

Guadalupe Soriano

Guadalupe.Soriano00@cuny.edu.

Arth 1204 D438(65091)

March 18, 2020

Museum Exhibition Object Analysis Paper

A Robe a la Francaise brocade silk jacquard made in the 18th century, a Sack-Back Gown that is made up of silk fabric, a more expensive material to show power and wealth. The gown that I am analyzing is a gown at the Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology. It is a brown/nude gown with a green undertone. There is decor of very specific floral stitched patterns which makes it seem garden inspired. The silhouette is a bustle/bell shaped due to the undergarments and corset under the gown, this also gave it the unique square shape of the gown. Under the dress would usually contain a casket to lift up the gown which gives it its unique square shape silhouette. The sleeves contain ruffles at the elbows and on the back several square pleats are formed to create the sack-like effect. The rest of the skirt would then rest on the wide hoop and underskirts to maintain its volume.

The attire would be worn by the wealthy as an informal court attire at first, the Sack gown was also known as a Mantau dress. The attire was originally made to be worn as an informal attire due to the loose fitting, a free fall all throughout the dress. The loose fitting made the attire look like a sack which is where it got its name from. “Women’s clothing styles retained the emphasis on a narrow, inverted conical torso, achieved with boned stays, above full skirts. Hoop skirts continued to be worn, reaching their largest size in the 1750s, and were sometimes replaced by side-hoops, also called ‘false hips’, or panniers. Court dress had little or no physical comfort with restriction of movement.”(fashion history) The change of silhouette was affected as well because of the era and what was happening in society.

Changes in society were developed throughout the 18th century, during this time period the enlightenment era was still going on. The enlightenment era was the movement of reasoning, individualism and science, ideas and reasoning of individuals progressed as more philosophers began to question the traditional ideas of humanity. Because of all of the new changes, the remodeling of society began. Fashion as a whole began to change and became influenced by others. Wealth and power throughout the era was impacted as well. "Merchants and factory owners soon had enough wealth to dictate important parts of political and economic life and to influence fashions. No longer were wealthy nobles the only people who could afford the luxuries of life." ( fashion encyclopedia)

During the 18th century, fashion was being inspired by what was going on in society. The idea of European costume fashion began to develop because of the reign of Louis XIV in England. Ending in the renaissance era and beginning in the enlightenment era. A new period of art begins to develop as designers are influenced by the culture that is being exposed, such as in European countries. For example the designers were inspired by French artists/painters such as Antoine Watteau, his art was romanticized, with his art gowns named after him. The silhouette of previous eras of gowns stayed the same or enhanced like the sack back gown. The gown was worn by aristocratic women, to be worn at home or pregnant women. Since it was more enhanced in the hips and the back the torso area was left alone. "By the end of the century the Age of Enlightenment had become a popular cultural movement that favored reason over authority. Intellectuals questioned the leadership of royalty and the church and supported free thought" (fashion encyclopedia)

The garment was displayed in a dark room with enhanced lights shining specifically to the garments displayed. In the display not only did it showcase the one garment but it also displayed what men would have worn during that time as well as the shoes. Overall the display was showcased with similar garments from the same time period, with similar gowns and accessories. Throughout the exhibition, there were a variety of different eras of women's fashion throughout the years. Including several movements that affected society as a whole. With the sack back gown the garment did fit in the exhibition because with further research the dress was

established during a time of change. The garment itself is now a part of history that has changed society. Throughout our lectures we have learned about the history of fashion throughout the centuries. The closest that we have learned that connects to this garment is the Day dress from the 19th century. With similar silhouettes and coverage the garments can connect with not that different of a time period and technology . The material may be different but similar in weight and style. Overall the exhibition was effective, as well as further research. The exhibition was successful in showing us how the garments looked. Instead of looking at them through a screen, we were able to experience the actual garment in person.



## Sources

Eighteenth-Century Revolt. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/fashion\\_costume\\_culture/European-Culture-18th-Century/Eighteenth-Century-Revolt.html](http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/fashion_costume_culture/European-Culture-18th-Century/Eighteenth-Century-Revolt.html)

Johanna Roseanne, D. (2016, July 17). Sack-back gown. Retrieved from <https://historyandartblog.wordpress.com/2016/07/17/sack-back-gown/>

(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/83094>

1770-1779. (2017, July 26). Retrieved from <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1770-1779/>