Greek Style meets fashion

20th c. Dress and Culture

Arth 1204-D434

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Mariano Fortuny was a Spanish fashion designer who opened his couture house in 1906. Once he and his family moved to Venice, he discovered his love for fashion. Before his love for fashion, he was an all-around artist. He owned a factory in Venice. Fortuny is famous for his unique secret pleating technique. Fortuny was also known for his pleats and natural dyes. He was inspired by Greek fashion and his inspirations showed in his work. When it came to his pieces, he specifically wanted to incorporate the goddess look. Every single one of his pieces was made in his design house. He was a fan of removing the corset, velvets and simple dresses. Fortuny's gown (Figure 1) is called the "Tea Gown" and was established around 1930-32. The fabric used in this Tea Gown piece is silk. The colors used were black and gold. The garment looks loose fitted and was long-sleeved. His sleeves on the garment were also loose. Fortuny's garment was fully black, and the gold design covered the whole dress. His garment wasn't floor-length but it seems to be ankle length.

Madeleine Vionnet was a French designer who started her own fashion house in 1912. She started right before World War 1 and reopened when the war was over. She was fascinated by Greek Art and the fact that their clothing floated around the body. Vionnet was the first-ever designer to cut a whole garment into a bias cut. She was also an advocate for removing the corsets and loved for the fabric to just hug the natural curves. Fun fact, she didn't sketch her work. She worked with fabrics and small mannequins. During the 20th century a lot of designers would copy from one another without giving credit to the original creators. Vionnet decided to add her fingerprint to her labels to reinforce originality. Vionnet's gown (figure 2) is called the "Evening Dress" and was established in 1924. The fabric of the garment was silk and the trimmings appeared to be metal. Vionnet's color choices for this garment were black and gold.

She wasn't the biggest fan of colors. The evening dress looks similar to an A-line silhouette but Vionnet did incorporate her bias cut. Vionnet's "Evening Dress" hugs the natural curves and flares at the bottom. On the lower back of the garment the gold metal design is shaped into a wrapped bow.

Fortuny's piece (Figure 1) and the Vionnet piece (Figure 2) had a lot of similarities and differences. These two pieces are similar because of the color choices. Both pieces are filled with black and gold. These pieces were made around the same period. Fortuny's piece (Figure 1) and Vionnet's piece (Figure 2) were both influenced by the Greek style. These two pieces had some similarities but, they mostly had differences. Figure 1 was made for the daytime because of the length of the dress and the name choice. Compared to figure 2 which is longer and called the "Evening dress". Fortuny's piece was black and gold but, the design was all over the dress. Vionnet's piece was mostly black and the gold design was one statement piece. Figure 1 was loose fitted and comfortable, while figure two was an A-line silhouette. Figure 2 was fitted on the top half and loose on the bottom half. Fortuny's piece (figure 1) was a long sleeve dress and Vionnet's piece (figure 2) was short-sleeved. Figure 2 was also cut into the bias cut and had a low cut back. As you can see both garments were during the 20th century but, had two completely different silhouettes. Fortuny as a designer was all about looking like a goddess and being comfortable. While Vionnet was about letting the garment hugging the curves and focused on letting the clothes flow on the bottom half. Both designers had the same inspiration which was Greek style but, came up with different designs that is the beauty of fashion.

Figure 1

Mariano Fortuny

"Tea Gown"

 1930-32

Materials: Silk

C.I.51.86.6

Figure 2

Madeleine Vionnet

"Evening Dress"

1924

Materials: silk, metal

2017.314

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