

**Statement Sleeves Exhibit at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology**

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## **Statement Sleeves Exhibit at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology**

Statement sleeves are distinctive sleeve styles designed to be exceptionally dramatic, embellished, or intricately crafted, often serving as the focal point of a garment. These sleeves often surpass traditional designs, highlighting elaborate craftsmanship and unique silhouettes that command attention. For instance, day dresses consisted of a top with wide, bell-shaped “pagoda” sleeves always filled with large, ballooning undersleeves called engagements, a classic representation of 1860s fashion (Fashion History, 2019). This style features voluminous, puffed sleeves that extend dramatically from the shoulder and taper down to the wrist, creating a striking, exaggerated shape that defines the garment's overall look. On the other hand, a men’s robe from the 20th century, constructed from stripes of silk and velvet, embodies the era’s fascination with Eastern influences. This robe frequently showcases a kimono-inspired sleeve, wide and flowing, with a relaxed fit that captures the elegance and luxury of the period. The use of silk and velvet in the robe further underscores the era's penchant for opulent materials and bold patterns. One can then comprehend the significance of sleeves and their history and endorsement for society (Fashion History, 2019). An exemplary display of statement sleeves can be observed at the Museum at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, showcasing a couture dress by Marc Bohan for Christian Dior, presented in Figure 1 (2024). The attention to detail is impeccable, with the sleeves adorned with delicate feathers, shimmering rhinestones, and intricate lace, elevating the sleeve shapes into something more.

Dior unveiled a stunning dress featuring a striking shade of orange. This particular hue evokes emotions of friendliness, sociability, excitement, and vibrancy, making it a bold and expressive choice (Bell, 2024). The dress perfectly embodies earthy, warm tones, evoking feelings of homeliness, family, farm life, and simplicity. The orange hue is achieved through a combination of primary colors, primarily yellow and orange, with a delicate light tint to create a

lovely, lighter peach tone. This combination of colors and tones creates a truly unique and captivating garment (Bell, 2024). The color peach is a beautiful, warm hue positioned in the yellow segment of the color wheel. Peach is often linked to notions of youth, health, and affection. The base color of the garment manifests as a gentle tint of orange, creating an exquisitely soft pastel backdrop for the intricate feather and rhinestone embellishments that grace its surface. The dress adheres to a monochromatic color scheme, lending it a sense of aesthetic unity (Bell, 2024). Furthermore, the rhinestones adorning the garment exude a warm gold hue, enriching the ensemble with a lustrous semblance of sunshine, joy, and positivity.

The significance of *lines* refers to the direction of the garment, similar to how composition refers to the organization of elements to achieve a unified look in the garment, including balanced traits that indicate the garment's symmetric relationship. The vertical lines in the garment's sleeve convey a sense of strength, height, pride, and dignity (Bell, 2024). These lines draw the eyes up and down, creating an illusion of length and height, making the wearer appear taller and more slender (Bell, 2024). On the other hand, the rhinestone horizontal lines attached to the sleeve evoke a sense of ease, restfulness, and calm. They can create the illusion of added width, making the garment appear broader (2024).

When it comes to the *balance* in a garment, there are two main types: symmetrical and asymmetrical. Symmetrical balance creates a mirror image effect, with both sides being identical regarding visual weight and elements. On the other hand, asymmetrical balance involves creating equilibrium between different elements on each side without mirroring them exactly (Bell, 2024). In the context of Dior's design, symmetrical balance plays a prominent role. The garment features a vertical symmetry, presenting a mirror image that directs the eyes down the sleeves and establishes a consistent flow. The garment showcases symmetrical balance through various

design elements, such as having both sleeves attached at the shoulder seam. This meticulous attention to detail contributes to a cohesive and harmonious overall appearance.

*Rhythm* is described as the seamless movement from one element to another (Bell, 2024), guiding the viewer's eye smoothly from the main feature to the secondary elements. In the featured garment, rhythm is evident in the interplay of lines on the dress. The vertical lines on the feathered sleeve first capture our attention, with the pop of textiles seeming out of the sleeve. Next, the horizontal rhinestones on the sleeve create a sense of depth in the dress, making it stand out even more. Finally, the long horizontal belt on the garment adds dimension, enhancing the overall flow and structure of the dress.

The garment's *contrast* is its use of different *textures* and *textiles*. *Texture* refers to how the surface of the garment looks and feels. Textiles include any fabric or material used for the garment. Contrasting textures can add a sense of humor or surprise, making the design more dynamic (Bell, 2024). This dress fabric is a silk piece known for its soft, slightly textured surface that drapes beautifully. Silk has a smooth and shiny quality, reflecting light and creating an impression of lightness, which often gives a feminine feel because of its finish. The garment is decorated with delicate feathers and sparkling rhinestones. The silk crepe gives a luxurious, flowing quality, while the feathers add elegance, and the rhinestones introduce a shimmering, eye-catching element. This combination creates a strong visual contrast, enhancing the overall impact of the garment.

*Dominance* highlights the elements intended to stand out (Bell, 2024). In this garment, color takes center stage, creating a striking monochromatic effect. While the color commands attention, the vertical lines on the sleeve impart a sense of pride and majesty (2024), contrasting with the overall color-focused design.

*Proportion* is the relationship of size, scale, and weight among elements (Bell, 2024). In the context of the dress, the lines contribute to a balanced proportion. The extended feathers on the dress play a crucial role in drawing visual focus to the sleeves, adding weight and prominence (Bell, 2024). Additionally, the subtle horizontal line across the middle of the dress introduces a contrasting pattern that complements the overall design. The variation in line sizes not only forms a distinct pattern but also highlights different areas of the dress. This accentuates both the sleeves and the body, thereby contributing to the overall shape and dimension of the garment.

The concept of *juxtaposition* in fashion involves pairing unexpected elements to create a unique and distinct look (Bell, 2024). This can include combining contrasting styles or colors not typically seen together. Within this garment, juxtaposition is evident in the choice of materials. Recognized for its luxurious and feminine qualities, silk adds an element of elegance and comfort. It conveys connotations and often represents sophistication and high status in clothing. With a rich history in fashion, feathers symbolize status, wealth, freedom, and strength.

Christian Dior is renowned for his groundbreaking approach to fashion, his deep understanding of women and their needs, and his pivotal role in changing the fashion industry. In 1947, Dior revolutionized fashion with his "New Look" collection, characterized by rounded shoulders, a cinched waist, and a voluminous skirt (LVMH, 2024). This collection celebrated femininity, providing a fresh perspective after years of wartime austerity. Dior's designs captured the post-war longing for beauty, elegance, and luxury, empowering women to embrace confidence and allure. Dior's influence extends beyond design; he fundamentally reshaped the fashion business. His innovations included pioneering licensing practices and creating

collections for a single demographic (LVMH, 2024). Dior's ability to balance creative vision with financial acumen ensured the enduring success and resilience of his brand.



**Figure 1**

*Christian Dior (Marc Bohan), dress, peach silk crepe, feathers, and rhinestones, fall 1968, France, gift of Mrs. Linda Mitchell, 91.183.5*



**Figure 2**

*Guadalupe Soriano at the Museum at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology.*



## References

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<https://www.fitnyc.edu/museum/documents/statement-sleeves-mfit-brochure-acc.pdf>

Figure 1 (2024, July 25) Christian Dior (Marc Bohan), peach silk crepe, feathers, and rhinestones dress. The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY, United States.

<https://www.fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions/statement-sleeves/index.php>

Figure 2 Figure 1 (2024, July 25) Student Guadalupe Soriano at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY, United States.