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**THE TOTAL LOOK:**  
**An analysis of the work of Elsa Schiaparelli**

by

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# PREFACE

## The Twelve Commandments for Women

1. Since most women do not know themselves they should try to do so.
2. A woman who buys an expensive dress and changes often with disastrous results is extravagant and foolish.
3. Most women (and men) are colour blind. They should ask for suggestions.
4. Remember - twenty percent of women have inferiority complexes. Seventy percent have illusions.
5. Ninety percent are afraid of being conspicuous and of what people will say. So they buy a grey suit. They should dare to be different.
6. Women should listen and ask for competent criticism and advice.
7. They should choose their clothes alone or in the company of a man.
8. They should never shop with another woman who sometimes consciously and often unconsciously is apt to be jealous.
9. She should buy little and only of the best or the cheapest
10. Never fit a dress to the body but train the body to fit the dress.
11. A woman should buy mostly in one place where she is known and respected and not rush around trying every new fad.
12. And she should pay her bills.

Elsa Schiaparelli (35, p. 225)





# CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
PREFACE	1
CONTENTS	2
LIST OF PLATES	3
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER ONE Schiaparelli and displacement	11
CHAPTER TWO Schiaparelli and symbolism	17
CHAPTER THREE Schiaparelli and sexuality	23
CHAPTER FOUR Moschino	28
CONCLUSION	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	36





# LIST OF PLATES

## Figure

1. Horst P. Horst, Elsa Schiaparelli, (1937)
2. Elsa Schiaparelli, Butterfly Bow Sweater, 1927
3. New York Buildings
4. Elsa Schiaparelli, Evening Ensemble, 1938
5. Elsa Schiaparelli, Desk Suit, 1938
6. Salvador Dali, City of Drawers, 1936
7. Jean Cocteau, Embroidery on Jacket, 1937
8. Elsa Schiaparelli, Two Pursed Lip Profiles, 1937
9. Elsa Schiaparelli, Glass Cape, 1934
10. Elsa Schiaparelli, Rococo Mirror Jacket, 1939
11. Elsa Schiaparelli, Butterfly Buttons, on jacket, 19..
12. Elsa Schiaparelli, Shoe Hat, 1937
13. Elsa Schiaparelli, Lobster Dress, 1937
14. Illustration of uterus
15. Wrasse Fish
16. The colour red
17. Elsa Schiaparelli, Circus Button, detail, 1938
18. Elsa Schiaparelli, Circus Jacket, 1938
19. Elsa Schiaparelli, Circus Jacket, detail, 1938
20. Elsa Schiaparelli, Tear Dress, 1938
21. Elsa Schiaparelli, Tear Dress, detail, 1938
22. Callot Soeurs, Evening Dress, 1922
23. Berard, Total Look of Women
24. Illustration of figures through the ages
25. The male figure
26. Manteau Camouflage, 1942-43
27. Elsa Schiaparelli, Embroidery, detail, 1938
28. Elsa Schiaparelli, Design Resembling Soldiers Uniforms
29. Elsa Schiaparelli, Hat Design, 1937
30. Moschino campaign photograph
31. Coco Chanel, Suit, 1960
32. Franco Moschino, Chanel Suit, 1984





## Figure

- 33. Franco Moschino, Dress of a woman
- 34. Moschino with aeroplane, campaign photograph
- 35. Model with aeroplane on head
- 36. Franco Moschino, Wham outfit, 1985
- 37. Franco Moschino, Fresh Fruit Suit, 1985
- 38. Moschino with Queen and bishop impersonators
- 39. Moschino's Teddy fantasy world, 1985





# INTRODUCTION

Elsa Schiaparelli brought a completely new and original talent to the world of Haute Couture and was the most successful new designer to cope with the often trying circumstances of the thirties. (34, p. 94)

Interpreting its needs, Elsa Schiaparelli (Fig. 1) moved fashion from a purely occupational activity which women participated in to an essential part of our society where it could be used as a means of communication. She became an artist in the world of couture; not involved in the development of existing designs, but instead extracting inspiration from her cultural past. This sense of closeness to her surroundings and acute knowledge of contemporary society led her to merge fashion with the creativity and awareness of art. As Palmer White said: "She was one of the rare designers to bring a background into fashion with her." (38, p. 17) Schiaparelli's inventive discoveries, one must remember came from her intellect and not from her skills as an atelier. Her presence was felt mostly in the development of concepts and design ideas; these were later assembled by her ateliers. It was this total lack of knowledge in the creation of garments that led her into the unknown. For Schiaparelli dress designing was not seen as a profession but as an art form, "a most difficult and unsatisfying art became as soon as a dress is born, it has already become a thing of the past." (12, p. 26)

Schiaparelli's early success was brought about by her crude Bow Tie design of 1928 placed on a black and white sweater (fig. 2). This sweater resulted in a new feminine look, completely at odds with the boyish one of the early twenties. The sweater with its child-like bow was unusually soft, with the addition of elastic which allowed the body of the garment to cling to the wearer. This humble beginning eventually led to the first ready-to-





wear ranges that fulfilled the needs of career women who yearned to express themselves through their attire.

Similar to fashion, other art forms also matured through an age of political, social and intellectual unrest during the 1930s, as they sought out a variety of other mediums in which to accommodate their ideas. It was at this time Schiaparelli formed close links with the Surrealists and their manifesto. A brief description of the Surrealist movement will need to be given before it can be understood in the context of fashion design.

### **Surrealism.**

Surrealism, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express-verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner-the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any context exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

Andre Breton (20, p. 28)

Surrealism resulted as a reaction to the First World War and was influenced both by the Dadaists and the Russian Constructivists. It wanted to bring a new art form into society that broke all previous boundaries. Their intention was to rebel against all acceptable and admissible standards connected with both social and cultural sources as these were seen to no longer have any relevance. The Surrealists strove to create fresh and uncorrupted meanings through which they could express the absurd and the illogical. Considered rebels within the art world of the 1930s, they were determined to find a context in which they could change social values. This was eventually found in the then rapidly growing field of psychoanalysis.

Profoundly influenced by all contemporary art, the Surrealists followed their own fundamental interests into other fields. The Surrealists were distinctly interested in learning from other fields, rather than just dismissing or destroying their policies. One such field was psychoanalysis.





Both Freud's and Jung's work, strongly based around free association influenced the Surrealists and introduced them to the possibility of creating a formula and doctrine based on the principles of the free association of words and images. The idea of civilised man having similar characteristics to his predecessors, whose mind contained a well of subconscious material fascinated the Surrealists. With free association the Surrealists found the capacity to encourage the mind to forget its conscious logic and reason, and expose its alternate and up to now hidden unconscious. This can be seen in Breton's first Manifesto of 1924: "We are still living under the reign of logic...but in this day and age logical methods are applicable only to solving problems of secondary interest." (20, p. 12) Further on he acknowledges Freud and his discoveries: "We must give thanks to the discoveries of S. Freud," (20, p. 11) Andre Breton adopted and translated Freud's techniques into Surrealist terms that Breton dubbed "pure psychic automatism." (14, p. 7) This resulted in a variety of images which caused a certain amount of willingness within the unconscious to explore its unique powers. It was through this method that the Surrealists developed a host of images based on psychoanalytic actuality. Further advancement and experiment with new techniques allowed not only the Surrealists but other artists and designers to bring about a different series of thought into their own media.

### **Methodology.**

It has previously been the norm where one discusses and classifies a fashion designer's work to do this in terms of the objects they design, such as hats, gloves, jackets; that is, in accordance with the physical boundaries of the garments themselves and the traditionally received categories of these physical objects. As such fashion design is typically analysed in terms of groups of objects. In this thesis, I propose to analyse and classify Elsa Schiaparelli's work not in terms of the objects she has designed, but in more abstract terms. These will appear closer and more relevant to the essence her work and they will also help to clarify her defining relationship with the





Surrealist movement (who had artists such as Magritte and Breton also rejecting traditional categories of analysis).

The categories in question are: 1) Displacement; 2) Symbolism; 3) Sexuality. We can expect therefore to find in this thesis garments such as evening dresses and hats discussed side by side, or the same garment discussed under different categories, each which deals with a particular aspect of the garment in question. This method of analysis can be viewed as emphasising the thematic rather than the physical: more in search of meaning within Schiaparelli's work rather than discussing her work descriptively according to types.

This is nearer both to Schiaparelli's work and her method of dealing with fashion. Fashion was never just fashion for Schiaparelli (as it was for Chanel) but a medium for her messages and fantasies. It is also closer to current methods of analysis in other fields of design, and in architecture (a favourite subject for displacement with Schiaparelli) where buildings are 'read' or 'deconstructed' for meaning rather than discussed as just 'buildings' (see Jencks, The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, 20).

### **Format.**

The following chapters will lay the foundations by which I will analyse Schiaparelli's character. They will reveal a woman who used fashion to express her emotions about he society and environment in which she lived.

Chapter one will discuss Schiaparelli's use of displacement within her work. Before this a brief explanation of displacement is given as understood by the Surrealists. The chapter is broken into 3 parts. Part one deals with Schiaparelli's displacement of structure and her placement of





structures on top of each other. Even though the figures she used were in no way abnormal, she managed to utilise their anatomical elements, regularly positioning them completely out of context. Schiaparelli's displacement of architectural concepts is also investigated. Part two deals with the displacement of objects on the body. The displacement of these items allows for a certain amount of authenticity as the objects displaced might adopt a new role but the customary knowledge and recognition of the object remains the same. Part three deals with Schiaparelli's use of displacement within materials: descriptions of glass, mirrors and animal fibres that are out of context will be analysed.

Chapter two. This chapter will focus on the use of symbolism in Schiaparelli's work. Even though "her emotional life was governed by a deep necessity to preserve her physical and spiritual privacy," (41, p. 89) this chapter will give an analysis of Schiaparelli's character and will show that through symbolism she revealed her more repressed emotions. This chapter is broken into three parts each addressing different symbolic aspects of her work. Part one discusses her symbolic representation of nature; it will show how she transformed elements of nature into the extraordinary by incorporating them into her designs more or less as they are found in nature. Part two discusses Schiaparelli's use of themes in her collections. These themes were not only used to harmonise the collection but also to instill an overall symbolic gestalt in the minds of people. Schiaparelli regularly used themes as a means of articulating her dreams and expressions in a symbolic way. Part three looks at symbolism which expressed the sexuality of women in the 1930s. Examples will be used in an attempt to throw light on Schiaparelli's reasons for using sexual symbols as a means of personal expression, as well as a means of exploring the ideas based on feminine.

Chapter three. This chapter will closely observe the way Schiaparelli expressed her individuality and the sexuality of women in the 1930s and will investigate her determination to create garments that reflected the needs of women at that time. Instead of attempting a complete





account of Schiaparelli's attitudes to sexuality, this chapter is broken into two parts. First, a brief overview of the 1930s is undertaken: this will lead to a study of the structural forms she imposed on the female figure in order to achieve a more feminine style. These garments portray an overall aesthetic image of 'smartness' which had not been seen in the previous twenty years. A close look at the way in which she conveyed women's sexuality through shoulder pads and a small waist will be discussed. Finally, Schiaparelli's use of uniforms within female dress will be looked at. Her ability to protect a woman's sexuality, from a male-orientated world will also be discussed.

Chapter four. This chapter investigates the contemporary designer, Franco Moschino. The reason for choosing Moschino is to show that he is influenced by Schiaparelli and her ideas and has used them to further his own work. Being both Italian, they have similar approaches to design problems and similar artistic influences, the chief one being the Surrealist movement. Moschino's use of Surrealism, as with Schiaparelli's, appears to be entwined in the psychological theories the Surrealists developed. In this chapter, Moschino's connection with the Surrealist movement and his disparaging attitude to the Italian fashion industry will be dealt with. His use of wit and creative flair to liven the now almost moribund fashion industry will also be examined. This chapter will allow a broader understanding of Schiaparelli as well as placing her work in a historical and contemporary context.







Fig 1: Portrait of Elsa Schiaparelli  
by Horst 1937





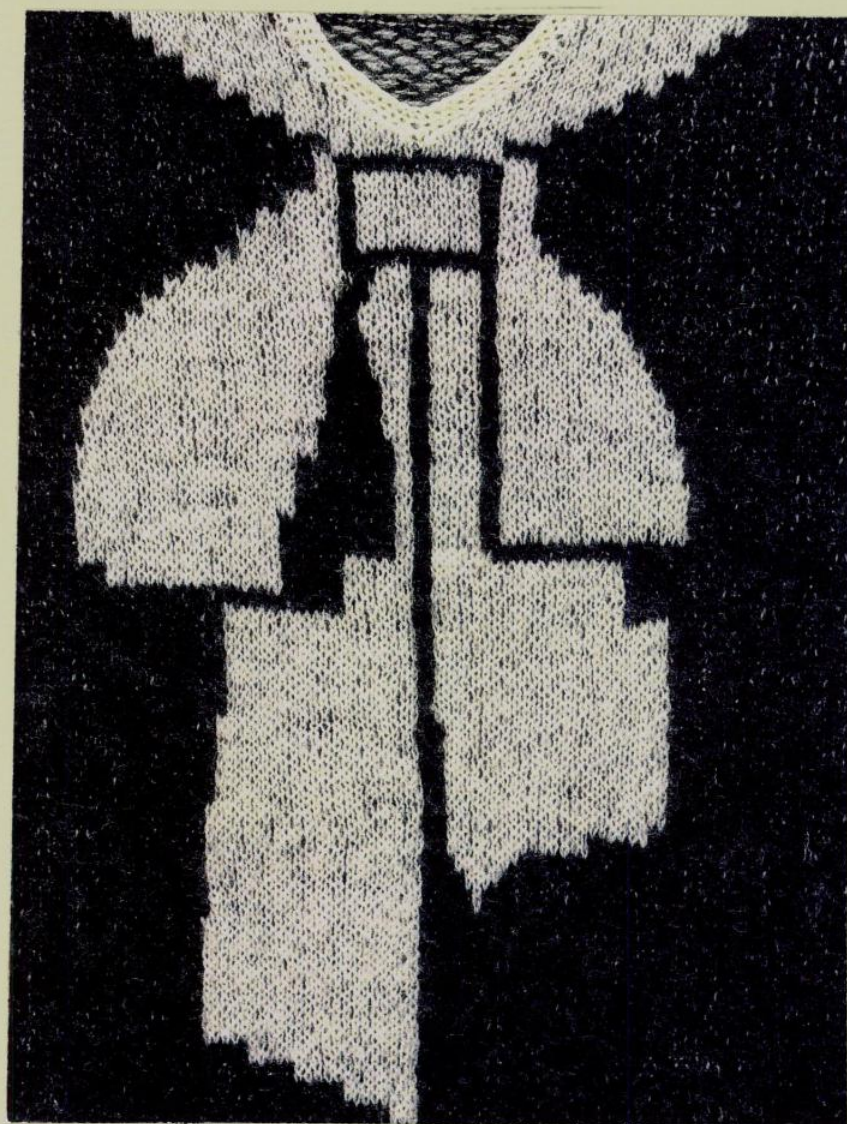
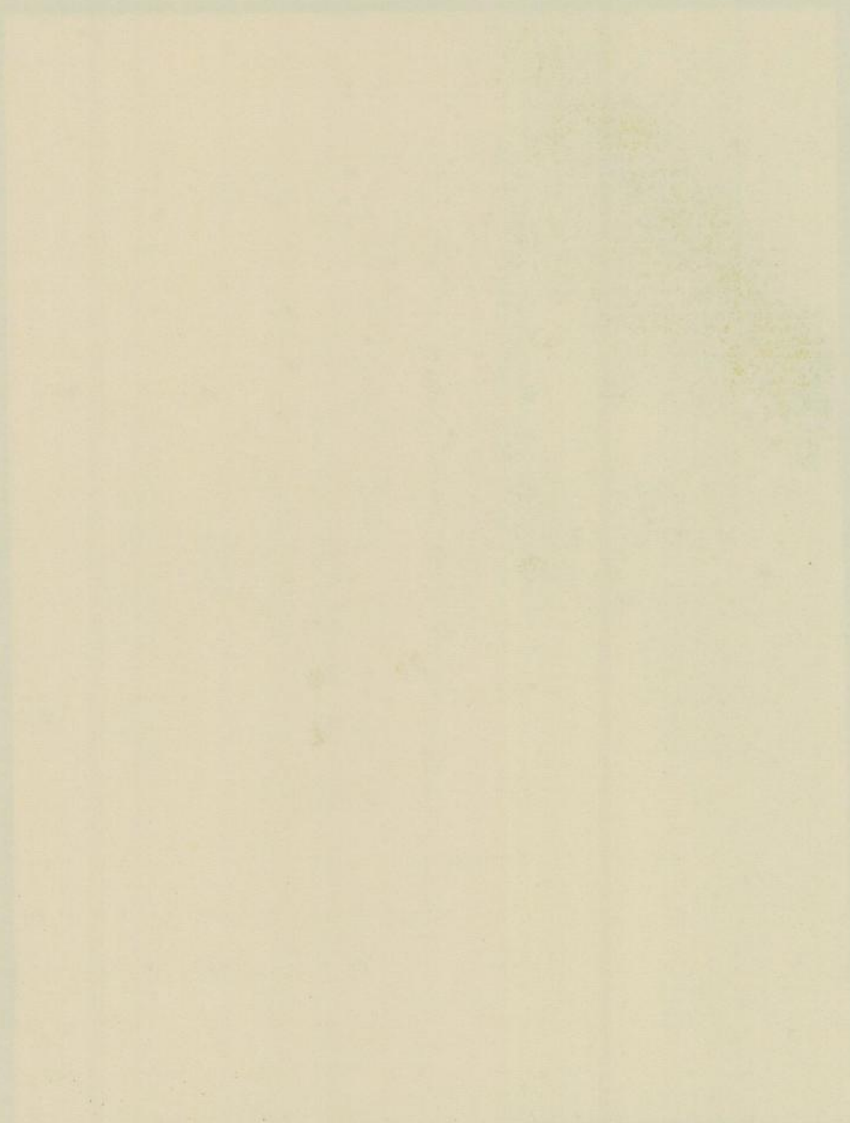


Fig 2: Butterfly Bow Sweater, 1927





# CHAPTER ONE

## SCHIAPARELLI AND DISPLACEMENT

Surreality will be moreover, the function of our will to the displacement of everything.

Andre Breton (20, p. 38)

The word displacement as used by Schiaparelli and the Surrealist artists refers to an element or object no longer in its original context, as opposed to merely its physical position. The purpose of displacement within Schiaparelli's work was not therefore just concerned with an element's simple physical repositioning but primarily with its contextual aspect, in order to question its meaning. This disruption of the element allows it to automatically achieve a fresh identity. It is this new identity that allows an artist or a designer to create contradictions in terms of the elements perceived function and its expected role or place in society. The once familiar object in its new setting not only surprises and confuses the beholder but forces him or her to consider new roles and possibilities for it as well as querying the original one. As Louis Aragon points out in Challenge to Painting, "the marvellous is born out of the refusal of one reality, but also of the development of a new relationship, a new reality liberated by that refusal." (20, p. 37)

Although the displacement that the Surrealists were initially concerned with in the early days of the movement was chiefly expressed through the spoken and written word, it wasn't until these artists began to look for a more powerful medium through which to achieve displacement that they discovered fashion design (14, p. 7). The fashion medium provided a setting through which the displacement of objects could be more disruptive, while more importantly giving the opportunity to communicate with both language and visual concepts, similar to painting, (for example Magritte's Dreamings Key, 1930). The widespread astonishment caused by





displacement was due to the greater media exposure and the greater political potential allowed by fashion compared to art within society.

As a fashion designer, Elsa Schiaparelli's greatest revelations came from her inventive mind rather than from her ability as a dress-maker. This lack of fashion knowledge allowed her to go "beyond the crude and boring reality of merely making a dress to sell." (38, p. 62) Contemporary fashion designers of the thirties were basing their work around traditional methods. Both Chanel and Rochas impact was a direct result of easy to wear and practical garments that were based on the simplest of structures. Chanel's referral to Schiaparelli as the "Italian artist who makes clothes," (41, p. 98) was scornful in its intention, but it shows that Schiaparelli's involvement went beyond the basics of garment style and into the realms of artistic expression.

It is clear that Schiaparelli's relationship with the body went further than any of her contemporaries. Through her close association with the Surrealist movement, Schiaparelli came to adopt a number of their ideas and used them to advance her train of thought in the fashion world. Her study of various artists, such as Frederick Kiesler (1896-1965) led her to consider the principle of displacement as a conceptual base for her clothes (Kiesler, a sculptor/architect was primarily concerned with the fusion of these two arts):

Schiaparelli's pre-occupation with the application and displacement of architectural forms is evident in her autobiography, Shocking Life:

Her concept of clothes was architectural, the frame is used in a building. Instead of following the undulating curves of the flesh, she followed the length of the hard, bony structure. The variations in line and detail always had to keep a close relationship to this frame. The more the planes of the body were respected the more the garment acquired vitality. One could add or take away, lower or raise, modify and accentuate, but the harmony must remain. (35, p. 64)

Here her intention was to displace architectural concepts and transfer them onto the body. A prime example of this positioning of





architectural structures on top of the anatomical structure can be seen in the Desk Suit (1938, fig. 5). This outfit not only has the juxtaposition of the architectural and the anatomical but it also has the added feature of simulating a piece of furniture. Dali's initial Surrealist drawings for the City of Drawers (fig. 6), and the Venus de Milo of the Drawers (1936), acted as a basis for this suit. Schiaparelli's interpretation of the suit is not directly that of Dali's original, but is a more subdued variation, unlike Dali's primary theme, of a woman with an outstretched arm fending off any strangers that might wish to enter her body. Schiaparelli, although interested in the sexual implications (discussed in chapter three) of the drawers, is drawn more importantly to the manipulation of the structure within the suit.

Conceived initially by turn of the century architects such as Louis Sullivan, the skyscraper became one of the greatest stylistic phenomenons of the American Depression years. Schiaparelli adopted this streamlined and elegant object and displaced it to produce an extraordinary silhouette. It was through her use of cut that Schiaparelli incorporated the streamlined effect: "If you draw a square balanced on top of a narrow oblong you will get an idea of this ultra-smart silhouette." (41, p. 7) This effect became highly relevant to Schiaparelli since not only did its simplicity of line add to the female figure, it also suggested symbolically to people, especially women that like the skyscraper, which gained acceptance as a building during the first three decades of the twentieth century, women were no longer going to be denied the privileges they deserved. The skyscraper was also "a symbol of optimism and promise for the future since it suggested a nation moving forward out of the depression to become the powerhouse of the new machine age." (10, p. 37) So too for they with their new found silhouette, encouraging them to fight for their independence and equality in a man's world.

Not only was this idea of displacing architecture used but the similarly fundamental idea of re-interpreting the body was also conceived





by Schiaparelli. She began to realise that the entire relationship between the body and its clothes could be both playful and perverse. The idea of displacing and dislocating parts of the body was soon adopted as yet another means of enhancing the existing anatomical structure. Of all the representations of this dismemberment of the body, perhaps the most contrived is that of Rene Magritte's The Titanic Day, (1928). A superimposed figure sharply outlined is at odds with the already existing figure. The two figures appear to be in turmoil, fighting over the invasion of the woman's body. A similar idea can be seen in a collaboration between Schiaparelli and Jean Cocteau during 1937, a jacket which is decorated with embroidered hands that seem to clasp the wearer's body (fig. 7). These illusory hands are complimented by the placing of a full profile of a figure with a cascade of hair falling along one arm. Here Schiaparelli manages to create an element of discord between the fictitious figure and the wearer, somewhat akin to Magritte's painting. Schiaparelli causes frustration as one tries to view the parts of the body in relation to the wearer. Adding to this frustration is the realisation that both the underlying and displaced waists are aligned correctly. Schiaparelli is forcing the observer to question what is seen, although parts of the body are applied with some logic. Schiaparelli plays off the fact that visually this is both tormenting and stimulating to the eye; here is "the almost impossible marriage of eccentricity and common-sense pulling off paradoxes and contradictions with brio." (41, p. 2)

A similar example of displacement can be seen in the voluptuous symbol of the lips. Lips had the ability to be interpreted as symbols of physical pleasure, which appealed greatly to the Surrealists and Schiaparelli. These symbols first appeared in the second Surrealist manifesto in 1929. Seen sometimes more real than life and other times purely decorative, these lips had the power to migrate all over the body. In one of Schiaparelli's designs a jacket, Two Lip Profiles (fig. 8) the lips are embroidered onto a blue silk jersey evening coat. The lip profiles are at odds with the form of the garment but enhance it to the fullest. The two lip profiles at first glance appear to take the form of a champagne glass: this





optical illusion once again manages to make the viewer question exactly what he or she is looking at.

Schiaparelli also became known in the field of fabric design, where she used contradictions within the fabrics themselves. Early on she began to displace traditional fibres with synthetics. Her substitution of unusual fibres such as horse hair for evening wraps, tweed for evening dresses and tent canvas for hats were contrived as methods for making people question the use of traditional materials. It was her close involvement with the textiles industry that allowed her to achieve such results. Her unremitting search to find a cellophane-like fabric that would have the appearance of glass was realised in 1934. It was a transparent material resembling a thick cellophane that was brittle and fragile . The ensemble arising out of this was the Glass Jacket (fig. 9), placed over a black evening dress, that held some similarities to Magritte's Homage to Mack Sennett (1934).

But it was with the Rococo Mirror Jacket of 1939 (fig. 10) that Schiaparelli astounded, with the extremity of her displacement through materials. The mirror is a regularly used device in Surrealism. Similar to Schiaparelli, Magritte incorporated it, with an eye into his 1928 work, The False Mirror. The mirror is also evident in Cecil Beaton's and Jean Cocteau's work.

The Rococo hand mirrors with fractured faces and frames are strategically placed on the breasts of the wearer: through this Schiaparelli creates a visually intimate relationship between the wearer and onlooker. Less obvious is the play of power between the two, particularly the lack of it on behalf of the viewer. The paradoxical aspect within the jacket of whether the wearer is tempting the vanity of the viewer to look at themselves through the broken mirror or beyond and into the wearer can be confusing to the viewer. Schiaparelli is also questioning causality in this situation, in that she seems to be asking, who is responsible for the impression that is received from the jacket; the wearer or the viewer?





Schiaparelli accepts that the wearer is responsible for the frustration caused, in that a certain amount of responsibility is placed upon the wearer of how she wants to be seen. On the other hand the placing of the mirrors plants the view in ones mind that the beauty seen when looking at this jacket only leaves the observer responsible for any impression created. The jacket is not only a displacement of materials but a constant displacement of thought. Schiaparelli is not trying to answer these issues: rather, she is revealing them for questioning and forcing others to do likewise.

Schiaparelli not only obscured materials and architecture, she also used a range of seemingly (to fashion) irrelevant objects. This practice, known as 'displacing objects' was used by Andre Breton among others. He wrote an essay on the matter in 1936 entitled, Crisis of the Object. Breton believed that "there is more to be found in the hidden real than in the known quantity." (20, p. 54) Using this Schiaparelli began to want any knowledge of the displaced objects original meaning disregarded and to let the unconscious offer its own suggestions. Schiaparelli saw that this offered her a chance to transplant an idea and 'transmogrify' it. This resulted in some of the strangest examples of displacement, many of the objects she used were still visually potent: such as the jacket with the butterfly buttons (fig. 11). Their degree of authenticity is surprising considering her "betrayal of conventional meaning." (20, p. 113). The Shoe Hat (fig. 12) of 1937 is a bizarre example of Schiaparelli's methods at the time, as well as demonstrating her sense of humour. Once again originally conceived by Dali, the heel over head design observes the traditional rigours of millinery, as well as those of shoe design, allowing Schiaparelli to fulfil her desired wish when designing it, the querying of the object and its meaning.







Fig 3: New York Buildings

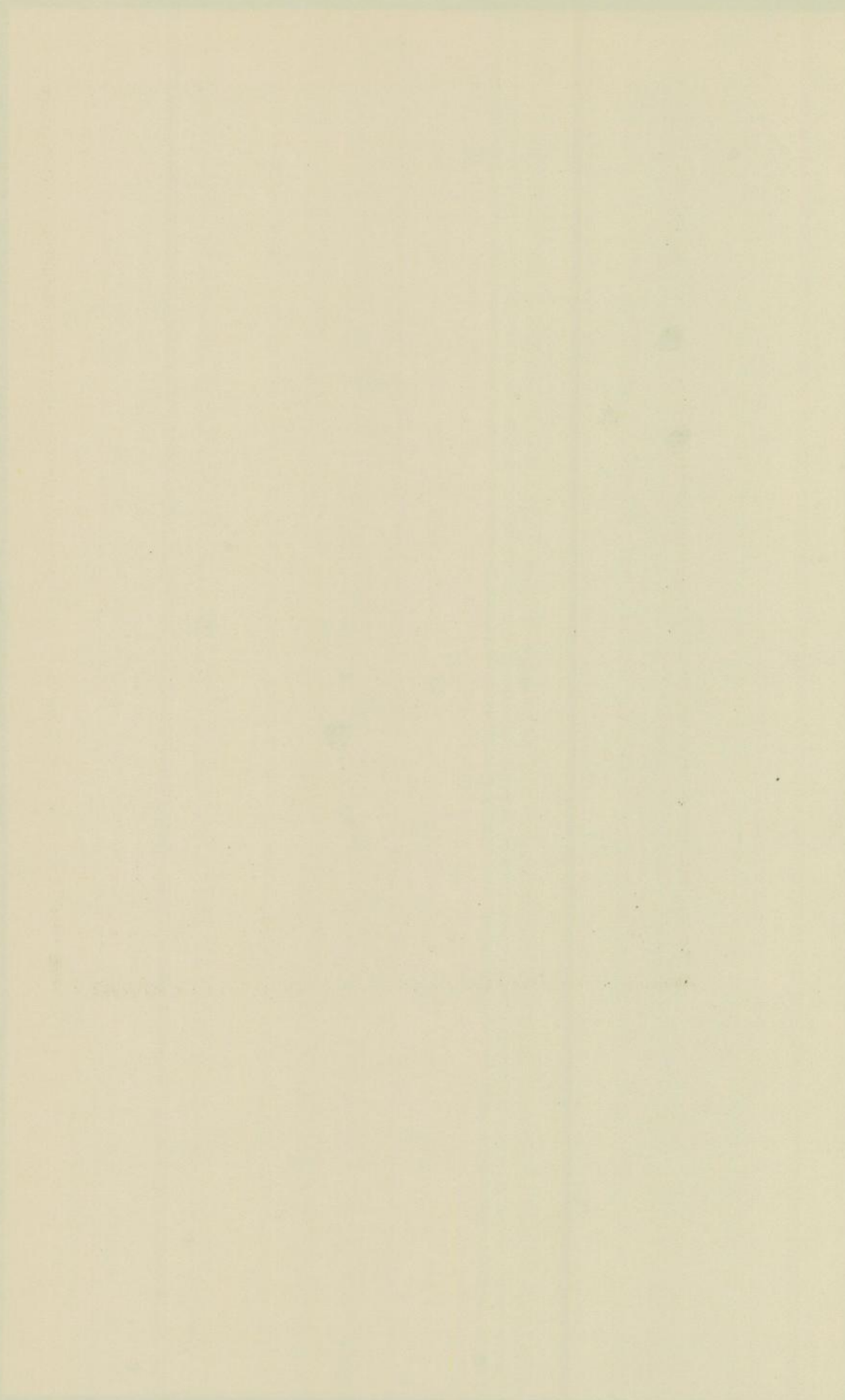






Fig 4: Evening Ensemble, 1938

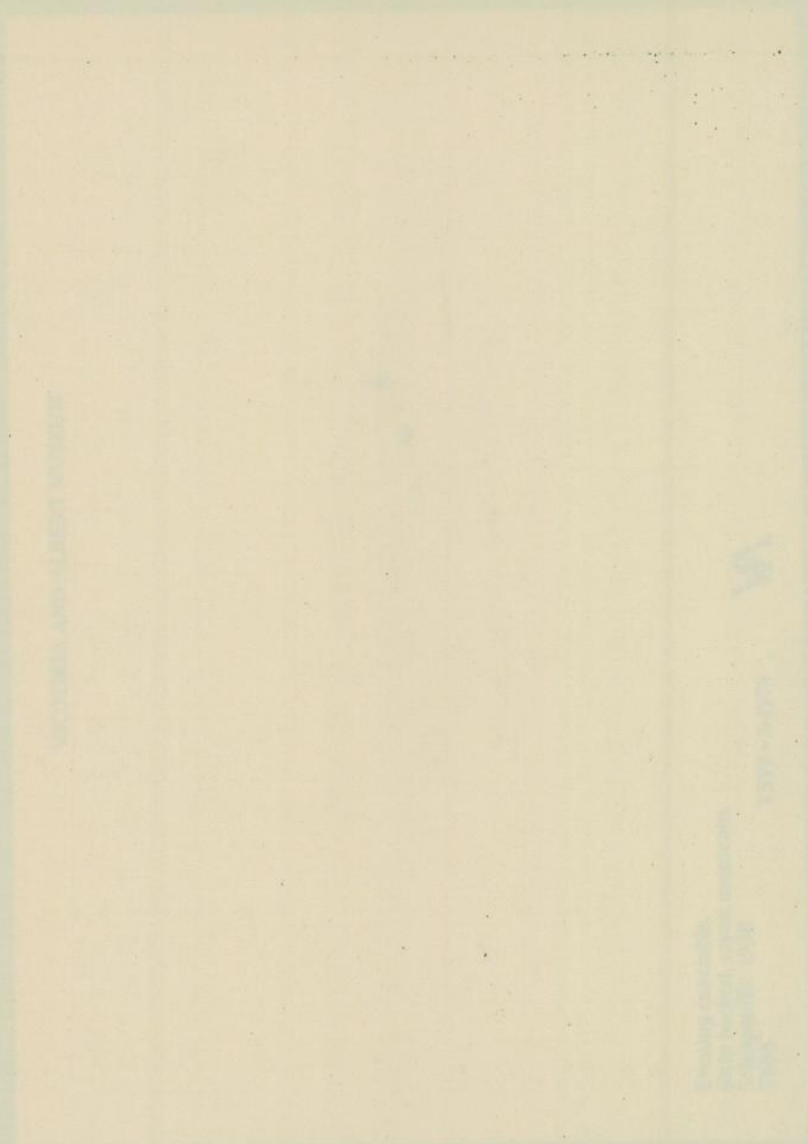






Fig 5: Desk Suit  
by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1938

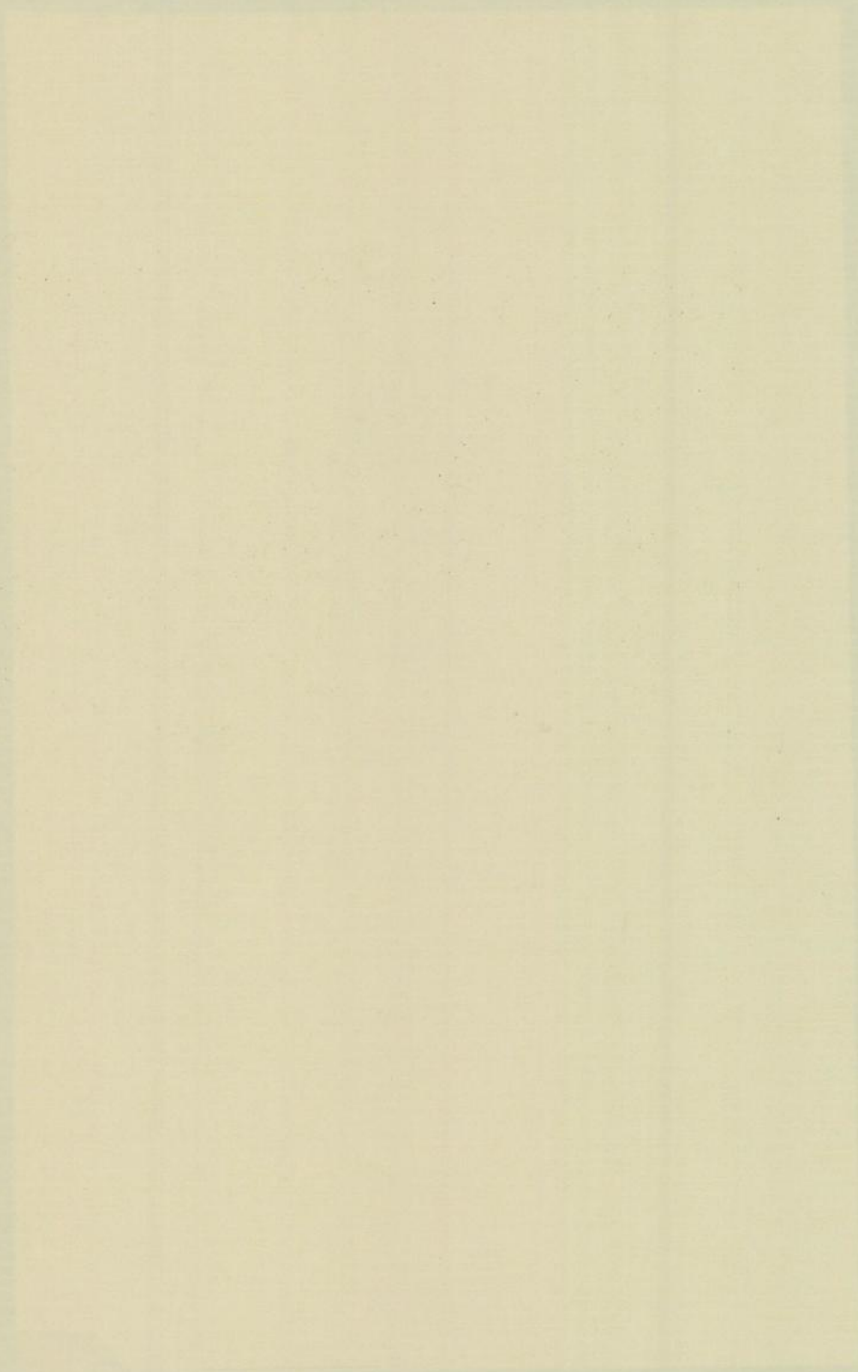






Fig 6: City of Drawers  
by Salvador Dali, 1936

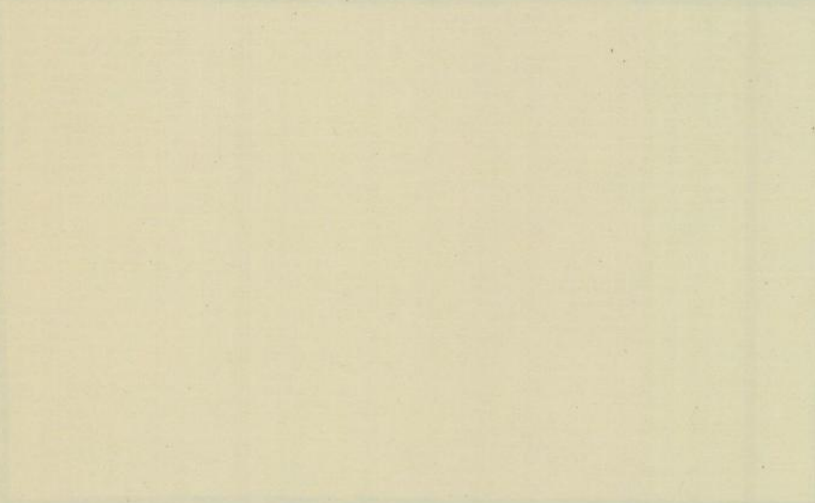






Fig 7: Jean Cocteau Embroidery on Jacket, 1937

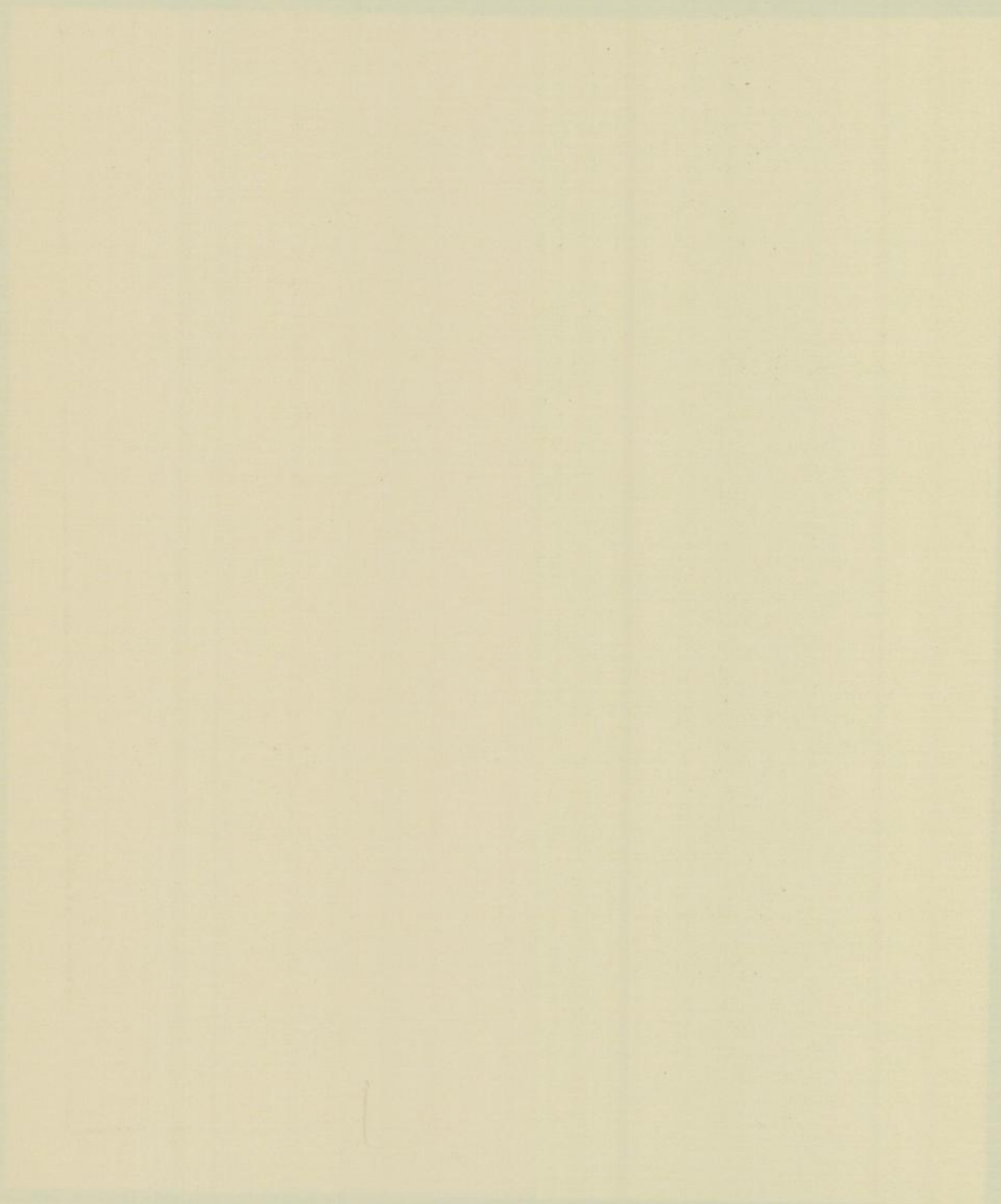






Fig 8: Two Pursed Lips Profile  
by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1937

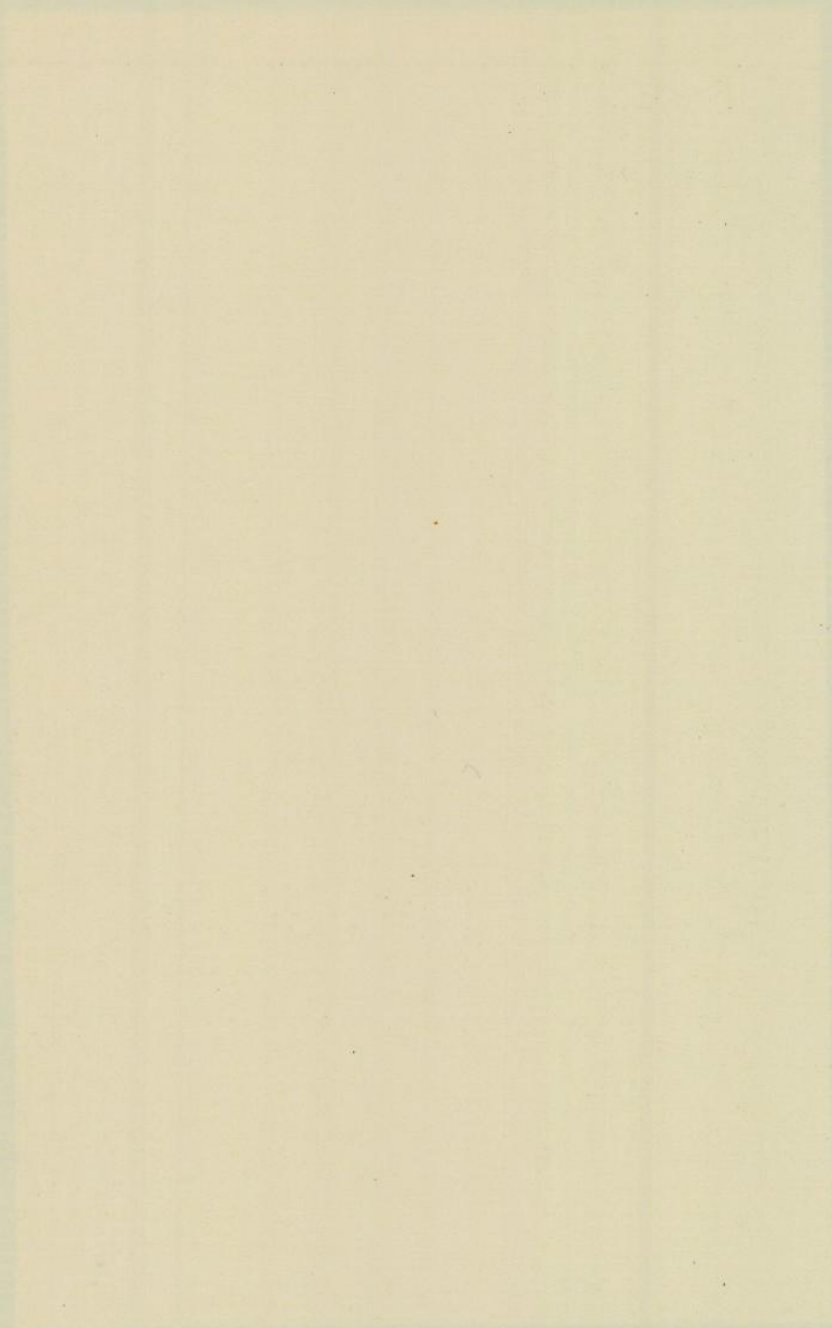






Fig 9: Glass Cape  
by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1934

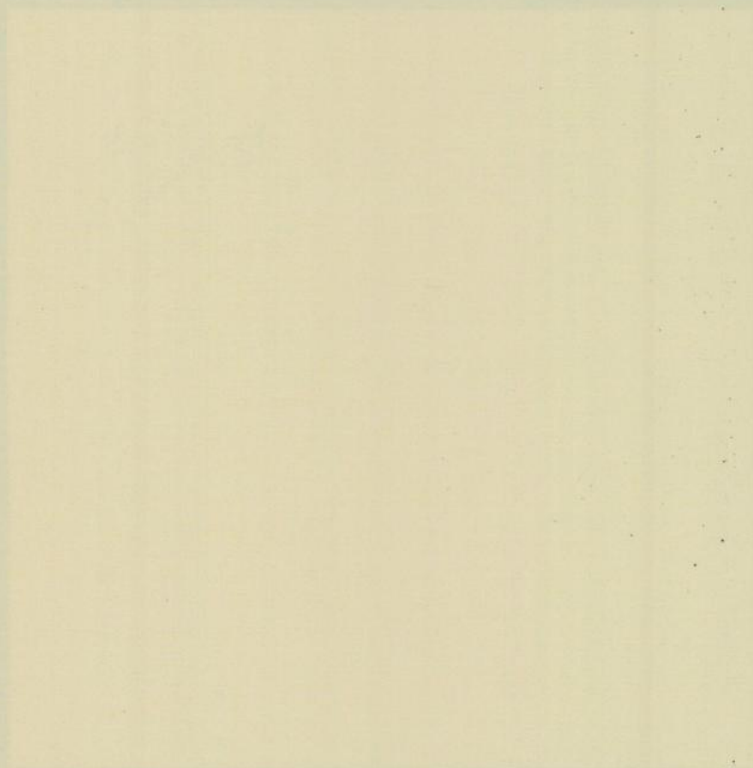








Fig 10: Rococo Mirror Jacket  
by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1939





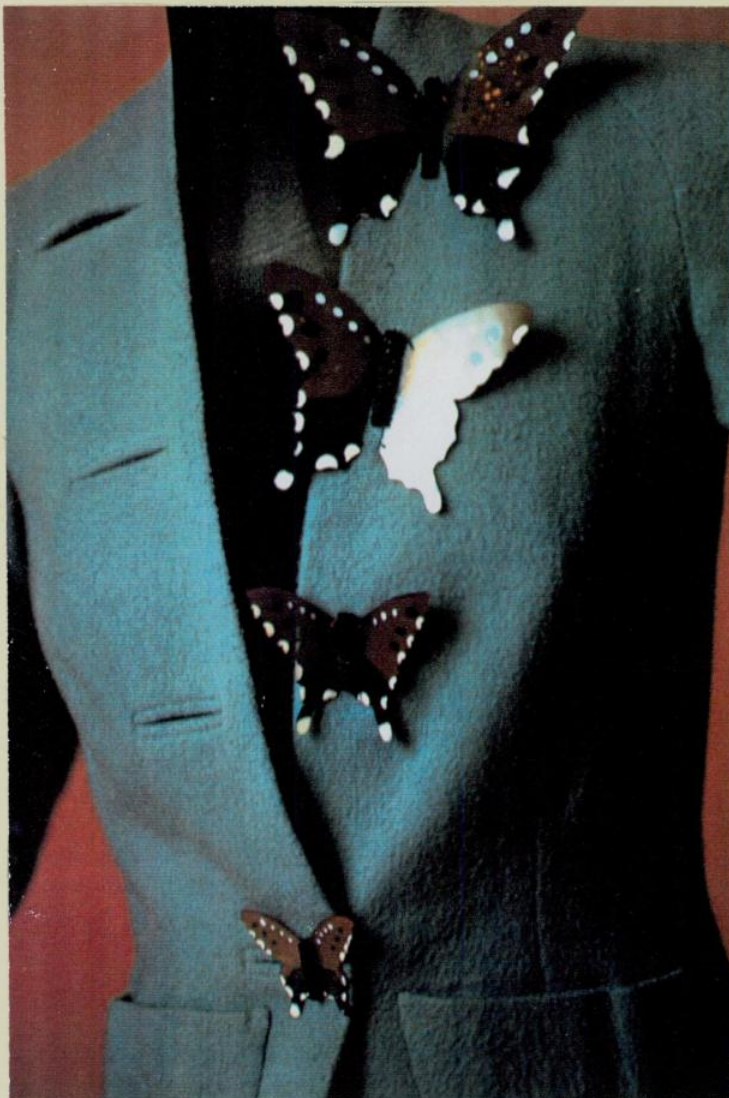


Fig 11: Butterfly Buttons on Jacket, 1938

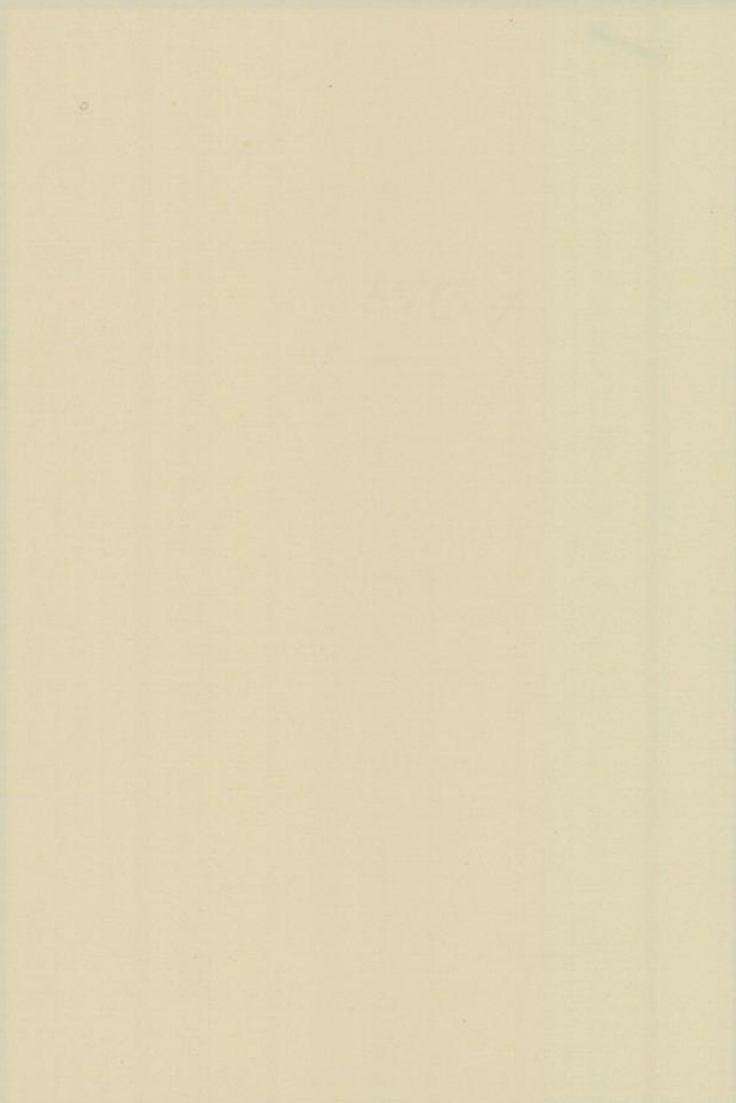
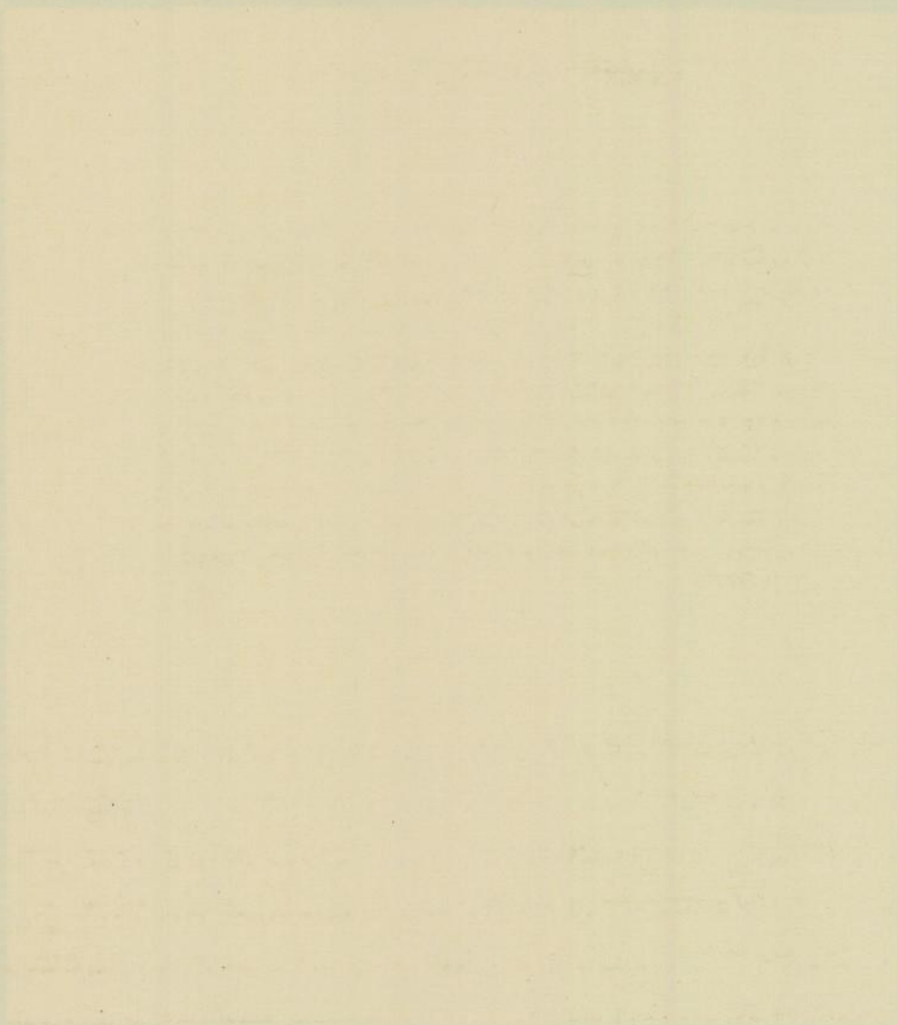






Fig 12: Shoe Hat, by Elsa Schiaparelli





# CHAPTER TWO

## SCHIAPARELLI AND SYMBOLISM

**Symbolism:** 1. use of symbols to represent things; symbols collectively. 2. a school of painters and of (esp. French) poets seeking to express the essence of things by suggestion.

In a literary and art historical sense, symbolism is the idealist movement of the 1880s and 1890s in France. Primarily a literary concept, it was launched as an identifiable movement by the radical poet Jean Moreas in 1886. Symbolism was seen as the expression of an idea through form, the word or the object represented being no more than a sign, to open up the world of the imagination(...). Symbolism was important in later theories of abstraction and Surrealism. (16, p. 834)

With the increasing significance of psychology during the first half of this century the area and meaning of symbols and symbolism came under scrutiny, particularly in the work of C.G. Jung. In Surrealism this led to the conscious and premeditated manipulation of what were previously pre-conscious images. This increased awareness inspired not only the rendering of symbols to explain and describe dream states as in Dali's work, but also in their use as political or subversive devices.

In Schiaparelli's case the possibility of war led her to use symbolism as a means of defusing the turbulence in peoples minds caused by events in Europe: "Caught between a depression and the approaching shadow of war, life had become brittle." (9, p. 115) Other fashion designers such as Chanel responded to this prevailing mood by designing day-wear in a severe and military style; Schiaparelli however used symbolic elements in order to allow her and her clients to refute the melancholy atmosphere. Furthermore it allowed her to continue her particular brand of creativity as well as giving vent to her more repressed emotions. Schiaparelli saw symbolism as a "non-verbal language that conveyed double meaning," (19, p. 2) a way of using a disorientated image and transforming it into a fashion device.





The possibility of war resulted in a concealment and diversion of femininity in day-wear, as womens energies were channelled into the war effort. The fashionable figure became increasingly slender and the emphasis on clothes became ones of smartness and chic.

Schiaparelli believed that during the day, "women's clothes should correspond to their way of life, to their occupation, to their loves, and also to their pockets." (35, p. 71) But in saying this she also believed that on account of the growing confidence in their new roles in society, women need another form of expression for the night. As Palmer White points out:

During the blackest time, Paris was more frivolous and scintillating than ever. Against this background Elsa urged women to dare appear publicly in theatrical clothes, not only to assert their independence but to provide glamour fun and romance in their daily lives, "wear the smartest of what is conventionally permitted, yes, but also be the most exciting of your unique self while remaining fashionable." (41, p. 172)

It was at this time that Schiaparelli became a "tireless investigator of the world of nature," (30, p. 171) where she began to express her personal imagery through elements of nature. She began to take them directly and use them by incorporating their exact forms into her garments. One of Schiaparelli's better innovations involving natural symbolism was a collaboration with Salvador Dali. His particular obsession with the lobster (fig. 13) resulted in a design for a white evening dress, known as the Lobster Dress (1937). The image of the lobster greatly appealed to both Schiaparelli and Dali due to its sexual connotations. Its resemblance to a woman's uterus (fig. 14) led them to view it as an appropriate symbol for female sexuality and fertility. The two claws are similar in form and angle to the fallopian tubes and the lobsters carapace evokes the vagina.

The lobster also appealed to Schiaparelli due to a metamorphic quality; its ability to change colour from green-brown when alive to bright red when cooked. Colour change is also an important element of sexual behaviour in nature, as for example in the Wrasse fish (fig. 15): "One





interesting aspect of this colouration is that it changes with sex and with the eye of the individual [the fish] and can apparently change from time to time, for example changing colour and pattern during courtship and mating." (8, p. 17: brackets mine) The plain white background on which green parsley is sprinkled helps to enhance the lobster and its colouring.

The particular colour of the cooked lobster, red, also has a highly significant symbolic meaning: traditionally red has represented sex. "Red is associated with reproduction. It is said to stimulate...and say some experts, even help the woman to conceive." (8, p. 18) The colour red (fig. 16) also considered to "represent passion and energy...impulsive and sexy." (8, p. 18) More recently, tests have show that viewing the colour red causes a physiological reaction, particularly with the skin and sweat glands.

The position of lobster on the dress is also significant. Symbolically the lobster is placed over the breasts and reproductive system; the lobster acts as a signal, emphasising the wearer's sexuality. This not only stimulates both the mind of the wearer and the viewer but also implies the sexual audacity of the wearer.

Although some of the Surrealist images used have often been seen in relation to an ideal of female beauty (such as the flower), Schiaparelli took the unusual symbol of the lobster in order to promote her message to women. This symbol not only allowed her to explore the intellectual and psychological aspects of Surrealism but also gave her scope to express her repressed emotions. The lobster on the dress allows the wearer to be aggressively seductive by night. Schiaparelli used this image almost as a guardian of the inner female of the woman and as a symbol of protection, a safeguard against men in their battle for equality and independence.

Another of Schiaparelli's innovations was the use of themes. During 1938 each of her collections was centred around a particular theme. Circus, Pagan and Seasons were examples of these. Although the use of themes





gave an instantaneous harmony and coordination to each range, it also allowed her greater creative input.

It was here with her use of themes that one can see the extremes of her occasionally perverse and cruel attitude toward life. The use of symbolic themes allowed scope for self-expression and the chance to, "become a different person - tender to herself and her real nature, more conscious even more cruel." (41, p. 96) Schiaparelli managed to create entire illusory worlds, instilling fantasy into peoples minds at a time when war loomed, stubbornly refusing to acknowledge the threat and preferring instead this form of escapism.

The Circus collection of February 1938 was centred around a series of novelty effects achieved by the use of particular fabrics, prints, embroideries and accessories (fig. 17), such as evening bustiers attached to gowns, where they resembled bareback lady riders, intricate bolero fronts carrying the motifs of prancing dogs and horses, grey elephants, spotlight accessories, tents and clowns, which reflected the overall theme (fig. 18). Garments containing tent-like veils which covered the head as if a miniature one had collapsed on the wearer, or on her shoulders where it could be reversed in to a cape. For the daytime circus theme (fig. 19), many suits were used which had short hip length fitted jackets, the skirts had high gathered waistlines while the blouses had higher necklines. One suit was reversed, with all the accessories (buttons, pockets, lapels, cravates and brooch) worn entirely backwards.

The symbolic use of the circus was nothing other than a fantasy for Schiaparelli, indicating a world of excitement, gaiety and adventure. Images such as the merry-go-round, lollipops and clowns are constantly incorporated into her designs. This show of frivolity displayed her overwhelming rejection, almost to the point of denial, of contemporary events, even though, "by 1938 it seemed obvious that war was not far off." (10, p. 57) Her refusal to acknowledge the incumbent war reflects an





almost total inability to deal with her times. With this near despair, she flung herself into a self-absorbed state which revolved around creating a symbolic yet trivial illusion for the fashion world and its customers. Although this expression was carefully conceived and executed, it became increasingly difficult to maintain as the envelope of fear increased in people's minds. Schiaparelli's attempt to enliven, excite and deny was totally unwarranted on her part as fashion is always,

an expression and reflection of the social and economic times in which it flourishes [or declines], it is important to remember however, that fashion follows no fad. It is part of the fanfare of our daily lives. As the music of our time changes, so does the fashion. When painting takes on a new direction, a new perspective, fashion changes subtly but quite totally as well. (33, p. 12)

It was in Schiaparelli's use of symbolism, to express the sexuality of women, that one finds the true essence of her style:

For Elsa Schiaparelli, it was more passion than fashion. The energy "moment" and inspiration for her work were more important than line or the development of a style. Her clothing is an expression of a desire, not merely of design. (30, p. 197)

Schiaparelli's "emotional life was governed by a strong sense of protection for her spiritual and physical needs." (41, p. 89) Unlike the male Surrealists of her time whose work expressed physical and erotic desire, Schiaparelli hid her feelings behind a form of feminine disguise. It was with her considerable knowledge of mysticism, garnered from her background in Rome, that she began to achieve a perfect symbolic play between sexuality and a form feminine disguise.

At this time (1937), when the Tear Dress was created, political, pressures began to increase and the feminine self-awareness which had been resulted seemed about to be reversed as modern values were thrown at them. Schiaparelli became increasingly interested in trying to restore women's lost sexuality through symbolism. Her clothes began to "reflect an entire social revolution, defensive during the day and aggressively seductive by night." (41, p. 96) The Tear Dress and head scarf (fig. 20)





were such garments. The printed design of ripped fabric (fig. 21) gives the dress the appearance of actually being torn. To extend the illusion, the head dress is appliqued with organza tears. These tears force one to question both mental and visual preconceptions that constitutes an evening dress and challenges the idea of revealing and concealing the body. Schiaparelli's discerning concealment allows this image to accentuate a woman's sexual beauty. Although the garment does not lend any explicit sexual or erotic meaning (as does the Lobster Dress), ultimately the symbols convey sexual attraction. Its virginal white veil and dress, contrasting with blood red tears subtly portrays an image of implied violence which is finely contradicted by the glamorous and elegant persona of the evening dress. The idea of a newly created garment in this state of destruction was at the time regarded as a profound statement unlike anything seen before in the fashion world.

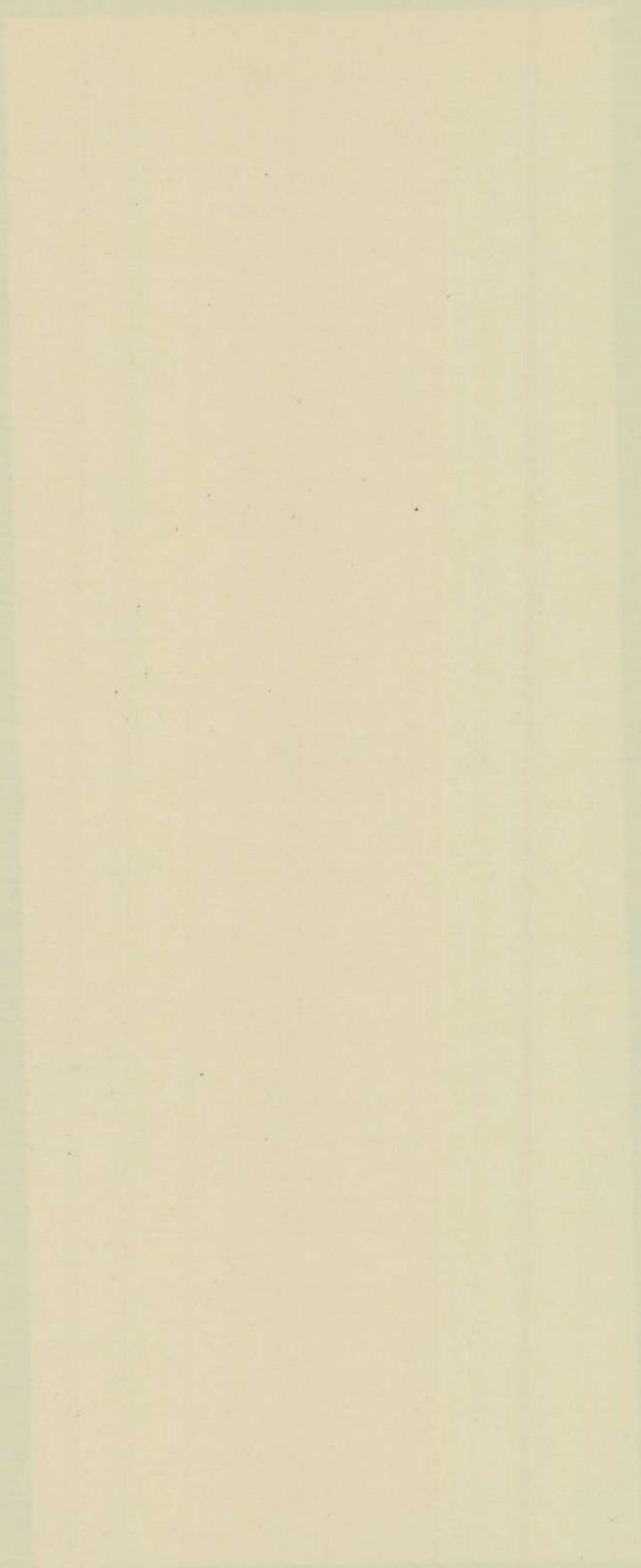
Another example of sexual symbolism is the Desk Suit (fig. 5). Already mentioned under displacement, the Desk Suit also has strong sexual connotations. In Dali's original, one can see his view of women as objects of desire; with Schiaparelli this is somewhat tamed. She somehow loses the essence of desire inherent in the original. This is intentional, and is corrected by her use of structure in the suit. Its displaced streamlined effect can't help but lose the sexual elan of the garment and replace it with smartness and chic, ready for the new women of the world.







Fig 13: Lobster Dress  
by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1939





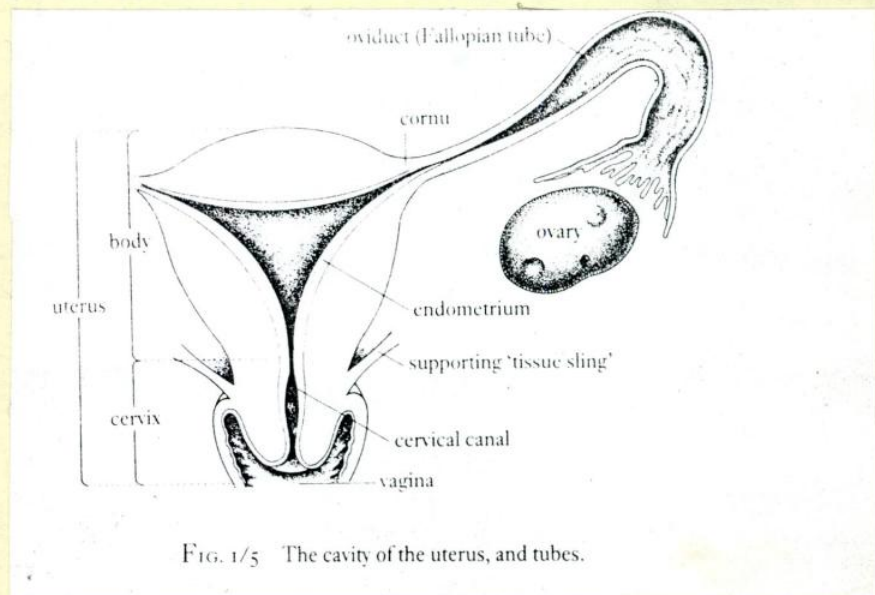
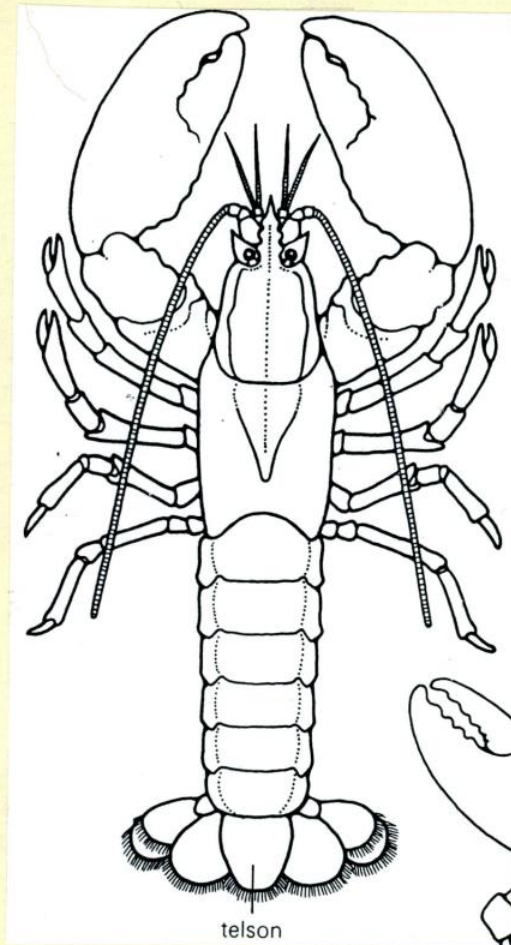


Fig 14: Drawing of Uterus







Fig 15: Wrasse Fish

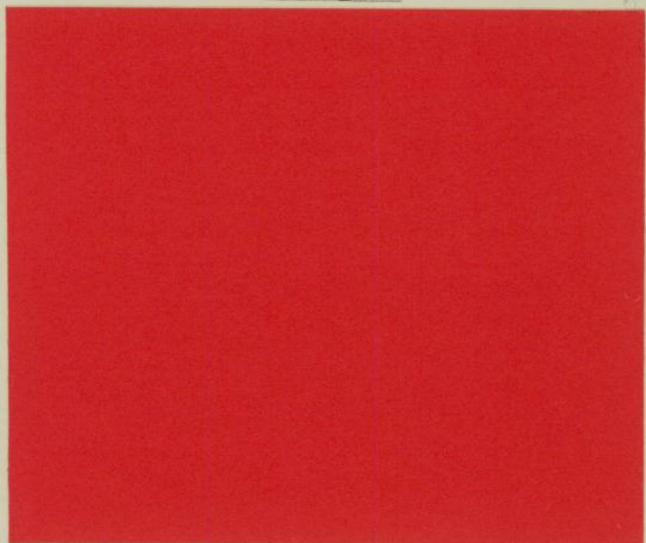
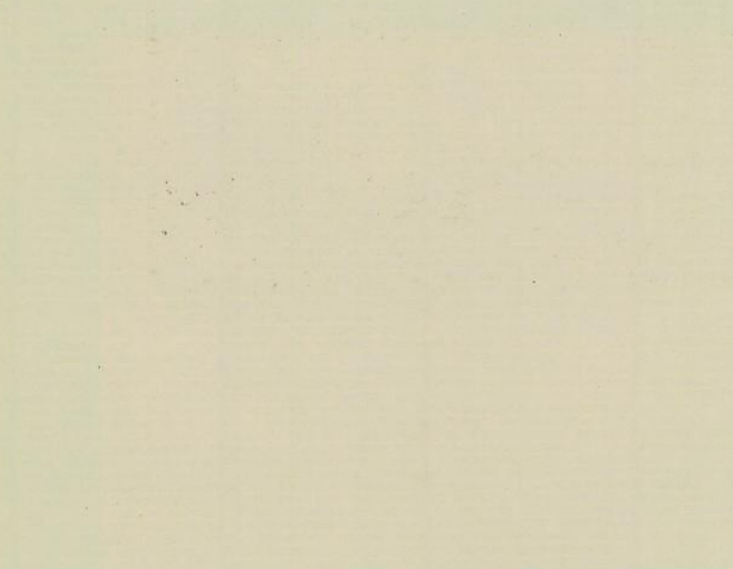
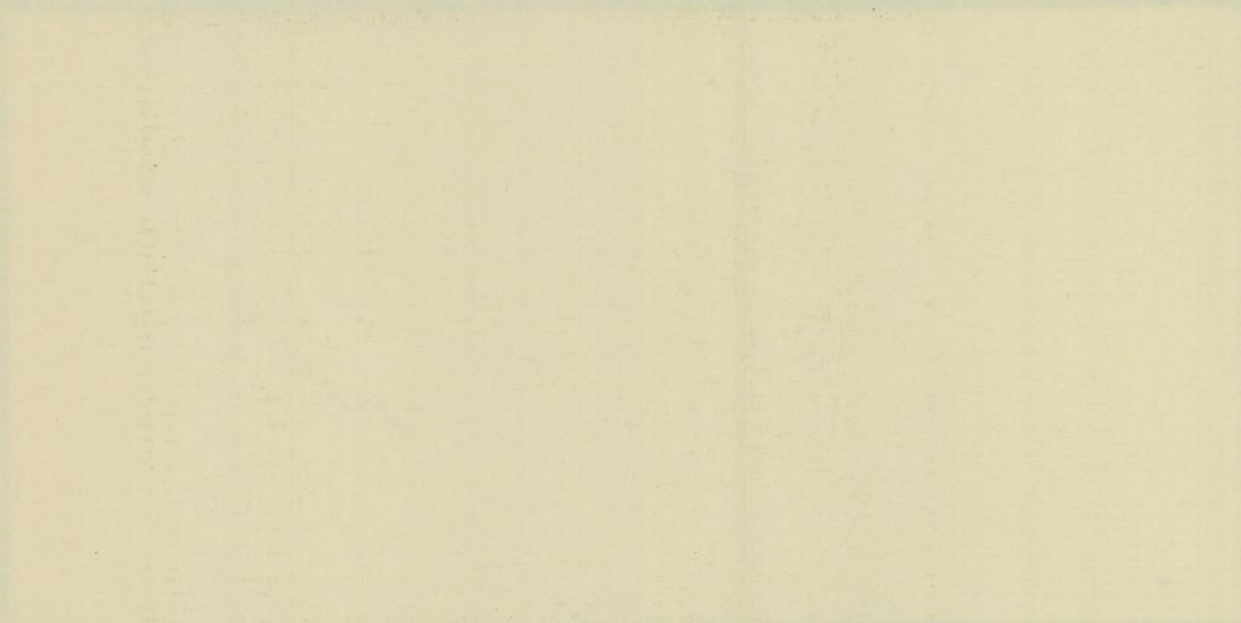


Fig 16: Red Block of Colour





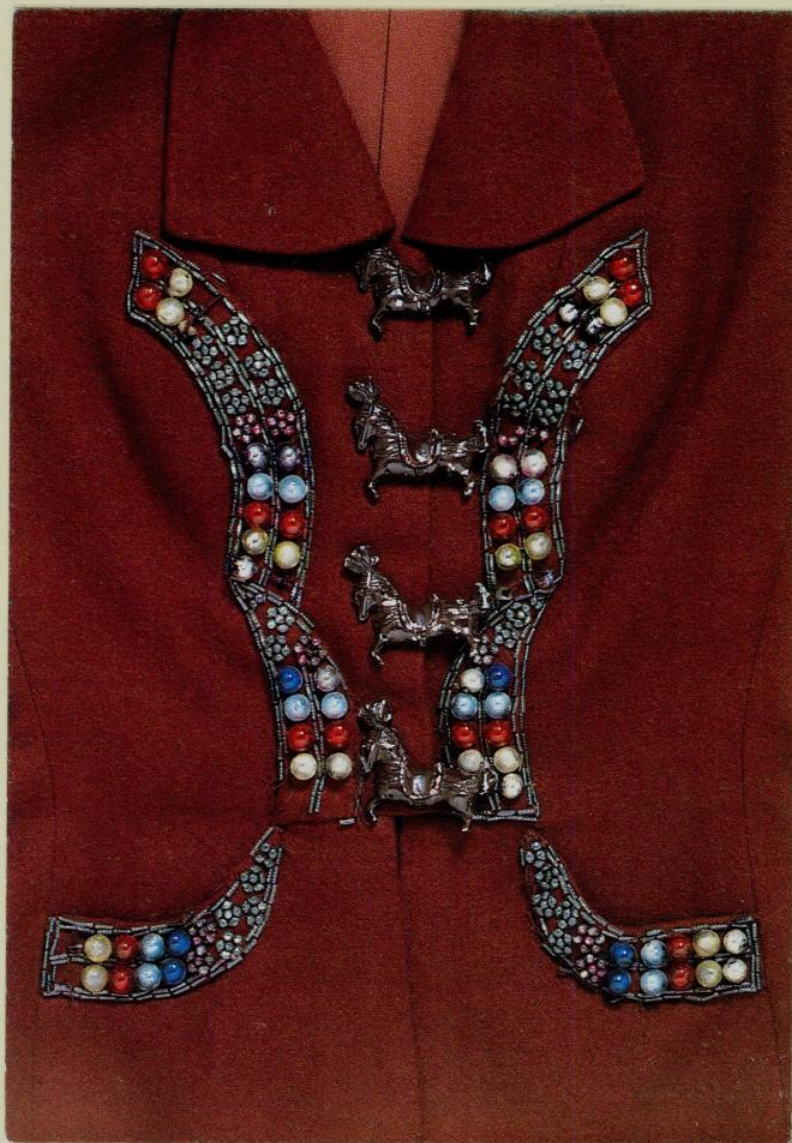


Fig 17: Circus Buttons, 1938

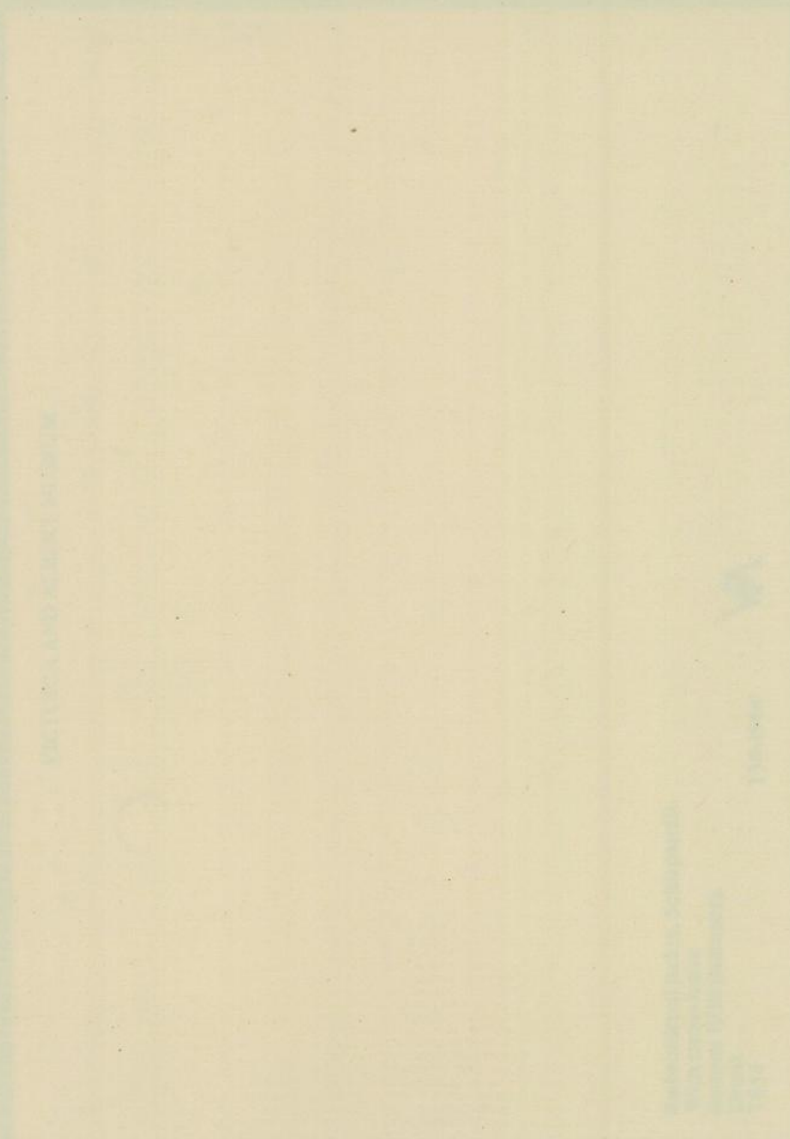






Fig 18: Circus Jacket, 1938



Fig 19: Close Up of Buttons

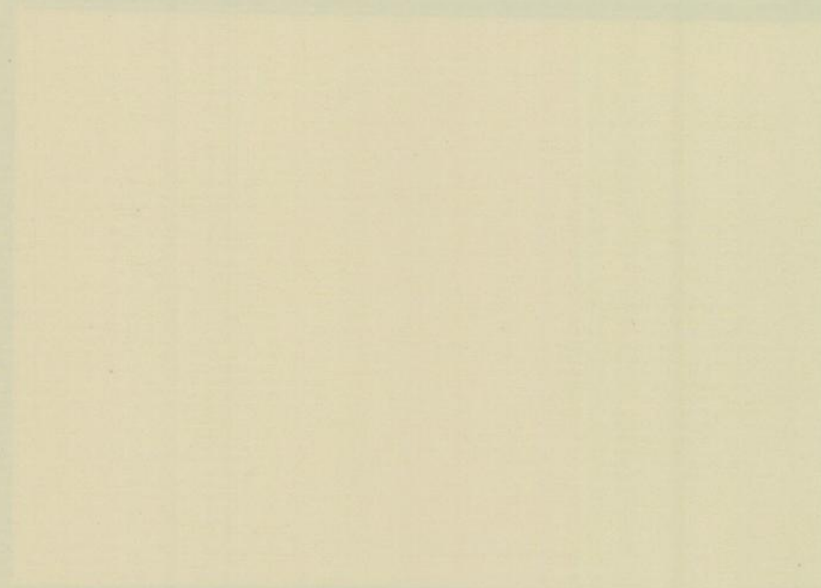


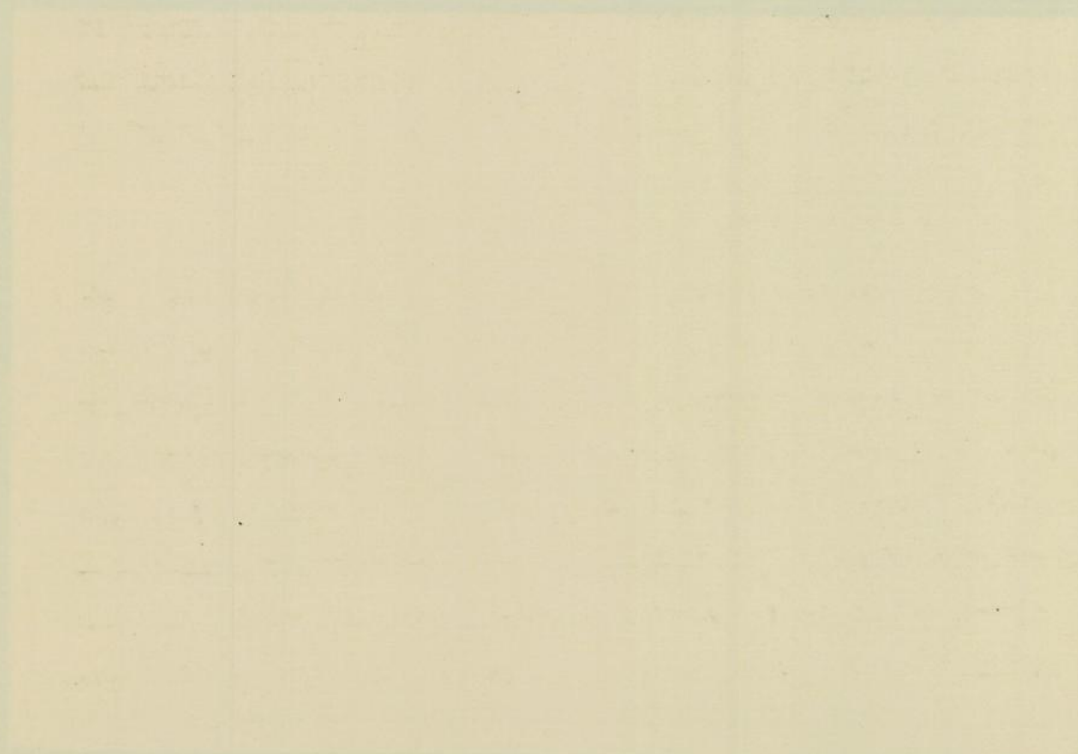
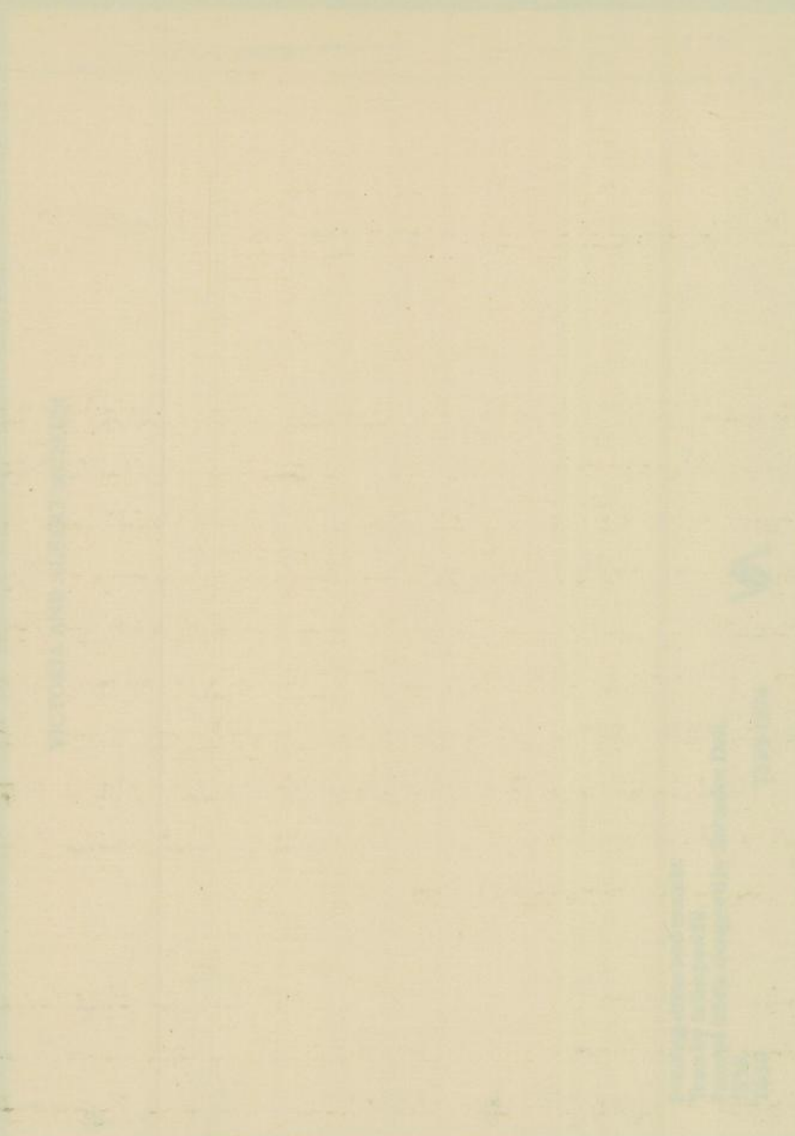




Fig 20: Tear Dress, 1938



Fig 21: Close Up of Tears on Hood





# CHAPTER THREE

## SCHIAPARELLI AND SEXUALITY

Following the First World War, access to high quality goods became difficult. People no longer had any time for couture garments and an increasingly large number of women Schiaparelli catered for went into the workplace. Their needs now had to be filled by ready to wear ranges. The new women of the thirties yearned that their sexuality could be expressed more readily through these ranges. The new silhouette offered by designers gave women a more alluring and feminine style. This silhouette consisted of a slender body with broad shoulders, a large shapely bosom and a natural waistline. This softer feminine fashion gave women an elegance they feared they had lost during the Depression years.

While day wear became more wearable and practical, evening dress became more romantic and extremely delicate. Schiaparelli was one of the forerunners of this new age of fashion: "Her clothes were the antithesis of the neat, pretty style and her unquestionably chic models a godsend to plain women to whom flattering chiffons in pale shades were unsuited." (7, p. 7) By 1936 however, as the worst years of the Depression closed, there began a year of concern over the future of Europe. It was during this period that Schiaparelli demonstrated her ability to interpret sociological happenings and filter them back in to fashion.

The mood of women at the time was a desire to express their femininity. Unlike other designers of the thirties such as Madame Vionnet and Coco Chanel who drew inspiration from the past, in both structure and form, Schiaparelli looked to the future and instinctively drew from other sources. She drew from the evolving image of "the thoroughly modern woman"; and saw that a, "well dressed city women of the mid-thirties would wear out of doors a hat over her permanent wave, well defined make-up perhaps a smart, two pieced suit with a blouse, a handbag, silk stockings





and court shoes. This was the total look." (1, p. 161: see fig. 23)

Schiaparelli's reaction to this cliché of the 1920s (the standardised short tubular dress which hung from the shoulders), can be witnessed in her feminine restructuring of the upper half of the woman's torso. The shoulders were broadened with the use of pads to emphasise the small narrow waist and the now slender hips. The inverted triangle (fig. 25) created by the broad shoulders lead the eye downwards to the legs and then onwards to the ankles. One must note that Schiaparelli's intention to alter the female figure to the ideally firm yet curvy, broad shoulders, small waist and slim hips is not to be seen as a means of extracting male characteristics (broad shoulders and slim hips) and applying them on to the female body, but as a way of emphasising a woman's sexuality. "We tend," said Valerie Steele,

to associate broad shoulders and narrow hips with a man and sloping shoulders, a small waist and wide rounded hips with women. As Morris reports, one of the most striking (non-reproductive) differences is shoulder mass. 'The male shoulders are much broader, thicker and heavier than those of the female, a difference exaggerated by the female's wide hips. The typical male body shape tapers inwards as it descends while the typical female shape broadens out.' (36, p. 38)

The above quote shows the apparent differences in both sexes, however when Schiaparelli was designing her garments she instinctively created distinctions between the masculine characteristic of broad shoulders and her feminine version. To Schiaparelli, "what was similar in men's and women's dress was perceived differently...narrow hips on men were seen to emphasise broad shoulders, while broad shoulders on women were perceived as drawing attention to small waists and slender female hips." (24, p. 129) An excellent example of the new structure Schiaparelli used to design a garment can be seen in her neat office suit called The Desk Suit (fig. 5). This jacket contains built-up shoulders and narrow hips which help to achieve a shapely outline that appears very feminine. The long unbroken line of a straight silhouette is achieved by a modern ideal of simplicity and proportion which has the appearance of being scrupulously observed.





Schiaparelli's method was, "if you draw a square balance on top of a narrow oblong you will get an idea of this ultra-smart silhouette," (41, p. 71) and "the top of the square should be in line with the shoulders the lower part cutting across the figure at the elbow level with the oblong representing the long narrow tubular line of the skirt." (41, p. 70)

It was largely through Schiaparelli's use of her feminine silhouette that women became increasingly confident with their new role in society: "I tried to make women both slim and elegant so that they could face the new way of life." (35, p. 193)

One must remember that it had only been since the end of World War One that women had been introduced into the male world which in turn allowed them activities but more importantly responsibilities which were previously denied to them. Schiaparelli was no longer hiding the defects of a woman's body but was allowing the new look to create an image so that the modern woman could be taken seriously in positions of responsibility. Schiaparelli's clients prior to the early 1930s had been ones with very little duty to society but as more women entered the work force, her clientele began to expand, reaching modern working women. They now objected to been seen as the women who dressed merely to please men. Schiaparelli believed that "these women's looks should correspond to their way of life, to their occupation, to their loves and also to their pockets." (35, p. 71)

It was with the use of the new silhouette that Schiaparelli adopted an image that promoted views on the sexuality of women in the 1930s. Alongside the wide shoulders, she took masculine qualities and elements of military uniforms and allowed these to become an integral part of the new feminine look (fig. 26). Although seen in the twenties-Patou and Chanel adopted few elements from the typical English gentleman's wardrobe-Schiaparelli's use of male attire was a revolutionary step not only in fashion but in feminism also.





For Schiaparelli it was read as a stance for the new woman, fighting as she was, for independence and equality. "When civilians adopt square cut styles they are often said to be influenced by military uniforms." (24, p. 129) This was not the case with Schiaparelli. She based her garments during the late thirties on the connotations associated with the military uniform and *not* the square cut (fig. 28). This style she had developed earlier, in 1933. As a consequence this was incorporated into the military uniforms of 1939. "Not only did military uniforms not influence civilian styles, they lagged behind, following not every variation but the major changes in civilian fashions." (24, p. 130)

With her use of the military uniform as a non-verbal message, or sign, Schiaparelli expressed a claim that women could visually look and act as efficiently as men in the business world. Her use of similar clothing between women and men led to a decrease in the visual differences between the sexes. Just as with military uniforms, Schiaparelli designed a woman's garment with similar attention to detail and trained them to, just like men, be meticulously groomed. Although the above level of abstraction could be considered an unrealistic, there are other interpretations. In Schiaparelli's case it was not a romantic view but one of clarity and precision. Schiaparelli's message illustrates a fight for the independence and equality of women. As seen in the book Uniforms and Non Uniforms; "Not only does the uniform serve as a means of internal communication, it also informs the opposing army that one is a legitimate enemy." (22, p. 38) It was in this way that Schiaparelli wished her garment to be considered, pointed out by Diana Vreeland's statement: "Why don't you realise that this wonderfully creative woman is expressing our life and times in her little suits and dresses and her unique materials?" (38, p. 87) One must not forget that although this new look acted as a statement and allowed women to be taken seriously, the women of the thirties still had to openly challenge the superior hold men had on the workings of society.

Schiaparelli's belief that most women have an inferiority complex





about themselves led to a playful abstraction of her designs. These she used as protective clothing for women. Whether it was true or not, Schiaparelli believed that, "twenty percent of women have inferiority complexes and seventy percent have illusions." (35, p. 225) Through her designs she no longer concealed the defects of the women's body but allowed women a defence mechanism to protect their true feminine qualities by day. These smartly styled military abstractions, had an appeal for women who were unsure of their intellectual qualities, nervous of their sexuality and afraid of being manipulated through their dress (fig. 28). "They reject what they see as the slave culture of the fashionable woman, who self-consciously dresses to reap the rewards of male approbation." (36, p. 113)

An example of the method of protection called can be seen in her jacket The Rococo Hand Mirrors (fig 10). Already discussed in chapter one under displacement, the jacket can also be seen as a defence mechanism for women. The mirrors are strategically placed objects, almost resembling armour, placed there to protect and help her in her fight against male supremacy.

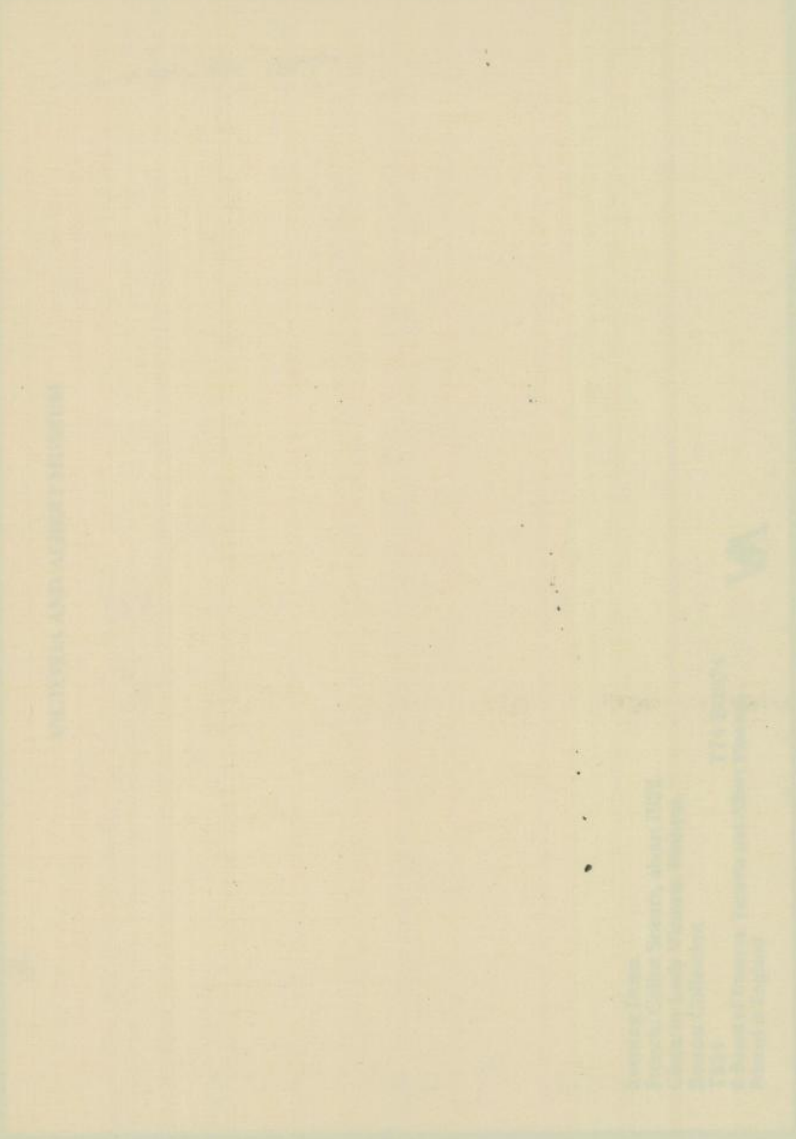
Hats also allowed Schiaparelli to experiment further both by shocking and amusing, but more importantly by diverting the eye away from a woman's hair, a symbolic fertility symbol. These hats were both designed for elegance and eccentricity. The elegant hat set off the face of a beautiful wearer while the eccentric hats acted as almost a defensive element for those women who had a plain face. One hat designed by Schiaparelli drives over the front of the wearer's face and precariously covers one eye (fig. 29). It was with this playfulness in both her suits and hats and their perfect proportions that Schiaparelli allowed to assert their individualities in their careers.







Fig 22: Evening Dress  
by Callot Soeurs, 1922



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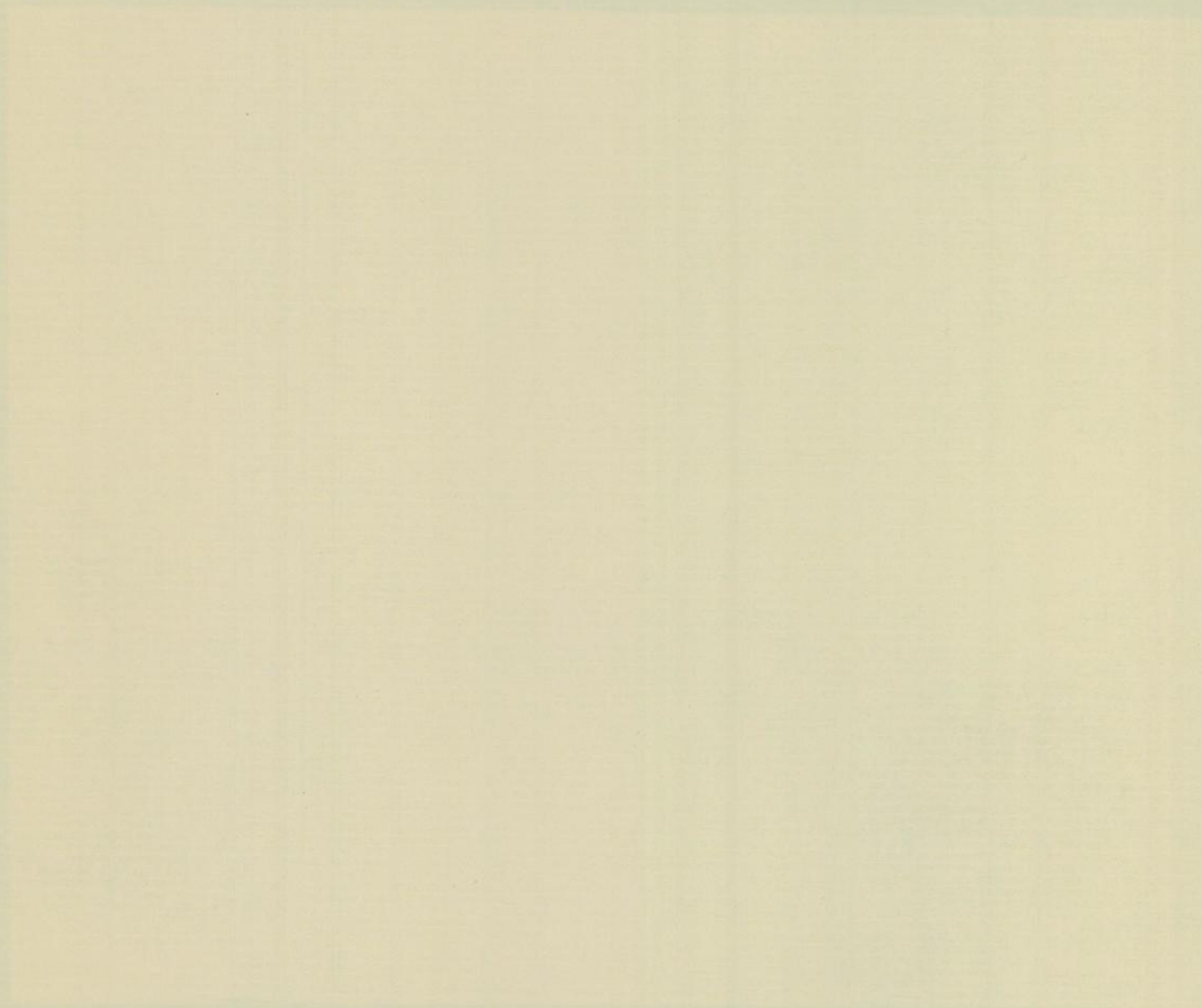
Fig 23: Total Look of Women  
by Berard







Fig 24: The Change of Figures throughout the Ages





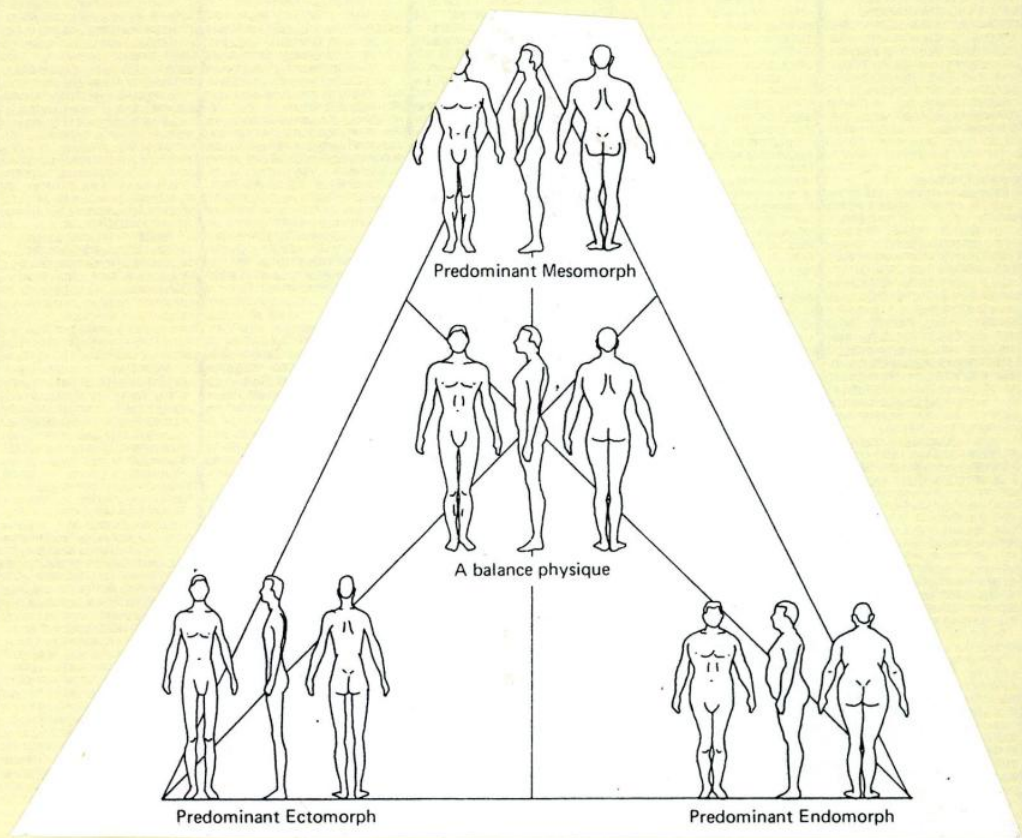


Fig 25: The balanced physique of man

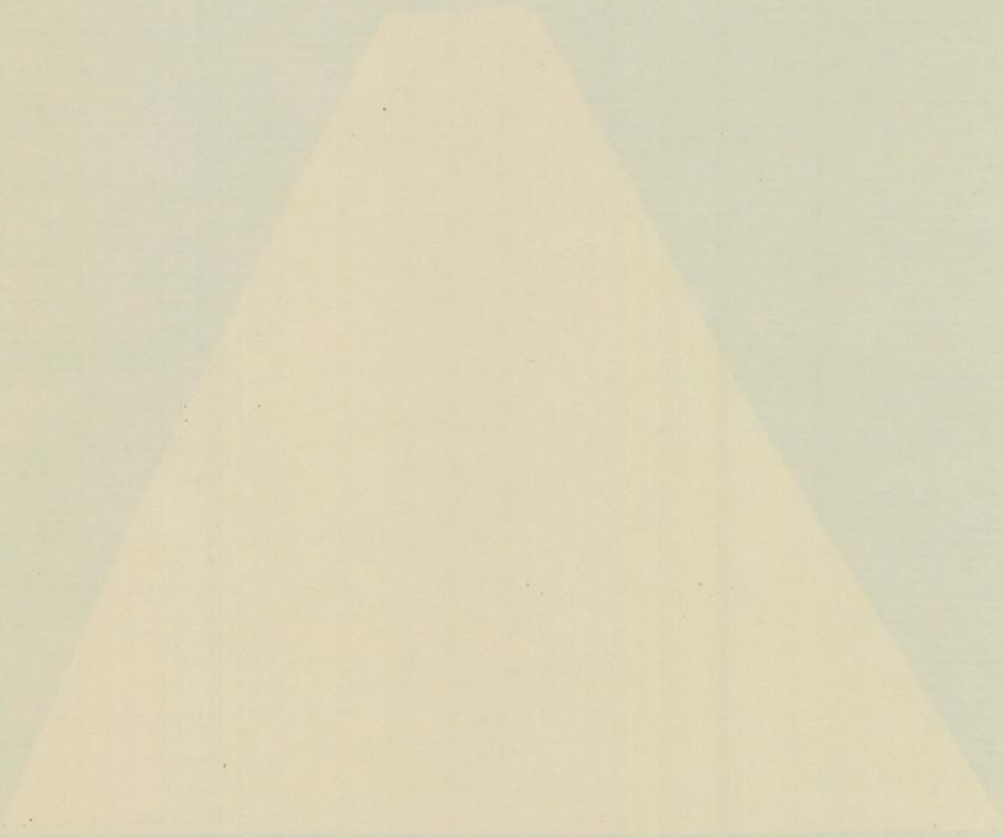


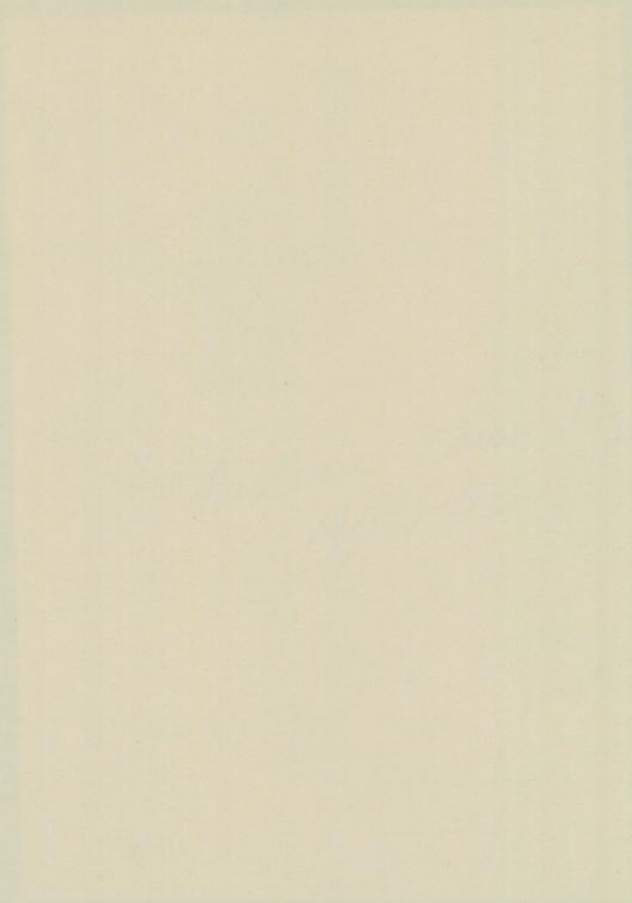




Fig 26: Manteau Camouflag (1942 - 43)



Fig 27: Close Up of Manteau





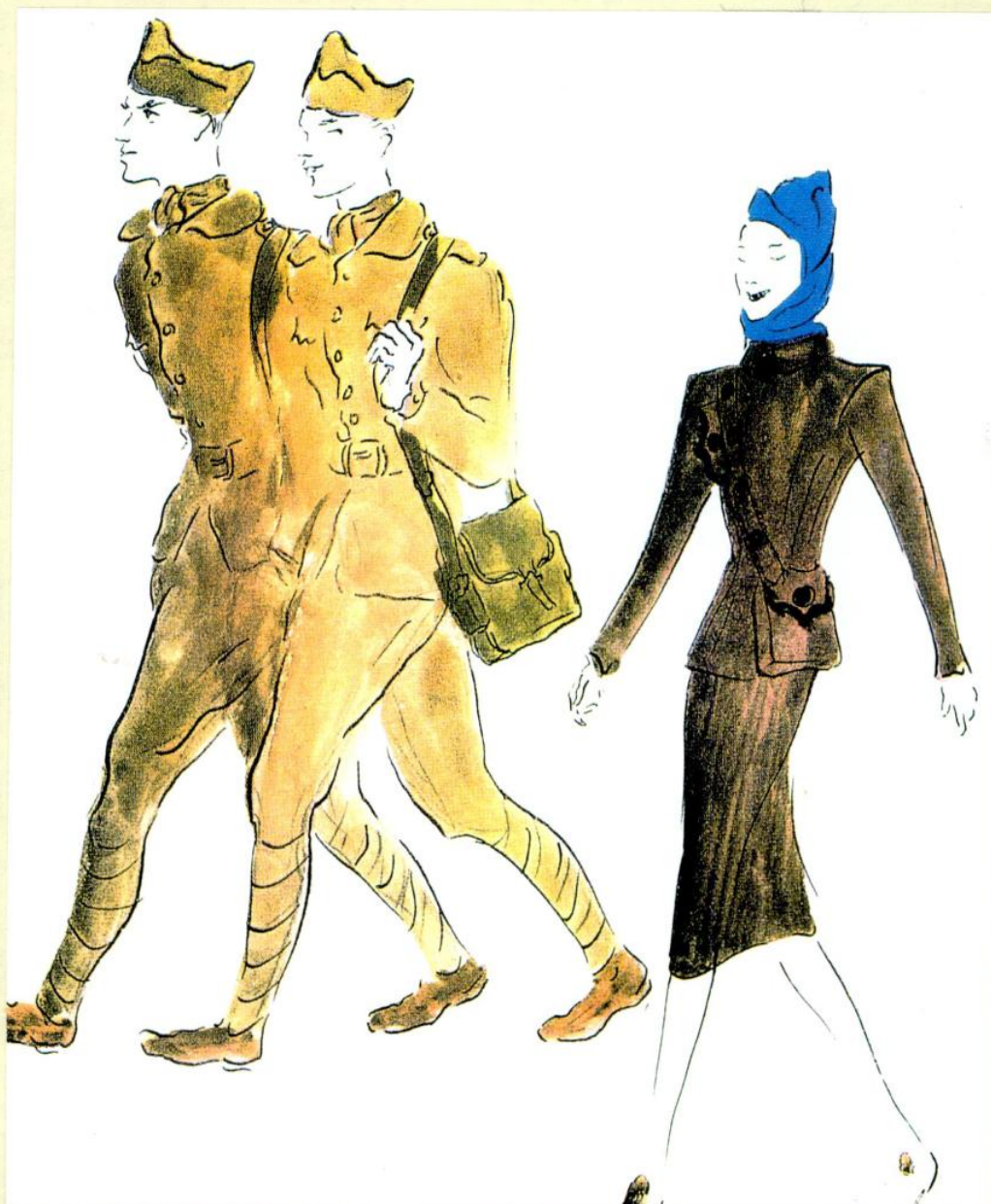
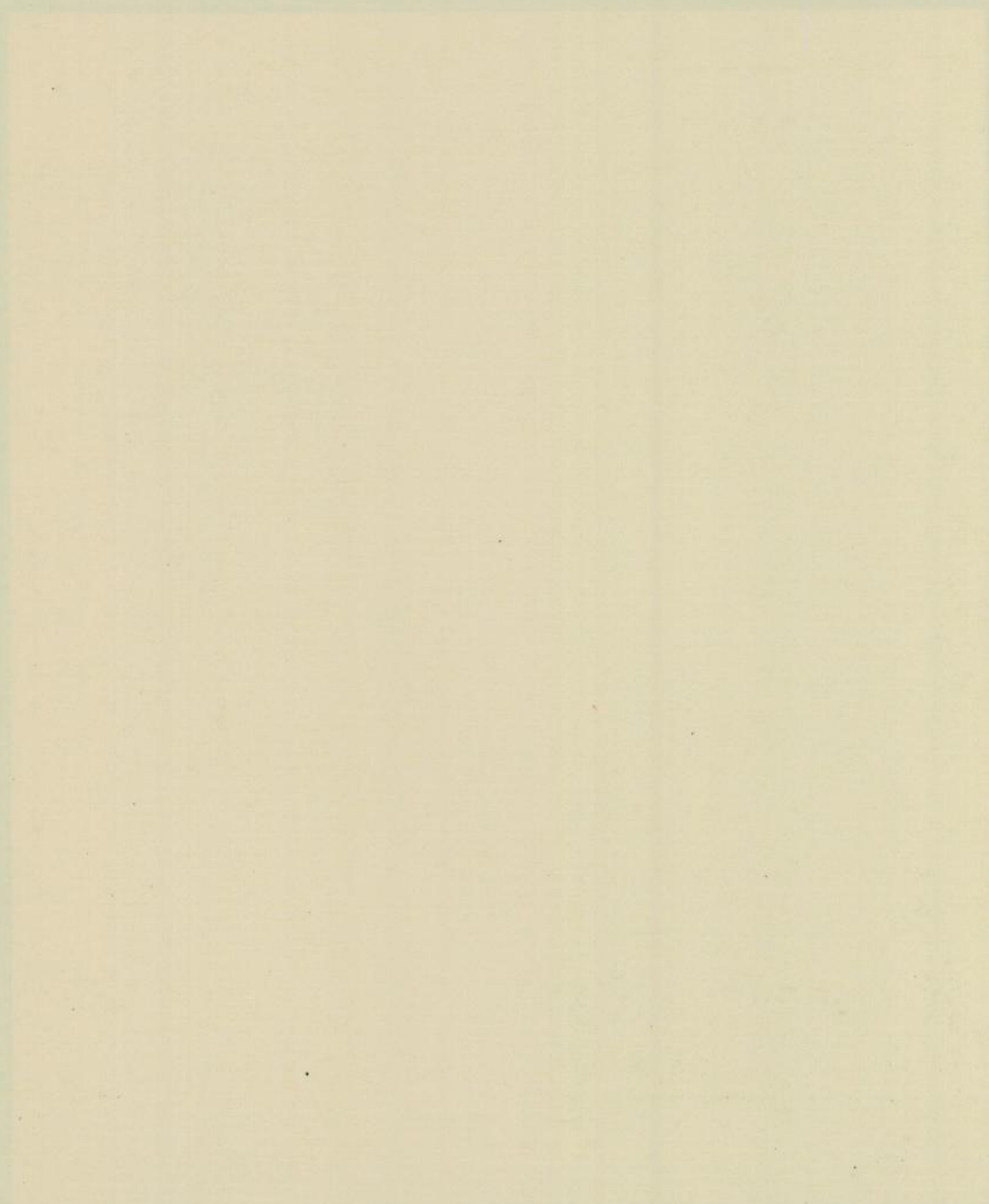


Fig 28: Design resembling Soldiers' Uniforms





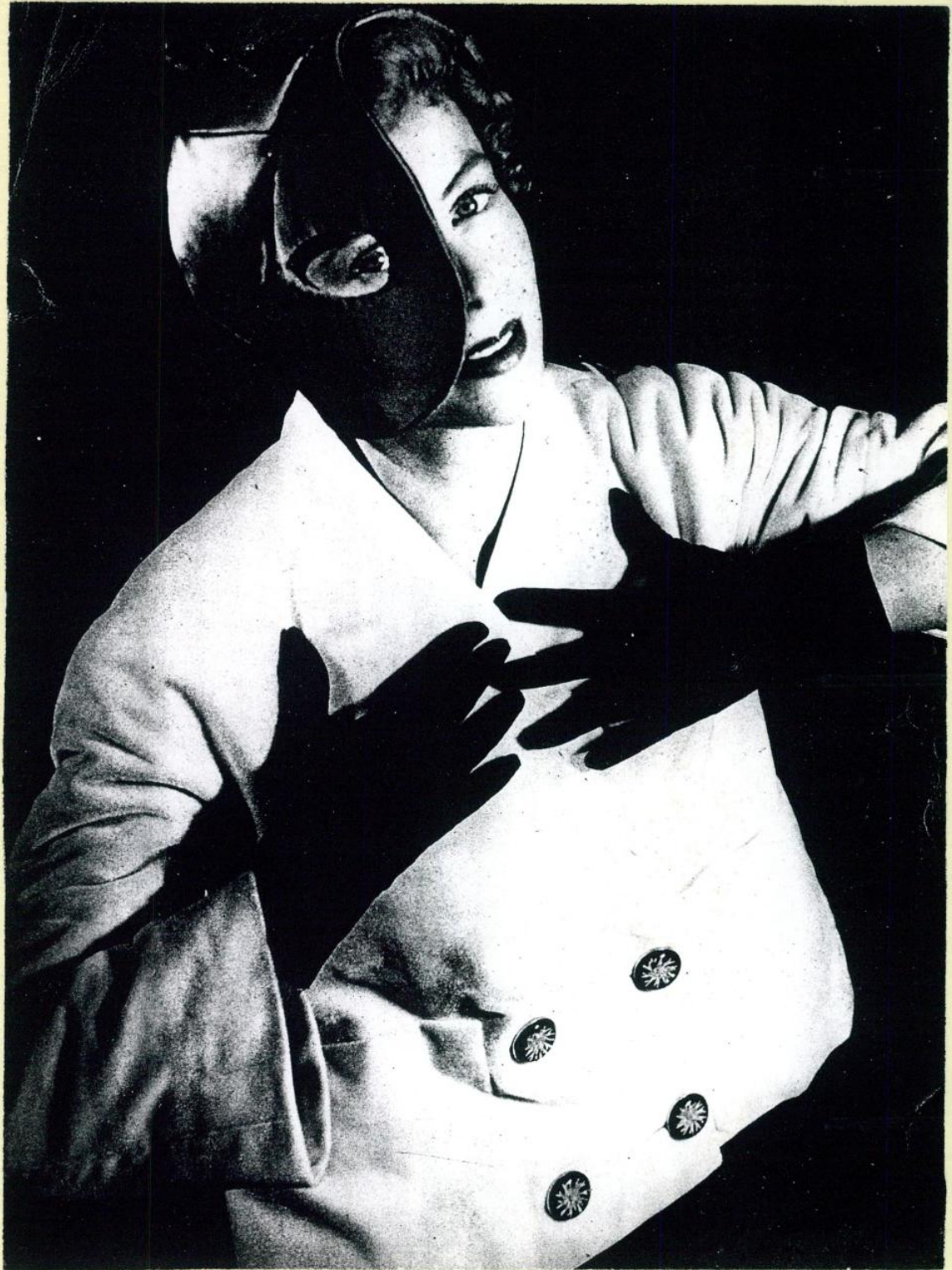


Fig 29: Hat Design  
by Elsa Schiaparelli





# CHAPTER FOUR

## MOSCHINO

Originally a painter, in 1983 Franco Moschino started to design fashion garments simply because someone asked him to. Moschino claims to be unable to cut a pattern yet has chosen tailoring and fabrics above painting, as he feels it is the ideal medium within which to express himself. Designing twenty-nine collections every year, he is based under a parent company named Moonshadow. This company, located in Milan has both his Moschino Couture and his Cheap and Chic ranges but also does a wide range of jeans, childrens wear and perfume. Totally disregarding fashion, Moschino refuses to be acknowledged as a fashion designer. Instead it can be seen through his appetite for visual information that he has become a modern day conduit, absorbing everything around him and manifesting them in his designs.

Unsurprising amidst a deep recession, the creative flair normally apparent in the Italian fashion design industry has become somewhat conservative and predictable. The serious commercial interests which entered fashion have allowed it to change from a creatively inspired affair to one of big business, becoming no more than a status symbol which revolves around designer label pretensions. Through the launch of Moschino's own label in 1983, he has single-handedly allowed the element of fun to creep back into Italian fashion similar to Jean-Paul Gaultier's achievements in the UK. Moschino began by breaking rules and allowing barriers which had formed between the wearer and the fashion garment to be abolished. His work is deliberately intended to invite controversy from other designers and the media. Moschino's wit deeply driven by his Italian sense of drama has earned him the nickname of jester in Italian couture (fig.





30). As seen by Moschino, "to joke is essential to my way of life; to me one of the most important things is to have the courage to joke about yourself." (45, p. 225)

This quote draws a close similarity to Schiaparelli, who also emphasised humour in her work: "I like to amuse myself so I do through my creations, if I didn't I would die." (12, p. 46). Through viewing both Schiaparelli's and Moschino's work in detail one can detect strong connections in their respective works.

One such element is their cultural background. Being both Italian their values and similar approaches to design problems reveal a commonly shared flair. As shown above, the traditional sense of humour and wit associated with Italians is evident in their work.

Moschino reveals a unique ability to comprehend previous styles seen in other centuries and renew them. By extracting images from historical sources and using them in a contemporary way Moschino shows an appreciation and respect for the past and the present. "I am just deliberately mixing up and twisting classic styles from the past, translating them into the present in an ironic and funny way." (46, p. 164). This inimitable awareness of the past allows Moschino perhaps the best means with which to create a nostalgic look in his contemporary interpretation of garments. A prime example of this can be seen in his reincarnated 1960s Chanel Suit (fig. 31) to which he simply changes the buttons of the suit (fig. 32). These buttons have evolved through his Surrealist influences and become gold clothes pegs. These images bring to mind Schiaparelli's similar usage of buttons on her suit-jackets of the 1930s, where she was also tireless in her pursuit of original fastenings. As with Moschino her wonderful Italian sense of amusement is demonstrated through her use of the button. Schiaparelli's substitute for conventional buttons can be seen in her Circus collection (fig. 17). Her buttons consist of flying acrobats, clowns and circus animals, these not only added special novelty effects to





her suits but also a certain uniqueness as they could only be purchased with the garment.

In these concepts for buttons one can see both Moschino and Schiaparelli incorporating humour in a visually enticing manner, yet when examined Moschino can be seen using elements which go beyond reason and expectations of fun (fig. 33). Examined more closely they display a wide variety of influences with particular art movements and also aspects which are related to psychology.

Moschino regularly draws from the fertile relationship that fashion had with the Surrealist movement during the 1930's. He believes that, "Surrealism is the only serious thing that fashion has absorbed since the 1930s. I think it helps people to dream, to get a little confused in a positive way. If you wear your shoes on the wrong feet I think it's a very positive thing-as a means of decoration and of questioning the meaning of objects." (44, p. 33) Using aspects of displacement originally conceived by Breton in 1924, Moschino adopts elements to further enhance his abilities in recreating age old solutions to apparently new design problems. In one advertising campaign Moschino questions what the viewer sees. He uses an image of himself positioned on top of another anatomical structure and on his head he has placed an aeroplane (fig. 34). This is used to question the meaning of a hat. On the catwalk he gets a model to wear this hat/plane and says: "I mean it was a real plane on her head in the campaign, it was a real toy; but once it was on her head it became a hat. Not because I transformed it into a hat but because where it was only made sense as a hat. So we still think it's a hat but it's really still a plane." (44, p. 33)

Similarly Schiaparelli was not only obscuring the object but she wanted the knowledge of the original object disregarded in order to allow the unconscious to offer interpretations of it. The idea of bringing the shoe to the head is one of Schiaparelli's more bizarre ways of displaying the black humour associated with the Surrealists. As Surrealism emphasised a





direct collision between the artist and the viewer, both Schiaparelli and Moschino use Surrealism as a means of making fun but also as a means of communicating to others. Moschino's use of Surrealism as with Schiaparelli's, seems to be intertwined in the psychological theories the Surrealists developed. While Moschino admits that his relationship with the Surrealists is not emotionally deep, he has adopted their movement and methods in order to promote his message. By being openly manipulative, he reconstructs a distant reality through the movement, allowing us to view fashion from a new and unexpected angle. Moschino realises that by using Surrealism in his designs he can indirectly attack and poke fun at the contemporary fashion scene and its symbolic imagery (fig. 36). The overstated aspect of fun first evident in his work goes beyond a joke, it is directly driven toward the conservative and chaotic elements to be found in fashion.

These over-serious characteristics permit Moschino to present a colourful image that emphasises the creative decline to be found in fashion. They also have the effect of allowing him to counteract this decline by presenting witty and creative yet superficial images, for example his Fruit Dress (fig. 37). One other such image is apparent in his description of customers buying his clothes, "loads of toys for different kinds of children and then once all the clothes are ready we put them into a room, we open the door and all the children come in and choose their toys to play with." (44, p. 35) Moschino reveals in his designs that he is aware that the current fashion scene and its society is seriously in need of another outlet, one they could resort to when fashion gets intense. People as varied as Madonna and Princess Diana have been known to wear his clothes. Moschino can be seen to be deliberately mocking and humourously exaggerating current design trends and their victims, for example cardboard cutouts of Tina Turner and Princess Anne can be seen walking up and down his catwalks. These theatrical fashion shows differ somewhat from the norm where designers use celebrities as a means of attracting attention (fig. 38). These mock-ups of celebrities openly reveals his attitude to fashion and its self-importance.







Schiaparelli likewise used Surrealism as a means of illustrating a message. But unlike Moschino, Schiaparelli was genuinely interested in their theories. She experimented with their method, symbolism and their psychological references to further her designs. Just as Moschino has created another outlet for fashion this method draws close similarities to Schiaparelli's use of themes in her work. Her symbolic representation of the circus was (as in Moschino's) intended to instill a sense of fantasy and creativity in to the minds of people in the late 1930s (fig. 39). The splendour she hoped to nurture could not but help display her overwhelming arrogance in not foreseeing the seriousness of the coming war. Through the Circus theme Schiaparelli hoped to convey a fantasy world that would symbolically motivate the new modern woman with equality and independence.

It is evident that there are links between Moschino's and Schiaparelli's work both in terms of ideas and their execution. What seems to separate them is the different level of emotional involvement with the *meaning* of their designs and in particular, Moschino's less concerned approach. As well as this both Moschino and Schiaparelli in an indirect manner can be seen reinterpreting the particular mood their economies are portraying. Their love-hate relationships with fashion seem to be instrumental in bringing about their success.







Fig 30: Moschino dressed as a child, 1985





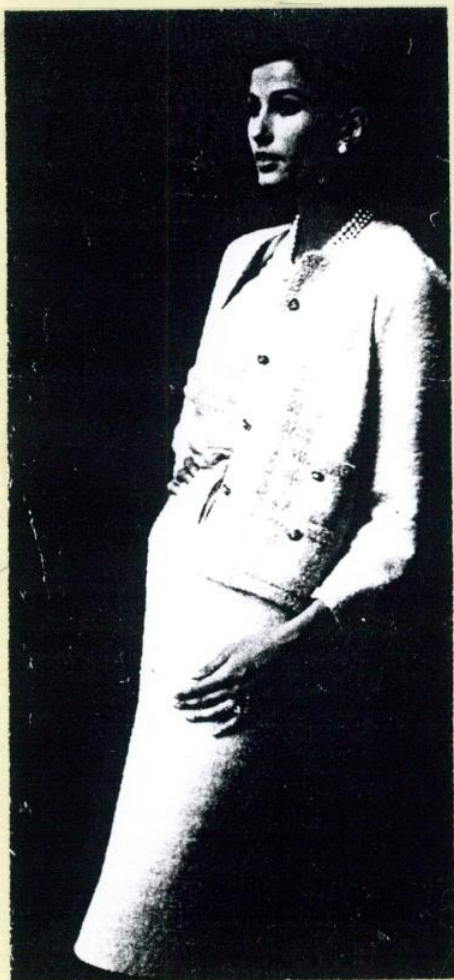


Fig 31: Chanel Suit, 1960



Fig 32: Moschino Suit, 1985

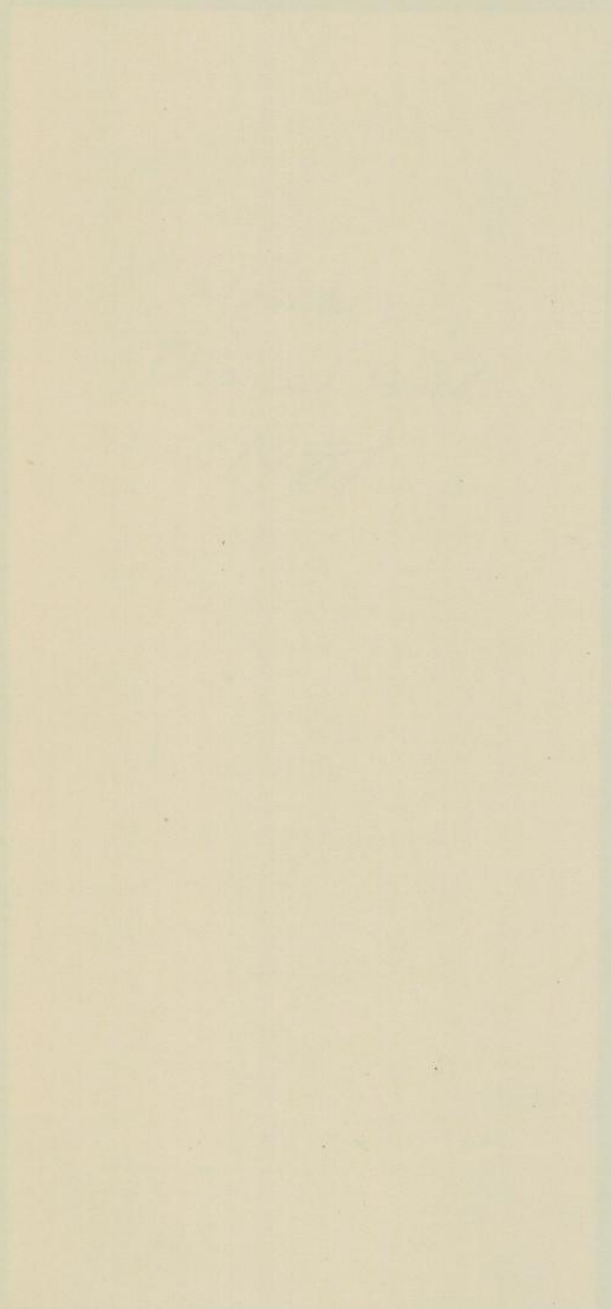
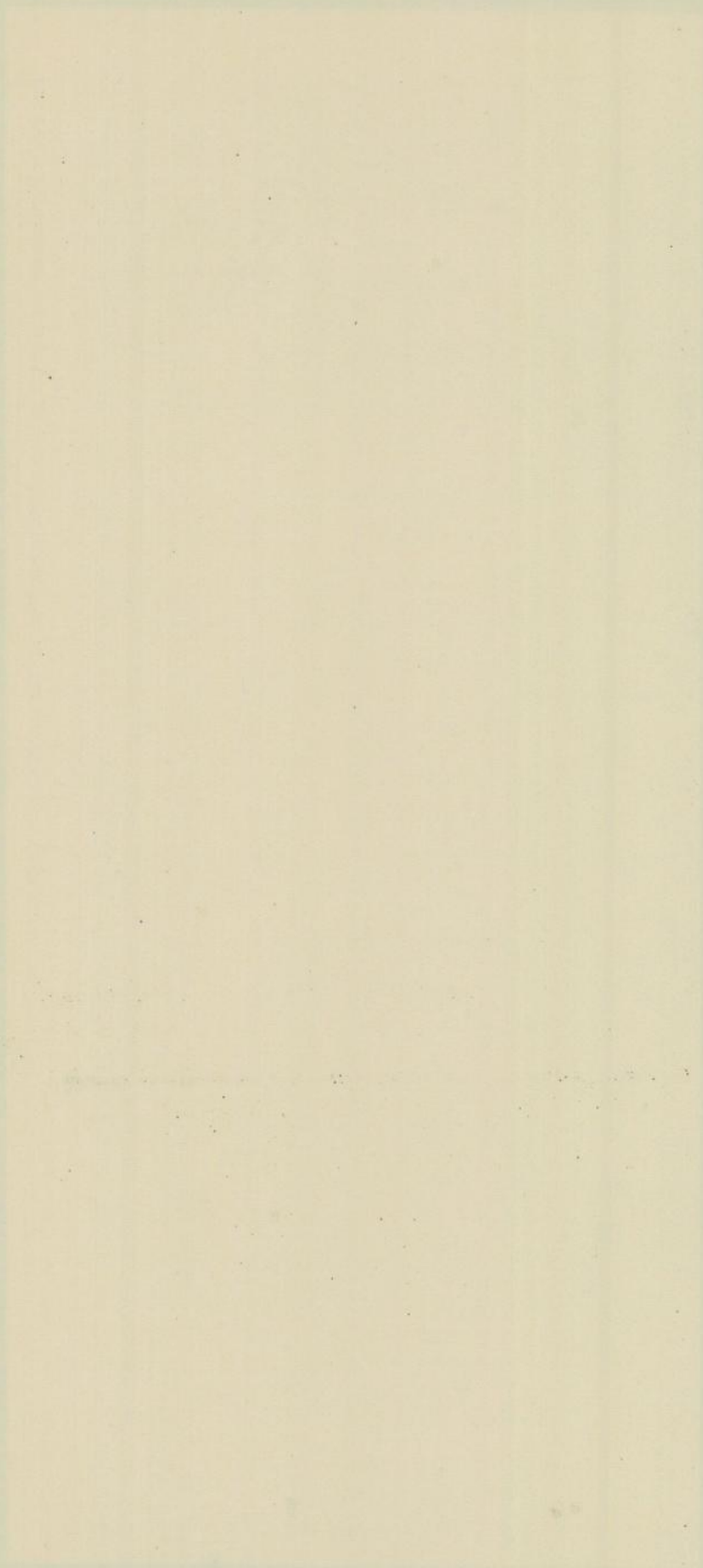






Fig 33: Dress Design by Moschino







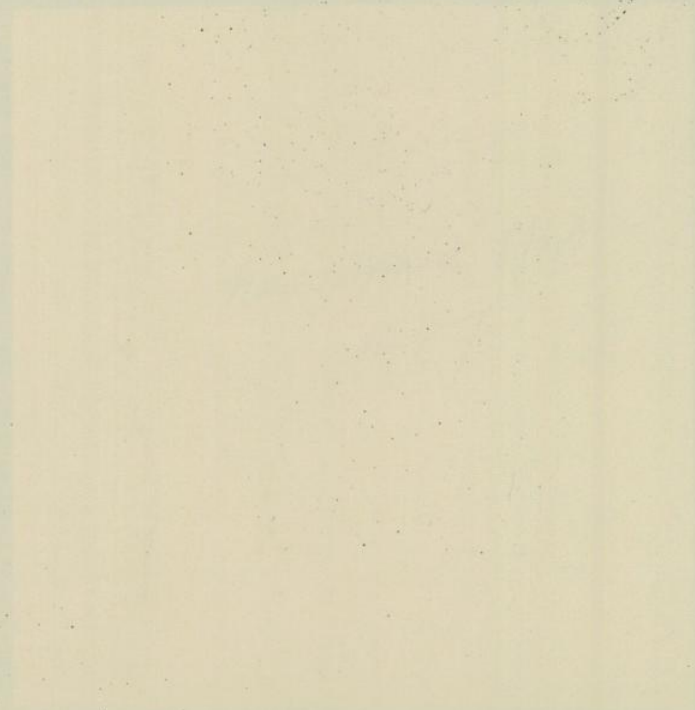
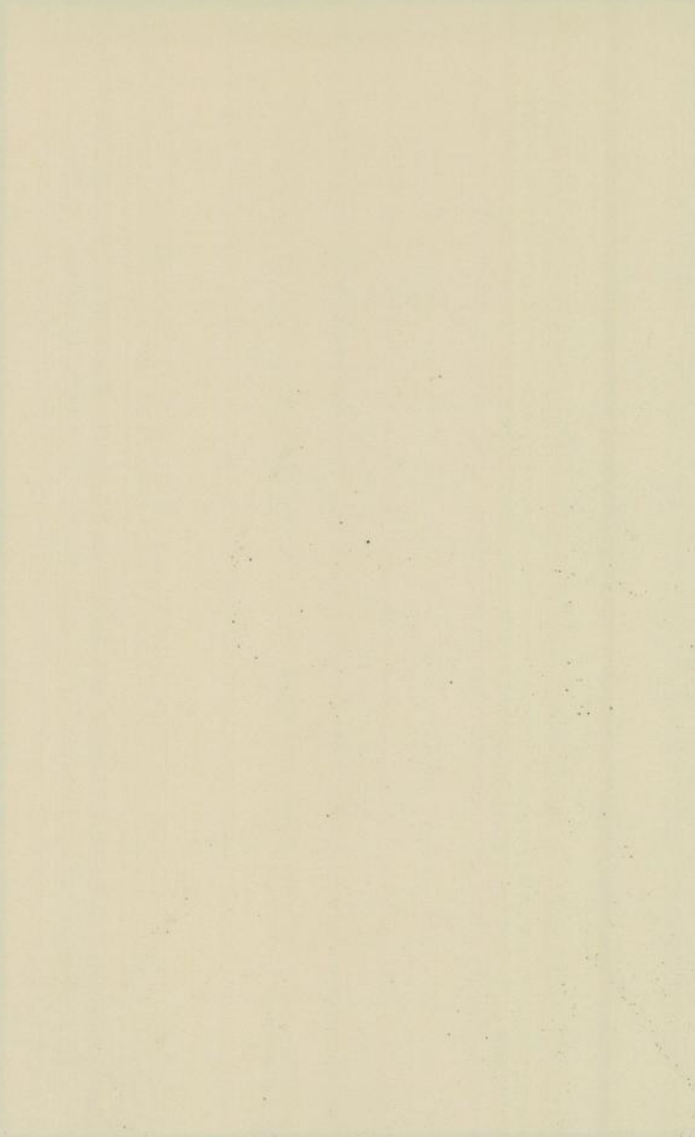






Fig: "Wham" Design, 1987



Fig 37: "Fresh Fruit"  
Design, 1987

Fig 39: "Fantasy World of Teddies"  
1987







Fig 38: Queen and Bishop Impersonators





# CONCLUSION

How wonderful to liberate oneself in what appears to be such an easy way but at the same time retain the privacy of one's feeling.

Elsa Schiaparelli (35, p. 28)

My basic aim when I began this thesis was to take abstract terms from Schiaparelli's close association with the Surrealist movement and use this to discuss and analyse her work. Previously it has been the norm when one discusses and classifies the work of a fashion designer to do so in terms of the actual objects designed, that is in terms of the physical boundaries of the garments and the traditional classes of garment. Instead of this, I chose to analyse her work in more abstract terms, addressing it under the categories that headed the first three chapters. The headings used were not to be viewed as disparate elements, but as a background from which I could understand what Schiaparelli was trying to disclose through her work. The above headings I felt would be closer and more relevant to the essence of her work. Analysing her from a literary/theatrical standpoint rather than physically, I have achieved the goal of greater understanding.

Schiaparelli's interaction with fashion was a precarious one, where she used fashion as a means of expression rather than as mere design. Needing a stepping stone from which she could create from she turned to fashion design as it offered her a forum through which she could communicate her innermost thoughts to other women.

Having developed a fear of men from childhood images depicting evil spirits of men enslaving women against their will and Greek myths of young women who escaped the crude advances of possessive young hunting gods, these images followed Schiaparelli for most of her adult life.





This along with the disintegration of her marriage and the love of a man she trusted implicitly, all contributed to her fear of men and the eventual obsession which drove her to insist on protecting herself and other women.

But before Schiaparelli could contribute to other womens' needs she first had to repress her own natural sensitivity and shyness through a hardening process, allowing herself to change from the once vulnerable woman who suffered emotional devastation to an impregnable career executive who was considered a business-person first and a woman second. By doing this, Schiaparelli forfeited any chance of happiness in her life as she was afraid of reliving the suffering she had experienced with the man she gave herself to. Just as her childhood images fled male conquest, so should she and her fellow women. Schiaparelli's emotional life can be witnessed in her autobiography. Through the headings used, one can begin to see aspects of Schiaparelli's inner character and her over-enthusiastic zeal to protect women.

The Rococo Mirror Jacket (1939, fig. 10) not only acts as a displacement of materials but it can also be seen as a piece of armour, protecting the chest of the wearer. These strategically placed mirrors not only act as safeguards for women, but the material itself, mirrored glass, also acts as protection. Although Schiaparelli creates a visual relationship between the wearer and the viewer, another relationship, not as obvious is created. It is the relationship of power on behalf of the wearer and the lack of it with the viewer. This allows women to be more confident in themselves and it also encourages those who need protection to avail of this character strengthner.

Other examples of Schiaparelli's desire for protection can be seen in the Desk Suit, where the streamlining and the all-important height of the skyscraper is added to the suit. This effect was extremely relevant to her, as not only would the simplicity of line add to the elegance of a woman's figure and appearance, it would also symbolically suggest to people,





especially women that like the skyscrapers which gained acceptance as an 'accepted style' of building, so too were women no longer going to be denied the privileges that their newfound responsibilities held. This encouraged the new woman to stop and fight for independence in a male world.

Throughout this thesis one can see that Schiaparelli's connection with the Surrealists does not run as deeply as other artists of her time who were also associated with the movement. For Schiaparelli Surrealism offered her a transparency under which she could explore safely. It allowed her to symbolically open herself up and reveal her fear of men. Through the method of psychic automatism, she found a way of exploring her consciousness in safety and incorporating this into her fashion designs. With her designs she no longer tried to hide through clothes the physical deficiencies of women but instead choose to hide something else: the inner female. These designs she hoped would protect the new woman from the counter-attacks of the opposite sex.





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