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National College of Art & Design

Department of Fashion & Textiles

**"An examination of Haute Couture and an
assessment of its future direction into the
21st Century"**

by;

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**"Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree
of"**

B.Des Fashion Design

1994

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Haute Couture is not just supplying rich women with expensive clothes. It is, according to La Chambre De Syndicate, not only the art of sewing, but the art of inventing, assembling, creating everything that goes to clothe a woman, that defines Couture.

INTRODUCTION

Haute Couture is the art of transforming a length of cloth into a luxurious, exquisite, original piece of clothing. Haute Couture sets the trend for the remainder of the industry essentially, it is the idea maker. However, at present, in the 1990's it would appear that the fashion market has reached saturation point as designers cater for every need and new niche that the market presents. I would like to examine how this affects the art of Haute Couture. Has the art of Haute Couture become redundant in the face of main stream fashion or does the concept of Haute Couture have a valid place in the future as we approach the 21st Century?

The initial concept of a Haute Couture designer is attributed initially to an Englishman, Charles Frederick Worth. He established his fashion house in the 1840's in Paris. He was the first Couturier to establish a house that had a distinct style and the concept of a 'label' with its associated elitist value originated here. This, as a concept, in Haute Couture has become the ultimate status symbol in today's modern world.

Haute Couture was developed in an era that was inundated with aristocracy and hierarchy who, with extreme amounts of money available to spend on their wardrobes. Throughout Haute Couture's history, there have been many great names - Worth, Poiret, Chanel, Vionnet, Schiaparelli, Balenciaga, Fortuny, Dior and more recently Yves Saint Laurent, Armani, Karl Lagerfeld, Lacroix,

Donna Karen, Jean Paul Gaultier to name but a few. Due to the large numbers of designers over the years, each developing their personal concept of fashion and Haute Couture, it creates a challenge to estimate the continuity within it, to examine the crises that changed and developed its direct and to assess the changes that are necessary to ensure its survival in the 21st Century.

Haute Couture has been struggling to survive, especially in recent times, as has the whole fashion business in general. This presents many issues which need to be addressed in this thesis. I will be examining how Haute Couture has adapted and changed to meet modern day demands, the ability of Couture to deal with past crises and relating this to the present situation? Does Haute Couture still possess the ability to overcome the current crises? What is Couture in the 1990's? Assessing the connection and similarities, if any, existing between early Couture and now. Has it comprised its original character? What factors have affected Haute Couture as an art form and a business, has the former been comprised in favour of the latter (or is it merely a new link in the evolution of Haute Couture)? In order to evaluate this, it is necessary to examine specific Couturiers, their strategies in the face of recession. What does the future hold, a question which is always difficult to answer, one that is full of conjecture and supposition, however an examination of history can aid an ability to predict and foresee general trends. In this light, the house of Chanel will be examined as a case study. It epitomizes the past, present and future of Haute Couture.

It has existed for nearly a century, it has survived such crises as both World Wars, various recessions and depressions. Chanel is simply regarded as a symbol of unchanging excellence, 'status quo'. Despite the engaging of a new designer, Karl Lagerfeld who has not altered the house's identity, Chanel the name, label and symbol continues to thrive. They possess the history and ability to have a dictative role in future of Haute Couture. This will be evident in a close examination of the origins of Chanel, the directions Karl Lagerfeld has taken and what aims does it possess for the future.

Although Haute Couture has changed, traditionalists like Valentino and Balenciaga exist working in the old mode. It is a tradition that is deep rooted in exquisite beading and embroidery. Ralph Lauren on the other hand presents what could be regarded as a corporation, a multi million Dollar empire was built from clothes he designed to suit American needs, heavily imbued with a sense of tradition and history emphasising the American identity. He created an image that Americans wanted to buy. Ralph Lauren has fulfilled the American dream, he reached a pinnacle of business success but will he be remembered as a Haute Couture designer or simply as a businessman who designed clothes?

Jean Paul Gaultier will be examined in the light of an 'Avant - Garde' designer. He is regarded as an exhibitionist, he gives Couture the 'shock treatment'. His work lies in complete contrast to other Couturiers which will be examined.

This thesis will examine these Couturiers in an effort to assess the direction Haute Couture will take in the 21st Century and beyond!

Chapter 1, looks at the development of Haute Couture from its initial beginnings. Chapter 2, Looks at Haute Couture in crises and how Haute Couture coped in such periods of uncertainty. This leads into Chapter 3 which looks at Haute Couture in the 1990's and assesses its present standing. Chapter 4 looks specifically at four individual Haute Couture designers and how they operate in todays world of Haute Couture. Finally, Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the findings and assesses the future direction of Haute Couture based on the available information.



Dress, Charles Frederick Worth, 1835 - Plate 1

CHAPTER 1

Charles Frederick Worth was arguably the first to establish a label in Haute Couture. He built an international business through dictating his style to the customer. From then on Couturiers and designers have used their own inspiration to create womens clothing and to express their vision of fashion, style, beauty and life. Initially, Couture was a leader in style, it created new silhouettes, but as with most businesses, it had to work within boundaries with particular restraints primarily or namely the etiquette of the time as well as each clients particular appearance and disposition. A Couturier had to know the habits of the socially prominent and convey this knowledge through the clothes he made for them. The more he became a part of society, the better he understood the suitability of clothes or attire for the varied occasions, amongst them visiting clothes, hosting clothes, country clothes, court clothes, clothes for morning and clothes for evening. The Couturier became socially acceptable, Worth was no longer considered just a 'dressmaker', he was considered an artist, the creator of unique wearable pieces of art, a position from which he could even more forcefully dictate his ideas of artistic vision.

The fashions changed rapidly with landmarks such as the expulsion of the crinoline in 1864, disappearing shawls and bonnets, the abolishment of the corset in the mid 1860's, changing hem lengths and silhouettes and the acceptance of trousers for women.

Designers who were too erratic or failed to keep up with such rapid changes in fashions soon lost their foothold in the world of Haute Couture. As time progressed, of course, women began to think for themselves and hence were less willing to subscribe to a single Couturier's vision. His job became more difficult when his clientele grew and consisted of women worldwide, queens, film stars even Courtesans. The Couturier needed to adapt to these changes to present a collection that catered for this wide spectrum and their social needs and occasions, yet he had to continue creating those innovative works of art that spread the reputation of the house. Initially, Couturiers relied on 'word of mouth' to build their reputation - who was wearing whose creation at the most prestigious ball or gala. Later during the 1920's and 1930's magazines such as Vogue and Harpers & Queen published the latest modes. These magazines became very dictatorial in later decades. Today, these magazines publicise fashions worldwide and have become the elite in provision of information for the fashion conscious across the globe.

Couture has survived many difficult times, from the beginning, it had to overcome many stumbling blocks. One of the first difficulties being the collapse of the second empire in France in 1870, but this did not cease business, it inadvertently helped Worth, the leading Couturier of the time, to develop, as he began launching new styles completely free of court supervision. At that time, 'new' money was entering the world of Haute Couture. The effect of such changes in economic climate on Haute Couture are examined more closely in the next chapter.



'S' shaped corset, 1885 - Plate 2



THE NEW SKIRT AND THE POETRY OF MOTION.

Edith (breaking into a hop). "HURRY UP, MADEL; YOU'LL NEVER CATCH THE TRAIN IF YOU KEEP ON TRYING TO RUN."

Couture from the beginning had to learn to change with the times as well as being that little bit ahead of its competitors. It was a Couturiers responsibility to foresee a change in social climate and react to economic movements. It was and still is today critical to the survival of a Couture establishment.

One early example of a Couturier's foresight occurred in 1898; the pace of life was changing after the empire fell and Worth's clientele had changing needs, princesses and dignitaries were playing a more integral role in everyday life. There was less of a need for splendid robes as often. However, Jean - Philippe Worth, son of Charles Fred, as a designer had no desire to change his luxurious taste to a more practical substitute. Thus the house employed Paul Poiret to do this rationing for them. He was a young upcoming designer with new ideas

"We are in the position of a great restaurant where one would prefer to serve nothing but truffles. We therefore need to open a counter for fried potatoes."
(Charles Frederick Worth)

Poiret's job was to fill that gap and design simpler less extravagant clothes, thus creating a new dimension in Couture, showing its ability to adapt. This is a feature that re-occurs through history. Couture had to be willing to adapt and change to suit the needs of the client, the Couturier has to design and create clothes that suit the times, be they fruitful or not.

Poiret was a designer who was accredited with many changing styles, he freed women from the 'S' Shaped corset (see plate 2), however he restricted them again with the popular 'hobble' skirt (see plate 3). This was one of the first designs in which Haute Couture showed its authority in dictating to women.

Couture survival relies on change as this is how business survives and makes progress. During the 19th Century 'new' money from industry and banking made it possible for the middle classes to challenge the aristocracy as never before. Industrial wealth could now outrank landed wealth. During the second Empire, manufacturing millionaires and international bankers began attending aristocratic functions. These barons did not spend money on their wardrobes as aristocracy had done, the man left it to his wife to display his monetary wealth and power by sending his wife to the best Couturier. Women and their clothes became a status symbol, women wished to display their husband's or father's power and wealth, clothes became their outlet and therefore they attended the leading Couturiers of their generation. Thus the snobbery and elitism thrived; the richer the person the more expensive and exclusive the clothes became. The importance of a 'label' was ultimately to distinguish a woman within her milieu from her companions. Couture has thrived on this notion throughout its history. It is an integral part of the business and one that Couturiers are aware of and cater towards. In the 1990's it is paramount to a Couturiers' success as the 'label' sells their varying array of sidelines and accessories which, in the 1990's, owns the most lucrative earning potential.

As well as economic changes affecting fashions, mans desire for change in itself is an integral part of the fashion process. An interest in novelty as R. Konig has termed 'Neophilia' part of the interest is shown by the changes which occur in relations between generations.

"Each generation wants a different stance from the previous one, it wants to believe that it has new ways of addressing problems, new attitudes towards moral questions and that it possesses an awareness of new developments." (R. Konig, 1973 pg. 160)

Fashion has often been a guideline to what may be referred to as the generation gap. Each generation striving through new fashion and other outlets to create its own identity. Sometimes the differences may be subtle, not too obvious or in revolt they may be blatantly obvious. Within this framework and also associated with the competitive element is the constant need for change if a Couturier is to attract and maintain new business. Any modification, however small, can make last years dress look antiquated when compared to the latest one. The sheer novelty factor alone creates attention thus for the customer to have something new is a good enough reason for buying it as it puts her a little ahead of her peers.

"It was the pleasure of being smart and for the greater joy of snuffing out the competition from other women." (Charles Frederick Worth)

"My business is not only to execute but especially to invent. My invention is the secret of my success. I don't want people to invent for themselves if they did I would loose half my trade." (Charles Frederick Worth)

CHAPTER 2

In the previous chapter, while examining the development of Haute Couture, I touched upon how economic climate has affected Haute Couture in the past. Couture for the 1990's is in the middle of crises. In order for me to assess Couture's future following this crisis, I must examine how it has coped with crises in the past and examine the similarities, if any, to the present day.

In an early example, the Puritans proclaimed their convictions which crowned the revolution of 1642 by a conscious emphasis on their clothes, on modesty, moderation and simplicity in contrast to what they considered extravagant, ornamental, bad taste of the cavaliers. After the French revolution of 1789, any flamboyance in dress with its implication of wealth and privilege was met with danger. Women used a means of dress to indicate outwardly their loyalty to the new republic by wearing transparent versions of the costumes of ancient Greece on whose ideal of democracy the republic is supposedly based. This achieved the height of instances of indecent exposure not seen again until the mid 1960's. Thus clothes became a medium through which we can communicate, especially during times of extreme social upheaval.

In more recent times, World War I and World War II affected every element of the social make-up, fashion was no exception.

"The pity of war, the pity of war distilled." (Wilfred Owen, Poet W.W. I)

The great war, as it was called, in 1914 was the first World War. It accelerated the advance of female emancipation. Women of all backgrounds played their part in the war efforts by joining the work force. During such time, social life diminished, the need for elaborate and non-functional restrictive clothes was minimal. Interestingly, this war did not crush the fashion industry. Advertisements and photographs continued to feature in Parisian magazines.

Many Couturiers such as Poiret closed their salons and joined the army. Madam Cheruit, a designer, remained open.

"Women must have clothes, war or no war; and those who make them must have a way of earning a living." (Madam Cheruit)

One of the most important effects of World War I on the clothing industry was the introduction of government control due to the necessity to produce uniforms for the forces. As a result, new machinery and methods of production improved and created new recognition of its importance.

Paris Couture, after the first few frightening months of war resumed an almost normal production and throughout the war Vogue was able to publish the Paris models for each season.



Blouse, Vionnet, 1929 - Plate 4

Paris at this time was the Couture capital and it decided what was to be worn. In the Chambre de la Couture Parisienne, the top designers had a powerful association - part trade union, part public relations, part training school. Under Gaston Worth, the Chambre had from 1885 represented the French Couture, from 1911 it only represented the Paris Couture. This change enabled it to survive World War I.

Paris dictated Haute Couture because America or London did not have the credentials or courage to challenge it. America lacked any real cultural past and, as a result, did not have any self confidence to take on Paris which was renowned for its culture, art and intellects with their critical judgement.

Prudence Glynn noted that

"The British viewed fashion with suspicion, were impatient of its constant capricious change. Poised uneasily between France and America, Britain never accepted good fashion as an integral part of civilised life as did the French, nor was it peddled by quite such high pressure." (Prudence Glynn)

But why was Paris the Couture capital? Couture exists in other countries.

The answer lies in a remark by Quentin Bell.

"If Paris did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent it. Paris is the centre of an explosion of exquisite crafts which the business of Couture attracts and without which could not function properly.

In Italy, if you want a button or a bow, you have to design it, work out how it is to be made and oversee its production. In Paris, everyday someone comes to you with trays and trays of fabulous buttons, belts, buckles, bows with ideas for handbags, feathers, embroideries and new fantastic fabrics." (Quentin Bell)

World War I and its aftermath saw the rise of new Couturiers, many of whom were women, Vionnet and Chanel for example. Being women could perhaps be credited with having an intuition which their male counterparts did not possess. They designed clothes that were suitable for women's new lifestyles and new role in society, continuing the essence of Couture's traditions but in a simplified less fussy way. Chanel was the essence of the post war mood. Other designers hailed in the 1920's were Edward Molyneux, who is admired for his flattering, subtle perfectionist designs and flowing lines. Jean Patou, who promoted more feminine flowing lines, became famous for beach wear which bore the monogram JP (see plates 6 and 7). This was another Couture innovation which is so vital today. Madam Vionnet, who designed superbly cut, beautifully made clothes which were intricate individual designs. Vionnet may have been considered the Couturier's Couturier. She was admired for her brilliance and is credited with inventing and perfecting the bias cut.

The 1920's was the beginning of a fundamental breakaway from the long established concept of fashion. Technological and political developments were quickening as was the pace of social change. The new generation were willing to accept more practical attitudes towards fashion.



Bathing Suits, Patou with monogram JP - Plate 5



Scents, Patou with monogram JP - Plate 6

The roaring 1920's was a reaction against the war and the loss of a generation. Their identity had been lost in the battlefields. After the heavy darkness of war, it was a time of revolution, a celebration of life and its outlet was epitomized by fashion and music during that era. Couturiers played a major role in alleviating the despair of war. The creative talents of advanced designers particularly Coco Chanel seemed to sense intuitively the need for change and pioneered major alterations to a woman's appearance. It is this intuition on a designer's part that is crucial to their survival and one which re-occurs throughout history. Couturiers in the 1990's must sense the current climate and react to it or it will mean the death of Couture.

Fashions during the 1920's appeared simplistic. Couturiers led the fashions with fervour. The natural curves of the female figure were ignored, breasts were flattened, waists were non-existent, hairstyles were short. Couture was setting the trends, that filtered to mainstream fashions, through magazines and films and also the updated machinery made it possible to produce large scale quantities of clothes similar to the Couturier designs. This created a new need, Couture began a counter revolution, which evolved in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Couture houses at this time were at the peak of their scope and success, as clothes were utmost for the elite of the time. They had an international way of life and required many different types of clothes to suit a variety of climates, resorts and cities.

The 1930's saw the onslaught of a major economic depression worldwide, it is said to be one of the worst depressions in modern history. In the midst of the slump and with the approach of World War II, life had become brittle. The climate caused an instant change in mood from one decade to the next, from the 'roaring 20's' to the more mature 1930's. The fashionable world of the 1930's reacted to the more serious times with a distinct change in attitude. Clothes became more sophisticated and more mature in appearance veering away from the straight, simplistic boyish lines of the 1920's. The female figure became popular once again but in a totally different way to the contorted corsetted curves of the Edwardian period. The new silhouette was uncompromisingly figure conscious, shoulder pads became fashionable. The Couturiers created clothes that were long, soft, draped and figure hugging. The look of the 1930's was a feminine flowing look.

Fashions do not always outwardly reflect major economic events for better or for worse. As we can see by the 1920's it was a boom time but fashion did not become overtly extravagant, they appeared simple and casual compared to designs of the previous decades. Conversely looking at the fashions of the 1930's, there was no indication that the economy was suffering from a major depression. After the Wall Street Crash, 10,000 people were made redundant and the jobs of half a million were threatened throughout the fashion industry. Europe had not recovered from World War I. American had a booming economy, when that crashed, it reflected a worsening state in European economies.

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In France, the French Couture fell from second place to 27th place as an export item. American buyers cancelled their orders and Couturiers in France suffered withdrawal symptoms at the sudden absence of American Dollars. However, a wealthy class still existed, Couturiers still had a market in which to sell, even if it was of lesser size!

How did Couturiers change? They survived through cutbacks and staff reductions; by getting credit from textile manufactures and using capital accumulated during the prosperous 1920's; and because of the patronage of the 'best dressed list'. This was a list of distinguished clients drawn up by the Couturiers of the time.

"A candidate must do more than invest the sum of \$50,000 with the Paris dressmaking trade. She must have brains, poise and vivacity." (The New York Times 1921)

These women who were leaders in society in the post war years inspired and gave energy to the creativity of Couturiers. To moderate the grim reality of the depression, a mood of escapism prevailed during the early 1930's and women set a brisk pace in inspired deeds that grabbed the headlines. Schiaparelli, a female Couturier, became very popular during the 1930's. Her clothes were a break from the harsh realities of the depression. She amused through her clever, witty designs, she brought vibrant colour into the limelight, shocking pink is one of her favourites.



Jacket, Schiaparelli, with inventive buttons - Plate 7



She gave new light to fastenings with inventive buttons and was one of the first to use zips and man-made fibres within the realms of Haute Couture (see plate 8). This was unique for a Couturier, she catered for a new era and created a new ideal.

World War II was the first time in England when women were actually called into the services or directed in some other types of war work. Women replaced men in offices, penetrated the main domains of government ministries.

Spring 1940 was the last time the outside world heard the fashion news from Paris until the liberation in 1944.

Paris Couture faced a major crisis. Lelong, as head of la Chambre Syndicate de la Haute Couture felt it was his duty to defend the Haute Couture industry. The Germans invaded the offices of la Chambre and seized all documents relating to exports. Lelong was informed that the French Couture would be moved to Berlin and Vienna, to merge with the German dress manufacturers in order to create a major new export industry for the Reich. He realised the death of Couture would be imminent. It would not be possible to transport the entire industry which included, as I pointed out before, the underworld of the little manufacturers and the numerous accessories, decorations and trimmings. The support industry would have been left in Paris. Haute Couture and its suppliers had to stay together.

The Germans relented with the persuasion of Lelong to leave Couture in Paris by collaborating with the Germans and pointing out to the high ranking officers that they could buy Couture dresses for their wives when stationed in France. It was war time and Couture had to do what it could to survive. To the onlooker it seemed unethical, it seemed that they dishonoured the Haute Couture and the French generation. However, Paris was an occupied state, collaboration on many spheres was necessary for Paris to continue to function even on a small degree. In order to survive it was inevitable for collaboration to take place otherwise Paris Couture would have ceased to exist. In retrospect it was the right thing to do as the business continued and the traditions and crafts people remained in Paris and after the war regained their respect.

The scarcity of natural fabrics was one of the effects of war e.g. wool and silk. The general public had to resort to artificial fabrics which were rationed under a points system. However, Lelong managed to acquire permission for a special allowance of points for the Couture trade based on pre-war not current business records. He also obtained permission for Couture creations to escape clothes rationing in order to keep the industry alive. The idea of unrationed clothes during wartime attracted a wider range of clientele than ever before with the middle class of society beginning to attend the salons. Two new types of customers emerged during the war, the wives of the German officers and the wives of black market profiteers. Dior claimed

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

3. The third part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

"This sort of customer would be shot come the liberation". (Christian Dior, 1944)

Paris Couture collections operated on a reduced scale due to the heavy restrictions on the production of textiles and the low number of Couture houses that remained open.

Trimmings such as ribbon were not restricted so Couturiers used ingenuity and creativity and utilised this fact to the highest order. Hats were made from scraps such as rags, newspapers and wood shavings. Ingenuity was the key to its survival and war inadvertently helped Couture to develop. It broadened its horizons and inventive original creations developed. Couture was coming into a new era. It used fabrics and substances which would never have been used in Couture had it not been wartime. The restrictions resulted in a new concept and attitude towards Couture.

Another result of the war was the affinity that developed between the houses. They supported each other and when one house got on the wrong side of the German administration, the other houses rallied support e.g. when the Germans ordered designers, Madam Gres and Balenciaga to close for 2 weeks just before the showing of their collections due to exceeding the permitted allowances, the other houses finished their collections unknown to the Germans.



Utility Prototypes, Hardy Amies and Molyneux -
Plate 8

In Britain, clothes rationing was introduced, Couturiers organised by Norman Hartnell formed an action group in the hopes of keeping the fashion industry going. He thought the even in wartime people liked to be well dressed and maintaining emphasis on style helped to maintain self respect and boosted the self esteem which was sorely needed in the climate of the time. As the incorporated society of London fashion designers, the group co-operated with the government in deciding clothing polices. Their contribution extended as far as direct financial support. Molyneux had created a huge business which enabled him to donate over half a million which was used by the government to purchase ammunition.

Clothes rationing got more severe as the war continued. Every item of clothing, with the exception of hats, had an allocated coupon value. This coincided with the introduction of utility clothes which regimented the clothing industry. Specifications were laid down by the government. To conserve fabric, length, width, even pleats were controlled, to conserve labour, trimmings were reduced. Couturiers were called upon to produce prototypes. One may think that they may have been inspired by these limitations to develop a new concept in clothing but the fact is that they simply maintained a skimpy version of the Schiaparelli silhouette, squared shoulders, nipped in waists and narrow skirts had been the fashion in the late 1930's. The solutions to the restrictions in Britain were not as ingenious or creative to my mind as those of Paris. Fashion developments remained in a frozen state until the influence of Paris once again with Dior's controversial 'New Look' in 1947.



CHARLES MONTAGNE - Manteau en lainage marron foncé, boutons en métal or et émail marron. 1945.

SCHIAPARELLI - Manteau cintré gris. Dessin original de 1941.



In American, price controls and restrictions on the use of fabric and needless trimmings were introduced in 1943. American designers responded to their restrictions with more ingenuity than their counterparts in Britain. Although there were gestures in order to increase recruitment, towards making the British womens' service uniforms more flattering following the sharp, much admired, tailored uniforms of their American counterparts. Women who had decided to join the army may have been attracted to the navy because of the 'WAVES' uniforms. This was the beginning of America using its own resources, being cut off from Paris they could no longer rely on the French Couturiers direction; thus America began to develop a distinct and assured style with a strong utilitarian basis. The American designers began to design, using their own ingenuity and creativity. Suits and dresses were well tailored with clean cut lines, these were less fussy than the European styles that were in fashion at the beginning of the war. The second World War inadvertently gave birth to the American Couture industry. American designers grew and developed. They had an American clientele during the war and they did not have any competition from Paris to inhibit their growth.

One of the main emphasis at this time was on strongly stated accessories, this era saw the beginning of a trend that was to inspire female 'power dressing' in the 1980's.

America emerged from World War II as the most powerful nation in the world, other countries began to follow their lead. Although America had not produced any revolutionary changes in fashion, the internationally admired ideal had become quite Americanised and the U.S.A. took the lead in the contemporary ways of dressing. This was aided with the influence of Hollywood and the film industry, where stars of the screen became the ideal.

Despite the devastating and acute shortages, Paris Couturiers presented their first peace time collections in 1945. It was thought that Paris may never regain their former position as the centre for the decorative arts, stylish living and the leader of luxurious clothes, but Paris surprised the world with its collections. Their creativeness was not hampered by such a long stagnation period. The collections were inventive but possessed commercially viable ideas. There was also signs of change silhouette that had been long established in previous years. These new fashions proved that Paris was still a leader, keeping its tradition of femineity and chic. The early post war fashions seemed to express womens longing for escape from the harsh realities of the day and regress into a more secure pre 1914 world of elegant living. Nostalgia was a re-occurring theme in all the collections. Jaques Fath (see plate 10), Christobal Balenciaga (see plate 11) and Pierre Balmain featured at this time.

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Dress, Jaques Fath, 1947 - Plate 10

In February 1947 America was well on the way to post war prosperity and expansion. Although Couture had come into its own right, the American buyers were glad to have Paris again as a source of new ideas and inspiration which they in turn could adapt to suit American tastes.

The severe winter of 1947 caused many fatalities from hypothermia, yet the fashion press were undeterred and gathered in Paris for the spring collections. Molyneux, Schiaparelli, Pierre Balmain with wide shoulders and Piguet and Lelong had evening wear with tight waists and long full skirts, a trend for curves was emerging. However, it was a new designer, Christian Dior, who shocked and hit the headlines with his 'New Look' (see plate 12). Dior expanded and exaggerating the developing trends further than anyone would have dared, considering the atmosphere of the time. Thus, he earned for himself a prominent place in the history of fashion. This look brought femineity back into fashion after the harsh brutality of war and the square masculine lines of wartime clothes, there was a universal yearning for a more feminine image, for peace time. For some it represented a retreat from the equality between men and women on the job front during the war, the feeling returned to 'a woman's place is in the home' concept with a vengeance but was this a man wanting to put women back into her traditional niche or was it just another development which was a reaction against wartime? Well, whether it war or not, women adored the 'New Look' and adopted it with great pleasure.



Dress, Balenciaga, 1949 - Plate 12

Haute Couture was once again on the decline in the 1960's and 1970's with the pre-occupation of youth culture and hippy dressing but developments in the early 1980's saw a return to high fashion and Haute Couture.



Dress, Christian Dior, "New Look", 1947 -
Plate 11

CHAPTER 3

Couture has adapted with the ever changing climate throughout history as I have discussed in the previous chapters. It has learned to suit changing tastes and develop itself to ensure its survival during economic crises. But attitudes towards Couture have changed especially in the last decade. In Paris in 1970 Yves Saint Laurent declared "Haute Couture cannot be modernised".

In 1989 the Couture shows as an event were certainly modern, a twice yearly celebrity and media bonanza, as much as it was a fashion happening. Dior made headlines by calling in a new Italian designer, Gianfrance Ferre. Yves Saint Laurent went public on the Paris stock market. The midland bank bought Lanvin. Karl Lagerfald sent out a collection hailed by many as the best ever for Chanel.

The main difference and a crucial factor was that Paris had deftly integrated Haute Couture a traditional old world art, into a machine of modern business. It has developed from the worlds most exclusive dressmaking service for the privileged clients as it had been into a supreme exercise in fashion public relations. Few Couture collections now make money in direct sales to private customers but is that the point? What the French came to recognise was the value of Couture as an industry that runs at a loss in itself but for a house or designer to have a Couture collection was the ultimate proof of its own prestige.

The headlines and press have an incalculably profitable effect, promoting all the products that appear under the houses label; in selling ready-to-wear lines, its cosmetics and its scents and fragrance. But does this demonstrate Couture. The author disagrees, Couture is still a laboratory of fashion ideas, it is a place for producing prototypes that will ultimately filter down into mainstream fashion and it creates those pieces that will simply remain as the highest examples of a state of art for arts sake. Couture allows a designer to express himself to the limits of his imagination, without the constraints of expense or having to think of the practicalities of factory production. It is the opportunity for the crafts people of the Couture workrooms to demonstrate the superiority of hand constructed garments over the computer programmed cut of the machine made article. Couture is a platform from which the skills of the embroiderers, the beaders and the fabric creators can show their genius. This celebration of virtuosity has produced some of the most extravagant clothes seen in modern times. But as it has been throughout Couture's existence, there is a contradiction at the heart of Couture. While the event factor encourages exhibition designing, the Couturier must not forget its customer, women whose figures he must flatter and whose personalities he must not overwhelm. The worlds best dressed women will not be wearing the show stoppers that appear splashed across the newspapers. We have seen that a good Couturier knows that whatever he does to please the press, he must never overlook his customer. He will always have a few staple marks in his collection for his elite clientele.



Outfit, Montana, New Couture, 1990 - Plate 13

So what is the Couture customer? Ideally, a lady that in most cases would not wear trousers probably because she has such well toned body dictated by the present pre-occupation with the perfection of physique.

In 1989 Karl Lagerfeld designed contemporary clothes while respecting the Chanel tradition. Yves Saint Laurent also created a sense of tradition by presenting a collection of clothes containing a multitude of Couture craftsmanship. His collections did not deviate from those he has done for so long and, for this reason, he was greeted with the utmost of admiration. At Dior, Gianfranco Ferre's most daunting responsibility was to deal with history and to retain the essence of the house look, yet giving it a contemporary air and satisfy the French it was worthy of being called 'Parisian chic'. Ferre succeeded using his appreciation of the existing Couture skills at the house of Dior to the full.

But the 1990's was the beginning of a sway away from the traditional values of Haute Couture. Claude Montana, the new designer for Lanvin, opened the Paris Couture season with a collection that aroused some conflicting views. His collection was made of pants and subdued evening wear, the collection was understated (see plate 13), his show was met with bad response whereas Yves Saint Laurent presented a truly classical collection including extravagant beaded silk evening gowns. Yves Saint Laurent was greeted with a standing ovation. These two extreme reactions highlighted what was then the current dilemma facing a brand of dressing which exists uneasily in a modern world.

What was Montana's theory behind his collection? It seems to me that he was reacting to a change in climate one similar to the dilemma Poiret faced in 1898, 100 years earlier. Poiret reacted by designing a simpler form of Couture but it was not easily accepted as he was designing ahead of his time. The similarity is seen here in Montana's case, the public were not ready to accept the change yet!

"There are many young people for which Couture holds little relevance, what I was trying to do was forge a new kind of simplicity in Couture - a made to measure entirely personal service, that will appeal to young as well as old." (Vogue April 1991 pg. 49)

But in making his collection he broke some unwritten rules in Couture. Montana's faithful followers hailed the collection but for the rest of the audience they were left wondering whether it was Haute Couture at all?

Paloma Picasso remarked

"The great pity with Montana's show for Lanvin is that he dispensed with all the wonderful embroiderers, button makers, bead specialists and so on who form the rock-bed of Couture." (Vogue April 1990)

This statement sounds narrow minded but it is a view held by many and one to which many Couturiers conform.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part is a description of the methods used in the investigation.

3. The third part is a description of the results of the investigation.

4. The fourth part is a discussion of the results and their significance.

5. The fifth part is a conclusion and a summary of the findings.

6. The sixth part is a list of references.

7. The seventh part is a list of figures and tables.

8. The eighth part is a list of appendices.

9. The ninth part is a list of footnotes.

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11. The eleventh part is a list of acknowledgments.

12. The twelfth part is a list of the author's address and contact information.

13. The thirteenth part is a list of the author's other publications.

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25. The twenty-fifth part is a list of the author's other commitments.

26. The twenty-sixth part is a list of the author's other interests.

27. The twenty-seventh part is a list of the author's other hobbies.

28. The twenty-eighth part is a list of the author's other passions.

29. The twenty-ninth part is a list of the author's other loves.

30. The thirtieth part is a list of the author's other dreams.

That same year Yves Saint Laurent, Lagerfeld for Chanel, Christian Lacroix and Gianfranco Ferre for Dior (see plate 14) did not disappoint their audiences, one was left with no doubt about the exquisite artistry of their clothes. For example, a Chanel jacket with thousands of seed pearls hand stitched into it or the enormous sublimely impractical organza bows on Ferre's evening dresses, or the satellite jewelled buttons on Lacroix, Valentino or a Versace suit.

Montana's collection did contain some of these delights, dresses contained subtle embroidery and jewels but it was not blatantly obvious and these touches may have been missed if one was not watching closely. When a Couture gown can cost up to Stg. £25,000, many women would not run the risk of their Couture outfit being mistaken for anything other than Couture.

8 In many cases, the great attraction of Couture lies in being able to afford the clothes. These are the people for whom a regular flow of photographs of themselves dressed in Couture in glossy magazines is a point of honour. They wear outfits that no-one could mistake for anything but Couture, as well as being willing to broadcast intimate secrets such as how much they cost. Vulgar as it may seem, this is only a small, if vital ingredient, of the glitz surrounding Couture. Astonishingly, while most women confine Couture to glittering special occasion outfits, there are others to whom it would never occur to shop in any other way.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the various factors that have shaped the development of the United States, including the role of the government, the economy, and the culture. The paper concludes by suggesting that a study of the history of the United States is not only a valuable academic exercise, but also a necessary one for anyone who wishes to understand the world in which we live.



Outfits, Christian Lacroix and Yves Saint Laurent,
1990 - Plate 14

Mrs. Henry Kravis - aka Carolynne Rohem in 1992 remarked "how novel" on being told that designers held ready-to-wear shows.

There is a prestige for those who dress only in Couture, it is the entry to a clique, it is a high price to pay to join a social club but it is one that these women of high society are willing to pay. Couture buying is a highly sociable past-time. As one customer put it

"If you are unsure of your own taste, it is a fail safe way of acquiring some, if you are 'new' money, it is a way to meet 'old' and if spending a few thousand means you get to have coffee and a private consultation with Mr. Lagerfeld or Mr. Givenchy, the outgoings seem quite reasonable." (Ivana Trump)

Buying Couture means that these women come to regard some of the most skilled and creative fashion designers in the world as their personal dressmakers. It is for these women then that the designer ensures that each show contains a healthy quota of wearable outfits as well as the more extreme flamboyant 'headline grabbing' ones. Even though it is commonly accepted that at today's elitist prices Couture can never be anything other than a business working at a loss. However, it generates untold publicity and prestige for a house (on the back of which it can then launch its serious money makers, such as perfumes, cosmetics, sunglasses and countless other spin offs) it is vital to the designers that 'real' women be seen wearing their Couture creations.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methods used.

3. The third part of the report is a discussion of the results obtained.

4. The fourth part of the report is a conclusion and a list of references.

5. The fifth part of the report is a summary of the main points.

6. The sixth part of the report is a list of the names of the authors.

7. The seventh part of the report is a list of the names of the institutions.

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With the year 1991, the Gulf War created yet another crisis for the Paris Haute Couture. There was anxious talk of war and recession, amid the empty seats of absent American consumers and journalists at the January 1991 shows. Paris Couture relied on the Middle Eastern clients especially the Kuwaits for a good portion of their Couture revenues - people perhaps focused again on the indecency of selling a dress for Stg. £30,000 when the bottom was dropping out of the fashion market.

Valentino literally spelt out his reaction on a white dress embroidered with 'peace' in 12 different languages including Arabic (see plate 15). In times of war and recession fashion faces a dilemma because after all a frock is just a frock and seems trivial in a time of upheaval. But Pierre Cardin went on stage before his show to explain another school of thought that fashion should provide an alternative to bad news.

"We have to try and bring a little pleasure in these times." (Cardin 1991, Paris)

One of the deep seated myths about fashion is that when the stock market is high, hemlines go up and when its low they go down. Fashion could do itself a favour by dispensing with the phantom of the mechanically rising and dropping hemline. As we saw it fall in Patou's 1929 collection on the eve of the Wall Street Crash.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States. It is a letter of great importance, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

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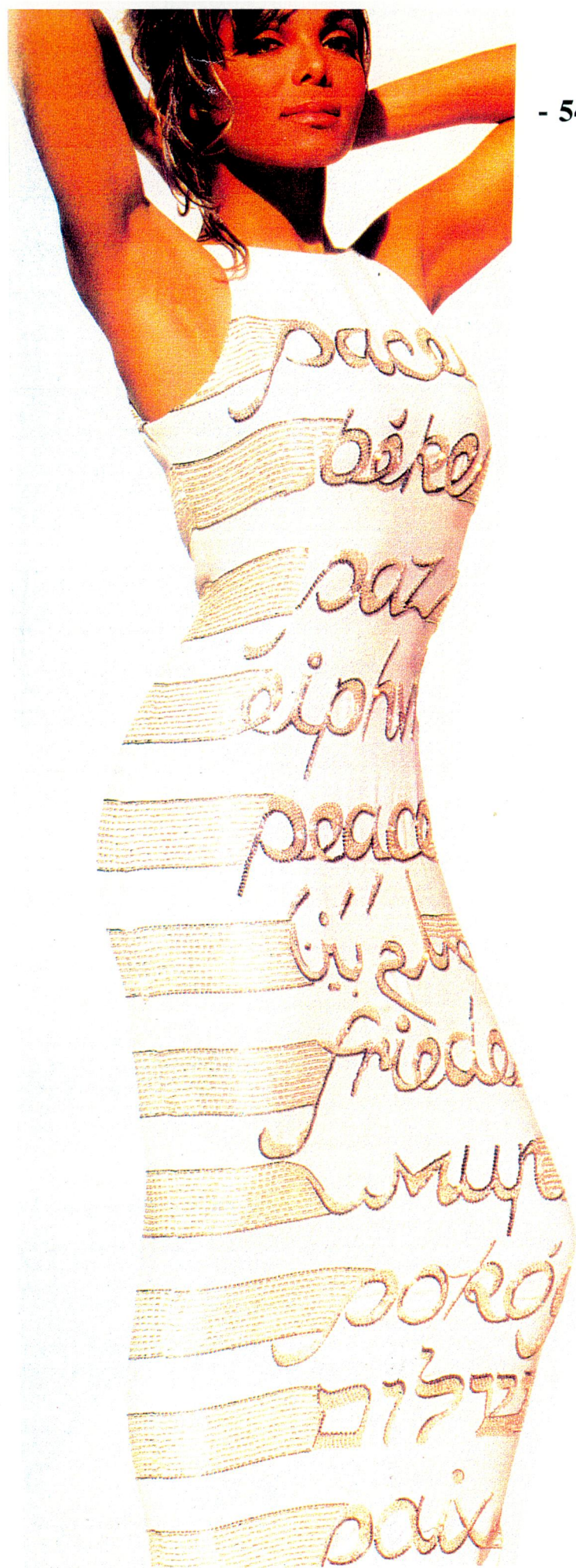
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But the next dramatic fall, in Dior's 'New Look' in 1947 was in a time when things were looking up after the war and in our time since the stock market crash of 1987, short lengths have only gotten shorter and more irrelevant to any serious discussion about fashion. As any modern woman knows, the correct skirt length these days is the one that suits her. In any case, the lowering of hemlines would scarcely be enough to protect fashion from the accusations of frivolity that always come its way in hard times.

Although one could also question how no-one expects for example the producers of luxury cars to start justifying themselves as soon as war breaks out but at the same time fashion is expected to explain itself.

"It is nonsense to say that women should not wear dresses that take 200 hours to make. That would mean 200 hours less work for people." (Karl Lagerfeld 1991)

In 1991 the Chambre Syndicate reported a drop in the number of women who buy Haute Couture from 3,000 in the 1980's to 2,500 in the winter of 1990 and predicted a further drop for 1991. Balmain announced the closure of his Couture workrooms and other were to follow. Across Paris employment for 2,300 people would go if Haute Couture halted. 1992 was the year of upheaval. The prestigious French Haute Couture industry joined the coal, mining, steelmaking and agriculture on the growing list of industries of difficulty.



"Peace" Dress, Valentino, 1991 - Plate 15

In Paris there were losses of 34,000,000 Francs at Lanvin in the space of 12 months, three years of falling profits of Nina Ricci and 36 jobs to be 're-allocated' at Givenchy. To top it all on November 19, 1992 the Couturier Jean-Louis Scherrer was sacked from his own fashion house along with seventy staff, by his company's new Japanese shareholders. He was accused of poor management.

Vladimir de Konsmire, managing director of Nina Ricci, summed up the problem

"Unfortunately for us, in times of crises, people learn to live without luxury."

The entire estimated number of Haute Couture clientele is estimated at 2,000 people with just 300 constant customers.

Haute Couture the industry has been hit by world recession it has also fallen victim to its own lack of vision and a certain indifference to reality. Couture has lived by outdated rules, originally designed to protect its upmarket cachet. The industry for years has been subject to the most restrictive practices.

These regulations require each of Paris' 21 Haute Couture houses to employ a minimum of 20 skilled workers and to present a minimum of 75 garments costing as much as 75,000 Francs.

Fashion houses regularly post huge losses and new young designers are excluded from an increasingly expensive and exclusive club.

A programme of reforms is being introduced now for the year 1993 and 1994 which will, it is hoped, alleviate these financial burdens and open up Haute Couture to young talent under new regime, fashion houses will be required to employ only a 10 skilled workers and to show 50 outfits ever year to qualify for the coveted Haute Couture status. In addition, they will be allowed to present their collections on videos instead of live shows which can cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

1993 was the year of sobering, collections were more sombre

"Too much embroidery would be a political mistake." (Lacroix admitted in January 1993)

It has been accepted that in times like these it is not acceptable to flaunt ones wealth. Recession has reduced the number of women who buy Haute Couture as well as reductions in the mass sales of all these lipsticks, chain bags and perfumes. There is one question that particularly American buyers ask now and that is "How much does it cost?"

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Signs of trouble in Paris Couture houses are growing. The big finance companies that control many of the houses are growing nervous in the face of losses. 'The House of Aletiers' is laying off seamstresses as demand falls. Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Berge gave up control of their most exclusive label to a state owned pharmaceutical company Sanofi, they had envisaged its profits being halved with the recession.

The industry has been rocked by the Scherrer scandal, he being the first Couturier to be sacked from his own house, that still carries his name. Scherrer was an extravagant designer, his lavish shows would always end with his daughter Laetita wearing the most ornate beaded embroidered gown in the collection. Scherrer's clothes suited the taste of his clients, the majority of whom were Arabs, he used to dress Kuwaits and Saudi princesses but the Gulf war knocked the bottom out of that market, the company reported losses of 42,000,000 Francs. Scherres should have predicted that he would have to tame his extravagant tastes for the change in climate but, just as may of his predecessors, this was his downfall.

Erick Fayer, owner of the ailing house of Balmain, drafted in an American designer, Oscar de la Renta, to try and rejuvenate the designers faithful American clients. Givenchy has plans to make 36 staff redundant and is trying to pare down his budget from 10,000,000 to 6,000,000 Francs. Starting by ordering 40 pairs of shoes instead of 80 pairs.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1954

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In Paris, Francois Lesage, credited with most of the exquisite beading and embroidery which is at Couture's foundation, was accustomed to orders of 100,000 Francs worth of embroidery on a single Couture dress, has claimed that for the first time Couturiers are asking the price before placing their orders.

Pierre Cardins show for 1993 was a 'four seasons' in one show which, which cuts the cost by just presenting one show yearly. Lanvin pulled out of Couture shows, the mix of the traditional with the new Montana style was a mistake.

Thus the future of Haute Couture hangs in the balance. In order to assess the impact of this crisis on Haute Couture, the author has decided to examine four different designers and form case studies of their current operations and likely future direction.



Chanel at Biarritz, 1920.
Photograph.

CHAPTER 4

Gabrielle Chanel

I have chosen Chanel as the major case study in this chapter because the house of Chanel has survived through all the major economic and social upheavals to date and continues to maintain its prominent position in the world of Haute Couture.

Chanel's success was greatly due to the international pertinence of her own individual style, a style and a success that she herself credited to having been 'in the right place at the right time'.

Chanel began her business as a milliner with private financial backing. Chanel began designing clothes by chance. In 1913 she vacationed in Deauville, a stylish resort and a favoured location with painters because of its constantly changing light. Chanel began designing comfortable beach wear and sports clothes, middi blouses, wide skirts, with pullover sweaters, silk blouses, linen suits, light shoes. This style of dressing was to become a revolution in womens wear.

With the outbreak of war in July 1914, the resort was suddenly abandoned, but in the following weeks Chanel's wealthy clients returned to their villas in the face of the German advance on Paris and in the process leaving their wardrobes behind.

This was the beginning of Chanel's rise to fame.

"All I had with me were milliners, I transformed them into dressmakers. Fabrics were in short supply. I cut out jerseys for them in 'stable-boys' sweaters and trainers, jumpers such as I wore myself". (Gabrielle Chanel)

Chanel opened a boutique of Couture clothing in Biarritz with its own collections. Nearby Spain provided her with a clientele of wealthy aristocrat who frequented the resort. By this time Chanel had repaid her debts and gained her independence. Chanel is famed for the introduction of 'poorer fabrics' into the world of Haute Couture. During the wartime shortages, she used her intuition and her own personal style to create clothing from fabrics such as jersey. This fabric defied the conventions of luxury and promoted purer lines, it created a revolution in dress and appearance.

This was a time of emancipation for women as I have discussed earlier. 'Simpler' clothes had already been introduced as sporting clothes and this was a wonderful influence for Chanel when she arrived on the scene.

"One world was ending and another was coming into being. I was there, I saw the opportunity and I took it. I was a contemporary of this Century and so it was to me that it turned for its expression in clothes." (Gabrielle Chanel)



Tweed suit, Chanel - Plate 17

Why was Chanel so successful? It was due to the fact that her clothes were simple and comfortable but ultimately they were casually elegant. Just as, today, Giorgio Armani's 'unstructured' jacket is actually a very complicated construction, so also did Chanel create an extremely expensive look, produced with wonderful artistry and deceptive simplicity.

Chanel was a woman that other women wanted to look like. She represented a new type of Couturier, she combined the masculine of fashion genius with the feminine role of fashion leader. Chanel offered a substitute to the traditional idea of Couture, it was an elegant style but it was founded on elements considered foreign to it, comfort, ease and practicality. It was composed of masculine elements that appeared feminine.

Chanel's most famous design is the suit, in two or three pieces. First made during World War I, it remained in style until 1939 and was re-introduced in the 1950's and it is still popular today (see plates 18 and 22) . These suits were usually soft and untailored made in jersey, velvet, silk charmeuse or tweeds. They were highly practical, boxy cardigan jackets with sleeve buttons that were functional, pockets where one needs pockets and straight knee length skirts with walking pleats. After 1954, tweeds and braids were used, with gold chains weighting the hems of the jacket and brass buttons. Chanel designed jackets which looked equally as good worn open or draped across the shoulder. Blouses were made to match the linings of the jackets.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used in the study.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and a list of references.

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25. The twenty-fifth part is a list of appendices.

It was subtle, discreet touches such as lining her jersey jackets with the finest silks that earned Chanel her prestige as a great Couturier. Her clothes were casual elegance with hidden luxury that only the wearer could fully appreciate. Her theory was 'less is more'.

Another Chanel trademark is the 'little black dress' which was deceptively simple, but was ingeniously cut and proportioned. She used traditional elegant materials, lace, tulle, embroideries or soft weightless silks in a newly tailored way. Worn with a cardigan of the same fabric as that of the suit she owned. The 'little black dress' made women wearing anything else seem overdressed. During the war years, being overdressed may have seemed like a crime. A re-occurrence of this thinking has been seen again during the 1990's recession and Couturier shows.

Chanel was practical about every aspect of her design, she avoided fabrics that looked good but felt uncomfortable next to the skin. When she lined her coats with suede or fur it was for warmth, not show. Along with this attention to practical detail, her clothes held a hidden cachet. A woman felt a self-assured chic not having to worry about her clothes when wearing them knowing they represented the essence of a classic.

Making clothes simple and easy to move in would not in itself constitute an immortal style. What makes Chanel's style so recognisable included her perfect balance of detail and especially her accessories.

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Chanel made imitation jewellery chic (see plate 20). Costume jewellery could be worn jokingly, a statement of bravado and independence. Everything about her jewellery was a break from the past. Sometimes it was real, sometimes fake, mixing large and small stones and she used loads of it. Her jewellery was worn during the day to complement her suits. She created an unpretentious style that had nothing to do with money. The effect was stunning.

Chanel's customers essentially came to buy clothes like the ones she wore and that were suitable to the casual pace of seaside living. Such simple styles reflected a general wartime sobriety throughout the French Couture as I have shown earlier.

Chanel as usual with perfect timing and flair arrived on the perfume scene. Chanel befriended Ernest Beau, an outstanding perfumer. He wished to use synthetic compounds that had not been used previously in perfume making. Chanel encouraged him to use the most extreme solutions. Chanel proved herself in her sense of smell, Beau presented her with a selection of samples numbered 1 to 10 approximately. Chanel choose 'No. 5' (see plate 19). This sample contained over 24 ingredients which involved an expensive process but, to Chanel, the more expensive it was, the more desirable it became. She already knew from the sale of her Couture dresses how much women would pay for the excitement of a luxury in short supply. Chanel was not the first to see the potential of perfume sales.



Jewellery, Chanel - Plate 19



Chanel No. 5 perfume - Plate 18

In 1913 Poiret took the initiative of associating Haute Couture and perfumes but his scents had been sold under the name of Rosine, so he never capitalised on his personal fame. Chanel in contrast saw the new scent as a way of keeping her personal identity valuable and of attracting new clients. 'Chanel No. 5' has become a world famous legend.

In 1939 Chanel closed her Couture house and retired but continued the perfume production. Chanel had been forgotten, fashion embraced Dior's contrived 'New Look'. However, in 1954, Chanel displayed her usual sense of perfect timing. Already the impact of the 'New Look' was waning. The time was right once again to liberate women from the corsets of a male Couturier. Initially, the fashion press criticised her for reinstating the same tweed suits and 'little dresses' but they could not ignore the great number of women who once again clambered for wearable clothes. Her designs were now made in subtler, more flattering, pastel tweeds. Her reputation as a colourist grew.

The suits had patch pockets, cuffs, lapels and hems edged in matching or contrasting braids. For evening, trousers often featured, made in solid or patterned velvets, metallic brocades, or silks embroidered entirely with sequins. The most prominent silhouette was the one most flattering to the flattened figure; it featured a straight jacket ending just below the waist and a straight skirt ending just below the knee. The pockets, placed in the seams of either side of the skirt centre, were perfect for achieving the famous Chanel 'slouch'.

She introduced the low heeled, two toned sling back shoes that actually suited walking. Remember this was a time when stiletto heels were thriving. Her chain - handle quilted leather shoulder bags first shown in 1957, were the dressy versions of a pocket book that freed the arms. This bag has been updated for the 1990's and is one of the most popular of Chanel's products, it has become the ultimate symbol of Chanel.

Chanel continued to make the kind of clothes she always did. In a sense the client helped dictate her style. Women enjoyed wearing her clothes, the ones she had always designed. It was a symbol of the unchanging excellence, status quo. It was the key to her success.

After Chanel's death, the House of Chanel passed into the hands of Gaston Berthelot. It was a difficult task to follow immediately after Gabrielle Chanel. Philippe Guibourge developed the ready-to-wear side of the enterprise. Jean Cuzaubon and Yvonne Dudel, managed the Couture side of the business.

In 1983 Karl Lagerfeld was appointed design director for both ready-to-wear and Couture lines. Karl Lagerfeld has used his own personal style to develop Chanel without renouncing some of the traditional elements of the classic Chanel. His is a difficult and brilliant mission which not only involves taking over and continuing Chanel's traditions but he has to boldly change and update the exiting classic designs of his famous predecessor. Karl Lagerfeld has resurrected ideas from the past and altered them just enough to accommodate a new generation and a new mode in silhouette.

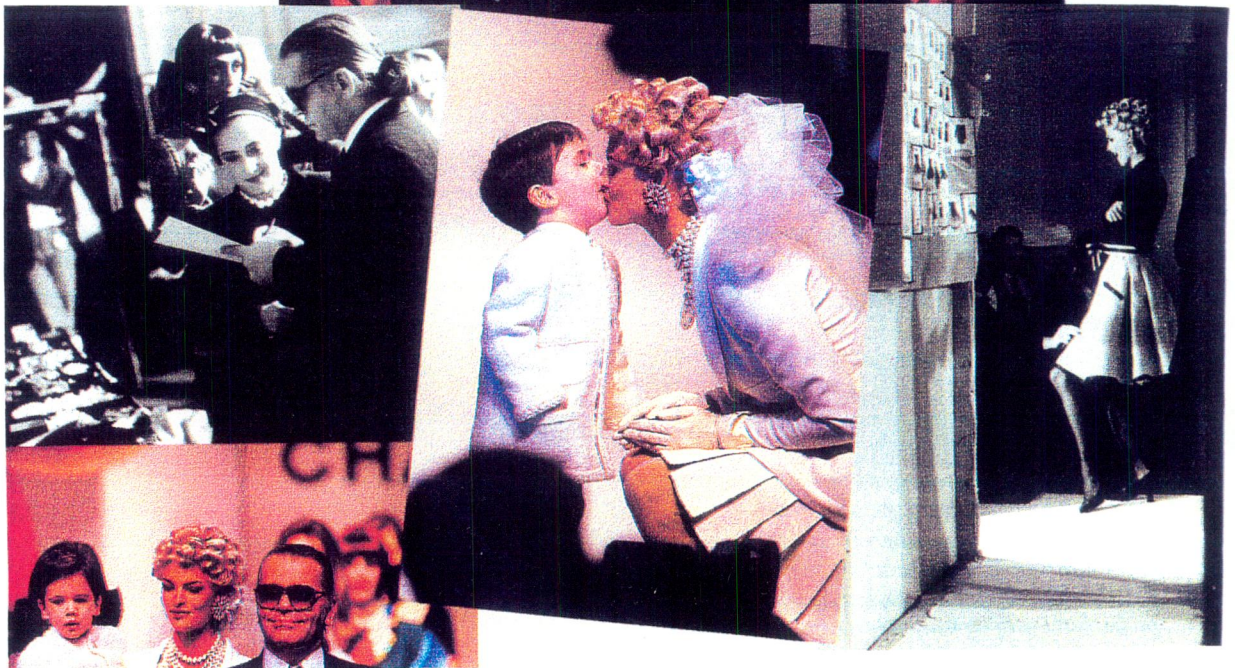


KARL LAGERFELD FOR CHANEL

"Coco became too refined, too distinguished at the end of her time, when she lectured on elegance, she was so boring. It was more fun when she was young and cruised around being a kept woman. I want to make the clothes more graphic, more fun, but with distinguished touches that change slightly from one season to the next." (Karl Lagerfeld)

Karl Lagerfeld has exaggerated proportions of colours, he has played with trimmings and accessories. He uses Chanel's favourite details in a witty and new way. Chanel's famous pocket book now stands embroidered in sequins and set off again with a narrow black dress. The spools and dressmaking tools she used in costuming 'Oedipus Rex' have been translated by Lagerfeld into jewelled evening dress bodices. A suit with a short jacket, the fronts elongated into points heavily emphasised with gold braid. A burgundy suede outfit with huge crushed velvet flowers at the neck, echoing Chanel's preference for artificial flowers. Waistcoats covered in gold chains, fringed hems, short skirts, worn over matching thick tights. Lagerfeld used the mini but with long pleated chiffon layers reaching the floor. Afterall, it was Chanel who dared to show womens ankles in the 1910's. Lagerfeld dared to show the knee, in a Chanel suit. One of the most beautiful recreations was a simple long shirt - waist style dress, constructed with flat pleats from shoulder to hem, fastened down the centre front with large flat mother-of-pearl buttons.

Chanel's legacy is being brilliantly served by Karl Lagerfeld. At first Lagerfeld's new collections were criticised but now journalists can hardly wait to photograph and present them.



Chanel outfits, Karl Lagerfeld - Plate 21

Thus the legend not only persists, it lives! Chanel is now an empire with Haute Couture lines, ready-to-wear lines, perfumes, cosmetics and accessories. The name Chanel is now a legend, her name lives on through the talent of Karl Lagerfeld. Chanel is the story of success. It has been modernised for the 1990's woman; due to the ingenuity of Karl Lagerfeld. He recognised the potential of Chanel's label and exploited it to the full. In some cases, this may be perceived as mockery but he uses Chanel's trademarks and logos in an updated and witty way. I feel whether the Couture in itself makes money it is not significant, Chanel's ready-to-wear (filtered down Couture) and its many other lines will continue to thrive and carry the name of Chanel into the next century.



Chanel Symbols - Plate 22



Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld - Plate 23



Valentino and Model - Plate 24

Valentino

Valentino the Couturier is a traditionalist by nature, his creations are enriched by exquisite craftsmanship. Every stitch is laboriously handworked. Valentino attended art school in Milan and studied drawing in Paris. His first job was working for the Couturier, Jean Desses. Valentino was quoted by Vogue in 1968 as saying "Desses was a wonderful school for me. I stayed there for 5 years. I learned everything, how to drape a dress, how to cut, how to hang the cloth for proportion". Valentino's designs are classic, he uses few gimmicks and his designs subtly change from season to season. Valentino set up his own business in 1959. He launched his first collection in Rome. This collection was bursting with ideas but appeared confused. Two seasons later he showed in Florence with this collection he earned much prestige. Valentino turned the limelight from Paris to Italy. During the 1960's Valentino became accepted as a brilliant Haute Couture designer. In 1968 he launched the 'White Collection'. People were amused and surprised that a designer would make a collection entirely in white, it was a great success. Following the show in 1968 Valentino launched his ready-to-wear collections and opened boutiques worldwide.

Valentino has many an illustrious clientele who purchase his clothes and it was through Jackie (Kennedy) Onassis, one of his favourite clients, that he became acknowledged, first when she was captured on camera wearing a red Valentino outfit at the opening of Expo 1967.



Brocade Jacket in Valentino's studio - Plate 25

Valentino remained true to his profession even through the 'hippy syndrome' of the 1960's when clothes were less formal due to a post-war climate, when experimentation of shock value seemed all too evident.

"Those hippies in their rags are only something to laugh at, I believe only in high fashion." (Valentino 1968)

Thus the spectacle and shock so prevalent in the Couture shows of this era inspired him to inject fantasy without compromising the traditional Couturier's mould in which he worked. From 1965 onwards he developed a more theatrical approach to fabric and the use of materials. He was influenced by the east and transported his inspiration through his designs e.g. the huge legged pyjamas and turbans. However, Valentino's creations would never cross the border into costume. His designs are the essence of Haute Couture, in a traditional sense. Brocade coats, hand printed chiffon, beaded jackets, sequins tops and feathered hems. The workmanship is superb, the result is sheer luxury.

Valentino is a Couturier from the 'old school'. Every design starts with hundreds of sketches. Valentino draws continuously, certain ideals will be chosen and then developed, drawings are discussed, at this stage many are discarded. A more finished plan will be drawn up by him or his assistant, Romy Goldwin. Fabric will then be draped on a model who will move around to display how the fabric reacts on a person.

"Movement is very important. The first thing I ask a model to do when I am working on a dress is to move, walk, lean. I need to see how it will wear. If a dress moves well, it is a success." (Valentino 1989)

Valentino is a true perfectionist, when Valentino is satisfied with the drape, a toile (a version of the garment cut from gauze) will be made and discussed and altered if necessary. Then the garment is cut and made by a multitude of expert workers, seamstresses, artists, cutters, pleaters and pressers will make the finished garment. A garment can take up to 80 hours to construct, hours of quilting, applique, embroidery, measuring and stitching entirely by hand. Valentino has 6 laboratories, each specialising in a different type of dress - day, evening, heavy or light, plain or embroidered. When a customer has chosen a garment from the Couture collection it will be reconstructed especially to her requirements.

Is this ritual a dying art? Valentino continues to work in the traditional mode. It is claimed that the number of people who are Couture customers has been reduced to 300 people and the numbers are still falling in the present climate. But there is life after recession, but as the old phrase goes 'what goes around comes around'. Valentino believes

"Haute Couture is always there, it's not like ready-to-wear, where we have to achieve the maximum and send it to boutiques all over the world. People never stop buying Haute Couture, never stop wearing it. Because people don't see ladies in the street wearing a \$20,000 suit, they think it doesn't exist anymore.

It's not true. If a woman can afford an Haute Couture dress, it's a privilege, a joy, like buying a beautiful piece of furniture. Because it has been made expressly for her, it is perfectly comfortable, full of glamour, sex appear and charisma." (Valentino)



VALENTINO

Embroidered sequin bodice attached to silk velvet skirt, and silk chiffon pareo, by Valentino, Piazza Mignanelli 22, 00187, Rome. All fabric by Ghioldi. Scent: Vendetta pour femme

Dress, Valentino, 1994 - Plate 26



RALPH LAUREN

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Ralph Lauren, New Couture - Plate 27

Ralph Lauren

Ralph Lauren is a designer who has one of the biggest names on the American front of Haute Couture. Although his name would not automatically be connected with Haute Couture, his direction may hold the future for the survival of Haute Couture during the 1990's and the direction it may take in the next century.

"A leather t-shirt is ready-to-wear but it could be coutured too, the lines have definitely blurred." (Christian Lacroix, 1993)

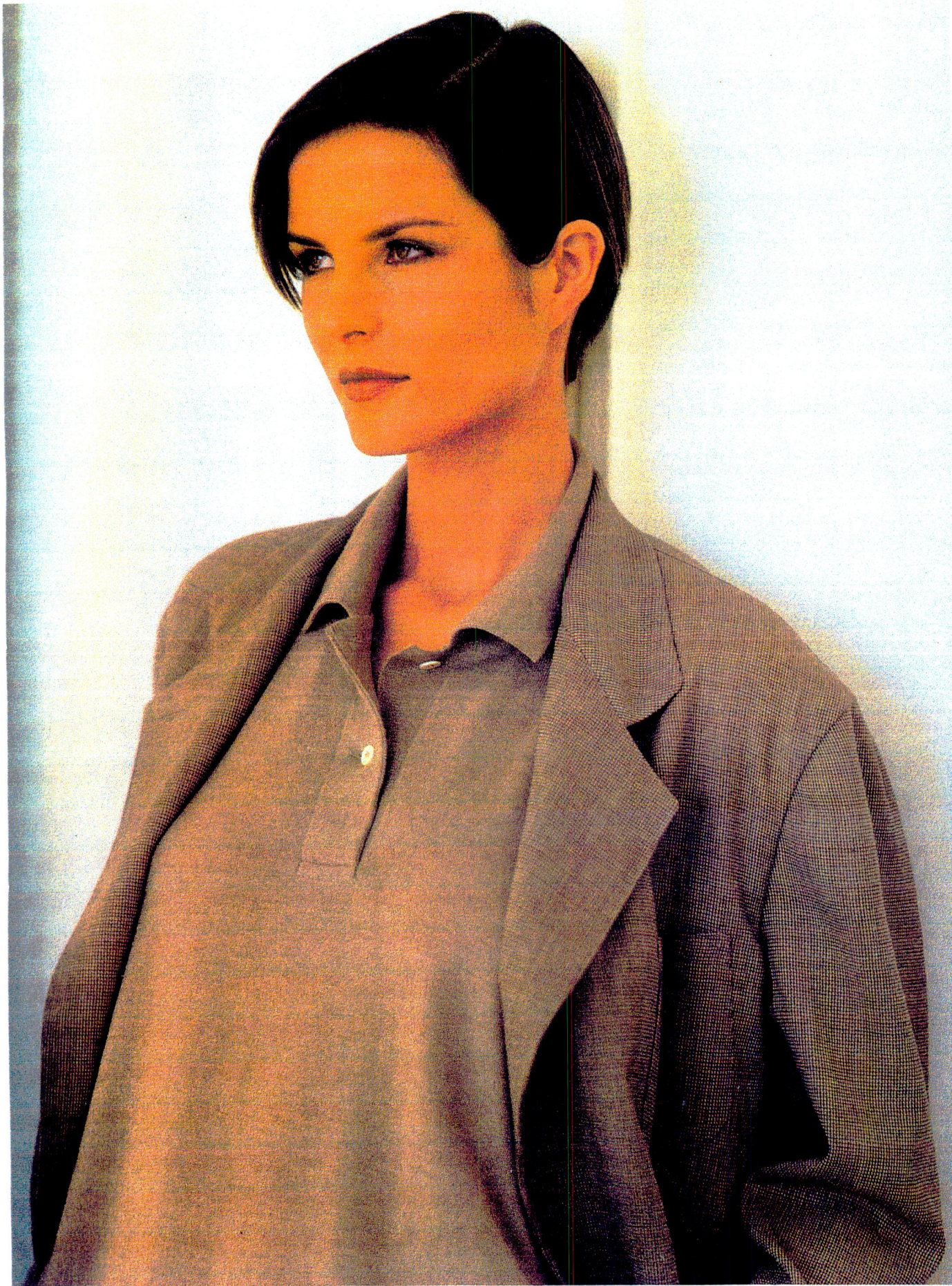
This is the opinion of many, 'de-luxe' ready-to-wear may become Couture in the next century, a more causal approach to Couture.

Lauren has no formal design training, however, he studied business. He began his design career in 1967, when he persuaded a menswear firm to handle his neck tie designs, establishing the Polo neck wear division. The ties were unique, exceptionally wide, handmade in opulent silks. Lauren was then contracted to design the 'Polo Line' of mens clothing for Norman Hilton with whom in 1968 he established 'Polo' as a separate company producing a total wardrobe for men. 'Polo' was created to produce very understated mens clothes, combining English taste with American and business acumen flair. In 1971 Lauren introduced finely tailored shirts for women and in 1972 an entire ready-to-wear collection of sophisticated separates in fabrics such as English flannels, Paris tweeds, silk, cashmere and camel hair.

He went on to establish 'Polo's Boys Wear' followed by 'Western Wear', Ralph Lauren for girls and then a less expensive mens line called 'Chaps', 'Polo University Club' and a rugged outdoor collection called 'Rough Wear'. His collections have a very relaxed impression. His label also incorporates mens robes, swimwear, furnishings, leather accessories, furs, scarves, perfumes, cosmetics, skincare products, luggage, sheets, towels, blankets, tablewear and accessories. Lauren has also created costumes for film e.g the leading man in 'The Great Gatsby' in 1973 and for Woody Allen and Diane Keating in 'Annie Hall'.

Lauren has spent the last quarter of a century shaping an American ideal of what could be. Lauren has defined; even created a lifestyle. This is a feat unmatched by any other designer of his generation. Though grounded in an idealised America, his vision has universal appeal. His clothes use classic silhouettes in superb fabrics with fine workmanship. These project an image of being well bred and extend confidence with an offhand luxury.

Lauren's clothes appeal particularly to the American customer because, through his clothes, he is creating an identity, a history which Americans lack. For example 'Polo Western Wear' in 1979 Lauren created a sense of deep nostalgia. Although there was very little design innovation in this range, it was hugely successful with American men and women, as well as many other parts of the world. Lauren has established his style firmly in the public eye. His customers have found his clothes relevant to their way of life.



Ralph Lauren, Casual Elegance - Plate 28

This is the key to his success. Lauren's methods mirror the theories of Gabrielle Chanel, Chanel created a style that was suitable for the lifestyles of the women who wore her clothes, Chanel may be regarded as a stylist. She created a look that was casual, suiting the modern needs at that time. Lauren is creating a style for the 1990's. The success of a designer/Couturier depends (as I have said earlier) on his ability to foresee change and move with the times.

"I have always felt clothes should be a part of life, but a back-drop. There is a sensibility about a woman who is always stylish but never fashionable - Catherine Hepburn, Audrey Hepburn, Garbo. It's never the woman who wore the big fluffy gown at the party." (Ralph Lauren, 1993)

There are some who do not agree with Lauren's concept

"I don't like country fashion and I don't like this Western look. He represents all that I detest in fashion. He appeals to people who want to hide in the past and are afraid of the future." (Pierre Berge, Chairman of Yves Saint Laurent)

But Lauren is the success story of the 1990's. He has a multi million dollar corporation and his business is growing unlike many in the present economic climate. Lauren offers uncluttered glamour, wonderful tailoring and an understated elegance for the 1990's woman or man.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject.

2. The second part is a detailed description of the methods used in the study.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and a list of references.

5. The fifth part is a list of figures and tables.

6. The sixth part is a list of appendices.

7. The seventh part is a list of footnotes.

8. The eighth part is a list of acknowledgments.

9. The ninth part is a list of abbreviations.

10. The tenth part is a list of symbols.

11. The eleventh part is a list of units.

12. The twelfth part is a list of definitions.

13. The thirteenth part is a list of terms.

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16. The sixteenth part is a list of units.

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18. The eighteenth part is a list of terms.

19. The nineteenth part is a list of abbreviations.

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23. The twenty-third part is a list of terms.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a list of abbreviations.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a list of symbols.

"The greatest compliment is having Woody Allen wear my clothes. He doesn't want to make a fashion statement. You look at Woody and say 'that's Woody genius, artist, aesthete and American' I admire people who never look like they try to hard." (Ralph Lauren, 1993)

Jean Paul Gaultier

In Paris, Jean Paul Gaultier was France's most successful new Avant-Garde designer. His shows always include some 'guaranteed to shock' themes. He was interested in fashion from an early age. At 17 he sent some design sketches to Cardin for whom he worked as a design assistant for 2 years, he also spent short periods at Esterel and Patou after which he went freelance in 1976.

Gaultier has rejected his traditional Couture training and earned himself the nickname 'L'enfant terrible'. He has become the bad boy of fashion, using his considerable dressmaking and tailoring skills to produce irreverent send-ups of the fashion establishment. He uses unusual juxtapositions of fabrics and his shapes are unexpected and usually witty e.g. grey lace layered over voluminous grey wool knits, over scaled coats, over tiny vests, cropped above the waist. His extreme outfits are usually backed up with a good selection of more wearable clothes. These may often be toned down, modified adaptations of his wider themes.

Jean Paul Gaultier is yet another breed of Couturier, he is outrageous, he designs witty and often shocking designs. He appeals to outrageous personalities such as Madonna who publicised his conical corset. Jean Paul Gaultier has put the fun back into clothes, he plays on wit. He could be compared to Elsa Schiaparelli who in the 1920's and 1930's shocked people with her witty surrealist designs.

Ring leaders, top:
Complice circa
1992 – stars and
stripes
predominate on
lion-tamer
leathers,
ringmaster suits
and frothy
feminine skirts.
Wear and tear,
right: Jean Paul
Gaultier's bridal
headdress for the
marriage of
convenience



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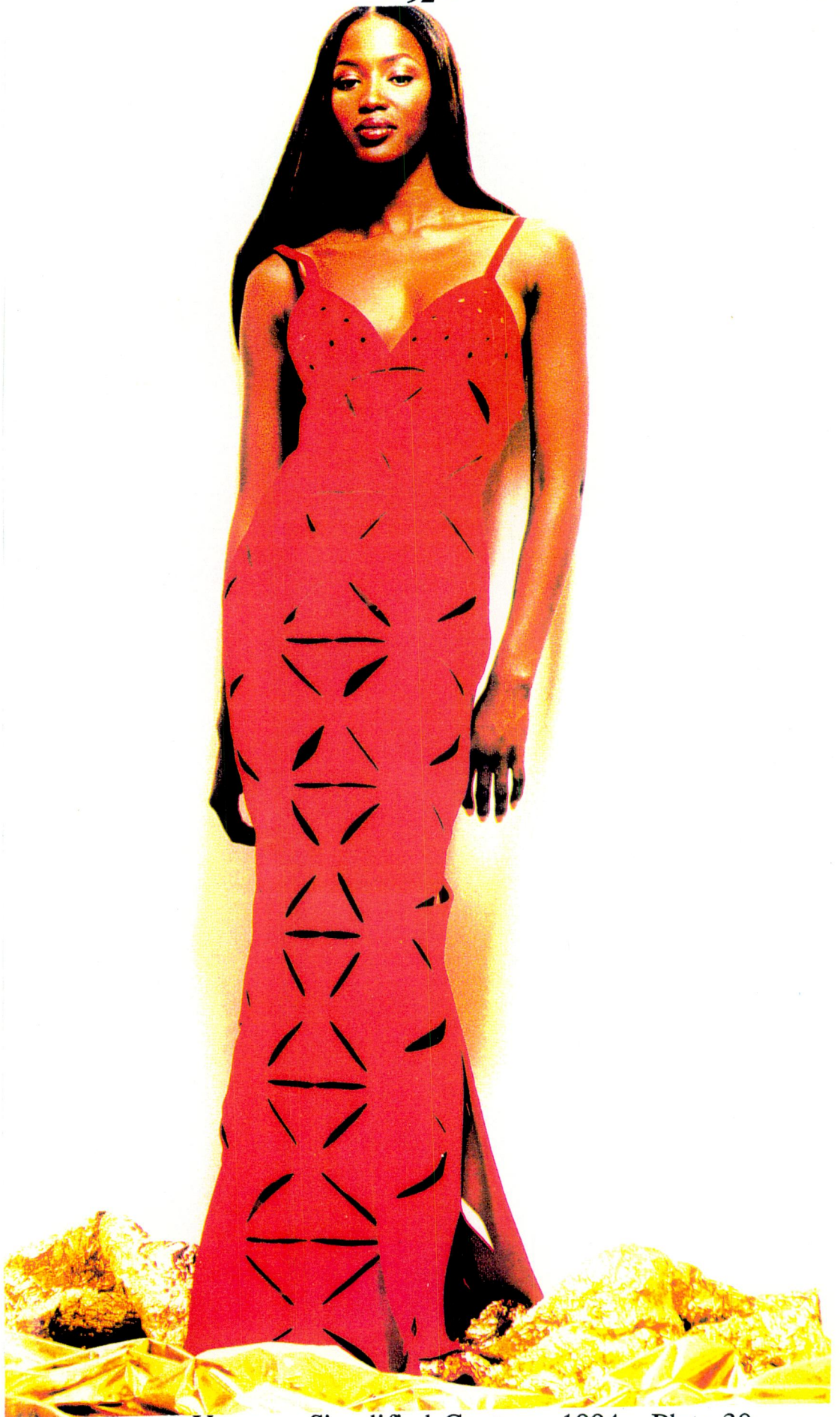
*at Yohji Yam
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– FOR SUI

Outragious outfit, Jean Paul Gaultier, 1993
Plate 29

Jean Paul Gaultier is yet another type of designer in this diverse climate. He is an idea maker, a creative talent, through his designs he questions the norm, the traditional values that have been set. For example, in 1992 his wedding outfit for a 'marriage of convenience' with a headdress consisting of a contraption with earphones and 5 toilet rolls attached to the top (see plate 30). One wonders is he ahead of his time or just out of this world? His designs often have little relevance where comfort is involved.

Has Gaultier created a new art of Couture? Couture afterall is the idea maker, the leader for others to copy. Couture is unrestricted by the bounds that fashion holds. Maybe these are just the novelty show stoppers, a fad 'here today, gone tomorrow'. However, Gaultier has very successful ready-to-wear lines, which are still outrageous but wearable. He has also diversified into perfumes, accessories and childrens clothing.



Dress, Versace, Simplified Couture, 1994 - Plate 30

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

This thesis has traced the development of Haute Couture from its earliest days, through various crises and onto its present state of being. Couture has developed and matured since it opened its doors with Charles Frederick Worth. Through examining its history, there are similarities concerning how it deals with crises and adapts to meet modern day demands. Modern appears to be the key word. Couture has become a modern business, it has to deal with the problems of the modern world, it has to change to meet new demands to ensure its survival in whatever form that may be.

After examining Haute Couture's history, it seems that each crisis Couture encountered enhanced its existence and development. Practicality and comfort are elements that became more important with each progression. Poiret changed attitudes by abolishing the corset. Chanel created clothes that were comfortable, the look was one of uncluttered glamour. Chanel suited the needs of women and predicted the change in attitude following the first World War. Changing with the times was the key to her phenomenal success. Dior also sensed the need for change. Following the second World War, he predicted an urgency in the prevailing climate, women returning to a more feminine silhouette. Dior created the 'New Look' which women adored. Although he retreated into an old mode by once again corsetting the female figure. This may be seen as a step backwards in the sense that Poiret and Chanel among many had liberated women through their designs.

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However, Dior's 'New Look' was a tremendous success, as he predicted the need once again for change as a counter reaction to the harsh realities of war.

So it is clear that every crisis and social upheaval has affected the Haute Couture industry. Each reaction resulted in a counteraction, but this did not result in the failing of Haute Couture. Instead of being a hindrance, such crises were, in fact, stepping stones in the development of Haute Couture and its evolution. Couture modernised itself, the image and ideals within the Couture network have changed throughout its history and it has continued to survive.

The question is, how will Couture evolve in this present climate - one of major economic recession worldwide, will it remain faithful to the Haute Couture traditions of the past as it enters an uncertain future?

The trends seem to lie in making cutbacks. In 1993 la Chambre de Syndicate changed some of the outmoded laws governing Haute Couture, which at present require just 10 skilled workers and to show 50 outfits a year, they may also present their collections on video instead of live catwalk shows.

These rules may seem unimportant, but to the Couturier they are vital. Such changes thus free capital which otherwise would have been tied up in the creation of garments. This sets the platform for this new view of the future direction of Haute Couture. Haute Couture seems to be developing into a modern business e.g. The House of Ralph Lauren.

I believe from the evidence of history and current Haute Couture that Couture will continue, but it will diversify into different schools of thought. Few Couture houses still maintain the true traditions of Couture as it was. Yet Couturiers such as Valentino, Dior, Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent continue to uphold the traditional values in Haute Couture. They continue to design for a handful of faithful clients, creating beautiful, original, hand crafted garments. It has been accepted that Couture lines may exist at a loss but ready-to-wear and diffusion lines (which have filtered down from Haute Couture) continue to sell and just as important the limitless amounts of perfumes and accessories licensed under the designer label. Ultimately, extravagance has been pared down, Couture has sensed the need for change, the fashion has yet again emerged into a minimalist phase, obvious statements of luxury have been toned down.

"This is new Couture, its called undressing the dressing, who needs traditional luxury fabrics, we need fabric like wool to change the lady like image of culture." (Karl Lagerfeld)

This attitude is upheld by many designers, it mirrors the situation of World War I when fashions became discreet and minimal.

"Couture has to reflect the world we live in. If its just to show incredible things it will die." (Christian Lacroix)

It has to change, to be modern today means to do less. There has to be total discipline and sobriety. I call it subterranean luxe." (Emanuel Ungaro)

Couture has simplified its image for the 1990's. It has reacted to these harsh times with sobriety, flamboyance and extravagance is passe, simplicity is the key. This is the direction Haute Couture is taking. Ralph Lauren seems to be taking the lead. His designs can be categorised as de luxe ready-to-wear. As mentioned earlier, Lacroix believes that there is little difference Haute Couture and de luxe ready-to-wear during the 1990's. this is the direction Couture seems to be taking, it seems to be compromising its traditional fundamentals, but this is history repeating itself. In times of recession Couture must adhere to ensure its survival. However, recessions end, the climate will change, as before money will once again become available to spend on luxuries as it has done throughout history. Haute Couture, I believe, will thrive once again, maybe not in its original outdated mode but as an updated version, meeting the modern day demands. Hopefully, the recession will not continue to haunt the remainder of the decade in which case Couture may slip into the de luxe ready-to-wear and the Couture craftsmanship may be lost.

"The lines have definitely blurred, these days women wear them together. But one cannot diminish the other, we still need the Couture to make people dream. Life is so mediocre and flat but if you don't push people to dream, they lower their standards. Consider Couture the fantasy food." (Christian Lacroix)



Dress, Christian Dior, Couture, 1994 - Plate 31

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