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Art and Fashion Essay
20th Century Dress and Culture
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Figure 1 - Evening Dress, Fortuny, 1910 (MET)



Figure 2 - Robe de Style, Paul Poiret, 1925 (MET)

Fashion imitates Art but Art also imitates fashion. Designers create objects that have a touch of art such as in color. But designers also get inspired from old designer's work. They learn about their style and recreate their own piece of object. In this essay, I will be comparing and contrasting two objects.

Figure 1 is called the "Evening dress" by the designer, Mariano Fortuny. The dress was made in ca. 1910. The culture of the "Evening dress" is Italian. As for the medium, the dress is made out of silk and glass. The credit line is Gift of Erna Obermeier, from 1977. The Accession Number is 1977.68.1. The dress cut is a long straight maxi dress. The dress is very boxy as well. It does not hug the waist area. On the sides of the dress, it has a little flare on the ends. Also,

the back has extra fabric and gives it a cape like look. The extra fabric makes it look very majestic. It gives a sort of higher authority. The dress hangs off the body slightly loose. The dress color is like rustic gold. Gold is known to be wealthy color for the rich, this color worn shows one would be seen as prosperous. The material is made out of silk but it looks soft like velvet. The neckline is square so it continues out the boxy look. Overall, the dress's visual is that it is elegant and comfortable. It is long and beautiful in the shiny soft fabric that is being used. The little trimmings on the sides of the dress makes it have some flare. As for the design in the front, it is very detailed, it looks as if it been sketched onto. It appears to be middle eastern inspired as well. The details and colors makes it look rustic as if it was for people that were royalty wore this garment.

Figure 2 is called the "Robe de Style", by the designer Paul Poiret. The dress was made in 1925. The culture of the "Robe de Style" is French. As for the medium, the dress is made of silk. The credit line is Gift of Mrs. Ivor Bevan, from 1982. The Accession Number is 1982.249. The Robe de Style dress seems like it was inspired from the "Evening dress" by the designer, Mariano Fortuny. However, the cut of it is different it's a mid-length dress when the evening dress is maxi. This shows how as fashion started to progress so did the length style as well. The Robe de Style has a little pleated kind of look on the sides of the dress to give it some drama on the bottom. The fabric is silk but appears to be velvet, which looked very similar to the evening dress. Also, the Robe de Style is similar to the Evening dress by sleeve length, both are long sleeve. The texture seems soft as well like the evening dress. The Robe de Style dress is not as boxy but a bit more fitted to the woman's body. It seems that Paul Poiret was inspired by Fortuny freeing the corset from garments. The details on the waist of the Robe de Style gives the

illusion that it is hugging the hips. The details of the dress has some colorful details to give it a little bit of a pop. The Robe de Style dress uses a light calm tone of blue. Blue is a color that reminds me of the calm cool sky or water (Project, Bourn and Bourn, 2018). The color of the dress is very peaceful to the eyes. The Robe de Style dress seems like it was inspired from the Greek Goddesses especially the way it is showcased in the white marble female statue. It looks like an outfit that a gladiator would wear as well. One major difference that the Evening dress has from the Robe de Style is the extra fabric and more fabric gives more of a royalty look but the less fabric makes it look what a peasant would wear. The time difference of the two garments is 15 years, fortuney's evening dress is made in 1910 and Paul Poiret's Robe de Style dress is made in 1925. Looking at both dresses, they both have their similarities and as well their differences. Fashion gets its inspiration from almost anything from art, history, and other objects as well. Designers look at old garments to recreate one in their own perspective. Looking at past objects and artworks gives a designer inspiration and allows them to be more creative. This gives designers to be more than creative but in fact innovating and unique.

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