdelle,  
*Dying Centaur*, bust, 1914,  
Musée Bourdelle  
© Musée Bourdelle/Roger  
Violet

6

## TERRACE: THE BACK ON FILM

Set among the bronze busts, the outdoor mezzanine is showing a selection of iconic film scenes in which the back is the subject of intrigue, from *M* by Fritz Lang (1931) to Mireille Darc's bare back in *Le grand blond avec une chaussure noire* by Yves Robert (1972).

## THE PORTZAMPARC WING

### 1. ABSENT BACK

For the women's spring-summer 2019 shows in Paris, the 79 shows in the official schedule presented some 3524 silhouettes. Those who did not have the opportunity to be present can see them on internet in just a few minutes. However, given the speed at which they are shown, only the frontal views are kept. Sadly, the emphasis on frontal views neglects the three-dimensional nature of the body and its clothes.

### 2. IN THE TRAIN OF THE BACK

The body's natural forward motion allows fashion to use trains and volumes to extend the line of the outfit behind the back. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the train has been a distinguishing characteristic of the rich and powerful. In more reasonable proportions, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century it became a feature of evening and wedding dresses. The bustles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired the more experimental versions offered a century later by Cristóbal Balenciaga and Yohji Yamamoto, who incorporated volumes extending backwards.



7



8



9



10

7  
Yohji Yamamoto, Dress and skirt, Ready-to-wear, autumn-winter 1996-97  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
Yohji Yamamoto/Azents

8  
Jean Paul Gaultier, "Arabesque penchée", trench-coat dress, skirt and belt, Haute couture, autumn-winter 2011-12, "Black Swan" collection  
© Françoise Cochenec/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

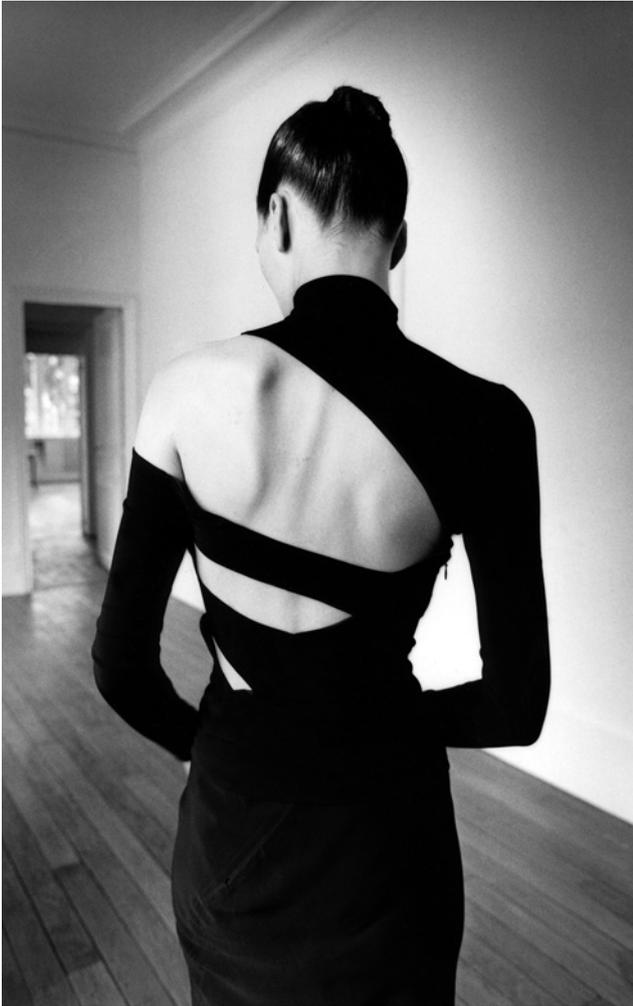
9  
Balenciaga, Evening dress, Haute couture, autumn-winter 1961-62  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
Balenciaga Archives Paris/  
Azents

10  
No label, Robe à la française, 1750-60  
© Eric Emo/Palais  
Galliera/Roger-Viollet

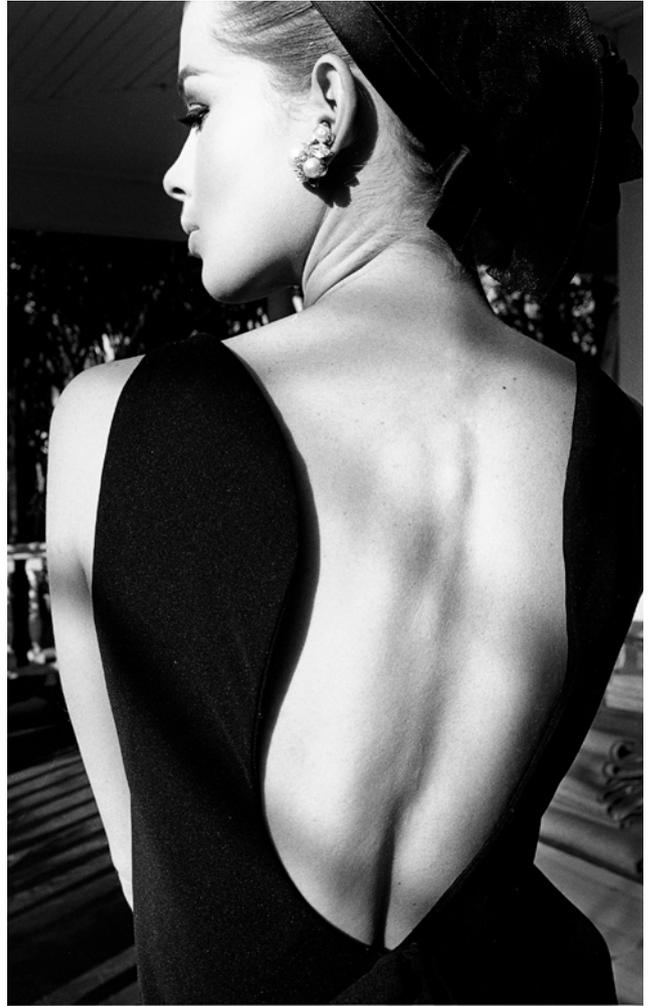
### 3. EYES ON YOUR BACK BY JEANLOUP SIEFF

Like painters, photographers also often focus on the back. Among the most famous names from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jeanloup Sieff (1933-2000) is indisputably the photographer who gave most attention to this view.

From the 1960s to 1990s, Jeanloup Sieff made the back the subject of his most famous photographs, which he treated in black and white. To the extent that in 1985 he devoted a portfolio to it titled *Back is Beautiful*.



11



12

11  
Jeanloup Sieff, *Ève de dos*,  
*Kim Inslinski*, New York [top  
and skirt, Martine Sitbon],  
1997  
© Estate Jeanloup Sieff

12  
Jeanloup Sieff, *Le dos*  
*d'Astrid Heeren*, Palm Beach  
[dress, Bill Blass for Maurice  
Rentner], *Harper's Bazaar*,  
1964  
© Estate Jeanloup Sieff

#### 4. FORGOTTEN BACKS

In the history of fashion, the back is often forgotten. A striking example is the French men's suit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The forebear of the men's suit of today, it was composed of a waistcoat and breeches, over which a jacket called a *justaucorps* was worn, designed so that it did not need to be removed. Thus, for reasons of economy, regardless of the wealth of the man who wore it, the highly embroidered front of the waistcoat was always contrasted by the back, made from some "humble" material like linen or simple hemp cloth. This treatment of the back was echoed in sculpture by bronze masks made never to be looked at except from the front.



13



14

13  
No label, waistcoat from a habit à la française, 1770-75  
© Palais Galliera/Paris Musées

14  
Antoine Bourdelle, Beethoven baudelairien, study of a head with shoulder, 1905  
© Musée Bourdelle/Roger Viollet

15  
Lanvin by Alber Elbaz, Evening dress, Prêt-a-porter, autumn-winter 2012-13, from the collection "Les 10 ans"  
© Françoise Cochenec/Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

16  
Loewe by JW Anderson, Long dress, Prêt-a-porter, spring-summer 2017  
© Françoise Cochenec/Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet



15



16

## 5. LADEN BACK

Of all parts of our body, the back is the one that can take the greatest load. Backpacks increasingly became the preferred form of baggage for travellers, soldiers and then schoolchildren. As from the 1970s, the backpack gradually became more common in the city as a result of recreational activities, followed by its reinterpretation by contemporary creators.



17



18



19

17  
Rick Owens, "Ensemble suspendu", Prêt-à-porter, spring-summer 2016, "Cyclops" collection  
© Françoise Cochenec/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

18  
Yohji Yamamoto, "Robe à traine sac à dos", Prêt-à-porter, spring-summer 2001  
© Françoise Cochenec/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

19  
Nick Klavers, Manteau, Prêt-à-porter, printemps-été 1998  
© Françoise Cochenec/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

## 6. WINGED BACK

Used since Antiquity on divinities or allegorical figures, wings have always fascinated mankind for their lightness. More usually suggested than natural, the wings of birds, bats and insects are expedients used by fashion on the back of special women's clothes.



20



21

20  
Comme des Garçons,  
Tailleur bermuda, Prêt-  
à-porter, autumn-winter  
2013-14  
© Françoise Cochenec/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

21  
Antoine Bourdelle,  
*Hannibal's First Victory*, 1885  
© Eric Emo/Palais  
Galliera/Roger-Viollet

## 7. HELD BACK

In Western societies, only women wear clothes that are fastened at the back.

In spite of the anatomical impossibility of reaching one's back, laces, ribbons, hooks, buttons and zips are the inconvenient fasteners devised for use by the female sex since the Renaissance. This archaism has evolved from the time when, in their capacity as dependents, women required a domestic or a husband to dress themselves. Historically, men's clothes that close at the back are very rare – unless for medical reasons, such as straitjackets.



22



23

22  
Yohji Yamamoto, Dress  
and hat, Prêt-a-porter, spring-  
summer 2018  
© Aurélie Dupuis/Palais  
Galliera/Azentis

23  
Antoine Bourdelle, *Woman  
with Arms Raised*, 1907  
© Musée Bourdelle/Paris  
Musées

24  
Anonymous, straitjacket,  
early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
Museum Dr. Guislain, Gand/  
Azentis

25  
John Galliano, Sheath  
dress closed by 51 buttons,  
Prêt-a-porter, autumn-winter  
1998-99  
© Aurélie Dupuis/  
John Galliano/Azentis



24



25

## 8. BARE BACK

The bare back is a fashion cliché that erotically fuels the imagination. The first bare backs to appear in fashion were seen right at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chaste in appearance, all that was visible was the nape of the neck and the top of the back. At the end of World War I, the canons of beauty were altered by the practice of sea-bathing, shifting emphasis away from an ethereally white skin to one displaying a tan. By showing their back in a public space without offending morality, the sight became commonplace and was extended to evening dresses.

Whereas necklines became lower during the 1920s, it was the following decade in which tribute was finally paid to the bare back. This was the result of the fact that Hollywood films did not allow a women's breasts to be seen. The decade saw a flowering of ways to show off the back, thanks to the use of straps, cuts and ties.



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Yves Saint Laurent, Short evening dress, Haute couture, autumn-winter 1970-71

© Eric Emo/Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

27

Alaïa, Sheath dress, Prêt-a-porter, spring-summer 1986

© Palais Galliera/Photo Azentis

28

Helmut Lang, Dress, Prêt-a-porter, spring-summer 2001

© Françoise Cochenec/Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

29

Sybilla, Evening dress, Prêt-a-porter, spring-summer 1991

© Françoise Cochenec/Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

## 9. MARKED BACK

Messages on clothes, which evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the names of athletes written on their backs, spread widely on the back of clothes from the late 1960s. Whether functional, provocative, decorative or personal, they were a message broadcast on the back of their wearer.

Using text and images, fashion labels became aware of the promotional possibilities of the back. In the 1980s, fashion made the back its medium to print names and logos as means for individuals to recognise fellow-members of an elite.

The theme is further enriched with twenty-four photos by Susan Barnett, an American photographer who since the late 2000s has been challenging accepted ideas of the portrait by photographing anonymous people from behind in the streets of France and the United States.



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Jean Paul Gaultier, Dress, Prêt-a-porter, autumn-winter 1995-96, "Cavalières et Amazones des Temps modernes (ou Mad Max)" collection

© Françoise Cochenneq/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

31

Zara, I really don't care, do u?, Parka, spring-summer 2016, Blanche and Pauline Nouchi collection

© Aurélie Dupuis/Zara/  
Azentis

32

Raf Simons, Coat, Prêt-a-porter, spring-summer 2015

© Françoise Cochenneq/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

33

Schiaparelli, Evening dress worn by Carina Lau, Haute couture, spring-summer 2015 (variation)

© Françoise Cochenneq/  
Palais Galliera/Roger-Viollet

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

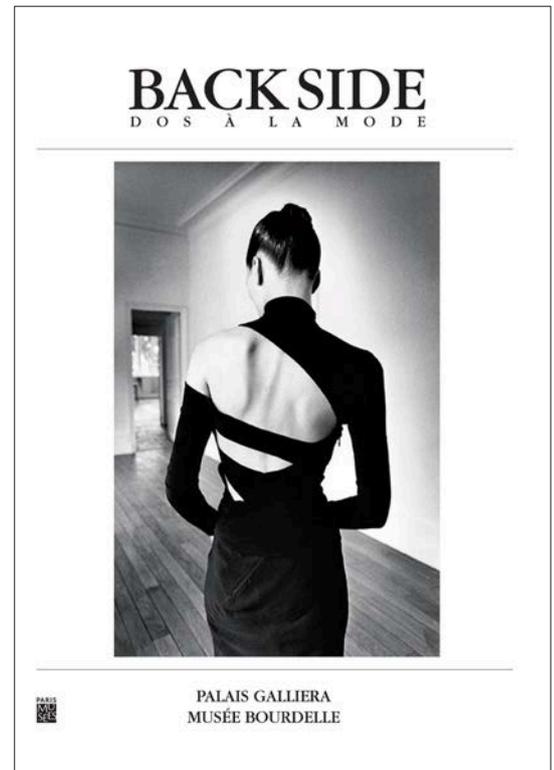
5.07–17.11.2019

## THE BOOK

*Back Side/Dos à la mode*  
French version only

Size: 22x28 cm  
No. of pages: 128-144  
Binding: flexibind cover  
Illustrations: 70-90  
Price (VAT incl.): 35,00  
Publication date: June 19<sup>th</sup>  
Foreword: Yohji Yamamoto  
Prefaces: Amélie Simier  
and Miren Arzalluz  
Introduction: Harold Koda  
Texts: Alexandre Samson

The book deals with the key themes of the exhibition, and is illustrated with images by leading photographers and archive images that reveal the major concerns in this universal subject. It features quotations from great stylists, like this enlightening observation by Gabrielle Chanel: *All physical articulation is in the back: all movements stem from the back.*



# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

### Looking Back

Harold Koda

Thinking about fashion focused on the back immediately conjures a jumble of disparate images. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century fashion plates advocating the robe à la Polonoise or the fitted bodice à l'Anglaise, renderings by Francois Boucher and Jean-Antoine Watteau of privileged ladies in states of repose observed from behind, Jacques Joseph Tissot's obsessional rear interest in the bantam-like proportions of the bustle dresses of the 1870s and '80s that were interrupted for a few years by the hourglass silhouettes à la sirene, photographs of women at the races with the S-curve of the small of their backs with rear-canted buttocks, Art Deco-inflected illustrations of attenuated society beauties with plunging back décolletes, or a Edward Steichen of Marian Morehouse in an ombreed Chanel, a Horst of the bronzed backs of a man and a woman on a diving board staring out to a non-existent horizon, Richard Avedon's evocations of Parisian luxury with Dior evening gowns anchored with silk roses at the back waist or trailing pleated tiers of Rebe embroidered tulle as well as his mid-'60s portrait of Twiggy from behind smoking in a chain-mail mini plunging past her waist, Tom Kublin's back views of Balenciaga's ultimate manifestation of aesthetic and technical rigor—his minimalistic 1967 wedding dress, Nick Knight's profile image of the Yohji Yamamoto bustled coat held out by a petticoat of red nylon tulle, Shaun Leane's corselet for Alexander McQueen that grips the torso with an externalized ribcage fused to a spine with extra vertebrae extending into a tail, John

Galliano's riding habit-inspired tailleur for Dior saddled over the buttocks, and the more recent paparazzi shots of Rihanna in a Guo Pei evening coat with an embroidered train of such amplitude that it became an internet meme.

When the point of observation is shifted from anterior to posterior there is mystery and its attendant potential for surprise. Someone of interest from behind offers the possibility of observation and study without the complications of engagement. It is a one-sided voyeuristic power in which the observed has no direct agency. The ability to engage, encourage, deflect or reject is precluded. The back view therefore offers the luxury of savoring the allure of another without consequence.

Perhaps, one of the greatest influences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the ideals of feminine form is the exposed back. Jean-Paul Gaultier's Corset Gown conflates the period of structured underpinnings with the contemporary explorations of the bared body by incorporating the idiom of 1950s undergarments in an evening dress of seductive glamour. The designer suppresses any vulgar allusions to the garment's louche precedents through the artisanal refinements of *les petites mains* by subduing the high sheen of the gown's pink silk satin with an overlay of thousands of infinitesimal, hand-applied seed beads. For all the sumptuous allure of the front, it is Gaultier's resolution of the back that holds the design's dramatic impact. The laced closure of traditional corsets extends down from neckline to hem exposing

fissures of skin along the perimeters of the crisscrossing laces. Despite the explicit revelation of the nude body beneath, the cleavage of the derriere is covered by the density of the intersecting and overlapping laces down the center with the further excess of lacing looped into a dense tangle cascading at the hem like a train.

This control over the prurient gaze is itself a mechanism of erotic enticement. A sexual cue tantalizingly close but frustratingly elusive can fuel rather than dampen a subject's allure. The American designer, Geoffrey Beene loved such strategic deployments of nudity. His seams often split in spirals over the body held together only by webs of lace or point d'esprit. One of his famous evening dresses made for his muse, Amy Fine Collins, is an abstract cone that does not allude to the body in its shaping. Suspended from the shoulders, it swings bell-like. Frontally it is pure geometry, but from the back Beene has cut away the fabric in a huge scoop and inserted an expanse of net. The wearer's back is totally exposed, if veiled, to the sacrum. Collins describes how the dress seemed to invite and deny the voyeuristic gaze seeking a glimpse of her buttocks.

Diana Vreeland, the fashion editor par excellence, famous for her exaggeratedly fantastical world view, once described a fashion "moment" when the social American beauty, Rita d'Acosta Lydig, appeared at her box at New York old Metropolitan Opera. Lydig's appearances were always scrutinized, as she was known for introducing the latest fashions before anyone. Thus the ritual of her having her evening wrap removed to reveal a new style was something anticipated by the gratin in the Orchestra. On this evening, according to Mrs. Vreeland, Lydig's entry was unremarkable as she was dressed in a simple black gown a la mode. It was only till the first intermission, when she opened her black fan and stood to address her party in her box, that the audience was stunned to see that she her back was bared to her waist. For Mrs. Vreeland, this was the moment in America that the corset instantly became *démodé*.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the move to a new paradigm of slenderness from the softly contoured, molded and constrained bodies of the Belle Epoque, was evidenced in the ability of the willowy and gamine to appear virtually without underpinnings. The low-scooped necklines of the 1920s chemises were often only a preview of their even deeper plunging backs. The subliminal message of the completely bare back was the evident, unfettered nature of the bust and body.

Chanel who seems to have designed for her own body, "taut as a jockey's," created into the 1930s evening toilettes of tensile laces and sheer georgettes. Of apparent modesty, her languorous body-skimming gowns were paired with matching boleros that veiled the arms and hid the nudity of the back. Still, a woman's dance partner might touch her flesh discretely as he moved her across the floor. Karl Lagerfeld in one of his great masterworks alludes to this signature, if lesser known, Chanelism. In 1983, he created an evening gown of black silk crepe with a high neckline, long sleeves and a slight blouson waist. The most assertive element in this very covered-up design is the application of Lesage-embroidered trompe l'oeil necklaces and bracelets alluding to Chanel's advocacy of fake jewelry and her declaration that fake is preferable to real in that the former unlike the latter is not a vulgar expression of worth, but purely decorative, therefore solely and authentically about beauty. The fashion icon, Tina Chow, who owned this model layered her own collection of vintage Chanel jewelry by Gripoix over the embroidered illusion in a meta expression of Lagerfeld's own post-modernist citation.

What is never photographed is the gown's back, a surprise not disclosed by its modest front. Lagerfeld has eliminated the back bodice save for a vestigial surplice at the waist. He manages this audacious exposure by using a halter to support the illusion of the closure of the Lesage "necklaces" and hold in place, and secure structurally, any potential slippage of the front of the gown. He therefore takes the

well-known Chanelism of imitation jewelry and extends the fakery by pairing it with her subversion of the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century ideal of voluptuous pulchritude. Finally, he suggests his own literacy of the House codes by citing the eponymous designer's lesser known strategy of a coquettish camouflaged nudity.

With all the permutations and design elements that can reform, deform, extend, embellish or conceal the back, the framing and exposure of the naked back is especially significant because of its transformation of the aesthetic ideals applied to the natural body, ideals that were upended in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and persist till today.

## The bare back

Alexandre Samson

[...]

It was to Rita de Acosta Lydig that the history of fashion attributes the invention of the décolleté in the back. A New York society woman known during the Belle Epoque for being one of the most influential personalities in the fashion world, Rita de Acosta Lydig had outfits she designed herself made by her Parisian couturiers, generally the maison Callot Sœurs. Her sister Mercedes de Acosta remembered: "Rita had an exceptionally beautiful back. It was she who invented the décolleté evening gown cut down to the waistline at the back with only two narrow straps over the shoulder to hold it up. She wore this gown for the first time in her box in the Diamond Horseshoe of the Metropolitan Opera House. As the lights went on after the first act, Rita was sitting with her back half-turned to the audience. Frank Crowninshield,<sup>1</sup> who was in the box with her, said there was a gasp from the audience and then there was a flutter as binoculars and lorgnettes were lifted to a thousand pairs of eyes. It was a sensation. Newspapers came out the next day calling it and Rita 'scandalous' and 'indecent'. But it was not long before this type of evening dress was copied by fashionable women all over the world."<sup>2</sup>

In 1954 the British photographer Cecil Beaton related the emotion that the bare back of Rita de Acosta Lydig aroused once more, this time in the breast of Giacomo Puccini. When the Italian composer presented his opera *La Fanciulla del West* in New York on 10 December 1910, "he abandoned several rich dowagers who had invited him to the opera, having caught a glimpse of Mrs Lydig sitting in her box. For the rest of the evening, the composer stood like some forlorn and hypnotised bird at the back of Mrs Lydig's private loge."<sup>3</sup>

Rita de Acosta Lydig's initiative of a back laid bare down to her waist, which was captured on film in 1913 by Baron Adolf de Meyer, remains however marginal. And those women who adopted this décolleté before World War I took it no lower than the middle of the back. The use of the back as a new

means of seduction had, nonetheless, been initiated. In 1914, at the theatre "almost all the backs are bare. But nearly all the throats are covered."<sup>4</sup>

After the war ended, social life started up once more: the evening dress reappeared, and the extent of the visible back increased. From summer 1920, *Vogue Paris* remarked upon "the daring backs of dresses which, in the front, appeared more correct",<sup>5</sup> and presented a series of articles on the importance of the back by asking the following questions: "Is this fashion trend here to stay? From now on, will men only recognise the extent of a woman's grace and elegance when she flees?"<sup>6</sup>

The fashion for décolletés was influenced by several factors. The use and evolution of the bathing costume as beachwear, and the fondness for tanning allowed the female body to indulge in a new form of nudity in public bathing areas. "This is a backless age", commented *Vogue*, "and there is no single smarter sunburn gesture than to have every low-backed costume cut on exactly the same lines so that each one makes a perfect frame for a smooth brown back".<sup>7</sup> In order to avoid sun marks, the sunbathing décolleté – a simple strap that passed behind the neck – made its apparition, leaving the shoulders and back bare.

Furthermore, new dances that were then all the rage meant that women, with their bodies coiled against their partner's, showed no more than their back. Tubular dancing dresses with suggestively low backs, ideal for the androgynous figure so popular during the Roaring Twenties, became immensely fashionable. The bust, hips and waist, which were thus effectively done away with, demanded no form of lingerie that interfered with the possibility of wearing a low-backed dress.

The very fact of the back's nudity meant that this fashion contributed to the emancipation of the female body. Skin was accepted and displayed: the hem of skirts rose above the knee and the sleeves on summer dresses disappeared, considerations that were impossible before World War I. The fashion for low necks was such that it appealed to women

of all ages. During the decade, “both less and more attractive bodies were exhibited from the armpit to the kidneys in the neckline of light dresses”.<sup>8</sup>

[...]

After the opulence of the 1920s, the '30s brought a return to order that was expressed, among other means, in the lengthening of the hemline as from 1928. Nonetheless, the bare back was also one of the hallmarks of the decade. The period even saw the conception of an archetype of a dress that would be very influential and of which the back was its leading characteristic. It was a long, evening sheath dress, often black and with a severe front, with a high neck and long sleeves, “as discreet as possible”, remarked *Harper's Bazaar*, “until you turn round”.<sup>9</sup> The back had an unexpected décolleté that was all the more striking when it was hidden beneath a jacket or coat.

This paradox between severity and eroticism was typical of the decade. The puritanical influence exercised on American cinema by the Hays Code was palpable. It was in 1930 that William Hays laid down a form of censorship to inculcate the movie business with a sense of morality. Among its regulations was the prohibition in particular of nudity and sexual references, making overly suggestive low necklines impossible on the screen. In reaction, the back was filmed as being new and fertile territory for eroticism: in *Tonight or Never* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931), Gabrielle Chanel exaggerated Gloria Swanson's décolletés, and, in *Bringing Up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938), the back of Katharine Hepburn's skirt gets torn and reveals her underwear.

“Our definition of the new fashion”, commented *Vogue* in 1933, “would be incomplete if we didn't mention the importance of the back, whose very name has just been cited, as it is so difficult to describe the latest models without alluding to it. This year, the wind is blowing from front to back. All interest in a dress has passed from the front to the back, and you have to wait until a woman turns around to be able to have a full opinion on what she is wearing. This kind of two-sided appearance is very amusing, like everything that is contradictory and unexpected. [...] We sometimes wonder whether dresses are not being worn back to front, there being so much reversal of what we are accustomed to”.<sup>10</sup>

[...]

- 
1. Frank Crowninshield, an American journalist and art critic.
  2. Mercedes de Acosta, *Here Lies the Heart. A Tale of My Life* (New York: Reynal & Co., 1960), pp. 46-47.
  3. Cecil Beaton, *The Glass of Fashion* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954).
  4. *Gazette du bon ton*, no. 4 (April 1914), p. 114.
  5. “Colette a décidé de créer sa toilette”, *Vogue Paris* (15 July 1920), p. 24.
  6. “Une mode dont le dos est le grand favori”, *Vogue Paris* (August 1920), pp. 3-5.
  7. *Vogue* (July 1929), n.p., reprinted in Harold Koda and Richard Harrison Martin (ed.), *Bare Witness*, exh. cat., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996.
  8. Victor Marguerite, *La Garçonne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1922), p. 123. Reprinted in Christine Bard, “La garçonne mise à nu”, in Sophie Grossiard (ed.), *Les Années Folles, 1919-1929* (Paris: Palais Galliera, 2007), p. 203.
  9. Louis Aragon, *Aurélien* (1944) (Paris: Gallimard, “Folio”, 1986), pp. 584-89.
  10. *Vogue Paris* (October 1933), p. 24.

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### 1. WORKSHOPS

#### Young children

- Aged 4-6. "The little explorer of fashion"  
Exhibition visit + workshop.  
1h30 / 6 participants  
Our youngest visitors will tour the show with their "mystery" cards that conceal clues. Will the treasure hunt enable them to find the works linked to the clues?

#### Kids

- Aged 7-12. "Customise your T-shirt"  
Exhibition visit + workshop.  
2h / 8 participants  
After a visit to the exhibition, the participants will create a design for the back of a T-shirt and, using the transfer technique, apply it to the material with a digital print.
- Aged 8-12. "My stylish backpack"  
Exhibition visit + workshop  
3h / 6 participants  
Wearing a backpack gives your silhouette a bit of style. The museum will give participants an introduction to sewing with a machine. They will leave with their summer backpack made from printed cotton canvas.

#### Teenagers – Adults

- From age 13. "The summer backpack"  
Exhibition visit + workshop  
3h / 6 participants  
Wearing a backpack gives your silhouette a bit of style. The museum will give participants an introduction to sewing with a machine. They will leave with their summer backpack made from printed cotton canvas.

### 2. STORIED VISITS

- Families from age 5:  
"A queen's train"  
Storied visit: 1h30 – 15 participants  
You will learn how the train of a queen brought about the fall of a man and, in his wake, caused many other stories as well, under the watchful but not always marble eyes of some statues.
- Children – aged 8-12:  
"Let's play with expressions"  
Storied visit followed by a writing workshop: 3h – 12 participants  
After a storied visit to the exhibition, you will play with words and expressions, take them apart and turn them around, and invent and write your favourite on the back of a backpack.

- Teenagers and adults from age 15:  
"The back on show"  
Storied visit followed by a writing workshop: 3h – 10 participants  
After a storied visit to the exhibition, you will write messages of all kinds: humorous, socially aware, satirical, poetic, etc.  
Then you will choose the one that you want to display on your backpack.

- Adults (from age 18):  
"Paean to the back"  
Storied visit followed by a writing workshop: 2h30 – 10 participants  
After a storied visit to the exhibition, celebrate the back with a blason\*.  
Open to all literary genres.

\* A blason is a type of poem that was fashionable in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in which the poet writes in praise of a part of the female body.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Cultural service of the Palais Galliera:  
+33 (0)1 56 52 86 20/21  
galliera.reservations@paris.fr

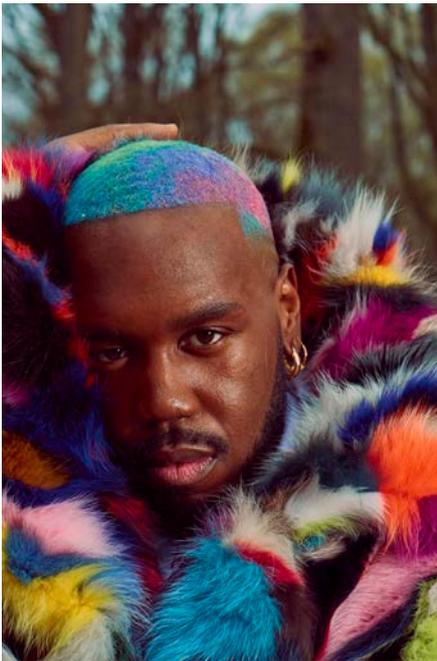
#### RESERVATIONS

www.billetteriegroupe-parismusees.  
paris.fr

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

PARIS MUSÉES OFF  
THURSDAY 11 JULY, 8PM



© Nico Bustos

## **KIDDY SMILE INTERPRETS HIS ALBUM *ONE TRICK PONEY* LIVE**

Accompanied by his dancers, singers and stage setting, Kiddy Smile is a major and extravagant artist on the new French music and queer scene, and a proud representative of French ballroom culture. He will be present in the Hall of Plasters at the Musée Bourdelle at the opening of the exhibition *Back Side/Dos à la mode*.

The evening will kick off with a DJ set by Bêtises from the collective la Culottée that will include references to fashion-related films and artists in the garden of the Musée Bourdelle.

## **THE ARTIST**

Before working in music, Kiddy Smile was a fashion designer, a passion passed onto him by his mother who worked in event management. He cites among his influences Black American music like gospel and hip hop, the music of Chicago and Detroit during the 1990s, voguing and the house-music ballroom scene in New York. With his soirées, dancers, music and video clips, Kiddy Smile embodies this culture, in which his skin colour, love of fashion and homosexuality are fully accepted. His talent and extravagance have brought him to the attention of the public and won him the tag “the French prince of voguing”. While he was organising the “Strange” evening events, he met Olivier Rousteing, director of Balmain, who invited him to work on the brand’s sound identity. This was to be followed by partnerships with Alexander Wang, Balenciaga, Lancôme, Versace...

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## THE MUSÉE BOURDELLE

Situated in the heart of Montparnasse, the Musée Bourdelle is one of the last examples of the centres in which Parisian artists flourished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Bourdelle, the sculptor of Hercules the Archer, and the designer of the facades of the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, lived, created and taught in this place from 1885 until his death in 1929.

The series of spaces and gardens around his preserved studio contain studies, sketches, models and everything that went towards the creation of a work. The Grand Hall built in 1961 and its gardens display the monumental sculptures he created for the public space, while the extension designed by Christian de Portzamparc and constructed in 1992 is the setting for temporary exhibitions.

The exhibition in the former studios offers the chance for visitors to rediscover Bourdelle and his production from his early days until his maturity, from the initial sketches to the final works. It comprises a hundred or so sculptures, drawings, photographs and archive documents with the theme the “spirit of the studio”, echoing the architecture of the places and the creative processes seen at work.

In the former studio of the painter Eugène Carrière, next to Bourdelle’s in the heart of the museum and its permanent collections, a room offers an educational, visual, tactile and sonic presentation of sculpture techniques.

As a counterpoint to the poetic geography of the studio-museum, the renovation of the painting studio – as similar as possible to its state in the photographs left by the artist – has been inspired by the Musée Bourdelle’s thoughts on the life and practice of an artist’s studio, emphasising its nature as a centre of deep-rooted existence, and a place of transmission and “permanent” creation.

MUSÉE BOURDELLE  
18, rue Antoine Bourdelle  
75015 Paris  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 49 54 73 73  
[www.bourdelle.paris.fr](http://www.bourdelle.paris.fr)



Façade looking onto the museum’s internal garden  
© Paris Musées / Photo Benoit Fougeirol



Antoine Bourdelle’s studio  
© Paris Musées / Photo Benoit Fougeirol

# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

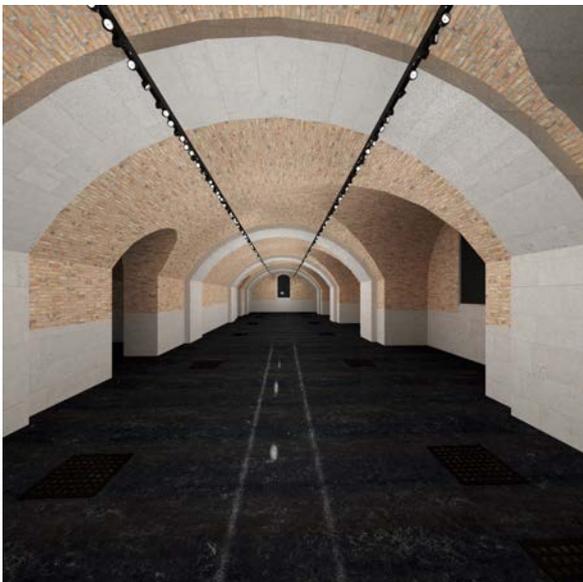
5.07–17.11.2019

## THE EXTENSION PROJECT AT THE PALAIS GALLIERA

In order to better meet the expectations of its public, the Palais Galliera is doubling its exhibition area by renovating the spaces on the garden level. Together, the two floors are able to house temporary exhibitions of great scale or to present the permanent collection and offer visitors a history of fashion from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

Serious restoration work of the basement was begun in October 2018 to allow the public to visit the vaulted galleries and improve visitor comfort by developing the services on offer, with the creation of a bookshop, educational workshop and outdoor café.

This project has been made possible by the exceptional support given by the House of Chanel. The Palais will re-open its doors in early 2020.



# BACK SIDE DOS À LA MODE

5.07–17.11.2019

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

MUSÉE BOURDELLE  
18, rue Antoine Bourdelle  
75015 Paris  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 49 54 73 73  
www.bourdelle.paris.fr

Metro : Lines 4, 6, 12 , 13 :  
Montparnasse - Bienvenüe  
(exit 2 - Place Bienvenüe)

### OPENING TIMES

10am–6pm, Tuesday to Sunday, closed  
Mondays and on certain Bank Holidays.  
The museum remains open on 14 July,  
15 August, 1 November.

### TICKET PRICES

Full: 10 €,  
Reduced: 8 €  
Free for under-18s

Follow us!

#BackSide



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### PARIS MUSÉES

The City of Paris family of museums

Grouped together in the public institution Paris Musées since 2013, the City of Paris's 14 museums and heritage sites represent collections that are outstanding in their diversity and quality. To share this extraordinary heritage, today Paris Musées has overhauled its policies, adapted its ticketing for temporary exhibitions, and focused its attention on attracting members of the public who are unfamiliar with cultural life. In 2018, the permanent collections (free of charge\*), temporary exhibitions and a varied programme of cultural activities attracted 3 million visitors.

An internet site provides a full calendar of the museums' activities, introduces the collections, and allows users to plan their visit: [parismusees.fr](http://parismusees.fr)

The Board of Directors is chaired by Christophe Girard, Vice-Mayor of Paris for Culture, and the Vice Chairman is Afaf Gabelotaud, Vice-Mayor of Paris for Employment Policies. Delphine Lévy is General Manager of Paris Musées.

\* With the exception of the heritage sites: Archaeological Crypt of the Ile de la Cité, the Catacombs of Paris, and Hauteville House.

### THE PARIS MUSÉES CARD

The exhibitions without the hassle!

Paris Musées offers a card that gives the holder unlimited access to the temporary exhibitions in the 14 City of Paris museums,\* the facility not to wait in line to enter, discount prices for the activities organised, the chance to benefit from reductions in museum shops and café-restaurants, and to be the first to receive all the news affecting the museums.

\* With the exception of the Archaeological Crypt of the Ile de la Cité and the Catacombs of Paris.

### PRESS CONTACTS

Palais Galliera  
Anne de Nesle,  
Caroline Chenu  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 56 52 86 08  
[presse.galliera@paris.fr](mailto:presse.galliera@paris.fr)

Pierre Laporte Communication  
Alice Delacharlery  
Tél. : +33 (0)1 45 23 14 14  
[alice@pierre-laporte.com](mailto:alice@pierre-laporte.com)