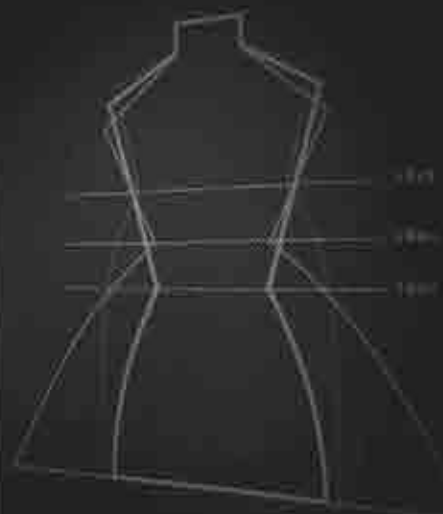


WAIST NOT

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MM 83896

[introductory panel]

Waist Not

Ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras said that "man is the measure of all things." But what is our index and meter? Surely, before we can compute all things, we must be able to assess ourselves. Anatomy is a science of the body's composition. Fashion is an art, correlative to anatomy, that defines the body and is inevitably defined by the body.

Waist Not studies the movements and variations of the waist that have occurred in Western European and American dress from the eighteenth century to the present. Anatomically, the waist is the zone between the hips and ribs that is unprotected and undefined by a hard body cage. But fashion's waist has shifted to areas beyond that anatomical zone: It has deviated high and low, has been defined diagonally from front to back, has been emphasized by swelled shaping of the bust and hips, has been compressed to utmost diminution, and has even disappeared entirely.

Seldom does fashion conform to the natural waist, however fictively positioned it may be. Instead, fashion's waist has served as a moveable fulcrum determining body silhouette and proportions.

Waist Not describes the physical and representational ideals of the human body through history. In some cultures, including our own, such ideals have been taken as an opportunity to deform the natural body. But fashion's inconstant waist is not a sign for body subjugation. Rather, its changes and options suggest that fashion assumes a task of rendering more similar, at least in ideal form, the range of human bodies. Rather, *Waist Not* is an effective reminder that human being is "the measure of all things," that all measure and appraisal begin with the individual and his or her body and self-image.

[first gallery, south]

Definition of Shape and Silhouette

Dress, as the surround of the body, is determined by the human shape it envelopes. Yet, our concept of beauty may modify fashion's shape. Two kinds of instruments of shaping are displayed in this gallery.

Corsets have traditionally manipulated the waist and surrounding flesh. Unlike those contours of the body that are determined by bone, the waist is malleable and subject to some control. Any power over the body is significant. Economist Thorstein Veblen saw the corset as "mutilation for the purpose of lowering the subject's vitality and rendering her personally and obviously unfit for work." Traditionally, the corset has served the subjugation of woman and been a source of erotic satisfaction for men. Busks such as those shown in the wall case were the staves of corset design: they testify to the romantic insinuation of the corset and to its implications of female chastity. The substantial and frequent change in corset profiles of the nineteenth century address that period's fluctuating ideal of beauty (in living form, as in art), whereas the recurrence of the corset in the twentieth century suggests its lingering allure.

Body extenders such as crinolines, bustles, hips pads, and sleeve pillows worked to make the waist seem smaller. The legendary 16" waist of Scarlett O'Hara need not have been measured: any waist appeared more slender amidst the dilated forms of such dress.

Several of the dress forms shown here are expandable, in part to accommodate changes in the subject's weight and figure. But manufacturers were also attempting to create an armature that could keep up with the shifts of fashion. The 1880s waist is relatively high; in the 1890s, the waist was tiny and placed at the natural zone. The Charles James dress shape only appeared to be as heavily corsetted as a 19th-century torso; the 20th-century woman was not as willing to distort her rib cage or permanently choke her waist.

1. Hall-Borchert

Expandable dress form, patented 1881

Metal wire

Courtesy The Museum at F.I.T.

2. John A. Gillotte

Dress form, patented June 7, 1879

Seamed metal and wire

Courtesy The Museum at F.I.T.

3. American

Dress form, 1890s

Black chintz-covered paper maché

4. Hall-Borchert

Expandable dress form, 1910-14

Tan jersey covered paper maché plates on metal frame

Courtesy The Museum at F.I.T.

Charles James

Dress form, early 1950s

Orange muslin and batting-covered paper maché

Gift of Eleanor Searle Whitney McCollum, 1975 (INST 1975.8 b)

[on wall surrounding case opposite north vitrine]

Drawings by Ruben Toledo based upon garments in The Costume Institute were commissioned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994. All drawings are courtesy the artist.



1914.83897

1 2 3 4 INST 1975.86

The development of the crinoline was a response to the increasing amplitude of the skirt in the 1840s and early 1850s. The volume had formerly been achieved by layers of stiffened petticoats that were as cumbersome as they were difficult to maintain; crinoline hoops gave grandiose volume without unwieldy weight. Their airy support had its precedent in panniers of the eighteenth century, which created a broad frontal outline. In the 1860s, the umbrella-shaped crinoline began to shift its volume to the back. By the 1870s and 1880s, the crinoline looked more like a narrowed dome or bell jar. The vertical attenuation of the hoop in the bustle period becomes so diminished in the front that it was finally reduced to a semicircle.

The bustle, by extending the body, became a point of demarcation for the back of the waist. By enlarging the derriere visually, the bustle became a foil for the constricted waist in profile. Bustles were silk-floss, cotton, or feather down-filled. Small ones could be found sewn into Empire gowns; more prominent ones were used in the 1870s and 1880s and had an ingenious range of configurations and materials, including wire coil, rattan, and horsehair.

1. Hoop, 1870s

Cotton twill-tape and metal wire

Gift of Estate of Woodman Thompson, 1955 (CI 55.73.5)

2. American

Corset, 1880s

Red-orange cotton with white scroll embroidery

Gift of Mrs. Aline Bernstein, 1948 (CI 48.48)

3. American or European

Bustle hoop, ca. 1880

Blue and white cotton and metal wire

Gift of Mrs. Robert K. Baker, 1963 (CI 63.12.1)

4. French

Corset, 1884

Cream satin with lace and ribbon trims

Gift of Mrs. John W. Grout, 1956 (CI 56.40.2)

5. English

Bustle (Lobster Pot), ca. 1883

Blue glazed cotton with steel wire and cotton batting

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn and Alice L. Crowley Bequests, 1985 (1985.23.3)

6. American (?)

Hoop, 1880s

White cotton twill-tape and metal wire

Gift of Miss Marian H. Smith, 1979 (1979.53.2)



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7. American (?)
Hoop, 1880s
White cotton twill-tape and metal wire
Gift of Miss Marian H. Smith, 1979 (1979.53.3)
-
8. American
Corset, 1885
Cream satin with lace trim
Gift of Berenice L. Heller, 1974 (1974.57.1 a,b)
-
9. American
Bustle (lobster pot), ca. 1885
Red wool and wire
Gift of Mrs. Lee Simonson, 1938 (CI 38.23.281)
-
10. American
Hoop, 1880s
Metal wire and cotton twill-tape
Bequest of Woodman Thompson, 1955 (CI 55.73.6)
-
11. Priscilla Wohl, Inc. (American)
Pannier, 1947-48
Pink rayon satin
Gift of Julia Raymond, 1962 (CI X 62.3)

1. English
Sleeve puffs, ca. 1895
White cotton with wired frame
Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1966 (CI 66.38.5 a,b)

2. American (?)
Sleeve puff, ca. 1830-35
White cotton with down stuffing

3. American
Child's hoop, mid-19th century
Tan cotton and reeds
Gift of Estate of Mary LeBoutillier, 1945 (CI 45.79.11)

4. American
Sleeve puff, ca. 1827
Brown polished cotton with down stuffing

Gift of the New-York Historical Society, 1979 (1979.346.140)

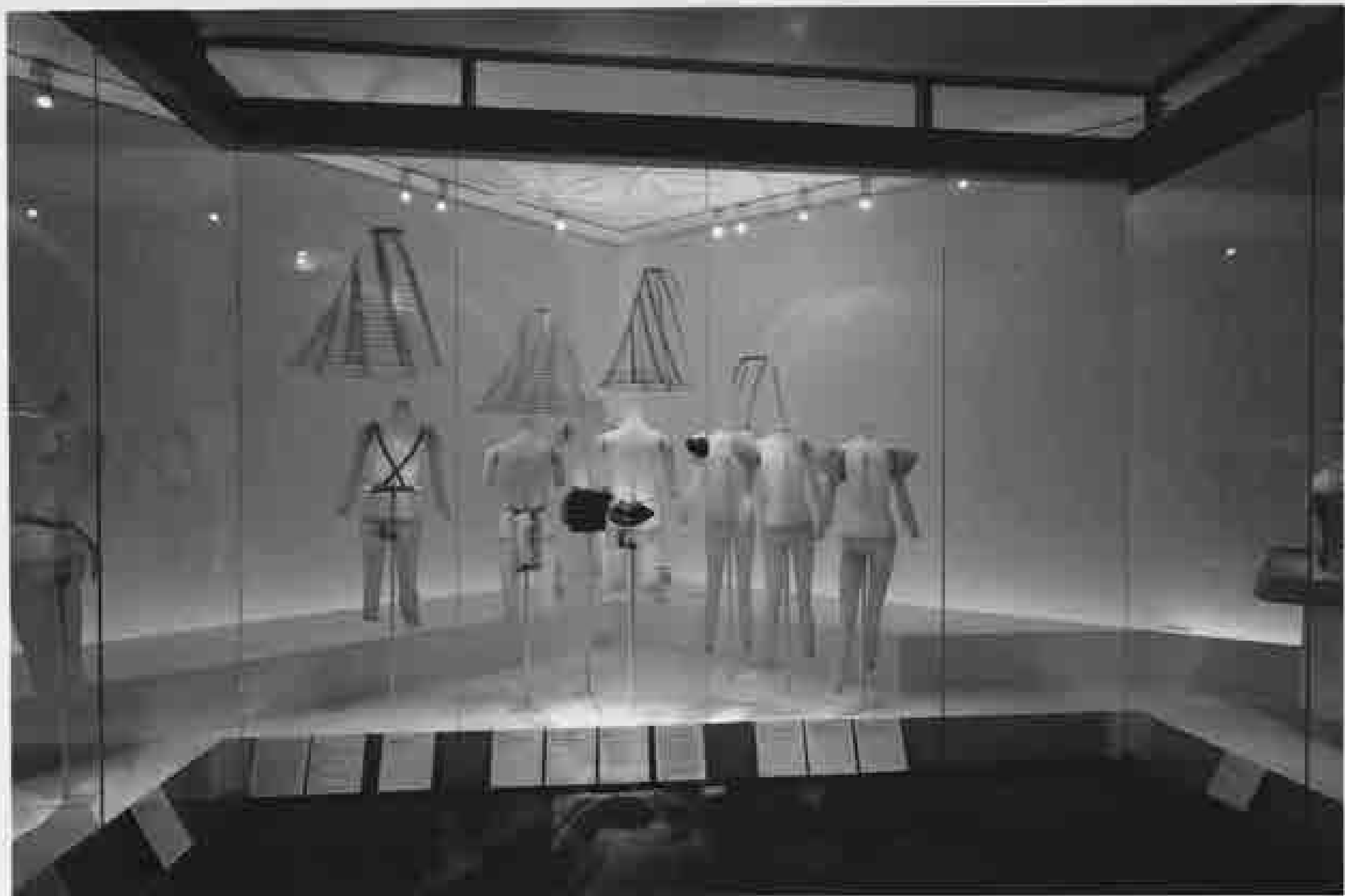
5. English
Crinoline, 1869
White cotton webbing and steel bands
Purchase, Gifts from various donors, 1983 (● 1983⁴.10.3)

The popularity of huge puff sleeves created a requirement for under-support, which took the form of down-filled pillows and, at the most extreme, wired hoops.

6. American
Bustle, 1880s
Cane
Gift of Mrs. William R. Witherell, 1953 (CI 53.72.17)

7. American or European
Bustle, 1880s
White cotton and horsehair
Gift of Lee Simonson, 1938 (CI 38.23.282)

8. American (?)
Hoop, 1865-67
Tan cotton twill-tape and wire



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9. American
Bustle support, 1870s
Steel wire springs and white cotton
Gift of Theodore Fischer Ells, 1975 (CI INST 1975.7.4)

10. American
Hoop, early 1860s
Cotton twill-tape and metal wire
Purchase, Vincente Minetti Gift, 1976 (1976.318.28)

11. American
Bustle harness, 1882-84
Tan linen and wire

English
Child's corset [back view], ca. 1780
Glazed brown cotton

Purchase, Catherine Breyer Von Bomel Foundation Fund, 1983 (1983.242.2)

French
Child's corset [back view], 1790s
Red watered silk with green pompoms
Gift of International Business Machines Corporation, 1960 (CI 60.22.19)

English
Corset, ca. 1750
Blue silk moiré and chamois
Gift of Mrs. F.D. Millet, 1913 (13.49.2)

English
Panniers, ca. 1750
Linen and cane
Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1973 (1973.65.2)

The busk determined posture as the corset defined shape. Detachable busks, because of their intimacy with the body, were the subject matter of intense love poetry and lavish fancy. Made of such materials as ivory, whalebone, wood, and metal, their detailed carvings constituted the most intimate dialogue of body and obdurate materials, but even more of a supposed discourse of lovers. Men crafted these elaborate components of a lady's "undress," thus promoting the pensive isolation of their painstaking craft and the impassioned yearnings of the busks' purpose. Cast-metal busks are likely to have come from the same workshops as pistol grips. The armorial association is apt.

BUSKS (l to r)

French
Busk, 17th century
Ivory

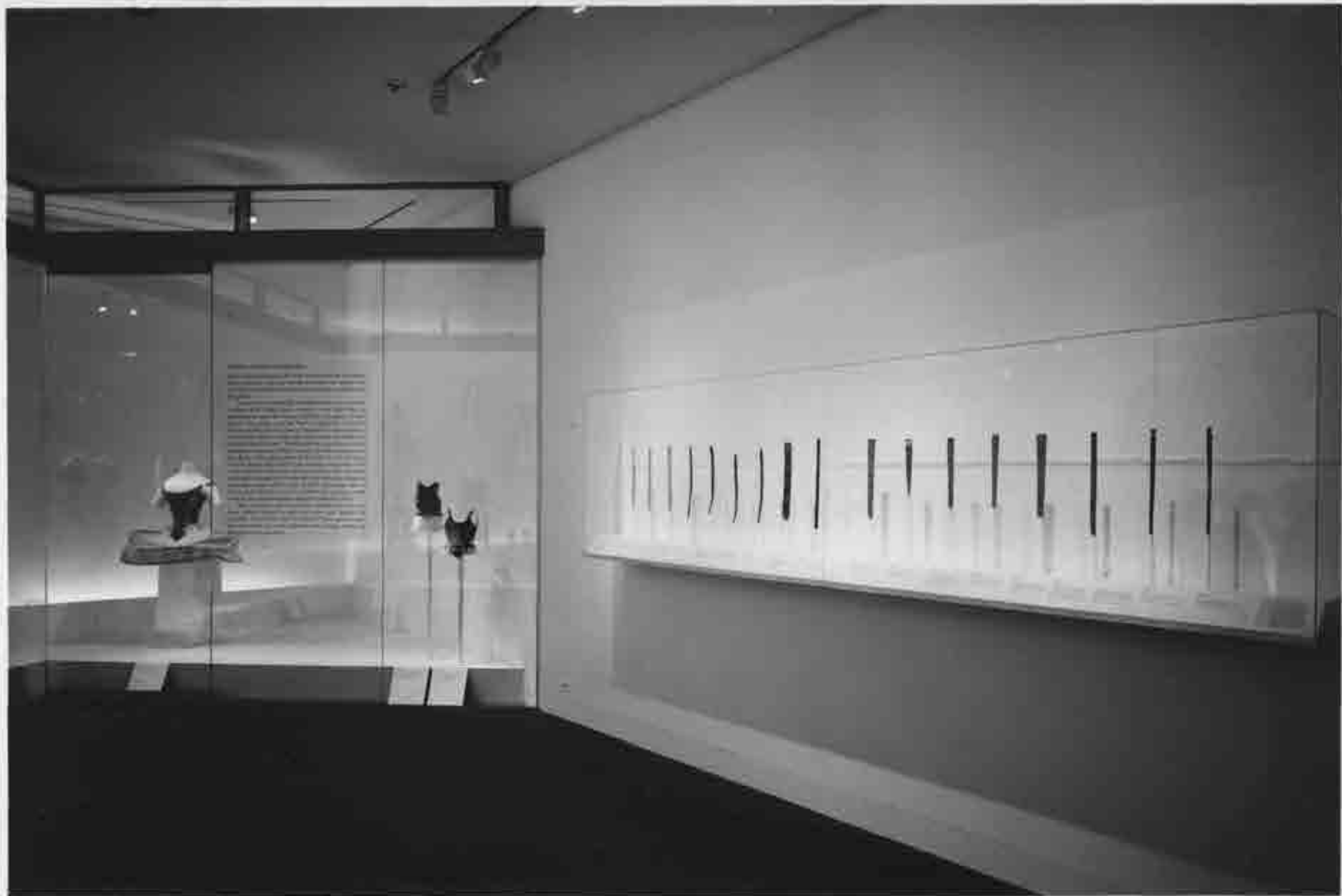
The inscription with the flaming hearts reads, "love joins them" and "the arrow unites us," while the message of the sun shining on a flower is "to see you or to die."

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.21)

French
Busk, 17th century
Ivory

The weeping eye reads, "until I see you again." The sun shining on a heart declares, "my love is pure." The vignette of two hearts over a house is inscribed, "love joins them."

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.20)



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13.49.2

CI 60.22.19

1973.65.2

1983.242.2

French
Busk, 17th century
Ivory

The decoration on this busk includes women playing musical instruments, a bird lighting on a branch, and foliate scrolls on the front. On the back, clasped hands, flames, and a heart pierced by an arrow are represented.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.19)

Italian
Busk, 18th century
Wood with mother-of-pearl and horn inlay

This busk is decorated with figures and a pair of male busts crowned with laurel, flowers, a falcon, and a shell.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.26)

Italian
Busk, late 17-early 18th century
Wood

Old Testament stories are carved along with decorative motives on this busk: Samson slays a Philistine with the jawbone of an ass; decoration features a gaping, laughing grotesque and swagged drapery.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.25)

Italian
Busk, late 17-early 18th century
Wood

Carving provides a man and woman on a draped platform with a shell canopy, a mask, scrolls, and flowers.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.23)

Italian
Busk, late 17 - early 18th century
Wood

Carved figures, fruits, flowers, and scrolls are edged with roping.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.27)

Probably American
Busk, second quarter 19th century
Wood

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Crossed swords are incised above a heart at the apex of the busk. The scenes depicted below are not of the accustomed love poetry, but of domestic life: vernacular scenes with figures dressed in late 1820s and 1830s costume and a clapboard house.

Gift of Aline Bernstein, 1938 (CI 38.68)

French
Busk, ca. 1660
Horn

A simple, but particularly attenuated form is curved to sculpt as much as to accommodate the contours of the body.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.38)

French or Spanish
Busk, late 17th - early 18th century
Metal

The crown of Spain surmounts foliate scrolls, flowers, fruits, and ornament.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.29)

French
Busk, 18th century
Metal

In the upper register, though read upside down, a man holds a heart which a woman pierces with a sword. Below, there is a mermaid.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.36)

French
Busk, 17th century
Metal

Engraved with flowers and trophies of love is the poem (front): "Nymphs, drawn to the chase and to the shadows of these forests searching some secret places far from the ambush of the satyr." The second stanza (back) reads: "Nearby, jealous desire, frantic by a torment of love, has caused the death of a young lover who himself still sighs."

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.30)

French
Busk, 17th century
Metal

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.34)

The love poem reads: "I have from the Lady this favor to be long on her bosom. Whence I hear a lover sigh who covets my place."

French

Busk, 17th century

Metal

Amidst decoration, there are two medallions on each side with figures on the front: a man and a woman; Cupid standing on a heart and a quiver of arrows. On the back: a man salutes a lady who holds an arrow; Venus standing on a quiver of arrows holds an arrow and flaming hearts.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.35)

French

Busk, 17th century

Metal

This busk was made for Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans (1627-93), Duchesse de Montpensier, daughter of Gaston d'Orléans. On the front, the arms of the Duchesse d'Orléans with fleur-de-lis and crown are accompanied by the text: "How I envy you the happiness that is yours, resting softly on her ivory white breast. Let us divide between us, if you please, this glory. You will be there the day and I shall be there the night." At the portrait head of a woman, the text reads, "Whether I live or die, I want my heart to be thine." On the back, the text accompanying clasped hands reads: "Faithfulness is above all." At the portrait of a man, the text reads, "My eyes to everyone; my heart to you."

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.32)

French

Busk, 17th century

Metal

Inscribed S*P on the back, this busk is decorated with leaf scrolls, flowers, a profile head, a sun, and a heart pierced by arrows.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.33)

French

Busk, 17th century

Metal

Decoration of foliate scrolls and an acanthus finial attend a mask which is upside down.

Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 1930 (30.135.31)

American
Dress, 1876-78
Black silk faille

An hourglass silhouette with a princess-seamed structure called the "cuirasse" was created with a high waist, just an inch or two under the bust. It was an upholstered, exaggerated shape achieved with a corset and a spoon busk to cup and re-form the abdomen. American dress reformers, many newly directed former anti-slavery advocates, came together in the 1870s in specific opposition to such deliberate body molding.

Gift of The Misses Faith and Delia Leavens, 1941 (CI 41.58.1 a,b)

American
Afternoon dress, ca. 1876-78
Black silk taffeta

The hourglass silhouette would haunt the imagination of fashion and beauty from the 1870s through Mae West. Its body-conscious naturalism was largely artificial. A severely cinched, high-waisted corset bound the torso. The bustle was drawn down and around the body, but with considerable understructure to support the volume of the back skirt even in this "siren" silhouette. Pierre Auguste Renoir's Madame Georges Charpentier and Her Children (1878) shows the style of this time in a Worth gown.

Gift of Theodore Fischer Ells, 1975 (1975.227.4)

1. American
Corset, mid 1880s
White silk satin with cotton lace
Gift of Mrs. Herbert G. Lord, 1980 (1980.589.2)

2. American
"A la Spirite" Waist Cincher, 1889
Ivory cotton
Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

American
Walking dress, ca. 1883
Green silk faille and figured velvet

Dropping from the previous decade, the waistline cleaved to the zone of the waist, now severely pinched. From the front, one saw an extremely narrow waist. From the side, there was the inevitable thickening caused by the volume displaced. Art's great witness to this silhouette was Georges Seurat, who fashioned the contrived shapes of 1880s style into an abstracted perception of the modern bourgeoisie.

Gift of University of Virginia Drama Department, 1977 (1977.304.2 a,b)

Mrs. C. Donovan (American)

Walking dress, ca. 1887

Green broadcloth partially embroidered with iridescent glass beads and dark-yellow silk ribbon trim

Seurat notwithstanding, the ideal perspective for achieving the smallest waist was always frontal, encouraging displacement of flesh to the side and back. The countervailing mass of the bustle--an apparent artifice--diminished the scale of that displacement.

Gift of Estate of Marcia Sand, 1978 (1978.295.2 a,b)

3. American (?)

Corset, 1880s

White cotton with wired bustle

Purchase, Janet A. Sloane Gift, 1990 (1993.171)

4. American

Child's corset[back view], 1883

Red wool

Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

5. French

Corset, 1891

Brocaded pale pink silk satin with ivory cotton lace

Gift of Marion Hague, 1945 (CI 45.27)

Latitudes of the Waist: The 18th Century to the 1840s

The waist shifted slowly in the eighteenth century, and likewise the fashion silhouette was relatively stable until it altered dramatically in the last two decades. Fashion change accelerated in the nineteenth century chiefly because of expanding means of communications. Fashion plates, followed by fashion and illustrated magazines, became the vehicles for prompt and more widespread dissemination. A migration of the waist with its attendant new proportions could now reach dressmakers immediately and project a revised ideal of dress and beauty. In addition, caricature could, with humor, intimidate and dissuade.

If only indirectly, the high-waisted Empire style, founded in Neo-Classical yearning, espoused democracy. The nineteenth century's varying revival values brought other historic aesthetic models to clothing and by 1840 fashion had returned to the lowest visual point for the waist well below the natural waist at center front, as the style emulated the vee-pointed corsetting of a century earlier. A suite of waist migrations progressed through Empire democratic idealism to romantic enchantment to Goncourts' aestheticism.

1. Italian

Man's suit, early 18th century

White silk satin brocaded in silver with gold bullion trim

Even men's clothing is largely defined by the articulation of the waist. An early eighteenth-century waistcoat was little more than a tube and did not shape the waist other than to generate a basic cylinder for the torso. The 1950s-60s man's sack suit is a more recent example of such waist obliteration.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1963 (CI 63.26 a-f)

2. English

Closed robe, ca. 1750

Cream silk taffeta

Whereas the nineteenth century was marked by regular changes in the placement of the waist, only very subtle shifts in the waistline occurred in the dress of the eighteenth century. While a low waist was in evidence at the eighteenth century's commencement and an extremely high waist took prominence at its end, the middle of the century was characterized

by a waistline that hovered at the natural zone but was severely corsetted to the point of distortion of the ribcage.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1972 (1972.139.2)

3. American

Corset, third quarter of 18th century

Quilted blue linen

The Jacqueline Loewe Fowler Costume Collection, Gift of Jacqueline Loewe Fowler, 1983 (1983.213.4)



attitude of the time background. The first part of the

The first part of the exhibit is devoted to the early years of the 18th century, when the fashion of the 17th century was still in vogue. It is interesting to see the transition from the 17th century to the 18th century. The first part of the exhibit is devoted to the early years of the 18th century, when the fashion of the 17th century was still in vogue. It is interesting to see the transition from the 17th century to the 18th century.

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← See MM 83905 →

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4. American
Man's suit, ca. 1820
Navy wool broadcloth and off-white polished cotton

MM 83902

The silhouette determined for women of the period was faintly reflected in men's high-waisted trousers accompanied by a jacket cut away to hug the rib cage and to stop short of the natural waist. As an immoderate style for men, it was susceptible to caricature. By the 1860s, Lewis Carroll's logicians Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee already mocked this style; their attenuated parody is found in Walt Disney's Jiminy Cricket.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1976 (1976.235.3 a-d)

5. English
Spencer, ca. 1818
Chartreuse silk taffeta
Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1975 (1975.34.9)

6. English
Dress, ca. 1819
White tuckered and embroidered muslin
Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1977 (1977.309.2)

Romantic emotion and elation encouraged speculations, explorations, and imitative and historically evocative styles throughout the nineteenth century. By the second decade, compelling fictions attached themselves to apparel as they did to other arts. Military and menswear motives validated spencers for women.

7. European
Open robe with matching underskirt and fichu, ca. 1798
Off-white mull with silk-floss embroidery

At first glance true to the radical innovations of the Neoclassical high-waisted style, this dress, composed of overskirt and underskirt, was a vestigial sign of the ancien regime, still requiring a truncated eighteenth-century style corset. Despite its macro-representation of the new, its construction and substitution of embroideries for robings testified to the persistence of the past.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn and Alice L. Crowley Bequests, 1992 (1992.119.1 a-c)

8. French
Corset, 1790's
Tan quilted linen
Gift of Elizabeth Ives Clark, 1982 (1982.405.1)

9. American
Corset, ca. 1830
White cotton drill with wooden busk

1. American (?)
Visiting dress, ca. 1897
Green silk satin

An elegant dress from the early 1890s was recut and restyled to accommodate the fashion detente of the late '90s, relaxing the more extreme elements of the earlier part of the decade: the gigot sleeve, still intact, collapsed into a puffed cap; the constricted waist fell at the natural zone.

Gift of Mrs. Jean Ghavami, 1979 (1979.238.1 a,b)

2. Charles Frederick Worth
Evening dress, ca. 1893-95
Garnet silk velvet

Severe corsetting falling at the natural waist, a flaring skirt, and the return of gigot sleeves constituted a fin-de-siècle extremism. The engorgement of sleeves and skirt made this extreme constriction seem even more exaggerated in the context of the bulbous shapes surrounding the ideal, hard, narrow waist. The style was maintained well into the twentieth century as a flattering stage effect by actresses such as Sarah Bernhardt.

Gift of Mrs. Frederick M. Godwin, 1954 (CI 54.4.1 a-c)

3. American
Corset, late 19th century
White cotton
Gift of Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, 1961 (CI 61.48 b)

4. Warner's (American)
Wedding corset, early 1900s
Pink silk taffeta ribbon
Gift of Mrs. Arthur Davies, 1946 (CI 46.85.2)

5. American
Waist cincher, 1900-10
Black silk satin
Gift of Hortense McCleod, 1950 (CI 50.109.2)

6. American
Afternoon dress, 1902
Pale-blue dotted swiss with cotton lace insertions

The grace of the S curve was in the slight forward pitch of the hips along with the elegant shaping of a burgeoning derrière as a countervailing dynamic.

Gift of Mrs. J.N. Thorne, 1943 (CI 43.44.7)



MM 83903

14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

7. American

Afternoon dress, ca. 1900-02

Sea-foam green pleated batiste with cotton lace insertions and black silk-velvet ribbon

At the turn of the century, the S curve prevailed, appearing to bifurcate the body at the waist. A narrow fulcrum of waist seemed to pivot between a base in the skirt and a separately-aligned torso.

Gift of Mrs. Charles Eckel, 1958 (CI 58.28 a,b)

8. English

Day dress, ca. 1902-04

Pin-check red and beige silk taffeta with off-white cotton net and black silk satin

In the turn-of-the-century S curve, the monobosom served as a blouson with soft drape dropping below and obscuring the natural waist. Corsetting under the monobosom created a lower bust stance and caused the pelvis to seem to dip forward. The waistline was angled from its apex at the small of the back to its nadir in the front, decreasing the center-back length and dramatically increasing the center-front length.

Gift of Mrs. William Floyd Nichols and Mrs. B. Langdon Tyler, 1975 (1975.248.12 a,b)

9. French

Corset, 1910

Ivory figured silk with cotton lace and silk ribbon

Anonymous gift, 1972 (1972.69.4)

10. Callot Soeurs

Evening gown, ca. 1910-14

Beige cotton net with gold, silver, pink, and bronze sequins

In the Directoire revival, the waistline was raised in the manner of a century earlier, but with corsetting that had vestiges of the monobosom. Perhaps even more importantly, the silhouette reflects Europe's examination of Eastern dress, the softness, raised waist, and lower bust stance suggesting the persuasive Orientalism of Ukiyo prints and other Japanese style.

Gift of The Jacqueline Loewe Fowler Costume Collection, 1981 (1981.380.2)

11. Bienjay (French)

Corset, 1920-25

Pink silk net and cotton lace

Gift of June Dorflinger Hardy (Mrs. John A. Hardy, Jr.), 1981 (1981.518.10)

12. Paul Poiret

Evening gown, ca. 1920's

Black silk voile brocaded in gold with black cotton net

The dropped waist of the 1920s voided the natural waist, except for a seam at the hipline. In the era of Art Deco planarity, the body was conceived of as essentially two-dimensional. While Poiret was a crucial figure in minimizing understructure, he was not the only designer to do so. His impulses to decreased structure were stimulated in part by an interest in less-tailored Eastern dress.

Gift of Mrs. W. Allston Flagg, 1979 (1979.150.2)

13. Jean Patou

Evening gown, ca. 1922

Gold lamé and beads

Patou dropped the waist to the upper hipbone. In what can be described as an archaic phase of modern apparel, the dress was ideally seen from the front view or the back view; in side view, the figure did not even seem to exist.

Isabel Shultz Fund, 1983 (1983.246)

14. Paul Poiret

Evening dress, ca. 1926

Gold metallic lace embroidered with pearls and gold lamé

The most radical shift in a standard of body shape and attire, the dropping of the waist and of much of the structuring of form in the 1920s may have been a Cubist-inflected and Art Deco-responsive aesthetic idealism, but it was preeminently a sign of the new woman in the flapper era, physically and socially free. One cannot imagine the twenties, F. Scott Fitzgerald, or modern life without this tubular ease of dress.

Gift of Mrs. Robert L. Dodge, 1951 (CI 51.48.4 a,b)

[large north vitrine]

Migrations of the Waist: 1850 to the 1920s

The ever-roving waist travelled madly in the late nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth. Silhouettes came into favor with the new immediacy achieved by of marketing and mass communication. Almost as soon as a silhouette was codified, it was being challenged by shifts in waist and proportions. Art of the period bore witness to shifts in dress even more rapid than modernism's inexorable progress: James Tissot's accurate but academic depictions of dress celebrated the style of his time, but it was Georges Seurat's hyperacuity in schematic rendering that turned *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte* into an icon of the flaneur.

Most importantly, the smallness of the waist prized in this period was achieved by a repertory of illusions on top of the persistent corset. Crinoline and bustle stressed the amplitude of the skirt, and on this enlarged base, any waist would seem more delicate: After 1854, the opening of Japan brought myriad ideas to the West. Fashion quickly assimilated the Japanese wardrobe: kimono and their representation in art showed the possibilities of a high-waisted obi and the tubular silhouette in the first decade of the twentieth century.

But, even with the modernist tendencies of the 1920s, the apparent freedom from waist definition and structure exceeded the interior truth of the garments, still maintaining a lighter version of the traditional shaping.

European
Day dress, ca. 1870-74
Off-white alpaca

MM 83904

A waistline rising slightly from 1860s was offset by the visual subterfuge of pulling all the fabric of the skirt into an airy bustle or pouf at the back. The graceful front view was preeminent; necessarily, a side silhouette was that of a truncated torso over a very full skirt. The coiffure of the period accorded with these proportions and called for a big coil of hair appropriate to balance the massing of the posterior pouf.

Gift of Lee Simonson, 1938 (CI 38.23.245 a-c)

American
Dress, 1868-72
Green silk faille

In this transitional dress with corsetted waistline still established high on the rib cage, the new proportion derived from the arms: pushed-down shoulders created a sloping line until the torso became almost diamond shaped at the back. The "coat" sleeves of 1860s, with widened elbows falling at or below the waist, were a visual contrast to the high waist.

Gift of Mrs. William R. Witherell, 1953 (CI 53.72.1 a-c)

American
Corset, 1860s
White silk satin and cotton lace
Gift of Mrs. H.C. Adler, 1947 (CI 47.53.1 a,b)



CI 38.23.245 a-c

1987.190.2ab

CI 53.72.1ac

CI 48.62ab

CI 47.63.1ab
Corset

MM 83904

Maison Clément

Afternoon dress, ca. 1866

Mustard and acid-green silk taffeta

A trompe l'oeil bolero jacket cropped and defined the bust, while the waist rose into the ribcage, genuinely above the zone of the waist. The devices of bolero and apron differentiated sectors within the dress and emphasized the high placement of the waist, while the crinoline hoop shifted to the back to make the great shape of the skirt mountainously prominent. Such monumental dress captured what Baudelaire called the "pomp and circumstance" of modern urban life.

Gift of Mary Chippendale, 1948 (CI 48.62 a,b)

English

Day dress, 1854-56

Teal blue-and-black striped silk taffeta

By the 1850s, the corset established a relatively natural placement of the waist, though it did cinch it in. The flaring sleeves and voluminous skirt with quasi-architectural tiers contrasted with and exaggerated the diminution of the waist. The crinoline hoop, developed and popularized in this decade, sustained the effect of the expanded skirt and further promoted the foil of large volumes surrounding a tiny waist.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1987 (1987.190.2 a,b)

1. French
Walking dress, ca. 1828-29
Brown silk taffeta

In the 1820s, the waist began to drop from immediately under the bust, and at the same time sleeves and skirt began to be enlarged. The dramatic inflation of sleeves and skirt aided the illusion that the waist was diminished even more.

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1984 (1984.82)

2. English (?)
Spencer, ca. 1818
Green silk satin
Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1985 (1985.222.4)

3. American
Dress, ca. 1810-20
White muslin
Gift of Mrs. Frank O. Bowman, 1964 (CI 64.61.1)

"There is only one way for the moderns to become great and perhaps unequalled: by imitating the Ancients," declared Johann Joachim Winckelmann, prophet and propagandist for Neoclassicism. New democracies, with their idealism, were vehemently and visibly expressed in quotidian form in statuary-emulating dress.

4. American
Walking dress with double shoulder cape, ca. 1832
Sage-green silk taffeta

The waistline's descent in the 1830s to some two or more inches below the bust came in tandem with the greatest grandiloquence of the gigot sleeves and billowing bell-shaped skirt. The elegant dilations favored the illusion of the waist as minuscule in the midst of swelling forms. The belted waist became the sole measure in a massing of bulges and balloons.

Gift of Mrs. Richard T. Auchmuty, 1915 (15.149.2)

5. English
Man's tail coat, ca. 1833
Dark-blue silk faille and black velvet
Purchase, Catherine Breyer Van Bomel Foundation Fund, 1981
(1981.210.4)



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1. French
Walking dress, ca. 1828-29
Brown silk taffeta

In the 1820s, the waist began to drop from immediately under the bust, and at the same time sleeves and skirt began to be enlarged. The dramatic inflation of sleeves and skirt aided the illusion that the waist was diminished even more.

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5. English
Man's tail coat, ca. 1833
Dark-blue silk faille and black velvet
Purchase, Catherine Breyer Van Bomel Foundation Fund, 1981
(1981.210.4)

6. English

Man's trousers, ca. 1833

Off-white linen

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn and Alice Lewisohn Crowley Bequests, 1982 (1982.316.11)

As in women's apparel of the period, men's sleeves puffed at cap and balloony pants were exaggeratedly full at hip and thigh. These extreme styles, first Pickwickian, were later caricatured as dandified and effete. Later, Amelia Bloomer's 1851 trousers for women depended on the same ovoid shape.

7. American or European

Corset, ca. 1840

White silk satin

Gift of Lee Simonson, 1938 (CI 38.23.10 b)

8. French

Dress, 1842

Brown-and-beige striped silk taffeta

As the torso seemed to drop low in the 1840s, its attenuation was often exacerbated by pleats radiating from the pointed waist.

Gift of Mrs. Howard Morse, 1943 (CI 43.129.1 a,b)

9. American

Afternoon dress, 1840s

Sea-foam green silk taffeta

Like the 1830s corset, the 1840s style expanded with gussets at the hipline supporting a full-skirted silhouette. The torso, however, was visually attenuated by center-front vee extending below the waist into the abdomen. This deep dip of the torso re-created the effect of the pointed waist of the eighteenth century, but the corsetting is specifically nineteenth century, rounding to the chest cavity to create a cylinder.

Gift of Professor Talbot Hamlin, 1954 (CI X 54.10.24)

Vacillations of the Waist: 1930 to 1959

Just as nature seemed to challenge artifice in the 1930s, when the waist was located at its genuine anatomical place, the 1940s were characterized by a renewal of artificial constraint on the waist, seeking a New Look wasp waist as the slender center between curvaceous extremes. Dior's 1947 New Look renewed old techniques and tyrannies of the 1860s: corsetted waist, pitched shoulders, thrust bust, and abundant skirts.

While visual ideals could already be rapidly communicated and exchanged rapidly before World War II, fashion design, promotion, and media fostered even more brisk changes in silhouette by the time Dior's New Look appeared. Promising a new silhouette every six months, Dior was, of course, only creating a planned obsolescence, but there were those who celebrated the constant and extravagant post-War transfigurations. While Dior and Balenciaga were vying for Parisian sovereignty, shapes were changing dramatically. Most importantly, at both Dior and Balenciaga the waist was voided in the 1950s, at each through different strategies and shapes. It was possible to think of modern dress without the waist.

1. Madeleine Vionnet

Evening dress and overbodice, ca. 1936

Red silk crepe

As early as the 1920s, Vionnet's proclivity to bias virtually precluded heavy corsetting and revealed the natural body. The inexorable cling of the drapery to the body denied the fabrication of the artificial armature that had been customary in fashion. In the 1930s, fashion moved decisively away from body-configuring devices.

Gift of Brenner Couture, Inc. 1978 (1978.278.3 a,b)

2. Le Gant

Girdle, 1939

Pink rayon and cotton

Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

3. Madame Hernstadt (American)

Girdle, ca. 1940

Pink stretch rayon with cotton lace

Gift of Mrs. Frederick H. Prince Jr., 1980 (1980.393.1 a,b)

4. American

Suit, Spring 1943

Black wool broadcloth

Counseling wartime women to convert their husband's unused evening clothes into their own evening suits, Harper's Bazaar (April 1943) created a model with a girdled waist and hipline. Shoulder pads exaggerated the torso and emulated masculinity at a time when women assumed many of the roles formerly exclusive to men. The man's tail suit was originally made by Playdell and Smith of London in 1929; Mrs. Bertha Black Lowery of Jackson Heights made over the suit on commission from Harper's Bazaar.

Gift of Harper's Bazaar, 1943 (CI 43.58 a,b)



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5. Christian Dior
"New Look" jacket, spring 1947
Beige silk faille
Gift of Mrs. John Chambers, 1958 (CI 58.34.30)

MM 83906

6. Christian Dior
Replica of "New Look" skirt, 1947 (made in Dior workroom in 1969)
Black wool
Gift of Christian Dior, 1969 (CI 69.40)

In contrast to the austere, faintly masculinized silhouette of the war years, a Dior New Look suit re-established effects not seen since the 1860s, including sloping shoulders, padded hips, severely corsetted waist, and, most notably, a long voluminous skirt.

7. Cristobal Balenciaga
Suit, 1955
Red linen

Developing from his watershed 1952 unwaisted suit, Balenciaga added a belted martingale to articulate a fullness at the back. The martingale tunic without its skirt became the chemise, and later the sack of the late 1950s.

Gift of Cristobal Balenciaga, 1955 (CI 55.60 a,b)

8. Cristobal Balenciaga
Day suit, spring 1952
Red linen twill

In 1952, Balenciaga introduced the first silhouette that fully and successfully challenged the New Look. By the 1950s, there were many who saw post-war Parisian couture as a battle between two creative titans, Dior and Balenciaga. Attempts by Norman Norell and others to launch an unwaisted silhouette in the late 1940s were unsuccessful; Balenciaga alone had the power to propose and impose a thoroughly different profile.

Gift of Bettina Ballard, 1958 (CI 58.50.3 a-c)

9. Warner's
Merry Widow, ca. 1954
White nylon and lace
Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

10. Warner's
Waist cincher, 1951
Ivory satin
Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

11. Cristobal Balenciaga
Evening ensemble, ca. 1958
Black dotted organza

MM 83906

Balenciaga's 1958 version of the baby doll was a tent silhouette in an extreme elaboration of the chemise.

Gift of Baroness Philippe de Rothschild, 1973 (1973.21.7 a,b)

12. Cristobal Balenciaga
Dress, ca. 1957
Brown silk lace

For Balenciaga, elaboration on the chemise was both a revival of the 1920s and an opportunity to recall traditional dress of Spain. The tiered flounces flirted with high-1920s flapper style, but the dress was even more redolent of Spanish regional costume, suggesting the festive dresses of Andalucia and Seville.

Gift of Mollie Parnis Livingston, 1973 (1973.57.1)

1. Cristobal Balenciaga
Sack cocktail dress, ca. 1958
Black raw silk

Inspired by the dropped waist silhouette of the 1920s, Balenciaga's chemise quickly became the sack with midsection fluidity and fullness in contrast to its hobbled hemline. Its iconoclasm of nullifying the waist was controversial. Even an "I Love Lucy" episode featured Lucy and Ethel in Paris donning the faux chic of burlap sacks first as style victims and then as style leaders. Balenciaga disdained the popular and journalistic appellation of the sack.

2. Christian Dior
L'el'phant blanc evening dress, Spring-summer 1958
White silk net embroidered with silver thread and beads

The daring of the spring-summer 1958 Dior collection was, in fact, boldness based upon a conceit favored by the rival Balenciaga in the cage or baby doll dress: a fluid and uninflected exterior anchored by a barely visible fitted and traditional underdress.

Gift of Col. and Mrs. Edgar W. Garbisch, 1977 (1977.329.5)

3. Jacques Griffe
Evening dress, late 1950s
Black silk lace and beige chiffon

The 1950s Baby Doll employed an Empire waist and allowed the external cage to fall in the elegant geometry of a continuous line from high waist to hem. Griffe's work under Vionnet from 1936 to 1939 may have been an influence in perceiving this diminished effect of the waistline; his use of exquisitely pieced lace likewise speaks of his abiding admiration for Vionnet in her romantic period.

Courtesy Mark Walsh

4. Arnold Scaasi
Ball gown, ca. 1958-59
Black-and-taupe silk satin

When he first arrived in New York in 1955, Scaasi worked for Charles James. From James, Scaasi developed his idea of the body as an armature for biomorphic geometry during the same era that Saint Laurent at Dior was creating the pure geometry of the trapeze.

Gift of Gillis MacGil, 1961 (CI 61.6.1)

5. Yves Saint Laurent for Christian Dior
Day dress, spring-summer 1958
Gray wool bouclé

The trapezoidal silhouette that Saint Laurent invented for his first collection at Dior was an immediate success, in part because its geometric formalism seemed to align fashion with contemporary art and design. The invention was to create a form that was not primarily determined by the waist and that seemed to have a life and *raison d'être* beyond fashion's avowal of body.

Gift of Imogene Schubert, 1958 (CI 58.66 a,b)



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6. Yves Saint Laurent for Christian Dior
Trapeze dress, spring-summer 1958
Pink linen

MM 83907

The 1958 trapeze anticipated the A-line dresses of the 1960s, but retained the understructure of the 1950s. Its apparent swing from the shoulders was, in fact, checked by its traditional corsetting within. With Dior's death in October 1957, many wondered if his house--and even the couture--would survive. Design direction had passed to the twenty-one-year-old Saint Laurent; his radical new silhouette in 1958 affirmed the persistence of the couture and Dior's supremacy.

Gift of Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 1977 (1977.108.1)

Viscera and Vicissitudes: 1960 to 1994

Contemporary designers have embraced many options: to abstain from the waist, to present and represent history's familiar profiles, and to bring the criticism and caricature that once was fashion's commentary to its creation. The architectural propensity of the 1960s A-line with raised waist was superseded in the 1970s by a preference for a narrow torso with the waist dropping even below the iliac crest. One needs only to conjure the low slung, low-rise jeans at Woodstock. In the 1980s and 1990s, waists have tended to rise again, even to humorous heights.

The anatomical waist is both prime cause and personally subjective. We are, in a literal sense, born of omphalos connection and ever aware of this birth zone, we find it to be our individual expression and our visceral self. Elsewhere, bones protect our interior and design our exterior. But the waist is a personal responsibility. An overeating, non-exercising individual know the waist's indulgence and impudence. The waist is, after all, our definition.

Fashion has sought not the anatomical waist, but a wider latitude and often a narrower frame. Habitually avoiding the anatomical waist, fashion has known our vulnerability and answered our striving to seem better than our failing and foibles that so often make themselves visible at the real waist. Fashion allows us the deceptions we desire. Yet fashion only mediates and expounds the body into cultural design; we are ever aware of the waist, anatomical and imposed, for which we are individually responsible and culturally responsive.

1. Pierre Cardin

Dress, 1971

Red-orange wool crepe and black nylon knit, black patent leather

Cardin developed the binary principle of the 1950s and 1960s Baby Doll in a characteristically 1970s version. Thermometer-like pendants constituted a movemented outer cartridge to a glovelike interior garment. The high-waisted silhouette was starting to elongate in this period.

Gift of Pierre Cardin, 1977 (1977.25.7 a-d)

2. André Courrèges

Evening dress, 1967

Black organza with vinyl trim

Like Cardin in his incorporation of geometry as a dress device and external reference, Courrèges created multiple waists with a magician's sleight of hand. A narrow belt established the fashionable waistline; the peek-boo middle band was an alternative, revealing the midriff near the natural waist. The scale of the perforated band, its punctuation to flesh, and its reiteration at the hem made this waist seem more important than the small-belted waist.

Gift of Jane Holzer, 1977 (1977.115.13)



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3. Pierre Cardin
Day ensemble, 1965
Pieced ivory-and-black wool doubleknit

Envisioning radical dress reform determined by technology and planning a reductive style of the moment, Cardin was, along with Courrèges and Ungaro, a prophet of the 1960s speculations toward a future. An A-line geometry was inflected by the ornament of a band and target. Cardin's emblem was as referenced as Jasper Johns's anatomical Target (1955): Cardin makes the pieced-in band and circle a visual waistline.

Gift of Pierre Cardin, 1977 (1977.25.1 a-e)

4. Halston
Evening gown, 1972
Black silk jersey

Like the contemporary shaped canvases of Minimalism, Halston's evening gown is outlined on the body by the cutaway at sides, creating an optically narrowed waist. Inspired by sportswear and specifically by swimsuits, Halston applied the ergonomic discipline of such clothing functionalism to a distilled, always astringent, modernism of design.

Gift of Mrs. Sid R. Bass, 1984 (1984.157.4)

5. Issey Miyake
Jumpsuit, fall 1976
Red-orange cotton

A woman's jumpsuit was wrapped and tied at the hip in the manner of the Japanese man's obi. Narrower than a woman's obi, the man's rests at the hipline rather than waist, wrapping under the belly. Low-slung waists prevailed not only in the high fashion of the 1970s but in street fashion as well, especially in the popularity of low-rise jeans.

Gift of Issey Miyake, 1977 (1977.405.5 a,b)

[case by west doors]

Fashion lives by its own sign system. Manuals of style and fashion illustrations propagate its ideas and ideals to a wide audience. Their influence is often positive, but, on the other hand, caricature is often effective in persuading women to abandon styles that had seemed desirable only a few years earlier.

Honoré Daumier

C'est unique!, February 7, 1840

Hand-colored lithograph

The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1962 (62.650.258)

Numa

La M.de De Corsets, 1830s

Facsimile of lithographs

The Department of Prints (1528.114)

Dupin after Le Clere

Tailleur costumier essayant un cor à la mode, 1778-87

Facsimile of engraving

The Department of Prints (1528.10)

Henri de Montant

Avant et après le corset, 1884

Ink and watercolor

Etudes sur les Femmes, 1882-1890

The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1951 (51.624.3)

Fashion dolls, serving as didactic miniature replicas, have traditionally been used by salesmen to communicate fashion concepts. Small-scale forms of this kind are not children's toys but analytical renderings. In the instance of innerwear, they provide an opportunity to see the infra-structure of fashionable dress.

Warner's

"Wrap-around" corset, 1920s

Mixed materials over wood

Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

Warner's

"Corselet," 1910

Mixed materials over wood

Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.



See MM
83908 & 83910

MM 83909

Warner's

"Corselet," 1910

Mixed materials over wood

Courtesy Warner's, a division of Warnaco Inc.

Thomas Rowlandson

A Little Tighter, 1791

Hand-colored etching

The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1959 (59.533.429)

R. Delvaux after N. Monsiaud

Le Lancet, 1796

Facsimile of engraving

Libron, Fernand and Henri Clouzot, Le corset dans l'art et les mœurs du 13-20 siècles,

Paris, 1935, p. 65

1. Comme des Garçons
Dress, ca. 1983
Navy wool jersey

MM 83910

In the early 1980s, Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto launched in the Paris showings an asymmetrical layered look, predominantly in black. Some responded adversely to the layering and seeming pastiche in lieu of traditional Western tailoring, even denouncing the garments as apocalyptic tatters.

Courtesy Muriel Kallis Newman

2. Comme des Garçons
"Elastic" dress, ca. 1983
Navy rayon

A gentle, highly intelligent, irony informs the displacement of elastic from fashion's waist and borders to a meandering pilgrimage through the garment. As Vionnet decreased the importance of the waist by distributing fit evenly throughout the garment, Rei Kawakubo for Comme de Garçons structured the garment through its elastic web at the surface.

Courtesy Muriel Kallis Newman

3. Christian Lacroix
Evening ensemble, fall-winter 1987
Black taffeta, lace, and dotted net

Lacroix's historicism is complex and often multivalent. He prizes a layered past. The original silhouette of the eighteenth-century polonaise is a source, but Lacroix acknowledged the transfiguration of that style in the flamboyant 1890s Moulin Rouge coquettishness. The

ensemble becomes a history anew, indivisible in its strata.

Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr., 1989 (1989.334.1 a-e)

4. Gianni Versace
Evening dress, ca. 1990-92
Quilted black silk crepe

Intrigued by the surreptitious sexuality of the 1950s, Versace reexamined the basic type of the Baby Doll dress and adapted the Merry Widow corset. Lace, lacing, and the quilted bodice of 1950s inner and outer layers were conflated by Versace as he compressed the layered suggestions of sexuality into an unabashed 1990s assertion of the erotic.

Gift of Gianni Versace, 1993 (1993.52.5)



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5. Bill Blass
 Barrel dress, ca. 1990
 Multicolored tulle

Blass employed the 1950s as model for his witty version of the sack dress. He deviated from the 1950s in his use of increased bareness, creating a small keg-like cylinder in lieu of the long tube, alluding to the caricature of people dressed only in barrels hanging from the shoulder.

Courtesy Bill Blass

6. Christian Lacroix
 Evening ensemble, fall-winter 1987
 Patterned red, black, and fuchsia silk satin damask

Returning to the example of Balenciaga, Lacroix created a rich and luxurious sack dress for evening, tapered at the hem, swelling and swaggering of profile. Lacroix's keen historicism (latent in his training as an art historian and curator) corresponded to the late 1980s interest in reclaiming the visual and cultural past.

Gift of Monika Dorsey, in memory of Hebe Dorsey, 1988 (1988.34.2 a-c)

7. Christian Lacroix
 Evening coat-dress, fall-winter 1987
 Patterned red, black, and fuchsia silk satin damask

The Empire waist was accompanied by a boned, corsetted bodice in an evening dress that might be said to reconcile various historical styles or perhaps not to reconcile them. The

excitement of the design was that its historical references did not conform to prescribed order nor did they yield to historical synthesis. Rather, Lacroix leaves history unresolved and ever tentative.

Gift of Veronica Hearst, 1993 (1993.105 a,b)

8. Christian Lacroix for Patou
 Evening ensemble, 1986
 Red silk taffeta

Lacroix's defining silhouette in transition from the house of Patou to his own couture house was the pouf: in this instance, the dress was Empire waisted with a bodice that was little more than a ruffle. The effect was to cloak the body literally and figuratively. The shape suggested a voluminous cocoon, more like that of a fanciful 1910s opera coat than that of a dress.

Gift of Monika Dorsey, in memory of Hebe Dorsey, 1988 (1988.34.1 a-m)

9. Jean Paul Gaultier
Oversized skirt, fall-winter 1993
Brown wool herringbone
Purchase, 1994 (1994.9.5)

Gifts from various donors

10. Jean Paul Gaultier
"Hair" pocketbook, fall-winter 1993
Black synthetic fibers
Purchase, 1994 (1994.9.2)

Gifts from various donors

Even if absurdly high, Gaultier does not disqualify the waist's possibilities but merely furthers its migrations. Ironical and even mischievous in reattributing apparel parts, Gaultier is nonetheless a fashion advocate, for even Alice in Wonderland in shrinking and stretching measurements always needs clothes.

11. Vivienne Westwood
Corset bodice, fall-winter 1993-94
Photoprinted viscose and Lycra

A social radical, especially in her épater les bourgeois challenge to the general public, Westwood is also a fashion historicist. Her constant recourse to fashion history for elements as extreme as platform shoes and corsets is a conservatism as much as it is an iconoclasm, if not more.

Courtesy Richard Martin

12. Jean Paul Gaultier
Men's oversized trousers with suspenders, spring-summer 1993
Navy cotton, elastic, metal

Gaultier is indubitably a designer of extremes. His coxcomb pants evoke the resplendent Directoire dandies, deep-pleated stylishness, dudes in zoot suits in the 1940s, and mannered geeks and resplendent clowns.

Gift of Richard Martin, 1993 (1993.151 a,b)

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Curatorial staff:

Meredith Burns
Harold Koda
Jennifer A. Loveman
Richard Martin
Dennita Sewell

Exhibition Designed by: Michael Batista

Graphic Design by: Jill Hammerberg

Conservation Staff: Chris Paulocik Kathleen Mahieu Kathy Keller

Mannequin preparation and dressing: Joell Kunath

Lighting: Zack Zanolli Anita Jorgensen Jonathan Sprouse

Photographer: Karin Willis

Editorial: Barbara Cavaliere Communications: Phylis Fogelson

Installation: Michael Downer

Administration:
Lillian Dickler
Deirdre Donohue

Librarian:
Robert C. Kaufmann

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Edith de Montebello
Rochelle Friedman
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Rosalie Lemontree
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Susan Furlaud
Barbara Guernsey
Betsy Kallop
Butzi Moffitt
Pat Peterson
Elaine Rose
Dee Schaeffer

Nancy Silbert
D.J. White

* * *

This Checklist was compiled and produced by
Jennifer A. Loveman, April 1994