

SMALL ILLUSIONS INTRODUCTION

The perception of childhood as an age of unfettered innocence is strictly a twentieth-century notion. Only in recent history have children been treated as free-thinking individuals, distinct from adults, with their own wants and needs. It now seems a commonplace notion that their personalities and requirements are reflected in their clothing, yet historically children have always been dressed as miniature versions of their parents. This exhibition explores how society's attitudes toward children have been mirrored in their clothing during the past two hundred years.

In the early eighteenth century, no special consideration whatsoever was given to children's clothes.. They were dressed in smaller versions of the corseted gowns and confining waistcoats of the adults. It was not until the middle of that century that people began to think differently about children--the result, to no small degree, of the educational influence brought to bear by social reformers, such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The consequence for children's fashion was a change to lighter fabrics and looser clothing, which allowed freedom of movement for an active child. This period of reform began about 1770 and developed during the French Revolution and the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Boys as well as girls had always worn dresses until they reached the age of five or six. After about 1825, uncomplicated lines and softly draped textiles with a minimum of surface decoration gave way to more constricting shapes and elaborate trimmings. The accession of Victoria to the English throne and the decline of the Romantic movement ushered in an era of strict formality. Very young boys and girls were dressed alike in white gowns, making it difficult to differentiate them. While older children wore clothes that followed the whims of adult fashion, there was a distinctly androgynous feeling in the way they were presented. Later in the century, children became objects to embellish and adorn; their outward appearance was now a measure of their parents' social status.

This perception persisted until the end of the Victorian era. The close of World War I brought an urgent need to liberate both women and children alike. There was now an emphasis on youth, and women sought a girlish look. For the first time the evolution of style came from a consideration of the needs of the child, interpreted into fashions that could just as easily be worn by the mother. The 1920s cleared the way for clothes designed specifically for the active child. Children were now regarded as autonomous beings and were no longer forced to wear clothes designed solely for adults. As modern attitudes about childhood gradually evolved, children came to be seen as possessing legitimate thoughts and a language of their own, which in turn, prompted the design of clothes reflective of their personalities.

This exhibition has been made possible by Stanley J. Love and The Joseph Love Foundation.

7. YOUNG BOY'S TUNIC AND TROUSERS

Ecrú linen trimmed with tucks. Tunic trimmed with self-fabric buttons, drawstrings at neck and waist, ties attached at waist.

English, ca. 1815

Purchase, The Bernheim Foundation, Inc., Mrs. Arthur H. Sulzberger, Nikki Scheuer and Agraria, Stanford-Gibson Ltd. Gifts and Gifts from various donors, 1982.

1982.57a-c

8. GIRL'S DRESS AND LEGGINGS

Cream cotton printed with a motif of orange clover; puffed sleeves and high waist, with scalloped trim edged in cream cotton binding. Leggings were often tubes of fabric tied onto the leg or sewn onto pantalettes.

European or American, ca. 1820

Funds from various donors, 1981

1981.288a-c

12. BOY'S DRESS

White cotton trimmed with eyelet embroidery and self-fabric buttons

American, 1841

Gift of George H. Danforth, 1976

1976.363

16. GIRL'S DRESS

Blue printed cotton with self-fabric piping.

American, ca. 1840

Gift of Aline MacMahon, 1938

C.138.93

17. YOUNG BOY'S DRESS

Ecrú cotton printed with a patriotic motif of a cannon and a soldier holding an American flag.

American, late 1860s

Gift of Mrs. Samuel Schwartz, 1967

CI 67.17

20. EVENING DRESS

Ivory silk and wool floral damask trimmed with self-fabric pleating and blond lace.

English, ca. 1835

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Trust Gift, 1984

1984.89

21. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS

Gold silk satin trimmed with self-fabric piping and gold silk cord. Thought to have been worn by a young girl in Martinique.

French, ca. 1825

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1970

1970.106.1

22. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS

Beige figured silk trimmed with self-fabric bands.

American, 1835

Gift of Mrs. William Witherell, 1948

C.1.48.18.1

22A TODDLER'S DRESS

Blue-and-green printed cotton and wool, trimmed with a light blue cotton braid.

Probably American, 1830s

Gift of Mrs. E.V. Anderson, 1943

C.143.126.64

23. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS (2 PIECE)

Rose, green, bold, and black silk taffeta trimmed with floral silk brocaded ribbon and pink silk fringe.

Probably American, 1850s

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1976

1976.276.2a-b

24. CHILD'S DRESS

Brown silk trimmed with blue, brown, and white plaid silk ribbon.

American, ca. 1853

Gift of Grace Robertson, 1945

C.145.82.1

25. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS (2 PIECE)

Teal-blue and rust ottoman and matching silk satin brocaded in a poppy-and-fan motif. Label: Mme. Hude-Vier, 139 Woodward Avenue, Detroit.

American, ca. 1885

Gift of Charlotte Church Collins, in memory of her mother, Alice Slocum Church, 1976

1976.257.1a-b

25A YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS (2 PIECE)

Teal-blue and rust ottoman and matching silk satin brocaded in a poppy-and-fan motif. Label: Mme. Hude-Vier, 139 Woodward Avenue, Detroit.

American, ca. 1885

Gift of Charlotte Church Collins, in memory of her mother, Alice Slocum Church, 1976

1976.257.2a-b

26. BOY'S DRESS

Olive silk satin trimmed with self-fabric tucked bands and piping.

American or European, ca. 1840

Gift of Jessie Leonard Hill, Charles R. Leonard Jr. and Laura Leonard Ault, 1978

1978.477.46

27. BOY'S SUIT (4 PIECE)

Royal-blue broadcloth jacket and trousers, trimmed with flat black-and-gold braid; white linen shirt with embroidered cuffs, collar, and band; royal-blue silk velvet hat couched with silver metallic-thread embroidery.

American, ca. 1860

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1976

1976.60.6a-d

28. **GIRL'S DRESS**

Sheer white muslin trimmed with Valenciennes lace and pink satin ribbon.

American, ca. 1859

Estate of Mrs. Robert B. Noyes, 1943

C.I. 43.7.45

29. **YOUNG GIRL'S AFTERNOON DRESS (2 PIECE)**

Black-and-white checked silk taffeta trimmed with red silk satin and mother-of-pearl buttons painted in floral and bird motifs. Label: Mrs. M.E. Jennings Modes, Lafayette, Indiana. Worn by Mrs. Nelson Lloyd Deming when she was about fifteen years old.

American, 1882

Gift of Mary Louise Deming, 1959

CI 59.13.3a-b

Department stores that sold children's clothing could be found in every major city by 1882. Yet, it was still the mark of the well-to-do family and the well-dressed child to have clothes made to order by the mother's dressmaker.

30. **GIRL'S DRESS**

Pink taffeta with vertical white stripes, polonaise bustle trimmed with self-fabric bow, pink twisted silk cord with two tassels.

English, ca. 1876

Purchase, Gifts from various donors, 1980

1980.408.1



small illusions

MM 80802

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11. CHILD'S DRESS

Fine white cotton trimmed with eyelet embroidery and gathered self-fabric bands.

American, 1830s

Gift of Judith and Ira L. Sommer, 1988

1988.111

13. YOUNG CHILD'S DRESS AND PANTALETTES

Pina cloth with drawnwork and embroidery in floral motifs.

Philippine, ca. 1844

Gift of Mrs. Frederick Sturgis, 1906

TSR 06.701

14. INFANT'S DRESS

White muslin with white cotton embroidery in a floral motif down the center front panel; Vandyke trimming around the neck, waist and hem. This dress is said to have been worn at various times by the seven children of Philip Alexander Ver Planck and Eliza Arden Ver Planck of New Windsor, New York. The eldest child was born in 1829, and the youngest, in 1840.

French, 1829

Gift of Mrs. William Gordon Ver Planck, 1944

TSR 44.137.1

15. INFANT'S DRESS

Fine white cotton trimmed with an applied, gathered frill with a rolled edge secured by decorative pink overstitching.

Probably English, ca. 1840

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1987

1987.190.1

18. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS (2 PIECE)

White pique princess-cut coat and skirt, trimmed with white soutache and eyelet embroidery. Worn by Lucia and Sally James of Ogdensburg, New York.

American, ca. 1869

Gift of Mrs. Phillip H. Gray, 1950

CI 50.105.11a-b

19. YOUNG BOY'S SUIT (3 PIECE)

White bird's-eye pique jacket, trousers, and vest, trimmed with olive-green wool and white cord applique.

American, ca. 1865

Gift of Madeleine Sinco Verne, 1964

CI 64.42.1a-c

A CHILD'S HALF-SUIT OF ARMOR

German, ca. 1525

Gift of William H. Riggs, 1913

14.25.705a-1

This child's suit of armor falls outside the timeline of the exhibition, but is perhaps the most striking example of a child being dressed in the same manner as an adult. Even though the armor was worn as a protective device, it always followed the fashionable silhouette. Since children normally did not fight, the purpose of such dress was primarily ornamental and, as such, its design clearly echoed adult (in this case, paternal) fashion.



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**31. YOUNG GIRL'S FANCY DRESS
(Sicilian tarantella costume, 4 piece)**

Yellow-gold twill silk and red silk velvet, trimmed with gold sequins, glass beads, and red-and-gold silk satin ribbons. Worn by Helen Claflin Pierce when she was about seven years old.

American, ca. 1887

Gift of Rosamond Pierce Braxton, in memory of her mother, Helen Holbrook Claflin, 1988

1988.272a-d

32. BOY'S FANCY DRESS (ROBIN HOOD COSTUME)

Tan suede jerkin; green velvet short pants; green knit cotton leggings; tan leather shoes; tan suede hat; tan suede quiver; six wooden arrows; leather and velvet belt; velvet belt pouch.

American, early 20th century

Gift of William A.M. Burden, 1976

1976.391.7a-o

**32A YOUNG GIRL'S FANCY DRESS
(Eighteenth-Century Costume)**

Teal-blue silk satin brocaded in stylized cream-and-blue foliate motif intertwined with abstract cream foliate motif. Yellow satin underskirt trimmed with machine-embroidered silk lace. Worn by Mrs. Leighton Lobdell, nee Ruth Adams.

American (?), ca. 1906

Lent by The Museum of the City of New York

Estate of Ruth Adams Lobdell

85.150.2

35. BOY'S SAILOR SUIT (2 PIECE)

Black silk jersey trimmed with black silk grosgrain bows and magenta silk fringed sash; black silk stockings.

Worn by Nathan Goldsmith.

American, 1880s

Gift of Louisa B. Goldsmith, 1943

C.143.74.1a-e

The popularity of the sailor suit was pervasive, and it was worn for many different occasions. The black color of this suit indicates that it was probably for mourning.

36. GIRL'S SAILOR DRESS

White linen trimmed with red cotton cuffs, collar, and belt, chevron-and-eagle insignia on right sleeve, two embroidered white stars on back of collar.

Label: Peter Thomson, registered, Philadelphia. Worn by Marie Amelia Charlotta Thomson Raub, granddaughter of Peter Thomson.

American, ca. 1915

Gift of Peter Thomson Raub to the Costume Institute's Jacqueline Loewe Fowler Collection, 1981

1981.182.1

37. BOY'S SAILOR SUIT (3 PIECE)⁹

Off-white linen and navy cotton, trimmed with red cotton tape and white cotton cord, chevron-and-eagle insignia embroidered on right sleeve, white stars with red centers embroidered on back of collar.

American, ca. 1905

The Jacqueline Loewe Fowler Costume Collection, Gift of Jacqueline Loewe Fowler, 1985

1985.367.10a-c



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38. **WOMAN'S SAILOR DRESS (3 PIECE)**

Blue chambray trimmed with white cotton tape, chevron-and-eagle insignia on right sleeve, red cotton-tape stripe on left sleeve.

American, ca. 1902

Gift of Mrs. Lyall Dean, Mrs. Borden Helmer and the Estate of Bliss Reed Crocker, in memory of Mrs. William Reed Thompson and Mrs. Edward Bliss Reed, 1965

CI 65.22.8a-c

41. **GIRL'S DRESS, JACKET, AND CAP**

Red wool Fraser tartan, blue velvet cap.

English, early 1870s

Gift of Mrs. Adelaide Nichols Baker, 1963

CI 63.11a-c

42. **BOY'S SCOTTISH COSTUME (5 PIECE)**

Brown velvet jacket; multicolored silk tartan vest and kilt; black leather belt; silver sporran with white goat hair and red leather purse; black velvet Glengarry cap trimmed with bronze medallion, black taffeta pleated ribbon with white feather, black silk ribbon streamers, and black silk tassel.

Scottish, 1860s

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Trust Gift, 1985

1985.154.2a-f

43. **GIRL'S DRESS AND JACKET**

Embroidered white linen with crocheted Irish lace insertions and edging. Worn by Grace Vanderbilt, daughter of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt.

American, ca. 1910

Gift of Cornelius Vanderbilt and Mrs. Robert L. Stevens, 1953

CI 53.32.6a-b

44. **LITTLE BOY'S DRESS**

White ribbed pique trimmed with eyelet embroidery and mother-of-pearl buttons.

American, ca. 1895

Gift of Orme Wilson and R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of their mother, Mrs. Caroline Schermerhorn Astor Wilson, 1949

49.3.48

45. **GIRL'S COAT AND DRESS**

Green wool trimmed with black middy braid and black silk and silver metallic embroidery. Label: Jeanne Lanvin, 22 Faubourg St. Honore, Paris. Worn by Sylvia or Sheila Redmond.

French, ca. 1921

Gift of Mrs. Roland L. Redmond, 1954

CI 54.49.3a-b

46. **BOY'S SUIT (2 PIECE)**

Tan self-patterned wool trimmed with rust-and-blue silk braid. Label: Au Louvre, Paris.

French, ca. 1927

Gift of Mrs. Harry Rodwin, 1952

CI 52.56.2a-e

47. **GIRL'S DRESS**

Cotton multicolored print on a black ground, combined with white organdy and trimmed with a black silk ribbon. Label: Love.

American, 1924

Gift of Joseph Love, President of Joseph Love Inc., 1950

CI 50.72.2

48. **GIRL'S DRESS AND HAT**

Light green linen*trimmed with ecru linen piping and appliqued and embroidered floral design. Label: Mignapouf.

French, ca. 1924

Gift of Esme O'Brien Hammond, 1977

1977.201.18a-b

49 **AFTERNOON DRESS**

Black silk crepe trimmed with self-fabric cording and black silk fringe. Designed by Jeanne Lanvin.

French, ca. 1920

Gift of Mrs. John Chambers Hughes, 1958

CI 58.34.2 abc

3. CHRISTENING ROBE AND MANTEL

Cloth of silver lined with white silk, trimmed with silver metallic lace. Said to have been worn by Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts.

English, ca. 1710

Gift of the New York Historical Society, 1979

1979.346.la-b

1. TODDLER'S CLOSED ROBE

Salmon-pink silk satin figured with white foliate motifs, bound at neck, shoulders, cuffs, and hem with pink silk braid.

European, early 18th century

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1989

1989.323

2. CHILD'S DRESS

Brown ribbed wool and silk, stiffened bodice with a rounded point, possibly cut and reshaped from a pointed bodice, lightly boned and laced down the back, with self-fabric leading strings stitched into the shoulders. Skirt has a deep tuck taken around the hem and in the leading strings; this alteration probably allowed a younger child to wear it.

English, ca. 1740

Estate of Polaire Weissman Fund, 1990

1990.24

3. CLOSED ROBE

Brown satin ground woven with a lace pattern in orange-and-beige silk.

English, ca. 1735

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1964

CI 64.14

4. BOY'S GOWN

Blue silk brocaded with silver metallic thread. Front-fastening gown trimmed with silk and silver metallic braid and fringe; polonaise back formed with button and braid loops. Self-fabric leading strings attached at shoulders.

French, ca. 1725

Rogers Fund, 1932

TSR 32.35.3

5. BOY'S COAT

Cream quilted cotton with vertical wide green stripes and narrower stripes of red, white, and blue. Self-fabric revers buttoning from shoulder to waist, with three-button closure, thread-covered buttons, faux pockets with scalloped flap.

American or European, 18th century

Gift of Judith and Ira L. Sommer, 1985

1985.300

6. YOUNG BOY'S SKELETON SUIT

Buff plain-weave cotton (nankeen) trimmed with metal buttons stamped in a basket-weave pattern.

English, 1796-1800

Isabel Shults Fund, 1986

1986.106.14

9. YOUNG BOY'S SKELETON SUIT

White cotton with red stripe, trimmed with self-fabric buttons.

American, ca. 1820

Purchase, Gifts from various donors, 1983

1983.3.1a-b

10. GIRL'S DRESS

White-on-white plain-weave cotton trimmed with tucks and whitework edging.

American or European, ca. 1820

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1986

1986.106.15



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33. BOY'S SUIT (3 PIECE)

Black velvet trimmed with black silk soutache braid and black silk military braid. Fine white cotton shirt trimmed with lace insertion and edging. Label: W. Hendricks, Stamford, Connecticut. Worn by George Alexander Phelps when he was six years old.

American, ca. 1879

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Phelps, 1957

CI 57.la-c

34. BOY'S LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY SUIT (3 PIECE)

Dark blue silk velvet trimmed with cut steel buttons and lace collar and cuffs.

American, ca. 1899

Gift of Mrs. Frederick M. Godwin, 1954

CI 54.32.la-c

39. YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS (AESTHETIC)

Pale aqua silk with smocking and silk embroidery.

Designed by Liberty of London.

English, 1890s

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Trust Gift, 1986

1986.115.4

40. WOMAN'S DRESS (AESTHETIC)

Mauve silk with silk embroidery and smocking.

Designed by Liberty of London.

English, 1890s

Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Trust Gift, 1986

1986.115.5

48B INFANT'S BOOTIES

Turquoise felt trimmed with appliqued pink-and-white rosebuds and light green ties finished with rosebuds.

Designed by Lenci.

Italian, 1920s

Gift of Mrs. Alvin L. Blume, 1976

1976.73.3a-b

48A INFANT'S COAT

Turquoise felt trimmed with multicolored appliques of rabbits and flowers and small rosebuds that end in cord tie at neck. Label: Ars Lenci, made in Italy, Torino, New York, Paris, London, Manchester.

Italian, 1920s

Gift of Mrs. Alvin L. Blume, 1976

1976.73.2



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