

Christian Dior - Blue Wool Suit FIT Museum

Lori Sofia Perez Matos

Christian Dior - Blue Wool Suit FIT Museum

CUNY New York City Of Technology

History Of Christian Dior

Christian Dior is seen as a fashion innovator and leader one of his most famous creations was the blue wool suit but did he get his start in fashion? Dior came from a wealthy background in which his father ran his own fertilizer business and Dior's father wanted him to become a diplomat. However Dior grew a passion for art and would even sell his own sketches in the street as he got older he convinced his father to allow him open his own gallery which he ran with a group of friends in 1928 when he was just 23 years old (Cohen 2019). His gallery was hit as it featured artists like Pablo Picasso however due to the zeitgeist of 1930 great depression his father's business had plummeted and his investors had pulled out of backing the gallery. Having lost so much including the loss of his brother and mother Dior was at a loss. While he was given a second chance he worked under Robert Piguet who was a well known fashion designer. This was short lived as Dior was called into war in 1940 it wasn't until 1942 that Dior returned and was able to be rooted into fashion. Upon his return he then worked under Jeanne Lanvin which to this day is the third oldest French house still operating. (Persson 2018) Where he gained a further knowledge of fashion it was on 1946 of December 16 that the House of Christian Dior was founded house was backed by Marcel Boussac who was one of France's biggest textile manufacturers he was also known as King Of Cotton. (Sowray 2012) With the House of Christian Dior Dior created timeless pieces that shaped the industry for years to come. For instance the New Look which was a dress that hugged the women's waistline and gave them an hourglass figure. This suit is one of the three basic fashion silhouettes which we now call the bell shaped silhouette. The bell shaped silhouette brought back memories of the Victorian era as women had become custom to more tubular shaped dresses. The new look as seen in Figure 1

gives women a fitted waistline without having to put on all the corsets used during the Victorian era.



Figure one Christian Dior, The New Look, Spring/Summer 1947, The Met Museum

The New Look

The New Look and his other popular blue wool suits have a lot of similarities as their dimensions are the same. Just like the blue suit the new look was cut into ten panels from the sides, front and the back, when opening up the jacket what creates the more fitted waist is the tea cup shape on the bottom. Once you open the jacket you have a half circle which seems to be three times the measurement of the waistline. There was cotton padding in the front where the half circle was located to create the tea cup effect. The front and back of the dress also have princess seaming in which creates the front and back to expand out more. While the new look has five buttons at the center of the jacket one inch away from each other The blue wool suit has four buttons at the top of the jacket at the end of the chest area. Instead of the traditional plastic

buttons used in 2022 both jackets have cotton layering with wool covering for the buttons. Instead of having two buttons on the sides like the New Look Dior removes the buttons for the Wool Suit. As for the skirt of the New Look; it's much heavier and longer than the one seen in the blue wool suit. The skirt had multiple layers on linen, horse hair and stiff net which is used for volume and in 2022 is made out of Polyester. Both suits have pleats but the original New Look has hand made pleats that create a tiger pleat while the blue wool suit has more spaced out pleats the new look had pleats that were 9 centimeters deep while the blue suit didn't have specific spacing. (Victoria and Albert Museum 2019) The new look suit inspired the evolution of the blue wool suit.



Figure Two (On the right) Christian Dior, The Blue Wool Suit, 1952, FIT Museum

New Look - The Blue Wool Suit

The Blue Wool suit has a navy blue hue which in color psychology can relate to deep blue to cold, moody and depressing. Following the zeitgeist in 1950 where world war II ended followed by the civil rights movement the color psychology shows how society around that time felt a sense of coldness with the ongoing struggles of conflict. The navy blue had a black tint creating a neutral color and adding to the intensity of the color on the garment. These dark hue colors compliant the body as darker colors create the illusion of slimmer waistline and fit.

There were a few fabrics used to make this suit but the main fabric used for the wool as sheeps are stripped of their hair, carding, spined, weaving and then dyed specifically for this suit it was dyed navy blue. The suit had less smooth and more a rough texture due to the wool however the cotton underlining that gave the bottom of the jacket volume was soft and lightweight. With zero to no shoulder padding the jacket is lightweight the mid-length skirt reaches just below the knee and light pleating on the skirt makes it less heavy than the original new look suit and allows for more movement within the blue suit. The arms of the suit are also taken up a little and less fitted for more movement. The original New look suit created a tight fit sleeve that imitated and flattered the women's arms however the navy blue suit has sleeves just above the arms with a wider end. This suit evolved and became less modest as the chest line was brought lower and more exposed than the original. The collar around the suit was circular in shape and wrapped across the neck without a break. These simple but drastic changes was what made the Blue Wool Suit ready to wear having a lighter weight material, adjustable sleeves and lower chest line can have women with more than one body type be able to wear this style of

dress. This creates for a wider variety of top heavy women to be able to try on the jacket to have space for them.

In conclusion what made Dior a fashion leader and innovator wasn't his setbacks, instead it was the knowledge he gained from those step backs. When he would sell sketches he gained the ability to create an outlet that perfected his design, when owning a gallery he was able to express his creativity through art which is connected to fashion and when working with other designers he was able to pick up sewing and their knowledge of the fashion industry which connected him to one of the largest textile manufacturer the king of cotton. Lastly with The House Of Dior he popularized the bell shaped silhouette and created a suit for women that was light weight, fashion forward and favored the women body.

Reference Page

YouTube. (2019). *YouTube*. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8ch2Ixxf2M>.

Sowray, B. (2012, April 5). *Christian Dior*. British Vogue. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/christian-dior#:~:text=Christian%20Dior%20was%20a%20French,was%20one%20of%20five%20children>.

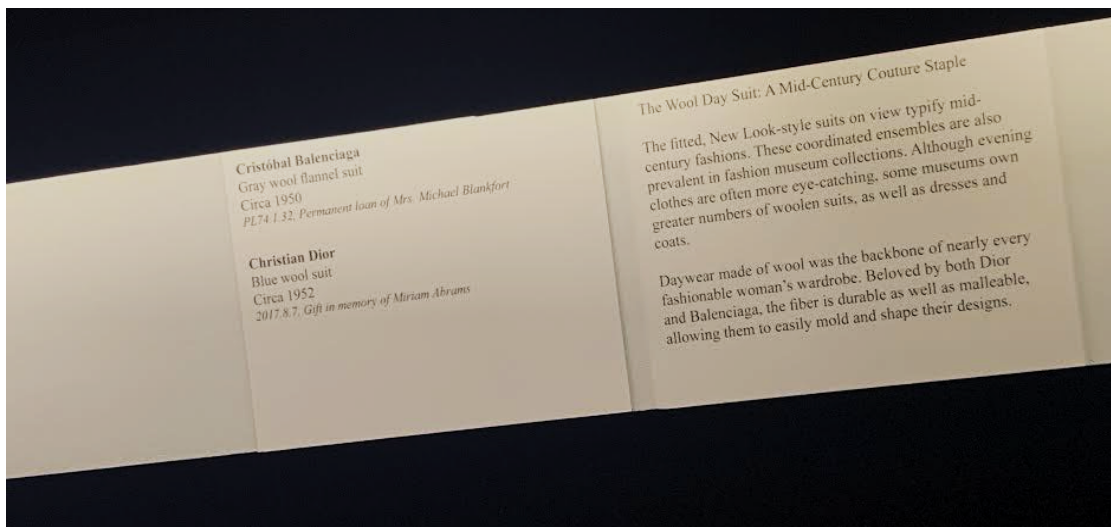
Borrelli-Persson, L. (2015, March 6). *12 of the most memorable Lanvin moments in vogue*. Vogue. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://www.vogue.com/article/jeanne-lanvin-best-moments-from-the-archives>

Cohen, A. (2019, May 31). *Christian Dior was the first art dealer to show Dali's "Persistence of memory"*. Artsy. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-christian-dior-first-art-dealer-display-dalis-melting-clocks>

Author's Page



(Original Blue Wool Suit Photo By Lori Perez Matos)



Cristóbal Balenciaga
Gray wool flannel suit
Circa 1950
PL74.1.32, Permanent loan of Mrs. Michael Blankfort

Christian Dior
Blue wool suit
Circa 1952
2017.8.7, Gift in memory of Miriam Abrams

The Wool Day Suit: A Mid-Century Couture Staple

The fitted, New Look-style suits on view typify mid-century fashions. These coordinated ensembles are also prevalent in fashion museum collections. Although evening clothes are often more eye-catching, some museums own greater numbers of woolen suits, as well as dresses and coats.

Daywear made of wool was the backbone of nearly every fashionable woman's wardrobe. Beloved by both Dior and Balenciaga, the fiber is durable as well as malleable, allowing them to easily mold and shape their designs.

(Photo of me in the FIT Museum)

