

Change.. : the quintessence of couture

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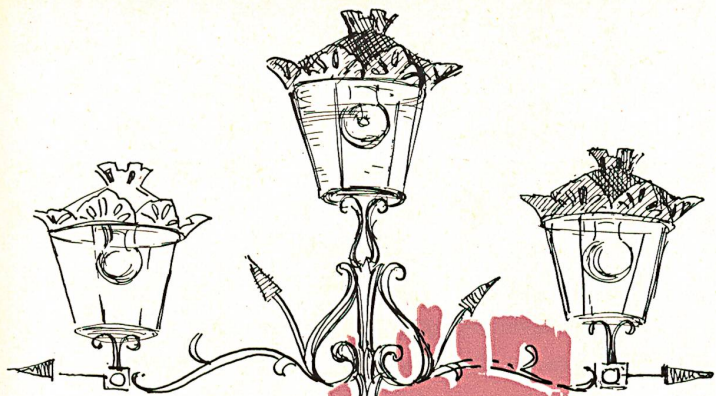
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Change ... the Quintessence of Couture

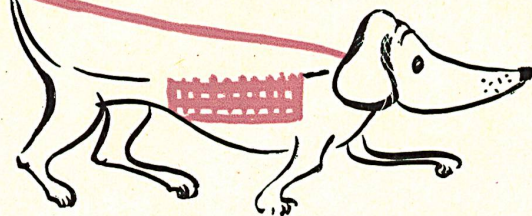
If Theresa Cabarrus, Marquise de Fontenay, Princesse de Chimay and wife of Jean Lambert Tallien, were to return to this world and be shown, as she walked down the Avenue Montaigne — the Allée des Veuves of her day — the latest models of the great Parisian couturiers, and were to be told that they were Consulate, Directory or Empire in inspiration, it is more than likely that this former queen of fashion and elegance would rend the air with loud cries of protestation.

Actually, the only resemblance between this new fashion and that of the Napoleonic era is the high waist right up under the bosom. Except for a few big gala ball gowns, it differs completely from the neo-Greek line which is so becoming in the portraits of Josephine and her contemporaries. It

Lavin Castillo
Deux-pièces laine façonnée rose,
rose du même tissu, ceinture haute,
piquée d'un bijou

Pierre Cardin
Manteau beige ample, col important
avec petits plis tuyautés piqués

MAFFRE
58





Pierre Cardin



Pierre Balmain



Pierre Balmain



Maggy Rouff



Pierre Cardin



Pierre Cardin
Taffetas bleu,
taille haute

Pierre Balmain
Manches à nœuds de velours
noir, marron, beige

Maggy Rouff
Cheviotte grise, jupe plissée

Jean Patou
Ceinture drapée sur robe de
satin avec applications de
roses en velours rouge

is a very far cry from the sketches of David. The 1959 fashion is a sort of Music Hall version of the Empire style; which must not be taken to mean that we think it unattractive. Far from it; it is gay, smart and charmingly frivolous. Under a roguish little hat, fitting snugly over the head, under the fringed forehead, beneath the resolutely angelic face, suddenly appear the shoulders, emerging out of an enormous collar. Actually, can it really be called a collar? It is more of a structural device resembling anything from a postillion's cloak to a gathered lampshade. But do not misinterpret me. These huge, somewhat startling collars show a consummate mastery of cut to which only the greatest of modern couturiers can aspire.

Next we come to the bust — held high and shaped by skilfully cut brassieres. While we are on the subject, let us point out that the designers of these indispensable feminine accessories have made considerable progress since the war. Instead of being content to make them merely support the bust (which would be etymologically correct; in French «bra» = «soutien-gorge» or «bust supporter» as, by the way, it was called in the Anglo-Saxon countries in their grandmothers' day), they shape it, give it form, sculpture it anew, one might almost say. In this field too, Dior played the role of pioneer just as Rochas and Fath did for the wasp-waist.

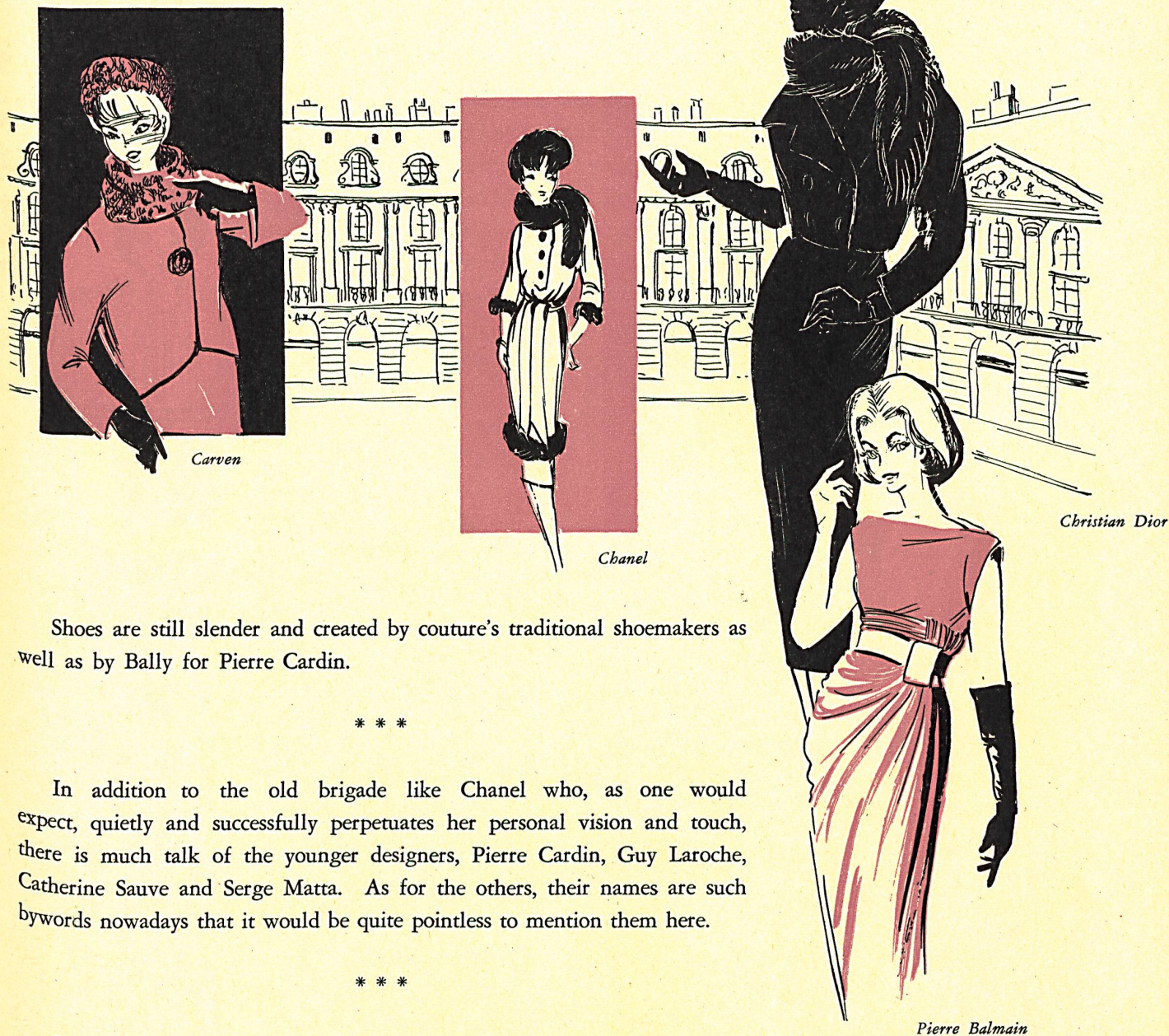
Immediately below the bust a belt is very often worn to emphasise the general appearance. Next comes the skirt, usually with a slight emphasis on the stomach. Should skirts be ultra short, as Castillo would have them, with an upward movement revealing the knees, or definitely longer as advocated by Yves Saint-Laurent? It is up to the customer to decide. All shapes and sizes of skirts seem to be in fashion now. One curves outward and downward from a rounded hipline, like a banana peeled in strips and still held at the top. Another is obviously inspired by the skirts of a clown — you know, the one with the white face and the spangled clothes. There is the Zouave skirt, the helical or spiral skirt, the Montgolfier balloon skirt. One even occasionally comes across the long mousseline skirt, for the evening, which alone has anything of the Directory about it.

As for the suits, they all have very, very short jackets and enormous collars enveloping the shoulders. They are buttoned very high, giving a rather determined, almost authoritarian look, which is only possible with very lovely woollens, of which I shall be speaking later.

Naturally boleros, which have a shortening effect, are all the rage; it is a fashion specifically for couture and almost impossible to reproduce for ready-to-wear.

As in previous years, lavish use is made of fur for trimmings (even imitation fur such as Madeleine de Rauch's hedgehog tweed). Beaver, mink of all shades, sable, fox, badger, opossum are all used, and even chinchilla. Not only chinchilla either but panther too, for some attractive belts.

With regard to woollen fabrics, the main emphasis is on thick, shaggy materials of all kinds, rough and hairy, tufted and bouclé. Outside the field of wool, there is the complete range of silks, cottons, nylons, crêpes, laces, mousselines, taffetas, moirés, tulles, satins, lamés, organdies, not to mention the lovely creations of Saint-Gall.



Shoes are still slender and created by couture's traditional shoemakers as well as by Bally for Pierre Cardin.

* * *

In addition to the old brigade like Chanel who, as one would expect, quietly and successfully perpetuates her personal vision and touch, there is much talk of the younger designers, Pierre Cardin, Guy Laroche, Catherine Sauve and Serge Matta. As for the others, their names are such bywords nowadays that it would be quite pointless to mention them here.

* * *

Doubtless, Madam, you will be surprised by the 1958/59 winter models but do not forget that your grandmothers opened their eyes wide with amazement at Poiret's hobble skirts, just as your mothers were shocked at first by the startling originality of Schiaparelli. Which did not prevent them from wearing, just for the fun of it and often with great pleasure and always with pride, these now forgotten dresses of days gone by. The very essence of Parisian couture

- Carven*
Lainage bleu,
col et béret d'astrakan même bleu
- Chanel*
Jersey beige, garnitures et toque en martre
- Christian Dior*
Ensemble robe et veste, cravate Pekans
- Pierre Balmain*
Jersey de soie beige, ceinture en daim beige

is its ceaseless renewal and constant change. Do not let me hear you complaining therefore when the couturiers are good enough to give you, twice a year, the opportunity to change your appearance and to look ever younger. Actually we have seldom seen collections so youthful in inspiration. Looking at them one has the impression that the couturiers designed them in moments of gaiety. Only a few years ago, that charming young man Jacques Fath used to create his models in his studio, surrounded by a dozen young people while a gramophone played his favourite tunes, dance rhythms as effervescent as champagne. His example has certainly been followed by others. In spite of long hours spent in the search for new techniques of cut to change the look of shoulders or remodel the figure, the couturiers have all presented models which foam and sparkle with irrepressible gaiety.

Will you be wearing your skirt shorter or longer this winter? It is up to you entirely, purely a matter of personal taste, but one thing is sure and that is you are bound to have one of those neat little hats that encircle your head, one of those big collars opening wide and almost enveloping your shoulders, nor will you be able to help falling in love with that short waist, that forward movement, that simple style reduced to the bare essentials. Your friends will go into ecstasies over your youthful appearance. What more could any woman ask?

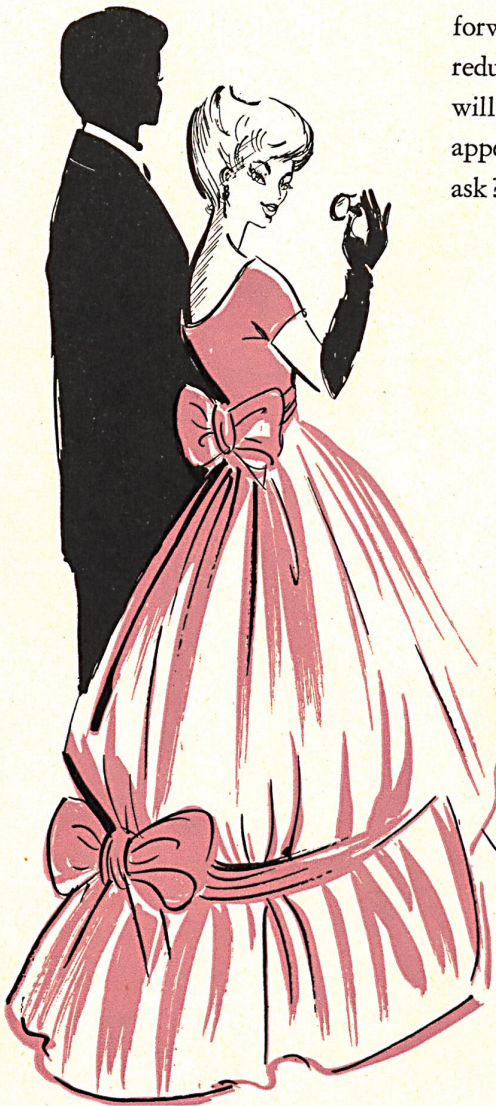
Maggy Rouff
Taffetas violet



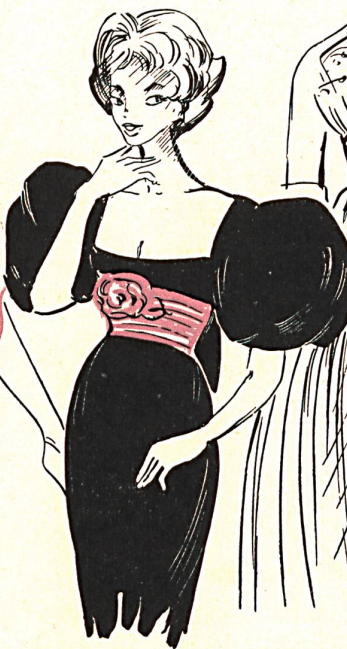
Pierre Cardin
Manteau du soir
avec manches
lampions japonais



Gala



Lanvin Castillo
Taille haute
sur une robe de faille rose



Pierre Balmain
Ceinture de satin rose
sur fourreau de velours noir

Carven
Tulle bleu nuit
rebrod  de saphirs

Christian Dior
Masque
de velours noir