

Nargiza Rahmatilloeva

Professor, Katie Sabo

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Reading Response#2

The Mechanical Smile

1. What was the role of the mannequin, or model, in the couture house? How did it change throughout the fashion season? Was there a difference in how the mannequin was perceived by a male buyer or female buyer at this time?

The role of mannequins and models in general was to model the dresses to the clients. Mannequins were full-time employees of the house and sometimes even lived in. According to Alexandre's suggestion in which organic and mechanical movement have switched, so that the living mannequins resembled the inanimate mannequin. Their role was to look just like a real inanimate mannequin. In the couture house, it was fun for models, because before they were called on the model, they were busy with different activities such as chatting, reading novels, playing cards, gossiping, painting their nails, sewing surrounded by mirrors, makeup and discarded clothes. While mannequins modeled in the salon they fell silent, except to enunciate the name and price of a dress when asked. The mannequin's role was to remain supernatural calm and measured in their pace and gestures. The smile was required while the laugh was prohibited for models. Mannequins played an active role in designing haute couture by standing for endless hours while Designers and artisans would pin, prod or tuck fabric and toiles to the mannequins to bring sketches and ideas to life. According to the text *The Mechanical Smile* it says, "It was only the costumes but also the mannequins who came to life over a month: from the endless hours of

standing still as dummies in the ateliers while garments were pinned, cut and altered on them, they progressed to the fluid and professional modeling techniques they employed in the salons at showtime”(Evans, 150). Based on this it can be seen that the mannequins were employed to work as “fit models,” standing for long hours while dresses were fitted on them. Most of the fashion shows were special with more females. In the fashion shows, the first private clients were females. During the mid-nineteenth century, when trade buyers were both sexes, there was a higher proportion of females than male. If there was a difference between particular individuals in this scenario, it might be between buyers and mannequins rather than between men and women. Buyers of couture houses were very unusual because they belonged to both sexes, and even though most roles in the fashion industry were not gender-specific buyers. Mostly females were the main customers of the haute couture house, however, some of men formed part of the audience at the fashion shows.

3. Describe the system of disseminating Paris Fashion in the period covered by the text [1910-1930]. How was the Paris Couture bought and then sold to an American Audience? Who were the operators? How were garments actually sold? Were they copied legally, illegally, or both? What strategies did buyers use to gain entry to the couture house, or to determine which designs would sell overseas?

According to the website, *History of Women's Fashion*, In the 1900s, Paris was the leading fashion centre of the world and the houses Worth Callot Soeurs, Doucet and Paquin were the leading names. However, Haute Couture was the name of the game, using the costliest fabrics and marketed to the wealthy elite to Paris, London, New York(Anonymous). Paris' collection was going on display to large international attendance to organize fundraising events

to support the French fashion industry, there was understandable worry in Paris. As a competitor America was going to benefit one way or the other. Even though the First World War was occurring at this time, it didn't stop Paris from presenting its collection. Later in the decade, the Paris house of Redfern arranged its great salon overlooking the Tuileries with a long platform and made its new collections in the old atelier. Thus, Paris' fashion spreaded in the 1910s when the fashionable silhouette became more flexible, fluid and soft than in the 1900s. The luxury of the Paris came in a variety of shapes, but throughout the decade, the most popular silhouette was the tunic over a long underskirt which was bought and then sold to Americans. Based on the text, *The Mechanical Smile*, and the website, *Beauty and Fashion*, It can be seen that some of the operators were Paul Poiret, who was one of the first designers to translate the vogue into the fashion world when the Bullets Russes performed Scheherazade in Paris in 1910. Another operator was Coco Chanel who opened her first shop on Paris's Rue Cambon in 1910. She first started to sell hats and then began to add stores in Deauville and Biarritz and started making clothes. Melnatte Simonin could also be one of the operators because he was the one who opened and installed a little stage with a little park in Paris so that he can present his collection and gather more audiences. Later, during the 1913s, the Paris houses produced about 250-300 models per season. The house models sold to the buyer and then were increased by adding more in America as well as the rest of the world. The overseas buyers converged on Paris from all over the world and filled in the fashion season. The overseas were who represented the categories of ready to wear, manufacturers, dressmakers working for individual clients and department stores which were made to measure for individual clients. There were also foreign buyers in Paris who mostly used the services who represented fifty to hundred buyers. According to *The Mechanical Smile*, The guide to Paris for Gimbels store buyers was shown in the spring of 1928.

The image(194)on page165, shows the volume of continuous animations. Buyers from a large New York department store in Paris were forced to convert for a ten-day period and, in which the olui can extend through it, the commissioner looked after them. The buyers had to assess, and think fast to make quick business decisions based on what they saw.

Works cited

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