



Fashion Show

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French Finery: “To be in Paris without seeing fashion is to have one’s eyes closed”: a statement from the Marquis de Caraccioli, written in 1772, begins this examination of Parisian fashion.

Fashion Show by Pamela A. Parmal and Didier Grumbach (MFA Publications, 145 illustrations, 224 pages, hardcover, \$65.00, 978-0-87846-707-5) looks at the evolution of the industry in Paris and the history of some of the world’s most influential houses. An essay by Parmal details the history of fashion in the city, which dates from the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715). Tailors created garments imitating the decadence of the royal court’s wardrobe and secured France’s position as the world’s fashion capital. In later years, Paris couturiers pioneered ready-to-wear suits for men and capes and mantles for women.

Grumbach traces this transition in her essay, “Haute Couture and Ready-to-Wear: A Recent History.” In 1956, the head of the department store Galeries Lafayette recruited socialite Ghislaine de Polignac to act as the company’s “stylist,” previewing and selecting garments from designers’ collections to be sold in their stores.

The book concludes with a look at ten of the city’s most significant designers, including Chanel, Christian Dior, and Valentino. Photographs of the houses’ representative designs accompany the story of their origins and evolution.

Parmal is the David and Roberta Logie Curator of Textile and Fashion arts at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Grumbach is a former chairman of Yves Saint Laurent and the author of *Histoires de la mode*. Their expertise and passion on the subject of fashion are displayed in the richly detailed essays.

Fashion plates, artwork, and photographs of historical garments illustrate major trends that occurred over the years, including the elaborate trims of the mid-eighteenth century, simple lines of the early twentieth century, and sport suits that empowered the new working woman. The book is a trove of information and a tribute to the world’s most fashion-conscious city.

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