





Mrs. Robert Liberman, daughter-in-law of the late Mrs. S. Joseph Tankoos, Jr., wearing a green chiffon evening gown by Mme Grès (1966-1967) that belonged to Mrs. Tankoos and was given to the Costume Institute in her memory by her daughter, Mrs. Frederick A. Melhado, 1970.152.1. Photograph: Edward Hardin

Contents

- Introduction** 1
Thomas Hoving
- Inspiration and Information** 2
Deedee Moore
Professionals in the fashion industry discuss the significance of the Museum's Costume Institute
- The Costume Institute** 11
A pictorial presentation of the scope of the collection
- Sleuthing at the Seams** 22
Elizabeth N. Lawrence and Adolph S. Cavallo
Detective work recaptures the stylishness of 18th-century gowns that had been remodeled to suit later fashion
- Homage to a Poet** 32
Stella Mary Newton
An analysis of clothing in "a curious little painting" sheds light on an art historical puzzle
- Clothes and the Historian** 38
John Nevinson
The truest portraits: how costumes reveal the actual appearance of historical characters
- Fashion Plate** 44
The visual language of fashion in clothing will be presented in the new Costume Institute's opening exhibition

On the covers

Dalmatian costume, and evening cape by Doucet. Plates by Borelli-Vranska and Dammy from La Gazette du Bon Ton, Paris, July and May 1914. The Costume Institute Library

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

Volume XXX, Number 1 August/September 1971

Published bimonthly. Copyright © 1971 by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82 Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscriptions \$7.50 a year. Single copies \$1.50. Sent free to Museum members. Four weeks' notice required for change of address. Back issues available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 313 N. First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Volumes I-XXXVII (1905-1942) available as a clothbound reprint set or as individual yearly volumes from Arno Press, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, or from the Museum, Box 255, Gracie Station, New York, N.Y. 10028. Editor of the *Bulletin*: Katharine H. B. Stoddert; Assistant Editor: Susan Goldsmith. Art Director: Stuart Silver; Designer: Joseph del Gaudio. (Photographs, unless otherwise noted, by the Metropolitan Museum's Photograph Studio.)

The Costume Institute

Attics and trunks have long been the repositories of the admired clothing of our ancestors and of last season's discarded fashions. But unlike other decorative arts such as furniture or ceramics that people also collect, costumes have seldom been thought of as works of art in their own right. The belief that they *are* art led the Metropolitan to take the Museum of Costume Art under its roof in 1946 as the Costume Institute, and to make it a Museum department in 1959.

The splendid collection of the Costume Institute began with two large gifts, one from Irene Lewisohn and her sister Alice Lewisohn Crowley and one from Lee Simonson. Since then the Institute's holdings have more than doubled, because hundreds of donors have contributed apparel ranging from a Spanish matador's "suit of lights" to the latest fashions by leading couturiers. The Institute's library has also grown steadily: in addition to books and periodicals it houses fashion plates and sketches, pattern books, and fabric swatches.

To make these valuable resources accessible to more people, an expanded Costume Institute will open this fall, following over thirteen years of planning and construction. For four years the collections have been in storage and activities were curtailed. These four years, however, are like the tip of the iceberg. Behind them lies a decade of planning, supervised by Polaire Weissman, then the Costume Institute's Executive Director, with the encouragement of the late James J. Rorimer and the architectural contribution of Edward D. Stone; and the enormous task of raising money for the building, which would have been infinitely more difficult without the grant of five million dollars from the city of New York and impossible without the support of dozens of people, both of Seventh Avenue and Fifth Avenue – among them Irene Lewisohn, Dorothy Shaver, Melvin Dawley, and Aline Bernstein.

Chairman Adolph S. Cavallo and his staff have made ambitious plans for the future: to show Museum visitors the aesthetic aspects of costume, exhibitions will be changed every three months, and for serious students of costume, the educational program – including workshops, publications, lecture series, and the Textile Study Room – will be enlarged. These programs and the well-designed new space will surely enable the Costume Institute to achieve its goal: to make its rich resources more available to laymen and to students than ever before – to literally open up the department – and to reinforce the idea of costume as art.

Thomas Hoving, *Director*

Inspiration & Information The Costume Institute

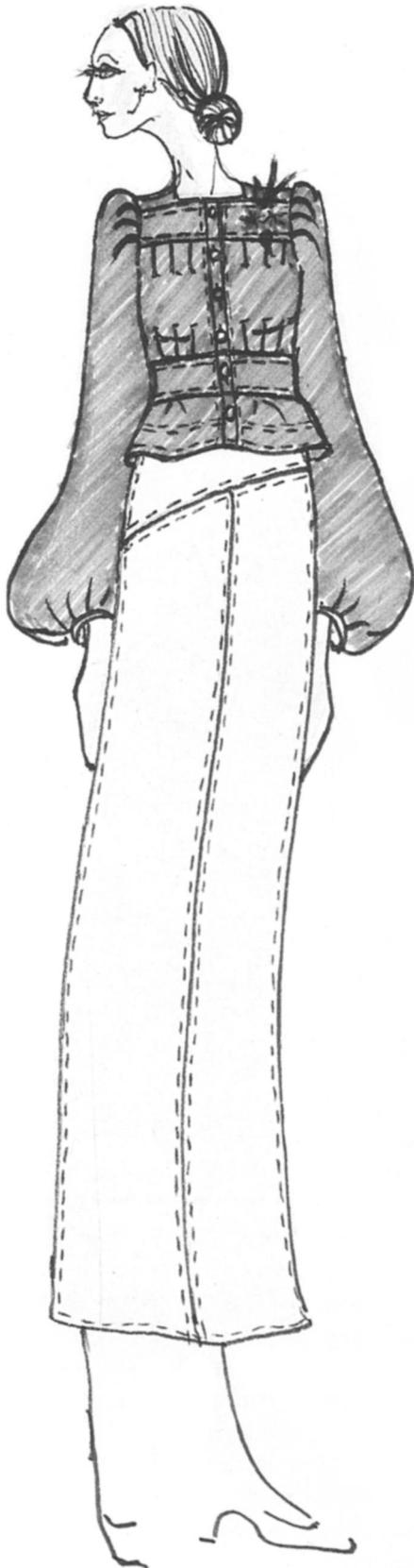
Deedee Moore, *Freelance Writer*

FASHION is the fifth largest industry in the United States, ranking barely below transportation, electrical machinery, nonelectrical machinery, and food. Yet, while years of planning go into an “innovation” like car seat belts, waistlines can be realigned in a matter of weeks and a season’s color determined overnight.

Fashion in clothing is the instantaneous industry, thriving on fantasy, dependent on constant change. People go on eating, traveling, living mechanically, but seldom do they wear out clothes and really “need” a new wardrobe. That “need,” therefore, beyond basics, must be created, cultivated. And so it is; it is not unlikely that the majority of conversations in the past few months have included some talk of hot pants and skirt lengths or even how wide men’s ties should be. Rare is the person who is not financially affected by the flux of fashion, rarer still the person who is not at least amusedly aware of it.

Of course, not all fashion in clothing is creative. The bulk of the industry follows – few are the pacesetters, the real designers, the inspirers. But, considering the demands on those few, it is no less than astounding that vitality is regenerated collection after collection, year after year. And where does their inspiration come from? Certainly not from three-way lightbulbs or Seventh Avenue’s thick air, as one might imagine, but from myriad sources: people watching, paintings, libraries of James Laver, Godey drawings, Etruscan urns, photographs, old movies, and, most of all, from period costumes. For clothing, theater, and film designers, for retailers, for students, the value of a library of costumes is inestimable; and, among costume collections, The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute is considered one of the finest. Why? In order to determine the answer, professionals in various fields of design, industry, and teaching were asked why they so value costumes as inspiration and, in particular, the Costume Institute.

Opposite: This soft Welsh lamb blouse and slender skirt were created by Jean Muir, a leading London designer



JEAN MUIR, the young Londoner whose designs ushered in the mod era of the 1960s, whose clothes helped alter the look of a whole generation, and whose work is studied closely by other designers for their sense of movement, first went to the Costume Institute last Christmas. “I had no idea of it,” she says, speaking with the ebullience of the discoverer. “Luckily I went backstage at the Institute. I was bowled over – it’s the most incredible place – a super collection. I was especially impressed by the national costumes – Albanian, Rumanian, Russian – I was riveted. In London one doesn’t have all these regional clothes – simply seventeenth- and eighteenth-century urban costumes.

“It’s marvelous to see how the embroidery was handled, how the fabric was worked, the extraordinary colors and color combinations, how they put things together. One may not get an actual design, but one gets a sense of atmosphere, rather like being in the right room – a feeling that these clothes were made for people to wear, to live in, to behave in. One couldn’t begin to compare sketches with these costumes. I would like to take a year off and help arrange the Institute’s collection. It would be such an inspiration!”

ON THIS side of the Atlantic, Rizkallah, of Malcolm Starr, can use the Institute more frequently and does. He was introduced to the Metropolitan by Henry Callaban, a vice-president of Saks Fifth Avenue and a great champion of the Institute (in fact, Callaban was one of the organizers of the fund-raising Party of the Year, a gala evening supported by the industry).

The Egyptian-born designer remembers his first visit as “a shot in the arm. I did not expect to see such exciting things. I had started a Caspian Sea idea, and within a few hours I had the whole collection designed, in my head.” That collection includes a soft, swinging dress of eastern European influence, swept with bold paisley designs. Rizkallah explains, “You don’t make THE Turkish pantaloons, but you get the feeling and adapt it to today. When I see real costumes, they speak of the spirit of a time – the workmanship, labor, and culture of a people, their circumstances, their entire way of life; costumes are imbued with layers and layers of culture. So you take the best of that culture and try to educate yourself, just as a painter goes to a museum to look at masterpieces not to copy but to learn.

“Of course I get inspiration from books and photographs, but, when I see actual costumes, I sense the spirit of the person in the clothes. I used to think clothes were simply to cover bodies; now I know each garment has a personality and realize that many of these garments have been handed down generation to generation – they are art. What I design now is an expression of me, classic, and, I hope, will be handed down mother to daughter, so students of the future will be able to know the feeling and mood of our time and to have that inspiration that I have when I go to the Museum.”

FASHION RETAILERS may not have as great a reason as designers do for using the Costume Institute, but Katherine Murphy, fashion co-ordinator of Bloomingdale’s, admits that “I don’t use it as much as I would like to, simply because it’s a mad, mad world and I don’t have the time. But it is a marvelous place to take young buyers and tune them in to

when fashion started turning corners, when mass production started, what periods actually were. Everyone is saying today that current fashion is forties-ish. It's not. If you go to the Institute, you can see the thirties influence, and a lot of what we are calling thirties is actually the twenties. Nevertheless, people literally won't believe you unless you take them up there and point out what was being designed in the thirties. Nor did the real clothes of those periods fit the way they are being adapted today – they were much looser.

“For theater designers who have to be authentic, and for Seventh Avenue designers who have to do collections year after year and be inspired all the time, the Institute is indispensable. From one garment at the Institute five or six looks can be produced – clothes were much fussier in the past. Today for one garment you can take a collar here or a sleeve there, because there isn't a look of the seventies as there was with Courrèges in the sixties – fashion now is confused. It simply reflects the times in which we live, and there is much polarization in the world and in fashion. In its attempts to sort out some of the confusion, fashion is delving into the past, and so the Institute with its costumes of old is particularly important at the moment.

“Actually applying costumes to retailing is difficult, though we do get promotional ideas from research at the Museum – for displays, windows. Recently I took a group of buyers up there to study Claire McCardell clothes – they were amazed at the size of the collection and how contemporary the clothes looked. What would be ideal for me would be to bring together a group of sportswear buyers to give them a “retro” on sportswear so they could suggest what we can do to give blazers, which are all over town, the individual mark of Bloomingdale's. Buyers might reply that they are not designers, but I am not asking them to be designers – only, with research, to get good ideas to work with.”

A *ANNE KEAGY of the Parsons School of Design is chairman of the fashion department, which she has built over the past twenty-four years and of which she is understandably proud: her alumni include Donald Brooks, Leo Narducci, Chester Weinberg – people mostly of Seventh Avenue. Parsons's fashion course is a three-year program with a first-year compulsory course in fashion research, conducted mainly at the Costume Institute.*

Mrs. Keagy is thus more than eagerly awaiting the Institute's reopening. She considers Parsons a favorite child of the Institute, and, in turn, Parsons donates to the Institute the costumes it collects. “We normally use the Institute as a classroom once a week,” Mrs. Keagy states. “There are lectures; we base work around special exhibits, sketch, do detailed renderings. Until a student has gotten involved with intricate detail, has seen it, drawn it – pleats for example, how they fold, how those folds work in peau de soie, how the fabric is used, how the darts are treated (for taffeta more darts are needed), how construction achieves proportion – he cannot actually understand the movement of a garment, how it fits on a person, and he cannot get that from fashion plates or books.

“It is so important for first-year students to have the course at the Institute as a basis for their studies. And they must learn to use the Museum – everyone looks, but not everyone sees. Many schools do line-for-line copies, but that is not our approach. Students have to feel the costumes, be aware of what's

Inspired by the richness of the eastern European clothes in the Costume Institute, Rizkallah created a "Caspian Sea collection" that includes this dramatic silk and worsted dress





In designing the costumes for the musical 1776, including the two shown here, Patricia Zipprodt strove to bring life and movement to her historically accurate creations

there, file those ideas in their minds, and then use just the color, or the fullness of a sleeve, or the way to adapt a sailor collar. At Parsons we have Seventh Avenue designers review students' sketches, give a critique. The designers return a second time to see the three-dimensional model in muslin. The third time, they see the finished garment – the draping, the fabric, the color, the proportion – when it has become part of living, of culture.”

FILM DESIGNER EDITH HEAD's work – dressing great movie ladies like Carole Lombard, Rita Hayworth, Grace Kelly – spans several generations. “In London,” she notes, “there has long been a passion for accuracy, authenticity, but for years we in Hollywood were escapists. We did what we called picture adaptations, and if the director thought the bustle on a gown was unbecoming, we removed it. Now, with the resurgence of period films and with audiences of the last ten to fifteen years so bright that you cannot fake a look – especially today when there is so much interest in home sewing – we have developed that same passion for realism. And without actual costumes, realism would be absolutely impossible.

“Today, every designer in the film industry tries to come to New York, or anywhere museums exist, to study costumes, because in Hollywood we have only museums of early clothes of the stars, Hollywood clothes, but not period costumes. And drawings or sketches are not the same – there is a feeling about a costume that you cannot possibly get from two dimensions. Even the Godey books were not accurate: their illustrations were artists' interpretations of fashion.

“Along with our growing interest in historical accuracy in film costumes, we are changing our attitude toward historical costumes in daily life: while they used to be thought stuffy, today they are having a strong impact on fashion – the use of the dog collar, the corselet, panniers – I think because there's tremendous interest in anything of beauty, romance. On the other hand, we seem to have become afraid of costumes of the future, the look of outer space, metal bosoms, nudity. So until fashion is compatible with life today we will need to go back, not only to different periods, but also to different civilizations and cultures.”

PATRICIA ZIPPRODT's list of Broadway shows includes *Cabaret*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *She Loves Me*, 1776, and her first film was *The Graduate*. She was pleased to learn that the new Costume Institute will be open year round, since the July closings in the past were a sore spot with theater designers. “I realize,” she says, “there's mothproofing to be done, but most Broadway shows are designed over the summer and finished by Labor Day. The Costume Institute was not as charitable as other museums. It was a real problem, because there is nothing like an actual costume to make you feel the whole expression of past worlds.

“Literally, of course, it's the construction that's important. If I am working on a show, the Institute gives me a room, books, and costumes to work with. You must become one with those clothes, equip yourself so that by the time you finish the research for a show, YOU could be the designer of that time and are free of copying. Because the clothes that have been saved and found their way into museums are primarily Sunday outfits of the middle class, however, I



Ben Franklin
is
A
MESS (Feb)

Franklin

Opposite: Gown and accessories designed by Donald Brooks for a New York production of the sixteenth-century play *Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe

couldn't go through this process for *Fiddler* at the Institute.

"I know that some people feel the costumes should not be handled, but to me the value of the Costume Institute is seeing how the garment feels on, how it moves on a body. If possible I take the stars to the Institute. For *She Loves Me*, I took Barbara Baxley and Barbara Cook and worked with them on the thirties look. We learned that you have to stand in a whole different way: you lean back a little in that sort of languid swayback with one arm limply thrust forward. I went back to the choreographer and we worked the entire show on this stance. It made the show elegant, gave the actors courage, and dispelled their belief that the mid-calf thirties length was without grace.

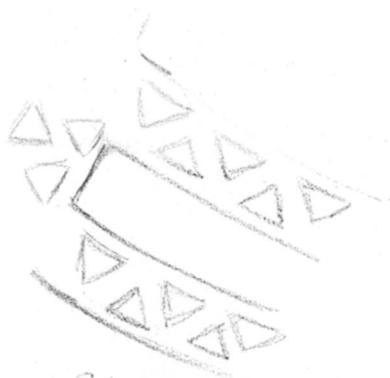
"Working with costumes gives you profound respect for the life of past times. You look at our things and see how much workmanship has changed, how many dressmaking techniques have been lost, the absence of the human hand that gave earlier periods so much beauty. In theater, however, we still need these techniques because we are custom, not mass-produced. I work with one shop where every seam is overcast by hand, and no theater embroidery is ever done by machine.

"For 1776 it was very important for me to see the cut of an eighteenth-century man's coat, especially important because we were dealing with a pantheon of American gods. I shudder when I see the costumes on people at Williamsburg and Gettysburg. The clothes are machine made, without vitality or fit. The tailoring of eighteenth-century coats made them very soft; they weren't stiff and hard as people imagine. In drawings you could never see that, for there's no dimension; you can't study where seams go on the body. And what you're aiming for in design is mobile sculpture on the stage."

PATTON CAMPBELL, associate professor of theater arts at Columbia University, specializes in designing for musicals and operas – from *Man of La Mancha* to *Scarlett*, the musical version of *Gone with the Wind* produced in Tokyo last year. For the past fifteen years he has used the Costume Institute extensively.

"I use it as the last stage of research and sometimes even after the designs are made," he says. "I use all material – books, fashion plates, photographs – but I prefer costumes. You can see how they executed the cut, the patterns, how they trimmed, the fabrics. The choice of fabric is terribly important, the way the fabric moves or is rigid in relation to the body – and you can study this only in actual costumes. Costumes show the behavior and stature of the person who wore them. You can see how tiny eighteenth-century people were as opposed to our vitamin generation. And the Institute is arranged so you can almost leaf through the decades – the mauve decade, the white decade – the palette of colors of a period.

"I use the Museum in different ways. One time I was doing an opera for the New York City Opera, and needed a group of chorus girls in riding habits of about 1875. The Institute had a number of marvelous riding skirts with a constructed shape that allowed for sitting sidesaddle, with a protuberance for the left knee – a very intricate pattern with gores. I could have spent hours drawing for the draper, but that made no sense, since the Institute was willing for the draper to go to the Museum to take muslin patterns from the skirts. The result is



CLASSIC PATTERN
IN "RUBY"
EMBROIDERY
IN CAUL

BLACK
VELVET
BERET
WITH OSTRICH

HAIR CAUGHT IN
CAUL OF GOLD AND
RED STONES!

WHITE
PLEATED
SILK
BOODICE

WHITE
SILK
PULLED
THROUGH
SLASHES

GOLD METALLIC
BEAD
RED VELVET



SHOES
ALSO RED
VELVET- EMBROIDERED



IN
GOLD
SCROLLS



Donald Brooks

a fascinating engineering feat: when the figure is standing, the fabric of the protuberance is hooked up gracefully on buttons.

“I also take my students to the Institute. A staff member arranges a talk and I am constantly amazed at her knowledge. It introduces the students to the Institute, to the use of costumes, gives them exposure to how costumes actually looked and were made.

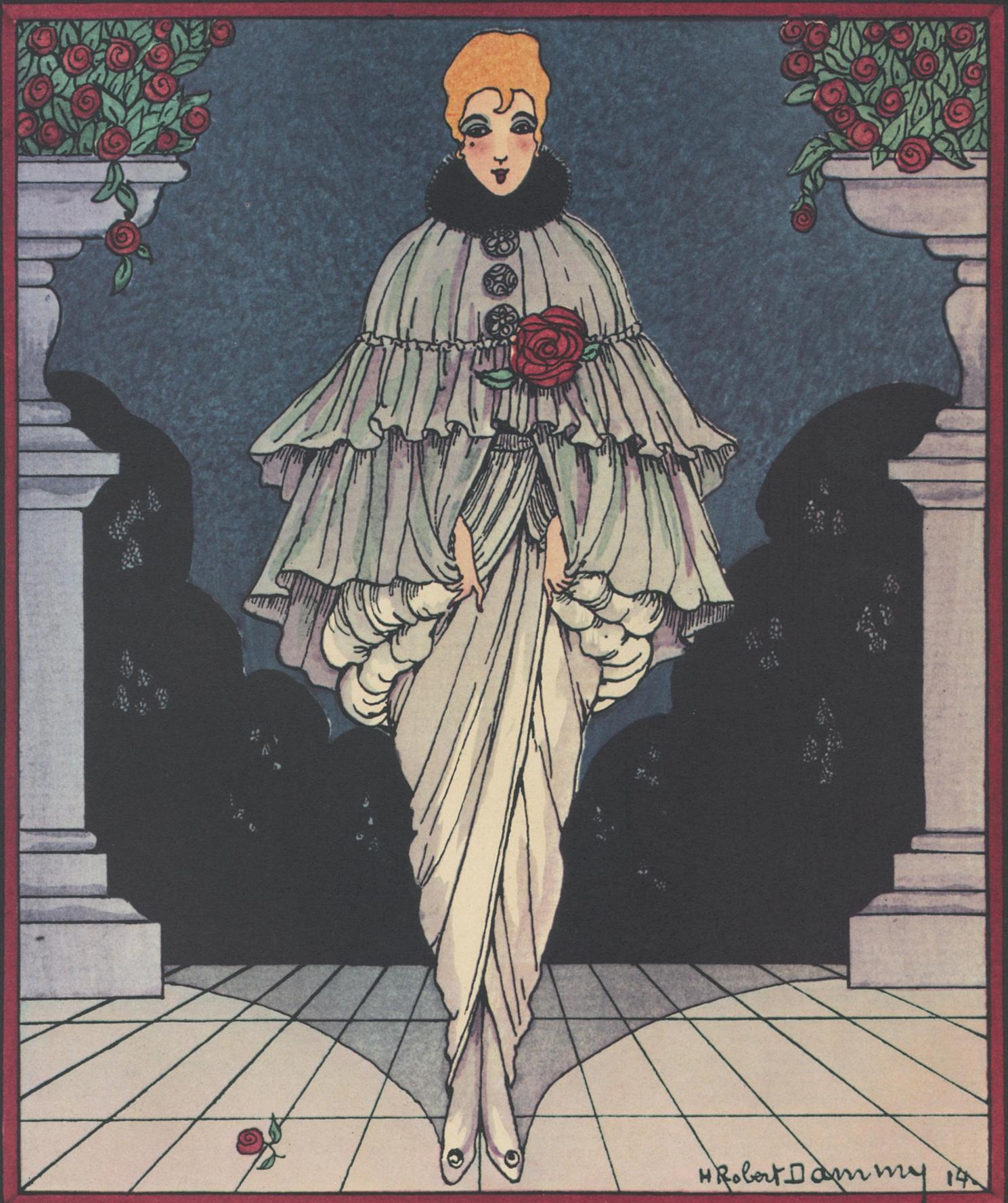
“With the expanded space, the facilities for study rooms are excellent and adaptable. The privacy that is possible is terribly important; if I am using a Polaroid, the flashbulb will no longer bother others. Now what is desperately needed is a well-organized program of photographing the costumes closely, from all angles – inside and out. Even with scientific care, these clothes are eventually going to turn to dust, and there is nothing more heartbreaking than picking up a costume to feel it crumble.”

DONALD BROOKS's latest shows on Broadway, *The Last of the Red Hot Lovers* and *Promises, Promises*, bring to fourteen his decade of theater credits. Each of his films has brought him an Academy Award nomination. And on Seventh Avenue, among his own group of professionals, he is considered a star designer. In turn, he applauds the Costume Institute, where so much of his research has been done and from which so much of his inspiration has been derived.

“I had studied fine arts, industrial design, and architecture at Syracuse,” he says, “and it was only through additional studies at Parsons that my interest in fashion became clear. Through Parsons, the gates of the Costume Institute were flung open. The collection of clothes at the disposal of students and professionals – going back to the sixteenth century – is fantastic: clothes and accessories that make it possible for theatrical and fashion designers to actually reach out and touch history. Now I’m at the Institute quite often, and, in general, I study embroidery, accessories – the height of a heel, the tooling of cut-steel buckles, passementerie.

“Costumes at the Institute are not necessarily divided into ethnic or economic groups, nor is every group represented. For instance, it is not possible to finger clothing worn by peasants of a period. But an ingenious designer, on studying one of the Institute’s examples of folk clothing, can take what is typical and downgrade it for a peasant’s apparel, or, conversely, upgrade it for what the mayor and his wife might wear for official functions. No designer who considers himself creative would try to re-create particular examples from the collection. But, through research, he can temper ideas with his own taste and judgment and create his own mood. If one is doing contemporary clothes he might be interested in the techniques, the use of trim – then the inspiration is abstracted. If the underlying theme in a collection is a specific historical period or locale, the inspiration can be more directly related to the source. In any case, though, the designer has to see how those clothes actually were. And the tremendous library at the Costume Institute – periodicals going back almost 200 years – provides extra help.

“Everybody is interested in history and beauty, so I think the public will use the Institute more with the expanded facilities. Because there is so much ugliness in the world, it is especially restful and soothing and calm to see the beauty of the past as it exists in the Costume Institute.”



H Robert Dammy 14

The Costume Institute



DESIGN: GOSLIN/BARNETT

Brocaded gray taffeta day dress. English, about 1836 (made of 18th-century silk). Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 66.35.1

Lavender faille dress with polychrome brocading. French, 1750-1775. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 59.29.1

Wedding dress of lace over satin. American, about 1834. Gift of Mrs. Peter McBean and Mrs. E. M. Smith in memory of Nathalie Lorillard Bailey Morris, CI 68.42.1



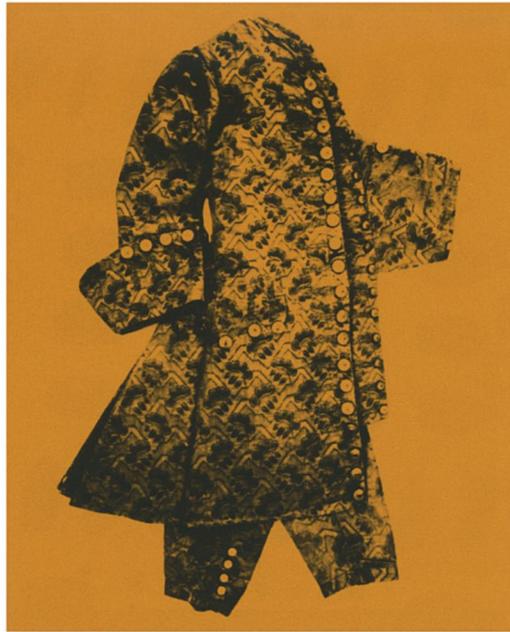
Ball gown of ivory satin with silver sequins and painted cornflowers. French (Worth), about 1894. Gift of Mrs. James G. Flockhart, CI 68.53.10

Closed robe of polychrome Spitalfields silk brocade. English, about 1750. Rogers Fund, 36.145

White linen day dress with polychrome silk embroidery. English, 1725-1750. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 66.34



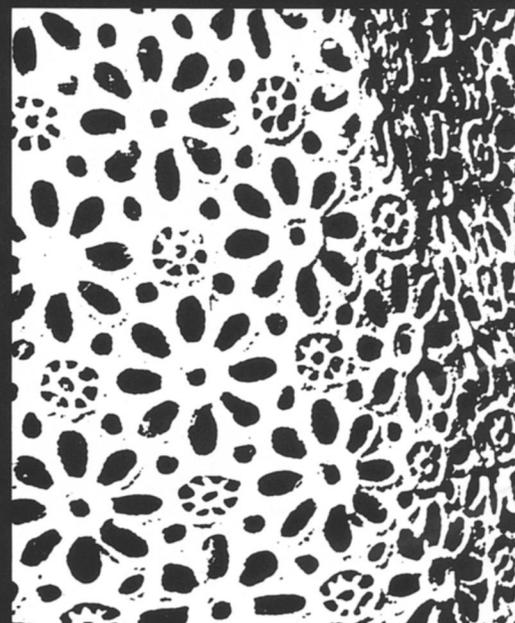
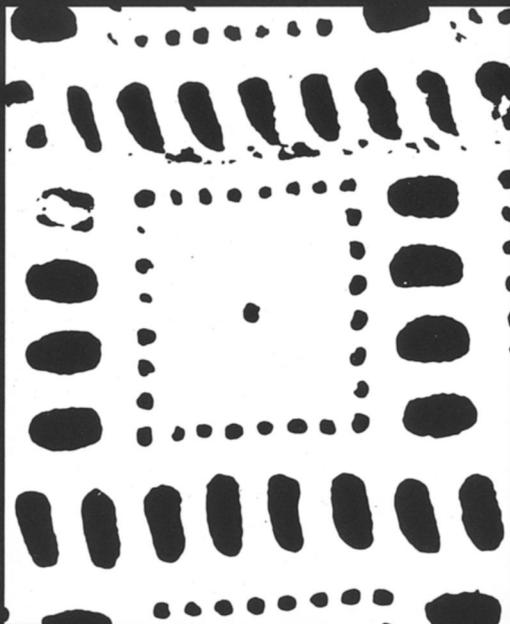




Left page and bottom: *Detail and overall view of man's red wool jacket embroidered with silver and black yarns. Albanian, 19th century. Bequest of Mrs. Hamilton Condon, 1970.84.1. Top left: Man's suit of blue patterned velvet. French, 1725-1750. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 62.27. Center left: Man's suit of brown velvet. English (?), about 1770. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 61.35. Center right: Man's coat of black velvet on a purplish blue ground with polychrome silk embroidery. French, 1775-1785. Gift of Lilly Daché, CI 68.45*

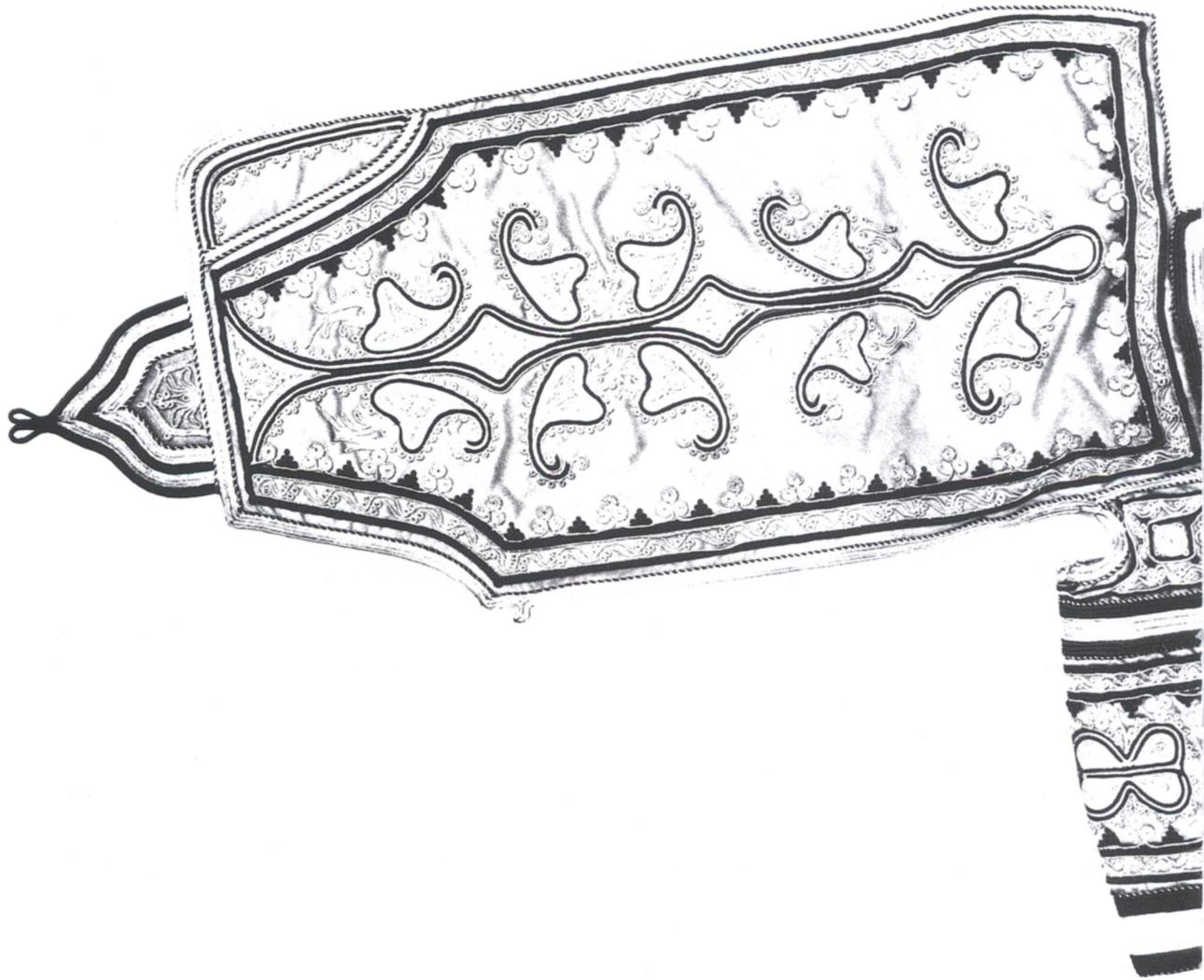


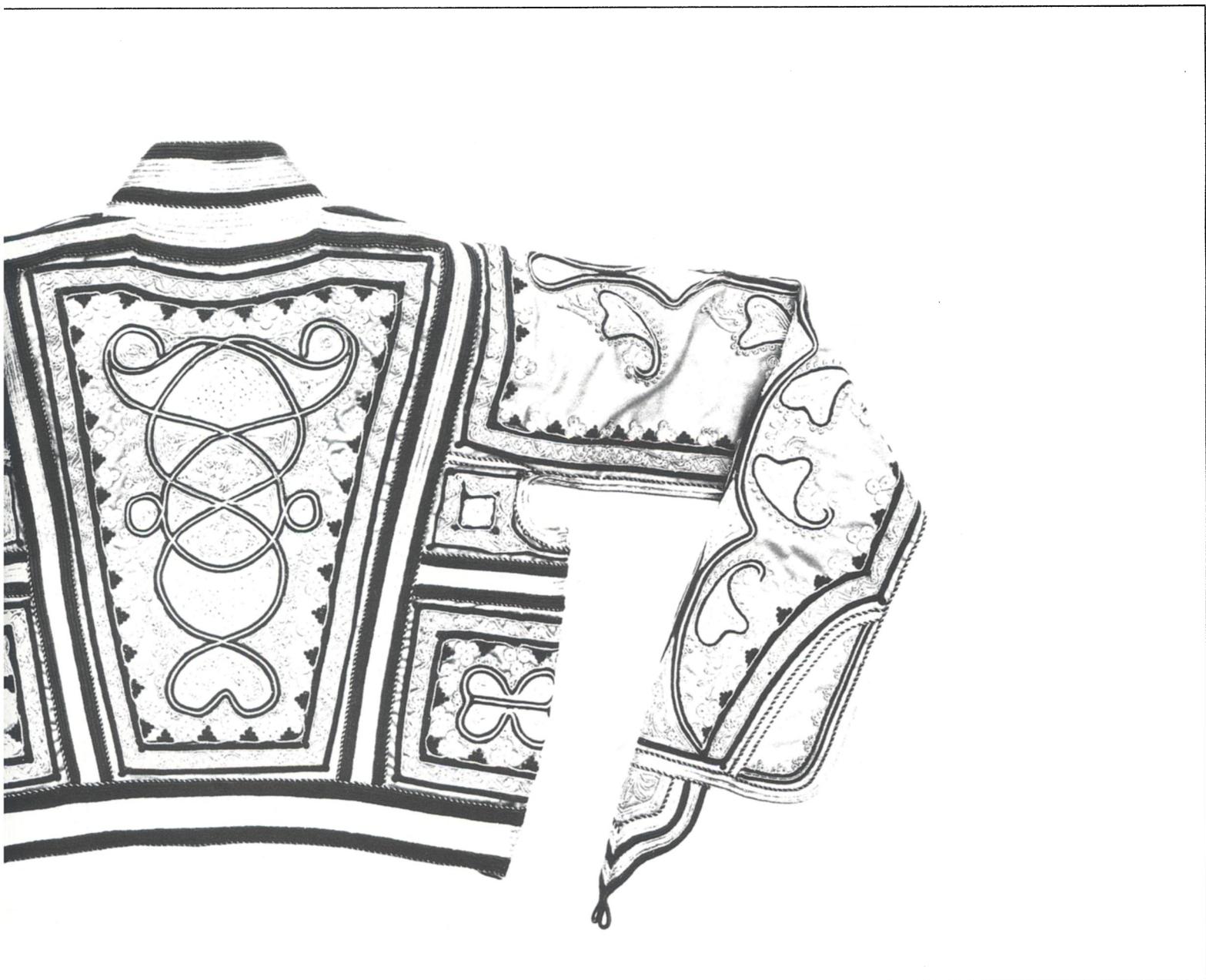
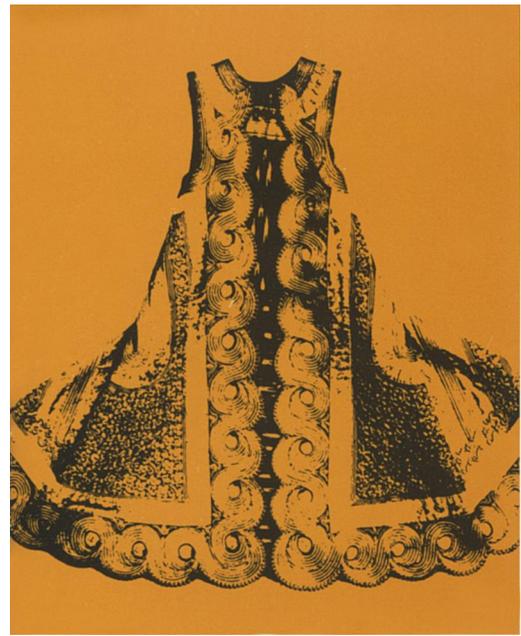
Top left and center: *Boy's white piqué coat, and detail.* American (?), late 19th century. Gift of Orme Wilson and R. Thornton Wilson in memory of their mother, Caroline Schermerhorn Astor Wilson, 49.3.51. Top right: *Woman's coat (front) of red velvet heavily decorated with gilt yarns.* Greek (Epirus), 19th century. Gift of Mrs. Harrison Tweed, CI 48.67.1. Center and lower left: *Two white piqué dresses for a boy, and detail.* American (?), late 19th century. Gift of Orme Wilson and R. Thornton Wilson in memory of their mother, Caroline Schermerhorn Astor Wilson, 49.3.48,52



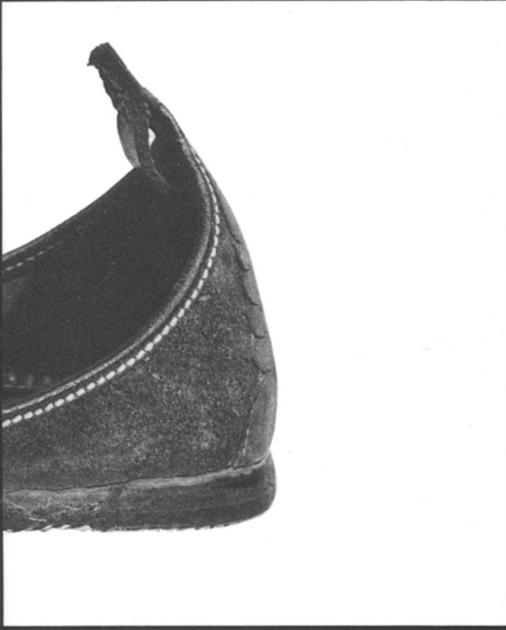


Right: Woman's coat of purple velvet decorated with gilt and silver yarns. Probably Serbian, 19th century. Gift of Alan Wolfe, CI 56.6.3. Center: Woman's coat (back) of red velvet heavily decorated with gilt yarns. Greek (Epirus), 19th century. Gift of Mrs. Harrison Tweed, CI 48.67.1. Far right: Woman's coat of scarlet velvet decorated with gilt yarns. Albanian or Turkish, 19th century. Gift of Chester Dale, CI 53.74.4. Bottom: Man's wool jacket heavily decorated with silver and gilt yarns. Greek (Epirus), late 19th century. Gift of Mrs. August G. Paine, CI 53.11.1









Top row: *Brown leather shoe embroidered in gilt thread. Indian, 20th century. Gift of Aline Bernstein, CI 40.51.3. Center row: Straw poke bonnet. American, about 1831. Bequest of Maria P. James, 11.60.237. Man's suit of blue-green velvet on an ivory and silver ground. French, 1760-1780. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 64.31.2. Maroon and cream satin boot. Italian, late 19th century. Gift of Mrs. Conway L. Atwater, CI 42.24.5. Ball gown of green satin and velvet. French (Worth), 1898-1900. Gift of Mrs. C. Phillip Miller, CI 57.17.8. Bottom row: Boy's coatdress of tan sateen. American, about 1830. Gift of Mrs. John C. Cattus, CI 52.21. Reception dress of patterned champagne silk and cream satin, elaborately trimmed. French, about 1878. Gift of Mary Pierrepont Beckwith, CI 69.14.12*



Sleuthing at the Seams

Elizabeth N. Lawrence

Assistant for Conservation, The Costume Institute

Adolph S. Cavallo

Chairman, The Costume Institute



1. *Fille de qualité, en d'Eshabillé d'Esté*, by Nicolas Arnoult (active about 1680-1700), French. Dated 1687. Engraving, 10½ x 7¼ inches. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 57.559.5(3)

2. *Gown with matching petticoat*, English, about 1690-1695, as restored in 1970. Rogers Fund, 33.54ab

3. *Front view of the gown in Figure 2*, as it appeared in 1933

When preparing an exhibition, most costume specialists try to mount garments so they look like clothes in contemporary fashion illustrations, but we often find it impossible to achieve that effect. Why so, if the mannequin is properly prepared and the dresser is skilled and informed? Why, in fact, do so many handsome costumes look dowdy and dull when installed? Careful examination of the problem usually leads to one conclusion: the garments are not in their original condition – they have lost their line and tone; they are hedging. Most surviving eighteenth-century dresses, for example, were remade once or twice before 1800. Some of these, and possibly others that were then still intact, fell victim to the dressmaker's shears in the 1830s, when textiles resembling certain small-patterned eighteenth-century fabrics were in fashion. Still others were remodeled in the years around 1900, when they were converted, more or less superficially, for use as fancy dress or for day or evening wear in the vogue for eighteenth-century revivals in architecture, furniture, and other accessories of life.

Those eighteenth-century folk were perfectly straightforward about making over a family dress to bring it up-to-date for a daughter. Silk was very expensive and labor was comparatively cheap, so why waste money on new material when the fabric of the old dress was still strong and handsome? Their descendants in the 1830s probably shared that point of view. After all, some eighteenth-century patterns were back in style. Out with the seams, off with the pleats! In turn, their descendants seventy or a hundred years later took out any old dresses they could find and changed them just enough to get that fashionable silhouette but not enough to destroy the old treasure.

If the dressmaker had simply made the garment somewhat larger or smaller or had altered its shape a little here and there to make it fit a particular body, we would have no problem. A clever dresser could still turn out a stylish figure for the galleries. But where one dress style has been converted into another, real difficulties may arise. Sometimes the transformation succeeded and the reincarnated dress stands on its own, regardless of whether the fabric is fresh or used. But in many cases the conversion shifted the garment only partially from one state of being into another. This is our problem: the costume that represents neither this period nor that, the poor foundling that no fashion plate will claim, no mannequin accommodate. Confronted with such a maverick, the specialist



4. Back view of the gown in Figure 2, as restored in 1970

5. Back view of the gown in Figure 2, as it appeared in 1933

must investigate its past, using any internal clues the garment itself offers and getting help where he can find it outside, in pictorial documents. When he discovers the costume's true identity, he can usually make it look worthy of its name.

The most important European costume in the Museum's collection is a case in point. It is an English, gilt-embroidered, wool gown, dating from about 1690 to 1695 (Figures 2, 4), which had suffered a number of alterations and conversions before it was acquired by the Museum in 1933. At that time the staff, seeing that the dress was not in its original condition, made some changes and installed it (Figures 3, 5). A later search for more information revealed that the dress had not yet been brought back to its earliest design, and a thorough restoration project was undertaken. Clues in the gown itself – especially in the tailor's notches, his logic in arranging the stripes, and the outlines of the embroidered areas – and clues taken from contemporary pictures guided us in making changes. To begin with, the pleats over the breast were too wide. When we narrowed them, the embroidered lapels appeared wider and more important by contrast, and it became fairly certain that the bodice was not intended to have a stomacher (the triangular inset filling the V at the front of the bodice), since the decorated lapels now gave the same visual effect. The four pleats at the back of the bodice were reduced to two and, like the two pleats on the front, moved into the positions they seemed to have occupied originally. The side seams of the bodice were let out between one and two inches, and the sleeves were readjusted accordingly, as well as being reshaped and reset in keeping with period fashion plates and the evidence in the gown itself. The petticoat was removed from its modern band and given a drawstring-like device, since that seemed to have been the original means of controlling its fullness. It was also given some cosmetic surgery at the top of the center front where someone had cut the fabric away. After these corrections, the petticoat could hang longer in front and more evenly all around as it was meant to do. Finally, the overskirt was piled higher on the hips. In its restored condition, the gown no longer has a broad-shouldered, stunted silhouette but has the character of costumes shown in illustrations of the period (Figure 1). It fits the mannequin with a trim sureness, and the figure has a spirited clarity that tells us we have found the right solution to this mystery.

A French gown, made of lavender and white striped silk taffeta with a matching petticoat was purchased in 1966 as an example dating from the late eighteenth century (Figure 7). The staff knew at first glance that the ruffles at the neckline and hem were signs of a conversion (the hem ruffles had been removed when this photograph was taken). The bodice would not fit an eighteenth-century corset; indeed, its shape suggested the late nineteenth century more than the eighteenth, but the petticoat gave the skirt a domed silhouette that was too early for the cut of the bodice. Nevertheless the silk and the basic structure left no doubt that this was an eighteenth-century dress and that it had been converted more than a hundred years later, perhaps as fancy dress.

Is the original gown still there, lost among the reseamings and repleatings? Investigations showed that it is, or rather, *they are*. After removing the neck ruffles, we examined the bodice seams and found that the diagonal "pleats" over the breast (really edges, folded under and stitched) concealed a fascinating secret. They covered the outer edges of the two pieces of silk flanking the closing; visible at those edges were segments of armholes – the armholes of the first dress





6. Detail of the gown in Figure 7, showing one of the armhole segments hidden under the diagonal pleats on the bodice

7. Gown with matching petticoat, French, about 1785, during restoration. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, CI 66.39ab

8. View of the gown in Figure 7, as restored in 1971. Photographs: Katrina Thomas

made from this silk (Figure 6). The two pieces of silk also show old fold and stitch marks, as do most parts of this gown. These clues might be interpreted in a number of ways, but it seems likely that they indicate the dress began life around 1760 as a *robe à la française*, or sack dress. Such gowns had deep pleats running up the sides of the bodice, flanking the opening, then over the shoulders and down the back where they joined other pleats issuing from the back of the neckline (Figure 9). When it was acquired by the Museum, the dress had none of these pleats. It had been converted around 1785 into one of the several variations of the very fashionable *robe à l'anglaise*. In this form, the *robe* had a neatly sculptured bodice that opened in a triangle at the front to reveal a tabbed, false waistcoat, and an overskirt that stayed well back on the hips, showing a good deal of the petticoat (Figure 10).

With a history of two different incarnations in the eighteenth century, the dress could in theory move back from around 1900 to either 1760 or 1785. But in practice there was no choice. Most or all of the silk in the 1760 pleats had gone into the construction of the 1785 dress, and if any silk was left it did not come to the Museum with the costume. Any attempt to reconstruct the 1760 dress would have destroyed the only truth we had left – the 1785 gown. A converted dress is like a remodeled house: neither one can be taken back earlier than the moment of a radical subtraction.

To move the gown back to 1785, we removed a pair of modern insets from the linen underbodice, and eased the seams of the outer silk bodice back into the right positions. When the skirt had been repleated, the fullness moved upward and back and the front edges came to the right position on the pelvis; the stripes of the skirt were now perfectly in line with those on the bodice. The pleats of the petticoat were put into place for the 1785 silhouette (but there was yet another set of fold marks that would have shaped the petticoat properly for the 1760 line). Fully restored, the gown represents its period and type with great flair (Figure 8).

Another gown of approximately the same period, made in the northeastern United States of Chinese painted silk, also suffered a conversion in the nineteenth century, possibly in the late 1830s, when there was a fashion for dresses that resembled open gowns with petticoats. When it was given to the Museum, the gown had a short, tapered bodice that would have nothing to do with an eighteenth-century corset; a petticoat that domed evenly all around; an overskirt with a deep flounce at its hem; and a neckline that was much too high for the eighteenth century. The dress was a foundling, proclaiming its ancestry through the fabric and basic form but then denying it through its details and silhouette (Figure 11).

Careful examination showed that all the bodice seams had been let out – a simple alteration – presumably to accommodate an early owner. But the marks of conversion became evident: there was a deep tuck at each side of the bodice, running from the lower edge up to the armhole and then down the inside of the sleeve; there was a deep dart (wedge-shaped pleat) in each front section of the bodice; the petticoat, gathered on a waistband that was not original, rode ninety degrees off center, with the pocket slits at the front (sewn up) and back (used as a placket) rather than at the sides, and its flounce had been moved to the skirt. These changes had produced a bodice that lapped across the front and a silhouette of mixed ancestry.



9. *Portrait of Mme Favart*, by François-Hubert Drouais (1727-1775), French. Dated 1757. The sitter, a French actress and singer, is shown wearing a robe à la française. Oil on canvas, 31½ x 25½ inches. The Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 17.120.210

10. *L'Indiscretion*, by J.-F. Janinet (1752-1814), after N. Lavreince (1737-1807), French. About 1785. The woman at the right is wearing a robe à l'anglaise. Engraving, 14 1/16 x 11 1/16 inches. Bequest of George Blumenthal, 41.140.4



Fortunately, except for part of one shoulder strap, the original gown was all there. By following old fold, stitch, and soil marks, we restored the seams and pleats to their earlier conformation. Reconstructed in its proper shape, the gown found its identity and told us how to install it, on a long-waisted, eighteenth-century corset with the fullness of the petticoat and skirt at the side and well toward the back. It was now clear that the petticoat should hang much higher off the ground than had seemed right at first. The gown is no longer just pretty: it is immensely stylish – as it was born to be (Figure 12).

Here are three cases, three sets of clues, three solutions. There are many others to investigate. The benefits of studying garments for evidence of conversion are clear, the most important being the greater ability of keepers of costume collections to offer the public truth and enjoyment. Fashionable garments radiate freshness and excitement in their lines and trimmings and they have always done so. No one should have to look at costumes that are flaccid, dreary distortions of what they once were.



11. Gown with matching petticoat, American, about 1780-1785, in the early stages of restoration. The petticoat has been partly restored and shows the deep flounce that had been on the skirt. Gift of the heirs of Emily Kearny Rodgers Cowenhoven, 1970.87ab. Photograph: George Mittag





12. The gown in Figure 11, as restored in 1970. Photograph: Katrina Thomas

Homage to a Poet

Stella Mary Newton

*Lecturer and Head of the Department for the Study of the History of Dress,
London University, Courtauld Institute of Art*

Homage to a Poet (Figure 1) is a curious little picture that, since it reflects the influence of the great Venetian painter Giorgione, who lived from about 1477 to 1510, has aroused from time to time the kind of interest that anything even distantly connected with Giorgione is bound to do.

The publication this year of an English translation of Terisio Pignatti's recent impressive book on Giorgione has once more focused attention on this painting, for Professor Pignatti considers it to be an important work from Giorgione's studio, whereas the National Gallery in London, to whose collection the painting belongs, catalogues it as by an "imitator" of Giorgione. This difference of opinion is significant, for while a work considered to emanate from the master's studio can hardly be supposed to postdate his death by more than a few years, an imitator or follower is one who worked in the style of the master after a lapse of time that could, in theory, extend to the present day. In this context an analysis of the clothing worn by the characters who appear in the painting can play an important – perhaps even a decisive – part.

The painting's Giorgionesque features include a group of figures who wear the air of abstraction that is a common ingredient in what some art historians have called the

"Venetian dream"; a tall escarpment (enclosing a minute hermit) rising in the middle distance; and a verdant but mountainous landscape in front of which stands a handsome building, northern in architectural style, set among trees in full leaf. In the foreground, animals and birds add a hint of the magical world of classical myth to the flowery meadow they inhabit; among them are a leopard and a peacock taken from or repeated in a painting in Washington called Orpheus and ascribed to Giorgione's master, Giovanni Bellini. Borrowed ingredients of this kind are not uncommon in medieval and Renaissance painting.

In view of Professor Pignatti's opinion that Homage to a Poet is a work from Giorgione's own studio, it is interesting to notice that none of the dress in the painting corresponds at all closely to any clothing to be found in his generally accepted works, although some details do correspond to similar features in paintings by other artists of the Venetian and Paduan schools who were more or less his contemporaries (a fact pointed out by Sir Charles Holmes, a former director of the National Gallery, in an article published in 1923). Giorgione did not, for instance, paint hair set into fat, vertical tubular curls, a style worn by all the characters in Homage to a Poet with the possible

1. *Homage to a Poet, detail, by an imitator of Giorgione. Oil on panel, 23½ x 19¼ inches. The National Gallery, London*





exception of the “poet” himself. Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, and Carpaccio, on the other hand, frequently did, accompanied usually by a curled fringe of hair across the forehead (Figure 3). This arrangement of the hair belonged, in fact, to a fashion that was current before Giorgione’s earliest pictures were painted, and that had disappeared soon after the beginning of the 1490s. The hair arrangement in *Homage to a Poet*, where the corkscrew curls break from smooth bands of hair that descend from a center parting, is very difficult, though not absolutely impossible, to discover elsewhere. In the one example that comes to mind, Carpaccio’s *Death of the Virgin* of 1508, it is worn by one of the saints, but by that time it was no longer a part of the Venetian fashion.

The young man who kneels in the center of the painting and offers the enthroned figure a bowl full of what Mary Delany in the eighteenth century would have called “nothing at all,” wears a long belted coat with a slit at the side that is not a part of Italian Renaissance fashion (Figure 4). Mantegna, however, used a vaguely similar garment to clothe two of the Magi (presented as Orientals) in his *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi, of about 1465 (Figure 2).

The general style of the dress worn by the young man playing a lute fits less uneasily into the normal fashion of the first decade of the sixteenth century, but its carefully painted shirt front, revealed to a considerable depth by the opening of his coat, is difficult to account for (Figure 7). Its lower part at least should be concealed by a tight-fitting lined jacket that was a sartorial necessity at the time, for without it the long hose could not be kept up. Early paintings by Titian and Palma Vecchio make it clear that toward 1510 a good deal of the shirt front could be exposed above the top of this jacket (a doublet or *farsettino*), but not nearly as much as we see here; ten years previously, at the end of the fifteenth century, a deep

2. *Left: Detail of the Adoration of the Magi, by Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), Italian. About 1465. Uffizi, Florence*

3. *St. John from a Pietà. Detail of an early work by Giovanni Bellini (about 1430-1516), Italian. Brera, Milan. Photograph: Anderson – The Mansell Collection*

4. *Detail of Homage to a Poet*





and wide expanse of shirt was allowed to show, but it was invariably crossed by lacings to hold the two sides of the jacket in place. The absence in a work of art of any means of supporting the hose would inevitably have produced in Giorgione's contemporaries empathetic sensations of acute discomfort.

The dumpy child who is presumably reciting a eulogy to the "poet" is more warmly clad (Figure 4). There is something Oriental in the design of his dress – Carpaccio drew a Greek in a rather similar gown (Figure 5) – but the silhouette produced by the tight belt, the long-haired fur lining, and the slit at the side do not belong to Oriental gowns of the time nor, with the exception of the fur lining, do they fit into Italian fashions of Giorgione's day.

Sir Charles Holmes, unable to reconcile the dress, as well as most of the other ingredients in the picture (which was then called *The Golden Age*), with the accepted work of Giorgione, reluctantly abandoned the attribution he had at first hoped to establish, and after much deliberation came to the conclusion that the painting was a very early work by Giorgione's fellow student in Giovanni Bellini's workshop – Titian. He proposed a date as early as 1494.

In his discernment in connecting the dress with Mantegna, Carpaccio, and Giovanni Bellini, Sir Charles overlooked one important specimen of it – the dress of the "poet" (Figure 6). Understandably, since the brilliant yellow drapery he wears draws the eye away from his black suit. This suit, with its small white turned-down collar (or falling band), plain front, and low-set belt, cannot possibly have appeared before 1540 – thirty years after the death of Giorgione and long after Titian had passed the period when he might have considered painting a little allegory such as this.

Once the date of the "poet's" dress has been identified, it can be seen that the gown worn by the child, too, closely reflects a fashion of the 1540s. And the dress of the kneeling man, never very convincingly Oriental, can be interpreted as a feeble and misunderstood version of the costumes worn by Mantegna's Magi, while the omission of the luteplayer's doublet becomes comprehensible, since by the time the picture was

painted hose were suspended by other means.

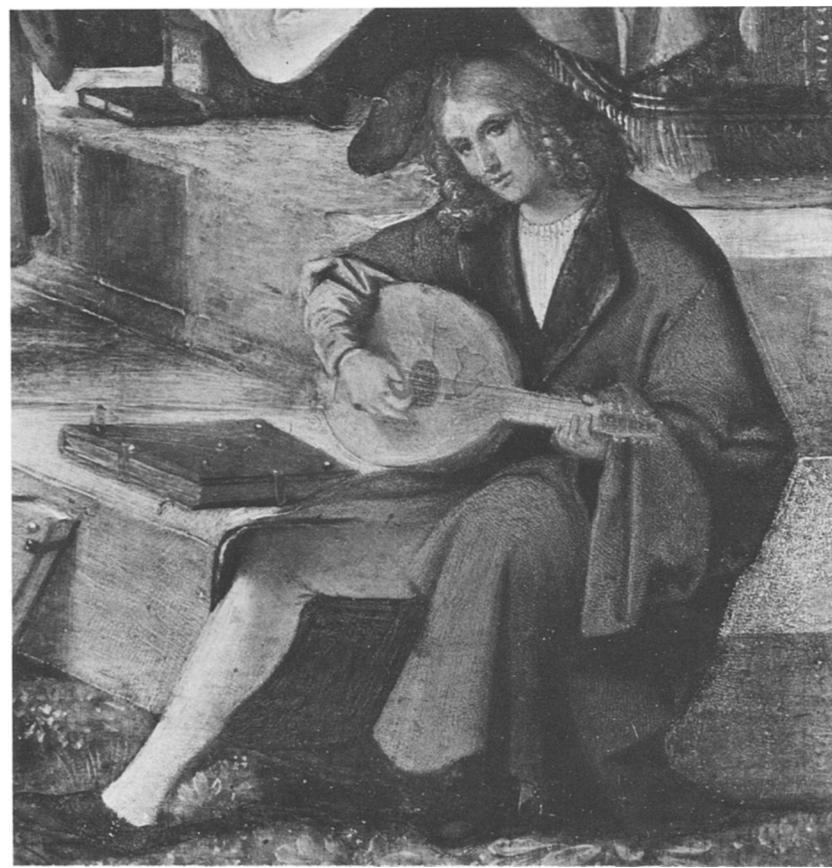
The discovery of small inconsistencies like these encourages the discovery of larger ones: one might, for instance, have overlooked the fact that if the gigantic “poet” rose to his feet, his head would disappear into the umbrella as though into an extinguisher. The umbrella itself is seen to grow, like an exotic bloom, from nothing more than a clump of bushes (it owes its existence in this painting, presumably, to a more elegant and rationally suspended umbrella that shades the Virgin in the little Sacred Allegory by Giovanni Bellini in the Uffizi).

And so this painting must be excluded from the charmed circle of works done under the influence of Giorgione himself. It is unlikely that it was executed more than a decade or so after 1540, for by that time the fashion had changed again and the particular anachronism that occurs in the painting of the “poet’s” doublet would no longer have found its way unconsciously into the picture – it would have been replaced, no doubt, by something equally irrelevant, but different.

The painting, manifestly an old one, is slightly damaged, but the area that includes the “poet’s” tunic and collar is in its original state. A date materially earlier than 1540 is therefore impossible. But what was in the painter’s mind when he so painstakingly selected clothing for his characters unrelated in design to any painted by Giorgione?

References

The following publications are cited in this article: Sir Charles Holmes, “‘Giorgione’ Problems at Trafalgar Square – 1” in *The Burlington Magazine* 42 (1923), pp. 169-181 (the painting is referred to as The Golden Age); Cecil Gould, *The Sixteenth-Century Venetian School (National Gallery Catalogues)* (London, 1959), no. 1173, p. 42; Terisio Pignatti, *Giorgione* (Italian edition, Venice, 1969; English edition, London, 1971), plate 141, p. 122 (Italian edition), p. 124 (English edition). Pignatti speaks of the picture as belonging, in his opinion, to a member of Giorgione’s closest circle and painted during the period of Giorgione’s own activity.





Clothes and the Historian

John L. Nevinson

*Founder Member, The
Costume Society, London*

A historian who is trying to form in his mind a clear picture of people in the period he has chosen for study may usefully supplement contemporary descriptions of what men and women said and did and looked like by seeking out their painted or sculptured portraits. But while portraits – and even photographs too – will show how people wished to appear, only a costume collection carefully displayed can demonstrate three-dimensionally the actual appearance of historical characters.

Clothes express personality, they indicate office or rank; they are most likely to be preserved when they can be associated with a distinguished person or a known character – the vestments of a king or the garments of a saint. Clothes, however, are vulnerable: their enemies are neglect, dirt, fire, and damp, not to mention the moth. Even relics are not immune, and when they perish, substitution is all too frequent. Any curator of a costume collection has had the task of trying to convince an owner that his cherished possession was not presented by King Henry VIII, not embroidered by Mary Queen of Scots, and not worn by Marie Antoinette or his own great-great-grandmother.

There are, however, welcome exceptions and these are of inestimable value for enabling us to see people in the round. Some relics are impeccably authenticated, as when pious folk preserved in the cathedral of

1. *James I of England, by an anonymous painter. About 1603. Cambridge University, Cambridge*

2. *Velvet doublet and breeches, probably worn by King James VI of Scotland and I of England. English, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Earl of Ancaster Loan*



Uppsala, Sweden, the clothes in which members of the Sture family were murdered in 1564, or when descendants kept the embroidered jacket in which Margaret Layton was painted in the reign of James I, or the Indian robes in which Captain John Foot sat for his portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The discovery of costumes has sometimes shown how they can confirm and illustrate written records or the accounts of contemporaries. James VI of Scotland and I of England was described by a detractor, Sir Anthony Weldon:

He was of middle stature, more corpulent through his clothes than in his body, yet fat enough, his clothes ever being made large and easie, the Doublets quilted for stelletto prooffe, his Breeches in plates [pleats], and full stuffed. He was naturally of a timerous disposition which was the reason of his quilted Doublets. . . . His skin was as soft as Taffeta Sarsnet. . . . His legs were very weak having as was thought some foul play in his youth or before he was born, that he was not able to stand at seven years of age, and that weakness made him ever lean on other men's shoulders. . . . In his apparell so constant, as by his good will he would never change his clothes till very ragges, his fashion never . . .

Other writers were more kindly, but the king, while no doubt flattered to some extent by portrait painters, certainly appears to have been a biggish, heavy man, although his height is difficult to judge (Figure 1).

In 1937 a purple velvet suit, said to have been worn by James I in 1603, was shown in London (Figure 2). No other suit like it is known, and it has unexpected features, unless one has Sir Anthony's words in mind. The doublet is padded, loose-fitting, and not stiffened as tailors' accounts would suggest for this date. The high, rather limp collar is unusual, the cut is old-fashioned for 1603, and the breeches though appearing bulky are really rather small. It must have been worn by a heavily built man with spindly legs, who liked loose-fitting, padded clothes – James I was just such a man. When we look at the suit, we can visualize him almost as well as we can picture Jeremy Bentham, who in 1832 left to London University not only his clothes but his skeleton.

Family tradition associates the doublet in Figure 3 with Charles I of England and sug-

gests that it was claimed as a perquisite by the Earl of Lindsey, who officiated as Lord Great Chamberlain at the coronation of Charles I in 1625. Charles I is known to have been a very short man indeed, probably about five feet three – he only looks of any size when painted standing beside his queen, Henrietta Maria, who was tiny. Dr. James Welwood wrote that “his body [was] strong, healthy and well-made, and though of low stature was capable to endure the greatest fatigues.” We realize, however, that he was oddly formed when we consider the account of his attempt to escape from Carisbrooke Castle. His page, Henry Firebrace, aged thirty, had found a suitable window, which he himself could presumably negotiate, but

I gave the Signe, at the appointed tyme. His Majesty put himself forward, but then too late found himself mistaken; he sticking fast between his breast and shoulders. . . . I heard him groane, but could not come to help him.

When we look at this doublet – which is made for a short man with a well-developed chest and exceptionally broad shoulders – we can visualize Charles I and confirm the tradition that the garment was his.

Identification of clothes can come in another way. The Verney heirlooms at Claydon House, Buckinghamshire, include a suit: cloak, doublet, and breeches of bister silk damask trimmed with many yards of silk and satin ribbon (Figure 5). The breeches are of a type that was ultrafashionable around 1660, known as “Rhinegraves,” or petticoat breeches, open at the knees, which measure sixty inches about the hem and are fully wide enough to justify the anecdote in Samuel Pepys's Diary:

. . . met with Mr. Townsend, who told of his mistake the other day, to put both his legs through one of his Knees of his breeches and went so all day.

When the suit was first being mounted for display, it was found not to fit an ordinary wire dummy. After shoulder padding was added, the doublet, although tailored with a center slit of a type not unusual in the 1630s to allow for easier movement, remained loose and baggy; the suit, in fact, must have been made for a man with a curved spine. A search in the Claydon archives was then made for any clue as to which member of the family may have had this deformity. A letter of 1653 was found, relating to treatment for

Edmund Verney, a boy aged sixteen:

Mun's backbone in which all the fault lies, is quyt awry, and his right shoulder half a handfull lower at least than his left. Herr Skatt hath undertaken the cure, if your sonne will stay here at least three quarters of a yeare.

The cure consisted of putting the boy in an iron harness, but the suit shows that the curvature was not corrected. Here then we can picture Edmund Verney richly dressed for the coronation of Charles II in 1660 (Figure 4) and then laying his best suit aside and retiring to live a country life and grow fat as we read that he did.

Costumes can also help in another field. There are a number of eighteenth-century portraits, many of boys, showing what is known as “Vandyke” dress. The best-known example is Gainsborough's Blue Boy, Jonathan Buttall (Figure 6). Although several contemporary literary references imply that Vandyke suits were actually worn, it was for a long time felt that they were but a painter's convention based on portraits of the previous century, or at best studio properties.

When two Vandyke suits, one of which is illustrated here (Figure 7), were discovered, costume specialists were at once able to say that the material, bright green satin, the decoration, the tailoring, and the cut, especially of the breeches, showed that both suits were made in the mid-eighteenth century. In such suits young men sat for their portraits, and not in seventeenth-century garments adapted to meet a passing demand. It can now be said with certainty that Vandyke suits were a real fashion for fancy dress at masquerades, since both suits were expensively finished and lined, each of the tab-skirts about the waist was carefully hemmed, and the seams were sewn with minute stitches. Vandyke suits made for an actor or for a dummy in a painter's studio would not have needed such elaborate tailoring.

The detailed study of costumes should therefore help to make history more vivid by showing what clothes historical characters actually wore. It may also be of use in the identification of portraits and for solving some problems for art historians.

3. Embroidered satin doublet, associated with King Charles I of England. English, 1625-1630. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Earl of Ancaster Loan





4. Detail of *Charles II Dining at the Hague*. Engraving by P. Philippe, 1660, after G. Toornvliet. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

5. Doublet and petticoat breeches of figured silk, associated with Edmund Verney. English, about 1660. Claydon House, Buckinghamshire. Photograph: Victoria and Albert Museum, London





6. *The Blue Boy (Jonathan Buttall)*, by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), English. The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California

7. Vandyke jacket of green satin trimmed with green and white silk ribbon. English, about 1770-1780. Ipswich Museum, Suffolk. Photograph: Brighton Art Gallery and Museum, Brighton



Bibliography and Note

For additional information on the clothes mentioned here, see my articles "New Material for the History of XVIIth Century Costume in England" in *Apollo* 20 (1934), pp. 315-319 (on Verney costumes); "A Late Elizabethan Suit and an Early Charles I Doublet" in *Apollo* 30 (1939), pp. 66-70; "Vandyke Dress" in *Connoisseur* 157 (1964), pp. 166-171; and "Vogue of the Vandyke Dress" in *Country Life Annual* (1959), pp. 25-27.

The quotations in this article can be found in the following sources:

Anthony Weldon, *Court and Character of King James I* (London, 1650).

Dr. James Welwood, *Memoirs of the Most Material Transactions in England for the Last Hundred Years Preceding the Revolution in 1688* (7th ed., London, 1736), p. 68.

Capt. C. W. Firebrace, *Honest Harry, Being the Biography of Sir Henry Firebrace (1619-91)* (London, 1932), p. 88.

Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 2 (London, 1970), entry for April 6, 1661, p. 66.

Letter of Dr. Creighton to Sir Ralph Verney, January 29, 1653. *Memoirs of the Verney Family*, 1 (London, 1925), p. 505.

I should like to express my thanks to the Earl of Ancaster and to Major Ralph Verney of Claydon for permission to reproduce photographs of their costumes.

Fashion Plate

An Opening Exhibition for the New Costume Institute

So much has been written and said *about* fashion that most of us have forgotten it *is* something. It is also *not* something. It is not clothing, although it has something to do with clothing. It also has to do with motor-cars, holiday resorts, and pet dogs. It is, in fact, a social phenomenon that defines the ways people do things at certain times, making them identifiable as characteristic of a particular time, place, and social level.

In relation to clothes as well as other things, fashion sets up criteria, and people who care about being fashionable will respect those standards. This involves an enormous industry based on the activities of designers, manufacturers, buyers, retailers, the fashion press, and people in related fields. The word itself, *fashion*, has been made synonymous with that industry. But although fashion is this industry's chief motivating force (as it is of other industries), it cannot invent the visual forms that express the moment's taste. It is the designers, as artists, who create the look of long skirts, short skirts, full sleeves, no sleeves, mane hair, chopped hair – endlessly. *What* the fashion of the moment says may in fact be less important than *how* it's said; and how it's said is a matter of terms that are visual, not economic, not social.

To salute the fashion industry of New York, whose tireless efforts and financial contributions were instrumental in making the new Costume Institute a reality, the Museum will present *Fashion Plate* in the Costume Institute in the fall of 1971. Plans

for the new facility call for the contents of the ten galleries to be changed every three months. *Fashion Plate* will be the first of these gallery installations — the inaugural exhibition.

Drawn entirely from the Costume Institute's own collection, the garments and accessories in *Fashion Plate* will represent a succession of fashions in clothing during the past 200 years. The clothes will be shown in conjunction with enlarged reproductions of fashion plates of their time. Both the plates and the clothes exhibit that taste for idealized line, for exaggerated form, for dramatized detail that conditions the visual language of fashion in clothing. To demonstrate fashion's consistency of action through the ages, the staff will arrange the groups of costumes and plates without regard to chronological sequence. In this way, without the distraction of tracing developments from one period to another, the visitor will be free to concentrate on the purely formal aspects of the images and to identify those elements of line, form, and color that the designer manipulated to achieve a fashionable look, whether he was working last year or a century ago. Possibly this will lead to some private and personal definitions of fashion in clothing. In any case, the visitor will see that our ancestors 200 years ago were just as close to (or far from) the fashion-plate ideal as we are.

Adolph S. Cavallo, *Chairman*
The Costume Institute

Robe à l'anglaise, 1784 or 1785. Fashion plate drawn by Watteau fils, engraved by Le Beau. Plate 198 from Galerie des Modes et Costumes Français (1911-1912 reprinting). Metropolitan Museum Library

Coat of satin and velvet. Detail of plate 487 from Townsend's Monthly Selection of Costumes, London, 1833. Metropolitan Museum Library



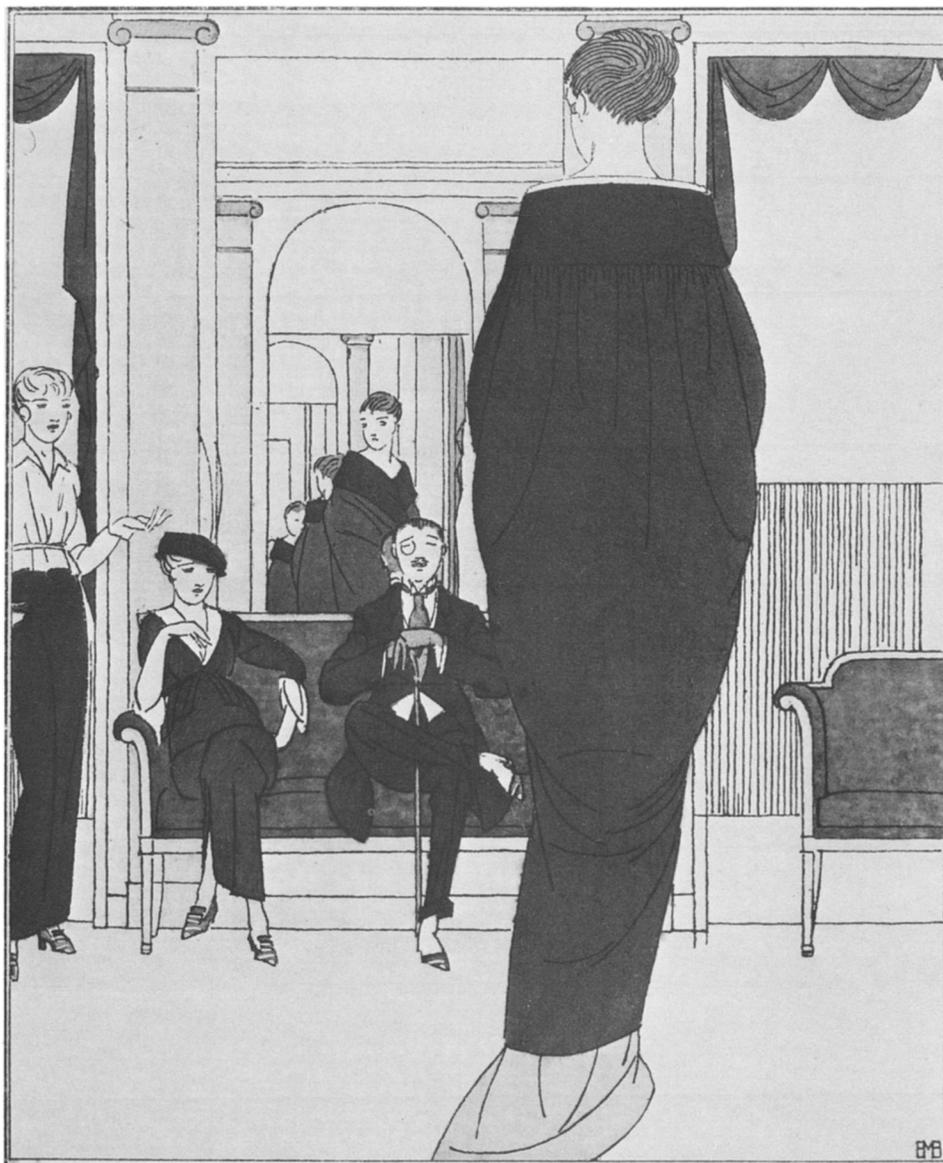




Two concert gowns. Fashion plate painted by Toudouze, engraved by Bracquet, and printed by Leroy. From *La Mode Illustrée*, Paris, February 5, 1865. Gift of Lee Simonson, Ly 61.16.12

Housecoat of brocaded silk and linen. Fashion plate by Barbier from *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, Paris, June 20, 1913. The Costume Institute Library





Beginning with this issue, the *Bulletin* will appear every other month throughout the year. On alternate months, Museum members will receive the *Calendar/News*.

Both have been redesigned and enlarged; the *Bulletin* will contain more articles and illustrations than before, and each issue of the *Calendar/News* will provide a day-by-day listing of events for the coming two months, as well as information on the Museum's activities and programs.

We hope that you enjoy these changes, and welcome your comments.

Katharine Stoddert, *Editor of the Bulletin*

*Evening coat by Worth. Fashion plate by
Boutet de Monvel from La Gazette du Bon
Ton, Paris, April 1914. The Costume
Institute Library*

*Robe de style by Jeanne Lanvin. Fashion
plate by Benito from Vogue, New York,
June 15, 1924. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn
Bequest, Ly 61.31.118*

