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THE WORLD OF
BALENCIAGA



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THE WORLD OF BALENCIAGA

AN EXHIBITION PRESENTED BY

THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART

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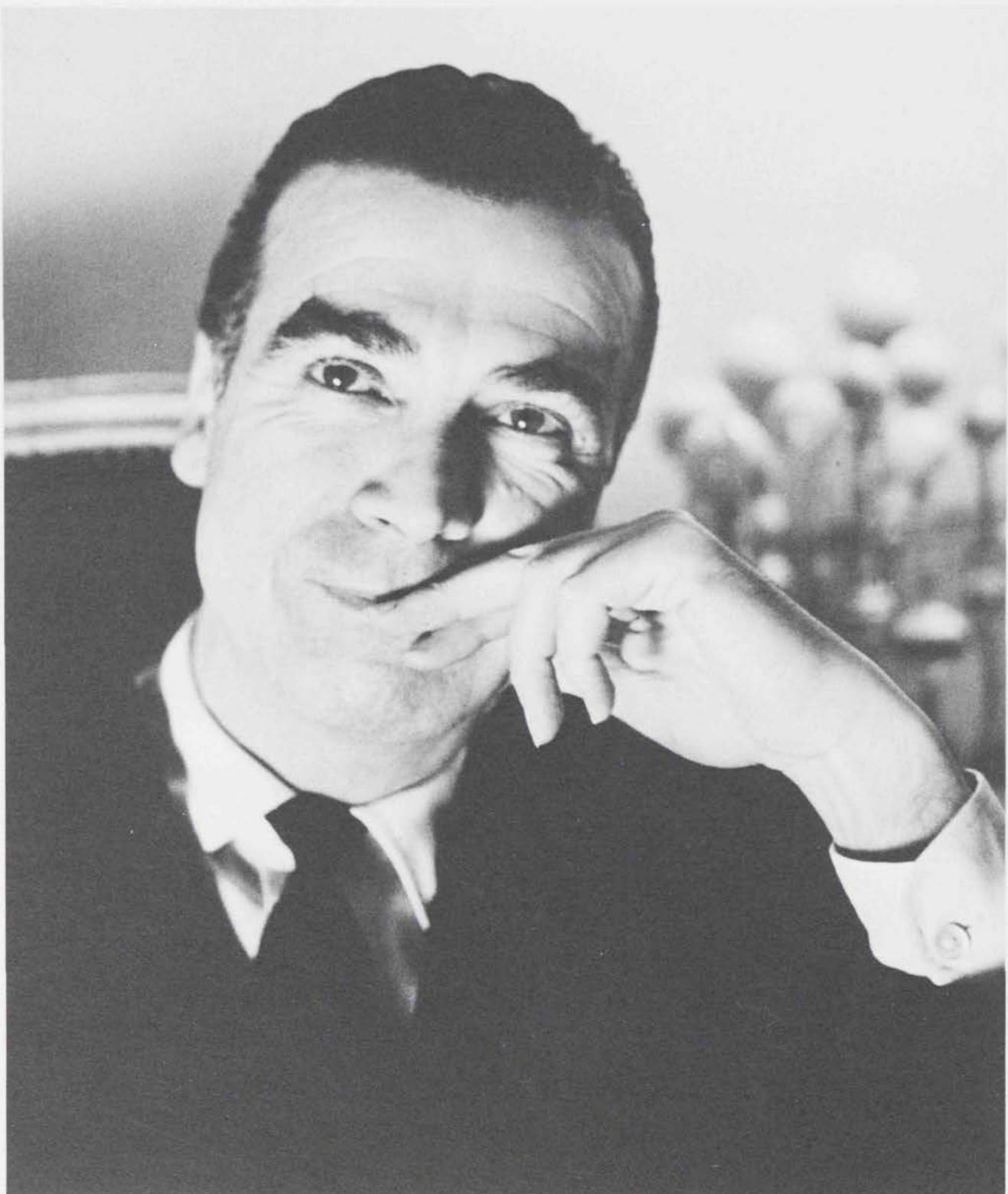
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CRISTOBAL BALENCIAGA

January 21, 1895-March 24, 1972

Photograph courtesy of Louise Dahl-Wolfe, February, 1950

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F OREWORD

BY THOMAS HOVING

Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

It is with particular pleasure that the Metropolitan Museum and its Costume Institute present THE WORLD OF BALENCIAGA. For many years members of the fashion industry have generously supported the Costume Institute so that now it is unquestionably the most important resource of its kind in the world. This exhibition pays homage not only to the genius of the fashion industry but to a man who made fashion history.

While exhibitions have always been a part of the Costume Institute's program, just as important, but perhaps less known by the public, is the daily use by students and designers of its library, archives, and study collection. Daily, students, young and established designers alike learn and are inspired by the creations of other designers. It is fitting therefore that we honor a man who inspired countless designers for nearly thirty years and who was a giant of haute couture.

Balenciaga was a great Spaniard and the rich cultural heritage of his country was an important influence on his work. It is for this reason that we have chosen to install with Balenciaga's creations works of art from the Museum's collections. It is from the great painters—Velazquez, Goya, El Greco, Zurbaran, and Murillo—that he drew his inspiration just as he did from the textiles, decorative arts, and regional costumes of Spain.

We wish to thank the many distinguished people, especially the lenders, whose cooperation has made this show possible. We are particularly indebted to the Government of Spain whose generosity and enthusiasm have enabled the Museum to present this great exhibition.

INTRODUCCION

Para el Metropolitan Museum y para su Costume Institute constituye un motivo de especial satisfacción el presentarles "EL MUNDO DE BALENCIAGA." Durante muchos años los representantes de la industria de la moda han apoyado generosamente al Costume Institute hasta el punto de que hoy día se ha convertido indiscutiblemente en el centro más importante del mundo en su género. Esta exposición rinde homenaje no sólo a un genio de la industria de la moda, sino también a un hombre que ha hecho historia en el mundo de la moda.

Mientras que las exposiciones han constituido siempre una parte del programa de actividades del Costume Institute, de la misma importancia, aunque probablemente menos conocida por el público, es la utilización por estudiantes y diseñadores de su biblioteca, archivos y colecciones. Diariamente estudiantes y diseñadores ya consagrados estudian y se inspiran en las obras de otros creadores de la moda. Es justo, pues, que rendamos homenaje al hombre que constituyó la inspiración de innumerables diseñadores durante cerca de treinta años y que fue un auténtico coloso en el mundo de la alta costura.

Balenciaga era un gran español y la rica herencia cultural de su país tuvo una importante influencia en su trabajo. Por esta razón hemos elegido algunas obras de arte de la colección del Museo para ser presentadas junto con las creaciones de Balenciaga, cuya inspiración procede de pintores como Velázquez, Goya, El Greco, Zurbarán o Murillo tanto como de las artes decorativas y de los trajes regionales de España.

Queremos pues expresar nuestro agradecimiento a todas las distinguidas personas cuya cooperación ha hecho posible esta exposición, y especialmente a las que nos han prestado sus colecciones. En particular estamos reconocidos al Gobierno español cuyo entusiasmo y generosidad han facilitado la presentación de esta gran exposición en nuestro Museo.

BALENCIAGA: AN APPRECIATION

BY DIANA VREELAND

Cristobal Balenciaga was the true son of a strong country filled with style, vibrant color, and a fine history. He remained forever a Spaniard and his inspiration came from the bullrings, the flamenco dancers, the fishermen in their boots and loose blouses, the glories of the church and the cool of the cloisters and monasteries. He took their colors, their cuts, then festooned them to his own taste and dressed the Western world for thirty years.

All women search for their special identity. All women have sleeping qualities of luxury

and mystery. Balenciaga brought the body and dress together in harmony and suddenly a woman found herself in perfect rhythm with the universe. She found herself in delectable colors and combinations and almost impossible perfection. He loved the coquetry of lace and ribbon, of floating taffeta and racy day clothes cut with such gusto and flair of tailoring as the Western world has never known.

He was the master tailor, the master dressmaker. His voice was low and his smile was warm. He believed totally in the grace and dignity of women and made each and every one of his devoted patrons a unique and extraordinary figure.



EULOGY FOR BALENCIAGA

BY FATHER ROBERT PIEPLU

My dear friends,

The pale Paris sun this morning evokes somewhat the splendor of the Guetaria sun which accompanied, haloed, the last passage on earth of Mr. Balenciaga. If I recall Guetaria, it is not only because his life originated there, but also because the piece of legend which this man has written in the history of the haute couture finds its meaning there.

Born of very poor parents, he could have become

a “personage”—for those who begin very humbly are often tempted to exaggerate what they are—whereas, one of the traits of his character was that he always remained a person. He remained true to his destiny. He dreamed of being a creator of form in the manner of Velasquez; he could, in that spirit, have appeared other than he was; he wanted to remain faithful to the inspiration within him from the beginning, for he was a haunted man: haunted by a great plan, a vision of the world and of the individual, and by a conception of his work. He was the man who could tell one of his close friends, a few months before his death, “I have never lied, I have never cheated with life, ‘my’ life, and I have never cheated anyone.”

Of course, when one possesses such daring one can be a beacon and, in a trade which has its vicissitudes, its petty sides, one can be a cornerstone for a young man who arrives in Paris and wants to find at his side an older man on whom he can lean, not only to get advice on his own art, but a friend who will accompany him in the hours of twilight or the moments of glory. You all know it, Mr. Balenciaga was this man.

You have known this man, and better than I you could express here, aloud, what you feel, because one and all you have been marked by him. Apart from his sincerity, the dominant trait of his life, the extra-

ordinary thing about him was his conception of harmony. He looked at the world and at men with a pure regard, free from all false interpretations. He saw people in their “naïveté,” over and beyond what life had made them, to what really constituted them, to their true selves, and divining the secret that everyone has within himself, he conceived his models. For him, clothes were supposed to reveal the deep harmony, beauty in its purest form, the reflection—beyond all distortions—of the Creator which everyone hides more or less in his inner self. Mr. Balenciaga in this way revealed and somehow remodeled the beauty of each individual. To serve this harmony, everything was subordinated, not only the shape of the model but the color, the fabric itself, the variation of ornament. This was his goal, his exigency—everything must be at the service of the individual.

And also, because he had looked at the magnificent sea at Guetaria, had roamed the village streets in his childhood, had been used to the harmony of things, had weighed the color of the setting sun or of the dawn, had seen fishermen working with their hands and had really watched their movements, he had understood that in order to be comfortable, harmonious, one must live in accord with one’s environment; that is why he created his models according to where they would live.

Such a conception of one's art at the service of the world and of the individual was the dominant note in your friend, your master.

But isn't it true, somehow, that what he was has already given light to what you have in you. Whatever your responsibilities: seamstress, premiere or designer, the same mission is yours, the same passion must live in you, a passion to reveal or create beauty. The real manifestation of beauty needs inner conversion, without which it degrades itself into mere appearance.

We suffer from living in a mediocre universe, a world which too often admits half-measures, compromises, ugliness as absolutes—we all suffer from that. You must all contribute, in whatever work you do, to build a harmonious world in which people love to meet, love to look at one another, not to be imprisoned one by another, but to discover inner appearances, the secret of a soul and of a life.

It remains to you, my friends, to keep him alive. May you, in your art, you who have known him, loved him, you for whom he remains an everlasting friend and master, continue his work, and bring back to life—in what you will now create—his leading traits: truth, daring, elegance, comfort, beauty.

Father Pleplu was Balenciaga's parish priest. This eulogy was delivered on March 29, 1972 at St. Pierre de Chaillot, Paris. Translated by Susan Train.

C RISTOBAL BALENCIAGA

BY GLORIA GUINNESS

Paris 1938. Balenciaga is here. His is the new fashion house, the new maison de couture. He is a Spaniard, and, except for rumors from Madrid, nobody really knows who he is or what he does. Mainbocher is great, so are Chanel, Schiaparelli, Patou, Paquin, and Lanvin, and so are Worth, Alix, and Rochas. They are the established greats of the world of fashion in the capital of fashion.

Fashion in the 1930s was not what it is today: a sort of fashionless fashion. In the 1930s fashion had its rules and regulations, and they were dictated to the entire world from the workrooms of the Paris fashion houses. From those houses and those houses alone came the ultimate word.

Women of that decade were not only well dressed, they were beautifully dressed. They were also superbly elegant and extremely demanding. Confronting them with a new maison de couture was about the most daring thing that anyone could do. But Balenciaga did it, and his confrontation with the elite of the fashion world was of such beauty, ele-

gance, and coordination that by the end of seeing his first collection no one knew what to say. This speechless reaction to his perfection was to become through the years the standard ovation to a Balenciaga collection.

Balenciaga's mannequins were never as physically beautiful as the fantastic-looking girls in the other houses but, as Balenciaga often said, women did not have to be perfect or even beautiful to wear his clothes. His clothes made them beautiful.

He was right. But watching his collection, one could not help having the most frustrating misgivings. Surely one would have to be as sophisticated looking as his mannequins, or at least be able to walk as they did, with that long uninterested stride, and that small imperious head held high in the air, looking ever so proud, so confident, so unsmiling.

No, one was a little afraid—afraid of not being good enough for his clothes, afraid of his clothes being too difficult to wear. But they were not. They were so beautifully constructed, so perfectly thought out that there was not a woman in the world who could not wear them. Like works of art they were there to be treated as such, without need of improvement or flattery.

But who was Balenciaga? Who was this genius, what was he like? No one knew. He never showed himself. One heard that he lived in Madrid and San Sebastian, where he had another maison de couture. But no one knew much and no

information ever came forth from the people who worked with him and for him at Avenue George V.

Even so, he became famous, and women crossed frontiers from all over the world to come to Paris and buy his clothes. When World War II came in 1939 and frontiers closed, more Balenciaga dresses were smuggled out of Paris than any other French item, including perfume.

Balenciaga was a very good-looking man and a very private person. He was a little shy but not as shy as he succeeded in making people believe. He was simply not very interested in people or in money. He lived in a world of "dreamed beauty," a world of elegance and dignity and quiet luxury. It was the world he had seen on the horizon of his life when, as a young boy, he had sat at a sewing machine, training those beautiful hands of his on the work that he loved best, work that would one day make him the greatest dressmaker in the world.

But Balenciaga was not only a dressmaker, he was also a great tailor, and his knowledge of that trade, combined with his love for beauty, changed forever what had been until then the standard cut in women's suits and coats. Balenciaga's collars in suits and coats were taken away from the neck and made to rest softly just about an inch away, allowing women and their pearls to breathe. Sleeves were shortened to uncover a wrist that permitted hands and bracelets to move. Waistlines were suggested, not emphasized, allowing women to believe

in a figure that perhaps they did not have.

Balenciaga was a man who worked alone. The ideas were his, the choices his, and his were the hands that put together every single model that was later shown in his collections.

No one before him nor since has known how to wrap an inexpensive piece of toile around a woman's body and make it beautiful. He knew how to pin and sew that toile until it became a masterpiece. Working sometimes on the cut of a sleeve, he would neglect all else and go without food or sleep for days and nights. He would sit at that sewing machine as he had done most of his life, loving every stitch, inspiring himself on the image that he alone had of what a woman should be.

In his dedicated and lonely work Balenciaga achieved the impossible. He made women appear and feel not only beautiful, elegant, and expensive, but also comfortable and chic.

He was my friend and I miss him.

B ALENCIAGA BY PAULINE DE ROTHSCHILD

In the center of a street made dark by the shadows of its thick stone houses, a woman was walking, her back turned to the light from the sea. She wore a pale, ankle-length, silk shantung suit. The severe houses enclosed her, shuttered.

A boy was watching her.

She would come almost abreast of him, and he would run up a side-street of the fishing village, so closely carved into the mountain that its streets are as steep and narrow as Genoa's, some entirely made of steps. Down another he would run and be ahead of her again.

Then he would stare.

One day he stopped her, and asked her if he could make a suit for her. The boy was about thirteen, with dark hair and darker eyes and the smile he would keep all his life.

"Why do you want to do this?" she asked.

"Because I think I can," he answered.

The boy was Cristobal Balenciaga.

The woman was the Marquesa de Casa Torres. We know nothing of the outcome of the first attempt. The Marquesa had him begin the long years of apprenticeship to his trade. In Spain, then, some say, in Bordeaux. When he was eighteen she took him to Paris to see Mr. Doucet. Mr. Doucet

was a great collector, and a very grand dressmaker. The boy saw how Caroline Reboux's hats were brought over for each fitting, how one fussed about proportions. Years later the Marquesa, still infinitely fashionable, insisted that the young man open his own house in Madrid. The Spanish civil war brought him back to Paris. The rest is not only the history of his clothes, but that of mysteries particularly his own.

I had the privilege of dressing at Balenciaga's for twenty-three years. I knew and loved other dressmakers, and understood them. But the mysteries were Balenciaga's.

He exerted a close to total dominance over his field. He did his own thing, as the saying goes, and where sayings cannot go, he went. His own way. Intransigent in his creativity, in his dealings with people, with a sway over the very bones and minds of those who wore his clothes. Perhaps even over their flesh. The women wearing a dress of his, or a coat, or a raincoat, seemed to have acquired a birth certificate to some commitment of their own secret choosing. And of his. He never went to galas or to a party, was never seen in restaurants or the theatre. One night, he refused to let a dress be delivered to one of his most beautiful and favorite clients, a dress ordered to be worn that every evening at one of three receptions in Paris for the Queen of England. The dress had been changed, he said. He did not like what had been done to it. It would be put in the sales, but not until it had been brought back to its original conception. (The crime consisted of sewing the seams of a dress down to the floor, instead of

letting it be two panels opening over a tunic.) The saleswoman responsible would pay for the alterations out of her own money. "I didn't mind the money," later moaned the saleswoman, "but imagine not being able to deliver the dress!"

Where had he developed this sureness?

His name became synonymous with perfection and elegance. Why these two words, in themselves unexplainable? How does the Oxford Dictionary explain perfection? It gives, as an illustration, "The hawk that is most suited for the flight." Perhaps. And elegance? "Neatness, grace, refinement."

Where did he train his eyes to choose and limit his colors so that each became a rarity? As subtle and firm as that of the most sparing of Chinese painters. This man who only traveled between France and Spain.

And the ever-renewed science of cutting? The superb cut that engendered a serenity in movement, a look of ceremonial. Where did he learn this? Not in any apprenticeship.

There was the magnificence too, the adventures for the evening, for the night.

From Goya, of course, came the prettiness of black lace and satin ribbons, but what of the spumes of frosted embroideries, the showers of mother-of-pearl, the pale slightly-stiffened silks layered in silver and gold so that you did not know which moved first, the dress or the light? There was once a bolero embroidered in natural straw the color of Inca gold.

So, one day in February, we went on a pilgrimage of affection and admiration to Guetaria, on the northern coast of

Spain, where Balenciaga was born and where he asked to have his body buried. It was an Atlantic winter day, sudden bursts of sun, then rapid clouds. The houses on the main street, their heavy stone still wet from the rain, glistened as if covered with a gold metallic armor. The proprietors of these seventeenth-century houses are well-to-do. Their boats sail out in the spring to the Arctic seas, to Iceland, for cod fishing. A map in a recent edition of *Moby Dick* shows that whales had a visiting place very near and directly facing Guetaria. In the church, we were to see two pews, to be identified by the carvings of two very small whales, harpooned, each surmounted by a cross. Whalers and believers. Visibly, a people of pride and nimbleness.

The cemetery lies on the side of a hill like a sheet spread out to dry. Vineyards run down to it. Balenciaga's tomb is the highest of two Balenciaga family plots, looking out toward the vineyards and the sea and one lone beautiful pine tree. Balenciaga's tomb is particularly ugly. Slab upon slab of gray granite, and a standing headstone of granite topped by an ill-shaped cross. It promises total blindness and deafness. Solid, expensive, it needs no upkeep, no gestures of fondness, it doesn't allow for weeds. What is he doing there, the austere voluptuary who so often gave us Cinderella's three dresses, one the color of the weather, the other the color of the moon, the third the color of the morning sun? He would be happier with the poor further down, lucky to lie under the green grass, who only require black cast-iron crosses of deli-

cate patterns with the green of the grass showing through.

But look carefully at the vineyards which he must have seen so often. As you look you see the swatches of a Balenciaga collection: rain-washed blues, grays with a greenish tinge. The weather has in places washed the dark brown wood to pale coffee, to white, and sometimes left a harsh metallic blue. No Mediterranean colors these, no red earth, no sapphire sea. The eye that chose so much for us knew the beauty of black hills in Atlantic mists, black against eggshell, against brown.

Asail is hung from a very precise point so that it will resist or give to the pressure of the wind. The shape of the sail determines the amount of yielding. It is mathematically constructed to respond to certain conditions. I had in my hands a few days ago a magazine on sailing and marveled at photographs of sailboats almost becalmed with sails of all shapes and colors, rounding out, fitted to hold the slightest breeze in a seemingly windless hour. The sails were kept shaped and alive.

A woman walking would displace the air so that her skirt would billow out just so much, front, back and sides would round out each in turn, imperceptibly, like a sea-swell.

That was the answer to these miracles of cut, the black tulips he would send out across the floor. Nothing held them out; neither whalebone cages nor petticoats gave them any support. Legs moved easily, the front of the long skirt running a little faster ahead than one's walk, like the tides, you were

given the elements, you could use them at will. This creator never cared much where the breasts were placed. "Monsieur Balenciaga *likes* a little stomach," the fitter would say. One afternoon, the waist disappeared altogether.

As for the general look achieved (long before the sack and tunic) he preferred the horizontal to the vertical. His clothes took on great width. They sometimes looked to me like a group of great insects with outspread wings when in reality they were closer to Japanese stage clothes.

Wit was on the head, where it should be, and several seasons saw small impudent black velvet hats with a straight tab up their back, such as those of long gone Japanese gentlemen, *shōguns* imperturbable under their highly lacquered headgear. On August sixth in Guetaria they hold the feast of Juan Sebastian Elcano, "the first navigator to circle around the world," in five years from 1519 to 1523. There in his birthplace, they play out his trip and his return. Which brings us back to procession and Balenciaga's four- or six-sided dresses like Spanish Madonnas. This brings back splendor.

Perhaps the church would bring an answer. Too big for the town, it stands across the end of the main street, a tawny animal high on its legs arching its back and stomach over a paved road. The road runs down to the wharfs below. In summer all manner of craft sail into the triangular port, and people walk up through the cool arch into the shadows of the street. They eat sardines grilled on iron grills the size of ships' berths. Inside the church, the Madonna stands

in a long hooded black cloak, the silver handles of the seven swords of our deadly sins stuck through her heart. A smaller Madonna is carried in processions. The vehemence of her usual ornamentation had disappeared and she was soberly clad, just a few sequins on a discolored dress, but the shape was there. Not much splendor. Other cathedrals not too far away must have furnished this, Burgos, for instance, or the exquisite Miraflores. Because Balenciaga used splendor as if he could make it materialize out of the shining things that man has used to distract and possess, gold, diamonds, mirrors, and their like. He, Balenciaga, worked as if he wished to annul the dark, the perishable, the disillusionment. It was unintellectual and very straightforward, made to last forever. There was voluptuousness, wit, and severity.

We are in front of a monumental work, in itself a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages give unexpected rewards. Guetaria holds many of Cristobal Balenciaga's secrets. It is dangerous, if not impossible, to try to invade the privacy of a man's genius. Errors set in. Yet one knows that imprints in the eye come up to its surface. At the end, some said the collections were not as bold, no longer prophetic. Then he made one, the one-before-last. It was the collection of a very young man together with all the knowledge.

In Spanish, the verb to wish, to want, to love is one and the same. *Tu quieres?* Perhaps at the beginning of life, at thirteen, one should ask only that question of others and of oneself.

BALENCIAGA -APRECIACION ESCRITA POR DIANA VREELAND

Cristóbal Balenciaga era un auténtico hijo de aquel país recio, lleno de estilo, de color y de historia. Balenciaga no dejó nunca de ser español. Las corridas de toros, los bailarines flamencos, los pescadores en sus barcas con sus blusas flameantes, el esplendor de las iglesias y la frescura de los claustros y monasterios eran las fuentes de su inspiración. Empleó sus colores y sus líneas adaptándolas a su gusto y vistió así a la mujer del mundo occidental durante treinta años.

Cada mujer busca su propia identidad. Cada una tiene cualidades latentes de lujo y de misterio. Balenciaga armonizó perfectamente el cuerpo de la mujer con su vestido contribuyendo así a identificarla con el ritmo del universo. La rodeó de colores delicados y sutiles alcanzando una rara perfección. A Balenciaga le encantaba la coquetería de las cintas y los encajes, los vaporosos tafetanes y los vestidos de tarde, todo ello de corte tan exquisito que superaba a lo que hasta entonces había conocido el mundo occidental.

Balenciaga fue maestro de sastres y maestro de modistas. Su voz era suave y su sonrisa cálida. Creía plenamente en la gracia y la dignidad de la mujer convirtiendo a cada una de sus fieles clientas en un ser extraordinario y único.

ORACION FUNEBRE PRONUNCIADA POR EL PADRE PIEPLU EN MEMORIA DEL SR. BALENCIAGA

Mis queridos amigos:

Esta mañana el sol de París constituye en cierto modo una pálida evocación del sol de Guetaria que acompañó y aureoló los últimos pasos del Sr. Balenciaga sobre la tierra. Si hago alusión a Guetaria no es solamente porque fue allí donde nació, sino también porque el capítulo de la leyenda que Balenciaga escribe para la historia de la alta costura encuentra en aquel lugar su auténtico significado.

De origen humilde, Balenciaga pudo haberse convertido en un "personaje," porque los que comienzan humildemente muchas veces caen en la tentación de exagerar sus talentos. Por el contrario, uno de los rasgos sobresalientes de su carácter fue el haber sido siempre una "persona." Fue fiel a su destino. Soñaba con ser un creador de formas al estilo de Velázquez y pudo, en este sentido haber adoptado una personalidad distinta de la suya. Desde el primer momento quiso ser fiel a aquella inspiración porque era un hombre obsesionado, obsesionado por un gran proyecto, por su visión del mundo y del individuo, y por el concepto de lo que debía ser su trabajo. Fue el hombre capaz de confesar a uno de sus íntimos amigos, pocos meses antes de su muerte: "Nunca he mentido, nunca he engañado a la vida, a "mi" vida y nunca he engañado a nadie."

Evidentemente, cuando se lleva dentro una dosis tan fuerte de radicalismo, se puede llegar a ser un faro que en una

profesión tan sujeta a vicisitudes y pequeñeces guie a los jóvenes que llegan a París en busca de un hombre de más edad en quien encontrar apoyo, no sólo como consejero artístico, sino también como amigo que le acompañe en las horas difíciles o en los momentos de gloria. Todos sabéis que ese hombre era Balenciaga. Vosotros le habéis conocido y podríais expresar mejor que yo lo que sentís ya que todos habéis sido marcados por su personalidad. Aparte de su franqueza, el rasgo dominante en su vida, lo más extraordinario de su personalidad, fue su sentido de la armonía. Observaba el mundo y al hombre con una mirada pura, libre de toda falsa interpretación. Veía a las personas con su "ingenuidad," por encima de lo que la vida había hecho de ellas para llegar a lo que realmente eran, a su verdadero ser, y adivinando el secreto que cada una lleva en su alma, creaba sus modelos. Para él el vestido debía revelar una profunda armonía, la belleza más pura, el reflejo creador que todos, unos más que otros, esconden en lo más profundo de su ser. Balenciaga, de esta manera, reveló y en cierto modo remodeló la belleza de cada persona. Todo estaba subordinado a esta armonía, no sólo la forma del modelo, sino también su color, la tela y adornos. Esta era su meta, su exigencia: todo debía estar al servicio de la persona.

Además, como había contemplado ese mar maravilloso de Guetaria, como había paseado durante su infancia por las calles del pueblo, como se había acostumbrado a la armonía de las cosas, como había aprendido a valorar el colorido de un amanecer o de una puesta de sol, como había visto a los pescadores trabajando con sus manos y había observado sus movimientos, comprendió que para conseguir la comodidad

es preciso vivir de acuerdo con el ambiente de cada uno. Por ello diseñaba sus modelos en función del lugar donde se iba a vivir.

Esta concepción de su arte al servicio del mundo y de las personas era el rasgo dominante de vuestro amigo, de vuestro maestro.

Pero ¿no es cierto que de algún modo lo que él era ha iluminado ya lo que cada uno de vosotros lleva dentro de sí mismo? Cualquiera que sea vuestra responsabilidad: costurera, modista o diseñadora, la misión es la misma, la misma pasión deberá arder en vosotros, la pasión de revelar o de crear belleza. La auténtica manifestación de la belleza exige una conversión profunda sin la cual se deteriora.

Todos sufrimos los efectos de vivir en un universo mediocre, en un mundo donde tantas veces se proclama como absoluto lo que no es más que compromiso, fealdad. Todos sufrimos por ello. Cada uno de vosotros debe contribuir, cualquiera que sea su profesión, a la construcción de un mundo donde reine la armonía, un mundo en el que los hombres deseen conocerse, mirarse, no para esclavizarse los unos a los otros, sino para descubrir el secreto de un alma y de una vida, dentro de las apariencias.

Ahora os corresponde, amigos míos, la misión de mantener viva su memoria. Quiera Dios que, con vuestro arte, los que le habéis conocido, los que le habéis amado, vosotros para quienes siempre seguirá siendo el amigo y el maestro, podáis continuar su obra y hacer revivir en vuestras futuras creaciones los rasgos que le caracterizaban: la verdad, el rigor, la elegancia, el confort, la belleza.

CRISTOBAL BALENCIAGA -ARTICULO POR GLORIA GUINNESS

París 1938. Balenciaga está aquí. Suya es la nueva casa de alta costura. Es español pero, aparte de los rumores que circulan por Madrid, nadie sabe realmente quien es ni qué es lo que hace. Mainbocher es famoso, Chanel, Schiaparelli, Patou, Paquin y Lanvin lo son también, así como Worth, Alix, Fath y Rochas. Son ellos los grandes nombres del mundo de la moda en la capital de la misma.

La moda durante la década de los 30 no había llegado a ser lo que es hoy en día: una especie de moda sin modelo. Durante los años 30 la moda tenía sus reglas y sus reglamentos que se dictaban a todo el mundo desde los talleres de las casas de alta costura de París. De aquellas casas y solamente de ellas surgía la última palabra.

Las mujeres de esa década no sólo se vestían bien, sino que lo hacían además con gracia. Eran también extraordinariamente elegantes y muy exigentes. Enfrentarlas con una nueva casa de modas era probablemente una de las cosas más atrevidas que se podía hacer. Pero Balenciaga lo logró; su primer contacto con la élite del mundo de la moda tuvo lugar con tanta belleza, elegancia y armonía que después de haber visto su primera colección todo el mundo quedó mudo

de asombro. Ese silencio ante aquella perfección, con el paso de los años se convirtió en la ovación tácita que recibiría la colección de Balenciaga.

Las maniquís de Balenciaga no eran físicamente tan bellas como las modelos de otras casas, pero, como decía el propio Balenciaga, una mujer no necesita ser perfecta ni muy hermosa para lucir sus creaciones: sus obras de arte las embellodian.

Y tenía razón. Pero al presenciar su colección nadie podía evitar una completa sensación de frustración. No había más remedio que ser tan sofisticada como sus maniquís o, por lo menos, ser capaz de caminar como ellas, con aquel paso largo y displicente, con la cabeza alta, llenas de orgullo, de confianza en si mismas y sin un asomo de sonrisa.

De manera que una sentía cierto temor de no ser digna de tales vestidos, temor de que aquellos trajes fueran demasiado difíciles de llevar. Pero no lo eran. Estaban tan bien confeccionados, tan perfectamente concebidos que no había una sola mujer en el mundo que no los pudiera llevar. Igual que las obras de arte, existían para ser tratadas como tales, sin necesidad de ser completadas ni aduladas.

Pero ¿quién era Balenciaga? ¿Quién era aquél genio? ¿Qué tipo de persona era? Nadie lo sabía. Nunca se le veía. Corrian rumores de que vivía en Madrid y en San Sebastián donde tenía una casa de alta costura. Pero nadie estaba muy enterado y, por otra parte, no se escapaba una sola palabra de las personas que trabajaban con y para él.

Sin embargo, llegó a ser famoso. Hubo mujeres que

atravesaron fronteras y llegaron a París desde todos los rincones del mundo para comprar sus creaciones. En 1939, cuando se declaró la Segunda Guerra Mundial, hubo más contrabando de vestidos de Balenciaga que de cualquier otro artículo, incluidos los perfumes.

Balenciaga era un hombre muy bien parecido y muy celoso de su vida privada. Era tímido, pero no tanto como lo hacía creer a la gente. Sencillamente no le interesaba ni el dinero ni el público. Vivía en un mundo de "belleza soñada," un mundo elegante, digno y de discreto esplendor. Era el mundo que él había entrevisto cuando de niño se sentaba a la máquina de coser, entrenando sus hermosas manos para ese trabajo que tanto amaba, ese trabajo que un día le consagró como el modisto más famoso del mundo.

Pero Balenciaga no fue solamente un modisto, sino también un gran sastre, y su conocimiento de la profesión combinado con su amor por la belleza, transformó para siempre lo que había sido hasta entonces la norma en el corte de trajes y abrigos de mujer. Se rebajó la altura del cuello para dejar respirar a la mujer y a sus perlas. Se acortaron las mangas para realizar los brazaletes y el movimiento de las manos. El talle era suavemente sugerido, pero no con exageración, lográndose así que la mujer otreciese una figura que tal vez no tenía.

Balenciaga era un hombre que trabajaba solo. Las ideas eran suyas, suyas las decisiones y suyas también las manos que creaban cada uno de los modelos que luego desfilarían las maniquíes de su colección.

Nadie antes ni después de él supo colocar tan bien una

tela sobre el cuerpo de una mujer, creando así belleza. Sabía cómo utilizar esta tela hasta convertirla en una obra de arte. Trabajaba a veces noches enteras, sin comer ni dormir sobre el corte de una manga. Se sentaba a la máquina de coser, como había hecho durante la mayor parte de su vida admirando cada puntada e inspirándose en la imagen que solamente él tenía de lo que debía ser una mujer.

En su trabajo, tan delicado como solitario, Balenciaga logró lo imposible. Fue él quien consiguió que la mujer no sólomente se sintiese hermosa y elegante sino también cómoda y chic.

Balenciaga era mi amigo y yo lo echo de menos.

BALENCIAGA POR PAULINE DE ROTHSCHILD

Por una calle ensombrecida por robustas casas de piedra, caminaba una señora alejándose del resplandor del mar. Llevaba un traje, largo hasta los tobillos, de pálida seda de "shantung."

Un muchacho la estaba observando.

Cuando la señora llegaba casi a tropezar con él, el muchacho se escapaba por una de las callejuelas de aquel pueblo de pescadores que parecía esculpido en la montaña, de calles tan empinadas y estrechas como las de Génova, algunas hechas solo de escalones. Luego el muchacho bajaba por otra calle para adelantarse a la señora y se la quedaba mirando fijamente.

Un día la detuvo y le preguntó si podía hacerle un traje para ella. El muchacho tenía alrededor de 13 años; su cabello era moreno, sus ojos más oscuros todavía y tenía ya aquella sonrisa que conservaría durante toda su vida.

"¿Por qué quieres hacerlo? le preguntó ella."

"Porque creo que soy capaz" contestó él.

Aquel muchacho era Cristóbal Balenciaga y la señora la Marquesa de Casa Torres. No sabemos qué ocurrió después de aquel primer encuentro. La Marquesa le hizo comenzar sus largos años de aprendizaje de la profesión en España, aunque algunos dicen que fue en Burdeos. Cuando Balenciaga cumplió los 18 años, la Marquesa de Casa Torres le llevó a París a visitar a M. Doucet que era un gran coleccionista y un gran modisto. El joven tuvo la oportunidad de asistir a la llegada de los sombreros de Caroline Reboux para cada prueba y comprobó hasta qué punto se tenían en cuenta las proporciones. Años más tarde la Marquesa,

que seguía vistiéndose maravillosamente a la moda, insistió en que el joven abriese su propia casa de modas en Madrid. La Guerra Civil española le hizo regresar a París.

Todo lo demás no es solamente la historia de los vestidos de Balenciaga, sino también la de un misterio, el suyo propio.

Yo tuve el privilegio de vestirme en Balenciaga durante veintitrés años. Conocí, y me gustaron, otros modistas a quienes podía comprender. Pero el "misterio" era propiedad exclusiva de Balenciaga.

Balenciaga llegó prácticamente a ejercer un dominio total sobre su profesión. Hacía lo suyo a su manera. Era intransigente en sus creaciones, en su trato con la gente, influyendo hasta en el propio cuerpo y en la mentalidad de las personas que vestían sus obras. Y tal vez también sobre su sensualidad. La mujer que vestía un traje suyo, un abrigo o un impermeable parecía haber adquirido un compromiso con su secreta elección... y con él. Balenciaga nunca asistía a fiestas o reuniones, nunca se le veía en restaurantes ni en teatros. Una tarde se negó a entregar a una de sus clientas más hermosas y fieles un vestido que debía ser lucido aquella misma noche en una de las tres recepciones organizadas en París en honor de la Reina de Inglaterra. Dijo que le habían cambiado el vestido. No le gustaba lo que se había hecho. Lo iba a poner a la venta pero nunca antes de que lo hubieran devuelto a su idea original. (El crimen consistió en coser el vestido hasta el suelo en lugar de dejarlo abierto cayendo en dos paños sobre la túnica). La vendedora responsable tuvo que pagar el arreglo con su propio dinero. "No me importa el dinero" se lamentaba luego la vendedora, "pero mira que no poder entregar el vestido!"

¿Cómo había llegado a adquirir aquella seguridad?

Su nombre llegó a ser sinónimo de perfección y elegancia. Y ¿por qué precisamente de "perfección y elegancia," estas dos palabras tan difíciles de explicar? El Diccionario Oxford define la palabra "perfección" con un ejemplo: "El halcón es el ave mejor preparada para el vuelo." Tal vez. Y ¿qué es "elegancia?" "Pulcritud, gracia, refinamiento."

¿Dónde había entrenado sus ojos para que pudieran elegir y limitar su gama de colores haciendo de cada uno de ellos algo único,

algo tan sutil y sólido al mismo tiempo que sólo pueden compararse con los de algún pintor chino? Y pensar que aquél hombre sólo había viajado por España y Francia!

¿Y aquella ciencia del corte en constante renovación? Aquel corte soberbio que engendraba la serenidad en el movimiento, un aire de ceremonia ¿dónde aprendió todo esto? En ninguna escuela de aprendizaje evidentemente.

En sus obras había también grandiosidad, aventura para la tarde y para la noche.

De Goya le venía la gracia del encaje negro y de las cintas de satén, pero qué decir de aquella espuma de bordados, de las exhibiciones de madreperlas, de las pálidas y levemente almidonadas capas de seda plateadas y doradas y que al verlas no se sabía qué se movía antes, si el vestido o la luz? Hizo una vez un bolero bordado en paja, del color del oro Inca.

Un día del mes de Febrero hicimos una peregrinación de admiración y afecto a Guetaria, en la costa norte de España, donde nació Balenciaga y donde pidió que le enterrasen. Era un día frío e invernal; el sol aparecía repentinamente y luego nubes veloces cubrían el cielo. Las casas de las calles principales, con sus grandes piedras todavía mojadas de lluvia resplandecían como si estuvieran recubiertas de láminas de oro. Los propietarios de estas casas del siglo XVII son gente acomodada. En primavera, sus barcos navegan por los mares árticos, hasta Islandia, para pescar bacalao. En una reciente edición de "Moby Dick" aparece un mapa en el que puede comprobarse que las ballenas llegaban hasta zonas muy cercanas a Guetaria. En la iglesia pudimos ver dos bancos caracterizados por dos esculturas de pequeñas ballenas coronadas por una cruz. Balleneros y creyentes: sin duda gente orgullosa y hábil.

El cementerio está situado en la ladera de una montaña como una sábana puesta a secar. Está rodeado de viñedos. La tumba de Balenciaga es la más elevada de las dos que posee su familia. Está situada frente a los viñedos, frente al mar y frente a un pino solitario. Su tumba es especialmente fea: láminas sobre láminas de granito gris con una

cabecera de la misma piedra coronada por una cruz deformada. Es como una promesa de oscuridad y silencio. Maciza, rica, no atrae la atención ni gesto alguno de cariño. Tampoco permite que crezcan las hierbas. ¿Qué hace ahí aquel hombre austero y voluptuoso al mismo tiempo que tantas veces nos ofreció "los tres vestidos de Cenicienta, uno del color del tiempo, otro del color de la luna y el tercero del color del sol naciente?"

Balenciaga sería más feliz abajo, con los pobres, bajo el césped verde donde sólo se ven cruces de hierro de formas delicadas, a través de las cuales aparece el verde de los prados.

Pero fijaos detenidamente en los viñedos que él había visto tantas veces, y podréis comprobar que poseen los colores de las colecciones de Balenciaga: celestes bañados por la lluvia, grises con tonalidades verdosas... En algunos lugares el tiempo ha desteñido la madera oscura dándole un color café claro, hasta blanco, y proporcionándole a veces brillantes tonalidades de un color azul metálico. Aquellos no son los colores del Mediterráneo, como el rojo de la tierra o el zafiro del mar. Aquellos ojos que eligieron tantas cosas para nosotros, conocían la belleza de los cascos negros de los barcos asomando entre las brumas del Atlántico: negro sobre ocre, sobre marrón.

Una vela cuelga de un punto muy estratégico para que pueda resistir o ceder ante la fuerza del viento. La forma de la vela determina la capacidad de resistencia. Está técnicamente fabricada para determinadas condiciones. El otro día tenía en mis manos una revista de navegación y me maravillaba ante aquellas fotos de veleros como tranquilizados por velas de todos tipos y colores, abombadas, dispuestas a acoger la menor brisa en un momento en que aparentemente no había viento. Las velas se mantenían erguidas y vibrantes.

Cuando una mujer camina agita el aire que la rodea y, casi, sin que se note, su falda se llena suavemente delante, detrás y por los costados como le crecida del mar.

Esta era la respuesta ante el milagro del corte: aquellos tulipanes negros que Balenciaga extendía por el suelo. Nada los sostenía, ni balleñas, ni enaguas les daban cuerpo. Las piernas podían moverse libremente, el delantero de la falda larga, se proyectaba unos pasos antes

que los nuestros, como la marea del mar. Se nos daban los medios necesarios que podíamos utilizar a nuestro gusto. A este creador nunca le preocupó demasiado donde iba a quedar el pecho. "Al Sr. Balenciaga le gusto un poquito de estómago" decía el probador. Un día la cintura desapareció totalmente.

Para lograr una impresión de conjunto (mucho antes que la túnica y el traje saco) prefería la línea horizontal a la vertical. Sus vestidos adquirieron gran amplitud. A veces me recordaban grandes insectos con sus alas desplegadas, aunque en realidad más se parecían a los trajes utilizados en el teatro japonés.

El ingenio estaba en la cabeza, donde debe estar, y así durante varias temporadas pudieron verse pequeños e impertinentes sombreros de terciopelo negro, con una cola atrás como la que usaban los antiguos señores japoneses, los "shoguns," impertérritos con sus cabezas lacadas.

El 6 de Agosto, se celebra en Guetaria una fiesta conmemorativa de la gesta de Juan Sebastian Elcano, el primer navegante que dió la vuelta al mundo, en cinco años, de 1519 a 1523. Allí, en el lugar donde nació, se revive su viaje y su regreso, lo cual nos hace pensar en los desfiles de Balenciaga, en sus trajes con cuatro y seis pliegues, como los de las vírgenes españolas. De nuevo nos encontramos ante el esplendor.

Tal vez la iglesia nos dará la respuesta. Demasiado grande para el pueblo, se encuentra al final de la calle mayor como un animal oscuro, erguido sobre sus patas traseras, con el lomo arqueado, sobre la calle pavimentada. Las calles descienden hasta el muelle. En verano toda clase de barcos entran en el puerto, de forma triangular, y la gente pasea bajo la frescura de los arcos y por las calles sombreadas. Comen sardinas asadas sobre parrillas del tamaño de los espigones de los barcos. En la iglesia hay una Virgen cubierta por una capa negra con las siete espadas de empuñadura de plata de nuestros siete pecados capitales atravesando su corazón. En las procesiones sale una Virgen más pequeña: ha desaparecido el esplendor de sus adornos y va sobriamente vestida con unas pocas lentejuelas sobre su vestido descolorido. Pero la imagen es la misma. Hay poco esplendor. Otras catedrales no muy

lejanas, como la de Burgos, por ejemplo, o la exquisita Cartuja de Miraflores, le habrán prestado sin duda aquel toque.

Porque Balenciaga utilizó el esplendor como si pudiera materializarlo en los objetos preciosos que el hombre ha inventado para su recreo y para gozar con su posesión, como el oro, los diamantes, los espejos, etc. Balenciaga trabajó como si quisiera anular la oscuridad, lo perecedero, las desilusiones. Su obra no era intelectual, sino muy sencilla y hecha para durar eternamente. Tiene volubilidad, ingenio y seriedad.

Estamos frente a un trabajo monumental que constituye como una peregrinación. Y las peregrinaciones tienen agradables sorpresas. Guetaria contiene muchos de los secretos de Cristóbal Balenciaga.

Es peligroso, cuando no imposible, invadir la vida privada de un hombre genial. Se cometen errores. Al final algunos decían que las colecciones ya no eran tan atrevidas y proféticas. Fue entonces cuando creó una, la penúltima, que era la colección de un hombre muy joven pero con toda su sabiduría.

¿"Quieres"? Tal vez esta sea la única pregunta que al comienzo de la vida, a los trece años, deberíamos hacer a los demás y a nosotros mismos.

"Balenciaga used color as well as texture and line. He used it as the great Spanish painters did, in a determined and precise way. His suits are perfectly combined chromatic portraits without faces, bodies without flesh. From pure black which Paul Valery called 'a powerful color and total solitude,' to red the color of life, or the yellow of silks or the blues of Velázquez's skies. There also existed in his theories the impeccable whites of Zurbaran or the grey habits of El Greco. His creative art was like an artistic Spanish explosion..."

"His fashion house had a curious monastic seal, in which there was no room for loud and outspoken people, nor for laughter and disorder. Everything was done in an atmosphere of silence and efficiency: fashion shows, work, rehearsals. Even among his models there was a sign of restraint, no airs or graces. To see his show was to be present at a pure aesthetic spectacle, reverent and organized."

Quotes from an article by Jose Maria Arielza, from *El Diario Vasco*, August 25, 1972.



Maria del Carmen Martinez Bordiu, granddaughter of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, on the day of her wedding, March 8, 1972, to Don Alfonso de Bourbon, now their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cadiz. This is Balenciaga's last creation and the only dress he made after his retirement. A white satin princess dress appearing to be laced with pearls and diamond cords, as in the middle ages. Her tiara is of diamonds and large emeralds set in gold.

Exclusive photograph courtesy of
Raymundo de Larrain

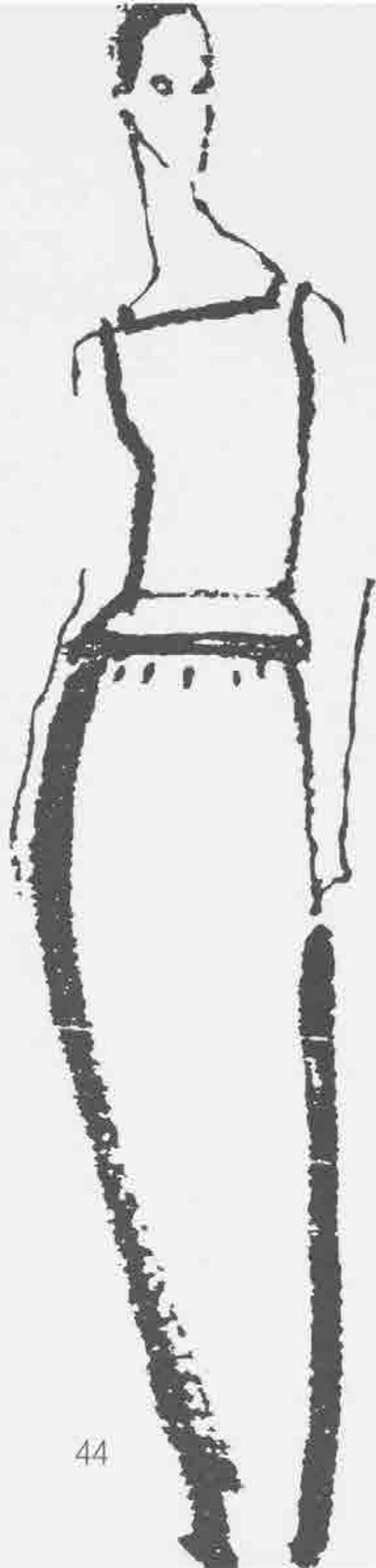




Her Majesty Fabiola, Queen of Belgians on the day of her marriage, December 15, 1960, to His Majesty King Baudouin. Her dress of white satin and white mink was a gift from Balenciaga as he was a great friend of her family.

Photograph courtesy of Paris-Match





p. 44 An impression of a sleeveless two piece
demi-sheath evening dress, circa 1964.

Sketch courtesy of Women's Wear Daily

p. 45 The fisherman's overblouse, the shal-
low canotier and chopped-off gloves.

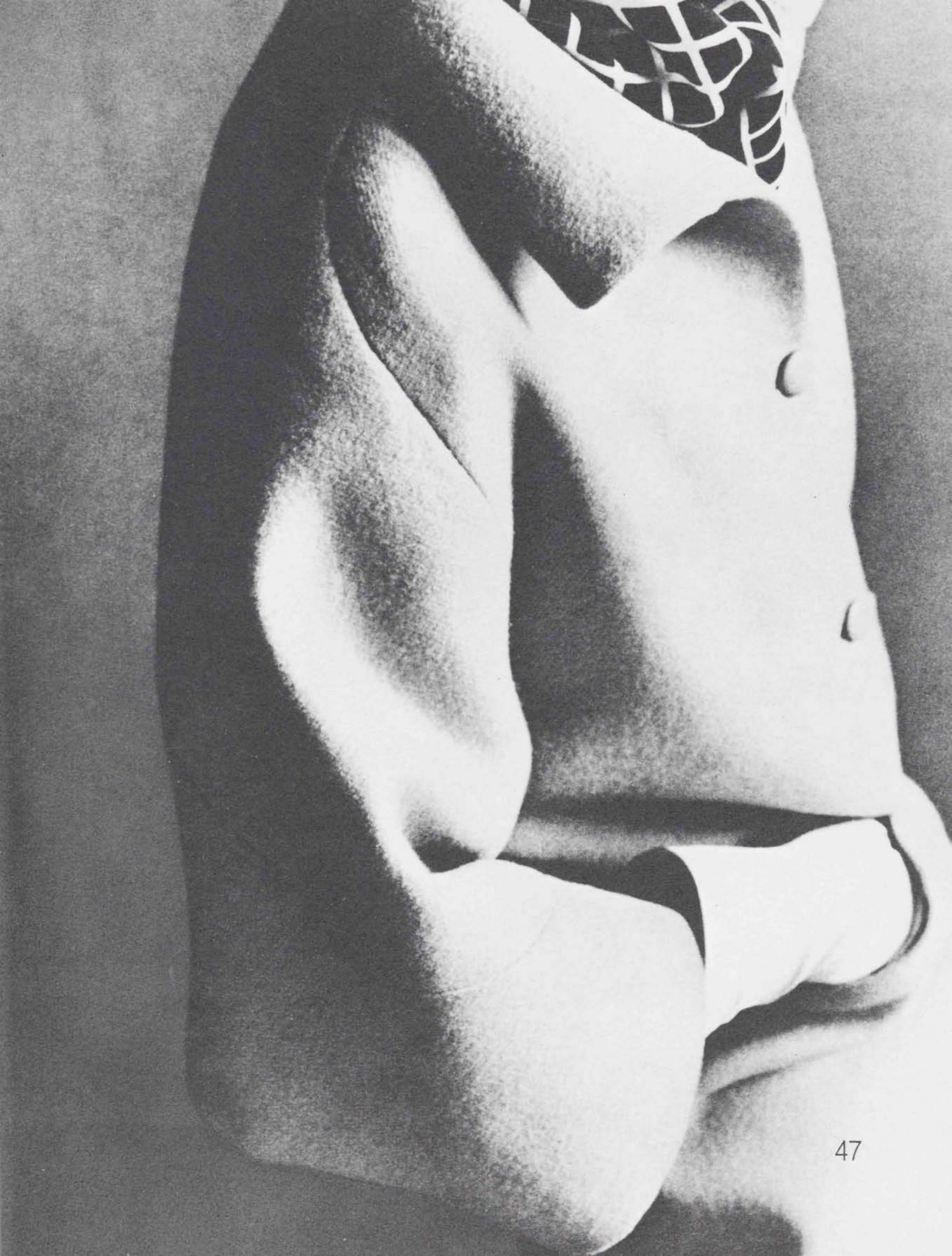
Photograph—Louise Dahl-Wolfe,
Harper's Bazaar, March 15, 1953

pp. 46 & 47 The loose fit of jackets through the
body, the cut-away necks with round-
mounted collars.

Photographs—Bert Stern, Vogue, April
15, 1964







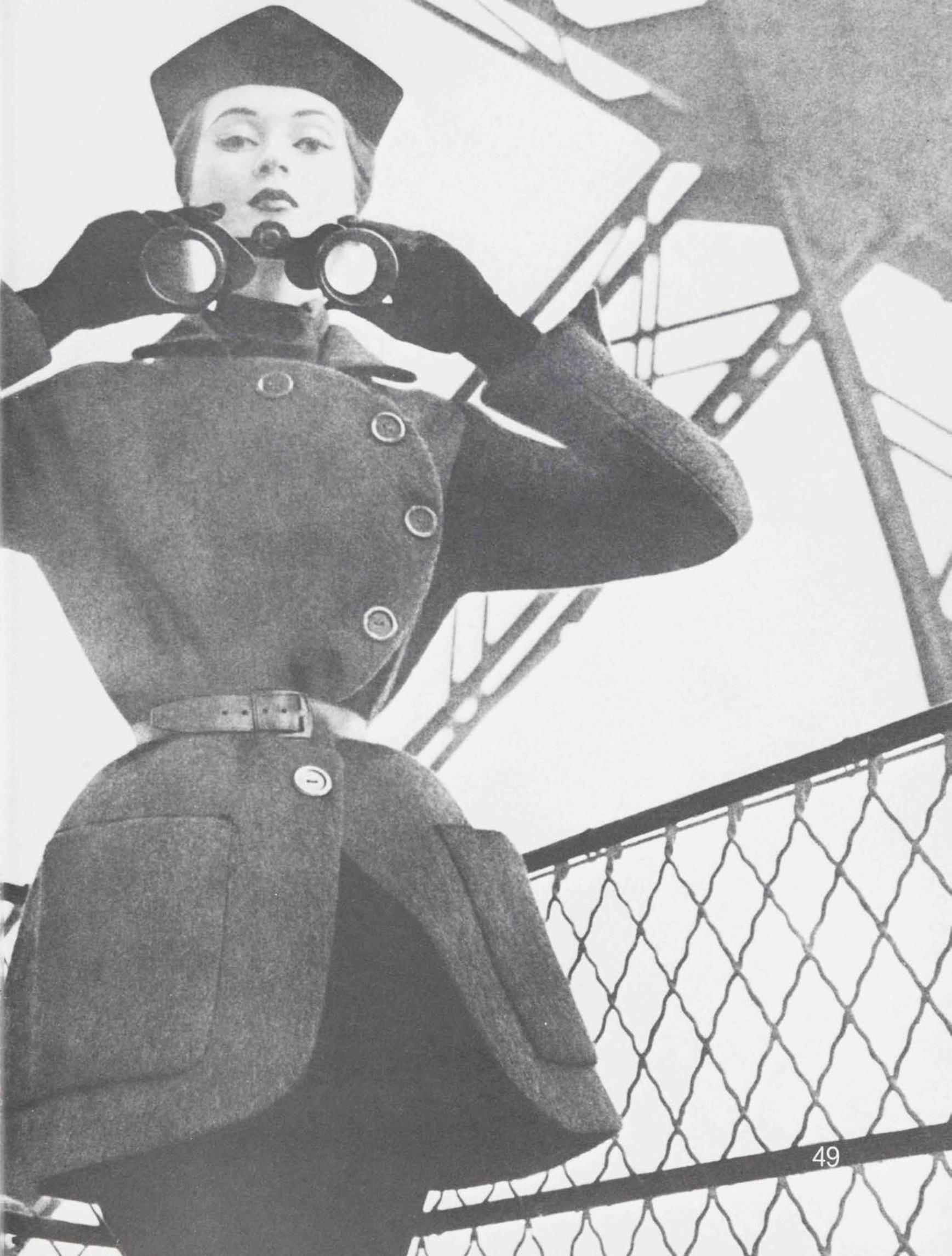
p. 49 A new tailoring starts in the early nineteen-fifties. Silhouettes of all sorts start to form, tightly belted wool and the decoration of buttons.

Photograph—Richard Avedon,
Harper's Bazaar, 1950

p. 50 A float of taffeta. Women move as swans across a pond, 1959

p. 51 A gathered then narrowing sheath of foamy crepe. Huge black velvet sleeves on an evening jacket. 1958

Photographs—Jean Kublin











p. 52 The coquetry of the back. 1960

p. 53 The released sheath, the hemline reminiscent of a flamenco dress. 1958

Photographs—Jean Kublin

p. 54 Released and flounced flowered taffeta. This is the era of the so-called "Baby Doll." 1958

p. 55 The skirt high under the bust cut like huge petals and the legs emerging as from a giant flower. 1958

Photographs—Jean Kublin





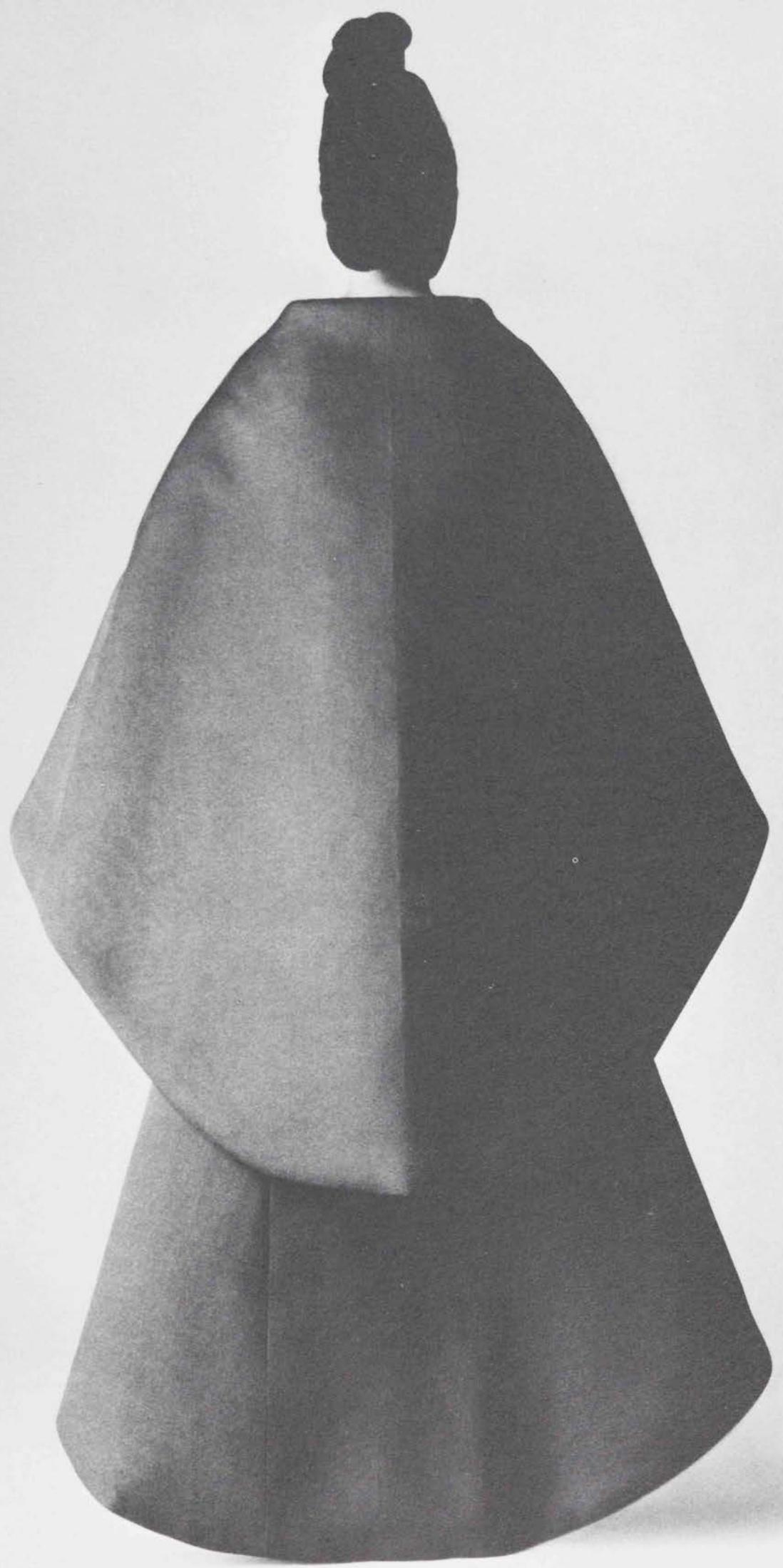
p. 56 A bride in white gazar

p. 57 A bride's attendant in colored gazar
Photographs — David Bailey, Vogue,
July 1967

p. 58 Light as two banked clouds, the thinnest black taffeta makes an evening cape.
Photograph— Irving Penn, Vogue,
September 1, 1950

p. 59 Black lace and ribbons as delightful
as are the majas of Goya
Photograph — Richard Avedon,
Harper's Bazaar, October 1952



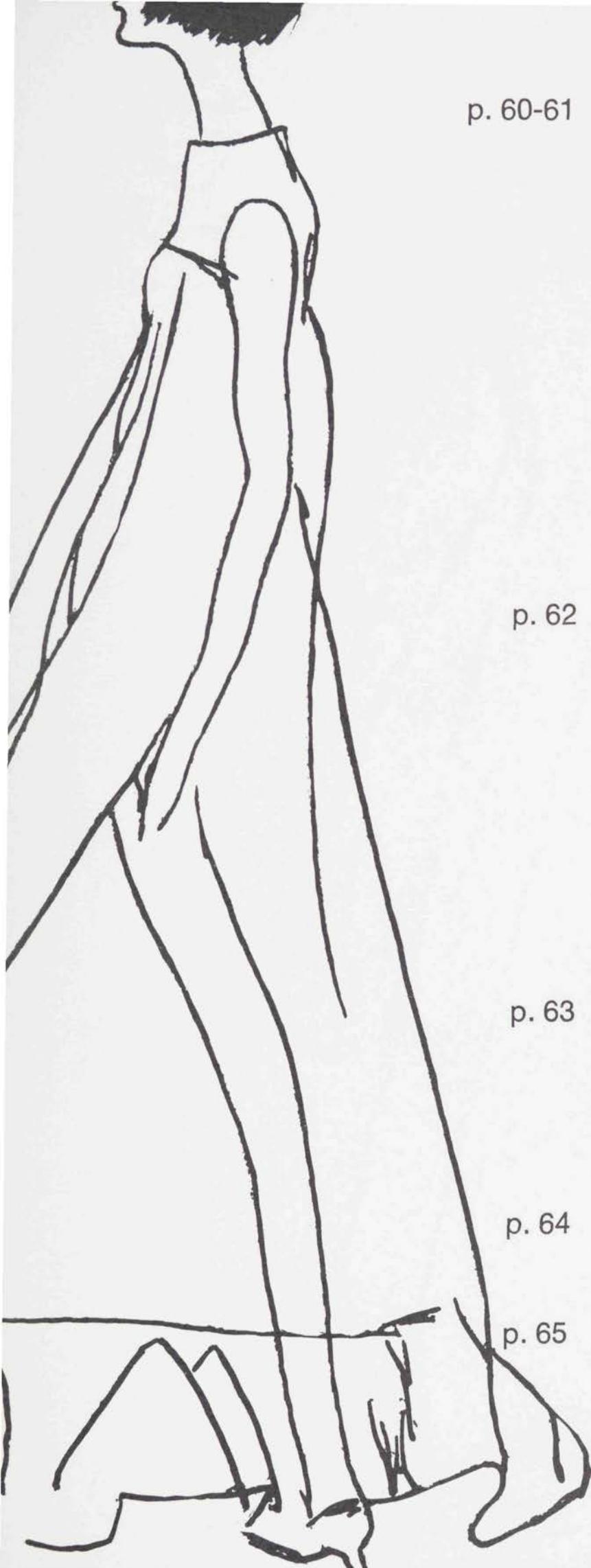




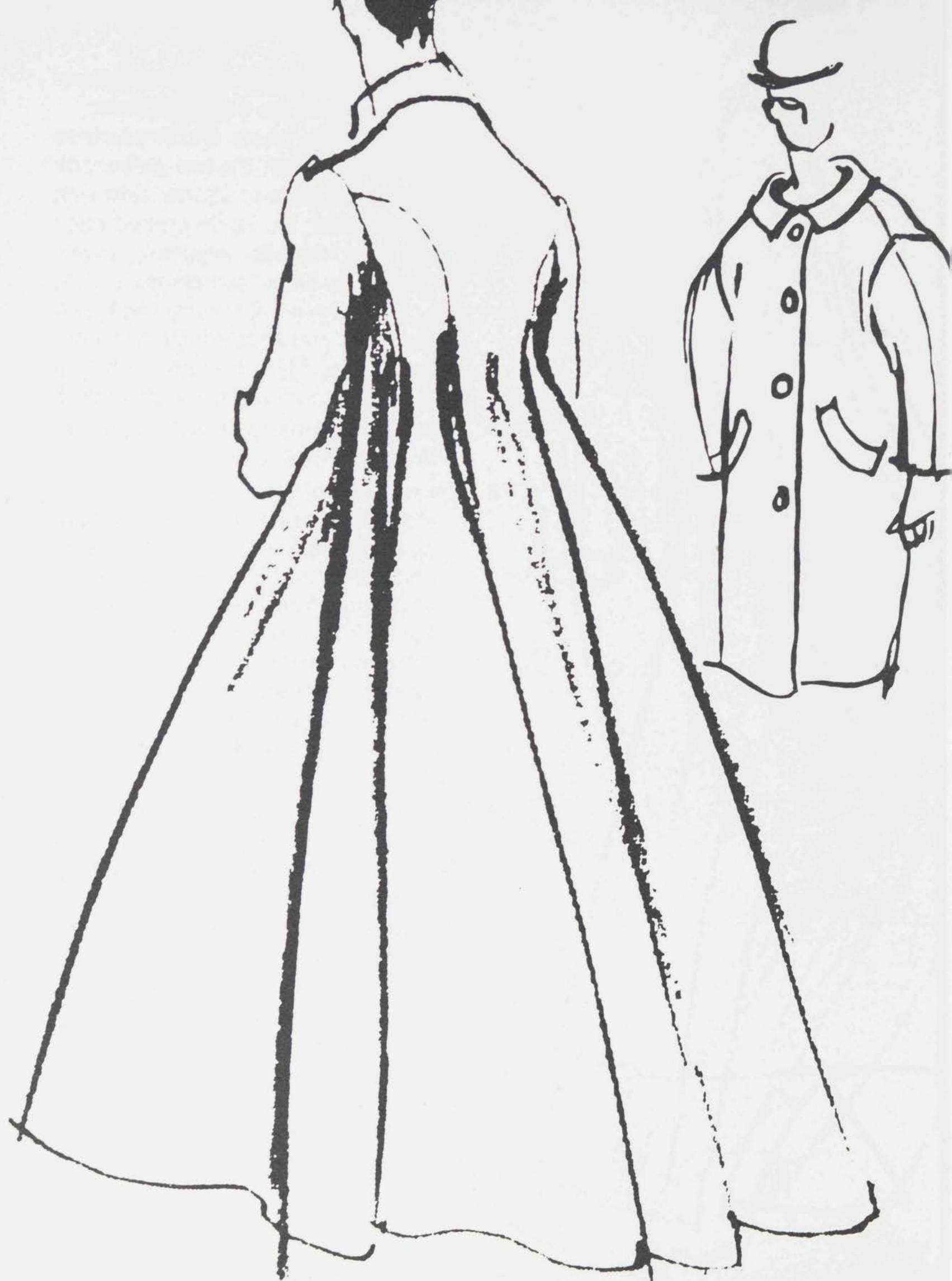


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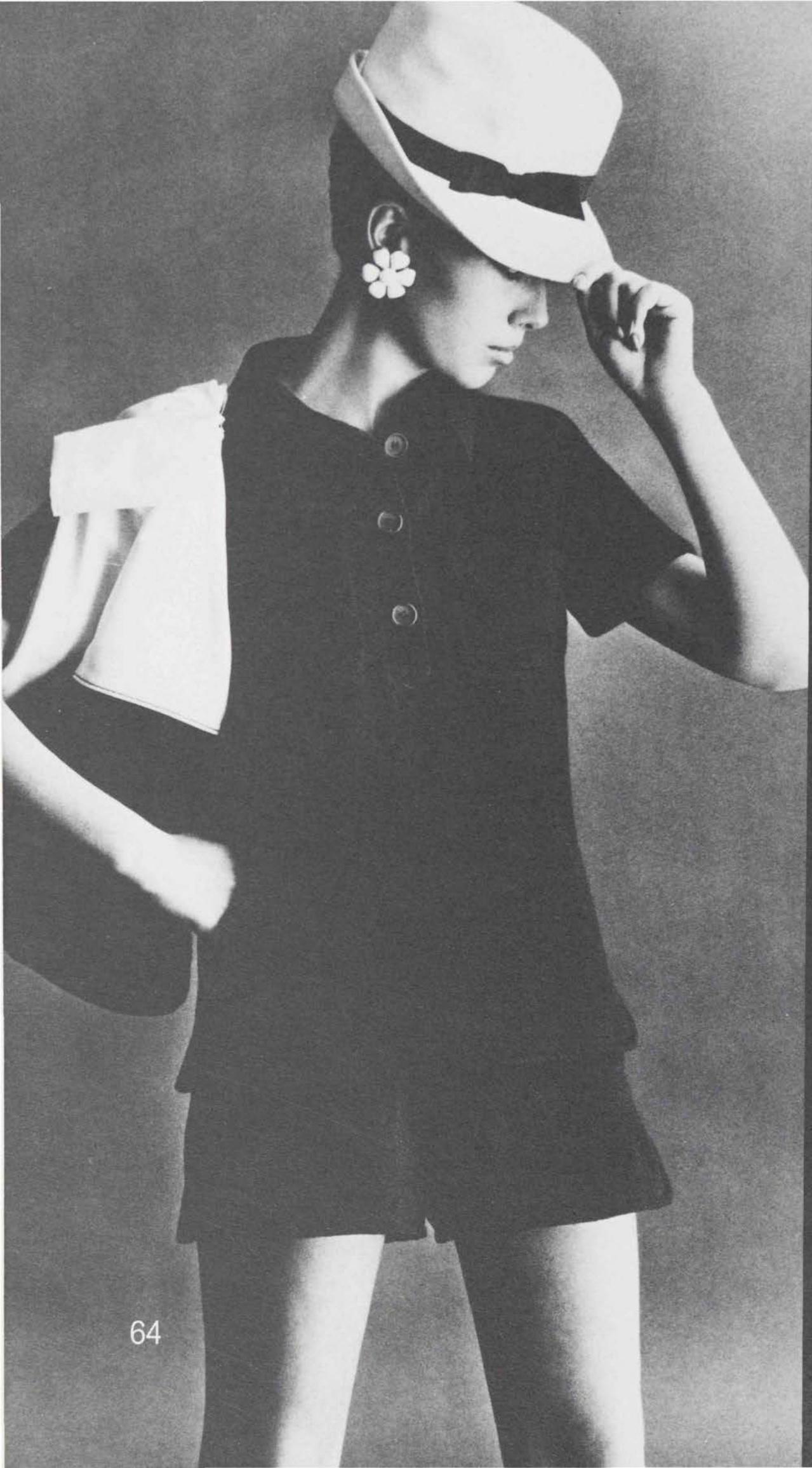




- p. 60-61 These are impressions of the nineteen-sixties derived from the collections: shorter skirts, boots, and three-piece separates, 1962; the two-piece look of tailored top and shorter skirt with boots, 1962; the loose draped back and bias front, sometimes in a two-piece dress and sometimes a long or short sheath, February 1964; and the body stocking 'sometimes covered in a loose flowered chiffon cape of ostrich feathers, August 1965
Sketches by Ermina Stimson, courtesy of Women's Wear Daily
- p. 62 Impressions of contrasts in coats: a classic nineteenth-century tailored coat of infinite workmanship and chic, 1948; the "tortoise" round back and arms. The front tailored to the body, the neck cut away with a mounted collar, a tour-de-force of tailoring that swept the world in coats and suit jackets, 1962
Sketches courtesy of Women's Wear Daily
- p. 63 A form of Inverness cape worn over matching suit, tailored of a fantasy tartan wool worn with leather hat and high boots, 1963
Photograph—Radkai, Vogue, October 15, 1963
- p. 64 Among the dozens of small sports clothes, this is typical of perfect tailoring and shirt-making.
- p. 65 A white organdy coif, worn with a black crepe sheath, all as clean and serene as a nun in a Spanish hill town.
Photographs—Helmut Newton, Vogue, March 15, 1968







THE CLOTHES AND THE LENDERS

The collection of dresses and tailormades in the exhibition has been kindly lent by several museums and many of Balenciaga's patrons in the United States and Europe.

It has been assembled to illustrate the various styles that Balenciaga created during the thirty years, from 1938 to 1968, that his salon was open in Paris.

The following entries are in alphabetical order by lender and are complete through mid-February 1973.

Items subsequently received are included in a supplement to the catalogue.

MAISON BALENCIAGA, PARIS

- 1 Evening dress of black organdy with long ruffle boa
1962
- 2 Strapless evening dress of black gazar with embroidered petals at bust and waist
1967

SIR CECIL BEATON COLLECTION, LONDON

- 3 Knee-length evening sheath of eau de nil pailleted silk organza
1960
Gift of Countess de Martini
- 4 Strapless evening dress of black crepe with diamante banding
1964
Gift of Ramon Esparza
- 5 Evening dress of red silk gazar edged with large red paillettes and matching shawl
1964
Gift of Mme. Arturo Lopez-Willshaw

BELLERIVE MUSEUM, ZURICH

- 6 One toile muslin pattern in three pieces for "the one-seam coat"
1961

MRS. ROSAMOND BERNIER, NEW YORK

- 7 Short dress of black wool with waistline and gathered skirt trimmed at left hip with satin bow
circa 1959
- 9 Long evening coat of pinkish-red faille
circa 1964
- 10 Double-breasted coat of light green wool faced with ivory wool, attached suede belt
circa 1961

MRS. JOHN BRODIE, LONDON

- 11 Short A-line dress of black net, embroidered in a floral pattern of pearls, sequins, paillettes, and chenille thread
1962
Worn by Mrs. S.W. Dittenhoffer

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

- 12 Short jacket of natural linen embroidered with gold braid and paillettes
circa 1950

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS,
DUCHESS OF CADIZ, MADRID

- 13 Wedding dress and train of white satin with appliquéd beading and embroidery in silver thread, pearls, and paillettes; long full silk tulle veil; white kid gloves; and square-toed satin pumps appliquéd to match dress
1972

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
CHICAGO

- 14 Strapless evening gown of shocking pink ribbed silk with black net jacket embroidered with grey paillettes
1953-57
Gift of Mrs. Henry R. Luce
15 Two-piece day dress of fuchsia wool
1967
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr.
16 Two-piece day dress of coral silk
1967
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr.
17 Day dress and scarf of white flecked pink silk
1967
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr.
18 Evening dress and scarf of white silk broché
1965
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr.
19 Dinner dress in black ciré cloque
1966
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr.

MRS. NATHAN CUMMINGS, NEW YORK

- 21 Short shift dress entirely covered with black sequins
circa 1964
22 Double-breasted raincoat of off-white wool twill
circa 1964

MRS. PIERRE DAVID-WEILL,
NEW YORK

- 23 Strapless evening dress of ivory satin appliquéd in black lace with matching bolero, black velvet sash, and net crinoline
1950

MARQUESA DE CASA RIERA, MADRID

- 24 Two-piece ensemble: blue and white shorts and navy blue top
1965-66
25 Long sleeveless evening dress of red lace, with matching triangular stole
1965-66
26 Long sleeveless evening dress of embroidered pale pink silk faille with matching crescent-shaped stole
1960
27 Long evening dress of pale green/pink moiré taffeta with crescent-shaped stole
1960
28 Pillbox hat of silver-grey satin
1960

COUNTESS RENÉ DE CHAMBRUN,
PARIS

- 29 Mid-calf length dress of black taffeta with deep hem ruffle
1952

COUNTESS GERARD DE CHAVAGNAC,
PARIS

- 30 Long evening dress of pink crepe with
short cape of pink ostrich feathers,
and matching pink satin shoes
1962

MRS. OSCAR DE LA RENTA,
NEW YORK

- 31 "Baby Doll" dress of black lace
1965
32 Two-piece day dress of black silk
matelassé
1966
33 Two-piece day dress of black silk
figured in bright pink
1966

MARQUESA DE LLANZOL, MADRID

- 34 Wedding dress of satin-finished silk
embroidered with silver thread and
paillettes
1957
Worn by her daughter Sonsoles
35 Child's First Communion ensemble,
long dress of white organdy with full
skirt
1945
Worn by her daughter Sonsoles
36 Short shift dress and jacket em-
broidered in iridescent red paillettes
1962

SEÑORA DE ROSENBLAT, MÁLAGA

- 37 Short dress of chocolate brown lace
appliquéd in brown beads, sequins,
and deeper brown ostrich feathers
circa 1955

BARONNE PHILIPPE DE ROTHSCHILD,
PARIS

- 38 Bolero of beige net and slubbed silk
with short sleeves and elongated left
side
1950
39 Long evening coat of bois de rose
ribbed silk-satin in the "Kabuki" style
1954-55
40 Pullover of oatmeal silk double-knit
with three-quarter length sleeves and
wide turtleneck collar
1956
41 Medium-length full evening coat of
purple silk velvet
1950
42 Long housecoat of pale grey satin
with white mink collar, three-quarter
length sleeves, and jewelled buttons
1956
43 Sleeveless jumpsuit of black silk-satin
worn with jacket of bright pink silk
faille
1957
44 Knee-length skirt of black point
d'esprit with seventeen ruffled
petalled tiers and wide band of rose
pink satin
1960
45 Tent-shaped sleeveless dress of black
silk organza with two-tier gathered
skirt worn with knickers
1960-62
46 Knee-length A-line dress of black net
with long sleeves, encrusted with
jeweled embroidery
1962
47 Large hood of taupe-brown mink,
lined with greyish-brown silk organza
1962

- 48 Sleeveless tunic of silver-jeweled silk, worn with lime green silk-satin trousers
1963
- 49 Evening dress of Persian blue basket-weave silk, with petal front, back fullness, high waist, slight train, and cut on the bias
1964
- 50 Bowl-shaped hat completely covered with black silk loop fringe
1964
- 51 Black straw hat with wide rolled-edge brim
1964
- 52 Shift dress of black organza completely covered with black ostrich feathers
1964
- 53 Long housecoat of pale peach silk shantung worn with apricot silk-satin trousers
1964-65
- 54 Day coat of bright mauve-pink wool with front zipper closing and narrow black leather tie belt
1965
- 55 Long evening coat of beige dotted net completely covered with beige ostrich feathers; yoke and sleeves of shocking pink organza
1967-68
- 56 Sleeveless tunic of pale green crinkle organza worn with skirt of nude transparent silk
1968
- 57 Sleeveless bell-shaped evening dress of black silk shantung
circa 1962

MARQUESA DE VILLAVERDE,
MADRID

- 58 Wedding dress of white taffeta with a long train falling from shoulders in matching taffeta; long full veil of silk tulle
1950

MARQUESA DE ZORNOZA, MADRID

- 59 Wedding dress of white shirred net completely covered with small white tassels, narrow satin ribbon and lines of satin embroidery floss; long full veil of silk tulle with a crown of white flowers
1958

RAMON ESPARZA, PARIS

- 60 "The One-Seam Coat" of beige and black wool plaid lined in black satin
1961

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,
NEW YORK

- 61 Short coat of grey wool with sleeves gathered in deep even folds
1950
Gift of Doris Duke
- 62 Short evening coat of cerise satin with deep flounce at hem
circa 1963
Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr.
- 63 Seven-eighths length evening dress of beige and brown watered silk taffeta finished in a wide flounced hem
1950
Gift of Doris Duke

EXCMA. SEÑORA

DOÑA CARMEN POLO DE FRANCO,
MADRID

- 64 Four-piece ensemble of cream chiffon with gold trapunto on the blouse and jacket
1946
- 65 Long evening dress of pale grey satin, with bodice of grey lace re-embroidered in silver sequins, pearls, paillettes, and crystal beads
1947

MRS. CALMAN FREIDMAN, NEW YORK

- 66 Strapless evening sheath of pinkish-red crepe with matching chiffon stole
1957

MRS. BENJAMIN GREENBERG,
NEW YORK

- 67 Long evening dress of black silk gazar with wide ruffle at hem and matching jacket
1960s

MRS. MOSS HART, NEW YORK

- 68 Suit of grey and white checked wool
1953
- 69 Knee-length full cape of soft grey wool
1953

MRS. CHARLTON HENRY,
PHILADELPHIA

- 70 Short sleeveless tunic dress of rows of gathered black lace
1960s
- 71 Long A-line evening dress of ribbed black silk with black mink at neckline and hem
1964

- 72 Long evening dress of white silk with embroidered black coin dots
circa 1955

MME. ANDRÉE HIGGINS, PARIS

- 73 Long evening dress of black silk gazar, worn with short cape of matching fabric
1960

MRS. LEONARD HOLZER, NEW YORK

- 74 Calf-length tunic dress of black silk with woven diamond design, pailleted and embroidered
1960s
- 75 Short A-line dress of beige matelassé in a floral design with large spherical buttons in silver gilt
1960s
- 76 Calf-length tunic dress of pink-beige matelassé organdy bordered in black satin ribbon
1960s

BARBARA WOOLWORTH HUTTON

- 77 Three-piece costume: turban-shaped hat, long dress of aubergine silk and matching velvet coat in a medieval silhouette
1951

MME. RETA KEIGI, ZURICH

- 78 Evening dress of deep royal blue eyelet embroidered gazar
1957

KAY KERR, NEW YORK

- 79 Two-piece dinner dress of white wool
1961
- 80 Lacquer feather toque
1961

- 81 Black suede cap
1955
- 82 Black velvet pillbox hat
1955
- 83 Chamois leather cloche
1969
- 84 Black leather hat
1958
- 85 Black felt toque
1961
- 86 Shift dress and jacket of rust brown chenille with ostrich feathers in rust brown and black
1965
- MME. PATINO ORTIZ LINARES, PARIS
- 88 Long strapless evening dress of bright pink silk crepe with draped bodice; matching short cape of ostrich feathers
1968
- MME. ARTURO LOPEZ-WILLSHAW, PARIS
- 89 Carved evening sheath of white satin embroidered in pink flowers and paillettes
1958
- LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES
- 90 Sheath dress of pink silk with silver embroidery, petticoat, and matching pair of shoes
1965
Gift of Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy
- 91 Long evening dress of bright yellow satin-finished silk appliquéd in pink, purple, turquoise, and white flowers
1961
Gift of Mrs. Mary F. Pendleton
- 92 Three-quarter length sheath dress of black lace with matching short lace cape
1963
Gift of Mrs. John J. Garland
- 93 Day suit of white Thai silk with black polka dots
1968
Gift of Mrs. John H. Cushingham
- 94 Long evening dress of bright pink silk with short cape
circa 1961
- 95 Long sleeveless evening dress of yellow satin with jacket embroidered in pink and blue
1957
Gift of Mrs. William W. Crocker
- MRS. PAUL MELLON, WASHINGTON, D.C.
- 96 Two-piece long evening dress of light blue silk gazar
1960s
- 97 Long evening dress and jacket of white satin
1960s
- 98 Morning coat and pants of plain pink silk
1960s
- 99 Morning coat of plain blue silk
1960s
- 100 Morning coat of yellow, pink, purple, and green flowered silk
1960s
- 101 Dress and pants of pink and white silk
1960s
- 102 Short dress of blue silk with fuchsia splashes
1960s

- 103 Short evening dress of black crepe
1960s
- 104 Short dress of purple silk
1957
- 106 Short dress of black wool
1960s
- 107 Sleeveless blouse of blue and white
striped cotton
1960s
- 108 Ensemble: skirt and belt of light tan
wool and short-sleeved blouse of
orange wool, button front
1960s
- 109 Suit of light green wool
1960s
- 110 Suit of red wool
1960s
- 111 Dress and jacket of navy blue linen
1960s
- 112 Coat of light blue wool
1960s
- 113 Raincoat and skirt of brown cotton
duck
1960s

MRS. ARTHUR MILLER,
ROXBURY, CONN.

- 115 Short strapless evening dress of pale
azure taffeta covered with gathered
black net dotted in velvet, worn with
very full, puffed skirt of matching
taffeta
1959
- 116 Suit with bloused jacket back, of soft
grey wool
1959
- 117 Short, draped back, evening dress of
black silk chiffon and full taffeta
and chiffon slip
1950s

- 118 Two-piece short evening dress of red
lace re-embroidered in matching
chenille
1950s
- 119 Suit of navy wool with wide collar of
white tucked organdy and lace
1950s

MRS. GILBERT MILLER, NEW YORK

- 121 Long two-piece dress with skirt of
pale green silk organza, and tunic
pavéed with large round opalescent
sequins
1967

MUSÉE DU COSTUME DE LA VILLE DE
PARIS DE MUSÉE CANAVALLET, PARIS

- 122 Jacket of black velvet embroidered in
black jet
1945
Gift of Mme. Leclerc
- 123 Two-piece evening dress of black
faille, completely encrusted in jet and
sequins
1949
Gift of
The Hon. Mrs. Reginald Fellowes
- 124 Jacket of black faille with inset of
black pailleted velvet
1949
Gift of
The Hon. Mrs. Reginald Fellowes
- 125 Jacket of dark red velvet with lace
trim
1950
Gift of
The Hon. Mrs. Reginald Fellowes

SEÑORA DE OSBORNE, MADRID

- 126 Sailor-shaped hat covered with small
yellow flowers

- 127 Medium brim hat of black veiling over wire frame
- 128 Wide-brimmed sailor in glossy black straw trimmed with white rose
- 129 Turban-shaped hat covered in pale pink ostrich feathers
- 130 Small black satin hat trimmed with black beads and sequins
- 131 Wide rolled brimmed hat covered with large checked silk in shocking pink and white
- 132 Bowl-shaped hat covered with white ostrich feathers with black satin bow
- 133 Turban-shaped hat covered with dark green ostrich feathers
- 134 Hat covered with gathered "V" cut strips of black silk ribbon on net base
- 135 Scalloped dome-shaped black hat with black lace veil falling from center knob of lace
- 136 Black organdy hat with flattened tube of fabric extending from closely fitting cap
- 137 Small round hat covered with shirred black tulle with black bird of paradise feathers
- 139 "Baby-Doll" tent dress of string-colored lace with wide ruffle at hem of skirt
1957
- 140 Mid-calf length dress of black silk taffeta
1952
- 141 Short sleeveless dress of pearl grey satin
circa 1952
- 142 Long evening dress of mint green satin-finished silk with band of white mink around top of strapless bodice
1965
- 143 Strapless evening dress of yellow lace with fitted bodice, circular skirt, and matching long stole of yellow lace
1950s
- 144 Tent dress of acid green silk marquisette with two wide ruffles at hem, and short cape of matching marquisette with deep ruffle at bottom
circa 1966
- 145 Short lampshade dress of cerise pink silk taffeta
1955
- 146 Two-piece dress of black silk taffeta; skirt trimmed with rows of scalloped pinked ruffles
circa 1955
- 147 Long strapless evening dress of white satin-finished silk covered with pink net, embroidered with floral design in silver thread; sash of off-white satin ribbon, and long stole of doubled pink net
1964
- MOLLIE PARNIS, NEW YORK
- 149 "Baby Doll" evening dress of brown lace
1965
- MRS. DERELD ROTTENBERG,
NEW YORK
- 150 Hat of cream felt
- 151 Suit of grey basketweave wool with medium brown slubbed silk over-blouse
circa 1965
- 152 Suit of horizontally worked white mink with attached bodice of draped crinkle chiffon in medium brown and satin ribbon sash
circa 1965
- 153 Strapless mini-dress of grey striped

organza and matching overdress with ruffled border
1967-68

- MME. FELISA SALVAGNAC, PARIS
- 156 Calf-length dress of emerald green ciré matelassé worn with underskirt of black silk with wide band of matching ciré at hem, and wide coat of matching ciré
1965
- 157 Muslin patterns for: raglan-sleeved coat; suit jacket; two dresses (one cut on the bias); and sleeve
1968

MRS. RONALD STEIN, NEW YORK

- 158 Long sleeveless evening dress of black slubbed silk with deep skirt ruffle and cape of matching fabric
1961

UNION FRANCAISE DES ARTS DES COSTUMES, PARIS

- 159 Evening dress of red satin with bolero embroidered in jet beading
1939-40
Gift of Mrs. Arturo Lopez-Willshaw
- 160 Strapless short cocktail dress of light pink tulle covered with bright pink sequins, ruby stones, and pale pink ostrich feathers
1950-55
Gift of Mrs. Arturo Lopez-Willshaw
- 161 Evening dress of red taffeta with voluminous skirt draped into Zouave-shape in front and bustled in back
1950
Gift of Mrs. Arturo Lopez-Willshaw
- 162 Evening dress of thick light blue moiré, hem shorter in front and

bordered in re-embroidered silver lace
1960-61

Gift of Countess Cristina Brandolini d'Adda

- 163 A pair of blue silk and silver brocade slippers with pointed heels
1957
Gift of Countess Cristina Brandolini d'Adda
- 164 Short straight tunic evening dress of black lace with pink moiré band on bodice and six flounces at hem
1957-58
Gift of Countess Cristina Brandolini d'Adda
- 165 Evening dress of white satin covered with a double layer of cognac-colored gold lamé gauze and grey tulle embroidered in a floral motif
1963
Gift of Maison Balenciaga

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,
LONDON

- 166 Evening coat of frilled black lace with white satin trousers and shoes
1960
Gift of Baronne Philippe de Rothschild
- 167 Evening dress of cerise gazar with skirt of three deep flounces in the "flamenco" style
1962
Gift of Stavros Niarchos
- 168 Evening dress of black zibelline with hem raised in front descending into full train, and matching cape
1967
Gift of Mrs. Loel Guinness
- 169 Strapless evening dress with a brown

chiffon bodice and white silk
 gabardine skirt, worn with a gilt mesh
 and rhinestone waist-length jacket
 1963
 Gift of Mrs. Loel Guinness

MRS. T. REED VREELAND, NEW YORK
 170 "Baby Doll" dress with overdress of
 black lace with ruffles at hem, and
 shoulder straps of black satin ribbon
 1957

MRS. DAVID ZIPKIN, NEW YORK
 171 Short full coat with full sleeves in
 black silk with velvet design in shapes
 of beige and brown
 circa 1950

THE COSTUME INSTITUTE OF THE
 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART,
 NEW YORK

173 Two-piece suit of poppy red linen
 twill
 1952
 Gift of Bettina Ballard
 175 Knee-length coat of pale turquoise
 wool tweed
 1958
 Gift of Shirley and Barbara Carmel
 176 Strapless evening dress with peach
 satin skirt, bodice, and jacket of
 gunmetal chiffon
 1949
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 177 Evening coat of brown satin with
 wide collar and embroidered full
 sleeves
 1947
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 178 Street-length evening coat of
 "American Beauty" velvet

- 1950
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 179 Mid-calf length evening coat of
 vermillion ribbed silk
 1954
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 180 Short strapless evening dress of black
 net over rose faille with bell skirt
 1948
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 181 Small black faille hat trimmed with
 jet, black velvet and lace
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 182 Pillbox evening hat of gunmetal
 chiffon
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 183 Evening hat of white satin
 embroidered with gold braid, beads,
 and stones
 1950
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 184 Brimmed beanie in black velvet on
 straw
 1953
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 185 Chignon cap of white satin with red
 glass beads in radial pattern
 1954
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 186 Cocktail hat of yellow satin
 1954
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 187 Small beanie of lemon yellow satin
 1955
 Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy
 188 Evening dress of black silk organza
 1957
 Gift of Mrs. Murray Graham
 190 Suit of black and white wool tweed
 1954
 Gift of Mrs. Murray Graham

- | | |
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| <p>191 Princess-cut evening dress of cream satin, heavily beaded with jet pendants
1940
Gift of Mrs. Loel Guinness</p> <p>193 "Infanta" evening dress of ivory satin
1939
Gift of Mrs. John Chambers Hughes</p> <p>194 Long full skirt of black taffeta with putty velvet jacket
1946
Gift of Mrs. John Chambers Hughes</p> <p>195 Evening dress of apple green silk gazar with eyelet embroidery
1966
Gift of Mrs. John Chambers Hughes</p> <p>196 Suit of navy and red plaid wool
1947
Gift of Mrs. John Chambers Hughes</p> <p>197 Straw hat with self-fringe
1951
Gift of Mrs. Eleanor Montgomery</p> <p>198 Blocked turban of black felt
1946
Gift of Mrs. Eleanor Montgomery</p> <p>199 Sack dress of dark brown wool jersey
1955-56
Gift of Mrs. Muriel Rand</p> <p>200 Strapless evening dress of silk in black on white paisley
1937
Gift of Mrs. Leon Roos</p> <p>201 Evening dress and jacket of red silk with floral design in gold and silver re-embroidered in gold and silver sequins and jet
1957
Gift of Mrs. Mala Rubinstein</p> <p>202 Short evening dress of black satin with pattern of black velvet flowers and leaves</p> | <p>1956-57
Gift of Mrs. Irene Stone</p> <p>203 Bolero of garnet velveteen with passementerie and jet beading
1946-47
Gift of Mrs. Jean Sinclair Tailer</p> <p>204 Evening dress of yellow silk gazar with uneven hem
circa 1967
Gift of Mrs. Claus Von Bülow</p> <p>205 Short strapless evening dress of black silk gazar with overdress descending into a train
circa 1967
Gift of Mrs. Claus Von Bülow</p> <p>206 Short dress of black crepe with draped back
1966
Gift of Mrs. Claus Von Bülow</p> <p>207 Summer evening skirt of pastel flowered silk
1960
Gift of Mrs. T. Reed Vreeland</p> <p>208 Short dinner dress and evening coat of black silk moiré
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>209 Sleeveless, scooped-neck evening dress of salmon satin patterned with lilies of the valley
1959
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>210 A-line skirt and jacket of opaline green satin with sleeveless over-blouse beaded in crystal, rhinestone, and passementerie
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>211 Long dress of pink dotted tulle, covered with pink ostrich feathers</p> |
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- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1965
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>212 Evening dress of silver and white paisley lamé with shoulder pleats, and matching shoes
1966
Gift of Mrs. Charles B. Wrightsman</p> <p>213 Short evening coat of coral chenille
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>214 At-home coat of pink silk, with A-line sleeves embroidered in chalk beads
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>215 At-home coat in multi-colored floral silk with long loose-fitting sleeves
1964
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> | <p>216 Knee-length chemise of black lace re-embroidered in chenille with satin bows down the front
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>217 Knee-length A-line dress of warp printed multi-colored satin
1963
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>218 Mini-dress in a black lace rose pattern with hip-length jacket
1965
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> <p>219 Short "wrap-around" dress of powder blue silk crepe
1966
Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman</p> |
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The documentary films showing Balenciaga's collections from 1960 to 1968 and a unique film of Balenciaga in his workroom play an important educational role in the exhibition. The Metropolitan Museum is most grateful to Ramon Esparza and to the Musée Bellerive, Zurich for making these films available.

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