

Blouses Bring in Culture

Morelia Pena

Dr. Nazanin Munroe

20th Century Dress and Culture

ARTH 1204-OL29

New York City College of Technology

The fashion during the era of World War II was fascinating and unique. Fashion reflected current events and culture in the world at that particular time. The garments were made and remade into different designs within a concise period of time due to the limitations and changes as a result of the fast pace and quick turnaround of World War II (Koda & Bolton, 2012). The main focus of this essay is to describe two garments by outlining their contrasts and comparison.

The first discussion is about an Evening Blouse (figure 1), designed between 1940 and 1945. It is documented that Elsa Schiaparelli, an Italian, designed it. This garment was designed for women during wartimes (Secrest, 2014). Therefore, its making process used indexical and attached monetary value products. This artwork consists of a wing-collar, puff long sleeves blouse with different and multicolor shapes printed on the fabric, such as blue boots, navy blue off shoulder blouse, yellow gloves, a black knife pledge skirt etc. all throughout the entire garment. This blouse also comes with red and white fabric buttons, which gives this piece an elegant and vintage style. The materials used in this artwork were rayon, plastic and glass. Through this garment, Elsa expressed her adventure and excellent imaginative capability. She also used this garment to represent the language and the cultural practices. Its design was fit for the evening hours, and that's why it was branded, Evening Blouse.

The second garment of focus is the Blouse of Madeleine Vionnet (figure 2) which is French designed. The Blouse was designed and dressed between 1876 and 1975. This is an oversized top with a bow collar, long sleeves accessorized with big gold buttons. The material used in making this garment was a very light dusty pink silk with a multicolored printed design. This Blouse was historical since it helped women turn their fashion look from

boyish to feminine (Koda & Glasscock, 2014). Madeleine made this Blouse with a lot of creativity, such that it was fit for any lady and any event. The Blouse (figure 2) design represented French culture, with the design at the neck, the flower arrangements, and fitness. All illustrated the taste of French women during the era of 1876-1975.

The two pieces have outstanding similarities and differences. One of the similarities is that they were both designed as womenswear and by women. Both garments utilized printed fabric for their unique design and were made to represent culture and language practices, which are evident in the design styles and materials. The other similarity was how they portrayed the talent of their designers, their personalities, and beliefs as they made them (Capalbo, 2016). The two pieces expressed the client's feelings, style, and preferences strongly, such that they didn't have to alter anything as a form of explaining themselves to their observers.

There are several aspects between the two pieces that illustrate the presence of a contrast between them. One of the contrasts is that the Evening Blouse (figure 1) is designed for evening events, but the Blouse (figure 2) is not limited since it can be dressed for any event, at any time. The other contrast is that the Evening Blouse (figure 1) was designed and dressed during wartime, whereas Blouse (figure 2) was made for recreational events such as night outs, cocktails events, and many other fun events (Koda & Glasscock, 2014). The other difference that these two pieces had was the material used to make them, the Evening Blouse (figure 1) was made of complex and heavy material, while the Blouse (figure 2) was made of a light and fancy material.

1. Figure 1

Designer: Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1975)

Department Store: Bonwit Teller & Co. (American, 1907)

Material: Rayon, Plastic, Glass

Date: 1940-45

Museum Accession NO: 1978.288.23a-f



2. Figure 2

Title: Blouse

Designer: Madeleine Vionnet (French, 1876-1975 Paris)

Material: Silk

Date: ca. 1935

Museum Accession Number: 1976.29.16



Bibliography

Capalbo, C. (2016). Creativity and innovation of the Italian fashion system in the inter-war period (1919–1943). *Investigaciones de Historia Económica-Economic History Research*, 12(2), 90-99.

Koda, H., & Bolton, A. (2012). *Schiaparelli & Prada: Impossible Conversations*. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Koda, H., & Glasscock, J. (2014). The costume institute at the Metropolitan Museum of art: An evolving history. *Fashion and Museums: Theory and practice*, 19-33.

Secret, M. (2014). *Elsa Schiaparelli: a biography*. Knopf.

