

Foreword by Jonathan Saunders

# THE FASHION DESIGN\* DIRECTORY

Marnie Fogg

Thames & Hudson

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# THE **FASHION DESIGN DIRECTORY**



An A-Z of the World's Most Influential  
Designers and Labels

Marnie Fogg



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Editors	Catherine Hooper, Becky Gee
Designer	Nicole Kuderer
Design Assistant	Alison Hau
Picture Research	Jo Walton, Helena Baser, Olivia Young
Production Manager	Anna Pauletti
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# FOREWORD

The extraordinary and diverse creative activity of 125 internationally known designers is recognized in this book, which includes the history of iconic and influential labels such as Balenciaga and Chanel as well as contemporary practitioners. With the constant regeneration of couture houses by the introduction of fresh new talent all, however, continue to make their mark in the 21st century. Fashion is by its nature subject to change. When I launched my own label in 2003, colour and print were very much peripheral to mainstream fashion. Now they are pivotal.

Change in fashion is given momentum by many things, including the introduction of new technologies, but for me and many other designers the creative process is rooted in fine art – certain things can only be done by hand. Combining this with the demands of manufacture and marketing is what provides the challenge to the contemporary designer. All of those featured in this book have successfully navigated their way through the fashion system from early beginnings, whether as a graduate or through the industry, to establish a business. A profile of each of these designers is illustrated with historically important images of iconic fashionable dress from past and present collections, providing a comprehensive guide to the key personalities and major participants of this significant and important global industry.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Jonathan Saunders. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JONATHAN SAUNDERS, London





# A BRIEF HISTORY OF FASHION

Placing individual fashion designers within a cultural and historical context requires a definition of the term 'fashion'. Paris has been at the centre of fashion since the 19th century, when Charles Frederick Worth (1826–95) transformed dressmaking from a craft into a business. Worth demanded that clients travel to the couturier to choose from a series of designs that were then made to measure, requiring several fittings for a perfect fit, rather than women dictating their requirements to the dressmaker in their own home. Haute couture (literally, high-quality sewing) refers only to this bespoke process. Worth also displayed new lines on mannequins in a series of parties and events, the precursor of the fashion show.

To qualify as haute couture, a garment must be entirely handmade by one of the eleven Paris couture houses currently registered to the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture. Each house must employ at least twenty people in workshops in Paris and show a minimum of seventy-five new designs a year. The couture garment is as exquisite on the inside as the outside, and every seam is perfectly calibrated to fit the client's body, from the first toile (the design cut from a type of muslin for fitting purposes) to the final piece.

Couture on the catwalk presents an extreme view that cannot be replicated by ready-to-wear mass manufacturers. The 'Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des

► A lavish frou-frou dress displays the S-shaped corset typical of the belle époque.







▲ Paul Poiret introduced avant-garde styles into society, as seen with this divided skirt, 1911.

Créateurs de Mode' embraces this distinction by listing a further ninety-two international design houses that are members outside the haute couture category. Haute couture itself is fuelled by the traditional skills of the artisans in the atelier, the name given to the workshop or studio where the couturier's vision is interpreted by the embroiderers, plumassiers, beaders, braid makers, knitters, print designers and practitioners, corsetières, weavers and leather workers – all skilled craftspeople whose trades are impossible to make available for the mass market.

The painstaking process of couture fittings for the frou-frou and lace of the first decade of the 20th century was replaced by the colourful exoticism of Parisian couturier Paul Poiret (1879–1944). Influenced by the extravagant colours and allure of the Ballets Russes, Poiret deployed richly embellished fabrics and exuberant jewelled turbans for his influential Directoire line of 1908, which discarded the corset in favour of a tubular silhouette. The orientalist spectacle of the ballet – particularly *Scheherazade* (1910) under the directorship of Serge Diaghilev and with costumes and set designs by Léon Bakst – radically altered the Western world's aesthetic values. Almost overnight, the corseted bustled silhouette disappeared, and the straight line replaced the voluptuous curves of women's dress. However, women were literally shackled by the introduction of Poiret's hobble skirt, which prevented the wearer from walking in any but the smallest of steps.

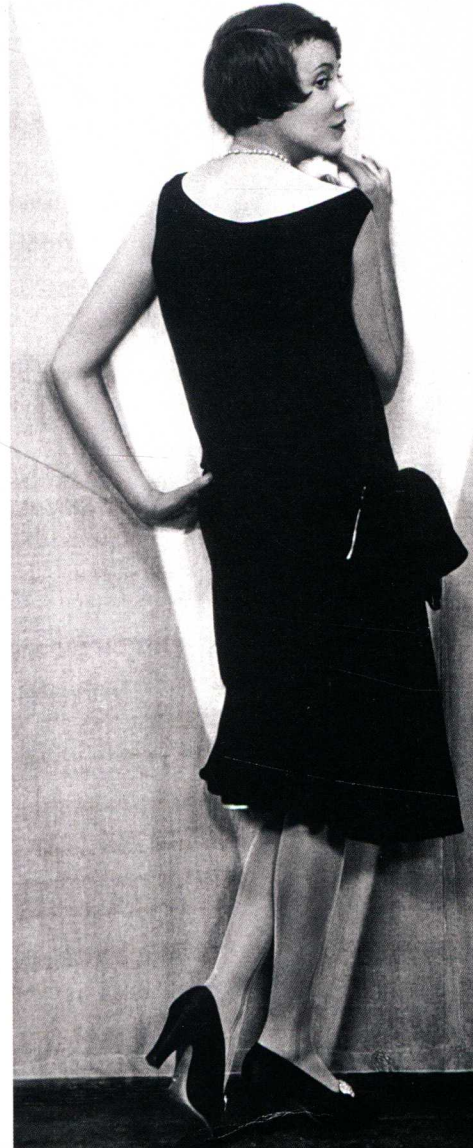
It was to take the genius of Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel (1883–1971; see p.86) to release women from the constraints of early 20th-century fashion and make it relevant to the modern age. Chanel, through her association with the English 'Boy' Capel, discovered a passion for sportswear. With his help, she launched herself as a dressmaker and developed a simplicity of style that subverted the idea of fashion as display. She claimed in 1914 that she was 'in attendance at the death of luxury', a comment on the end of the belle époque and the true beginning of the new century. Adopting a single-jersey knitted fabric, previously used for men's underwear, Chanel designed the three-piece cardigan suit – an edge-to-edge jacket, a pullover and a knee-length skirt – which became a mainstay of women's wardrobes. The simple elegant lines of the clothes responded to the new interest in sporting activities and the post-war

cult of the body. Garments no longer required lengthy fittings or upkeep in an era when domestic staff were no longer available.

After World War I, a seismic shift in all aspects of life took place, discarding the discredited attitudes, hierarchies and prejudices of the pre-war world. Manifestos of cultural revolution appeared, the arts influenced fashion and the avant-garde became mainstream. The applied arts flourished in the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. The Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops enterprise) of 1903 to 1932 was a huge influence on surface pattern design during this period. With its roots in the Arts and Crafts Movement, the studio progressed from producing exclusive furnishing fabrics to gradually introducing fashion fabrics. These then became increasingly available with the invention of the silk-screen printing process in 1907, providing the market with the first fashion fabrics in bulk. Printed pattern is inextricably linked to bohemian dress, which was worn by avant-garde artists, freethinkers and writers during the earlier decades of the 20th century, and associated with artistic and sexual freedoms. Flowing robes from eclectic sources, such as those from London store Liberty (see p.188), came to represent an alternative to mainstream fashion and have remained a constant theme throughout fashion history, from the Bloomsbury Group of the 1920s in London to the hippie fashions of the 1960s.

As hemlines rose and necklines dropped, the waistline disappeared altogether, resulting in the fashionable *garçonne* look of the mid 1920s. The minimalist style of modernism, a movement that rejected the use of decoration, was evidenced in Chanel's 'little black dress' of 1926, and in the streamlined fashions of Parisian couturiers Jean Patou (1880–1936) and Jeanne Lanvin (1847–1946; see p.184). The radically simpler clothes of the 1920s offered women a greater freedom of movement, in spite of the rubber 'flatteners' worn to suppress the bosom beneath the chemise. The chemise was a straight low-waisted dress that hung from the shoulder and grew ever shorter as the decade progressed, rising to just above the knee in 1927. The newly tanned and exercised body fresh from the tennis court or ski slope embraced this new near-nudity. The modern movement demanded the pursuit of the perfect form and this included not only streamlining products, such as automobiles and architecture, but also women's bodies. The loose flowing lines of the chemise appealed to

▼ Stage star Adele Astaire models the understated 'little black dress' in 1928.







◀ **Free-spirited flappers dance the 'turkey trot' on the edge of a Chicago roof in 1926.**

the 'flapper' – a notoriously precocious young woman who flouted the conventional dress and behaviour of the day, used cosmetics, smoked cigarettes, rouged her kneecaps and was epitomized by the heroine Iris Storm in Michael Arlen's novel *The Green Hat* (1924).

Androgynous silhouettes and greater freedom of movement resulted in the demise of the great Parisian couturiers such as Baron Christoff von Drecoll and Jacques Doucet (1853–1929), and even Poiret found himself out of step with the developing aesthetic of the time. Couture was now evolving from serving a few wealthy clients into an industry. Recognizing its commercial potential, Patou travelled to New York in 1925 and hired six women to return to Paris with him and work as mannequins. This well-publicized action brought couture to the attention of the US fashion-conscious elite.

Decoration and embellishment during this period reflected the shapes of art deco, with stepped forms, sunray motifs and zigzags translated into embroidery, beadwork or appliqué. Art deco began in Europe in the early years of the 20th century, although it was not universally popular until the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art) in Paris. It was a confluence of many trends: the arts of Africa, Egypt and Mexico, and the streamlined technology of the 'speed age', including modern aviation and the growing ubiquity of the motor car. The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 added to the designer vocabulary of the era. Widespread press coverage of this event, including newsreel footage of archaeological digs and reports that included Howard Carter's remark that he could see 'marvellous things' on peering into the tomb, heralded an obsession with all things Egyptian, from scarabs, snakes and pyramids to hieroglyphs and sphinxes – a craze that endured well into the 1930s.

The machine age brought with it innovation and new materials. It was inevitable that these would infiltrate fashion from their architectural or product design origins. Plastics were one of the most significant cultural phenomena of the 20th century, changing the way objects were produced, designed and used. Their chief property was their ability to be moulded or shaped into different forms under pressure or heat. The revolutionary injection-moulding process was used to produce handbags, buttons and brooches.



▲ **Comedian Fanny Brice models a tubular dress embellished with art deco patterning in 1925.**