

Fashion's Modern Muse

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Essay #1

Power, strength, determination — these are a few words one thinks of when they hear the names Elizabeth Warren, Ursula von der Leyen and Margrethe Vestager; some of the world's top female politicians (Britannica, 2019; Rankin, 2019). These women are soaring in a field that was once considered for men only. Friedman states (2020), "In the world of Elizabeth Warren and Ursula von der Leyen and Margrethe Vestager, the assumption that a woman who comes out fighting has to hide in a man's suit has shattered." Women no longer have to dress masculine to be viewed as an authoritative figure. In the exhibition at The Museum of F.I.T. titled, Ballet: Fashion's modern muse, an evening dress designed by Pierre Balmain was featured that depicted both masculine and feminine characteristics.

Pierre Balmain's evening dress (see figure 1) is constructed out of an off-white tulle fabric. The off-white color symbolizes innocence and purity, women in politics have been seen wearing white to display unity towards the women's suffrage movement (Lang, 2020; Allen, 2019). The tulle has a rough, uneven *texture* that is suggestive of masculinity (Adomaitis, n.d.). Tulle absorbs light and gives off the appearance of being a heavier fabric although it is light and flowy. The bodice features an off the shoulder neckline which cascades into ruched *diagonal lines* extending from both sides. The diagonal lines are suggestive of strength and action (n.d.). Although the bodice displays the same cascading ruched diagonal lines, one line overlaps the other creating an *asymmetrical balance*; "both sides offer equal weight but are not exact replicas" (n.d.). The bodice connects to a maxi, A-line skirt in the same tulle fabric creating a uniform appearance. Although the *composition* portrays femininity and elegance there is a *juxtaposition* between what one visually observes and what the elements of design are trying to express. The elements of design used in Pierre Balmain's evening dress (see figure 2) can

communicate Friedman's statement because women no longer have to show strength through a suit, they can wear feminine dresses and still communicate power.

Figure 1. Cream off the shoulder evening dress



Essay #2

Color evokes emotion, different colors can ignite different feelings at any given moment. That is why color is so significant in fashion, it is what initially draws one to a garment, creates a connection. The Museum of F.I.T. featured an exhibition titled, *Ballerina: Fashion's modern muse*, which showcased a vibrant *monochromatic* green ballet costume designed by Barbara Karinska (see figure 2). The bodice consists of cream sheer chiffon and smooth satin, in a rich emerald *hue* (Adomaitis, n.d.). The boatneck neckline is adorned with *adjacent* colors (Bell, 2017), emerald and gold; emerald crystals enclosed in a gold ribbon. Right where the neckline meets the shoulders there are emerald crystal tassels that give the appearance of cap sleeves. The sheer chiffon is embellished with a large emerald pendant, and right below there are more emerald crystals reminiscent of an infinity symbol. The *shading* of the skirt consists of different *values* of green tulle. Right where the tulle skirt meets the bodice there are teardrop-shaped emerald satin pieces of fabric encircling the border. They are adorned with a large emerald crystal placed directly in the center and outlined with a gold ribbon.

Figure 2. Green monochromatic ballet costume



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