

Comparative Essay on Poiret and Delaunay

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Introduction

From the bell shaped corsets to A line to Flappers in the 20th century. This era played a vital role in fashion as we see it today. WWI played a significant role in fashion as men were drafted into the army, women stepped into the workplace. Thus leading to the need for flexible clothing which increased mobility as opposed to the constricting dresses of previous eras. Which, at the time meant that women's clothing would inherently need to become more masculine. Another key factor was, women earning the right to vote. This in turn fueled the Flapper movement in the 1920's. After WWII, the economy was suffering so people had to ration fabrics and had less disposable income which led to shorter hemlines for women. Also, people began to wear more patriotic designs and prints. The 50's was a return to glamour highlighted with the New Look by Dior. While the 60's gave rise to the mini skirt and the 70's led to a change in mindset for women's clothing in which they focused on dressing more masculine to work in order to "fit in." In the 80's, athletic wear was being worn outside of gyms and the comfort of peoples homes. We see fashion become more modernized in the 90's with the birth of the internet and finally, the 2000's introduce the democratization of fashion which allowed fashion to be made accessible to the masses.

Poiret

Paul Poiret, also known as "The King of Fashion" started his design house in Paris in 1903. One outstanding role he played was that he did not follow conventional fashions. "He began with the body, liberating it first from the petticoat in 1903 and then from the corset in 1906." (Bolton, Koda, Metmuseum.org) Poiret was intrigued in fusing together Western fashion

with Eastern. Poiret hosted the 1002nd night party where he sold his Eastern influenced clothing. His styles paved the way towards modernism but ironically he had rejected this ideology and stuck with orientalism. In 1912 he created the sorbet dress. Poiret's gown (Figure 1) has a lamp shaped tunic cut. It is layered into two pieces which was typical of his designing style. Also, the fabric is draped as flowy. He put more value on draping skills as opposed to the actual skills a tailor possessed. This dress is made out of silk fabric and is embellished with beads and fur. Although the colors are dull, there is a variation used in the gown.

Delaunay

Sonia Delaunay made clothes that were wearable art to detail abstract painting. She alongside her husband had a private income to support their art until the Russian war. Delaunay created the simultaneous dress in 1913 (Figure 2). This dress has a sheath cut and is quilted with different shapes of cut of fabrics. Which was inspired by her fascination with abstract painting. One of her goals was to recreate the looks of her paintings into real life. The fabric is kind of fuzzy as seen around the neck area and stiff throughout. That can be due to the fact that multiple fabrics have been cut out and put together in this design. There seem to be pleats added on the area surrounding the right hip which from the back gives off a tail seeming look.

Comparison

Even though Paul Poiret and Sonia Delaunay were inspired by their unique ideas, both had some similarities amongst these two creations. Both dresses are long, reaching down to the feet. Also, both have used fur to add embellishments. As seen in Figure 1, Poiret used this fabric around the neck while in Figure 2 one can see that Delaunay used it as a border running along

the end of the dress. Both have used variations of colors yet Poiret incorporated bolder shades as opposed to Delaunay who applied more dull and neutral ones. Different necklines and sleeve lengths have been used. Delaunay created a V neck line and quarter length sleeves. Possibly to leave room for adding accessories. While Poiret has a tighter and more circular fit along the base of the neck and full sleeves. Overall, the Sorbet dress has more of an elegant, upper class, following the norm feel while the Simultaneous dress seems like an outfit for a rebellious person, someone trying to break free of societal constraints and exemplifying their uniqueness.

Conclusion

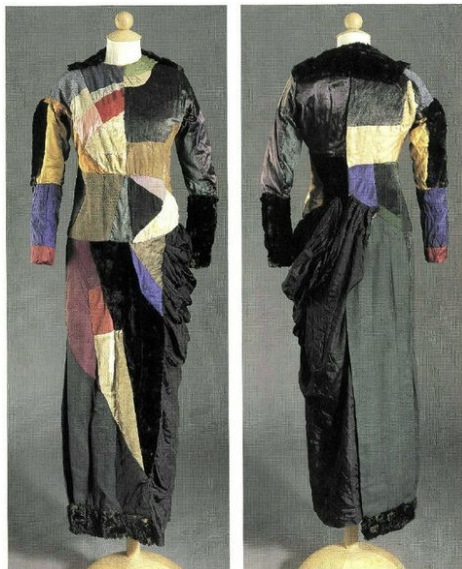
The Simultaneous Dress and the Sorbet dress are only a year apart yet we can see how quickly the fashion statements are evolving. Both designing techniques were very advanced for their time periods and actually paved the way towards modern fashion. Rather they were in favor of doing so or not. Poire's creations excluded restraining layers such as the petticoat and corset. Which was far from the norm during his time. While Delaunay added life and personality to her clothing.

Figure 1



Paul Poiret, "Sorbet Dress" ca. 1912 Silk chiffon and satin, embroidered with glass beads, and trimmed with fur.

Figure 2



Sonia Delaunay, "Simultaneous Dress" 1913 Needlework, crochet, quilting of various materials

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