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**IN AMERICA  
AN ANTHOLOGY  
OF FASHION**

**THE  
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The American Wing Galleries

# **In America**

## **An Anthology of Fashion**

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## **In America An Anthology of Fashion**

*In America: An Anthology of Fashion* explores defining moments in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American fashion. Following earlier exhibitions in the Museum's French and English historical interiors—*Dangerous Liaisons* (2004) and *AngloMania* (2006)—this presentation centers around the complex and layered histories of the American period rooms, which provide curated windows into over three hundred years of domestic life.

Within the rooms are a series of focused narratives that reflect larger developments, such as the emergence of an identifiable American style and the rise of the named designer as an individual recognized for their distinct creative vision. In this way, *Anthology* also provides a historical grounding for the companion exhibition *In America: A Lexicon of Fashion*—currently on view in the Anna Wintour Costume Center (Galleries 980 and 981)—which offers an expansive reflection on defining qualities of fashion in the United States.

The installations take the form of cinematic vignettes that enliven the stories and highlight the intimate and immersive aspects of the rooms. These fictional tableaux were created by nine film directors: Radha Blank, Janicza Bravo, Sofia Coppola, Julie Dash, Tom Ford, Regina King, Martin Scorsese, Autumn de Wilde, and Chloé Zhao. Seven “case studies” offer in-depth forensic analyses of individual costumes that function as connecting threads. Together, they comprise an anthology that challenges and complicates received histories, offering a more nuanced and less monolithic reading of American fashion, and of American culture more broadly.

The displays are augmented by props selected by the film directors.

## **Coat worn by George Washington**

American, ca. 1780–1800

Brown wool broadcloth

Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, Virginia, Gift of Mrs. C. B. Keferstein, 1930

This coat was originally worn by George Washington, possibly at his presidential inauguration on April 30, 1789. It is made of a brown wool broadcloth that was likely produced by the Hartford Woolen Manufactory.

*image description:*

a line drawing of a coat with a circular highlight showing the brown wool cloth

The Hartford Woolen Manufactory was the first well-documented U.S. factory to weave textiles that competed with imported woolens from England. It was founded in 1788 by Jeremiah Wadsworth and Peter Colt.

In 1789 Wadsworth launched an advertising campaign in major newspapers across several cities.

The ads extoll the factory's products and link the wearing of American-made cloth with patriotism.

*image caption:*

*Jeremiah Wadsworth and His Son Daniel*, by John Trumbull, 1784. Oil on canvas. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford

*image description:*

a man with light skin tone in a powdered wig sitting at a table with books and papers, one open on his lap, with his son standing at his side, arms on his father's shoulder

George Washington saw ads about the Hartford fabric. He may have seen published letters like this one, in which a "Philadelphia Mechanic" suggests that the president wear American-made cloth at the upcoming inauguration, the first in the nation's history.

*image description:*

an eighteenth-century newspaper clipping highlighting sections about "American manufactures" and "American-manufactured cloth"

On January 29, 1789, Washington wrote to his friend General Knox in New York:

“Having learnt from an Advertisement in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, that there were superfine American Broad Cloths to be sold at No. 44 in Water Street, I have ventured to trouble you with the Commission of purchasing enough to make me a suit of Cloaths. As to the colour, I shall leave it altogether to your taste.”

*image caption:*

*George Washington*, by Gilbert Stuart, begun 1795. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

*image description:*

a portrait of George Washington, wearing a powdered wig and facing the viewer

On February 19, 1789, Knox wrote to Washington about cloth from Hartford.

*image description:*

a letter in cursive handwriting with the date written across the top, above a letterhead logo, and sections about cloth amounts, color, and cost highlighted

The directors of the Hartford Woolen Manufactory must have learned that Washington was interested in their product. On March 23, 1789, he received a letter and a gift of fabric from Daniel Hinsdale, the agent for the company. Perhaps this was the fine brown broadcloth of the inauguration garment.

*image description:*

a letter in cursive handwriting with a section about a gift of fabric highlighted

It is believed that the suit was adorned with gilt buttons decorated with eagles, created by New York City engraver William Rollinson. None have survived, but they may have looked something like this button from Mount Vernon, his historic home.

*image description:*

a line drawing of a suit cuff with a button that has an engraved eagle highlighted

On April 30, 1789, at Federal Hall in New York, Washington was sworn in as the first president of the United States.

His appearance was well received.

*Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, May 8, 1789:

“We hear from New-York, that our beloved and illustrious President was proclaimed in a Suit of Broadcloth manufactured in the State of Connecticut. We hope, from this laudable Example in the first and best of Men, that we shall soon see Industry and Economy fashionable in the United States. National Dresses and Manners, as well as Principles, are absolutely necessary to our becoming an independent People.”

*image caption:*

Engraving showing Washington’s inauguration, April 30, 1789. “Federal Hall, The Seat of Congress,” by Amos Doolittle, 1790

*image description:*

a federal-style building with men gathered on the second-floor balcony

Washington's choice of Hartford broadcloth became a lasting symbol of the country's independence and growing prosperity. Even in this print issued for the nation's centennial in 1876, he is depicted in the brown wool suit.

*image caption:*

"The Inauguration of Washington as First President of the United States, April 30th 1789," by Currier & Ives, 1876

*image description:*

men in eighteenth-century clothing gathered around George Washington (in a brown wool suit) with his hand on a bible, with a man in robes to the left gesturing

*CASE STUDY, LEFT SIDE OF GALLERY*

**Brooks Brothers** (American, founded 1818)

**Coat worn by Abraham Lincoln, 1865**

Black wool broadcloth

National Park Service, Ford's Theatre NHS, Washington, D.C.

Brooks Brothers has clothed forty out of forty-six U.S. presidents, including Abraham Lincoln.

*image caption:*

President Abraham Lincoln, August 9, 1863

*image description:*

a photograph of Abraham Lincoln in a dark suit, seated, facing slightly to the right, his left arm on a table

This “great coat” was made for President Lincoln’s second inauguration, which took place on March 4, 1865, during the Civil War. In his inaugural address, Lincoln urged reconciliation: “Let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.”

He wore the same coat on April 14, 1865, the day of his assassination, just weeks away from the end of the war.

*image caption:*

President Abraham Lincoln delivers his second inaugural address in front of the East Front of the U.S. Capitol, March 4, 1865. Photograph by Alexander Gardner.

*image description:*

a large crowd assembled on the steps of a building with tall columns and a large American flag to the right with Abraham Lincoln highlighted in the center reading from a paper in his hands

The silk twill lining is machine-quilted and features hand-embroidered depictions of eagles carrying banners that read, “One Country, One Destiny.” The phrase comes from an 1837 speech given by one of Lincoln’s role models, Senator Daniel Webster. The message was a reminder of the president’s mission to unite Americans in the face of sectarian strife.

The coat was bequeathed by First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln to Alphonse Donn, the president’s favorite doorman. It remained in the Donn family for over a century, and visitors were allowed to cut swatches of

the bloodstained lining as relics. As a result, the coat's left sleeve eventually separated from its body.

*image description:*

a line drawing of a coat, which opens to show an embroidered eagle with a motto, and dotted lines and highlighted areas showing where portions of the left sleeve were removed

A custom archival form helps visually consolidate the fragmented pieces while also supporting the coat from within, preventing creasing and damage to the fragile lining.

*image description:*

a diagram of the coat with colors along the top and the missing portions of the left sleeve

The cutaway area along the coat's proper left shoulder was encased in polyester Stabilitex, a thin, lightweight open-weave fabric. This treatment was performed to limit further deterioration of this damaged area.

Additional conservation focused on protecting the fragile quilted lining. This area was also overlaid with polyester Stabilitex, which provides protection while

still allowing for an unobstructed view of both the quilting and the hand-embroidered motif.

The fragility of the coat makes its public display rare. A five-year rest in dark, stable museum storage follows any period of exhibition. While the original is on view here, a faithful replica is currently installed at the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site in Washington, D.C.

*image description:*

the previous line drawing and highlight of the embroidered eagle in the lining of the coat

## **Brooks Brothers** (American, founded 1818)

### **Coat, 1857–65**

Light brown wool broadcloth

Historic New Orleans Collection

This Brooks Brothers “great coat” was purchased by a wealthy New Orleanian named William Newton Mercer as livery for an enslaved man. Brooks Brothers is often credited, including in its own promotional materials, with democratizing fashion by introducing ready-to-wear suiting to the clothing market.

A more accurate statement would be that Brooks Brothers is the last surviving of several clothing companies to innovate the wholesale production of affordable ready-made menswear in the United States. This innovation was born out of the need to outfit free and enslaved workers who did not have the time or luxury to be fitted for bespoke garments.

*image description:*

a lightly colored nineteenth-century illustration of a store on a city street with many people in front of the store or passing by, with a sign on a building reading “Brook’s Clothing Store” and another reading “Henry Brooks & Co.”

This 1865 list of expenditures shows two purchases by Mercer from Brooks Brothers, though it is unclear if they include the coat displayed here.

Mercer was born in Baltimore in the late eighteenth century and studied at the University of Pennsylvania before enlisting as a surgeon in the Army. He eventually settled in Natchez, Mississippi, where he married into a wealthy enslaving planter family. Over the course of his life, he became extraordinarily wealthy and boasted a large disposable income.

*image description:*

a ledger with several columns filled in with cursive handwriting and two areas in the left column highlighted to show “Brooks Bros.”

The coat’s custom buttons are emblazoned with falcons, representing the falcon on the Mercer family crest.

*image description:*

a line drawing of a coat with a circular highlight of a button with a falcon engraving

This silver tray from Mercer's household also has an "M" for Mercer and a falcon for the family crest.

*image description:*

a falcon engraved over a stylized "M" on a silver background

The label reads "Brooks Brothers / Broadway / Corner Grand New York," referencing the brand's second brick-and-mortar location in present-day Soho.

*image description:*

another line drawing of a coat with a circular highlight of the label at the neck

This cutaway coat was also purchased by Mercer for an enslaved person in his household, most likely a child or adolescent, given its small size. This coat and the one on display were found in the attic of a descendant of Mercer in Saint Francisville, Louisiana, and were donated to the Historic New Orleans Collection.

*image description:*

a beige coat with the abdominal area cut away

This “list of negroes” from June 10, 1865, inventories formerly enslaved people who remained on or returned to Mercer’s four plantations. Created more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation and two months after the official end of the Civil War, the list enumerates individuals who were legally free, but treated as if they were still enslaved—note that 267 formerly enslaved people are catalogued alongside 554 livestock. This is evidence of the amount of wealth that Mercer amassed.

*image description:*

a ledger page with four columns of names in cursive handwriting

case study by Dr. Jonathan Michael Square

*IN SLANTED CASE TO RIGHT*

## **Possibly Maria Theresa Baldwin Hollander**

(American, 1820–1885)

### **Abolition quilt, ca. 1853**

Blue silk plain weave embroidered with polychrome silk floss, silk chenille thread, and metal thread; applied white silk plain weave with portrait of ink and embroidery; border of red and white silk plain weave

Historic New England, Haverhill, Massachusetts, Loan from Mrs. Benjamin F. Pitman

At the 1853 World's Fair in New York, fashion retailer Maria Hollander (highlighted in the adjacent Haverhill Room) displayed this quilt alongside children's clothing that her business designed and sold. Thirty-one finely embroidered stars—representing the states in the Union at the time—encircle a portrait of George Washington and a poem admonishing the nation's first president for furthering the institution of slavery in the United States, describing it as a “monstrous, hideous blot” on the country and on Washington himself. Hollander likely conceived the quilt's design, though the identity of the embroiderer is unknown.

Needlework, often sold at antislavery fairs, was one of the key ways that women participated in the abolitionist movement.

*THROUGH DOORWAY TO LEFT OF CENTER CASE*

## **Baltimore Dining Room**

Baltimore, 1810–11

Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.101.1)

Crafted in the Neoclassical style popular in early nineteenth-century America, this dining room originally stood in a Baltimore home at 915 East Pratt Street belonging to merchant and shipowner Henry Craig (1767–1832). Around 1810, when the house was built, Baltimore was emerging as a major Atlantic port and had become the third-largest city in the United States. With access to agricultural products and timber from the interior of the country and imports from Europe and Asia, Craig and his counterparts grew wealthy from the steady transatlantic trade. As Baltimore's economy flourished, an active community of artisans developed there. Skilled cabinetmakers crafted elegant mahogany furniture, examples of which are shown in the room.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, American homes commonly held a dedicated room for dining,

used in conjunction with a formal parlor for entertaining guests. These specialized rooms were usually outfitted with an expandable dining table, a suite of chairs, and a sideboard for the storage and presentation of a variety of silver implements and serving pieces. Elegant tableware was most often imported from abroad.

## **American Fashion and French Style**

By the early nineteenth century, Baltimore was an artistically and commercially vibrant city, offering its citizens access to a range of fashionable imports, from fine tableware to elegant dress goods. As in other urban centers in the United States, the latest styles in Paris and London influenced local trends.

In France, a revived interest in classical antiquity resulted in the popularization of dresses with narrow silhouettes and high waistlines. Characteristic of this French Neoclassical style, the evening gown highlighted at the center of the room was worn by Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte (1785–1879), daughter of a prosperous Baltimore merchant and briefly the wife of Jérôme Bonaparte, younger brother of Napoleon.

Most fashion-conscious American women modified Parisian styles for greater simplicity or modesty.

Bonaparte, however, enthusiastically embraced them without adaptations. That she was often critiqued by her peers for her low-cut gowns reflected Americans' conflicting views about French tastes, which suggested elegance and sophistication to some, and excess and

indecent to others. Despite this ambivalence, French style continued to provide inspiration in the United States throughout the nineteenth century.

## **Dress**

French, 1804–5

White cotton muslin embroidered with white cotton thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Gifts in memory of Elizabeth N. Lawrence, 1983 (1983.6.1)

## **Dress**

American, 1805–8

White cotton muslin embroidered with white cotton thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Albert Gallatin, 1917 (17.107.3a, b)

## **Dress**

American, 1800–1805

Cream cotton gauze and muslin embroidered with cream cotton thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the Jason and Peggy Westerfield Collection, 1969 (2009.300.3328)

## **Dress**

American, ca. 1809

White cotton muslin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George V. Masselos, in memory of Grace Ziebarth, 1976 (1976.142.1)

## **Autumn de Wilde**

I have grown up as a director and a photographer wandering the hallways of The Met. I have studied minute details in clothing, searched for new characters, discovered color combinations I'd never thought of, and committed to memory an encyclopedia of very dramatic poses. In most museums, we can only see historical costumes perfectly still, in clear boxes. Period rooms stand spotless, safe behind barriers, proudly protecting their treasures. It almost gives the impression that the people who wore these clothes and stared out of these windows were full of grace and humility, romantic to a fault, and walked on air. Maybe that was true of some, but mostly they were terribly human, and being human is a very messy business. Drawing inspiration from early nineteenth-century caricatures and early nineteenth-century gossip, my team has sculpted facial expressions, poses, food, pets, and vermin to bring to (still) life two stories. In the Baltimore Dining Room, the snubbed

socialite Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte, who detests prudish American fashion and dares to show the fullness of her breasts (as well as the occasional nipple), waits in vain for Jérôme Bonaparte to make their son a French royal.

Audio: “Malbrough s’en va-t-en guerre,” performed by Monsieur Doudou et ses petits chouponous, 2015

*THROUGH DOORWAY TO RIGHT*

## **Benkard Room**

Petersburg, Virginia, 1811

Rogers Fund, 1916 (16.161)

Petersburg's location at the headwaters of the Appomattox River made it ideal for processing and transporting goods in the early nineteenth century. Much of the cotton, tobacco, and metal produced by enslaved labor in southern Virginia and northern North Carolina passed through the port town. The architectural elements of this room come from the first-floor parlor of a stately brick home built there in 1811 for pharmacist William Moore (died 1835), who had emigrated from Ireland in the 1790s. The decorative carved woodwork and architectural ornament offer a local interpretation of the style of Neoclassicism originally popularized in Britain in the latter half of the eighteenth century by Scottish architects Robert and James Adam. The year Moore built his house, he served as mayor of Petersburg. However, probably due to financial setbacks, he only occupied the house for three years before selling it.

Today, the room bears the name of the collector Bertha King Benkard (1877–1945), whose friends donated her collection of fine New York City–made early nineteenth-century furniture to the Museum after her death. In 1980, the Petersburg room was renamed in Benkard’s honor and furnished with her collection instead of with the type of locally made objects that might have appeared in Moore’s Virginia home.

## **American Fashion and British Style**

The modern role of fashion designer—someone who conceives and disseminates original ideas linked to their name and reputation—had not yet emerged in the early nineteenth century. Individuals played a direct role in designing their own clothing, coordinating with dressmakers and tailors to create garments based on their personal preferences. In both architecture and dress, American tastes were shaped by the British example. That influence is evident in the built elements of this parlor from Petersburg, Virginia, a city where many residents maintained close ties to Great Britain. In fashion, it translated as a general inclination toward simplicity, along with the emulation of specific styles.

The blue silk dress illustrates the puffed sleeves and subtle trimming typical of British women's fashion in the late 1810s. It also reflects the popularity of a shade of blue favored by the Duchess of Clarence, who in 1818 married the future William IV. London periodicals noted the prevalence of "Clarence blue" in fashionable dress, a pronouncement that was reprinted in American newspapers. The original

wearer may have selected this style based on published descriptions, imported fashion plates, or guidance given by a dressmaker on the latest trends from England.

## **Dress**

American, ca. 1818

Beige silk crepe trimmed with beige silk charmeuse

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1980 (1980.259.a)

## **Dress**

American, ca. 1818

Blue silk twill

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 2016 (2016.181)

## **Ensemble**

American, ca. 1820

Tailcoat of navy wool broadcloth; trousers of light beige cotton plain weave; vest of cream silk plain weave striped with green and pink silk thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1976 (1976.235.3a, b, d)

## **Suit**

British, 1810–20

Black wool broadcloth

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of the family of Thomas Coutts, 1908 (08.187.1–3)

## **Autumn de Wilde**

I have grown up as a director and a photographer wandering the hallways of The Met. I have studied minute details in clothing, searched for new characters, discovered color combinations I'd never thought of, and committed to memory an encyclopedia of very dramatic poses. In most museums, we can only see historical costumes perfectly still, in clear boxes. Period rooms stand spotless, safe behind barriers, proudly protecting their treasures. It almost gives the impression that the people who wore these clothes and stared out of these windows were full of grace and humility, romantic to a fault, and walked on air. Maybe that was true of some, but mostly they were terribly human, and being human is a very messy business. Drawing inspiration from early nineteenth-century caricatures and early nineteenth-century gossip, my team has sculpted facial expressions, poses, food, pets, and vermin to bring to (still) life two stories. In the Benkard Room, a quiet night of

playing cards has suddenly gone wrong. What secret was revealed, how much wine was drunk, and how does that rat always outsmart the cat?

Audio: George Frideric Handel's "Ombra mai fù" (1738), performed by Andreas Scholl and Akademie Für Alte Musik Berlin, 2009.

*THROUGH DOORWAY, CASE STUDY, CENTER OF GALLERY*

**Possibly Elizabeth Keckley** (American,  
1818–1907)

**Dress worn by Mary Todd Lincoln, 1861–62;**  
altered late 19th century

Ivory silk taffeta with moire stripes, brocaded with  
purple and black silk thread

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History,  
Washington, D.C.

Originally created for Mary Todd Lincoln in the early 1860s, this dress features a striking textile. Its delicately woven floral sprigs on an ivory taffeta ground enhanced by shimmering moiré stripes reflect the First Lady's taste for youthful motifs.

This portrait shows the gown in its original state: the low-cut evening bodice was embellished with a wide lace bertha encircling the shoulders. The dress was significantly altered at a later date.

*image caption:*

Portrait of Mary Todd Lincoln by Mathew Brady, 1862

*image description:*

a woman with light skin tone in a voluminous gown holding flowers and facing to the right in this old photograph, with a negative version of the image and a line diagram demonstrating how the top of the dress was altered later

As was typical for the period, the garment bears no label identifying its creator. However, it may have been designed by Elizabeth Keckley, a modiste known for her finely crafted fashions. Keckley began working with Lincoln in 1861 and became the First Lady's primary dressmaker during her time in the White House, thus playing a significant role in shaping her public image.

*image caption:*

Portrait of Elizabeth Keckley, ca. 1861

*image description:*

a woman with dark skin tone in a dark dress facing the viewer, her hand on the arm of a chair

Keckley, who was born into slavery in Virginia in 1818, learned sewing skills from her mother at an early age. Through her accomplished dressmaking, she eventually earned enough money to purchase her freedom. After settling in Washington, DC, in 1860, she built a roster of socially prominent clients, including Lincoln.

Keckley was also an activist—founding an organization that supported formerly enslaved people who fled to DC during the Civil War—as well as an author. Her memoir provides insight into a career that is otherwise minimally documented through surviving garments.

*image caption:*

Title spread from Elizabeth Keckley's book *Behind the Scenes*, 1868

*image description:*

a printed spread with a portrait drawing of Elizabeth Keckley facing the viewer on the left-hand page, and the title, author name, subtitle and publisher's name on the right-hand page

*THROUGH DOORWAY ON OTHER SIDE OF PREVIOUS ROOM,  
WITH CASE STUDY TO LEFT*

**Olympe Boisse** (American, born France,  
ca. 1822)

**Evening dress**, ca. 1865

Pink moire silk taffeta trimmed with pink silk taffeta,  
cream cotton lace, and pink silk satin embroidered  
with clear paillettes

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum  
Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of  
the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. H. E. Rifflard, 1932  
(2009.300.a, c, d)

This striking design by New Orleans dressmaker  
Olympe Boisse was made with two bodices—the  
afternoon style on display and an alternate for  
evening illustrated here, with short sleeves and a low-  
cut neckline.

*image description:*

a line drawing of the bodice of a dress

The interior waist tape of the evening bodice bears a gold stamp with Olympe's name and the location of her business on Canal Street.

In the 1860s it was rare for American dressmakers to label their designs. By doing so, Olympe followed the example of French couturier Charles Frederick Worth, who saw labeling as both a promotional tool and akin to an artist's signature.

The inside of the evening bodice also reveals the steps of its construction.

*image description:*

a line drawing of the interior of the bodice, with the gold-stamped name and location of the dressmaker highlighted

Lines of paired pinholes show how the outer fabric and lining were pinned together and treated as a single layer during assembly, a technique sometimes called "flatlining."

Next, the bodice panels were sewn together by hand with cotton thread using a basting stitch, permitting the maker to carefully ease the curved edges together and prevent puckering.

A durable seam was then made over the basting

with a lockstitch sewing machine, using silk for the upper thread and cotton for the lower.

Finally, the cut edges of the bodice panels were joined together with diagonal overcast stitches, giving a neat finish that also limited fraying.

*image description:*

a close-up of the outer fabric showing the sewing, with four pinholes and certain stitches, then the left-hand seam, then stitches in the right seam highlighted

Until the invention of the sewing machine, thread was commonly made of two single yarns plied together in a clockwise direction (known as an S ply).

*image description:*

a diagram showing two yarns together as a thread

The threads in the evening bodice illustrate mid-nineteenth century innovations that helped them withstand the tensions and high speeds of the now widely used machines.

For the silk thread, an additional third yarn and ply reversed to the counterclockwise (or Z) direction

improved durability and prevented the thread from untwisting in the machine.

The six-cord cotton thread, composed of three pairs of yarns plied clockwise (S direction), is fine but very strong. The use of both silk and cotton threads combined the flexibility of the former with the strength of the latter, and was more economical than using silk alone.

*image description:*

a close-up of thicker diagonal yarns against the threads of the bodice, then highlighting a line drawing that demonstrates three yarns together as a thread, then showing six cords of yarn

The wide neckline and narrow waist of the evening bodice were achieved through dramatically curved seams over the chest and back. Baleen boning at most of the seams provided rigidity and prevented the fabric from wrinkling.

*image description:*

a diagram showing several parts of the bodice—center front, center back, and sleeve

Moire silk has a lustrous, organic pattern that reflects light in divergent directions, giving the fabric its characteristic rippled look. It is produced through a finishing technique called calendering, in which fabric is folded in half lengthwise and passed through high-pressure rollers, often with heat and moisture, that irregularly compress some of the threads.

*image description:*

a diagram with the luxurious straps of the bodice, then a close-up demonstrating the folding of the silk fabric

While moire fabric can create eye-catching gowns, its production process leads to conservation challenges. The immense pressure and friction of calendering weakens the silk, which over time can cause it to split and tear, especially along the fold line, as seen on the back of the day bodice.

*image description:*

another close-up of the silk fabric showing splitting along the fold line in the center back

*THROUGH DOORWAY*

## **Richmond Room**

Richmond, Virginia, 1810–11

Gift of Joe Kindig Jr., 1968 (68.137)

The ornate decoration of this space offers a curated suggestion of the early nineteenth-century domestic surroundings of wealthy Americans. The room's most notable original feature—its Caribbean mahogany woodwork—was purchased by lawyer William Clayton Williams (1768–1817) to line the parlor of his Richmond home around 1810. In selecting mahogany for his parlor's paneling and doors, Williams boldly expressed his social status and financial success. The expensive hardwood was imported from the Caribbean and Central America after being harvested in dangerous conditions by enslaved laborers. Williams's wealth and position in society was facilitated by slavery. Records confirm that he enslaved seventeen individuals at his Richmond residence, as well as at least forty other people who worked on his plantation outside the city.

Installed at the Museum more than forty years ago, the room was intended to provide an exceptional setting for furniture in the collection by leading New York City cabinetmakers Duncan Phyfe (1770–1854) and Charles-Honoré Lannuier (1779–1819) rather than to serve as an authentic record of how the Williams family furnished their home. Documents reveal that while they owned mahogany furniture and other luxury goods, their taste was likely somewhat simpler than the scheme presented here.

## **Fannie Criss Payne**

Three designs by Fannie Criss Payne, a leading modiste in the Virginia capital at the turn of the twentieth century, are highlighted in the Richmond Room. The dresses reveal the designer's precise technical skill and refined artistic sensibility. Her expert tailoring and careful composition of embellishments are evident in the ivory wool dress adorned with fine pintucks and lace insets. Exemplifying her virtuoso handling of delicate materials, the dress of ivory crochet lace is enlivened with subtle floral appliqués and narrow bands of filet lace that gracefully outline the figure.

Born in about 1867 to formerly enslaved parents, Criss belonged to a generation of Black Virginians who built their livelihoods following the abolition of slavery in the United States. She established herself as one of Richmond's premier fashion professionals in the face of segregation laws that barred members of the Black community from entrepreneurship. Dressmaking was one of the few occupations accessible to women in this period that offered opportunities for economic

independence and social advancement. It was also increasingly recognized as a creative endeavor, and thus “signing” one’s work with a label became common practice. Criss, like many American dressmakers, stitched a waist tape bearing her name into her garments, a marker of artistic ownership over her designs.

**Fannie Criss Payne** (American, ca. 1867–1942)

**Afternoon dress**, ca. 1905

Ivory silk satin trimmed with pleated ivory silk chiffon, ivory silk lace, and metal-wrapped silk cord

The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia

**Afternoon dress**, ca. 1907

Ivory cotton crochet lace trimmed with ivory cotton filet lace and ivory silk taffeta

The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia

**Day dress**, ca. 1905

Ivory wool challis trimmed with pleated ivory silk chiffon, ivory silk taffeta, ivory silk velvet, silk cord, and ivory silk bobbin lace

The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia

## **Regina King**

I was looking to portray the power and strength Fannie Criss Payne exudes through her awe-inspiring story and exquisite clothing. I placed her in a prosperous and active working situation, during the fitting of a dress for client Ellen Clark Wallace. Wallace is accompanied by a friend, who is also wearing a dress by Criss and is admiring the designer's latest creation. Alongside Wallace is a seamstress, whose presence highlights Criss's employment of other Black women. In the center of the room, we have the extraordinary Fannie Criss Payne, her stance suggesting power and command, expecting to be paid for her time by Wallace's husband. Reimagining the context of Criss's career, I have presented her in one of her own designs—as her own muse, and a muse for her clients. Elements of the room represent Criss's history and future. The trees and butler, dressed in livery, represent her parents' and ancestors' lives as enslaved people. Though Black people at the time

were excluded from most economic opportunities, her apprentice seamstress represents the future of Black success and self-determination.

Audio: Amanda Gorman, Steve Harris, and Regina King reading “& So” and “Call Us,” from Gorman’s poetry collection *Call Us What We Carry* (2021)

Headpieces by Stephen Jones

Projection on mirror: Titus Kaphar’s *Behind the Myth of Benevolence*, 2014, oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

## **Haverhill Room**

Haverhill, Massachusetts, ca. 1805

Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.121)

This room originally served as a parlor in a large, fashionable house built around 1805 for James Duncan Jr. (1756–1822) and his wife, Rebekah (1754–1838), in the town of Haverhill, thirty miles north of Boston. Located on the Merrimack River with direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, Haverhill was an important port for foreign and domestic trade. Duncan grew wealthy as a partner in the shipping and mercantile business begun by his father, James Duncan Sr. (1725–1817), who had emigrated with his family from Ulster, Ireland, in 1729. James Sr. started out modestly as a pack peddler, but by the start of the American Revolution, he owned three ships. It is thought that James Jr. joined him in the flourishing business in 1777.

Designed in the refined Neoclassical style popular at the turn of the nineteenth century, the space features

a delicately carved mantelpiece and woodwork trim decorated with motifs derived from the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome. Although originally a parlor, it is furnished today as a bedroom with New England furniture, and showcases an ornate bedstead once owned by wealthy Salem heiress Elizabeth Derby West (1762–1814) and attributed to famed Boston cabinetmaker Thomas Seymour (1771–1848).

## **Maria Hollander**

The mercantile success of the Duncan family, who originally owned this home, reflects the importance of Massachusetts port cities as centers for retail and trade. Of those cities, the primary fashion hub was Boston, represented here by one of its leading nineteenth-century firms, L. P. Hollander.

Founded in 1848 by Maria Hollander, the business initially specialized in children's clothing and later expanded to menswear and womenswear, opening retail locations in multiple cities. This wedding dress, worn in 1884 by Bostonian Alice Dexter Fay, illustrates the period's high-fashion silhouette, with an extravagant bustled skirt and sweeping train. The sumptuous voided velvet and neatly tailored bodice exemplify the fineness of L. P. Hollander's custom designs.

Maria Hollander leveraged her business success to engage with issues of fundamental importance in her day, including abolition and women's rights. In 1853 she participated in the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in New York, displaying a selection of her children's clothing as well as the abolition quilt shown

nearby, at a time of women's growing prominence in the abolitionist movement. When Hollander later became an advocate for women's suffrage, the activists with whom she allied valued her business experience.

**L. P. Hollander & Co.** (American, founded 1848)  
**Wedding dress, 1884**

Dress of ivory silk satin and ivory silk voided velvet  
trimmed with pearl beads

Collection of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina

## **Radha Blank**

*We Good. Thx!* reasserts Black Women, often uncredited as cultural weavers of the fabric of this country, back into a narrative highlighting our contributions and quest for self-actualization. Maria Hollander commissioned an unknown artist to create a quilt in vibrant reds, whites, and blues, chastising George Washington's stance on slavery. In *We Good. Thx!*, Black folks speak through our OWN quilt—one made within African braiding and beading traditions that are the Black Women signifiers of today. The colors here are inspired by the *Work-Clothes Quilt* (2002) by Mary Lee Bendolph of the Gee's Bend quilters. If Hollander was REALLY 'bout that abolitionist life, she'd know why I projected images of Black Women's hands onto her dress. Hands that, by day, made garments and cleaned White folks' houses and, by night, "caught babies" and conjured African spiritual practices not meant to survive the Middle Passage. *We Good. Thx!* is my tribute to the Conjure

Women, who in this very moment are weaving protective cloaks for Black survival in America.

*Work-Clothes Quilt* © 2022 Mary Lee Bendolph / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Audio: Sound design by Eric Hirsch

*TO RIGHT, PAST MARY TODD LINCOLN CASE STUDY AND  
DOWN STAIRS*

*VISITORS WHO WISH TO AVOID THE STAIRS CAN TURN LEFT,  
THEN LEFT TO THE DOORWAY; OUTSIDE THE DOOR, TURN  
LEFT AND PROCEED DOWN THE RAMP PAST THE ELEVATOR  
TO THE END OF THE HALL, THEN THROUGH THE DOUBLE  
GLASS DOORS WHERE A STAIR LIFT IS AVAILABLE TO  
CONTINUE THE EXHIBITION TO THE RIGHT*

*CASE AT END OF HALL*

*LEFT SIDE OF CASE*

**Madeleine Vionnet** (French, 1876–1975)

**Evening ensemble**, winter 1936

Dress of white silk crepe; belt of gold leather

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

*STATUE IN CENTER IS NOT PART OF EXHIBITION*

*RIGHT SIDE OF CASE*

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)

**Evening ensemble**, 1939

Dress of beige acetate jersey; belt of red suede and silver metal studs

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Claire McCardell, 1949 (C.I.49.37.52a, b)

The innovative Parisian couturiere Madeleine Vionnet avoided conventional pattern pieces that divided the body into sections—front and back or top and bottom. Instead, her fabrics wrap continuously around the body like the drapery of classical sculpture, and are

often cut diagonally on the bias to provide greater elasticity. American designer Claire McCardell frequently translated these principles to her ready-to-wear designs, and in this dress references Vionnet's fluid draping and streamlined forms, using simple rectangles of inherently pliant jersey and thus eliminating the need for complex bias cuts.

*THROUGH DOORWAY TO RIGHT*

## **Shaker Retiring Room**

Mount Lebanon, New York, ca. 1835

Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.187.1)

The Shaker Retiring Room comes from the North Family Dwelling at the Mount Lebanon religious community established in the 1780s by the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, also known as the Shakers. Sprung from a small band of English immigrants who arrived in New York in 1774, the Shakers counted thousands of members by the mid-nineteenth century. They lived by the doctrines of communalism, celibacy, pacifism, self-sacrifice, and gender equality. Following the motto "Hands to work, hearts to God," they created innovative buildings, furniture, and almost everything else needed to sustain the community, viewing the tasks as a form of worship.

A retiring room served as both a bedroom and a place to retreat and "labor for a sense of the gospel, before attending meeting." As in many Shaker interiors, a

pegboard runs around this room to suspend objects from the floor for more efficient storage and daily cleaning routines. The number of hooks and ample storage suggest that several women shared this room, and it would have contained more than one bed. The built-in cupboards, austere furnishings, and stained woodwork reveal three of the most typical characteristics of Shaker design: utility, simplicity, and beauty.

## Claire McCardell

American sportswear of the 1930s paralleled the design tenets of the Shakers: utility, simplicity, and beauty. Pioneering, and primarily female, designers shaped a distinct style unencumbered by the conventions of French couture.

A leading proponent of this movement was Claire McCardell, whose adherence to its principles is reflected in her “Monastic” dress: a bias-cut sack, pleated from neckline to hemline and cinched with adjustable self-fabric ties. Peaking in popularity in the mid-1940s, the garment was first introduced in the fall of 1938 as the American manufacturer Best & Co.’s “Nada Frock,” based on a prototype McCardell had designed for herself. This early iteration featured a separate belt to cinch its unstructured silhouette and was advertised as embodying “the simplicity of really great design and the mobile grace which the modern woman craves.”

McCardell extended the modest aesthetic of her “Nada” and “Monastic” designs to her “Cloister” dress, so named by its eventual manufacturer Folkwear, which

touted it as “a romantic but practical wedding gown for a wartime bride.” Versions of the three styles are displayed here alongside a traditional Shaker costume, whose simple silhouette, durable fabric, and roomy pleated skirt reflect the Shaker sisters’s practical mindset.

## **Ensemble**

American, ca. 1870

Dress of taupe wool-silk plain weave trimmed with beige silk grosgrain and edged with light brown cotton tulle; collar of white cotton plain weave; fichu of ivory silk twill

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. William R. Witherell, 1953 (C.I.53.72.5a–c)

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)  
**Townley Frocks** (American, founded 1929)  
**Wedding dress, 1941**

Ivory wool and rabbit's hair jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Claire McCardell, 1949 (C.I.49.37.8a)

**Claire McCardell** (American 1905–1958)  
**Townley Frocks** (American, founded 1929)  
**“Monastic” dress, 1949**

Brown heather wool jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum  
Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of  
the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Claire McCardell, 1956  
(2009.300.2446)

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)  
**Townley Frocks** (American, founded 1929)  
**Dress, ca. 1949**

Black wool jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum  
Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of  
the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Elizabeth Wadhams, 1965  
(2009.300.7435)

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)  
**Townley Frocks** (American, founded 1929)  
**Ensemble, 1938**

Dress of black wool knit; belt of black leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Claire McCardell, 1949 (C.I.49.37.15a, b)

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)  
**Townley Frocks** (American, founded 1929)  
**Ensemble, 1938**

Dress of brown wool knit; belt of brown leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Claire McCardell, 1949 (C.I.49.37.14a, b)

## Chloé Zhao

“Fact creates norms, and truth illumination.” Werner Herzog’s words on ecstatic truth guided the design of this scene. The Shakers believed that God is both male and female, and their religious leader was a woman, Mother Ann Lee, whom they believed was the Second Coming of Christ in female form. This aspect of the Shaker religion was incredibly radical and progressive in the 1800s. Upon seeing this room and its occupants, most people from that era would feel unease, confusion, wonder, curiosity, shock, or even distaste and anger. I hope to invoke some of these feelings in you, twenty-first-century viewers, in a humble attempt to capture the ecstatic truth of the moment in time displayed here.

Audio: Frances McDormand reading the words of Catherine Allen, as quoted in *Ann the Word* (2000)

“We recognise the Christ Spirit, the expression of Deity, first manifested in its fullness in Jesus of Nazareth. We also regard Mother Ann Lee as the first to receive in this latter day the interior realisation that the same Divine Spirit which was in Jesus might dwell within the consciousness of any man, woman or child.”

*OPPOSITE SIDE OF PREVIOUS HALLWAY*

**John Vanderlyn (American, 1775–1852)**  
***Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens***  
***of Versailles*, 1818–19**

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Senate House Association, Kingston, N.Y., 1952  
(52.184)

Vanderlyn's panorama is a hybrid object installed in an unusual oval space—neither a formal historical room nor a traditional gallery. The work is a remarkable surviving example of a precursor to today's motion pictures: enormous panoramic paintings that offered immersive experiences, transporting viewers to another time and place—in this case, the French palace and gardens of Versailles on a lovely late-summer day in 1815.

Panoramas flourished as a form of public art and entertainment throughout much of the nineteenth century. These large-scale landscape paintings were illuminated by hidden skylights and displayed within a darkened cylindrical room. Viewers stood on a raised

central platform, their eyes level with the painting's horizon line to create the illusion of being enveloped in the landscape.

The first American painter to be trained in France, Vanderlyn painted his panorama with the aid of small sketches he made at Versailles. Back in New York, he transferred the details onto a gigantic canvas (12 feet high by 165 feet long) at the scale of one inch to one foot. It was originally shown in a circular building known as the Rotunda—considered to be New York's first public art museum—which Vanderlyn designed for Manhattan's City Hall Park.

## The Battle of Versailles

American fashion took its rightful place on the world stage on November 28, 1973, at the transatlantic fashion show Grand Divertissement à Versailles (Great Entertainment at Versailles). Conceived by fashion publicist Eleanor Lambert and palace curator Gérard Van der Kemp as a fundraiser for the host palace, then in significant disrepair, the “Battle of Versailles” pitched five couturiers from France—Marc Bohan for Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin, Hubert de Givenchy, Yves Saint Laurent, and Emanuel Ungaro—against five ready-to-wear designers from the United States—Bill Blass, Stephen Burrows, Halston, Anne Klein, and Oscar de la Renta. While the French staged a presentation boasting “enough scenery and effects for four bad operattas [*sic*],” according to *Women’s Wear Daily*, the Americans captivated the audience with the modernity of their clothes and the vitality of their choreography. The American models, many of whom were women of color, “knew how to move in the clothes. . . . The French just stood there bewildered.” The event shifted the dynamics between the reigning

capital of haute couture and the emergent epicenter of sportswear.

The ensembles displayed here against John Vanderlyn's panoramic view of Versailles were shown either at the original event or in the participating designers' concurrent seasonal runway presentations.

## Tom Ford

In war, there are no winners—except, it would seem, in the case of the great *guerre de la mode* that has come to be known as the “Battle of Versailles.” The sides? France versus America. The stakes? Haute couture versus ready-to-wear. The weapons? Fans versus feather boas. The victors? Bill Blass, Stephen Burrows, Halston, Anne Klein, and Oscar de la Renta—surely the greatest underdogs in the history of fashion. Set in the Royal Opera of Versailles and attended by the chicest of the chic, this legendary evening and the battle that unfolded have attained mythological prominence—at least in the fashionable imagination. But how to re-create a myth? How to capture the exhilaration and astonishment of a victory that had its spectators—Princess Grace of Monaco among them—jumping to their feet and throwing their programs in the air like confetti? As with any myth, by reinventing it. The sides and stakes remain the same, but the weapons have changed—

in place of fans and feather boas are fencing foils and front kicks. And what of the victors? Captured mid-battle, the underdogs will again prevail, reestablishing American fashion as a global force to be reckoned with.

Audio: "Ball" performed by Craig Armstrong, from the soundtrack to *Plunkett & Macleane* (1999). Courtesy of Virgin Records Ltd. under license from Universal Music Enterprises. With the sound of fencing swords

**House of Dior** (French, founded 1947)

**Marc Bohan** (French, born 1926)

**Evening ensemble**, autumn/winter 1973–74

haute couture

Dress of green and gold silk jacquard georgette; cape of green and gold silk jacquard georgette trimmed with green ostrich feathers

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Gerald Van Der Kemp, 1978 (1978.176.2a–c)

**Bill Blass** (American, 1922–2002)

**Suit**, autumn/winter 1973–74

Jacket of brocaded and polychrome printed rayon chiffon trimmed with beige fox fur; skirt of brocaded and polychrome printed rayon chiffon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Jacqueline Loewe Fowler Costume Collection, Gift of Jacqueline Loewe Fowler, 1981 (1981.259.1a–d)

**Bill Blass** (American, 1922–2002)

**Dress, 1973**

Black silk jersey embroidered with black synthetic sequins and trimmed with black glass-beaded fringe

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Gould Family Foundation, in memory of Jo Copeland, 2021 (2021.42)

**Pierre Cardin** (French, born Italy, 1922–2020)

**Ensemble, 1973**

Tunic of white wool twill; bodysuit of black nylon ribbed knit; belt of black leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Pierre Cardin, 1977 (1977.25.14a–c)

**Pierre Cardin** (French, born Italy, 1922–2020)  
**Ensemble**, 1971

Tunic of orange wool Ponte de Roma knit; sweater  
and tights of brown wool knit

Musée Pierre Cardin

**Anne Klein** (American, 1923–1974)  
**Ensemble**, ca. 1973

Polychrome printed synthetic peau de soie

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Gould  
Family Foundation, in memory of Jo Copeland, 2022 (2022.48a, b)

**Halston** (American, 1932–1990)

**Ensemble**, 1973

Beige silk chiffon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Hillie (Mrs. David) Mahoney, 1996 (1996.498.2a, b)

**House of Dior** (French, founded 1947)

**Marc Bohan** (French, born 1926)

**Dress**, autumn/winter 1973–74 haute couture

Dress of peach silk mousseline shot with gold silk-and-metal thread and trimmed with beige silk satin

Collection of Marci Rosenberg

**Hubert de Givenchy** (French, 1927–2018)

**Evening ensemble**, ca. 1973

Dress of cream silk chiffon; cape of cream silk chiffon  
trimmed with cream ostrich feathers

Texas Fashion Collection, University of North Texas College of  
Visual Arts & Design

**Oscar de la Renta** (American, born Dominican  
Republic, 1932–2014)

**Evening dress**, spring/summer 1974

Blue silk charmeuse

FIDM Museum at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising,  
Los Angeles

**Emanuel Ungaro** (French, 1933–2019)

**Ensemble**, ca. 1973

Polychrome printed cotton-synthetic plain weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Gould Family Foundation, in memory of Jo Copeland, 2021 (2021.427)

**Emanuel Ungaro** (French, 1933–2019)

**Suit**, autumn/winter 1972–73 haute couture

Polychrome printed wool plain weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Joanne T. Cummings, 1976 (1976.360.34a–c)

**Oscar de la Renta** (American, born Dominican Republic, 1932–2014)

**Evening dress, 1973**

Orange rayon jersey

Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, Gift of Mrs. Norman R. Gardner

**Yves Saint Laurent** (French, born Algeria, 1936–2008)

**Dress, autumn/winter 1973–74 haute couture**

Light brown silk chiffon trimmed with brown and white ostrich feathers

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1976 (1976.273a, b)

**Emanuel Ungaro** (French, 1933–2019)

**Ensemble**, ca. 1973

Blouse of polychrome printed synthetic peau de soie;  
skirt of polychrome printed cotton-synthetic plain  
weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Gould  
Family Foundation, in memory of Jo Copeland, 2021  
(2021.315a, b)

**Stephen Burrows** (American, born 1943)

**Dress**, 1973

Pink silk chiffon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Gilles  
Bensimon, Inc. Gift, 2021 (2021.62)

**Yves Saint Laurent** (French, born Algeria, 1936–2008)

**Evening ensemble**, autumn/winter 1973–74

haute couture

Dress of red silk chiffon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joanne Toor Cummings, 1995 (1996.336.6a, b)

**Halston** (American, 1932–1990)

**Dress**, 1973

Red silk georgette embroidered with red bugle beads, sequins, and crystals

Collection of Christine Royer

*THROUGH DOORWAY, CASE STUDY, CENTER OF GALLERY,  
LEFT TO RIGHT*

**Christian Dior** (French, 1905–1957)

**“La Cigale” dress**, autumn/winter 1952–53

Purple-gray cotton-rayon-acetate moire ottoman

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Irene Stone, in memory of her daughter, Mrs. Ethel S. Greene, 1959  
(C.I.59.26.3a, b)

**Christian Dior** (French, 1905–1957)

**Hattie Carnegie, Inc.** (American, 1918–1965)

**Dress**, 1952–54

Dark gray cotton-rayon-acetate moire ottoman

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Byron C. Foy, 1955 (C.I.55.76.5a)

In 1947 Christian Dior presented a collection of wasp-waisted, full-skirted designs that accentuated the female form. Dubbed the “New Look” by the American press, the collection represented a shift from the austere fashions of the Second World War.

Dior would create variations of the silhouette throughout his career, such as “La Cigale,” on display here. Rendered in a heavy ottoman fabric and shaped

with angular seaming along the hipline, the dress was an architectural evolution of the supple “New Look.” A copy of this model, also shown here, was created by New York dressmaker Hattie Carnegie. Carnegie’s business focused on copies and reinterpretations of French styles, offering both custom and ready-to-wear designs.

*image captions:*

*left:* Christian Dior (1905–1957)

*right:* Hattie Carnegie (1889–1956)

*image description:*

*left:* a man with light skin tone wearing a dark suit with a white pocket square, looking at papers with clothing designs

*right:* a woman with light skin tone and glasses with dark frames looking at a paper she is holding in her hands, while she is seated at a desk covered in papers

*image captions:*

*left:* *Vogue*, September 1, 1952

*right:* Mrs. Byron C. Foy, 1954

*image description:*

*left:* a woman with light skin tone posing in a dress with white gloves and a hat

*right:* a woman with light skin tone wearing the same dress underneath a fur coat

*center:* magazine and newspaper clippings describing the dress and the woman in the fur coat

The dresses are made from identical ottoman fabric with the same fiber composition, thread count, thickness, and moire pattern, differing only in color.

Records from the House of Dior identify the fabric for their iteration as “Rhodia” by Hurel, an important French manufacturer of luxury textiles. The manufacturer of Carnegie’s fabric is unknown.

*image description:*

two line drawings of dresses with highlights showing close-ups of similar fabrics, with the Christian Dior design on the left and the Hattie Carnegie design on the right

While Dior’s dress boasts a separate belt, Carnegie’s features a mock belt: an inset waistband with a center button. Although the covered button does not appear on the original design, it is in a style used by Dior on other garments, and shows an intention to be true to the house even in small details.

*image description:*

two line drawings of dresses with highlights showing close-ups of the belt on the Dior design on the left and a “mock” belt on the Hattie Carnegie design on the right

The center front seam of Dior's skirt yoke is a straight vertical line. In Carnegie's version, it is diagonal, a continuation of the yoke's seam.

*image description:*

the two line drawings moving to focus on the center front seam of each, with the Christian Dior design on the left a straight vertical line and the Hattie Carnegie design on the right a diagonal

Dior's model has a single shaped dart at each side of the waist, while Carnegie's uses two straight darts.

Though it is unclear why Carnegie made this change, perhaps it was for flexibility in fitting. Small, straight darts are easier to execute neatly, an advantage when using a bulky ribbed fabric that would show any imprecision.

*image description:*

two line drawings demonstrating the darts at the waist, with the Christian Dior design on the left and the Hattie Carnegie design on the right

The interior construction of the two dresses also reveals subtle differences. The gussets are reinforced with individual organza strips in Dior's original design, while Carnegie's copy uses a larger single piece of reinforcing fabric.

*image description:*

two line drawings with the interior fabric construction showing in the background and highlighting a close-up of the reinforcements

The most prominent interior disparity is between the net ruffles that support the hipline of the skirt. In Dior's original they are cut to replicate the skirt construction, while in Carnegie's copy they add volume but do not conform to the skirt. Dior's design also included a petticoat, which has been cut away, possibly by its wearer.

*image description:*

two line drawings showing the ruffles at the top of the hipline of each skirt

The corselet and half-slip in the Carnegie copy are an interesting addition that do not appear in the original. Although many Dior couture dresses have built-in foundation garments, this model did not, and their inclusion in Carnegie's version may have been either a presumption by the seamstress or a specific request of Mrs. Byron C. Foy, who donated the Dior dress to The Met, and who owned numerous Dior couture pieces.

*image description:*

two line drawings showing additions at the waist of the dress on the right

*TO RIGHT OF CASE, RIGHT TO LEFT*

## **American Fashions for American Women**

Headpieces by Stephen Jones

From the 1930s to the 1950s, American fashion received promotional support from industry leaders who sought to encourage domestic business. In 1932 Dorothy Shaver, vice president of the department store Lord & Taylor, launched the “American Fashions for American Women” campaign, which highlighted relatively unknown designers at a time when French fashion dominated press coverage. Advertisements featuring photographs of designers alongside illustrations of their fashions were bolstered with corresponding in-store displays. By 1935 the program was dubbed the “American designers’ movement,” and with the onset of the Second World War and France’s ensuing isolation, the campaign correlated the practicality of American fashion with patriotism.

The movement peaked in 1945 with the copyrighted “American Look,” whose name associated American sportswear with the complex roles women held during

and immediately following the war. Advertisements equated the look with the ideals of ease and freedom, and lauded the American woman as “many sided—a cultivated woman with wide interests and influence” whose “public appearances invariably start new fashion trends.”

**Clare Potter** (American, 1892–1974)

**Dress, 1937–38**

Black linen plain weave and beige linen crochet

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Janet Chatfield-Taylor, 1962 (C.I.62.4.4a, b)

Clare Potter was one of the earliest participants in Lord & Taylor's "American Fashions for American Women" campaign. She joined the promotion in April 1933, endorsed in their advertising for "her fresh touches and the unorthodox way she use[d] old familiar fabrics." Here, Potter renders a simple A-line day dress in coarsely textured linen, achieving the impression of ornament on an otherwise unadorned design. The incorporation of densely crocheted sleeves enhances this effect, while also injecting a hint of nonchalance. Described by *Vogue* as having "the trick of looking equally well at resorts, polo games, and in town," Potter's versatile clothing contributed to the emergence of American sportswear.

**Helen Cookman** (American, 1894–1973)

**Ensemble, 1935**

Coat and skirt of black wool tweed trimmed with black silk velvet

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Helen Cookman, 1957 (2009.300.240a, b)

Lord & Taylor added Helen Cookman to its “American Fashions for American Women” roster in 1934. At the time, she was known for her designs produced by the manufacturer Hampton Coats, and her outerwear and suiting were promoted in the store’s Country Clothes Shop, which was intended to “separate the more formal types of sports clothes from the very informal.” This ensemble is an early example of the incorporation of menswear tailoring into women’s garments, an innovation that became closely associated with Cookman. The coat’s rugged wool tweed is offset by plush velvet trim, while its sober silhouette is softened with princess seams.

**Vera Maxwell** (American, 1901–1995)

**Suit**, autumn/winter 1937–38

Gray wool twill

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Miss Vera Maxwell, 1945 (C.I.45.56.3a, b)

**Vera Maxwell** (American, 1901–1995)

**Uniform**, 1942

Blue cotton twill

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Miss Vera Maxwell, 1947 (C.I.47.60.1)

Lord & Taylor's campaign evolved to reflect the changing social and professional roles of women in the years during the Second World War, with advertisements that emphasized perseverance and strength. Vera Maxwell's "youthful suits," such as this trousered example, were lauded in the store's window displays, and her pragmatic and progressive sportswear was among the most frequently promoted of the period. Though not sold at Lord & Taylor, her wartime "Rosie the Riveter" coverall—commissioned by electronics company Sperry Gyroscope for its female workers—reflected Maxwell's vision of

streamlined and attractive clothing that catered to the needs of the American woman.

**Bonnie Cashin** (American, 1908–2000)

**Playsuit, 1946**

Top and shorts of polychrome silk taffeta; belt of polychrome silk taffeta, brown leather, and silver metal

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Bonnie Cashin, 1962 (2009.300.7246a–d)

Bonnie Cashin sought to design clothes that reflected the multifaceted lives of American women. This playsuit is an early prototype of Cashin’s “Southern Exposure” ensemble, which was manufactured in 1950 with the firm Adler & Adler. The playful title reflects the designer’s unconventional approach to sportswear, one that mingled vibrant colors, simple lines, and utilitarian—at times industrial—materials. Here, Cashin renders a sporty silhouette in refined yet cheerfully hued silk taffeta accented with leather-strapped metal buckles—her preferred (and pioneering) form of trim. Bamboo toggles add an additional layer of texture and reveal travel as a source of inspiration.

**Claire McCardell** (American, 1905–1958)

**Playsuits**, ca. 1950

Polychrome cotton plain weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Helene Holland-Moritz, 1997 (1997.171.2a, b); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Promised Gift of Sandy Schreier (L.2019.43.38a, b)

In 1940 Lord & Taylor purchased Claire McCardell's first line of samples for the manufacturer Townley Frocks; within a few years, her innovative sportswear came to exemplify the "American Look." The playsuits here reveal McCardell's distinctive blend of sophistication and practicality. Capaciously gathered shorts provide versatility of movement while bias-cut sections of plaid emphasize the contours of the body. The bolero jacket's accessible hook-and-eye fasteners afford utility and suggest spontaneity. Described in a Lord & Taylor advertisement as "the marks of typically American creative genius," McCardell's design innovations contributed to the success of the store's campaign and laid the groundwork for the future of American sportswear.

**Anne Fogarty** (American, 1919–1980)

**Dress**, holiday 1950–51

Dress of white rayon ottoman; belt of black leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Anne Fogarty, 1951 (C.I.51.95.2a, b)

Anne Fogarty was promoted in Lord & Taylor's Young New Yorker Shop, where her sophisticated designs for teenagers and young adults helped advance the nascent "junior" market. Dubbed the "queen of crinoline daytime fashion" by *Life*, Fogarty designed signature waist-hugging, full-skirted day dresses informed by Christian Dior's "New Look" silhouette but interpreted in less formal fabrics using simpler construction. In this example, Fogarty achieves fullness in the skirt with gathering, enhanced by the horizontally ribbed textile, rather than laborious pleating. The combination of darts and a waist-cinching belt give the effect of intricate bodice seaming, while a high neckline helps to elongate the torso.

**Carolyn Schnurer** (American, 1908–1998)

**“The Rice Bowl Dress,”** 1952

Ivory cotton plain weave printed with green geometric motif

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Carolyn Schnurer, 1952 (2009.300.155)

Like Anne Fogarty, Carolyn Schnurer was marketed in Lord & Taylor’s Young New Yorker Shop, but unlike Fogarty, she sought to appeal directly to the tastes of the young, rather than translate mature styles into smaller sizes. She became known for her casual, pared-down sports and resort wear. This dress was informed by Schnurer’s travels in Japan and is printed with a motif influenced by *sekkazome*, a technique of dip-dyeing accordion-pleated mulberry paper. The relaxed neckline resembles the back neck drape of a kimono, while the vertically boned skirt, inspired by the construction of Japanese oilcloth parasols, creates a softened A-line silhouette and offers an alternative to cumbersome crinoline petticoats.

**Lloyd “Kiva” New** (Cherokee, 1916–2002)  
**Dress, 1950s**

Polychrome printed cotton plain weave

Collection of Doreen Picerne and Robert Black

**Lloyd “Kiva” New** (Cherokee, 1916–2002)  
**Andrew Van Tsinajinnie** (Diné [Navajo],  
1918–2000)

**Manfred Susunkewa** (Hopi, born 1940)

**Charles Loloma** (Hopi, 1921–1991)

**Dress, ca. 1956**

Polychrome printed cotton plain weave

Collection of Doreen Picerne and Robert Black

Though not featured in Lord & Taylor’s “American Look” promotion, Lloyd “Kiva” New was influential in shaping the defining characteristics of fashion in the United States through his championing of modern Native American fashion. With their silkscreened depictions of horses, desert scrub, and cliff striations, the dresses shown here reflect New’s interest in the landscape of the American Southwest. Their cinched waists and full skirts recall the silhouette of the

traditional Navajo broomstick skirt, offering a distinct counterpart to Christian Dior's contemporaneous "New Look." Realized together with Indigenous artists and textile makers, New's designs also echoed the collaborative nature of Parisian haute couture.

## **Dispense with Paris from this Day Forward**

Headpieces by Stephen Jones

In response to the Second World War and the German occupation of Paris, The Met sought to support the American fashion industry through various initiatives, including two contemporary fashion exhibitions: *Renaissance in Fashion* (1942) and *American Fashion and Fabrics* (1945). Exhibition organizers aimed to highlight the distinctive talents of domestic designers who were isolated from the creative stimulus of French couture, and to prove that the United States could produce fashions equal to those of Paris. They encouraged creative collaborations between designers and textile houses, embracing an ethos that had long been embedded in the French couture system.

With the mandate “dispense with Paris from this day forward,” the organizers of *Renaissance in Fashion* invited twelve New York designers to look to the art and costumes of the Renaissance era in The Met collection for inspiration in partnership with leading

textile houses. *American Fashion and Fabrics* boasted similar collaborations inspired by artwork ranging from Etruscan sculpture to medieval painting. In both exhibitions, the resulting fashions demonstrated not only the ingenuity but also the singularity of American designers.

OPPOSITE SIDE OF GALLERY, LEFT TO RIGHT

**Jessie Franklin Turner** (American, 1881–1956)  
**Dinner dress, 1942**

Green silk velvet pieced with green silk plain weave brocaded with gold and silver silk-and-metal thread, appliquéd with yellow silk grosgrain shot with silver silk-and-metal thread, and trimmed with gold metal charms

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Jessie Franklin Turner, 1942 (42.126.1a)

New York couturiere Jessie Franklin Turner contributed five dresses to *Renaissance in Fashion*. The examples on either end of this platform were inspired by The Met's holdings of Persian miniatures, whose depth and texture are reflected in the garments' delicately patterned brocade panels. Insets of velvet are rendered in a palette of muted primary colors, subtly duplicating the warm tones of European Renaissance paintings. The gowns' elongated contours echo those of Renaissance dress, while their ease of fit recalls Turner's signature tea gowns.

**Nettie Rosenstein** (American, 1890–1980)

**S. L. Klein, Inc.** (American)

**Evening dress**, 1942

Ivory silk gauze embroidered with gold metal strip and gold silk thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Nettie Rosenstein Gowns Inc., 1942 (42.125.10a)

**Jessie Franklin Turner** (American, 1881–1956)  
**Dinner dress, 1942**

Orange silk velvet pieced with polychrome silk  
brocade and trimmed with green silk velvet

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Jessie Franklin  
Turner, 1942 (42.126.8)

## **Renaissance Revival Room**

Meriden, Connecticut, 1868–70

Gift of Josephine M. Fiala, 1968 (68.133.7)

This opulent interior comes from the “princely mansion” built for Jedediah Wilcox (1817–1897) and his wife, Henrietta (1842/43–1907). A manufacturer of stylish hoop skirts, carpetbags, and other woolen goods, Wilcox commissioned Connecticut architect Augustus Truesdell (1810–1872) to design and oversee the building of the house. This fashionable rear parlor, or sitting room, with its coordinating architectural details and richly ornamented decoration, includes its original rosewood furniture suite, attributed to the Newark, New Jersey, cabinetmaking firm of John Jelliff & Co.

While the term “Renaissance Revival” may conjure up the Italian Renaissance, it was an eclectic style of the late nineteenth century that took inspiration from objects dating anywhere from the 1500s to the 1700s. The exterior of Wilcox’s imposing house blended historical and contemporary French and Italian

architectural features, such as a steep mansard roof and a picturesque rectangular tower at the front, in the Second Empire style that was popular in both Europe and North America during the reign of Emperor Napoleon III in France (1852–71). The interior was also heavily influenced by French design, and the local newspaper described this room as decorated “in the Marie Antoinette style.” Indeed, the overall appearance of the room’s furniture is derived from that made during the reign of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, almost exactly one hundred years earlier.

## **Ann Lowe**

Mid-twentieth-century American fashion was shaped by both the modernist impulse toward streamlined simplicity and the historicist tendency toward greater elaboration. The latter mode is represented here by Ann Lowe, whose designs—similar to the Renaissance Revival parlor—display the influence of historical sources, seen in their strong silhouettes and rich ornamentation. The expansive bow adorning the ivory ball gown, for instance, evokes the airy draping of an 1870s bustle, while the three-dimensional lilies on the wedding dress recall nineteenth-century bridal traditions, with Lowe’s signature fabric flowers as sculptural focal points rather than fussy decoration.

Based in New York for much of her career, Lowe specialized in debutante and wedding dresses for socially prominent women. Though underappreciated in the press, her fashions were recognized by her clientele as “works of art—timeless, feminine, beautiful.” The designer’s early training was with her mother and grandmother, a formerly enslaved dressmaker with a thriving business in Montgomery,

Alabama. Understanding every facet of the design process, from conception to fitting and finishing, Lowe created garments with interior structures as refined as their exteriors. Her perfectly fitted and intricately embellished gowns exemplify the American couture tradition.

**Ann Lowe** (American, 1898–1981)

**Dress**, ca. 1957

Ivory silk satin trimmed with blue synthetic tulle and embroidered with silver bugle beads, clear crystals, and synthetic pearls

Collection of the Henry B. Plant Museum Society, Inc., Tampa, Florida

**Ann Lowe** (American, 1898–1981)

**Ball gown**, 1957

Ivory duchesse silk satin overlaid with gray silk Chantilly lace and appliquéd with red silk faille and green silk velvet

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Diana Townsend-Butterworth, 2009

**Ann Lowe** (American, 1898–1981)

**A. F. Chantilly Inc., New York** (American)

**Dress**, ca. 1968

White cotton organdy trimmed with pink cotton organdy and green silk taffeta

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Florence I. Cowell, 1980 (1980.433.3)

**Ann Lowe** (American, 1898–1981)

**Wedding dress**, 1941

Cream synthetic satin embroidered with cream seed beads

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. K. Fenton Trimmingham Jr., 1975 (1975.349a, b)

## **Julie Dash**

The cinematic display inside the Renaissance Revival Room is about assigning value and worth to individuals and how the designs of Ann Lowe relate to the history of American fashion. Lowe designed exquisite gowns for some of the most prestigious families in the nation. She fashioned the majestic wedding gown for Jacqueline Bouvier's marriage to John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Lowe also designed the gown Olivia de Havilland wore for her Academy Award win in 1947. Despite all this, and due to the prevailing racial bias of her time, Lowe received limited public recognition for her work. Sometimes there was no acknowledgment at all. The designer was shrouded in secrecy, masked and hooded; invisibility was the cloak she wore, and yet she persisted. I close my eyes and see West African Egungun dancers inside the Renaissance room. Each beautifully masked mannequin covered with a diaphanous fabric represents the visible manifestation of Lowe

attending to her original designs. We celebrate  
Lowe's creativity and courage with this  
remembrance and blessing.

Headpieces by Stephen Jones; veiling by Ashaka Givens and  
Penelope Webster

Audio: Excerpt from *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) score,  
composed by John Barnes

Prop statuette is an interpretation of the Best Actress Oscar won  
by Olivia de Havilland in 1947.

*TO RIGHT, LEFT TO RIGHT*

**Norman Norell** (American, 1900–1972)

**Traina-Norell** (American, founded 1941)

**Peter Todd Mitchell** (American, 1928–1988)

**Bianchini Férier** (French, founded 1888)

**Dress, 1945**

Polychrome printed rayon crepe

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Gould Family Foundation, in memory of Jo Copeland, 2020  
(2020.207a, b)

*American Fashion and Fabrics* featured the work of eighteen American fashion designers worn by live models and fabric lengths by nine textile houses displayed next to artworks that had served as sources of inspiration. This striking evening dress by Norman Norell was based on an eighth-century B.C. terracotta krater (currently on display in Gallery 150) and features a geometric trompe l'oeil rendering of the vase's Greek fret motif. The bold textile is offset by the soft silhouette, a reimagining of classical dress.

**Nettie Rosenstein, Inc.** (American, 1916–61)

**Eva Rosencrans** (American, 1901–1994)

**Brooke Cadwallader** (American, born 1908)

**Dress, 1945**

Blue and black printed silk plain weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Nettie  
Rosenstein, 1945 (C.I.45.108.2a, b, e)

TO RIGHT AFTER EXITING GALLERY

## **The Richard and Gloria Manney Greek Revival Parlor**

New York City, ca. 1835

This modern re-creation of a parlor in a fashionable New York City town house of the 1830s showcases a rare suite of mahogany seating furniture made for lawyer Samuel A. Foot (1790–1878). Foot's large home at 678 Broadway in lower Manhattan was completed in 1837, and he commissioned the furniture from the firm of celebrated cabinetmaker Duncan Phyfe (1770–1854). The black marble fireplace and the Ionic columnar screen with mahogany sliding doors at the entrance are the only authentic 1830s architectural elements. The rest of the room was built in 1983 based on period pattern books, especially those by New York architect and builder Minard Lafever (1798–1854). His most popular titles, *The Modern Builder's Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835), include original Greek Revival designs for exterior elevations, floor plans, and interior details, all informed by ancient models.

Greek Revival buildings, designed in the first national architectural style of the United States, sprang up between 1820 and 1850. The style—adapted, like the country's democratic system, from ancient Greek models—was meant to express patriotic ideals.

## **Eta Hentz**

Throughout the Second World War, The Met cultivated close ties with the American fashion community. As designers faced material restrictions and diminished interaction with their counterparts in Paris during the German occupation, the Museum offered its collection as inspiration.

An especially successful example of this collaboration can be found in Eta Hentz's spring/summer 1944 collection, for which the designer looked to a Met exhibition on Greek Revival architecture in the United States. Her gowns echo the movement's classical columns and decorative motifs and also reference ancient Greek garments, including the chiton (tunic) and himation (cloak). Rather than directly copy these antique forms, Hentz captured their essence by creating the impression of fabric being draped and tied on the body.

Known professionally as Madame Eta, Hentz studied design in her native Budapest before establishing herself in New York in the 1920s. The designer frequently studied historical sources, most notably at

The Met, which she visited regularly and described as her second home. The fashions on display here exemplify her skill at producing ready-to-wear with the impeccable finish and refined fit typically associated with custom garments.

**Eta Hentz** (American, born Hungary, 1894–1986)

**“Athena” evening dress**, spring/summer 1944

Cream rayon crepe embroidered with gold glass beads and gold silk-and-metal thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Ren Eta, 1944  
(2009.300.2353)

**Evening dress**, spring/summer 1944

Black rayon crepe embroidered with gold bugle beads and gold silk-and-metal thread

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Brooklyn Museum Collection  
(2009.300.2656)

## **Evening dress, spring/summer 1944**

Cream rayon crepe embroidered with gold silk-and-metal thread and gold bugle beads

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Madame Eta Hentz, 1946 (2009.300.119)

## **“Helen of Troy” evening dress, spring/summer 1944**

Cream rayon crepe embroidered with opalescent sequins and white and silver seed beads

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Madame Eta Hentz, 1946 (2009.300.2360a, b)

## **Julie Dash**

Orson Welles, the iconoclastic director of stage and screen, was the first to have this vision. In 1950 he cast Eartha Kitt as his Helen of Troy in his production *Time Runs*. Through a narrative blend of reimagined storytelling, archival film images, and a dramatic evocation of historical moments, we dive headfirst into a strange and intimate conversation with the fashions of Madame Eta Hentz, the mythological Muses, and Ms. Eartha Kitt. Eartha Kitt is Helen of Troy, arriving from Sparta and taking the city of Troy by storm.

Audio: “Usaka Dara” (“A Turkish Tale”), performed by Eartha Kitt, 1953.

Video: Excerpts from *Helen of Troy* (1924), directed by Manfred Noa

Headpieces by Stephen Jones

*OPPOSITE SIDE*

## **The Richard and Gloria Manney John Henry Belter Rococo Revival Parlor**

Astoria, Queens, ca. 1850

Gift of Sirio D. Molteni and Rita M. Pooler, 1965 (Inst.65.4)

This room presents a sumptuous formal parlor characteristic of affluent homes in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. The architectural elements—columnar screen, windows, doors, cornice, and rosette—come from a grand villa built around 1850 in Astoria for Horace Whittemore (1813–1871), the prosperous owner of a wholesale fur and hat business.

The parlor showcases furniture in the Rococo Revival, or “modern French,” style created by renowned New York City cabinetmaker John Henry Belter (1804–1863). This type of furniture emerged in Europe during the early decades of the nineteenth century as designers and craftspeople turned to the recent past for inspiration. Loosely copied after curvaceous rococo designs from Louis XV’s reign (1715–74), the furniture is characterized by cabriole legs created from two

opposing curves, C- and S-shaped scrolls, and naturalistic carving. The German-born Belter's extravagant furniture was made by laminating multiple layers of wood, with the grain of each layer set at a right angle to the adjacent layer. This innovative process achieved a material of great strength that could be molded into undulating forms and carved in ways that would have been impossible if working with solid wood. For American patrons seeking to decorate their homes in the latest French taste, Belter furniture represented the pinnacle of elegance and luxury.

## **Marguery Bolhagen**

The opulent historicism of the Rococo Revival Parlor is paralleled in this lavish 1960s evening dress by Marguery Bolhagen, which echoes the emphatic silhouette of mid-nineteenth-century fashion. Bolhagen, who was largely based in the Washington, D.C., area, specialized in custom garments and was known for sculptural designs made from exquisite fabrics. In this ball gown, a firm internal structure provides a foundation for an inventive combination of materials—gray satin overlaid with cellophane fabric and blue net—embellished with crystal beads, iridescent tinsel, and lush ribbon work.

Austine Hearst, wife of newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst Jr., wore this design to John F. Kennedy's inaugural ball in 1961. Admired for her daring style, Hearst appeared regularly on the International Best Dressed List in the 1940s and 1950s and was a long-standing client of Bolhagen's. The creative synergy between the two women resulted in some of the designer's most distinctive work. In Bolhagen's view, the fruitful nature of enduring

designer-client relationships demonstrated the value of custom design, a branch of fashion she considered crucial for promoting individuality in dress.

**Marguery Bolhagen** (American, 1920–2021)  
**Ball gown**, ca. 1961

Gray rayon satin and iridescent silk-cellulose acetate plain weave overlaid with blue rayon net embroidered with iridescent cellulose acetate tinsel, blue silk grosgrain, iridescent glass beads, white rhinestones, and synthetic pearls

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., 1966 (2009.300.2556a, b)

## **Janicza Bravo**

We're hours into a party that seems to have no end in sight. The dress smells of cologne, cigars, and cake. I took a whiff of the lilacs in the garden. That helped. The last time I sat was morning. It was at the vanity in my dressing room while fastening the clasp of my necklace. No one hears me when I speak. My voice is shot. In place of talking, I choose smiling. Then a shadow of headache chooses me. I've played hostess since sunup. My mind is racing. An amalgamation of disembodied faces and gestures playing on a loop. I am shrinking.

Video and audio: Excerpt from *The Conformist* (1970), directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. © Minerva Pictures

Headpiece by Stephen Jones

*TO RIGHT*

## **Gothic Revival Library**

Balmville, Newburgh, New York, 1859

Gift of Mrs. Hamilton Fish, 1977 (Inst.1977.7.1)

This library comes from a redbrick Gothic Revival villa built for the family of banker Frederick Deming (1787–1860) in the hamlet of Balmville, a residential area in the prosperous Hudson River shipping town of Newburgh. Balmville was a popular country retreat for wealthy New Yorkers attempting to escape the unhealthy conditions of summers in the metropolis. The house, a classic example of the Gothic Revival style in domestic architecture, was designed by British-trained architect Frederick Clarke Withers (1828–1901). While none of the oak and walnut furniture is original to the room, it is arranged to suggest how an upper-middle-class family might have furnished their library.

In the mid-nineteenth century, architectural styles were meant to signal the values of their owners. A Gothic Revival house, inspired by the architecture of medieval

universities like Oxford, represented a family that enjoyed a quiet, contemplative life. The library often took center stage, serving as the informal sitting room. In previous eras, private libraries were often the exclusive domain of wealthy gentlemen. During these years, however, the mechanized production of clothbound books brought the possession of a large collection within reach for many middle-class families. More women became avid readers, and new types of literature, such as romantic novels and fashion magazines, catered to their interests.

## Elizabeth Hawes

For Elizabeth Hawes, writing and fashion were interconnected forms of creative expression, each essential for conveying her ideas. A leading New York designer during the 1930s and 1940s, she also wrote prolifically about topics including fashion and women's roles in American society.

Hawes's most widely read work, *Fashion Is Spinach*, first published in 1938, addressed problems she saw in the American fashion system. Among these was the persistence of "the French legend"—the idea that the most beautiful and desirable women's clothing was designed in France. Hawes believed women in the United States needed clothing designed specifically for them, with an emphasis on comfort, functionality, and timeless appeal.

Although Hawes rejected the authority of French designers to dictate American wardrobes, her fashions were informed by a knowledge of their couture techniques. Like the Parisian couturiere Madeleine Vionnet, whom she admired, Hawes often draped her designs directly on a form. This method

supported her creative piecing and bold geometric patterning, which was also influenced by contemporaneous artists such as Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee. The designer frequently assigned her fashions witty or irreverent titles, such as “The Tarts”—a dress with vivid arrows on front and back pointing to the wearer’s breasts and buttocks.

**Elizabeth Hawes** (American, 1903–1971)  
**“Uphill” trousers**, autumn/winter 1939–40  
Gray wool broadcloth

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum  
Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of  
the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the estate of Elinor S. Gimbel,  
1984 (2009.300.8094)

**Dress**, ca. 1937

Black wool flannel plain weave and blue rayon satin-  
back crepe embroidered with blue and black silk braid

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum  
Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of  
the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the estate of Elinor S. Gimbel,  
1984 (2009.300.8093)

## **Jacket, 1968**

Polychrome wool bouclé

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Q. and Dr. B. Riznik, 1980 (1980.490.1)

## **Sweater, 1968**

Polychrome wool knit

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Q. and Dr. B. Riznik, 1980 (1980.490.2)

## **“The Tarts” dress, 1937**

Black silk crepe appliquéd with purple silk satin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Diana S. Field, 1964 (2009.300.872)

## **“Paul Klee” dress, ca. 1937**

Purple cotton plain weave, appliquéd and trimmed with aqua and orange silk grosgrain

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Diana S. Field, 1964 (2009.300.7330)

## **“Mekong” dress, 1938**

Dark green wool crepe pieced with light green and blue wool jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the estate of Elinor S. Gimbel, 1984 (2009.300.8091)

## **Dress, spring/summer 1940**

Blue silk crepe pieced with green and aqua silk jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. Hollis K. Thayer, 1958 (2009.300.7038)

## **Dress, spring/summer 1935**

Black and beige rayon crepe

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the estate of Elinor S. Gimbel, 1984 (2009.300.813a)

## **“Little Moose” dress, 1939**

Black wool bouclé and brown wool jersey

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of the estate of Elinor S. Gimbel, 1984 (2009.300.1014a)

## **Janicza Bravo**

I am unable to place the exact moment when I no longer found myself on the outside looking in. And while this side certainly feels more comfortable, I will always carry the road that got me here (wherever here is). I do worry sometimes that I will find myself at an end where, when I look back, what will be reflected is a life where I could have done more. Should have done more. Some days I wish each hour was two. When I am long gone, what will be left? I hope to leave a little of me in every corner that shaped me.

Video: Excerpt from *Ten Minutes to Live* (1932), directed by Oscar Micheaux

*THROUGH DOORWAY TO LEFT*

## **McKim, Mead & White Stair Hall**

Buffalo, New York, 1882–84

Gift of Delaware North Companies, Incorporated, 1980 (1980.76)

This gracious stair hall once stood in the Buffalo home of Erzelia Stetson Metcalfe (1832–1913). In 1882, likely influenced by her artistic daughter Frances, the progressive Mrs. Metcalfe commissioned the New York City architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White to design the house. The three partners had united only three years earlier, but they soon became known as the country's leading architects. The Metcalfe house is representative of the firm's innovative early residential work. Stanford White (1853–1906) is credited as the project's lead designer, and the carved oak and cherry woodwork of the stair hall reveal his genius for intermingling disparate decorative sources into a coherent whole.

Fashionable stair halls of the 1870s and 1880s were inspired by the multipurpose ground-floor main rooms (called "halls") of early Colonial houses, where families

ate, slept, and performed the tasks of daily life. The updated versions like this one were designed as welcoming spaces for greeting guests and as informal sitting areas, often including an “inglenook”—a fireplace flanked by built-in benches—next to the dramatic staircase. This room’s beamed and paneled ceiling is intentionally low to evoke an old-fashioned feeling and to conserve heat during cold Buffalo winters.

## The Rise of New York Fashion

By the middle of the nineteenth century, New York had secured its status as an artistic and cultural leader as well as the center of American fashion. The city was a hub for retail and manufacturing and a channel through which new styles were disseminated. This growing fashion industry was enriched by the specialized skills brought by many recent immigrants.

The Stair Hall, designed in 1882 by the leading architectural firm McKim, Mead & White, highlights superb examples of New York dressmaking and tailoring from the same era. Two striking dresses by Franziska Noll Gross showcase her inventive use of rich textiles and trimmings, which are arranged to accentuate the strong silhouette of the 1880s. Gross, who emigrated from Germany, maintained her New York dressmaking business from the 1860s into the 1890s. The neatly tailored coat and waistcoat by Mathias Rock illustrate the subdued palette and streamlined silhouette of menswear during this period. Rock trained in his native Germany as well as in London and Paris before establishing himself in New York, eventually earning praise as “the tailor par excellence of America.”

**Franziska Noll Gross** (American, born Germany, 1831–1906)

**Dress**, ca. 1888

Overdress of dark purple silk velvet, polychrome silk ciselé velvet and gold silk lamé woven with black seed beads, trimmed with black silk cord and black seed beads; skirt of polychrome silk ciselé velvet

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Edith Gardiner, 1926 (2009.300.618a, b)

**Franziska Noll Gross** (American, born Germany, 1831–1906)

**Dress**, ca. 1888

Polychrome silk satin brocade pieced with light green bird's-eye silk satin overlaid with black cotton lace and trimmed with black silk satin ribbon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Edith Gardiner, 1926 (2009.300.619)

**Mathias Rock** (American, born Germany, 1832–1912)

**Coat and waistcoat, ca. 1887**

Black wool twill trimmed with black silk satin braid and lined with black silk satin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Jessie Leonard Hill, 1979 (1979.152.10a, b)

**Josephine H. Egan** (American, born ca. 1848)

**Dress, ca. 1880**

Overdress of brown silk velvet pieced with brown silk satin and brown silk twill embroidered with polychrome silk and metal cord and trimmed with brown silk velvet and cream cotton lace; skirt of brown silk velvet and brown silk satin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Susan Dwight Bliss, 1937 (37.144.1a, b)

## **Sofia Coppola**

I've always loved and gotten so much out of The Costume Institute's exhibitions. I remember *Dangerous Liaisons* (2004), which was so full of life and drew me to see their eighteenth-century collection up close when researching *Marie Antoinette* (2006), which gave me such a fresh impression of that period. When asked to prepare two rooms for this exhibition, I was happy to join the project and do something I hadn't done before—but how do you stage a scene without actors or a story? After being immersed in Edith Wharton's *The Custom of the Country* (1913) this past year, I was glad to be assigned the McKim, Mead & White Stair Hall and the Worsham-Rockefeller Dressing Room. I tried to keep it simple and to make an atmosphere to show these clothes from that time in these beautiful rooms, and hopefully give a brief glimpse into how people lived. I invited sculptor Rachel Feinstein to create distinctive faces for each of my “characters,” to

which painter John Currin gave a dewy, lifelike finish with luminous oil paint.

Audio: Sound design by Thomas Mars, based on Robert Schumann's "Der Dichter spricht," *Kinderszenen*, op. 15, no. 13, performed by Martha Argerich. Courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg under license from Universal Music Enterprises

*THROUGH DOORWAY, ON LEFT*

**George A. Schastey & Co. (1873–97)**  
**Worsham-Rockefeller Dressing Room**  
New York City, 1881–82

Gift of The Museum of the City of New York, 2008 (2009.226.18)

In 1881, Arabella Worsham (1851–1924), then-mistress of railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington, hired the cabinetmaking and decorating firm George A. Schastey & Co. to create a series of distinctive artistic interiors for her town house at 4 West Fifty-Fourth Street. The resulting décor, including that found in this dressing room, was the height of cosmopolitan style in the early 1880s and emblematic of Worsham's quest to fashion her identity as a wealthy, prominent woman of taste.

Worsham married Huntington in 1884 and sold the house, fully furnished, to John D. and Laura Spelman Rockefeller, who made few subsequent changes. Although it was demolished in 1938, the dressing room, its adjoining bedroom (installed at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), and the Moorish reception

room (installed at the Brooklyn Museum) were preserved intact by John D. Rockefeller Jr.

A German émigré, Schastey established a thriving career amid New York's burgeoning cabinetmaking industry. The dressing room serves as a paradigm of Gilded Age design and the pinnacle of Schastey's career. Every surface is patterned, from the elaborate marquetry and carving to the painted ceiling, frieze, and stenciled walls. The exotic woods inset with mother-of-pearl depict myriad objects associated with feminine pursuits—combs, scissors, and hand mirrors for the lady's toilette, and needle cases and darning eggs for sewing. A variety of necklace and earring motifs are interspersed throughout, befitting this luxurious jewel box of a room.

## Lucie Monnay

Gilded Age dressmakers, like architects and decorators, helped define elite identities for their clients. High-style fashion mirrored the era's sumptuous interiors with opulent design schemes and intricate surface ornamentation.

Like the Worsham-Rockefeller Dressing Room's decor, the evening gown displayed here was designed to interact with ambient lighting, which created glinting effects on the meticulously sewn embroidery of opalescent bugle beads and silver thread and paillettes. Designed by Lucie Monnay, a Swiss immigrant who established herself in New York in the late 1880s, the dress displays a quality of finish and sophistication of embellishment equal to French couture. Its original wearer, Annie-May Hegeman (1859–1948), an amateur embroiderer and collector of antique textiles, appreciated fine handwork and patronized both French and American couturiers. The evening dress shown within the Worsham-Rockefeller wardrobe, created by the Parisian couture house

Jeanne Hallée and also worn by Hegeman, similarly reflects her taste for lavish embroidery.

While Paris fashions enjoyed greater prestige and often provided inspiration for American styles, New York dressmakers of this period were increasingly acknowledged by the American fashion press. Their recognition reflected the growing ambition for the city to be seen as a fashion leader in its own right—not simply interpreting trends, but directing them.

**House of Jeanne Hallée** (French, 1880–1924)  
**Evening dress**, ca. 1903

Ivory silk satin and ivory silk tulle embroidered with silver bugle beads, silver silk-and-metal thread, silver paillettes, and clear crystals and trimmed with silver silk lamé and silver cotton and metal lace

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Estate of Annie-May Hegeman, 1950 (C.I.50.40.4a, b)

**Lucie Monnay** (American, born Switzerland, 1861)

**Evening dress**, ca. 1902

Ivory silk chiffon appliquéd and pieced with light green silk velvet and ivory cotton lace, and embroidered with iridescent bugle beads, silver silk-and-metal thread, polychrome paillettes, clear crystals, and pearls

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Estate of Annie-May Hegeman, 1950 (C.I.50.40.5a, b)

## **Sofia Coppola**

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“character,” to which painter John Currin gave a dewy, lifelike finish with luminous oil paint.

Audio: Sound design by Thomas Mars, based on Robert Schumann’s “Der Dichter spricht,” *Kinderszenen*, op. 15, no. 13, performed by Martha Argerich. Courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg under license from Universal Music Enterprises

CASE STUDY, LEFT SIDE OF NEXT GALLERY

**Herman Rossberg** (American, born ca. 1848)

**Wedding ensemble, 1887**

Gray wool twill trimmed with taupe silk braid and ivory cotton plain weave

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. James G. Flockhart, 1968 (C.I.68.53.5b,c)

On April 23, 1887, Louise Whitfield married industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in a small ceremony at her family home on West Forty-Eighth Street in New York.

*image captions:*

Louise Whitfield Carnegie and Andrew Carnegie, 1887, and the day's *New York Times* mentioning the wedding

*image description:*

*left:* a man with light skin tone and a beard wearing a dark suit, sitting with one hand resting on a cane and the other holding a hat, and a woman with light skin tone in a dark dress wearing a dark suit, a hat, and dark gloves with a walking stick or umbrella standing next to him

*right:* the front page of a newspaper with clippings highlighting coverage of the wedding

Whitfield's wedding suit included a second coordinating bodice—displayed here—appropriate for travel and informal occasions during the couple's honeymoon. The sobriety of the design was not only practical but also honored the recent loss of Carnegie's mother, Margaret.

Although the appearance of the dress is subdued, its complex construction and refined finishing details reveal its maker's skill. Intricate braided trimming takes inspiration from men's military uniforms.

*image description:*

a line drawing highlighting the details of the dress on the left side of hip and skirt

The interior is as finely executed as the exterior, with the bodice carefully lined in gold-and-gray striped silk.

*image description:*

the silk lining of the bodice with lines indicating its construction

To help create the bustled silhouette, strips of boning were stitched into the back of the skirt, with ties to hold them in the desired shape.

*image description:*

the interior construction of the skirt showing arcs of boning against ruffled fabric

For support, a hoop skirt was worn underneath.

*image description:*

a line drawing showing the shape of a hoop skirt underneath the heavier lines of the outer skirt

The ensemble was created by tailor Herman Rossberg, a German immigrant who established himself in New York in the 1870s.

At the time of Carnegie's wedding, Rossberg was located on Thirty-Second Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue, a prime location for fashion retail.

*image description:*

a close-up of the fabric with a blue tag reading "H. Rossberg New York"

As one of New York's leading tailors, Rossberg was invited by Vogue to participate in an 1897 event designed to highlight the talents of American makers. Each participating dressmaker or tailor created doll-sized fashions that showcased their design specialty.

*image description:*

a magazine page with nine dress designs

Rossberg contributed a riding habit comprising a coat, a waistcoat, and his patented riding skirt.

Rossberg's patented skirt was designed for sidesaddle riding, with an opening for the pommel and an interior strap to keep the skirt in place.

*image caption:*

*Vogue*, May 6, 1897

*image description:*

a drawing of a man and two women dressed formally, riding horses; a close-up of the woman in the middle highlights her riding habit, and then the design of her outfit is shown

Few fashions by Rossberg are known to have survived, though his work represents the height of tailoring in the late nineteenth century.

*THROUGH GALLERY, THEN LEFT TO END OF HALL, THEN  
TO RIGHT*

## **Frank Lloyd Wright Room**

Wayzata, Minnesota, 1912–14

Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.60.1)

The living room was the center of family activity in one of the grandest homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) in the Prairie School style, a distinctive approach to modern architecture that responded to the open vistas of the midwestern landscape. Built for lawyer and businessman Francis W. Little (ca. 1860–1923) and his wife, Mary (ca. 1870–1941), the summer retreat overlooking Lake Minnetonka embodied Wright's comprehensive architectural vision. Working closely with his clients, Wright designed every element of the house, including the furniture, windows, and light fixtures.

The Littles first hired Wright to design their 1903 home in Peoria, Illinois. In 1907, the family moved to Minneapolis and once again contacted the architect, commissioning from him a new summer home in

nearby Wayzata. Wright envisioned this house as a series of largely self-contained pavilions stretching 250 feet along the lakeshore.

Though undoubtedly one of this country's greatest architects, Wright was never easy to work with. The Littles and Wright's sometimes-strained friendship survived disagreements over design and timeline. This room's windows became a major point of contention. After much back-and-forth, Wright begrudgingly reduced the areas of intricate leaded glass in the lower windows, so that the Littles' cherished view of Lake Minnetonka could be admired through large panes of plain glass.

## Charles James

Charles James, like Frank Lloyd Wright, possessed a steadfast artistic vision, a trait that profoundly shaped his client relationships. As one design assistant said of James, he “was a genius but impossible. He had his own ideas for designs and fitted them to the customers whether they liked them or not.” Most clients accepted the couturier’s intractable nature and embraced his singular perspective. He maintained collaborative relationships with a select few, including the socialite and art collector Millicent Rogers (1902–1953), whom he credited with inspiring some of his best designs.

James crafted his fashions with the precision of an architect, using complex understructures and unconventional seaming to transform the wearer’s silhouette, often with allusions to the natural world. His “Butterfly” ball gown, for instance, evokes outstretched wings with layers of richly hued tulle, while his “Swan” mimics the bird’s arched back.

Although they suggest metamorphosis, James’s designs were also in tune with the wearer’s body,

emphasizing its sensuality with seams, draping, or contrasting materials that outlined the figure or accentuated erotically charged zones. In one of his more overt examples—a peach faille and marigold taffeta gown made for Rogers—suggestive draping at the pelvis echoes female anatomy.

**Charles James** (American, born Great Britain, 1906–1978)

**Evening dress, 1947**

Black silk jersey and black silk satin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. William Woodward Jr., 1964 (C.I.64.74.1)

**“Clover Leaf” ball gown, 1953**

Pink silk faille and copper silk shantung appliquéd with black silk lace

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Josephine Abercrombie, 1953 (2009.300.784)

## **Ball gown, 1948**

Light orange silk faille and orange silk taffeta

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Arturo and Paul Peralta-Ramos, 1954 (2009.300.2787)

## **“Diamond” evening dress, 1957**

Ivory silk satin, mauve silk twill, and black rayon velvet

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Marguerite Piazza, 1984 (2009.300.1015)

## **Evening dress, 1951**

Brown silk taffeta and green silk satin

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Eleanor Searle Whitney McCollum, 1975 (1975.246.7a)

## **“Swan” ball gown, ca. 1954**

Cream silk satin overlaid with brown silk chiffon and light brown nylon tulle, and polychrome nylon tulle

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009 (2009.300.8523)

**“Butterfly” ball gown, ca. 1955**

Cream silk satin overlaid with brown silk chiffon and light brown nylon tulle; brown silk satin; and polychrome nylon tulle

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of The Costume Institute Gifts, 2013 (2013.591)

**“Petal” ball gown, 1951**

Green silk velvet and ivory silk taffeta

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Marietta Tree, 1965 (C.I.65.36.2)

## **Martin Scorsese**

Create a one-frame movie in a period room?

A great opportunity and an intriguing challenge.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Room, one of the most beautiful I've ever seen. The extraordinary dresses of Charles James. These were my givens, my riches. I needed to find an emotional situation that suggested a story, many stories, and that could be felt across the length of that room, in the stances of the men and women, in what or whom they're gazing at. And I knew it had to be midcentury.

I turned to the cinema, specifically to melodrama, and to the vibrant three-strip Technicolor of the 1940s. Specifically, I turned to a film that has always haunted and inspired me and that affects me deeply every time I watch it, John Stahl's adaptation of *Leave Her to Heaven*, a true Technicolor noir. What happens before our one-frame movie? And after? My hope is that people will come away with multiple possibilities unfolding in their mind's eye.

Audio: Excerpt from the score of *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945),  
composed by Alfred Newman, 1945

*MANNEQUIN OUTSIDE WINDOWS ON LEFT SIDE OF ROOM*

Man's ensemble here and additional prop fashion accessories  
in the Frank Lloyd Wright Room courtesy of Helen Uffner  
Vintage Clothing.