

History: Evening Wear Gowns

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<sup>1</sup> History: Evening Wear Gowns

## Abstract

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Evening wear was originally built and worn as a way to feel more comfortable to do it all. Evening wear psychologically can make someone feel as if they exceptional . As time progressed, the uses for gowns and other evening dresses changed from everyday uses to high class events. The Greeks used tunics as a start up to the evolution of many gowns in the future. They had become a way to show status and as well class. Marie Antoinette was one to definitely show class and wealth through her silk gowns. Present day society, still uses this idea of having evening wear to represent their class and wealth. Fast Fashion has taken over though, leaving many designers question the direction in where their company will head. As material gets cheaper and technology improves, it is easier than ever to create new innovated designs. The classical gowns and evening wear were usually made out of silk and chiffon. As the textiles industry progresses, new ideas will be brought out but as always... the classic will always be a classic and seen as a reference to look back on.. Today it is easier to get evening wear but lets say if it's from a business such as Oscar De la Renta, it will be as difficult due to how they kept their classic elements into their company. From a date, to someone walking down the aisle, the gown will be seen as classy and elegant.

*Keywords:* Greeks, society, silk, chiffon and Oscar De la Renta

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Evening gowns have been serving purpose for many centuries to emphasize a person's character by wearing any set gown. Whether it is to enhance a person's sexuality, to give social power or class. It gave a sense of empowerment for women even through the oppression many still deal with in today's society. Specifically, evening gowns have been marketed to women as a way to let others know they are strong and powerful. This idea goes way back to the Ancient Greeks, when evening gowns were just functional with no intent in making them the way it is in present days. "In antiquity, clothing was usually homemade and the same piece of homespun fabric could serve as a garment, shroud, or blanket." (*Department of Greek and Roman Art. "Ancient Greek Dress." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-*

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/grdr/hd\\_grdr.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/grdr/hd_grdr.htm) (October 2003). Influenced by the Greeks, Egypt took it upon themselves to create a difference between social classes by making fashion determine an individual wealth. (© Neil Adams - *Painting of Nefertari and Isis: Art #1*)

"Upper-class women wore pleated dresses with fringes, sometimes covered with a transparent garment. Formal clothing was often more elaborate and the later periods brought Greek or Roman fashions. Peasant women wore plain linen dresses and some statues show servant girls wearing dresses made of colored fabrics sewn in a checkered pattern." ("Fashion in Ancient Egypt." *Fashion and Clothing in Ancient Egypt*)

[www.ancient-egypt-online.com/ancient-egypt-fashion.html](http://www.ancient-egypt-online.com/ancient-egypt-fashion.html))



*Image #1*

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Fast Forwarding to recent times, gowns are still used in social class events to enhance class or sexuality. Two icons that have impact the country and as well as the world: Hillary Clinton and as well Jackie Kennedy have used fashion in order to present themselves as strong leaders in a world that didn't let them have much of a voice. Jackie Kennedy an iconic woman to many and an influencer in the fashion industry has always presented herself with evening wear that made her look classical and ready for anything coming at her way. With Jackie Kennedy, her gown shows the boldness of her attitude about her position as first lady. The designer for the gown is Ethel Frankau of Bergdorf Custom Salon but it was sketched out by ideas Jackie had suggested. The gown was a strapless bodice under chiffon which was covered with embroidered with silver threading. "Along with a description of the inaugural wardrobe, the Washington Post reported that Mrs. Kennedy's "career as a major fashion influence was beginning impressively."



*Image #2*

(Jacqueline Kennedy." National Museum of American History, 26 Sept. 2013, [americanhistory.si.edu/first-ladies/Jacqueline-Kenned](http://americanhistory.si.edu/first-ladies/Jacqueline-Kenned).) Ethel Frankau was a worker at Bergdorf Goodman but widely known as "a woman of awesome gentility, whose ladylike reserve has kept other employees and can take our clients in line" "Ethel Frankacau, 85, a Director of Haute Couture Salon, Dies." The New York Times, The New York Times, 27 June 1971, [www.nytimes.com/1971/06/27/archives/ethel-frankau-85-a-direcor-of-haute-couture-salon-dies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/27/archives/ethel-frankau-85-a-direcor-of-haute-couture-salon-dies.html). Without having to explain what her duty will be for those 4 years... her garment spoke on how professional she is on the position, as well on how ready she is as a strong woman wearing a golden gown to her husband's inauguration party. For Jackie Kennedy, the textile choice was an

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ivory silk chiffon evening gown with a fully lined A-line skirt and three-quarter length sleeves which Mrs. Kennedy worn with elbow length gloves. It was a popular style of cut through the 1960's and 1970's. As well choice in fabric, silk was popular and still is. An A-line skirt was widely the cut many gowns had due to how classic it made the garment look. Politics in general is an influence, especially in the case of Jackie Kennedy where it was an opening ceremony to showcase the beginning of the public leader in America. Everyone had their eyes on Jackie and her husband to see if they were to slip up but instead Mrs. Kennedy looked ready and elegant. She's was looked up as what the definition of a is perfect woman is in society during the 60's. During the 60's usually woman went for the elegant cuts. It says a lot about how the mentality of women in society was back in the 60's due to how revealing cuts were kept to a minimum. But fashion constantly was changing due to how cheap fabric was due to synthetic fabric. In the 1970's, America's fashion was catching up to the standards Europe had. Evening wear had become softer and as well sexier. "Designed for a woman, energetic, tawny, all-American." Oscar: the style, inspiration and life of Oscar de la Renta. Assouline, 2002. Besides synthetic fabric, evening wear was considered fun and flowy due to the hippie era that took the country and world by a storm. The early sixties fashion was still very lady like: items marked waist and required a fully developed body to be able to wear them. The hairstyles were rigid, heavy makeup. The prints and more expressive. Late 1960s clothes have much charm, because it was slowly breaking with the model of beauty and elegance of the previous decade. This rupture would be exploited to the maximum by the end of the Decade. "Women's 1960s fashion was extreme style and attitude from the start of the decade to the end. In the early years, the fashion idol was Jackie Kennedy with her perfectly white pearls and tailored suit dresses. By the middle of the decade, supermodel Twiggy had women freeing their minds and bodies into clothing that didn't require any extra thought or effort. From modest to "there is no such thing as too short," 1960s fashions were in many ways like the 1920s-flapper revolution. But it didn't happen overnight." 1960s Fashion: What Did Women Wear?" VintageDancer.com, 3 Nov. 2017, [vintagedancer.com/1960s/1960s-fashion-womens/](http://vintagedancer.com/1960s/1960s-fashion-womens/).

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After the 1980's, it was seen through many platforms whether it was political or fashion that women were having more of a say in what they wanted in life. In the case of Hillary Clinton, she was at the center of attention not just because her husband had become president but as well she was supposed to represent well the female gender during the time that more and more voices came out about women's rights. The 90's was once more another revolution for women on many topics. As the wife of the president, she had created a platform and seemed bold just like Jackie Kennedy during the times of freedom for women that wanted to branch out of the norm. Hillary Clinton tried to mimic the same style as Jackie's garment in the 1961 pre-inaugural for her husband. The cape over a gown made both Jackie and Hillary bold. Some criticized Hillary's gown stating that it didn't fit her well to her age and body and how on Jackie it looked like it fit her well. A garment can make a political statement most definitely.



Image #3

Hillary Clinton's gown stayed safe by going with a classic cut such as the A-line cut. The classic will never get old and will be usually used as a reference at time for new innovative designs. Hillary wore a garment that favors how strong women are during an era women were trying to progress with having a voice and freedom in society.

(Image #3:傑奎琳的禦用品牌Oscar de la Renta為什麼曆久彌新?. (n.d.). Retrieved November 26, 2017, from <http://www.gooread.com/article/20121217961/>) Comparing both eras with 2017 it shows a lot how long we have progressed as a gender from using a classic gown to show bold and power, leading to progress with having the same bold and power to show what women are

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capable of. As someone that is a powerful influencer in fashion and as well as the world. In the 1990's classic designers were making a comeback. Designers such as Oscar de La Renta and

many designers who were classic icons back in the 60's and 70's had a slowdown in their company but successfully made a comeback. By adapting to new rules in fashion, many designers such as Oscar de La Renta. "Slimming down his entrance-making ball gowns to body-flattering evening dresses. He recalibrated his collection to meet the demands of the modern woman: sexy tops that would not only be gorgeous for evening but hip with a pair of jeans, looser options than the skirt suit that has once been the uniform ladies who lunch..."

Mower, Sarah. *Oscar: the style, inspiration and life of Oscar de la Renta*. Assouline, 2002. Going forward into the years, gowns were being used less while casual wear and streetwear were in. Many designers did keep their iconic evening wear but some



(Image #4:W. (2016, September 08). Hm Wallpapers. Retrieved November 26, 2017, from <http://wallsdesk.com/hm-42772/hm-wallpapers/>) had adjusted to "ready to wear". Now in fashion, it is being seen that a lot of consumers are leaning towards the fast fashion side. Evening wear is now seen not just in big department stores but as well as other stores like: Zara, H&M (Image #4), Forever21 and Topshop. Many designers are worried about how this can affect their gross in their company. Consumerism has increased through the years, resulting in leaving behind old sense of style and leaving the classics behind to dust.

Comparing both eras, it is safe to say that the classics will always be a reference to go back on and have some guidance on creating new and innovated designs. Fashion has taken a

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turn with style though these recent years. Street wear is taking over many brands that weren't used to contemporary styling. We have designers who have kept it the same such as Oscar de La Renta but then we have designers such as Donna Karan New York who has tried to shimmy into

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the spotlight with the trend. As human beings, we are programmed to adapt no matter what the situation is. Clearly in fashion it has been applied. Styles such as the ones Jackie Kennedy and Hillary Clinton wore clearly indicate that if someone would want to be recognized as someone equipped for the job, the individual will follow the classic cut and looks. "Fashion is about dressing according to what's fashionable. Style is more about being yourself." *Heilpern, John. "Out to Lunch: Oscar de la Renta." Vanities, Vanity Fair, 6 Nov. 2017*



. Fashion has evolved to what is trending. But if someone were to go out for an interview, she would have to dress accordingly just as the two icons that dressed to show off their wealth, class (Bridal. (n.d.). Retrieved November 26, 2017, from <https://www.pinterest.com/joelandson/bridal/?lp=true> Image #5) and as well how arranged they are. As well as they both kept it a classic with fabrics such as ivory silk chiffon for Jackie Kennedy (image #5) and chiffon for Hillary Clinton. The 60's were about being free in a society that put down woman, while in the 90's Hillary Clinton had more of an advantage due to how high the response was to be on a higher level as a female. With garments, we can express ourselves louder than words can. Within the 60's evening wear had consisted of multicolored and fun, while at the same time being well presented for any occasion. The difference between these two eras are very clear. In Jackie Kennedy's gown, it is seen that she is using a cape to cover up and seem more preserved. While Hillary Clinton was quick to take off a similar cape she had mimic Jackie Kennedy. As well it has to be pointed out that these are two gowns that were represented in two different eras. "During the 60's, many individual Americans rose to prominence as activist leaders-figureheads for the rising tide of thousands

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upon thousands of voices calling for peace, justice, freedom and equality. The government responded with tactic aimed at isolating, controlling, and neutralizing the leaders of rebellion.” *“REVOLUTIONS: The <sup>9</sup> Right to Protect vs. The Right to Protest.”* PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, [www.pbs.org/opb/thesixties/topics/revolution/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/opb/thesixties/topics/revolution/index.html).

It was a world where it was time to fight against the norm and create a better world for those that doesn't have a fair deal. Clothing took more time to make and had more of a detail to it due to how developed technology was back in the day. Human beings have progressed with technology luckily as it's been seen in the 90's with how cheap and easy it was to get fabric for such a low price in a short amount of time. Fashion will continuously change no matter what, but as innovators we must adapt but not lose touch with what were classics in the world of fashion. The classic tradition has been still kept alive, and that classic A-line cut similar to both gowns are still worn in the crowd of not just politics but elegance as well.



(Image #6) 2016 Michelle Obama Sexy Formal Evening Dresses Black Lace Sequined Women Gowns With Sleeves Satin Lady Party Event Dresses-in Evening Dresses from Weddings & Events on Aliexpress.com | Alibaba Group. (n.d.). Retrieved November 26, 2017, from <https://www.aliexpress.com/item/2016-Michelle-Obama-Sexy-Formal-Evening-Dresses-Black-Lace-Sequined-Women-Gowns-With-Sleeves-Satin-Lady/32759710275.html>

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