

Fashion in Paris

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Abstract

This paper discusses textiles in the Paris: Capital of Fashion exhibition at The Museum of FIT. Begins by giving information on the exhibition such as the theme. This paper then continues to describe in detail two chosen fabrics, a mauve silk/wool dress and a red silk satin dress. Ending with a concluding statement about Paris as the center of Fashion.

*Keywords:* Paris, Fashion, Silk, Dress, Fabric, Museum of FIT

### Paris is Fashion

The current exhibition at The Museum at FIT is Paris: Capital of Fashion, open since September 6, 2019 till January 4, 2020. It's located on Seventh Avenue at 27th Street, New York City and it was made possible by the Director: Valerie Steele, the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT, and numerous foundations. The first exhibition you see when you enter the museum explores the theme of Paris fashion in communication with other fashion capitals like New York, Tokyo, and Milan. "On display are Paris couture originals, contrasted with American copies, enabling visitors to see how the idea of Paris fashion has "worked" across national boundaries" (Valerie Steele, 2019). The exhibition also incorporates the role of immigrants and their impact on cultural diversity. Moving onto the main gallery, which is all about French historical fashion such as haute couture, royalty, luxury etc. This paper will focus on the textiles made in the first exhibition.

### **Silk and Wool Dress**

The dress is described as a mauve silk faille and white wool outdoor dress from 1889, USA made by Madame Victorine. The dressmaker is described to have been a "French immigrant or someone who adopted a French name in belief that it sounded more stylish, thus attracting clients who could not afford to shop in Paris". (Museum at FIT, 98.1.1)

Image 1, depicts the dress with puffed sleeves, which seem to be cut in two fabrics because the puffed sleeve stops just below the elbow. It's loosely fitted while the fabric under the puffed sleeve seems to be narrow. Throughout the dress there are velvet looking strips of fabric along the neckline, waist, running down the front like a lapel, and running down the skirt part of

the dress. The green floral design with orange, yellow/white yarn interlaced is also abundant throughout the dress. It looks like they used embellished yarn because it has a bronze/orangey shine. The mauve fabric has a small ribbed texture. There are hidden buttons/loops under the lapel strips. The dress is floor length and appears to have 2/more layered fabrics. Looking towards the back of the dress, I noticed a small bustle.

The first thing about this fabric that caught my attention was the fact that it looks vintage and it reminds me of the dresses worn back when there were royalty. I really like the floral design traveling down the middle of the top section. It works well with the cut of the garment because it makes it look elongated. Everything is geometrically placed and thought out. The cultural/historical origin of the fabric is from 1889 when the current trends were princess line dress and bustles. According to the Fashion History site, the princess line began around 1877. (2019). It was a dress that currested the body with vertical seams and tucks. The bustle around this time was reducing in size, which explains why it isn't as noticeable.

The fabric is made out of natural fibers, so I would assume this individual was kind of wealthy if they could afford natural fibers. Made with simple yarns, the part that looks velvety might be a novelty yarn. I think based on the time period the dress is woven, not really stretchy it was constricting. The dress is both plain and embellished, adding a bit of flashy excitement for the individual wearing this fabric because it plays with texture, shapes and that attracts attention.

This garment spoke to me personally because I like watching movies or tv shows about royalty and I've always wanted to wear a dress like this. This garment triggers an association that

I have with these gowns which would be the show Reign, about Mary Queen of Scots. I could picture myself wearing this garment.

### **Red Silk Dress**

The red silk satin dress was made in fall 1952, USA, by Jacques Fath for Joseph Halpert. The description says that Jacques Fath had licensing agreements and would experiment with new types of arrangements, like “his collaboration with Seventh Avenue manufacturer Joseph Halpert, who mass-produced thousands of Fath’s designs. Some foreign manufacturers found it cheaper to visit New York to buy line-for-line copies than to go to Paris”. (Museum at FIT 2013.19.1)

Image 2, depicts a vibrant red satin midi dress with black detailing such as a bow, buttons, and a small belt. The bow looks like its velvet, it holds the neckline of the dress. The dress looks pleated, and it has two vertical seams along the bust. The three black buttons look like diamond shaped beads. The dress is cinched in at the waist by a small vinyl belt, that might be like an inch or an inch and a half. The dress is also long-sleeved and it appears to have multiple panels of the same fabric because of where it’s stitched; it’s noticeable.

I like that the fabric is red and has this nice subtle luster look/sheen to it. This added shine, with the midi cut of the dress makes it look classy. The historical/cultural background of this fabric is that it’s from 1952, massively produced in the USA. According to the Fashion History site, this silhouette style appeared in the late 1940s when “Christian Dior’s “New Look” appeared in February 1947, it became an instant success and the nipped-in waist and full-skirted silhouette remained the leading style until the mid-1950s”. (2019)

This silk satin dress is made up of natural fibers, with the only embellishments being the buttons. It's a woven dress, made up of simple and novelty yarns. This garment's color spoke to me once I turned away from the earlier time period garments. It reminds me of something I'd envision Marilyn Monroe wear. I could picture one of my friends wearing this dress because she's very girly, when it comes to dresses. I love that it's such a simple dress, but with the vibrancy of the red contrasting with the black objects, to me it adds an interesting alluring effect.

### **Conclusion**

The objects I chose are one of the main contributors to Paris being the center of Fashion. The Paris: Capital of Fashion opens up this conversation of fashion revolving around Paris and what it'd be like.

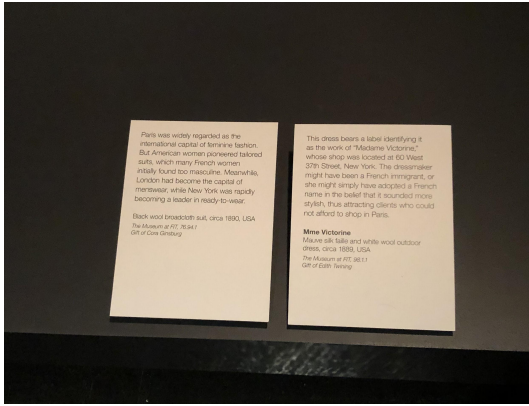
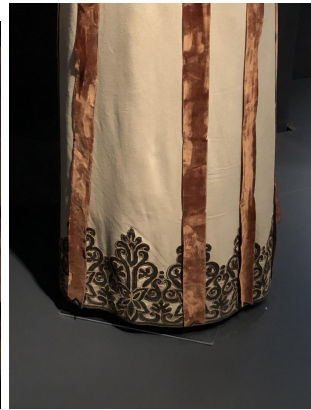


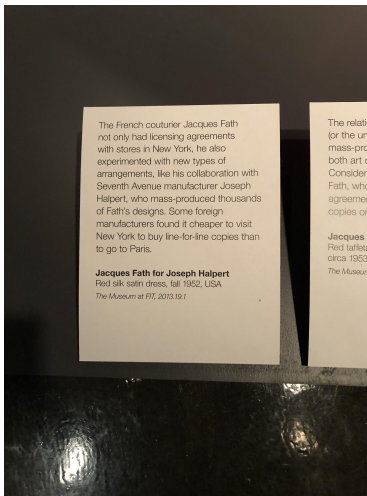
Image 1 "Sourced by  
(2019)



Museum at FIT"



Silk/Wool Dress





*Image 2 "Sourced by Museum at FIT" (2019): Silk Dress*





*A picture of me in front of the first wallpaper display you see when you enter and walk down the stairs to the exhibition. (Sourced from iPhone 8 Plus, 2019)*

#### References

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