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1997 FASHION BIG BANG

AU PALAIS GALLIERA
DU 7 MARS
AU 16 JUILLET 2023

* 1997 BIG-BANG DE LA MODE

#EXPO1997

10, AVENUE PIERRE IER DE SERBIE 75116 PARIS

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IRVING PENN. COMME DES GARÇONS PRINTEMPS-ÉTÉ 1997. COLLECTION - BODY MEETS DRESS, DRESS MEETS BODY - VOGUE PARIS AVRIL 1997 / MANNEQUIN CHRISTINA KRUSE © THE IRVING PENN FOUNDATION / CONDE NAST - CONCEPTION GRAPHIQUE : OFICINA

1997

FASHION BIG BANG

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07.03 - 16.07.2023

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PRESS VISUALS ON REQUEST

Poster : Comme des Garçons by Rei Kawakubo, collection « Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body », Ready-to-wear Spring-Summer 1997 - Photo by Irving Penn / Model Christina Krusse - © Condé Nast / Courtesy of The Irving Penn Foundation - Graphic design by Oficina, 2023.

1997

PRESS RELEASE

FASHION BIG BANG

07.03 - 16.07.2023

From 7 March to 16 July 2023, the Palais Galliera is organising an exhibition focusing on the year 1997, a watershed year in the history of contemporary fashion.

1997 was both a high point of 1990s fashion and the gateway to the new millennium. It brought a flurry of collections, shows, new appointments, openings and events that defined the fashion scene as we know it today. Such was its impact that 1997 can be thought of as the launching pad for 21st century fashion.

1997 was notable for a number of emblematic collections: bodies deformed by Comme des Garçons with the 'Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body' collection, Martin Margiela's conceptualised garments in the 'Stockman' collection, and Raf Simons's redefinition of the canons of male beauty in the 'Black Palms' collection. The magazine *Vogue Paris* defined the 1997 Spring-Summer haute couture season as the '*Big Bang*' that Paris needed in order to regain its place as the international capital of fashion in an era of economic crisis and intense global competition. But there's no denying that 1997 was a vintage year. It saw the arrival in haute couture of star designers from the 1980s, such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler, while the legendary French fashion houses were taken over by a new generation of British designers, with Alexander McQueen at Givenchy and John Galliano at Christian Dior.

The globalisation of fashion gathered pace, foreshadowing the 2000s and 2010s. Young, little-known artistic directors rose to prominence, either on their own or at the head of major fashion houses: Hedi Slimane, Stella McCartney, Nicolas Ghesquière, Olivier Theyskens – names that are still shaping fashion today.

A whole series of events marked the beginning of the new era: the concept store *colette* opened and stayed at the epicentre of fashion for the next 20 years. But also, that same year, the world of fashion was shaken by the tragic death of Gianni Versace.

The chronological layout of the exhibition features over 50 silhouettes from the Palais Galliera collections, along with loans from museums and international collectors and fashion houses. And it also includes videos and some outstanding archive documents.

The exhibition 1997 Fashion Big Bang is an invitation to discover or to relive key events from this 'explosive' year in fashion history.

CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION :

General Curator

Miren Arzalluz, Director of the Palais Galliera

Scientific curator

Alexandre Samson, head of collections, haute couture (from 1947) and contemporary creation, assisted by Louise Habert

Associate curator for photography

Sylvie Lécallier, head of collections, photography

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07.03 - 16.07.2023

INTRODUCTION

Landmark shows and creations, important events, the emergence of emblematic figures ... no less than fifty key dates, thirty-eight of which are presented in a chronological itinerary, made 1997 an exceptional year in the history of fashion. The effervescence of the spring-summer 1997 season was already apparent back in October 1996 during the ready-to-wear catwalk shows, when five designers offered visions that were as radical as they were complementary. Then, in January 1997, haute-couture week saw the highly anticipated first collections of major fashion figures and marked the revival of a discipline that was then considered on the verge of death. This “*Big Bang*”, as *Vogue Paris* called it, would have a ripple effect throughout the profession. 1997 therefore, marked the entry of fashion into the 21st century in that the questions raised, models, issues, influences, and careers of many of its key players seem to have had an effect over the last twenty-six years.

Today, while this system is undergoing profound changes (challenged by feminism, inclusivity, ecology, cultural appropriation, and the limits of globalization, and exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and social networks), the exhibition *1997 Fashion Big Bang* invites viewers to discover or relive the astonishing simultaneity of these pivotal events, with the desire to restore the creative energy of an era.

SECTION 1 : Ready-to-wear shows, Spring-Summer 1997

Salon d'honneur

Artistic director of Gucci in Milan, Tom Ford pushed the sexual energy of his creations to the limit with the *G-string*, emblematic of a hedonistic and uninhibited vision.

Presented in Paris one day apart, the “Stockman” collection by Martin Margiela and the “Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body” collection by Comme des Garçons questioned the creation and aesthetics of clothing. They also questioned the notion of the ideal body at a time when debates on cosmetic surgery and the controversy over the first cloning attempts were raging.

Ann Demeulemeester proudly dedicated an androgynous collection to Patti Smith, which would earn her international recognition. Shortly after, Yohji Yamamoto, sensitive to the revival of Parisian haute couture, paid tribute to the major figures of the discipline through one of the most acclaimed fashion shows of the season.

From 7 to 16 October 1996 - Martin Margiela, ‘Stockman’ collection

Famous for his reinterpretations of clothing, Martin Margiela sought to revise his classics and the foundations of the draping technique.

However, the result was not a sophisticated collection of evening dresses but rather a collection based on a bust of a “Stockman” mannequin found in all design studios, worn as a waistcoat and on which the different steps of its design were apparent.

The Belgian creator made use of a workshop vocabulary that could be understood by a large audience and, in so doing, touched on the essentials of creation by highlighting the typical stages that are usually hidden from the public.

The richness of this idea was such that Margiela would continue to explore it for his 1997 autumn-winter season, featuring raw linen and paper patterns worn like real clothes.





© Condé Nast / Courtesy of the Irving Penn Foundation

8 October 1996 - Comme des Garçons by Rei Kawakubo, 'Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body' collection

Sixteen years after her debut in Paris, Rei Kawakubo divided the critics. Surrounded by a monastic silence, she provoked either admiration or discomfort. By placing protrusions under tight-fitting garments, the designer merged the garment to the body.

This runway show was said to stem from the designer's anger at a *Gap* shop window display filled with overly simple black clothes. "*I maintain,*" explained Kawakubo in 1998, "*that seeing experimental clothing constitutes, for everyone, a sort of mental liberation.*"

This collection therefore, questioned the garment as much as the body, its beauty and proportions. In 1981, Rei Kawakubo had already questioned the Western vision of clothing. Here, she went further by challenging the feminine canons of beauty that had predominated since antiquity.

SECTION 2 : Haute couture shows, Spring-Summer 1997

Grande Galerie

From the two hundred fashion houses that existed in 1946, there were only fifteen in 1996. According to the press, in order to survive, this declining industry needed "*a media counter-offensive*".

This happened in July 1996, during the search for Gianfranco Ferré's successor as head of Christian Dior, an event that aroused immense interest, and shook the fashion world.

Lively speculation came to an end in October, with the appointment of John Galiano. This was followed by that of Alexander McQueen at Givenchy, and the announcement of their first haute couture collections in January 1997. The two young designers were joined by Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler, two figures from the 1980s' ready-to-wear industry.

This haute couture week received more media attention than any other in the late 20th century. In full metamorphosis, the discipline was no longer only judged by the yardstick of its lines and perfect finishes, but by the image and spectacle it generated, introducing a new era of extravagant presentations broadcast around the world. Paris was once again the epicentre of fashion.



© Guy Marineau / Courtesy of Givenchy

19 January 1997 - First collection of Alexander McQueen for Givenchy

At only twenty-seven years old, Alexander McQueen was asked to lead one of the most emblematic brands of classic haute couture. This controversial British designer, however, wanted to continue the work of Hubert de Givenchy and focus on the cut of daywear lines.

The brand's logo - a square formed by four facing Gs - reminded him of the meander motif in ancient Greek friezes. McQueen made it the starting point of a collection inspired by classical Greek myths. He also applied the white and gold of the logo to the entire collection.

Without taking his young age into consideration, journalists criticized this first presentation, accusing in particular its author of making costumes rather than clothes. The wounded McQueen would emerge from this first experience with a taste for revenge.



© Michael Thompson / Vogue Paris, Condé Nast

19 January 1997 - First haute couture collection of Jean Paul Gaultier

In 1995 and 1996, Jean Paul Gaultier was approached to take over the artistic direction of Givenchy and then of Christian Dior. Although, he declined both proposals, it motivated him to pursue his childhood dream, that of becoming a designer of haute couture.

His own runway show made use of the traditional codes of the discipline. In complete silence, only the suave, warm voice of journalist Élisabeth Quin described each passage in the manner of an usher from a performance in the interwar period.

This collection of the “*enfant terrible*” of fashion surprised by its classicism, search for purity, and inventiveness. Twenty years after his debut, the emblematic designer of ready-to-wear from the 1980s was now part of the great tradition of Parisian haute couture, whose codes he sought to renew. The designer presented his last collection in 2020.



© Peter Lindbergh / Courtesy of the Peter Lindbergh Foundation

20 January 1997 - First collection of John Galliano for Christian Dior

John Galliano’s first haute couture collection was expected to be the main event of an explosive season.

At the head of his own brand since 1984, he was appointed artistic director of Givenchy in 1995, and Christian Dior in October 1996.

Within a month, this first fashion show was to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the house: fifty outfits were presented on fifty mannequins, reflecting the diversity sought by Galliano. Faithful to his eclectic Baroque universe, the British designer combined multiple inspirations and references, both ethnographic and historical.

Hailed by the press, this runway show heralded the start of a fourteen-year career during which John Galliano would hoist the Maison Christian Dior to the pinnacle of unrivalled creativity in haute couture and ready-to-wear.



© Jean-Baptiste Mondino

22 January 1997 - Thierry Mugler, ‘Insectes’ collection

After a first haute couture collection presented in 1992, Thierry Mugler was keen to repeat the experience.

The runway show began with the humming of insect wings, thereby setting the tone for the most emblematic collection of the designer’s career. “*I have always been fascinated by insects, their carapace [and] futuristic-like graphics,*” he announced. “*They are at once fragile, light, and shielded by a protective covering, just like the woman I dress.*”

If Thierry Mugler drew his inspiration from the film *Microcosmos* (released in November 1996) by Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, this collection also contained references to lesser-known works, such as *L’Insecte* (1968), a work by naturalist Jacques Brosse, or the remarkable creatures of Belgian Surrealist painter Félix Labisse (1905-1982).

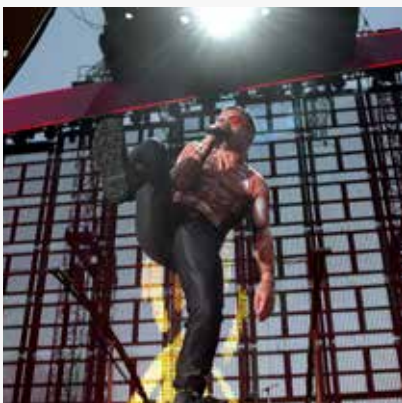
EVENTS



© Courtesy of Fendi



Reebok Fury, 1997. © Reebok International Ltd



© Achim Scheidemann / DPA Picture Alliance via AFP



Ruby Rhod (Chris Tucker) costume in *The Fifth Element*, a film by Luc Besson. Image from Gaumont collection. © 1997 GAUMONT

Thanks to GAUMONT

7 March 1997 - Fendi, the 'Baguette' bag

Galerie Est

Designed by Silvia Venturini Fendi, the 'Baguette' bag owes its name to its shape and the way it is carried slanting upwards at the rear, like a baguette placed under the arm. Presented during Fendi's 1997-1998 autumn-winter show, it is now considered one of the first it-bags in the history of fashion. Models of the bag were regularly renewed, while others, only available in limited edition, acquired the status of collector's items. Demand exploded, forcing customers to register on a waiting list or queue to get it at places like *colette* in Paris. The bag was also popularized by the international success of *Sex and the City*, the pilot episode of which was filmed in June 1997 in New York. By 2017, over a million copies had been sold.

18 March 1997 - Opening of *colette*

Galerie Est

In Paris where innovative commercial proposals were lacking, Colette Roussaux and her daughter Sarah opened *colette* at number 213 rue Saint Honoré. The brand played a role in defining the notion of the concept store in France, a term defined by sociologist and journalist Francesco Morace from the Italian "*negozi di concetto*" (conceptual stores). With their slogan "*StyleDesignArtFood*", mother and daughter aimed to bring together a boutique, bookstore, restaurant, exhibition gallery... They freely mixed recognized brands and emerging designers, with a collections of exclusive Pucci models and Martin Margiela wigs, in collaboration with Berlin duo Bless. The regularly changing selection also featured sneakers (anticipating the current craze), cosmetic products, and high-tech gadgets that were then impossible to find in Paris. In the space of twenty years, *colette* would become "*the must-see fashion stop*" of the capital. When it finally closed on 20 December 2017, this marked "*the end of an era*" for the press.

25 April 1997 - Walter Van Beirendonck designs U2's costumes

Grande Galerie

The pop rock group U2 asked Walter Van Beirendonck to design the costumes for their *PopMart World Tour*, with the first concert taking place in Las Vegas. Since the late 1980s, the Antwerp designer had made a name for himself with his universe of unbridled fantasy and collections with political, ecological, and social dimensions. A major reference in men's fashion, he was one of the first designers to thoroughly question conventions and the notion of virility. The fact that U2 called on Van Beirendonck in 1997 was surprising: his transgressive creations were more associated with *Club Kids*, underground nightclubs in the 1990s, than with a world-famous rock band. However, this collaboration would mark as much the career of the creator as that of the band. The era to the extent that it was included in an episode of *The Simpsons*.

7 May 1997 - Jean Paul Gaultier designs the costumes for Luc Besson's film *The Fifth Element* - *Grande Galerie*

Screened at the opening of the Cannes Film Festival on the same day as its release in French cinemas, *The Fifth Element* by Luc Besson met with international success. For the first time in the history of cinema, a French film topped the American box office. Jean Paul Gaultier had designed the costumes since the genesis of the project. He dismissed futuristic creations and preferred instead to imagine the evolution of the 1990s' wardrobe, based on his own style: elegance and assertive glamour, a surprising use of lingerie, and references to streetwear and underground cultures, with a touch of humour and sexuality, regardless of gender. The film, which earned the designer a César nomination in 1998, attracted over 7.5 million viewers in France.

SECTION 3 : Haute couture shows, Fall-Winter 1997-1998

Grande Galerie

The season was galvanized by the presentations of January and its new actors.

Gianni Versace, then at the height of his glory, kicked off haute couture week with a bang. The designer had immersed himself in two catalogues of recent exhibitions—“*Japanism and Fashion*” at the Palais Galliera (1996), and “*The Glory of Byzantium*” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1997)—, creating a mystical, religious collection.

Christian Lacroix celebrated the tenth anniversary of his fashion house. The opulence he had displayed from his beginnings, in stark contrast to the minimalism of the early 1990s, was reinvigorated by the theatrical turn taken by haute couture in 1997.

Alexander McQueen learned from the bad reviews of his first collection. He turned away from the past of the Maison Givenchy and presented a second, more introspective hautecouture show. Terrible and grandiose, it revealed all the intensity and darkness of his creation. A tribute to the artisans and seamstresses he admired, he now considered Givenchy as a laboratory in which he could perfect his ideas and experiment for his own brand.



© Courtesy of Versace

6 July 1997 - Last collection of Gianni Versace

Versace created his ready-to-wear brand in Milan in 1978, and was one of the fashion trendsetters of the 1980s. With a dazzling vocabulary and a sense of the spectacular, he imagined richly embroidered prints and provocative dresses, where asymmetry and graphics shared pride of place. Chain mail soon became his favourite material. This model was not part of the runway show. Gianni Versace, a supporter of the supermodel phenomenon that emerged at the end of the 1980s, enlisted the most coveted models, whose presence contributed to the success of his shows, as evidenced by this outfit worn during the show by Shalom Harlow. Since 1990, Gianni Versace had presented his haute-couture runway show in the swimming pool of the Ritz, whose neoclassical decor echoed the meander motif and the Medusa head emblematic of the brand.

Nine days after his haute couture runway show, Gianni Versace was assassinated outside his Miami villa by Andrew Cunanan. The shock wave caused by the news hit the entire world. The Versace family issued a solemn press release, all the brand's boutiques closed their doors, and numerous fashion events were cancelled.

7 July 1997 - Givenchy by Alexander McQueen, 'Eclect Dissect' collection

The Scottish tartan of the McQueen clan—a red and black checkered wool fabric with a yellow stripe—affirms the designer's independence with this collection. “*The first collection was for [Givenchy]. This one, I'm doing it for me,*” he announced in the press.

Drawing inspiration from the Gothic universe of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) and the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) by Robert Wiene, Alexander McQueen invents a story around this collection: “*It's the story of a mad surgeon who, after travelling the world, returns home with a bunch of body parts and 'inspirations'. He puts them together like Frankenstein and locks them in the house. The fashion show begins when these 'experiments' come to life.*”

The collection mixed references to the 19th century, with costumes and accessories from cultures across the five continents. Frightening silhouettes bristled with horns, talons, or bones, including the skulls of birds of prey, Alexander McQueen's favourite animals.

This collection was presented on the ground floor of the School of Medicine. The fashion designer Simon Costin clothed the space with large red curtains,



© Paris Musées / Palais Galliera



© Etienne Tordoir / Catwall Pictures

in reference to the macabre novel *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) by Angela Carter. The floor was littered with illustrations, anatomical plates, and fashion designs from the late 19th century. Large cages were filled with live crows which, according to the scenographer, « *fed on the remains from failed experiments* ».

10 July 1997 - Christian Lacroix house turns 10 years

Author of a sumptuous and Baroque style of fashion, Lacroix is considered the precursor of the opulent wave that resurfaced in 1997 after several years of a minimalist style.

For his anniversary collection, the designer from Arles, with an internationally recognized style, took inspiration from Neapolitan santons — polychrome Christmas crib figurines — and evoked the silhouettes of the late 19th century in an atmosphere of Spanish *zarzuela* fusing theatre and music, dance and song. The cuirassed bustiers, padded skirts, flowers on the bodices, and asymmetrical drapes held by ribbons were all evocations of 1880s' fashion.

EVENTS



© Jean-Charles de Castelbajac

24 August 1997 - Jean-Charles de Castelbajac dresses the Pope John Paul II and the clergy during the World Youth Days in Paris

Galerie Ovest

From 18 to 24 August 1997, the twelfth edition of the World Youth Days brought together almost 1,200,000 Catholics from all over the world. Designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, famous since the late 1970s for his playful ready-to-wear lines and his palette of primary colours, made history by becoming the first designer to dress the pope and nearly 5,500 celebrants. Images of the pontiff circulated all around the world, just like the wave of colour created by the clergymen's outfits. John Paul II congratulated the designer for having “*used colour as the cement of faith*”.

“*This tremendous creation,*” declared the creator, “*represent[ed] a turning point in my career, I was no longer the same man afterwards. The impossible ha[d] become possible.*”



© Nick Knight / Courtesy of Björk

20 September 1997 - Alexander McQueen dresses Björk on her album cover *Homogenic*

Homogenic is one of Björk's most famous albums. To design the album cover, the Icelandic singer contacted Alexander McQueen after seeing a photograph of the former's creations by Nick Knight in an issue of *Visionnaire* magazine. She told the creator about her wish to appear as a “*warrior with love as her only weapon*”. Faithful to the late '90s' penchant for multiculturalism, Björk appears wearing a dress inspired by the Japanese kimono, with a necklace similar to those worn by the *Ndebele* (South Africa) and *Burmese* peoples, as well as a carefully sculpted hairstyle reminiscent of those of the Native American *Hopi* and *Tewa* tribes. This cultural mix resonated with the “*Eclect Dissect*” collection presented by Alexander McQueen for Givenchy two months earlier.

SECTION 4 : Ready-to-wear shows, Spring-Summer 1998

Salon d'honneur

In Milan, Donatella Versace took over from her brother and presented a first collection hailed by the press as the beginning of a “*new era*”. In Paris, American designer Jeremy Scott triumphed with his “*Rich White Women*” collection, reflecting the anguish of a society faced with the body transformed by cosmetic surgery and cloning.

The period’s penchant for the past was reflected in the advent of a dark, even Gothic Romanticism, which permeated the early collections of Olivier Theyskens, Véronique Branquinho, and Josephus Thimister, a new generation of designers trained in Belgium. Also imbued by a sense of nostalgia, Stella McCartney presented her first collection for Chloé, highlighting the talent of the young British designers appointed to head important Parisian fashion houses. The only French artistic director appointed in 1997 was Nicolas Ghesquière, who created a surprise with his first show for Balenciaga featuring monastic-style silhouettes.



© Jurgen Rogiers / Courtesy of Olivier Theyskens

From 13 to 20 October 1997 - First collection of Olivier Theyskens

Olivier Theyskens interrupted his studies and created, on his own, a dark and Romantic collection, inspired by late 19th century fashion. Madonna would help launch the designer’s career by wearing the neck corset that adorns her figure on the cover of *Spin* magazine, in early 1998. She also appeared in one of his dresses at the Sanremo Festival in Italy, where she presented her single Frozen, whose dark aesthetic perfectly matched Theyskens’s silhouettes.

Spotted by catwalk producer Étienne Russo, Olivier Theyskens participated in the Barclay Catwalk, bringing together emerging Belgian designers during a show in August 1997. Here, Theyskens revealed his corseted silhouettes, attracting the attention of Kuki De Salvertes’s press agency. The latter would offer Theyskens its showroom in Paris for the spring-summer 1998 ready-to-wear fashion week. The designer had his first official fashion show in March 1998.



© Perry Ogden / Courtesy of Chloé

15 October 1997 - First collection of Stella McCartney for Chloé

At the age of twenty-five, Stella McCartney, daughter of Beatles singer Paul McCartney, took over from Karl Lagerfeld as the head of Chloé. For her first Chloé collection, the designer insisted on cottons and linen, materials somewhat neglected in the 1990s. She based her creations on lightness, as well as references to mid-20th century fashion and lingerie. As a vegetarian, she banished leather and fur from all Chloé collections. The mixture of candour and sensuality that characterized her creations would win over younger generations and strengthen the image of the Parisian fashion house in the late 1990s.

In 2001, Stella McCartney left Chloé to launch her own brand, handing over the creative reins to her friend and assistant Phoebe Philo, who had arrived at Chloé in 1997.

EVENT

14 October 1997 - Rei Kawakubo designs the costumes for Merce Cunningham's ballet *Scenario*
Salon d'honneur

A pioneer of abstract dance, American choreographer Merce Cunningham, fascinated by the distorted silhouettes of Rei Kawakubo's spring-summer 1997 collection, contacted the latter to ask her to create the costumes and sets for his new ballet. The result of two radical visions, *Scenario* is one of the most emblematic associations between fashion and contemporary dance and placed the Japanese designer in a line of artists who had collaborated with Merce Cunningham, including Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol.

Presented in October at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, the show was also performed in January 1998 at the Palais Garnier in Paris, before a world tour.



© Timothy Greenfield Sanders

1997

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LIST OF PRESENTATIONS
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

DESIGNERS & FASHION HOUSES

Gucci by Tom Ford
Comme des Garçons by Rei Kawakubo
Martin Margiela
Ann Demeulemeester
Yohji Yamamoto
Louis Vuitton by Marc Jacobs
Givenchy by Alexander McQueen
Jean Paul Gaultier
Christian Dior by John Galliano
Thierry Mugler
colette - Sarah Andelman
Fendi
Emilio Pucci
Bless
Guy Laroche by Alber Elbaz
Martine Sitbon
Hermès by Martin Margiela
Walter Van Beirendonck
Yves Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane
Raf Simons
Christian Lacroix
Versace by Gianni Versace / by Donatella Versace
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac
Alexander McQueen
Jeremy Scott
Olivier Theyskens
Balenciaga by Nicolas Ghesquière
Josephus Thimister
Veronique Branquinho
Chloé by Stella McCartney
Helmut Lang
Hussein Chalayan

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Davide Sorrenti
Katerina Jebb
Satoshi Saikusa
Ronald Stoops
David LaChapelle
Philip-Lorca diCorcia

CELEBRITIES

U2 - Bono
Milla Jovovich
Chris Tucker
Lady Diana
Pope John Paul II
Björk
Madonna

1997

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SCENOGRAPHY

Scenography by Jean-Julien Simonot

Lights by Philippe Collet

Graphic design by Tania Hagemeister

SCENOGRAPHIC CONCEPT

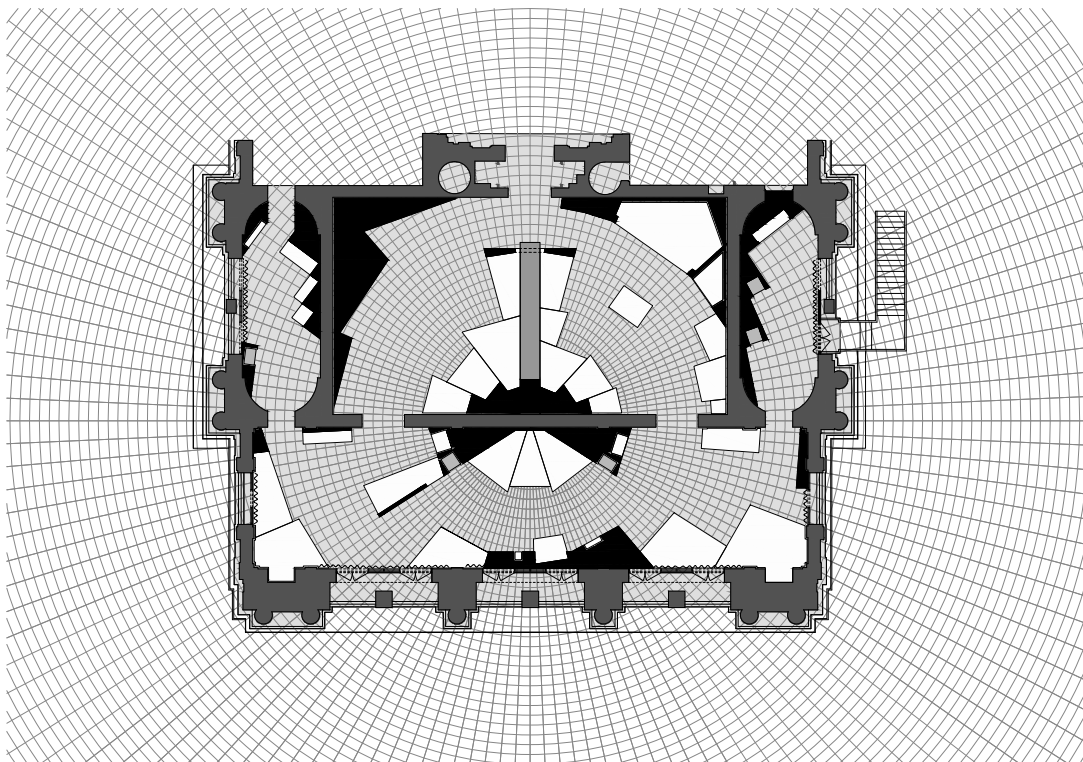
From the entrance to the exhibition, through a large window, the public discovers a long central podium onto which is projected the exhibition title, using lasers set in motion. The title runs along this first podium and is then superimposed onto the architecture of the Palais Galliera.

“1997” thus becomes the epicentre of a shockwave that sends out ripples, in the form of concentric circles, into all of the rooms of the museum. These circles, spliced by a series of beams that all stem from the same central point, form an invisible framework that becomes the matrix of the visit. Highlighted throughout by black and white picture rails, this invisible framework echoes the message of the exhibition.

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE EXHIBITION TRAIL

The space is designed to allow the public to wander: it is a directed visit, respecting the chronology of the fashion shows, yet flexible enough to allow visitors to pass freely from one designer to another.

Silhouettes are presented on podiums of variable sizes and heights, which invite visitors to follow the “shockwave” and combine to create parallels and clusters, or, on the contrary, to isolate certain silhouettes. The podiums form the exhibition circuit and organise the space in three dimensions.



1997

FASHION BIG BANG

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AROUND THE EXHIBITION

PLAYLIST

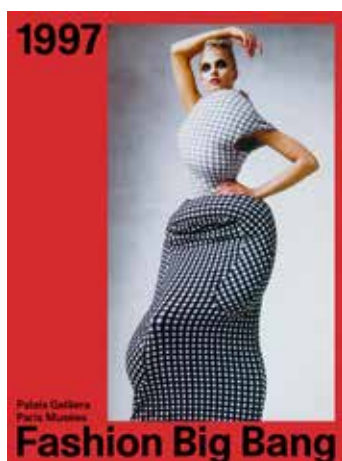


© Stéphane Feugère

Experience and enjoy the year 1997 in music with the playlist accompanying the exhibition, under the artistic direction of Michel Gaubert, sound illustrator of the greatest fashion shows since the 1990s.

Available for free on Spotify, Deezer and YouTube.

CATALOGUE *



1997 Fashion Big Bang

Edited by Alexandre Samson
Éditions Paris Musées

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Marc Lambron, member of the Académie française and author of *Quarante ans: journal de 1997* (published in 2023);
Sylvie Lécaillier, head of collections at the Palais Galliera, photography collections;
Alexandre Samson, head of collections at the Palais Galliera, haute couture collections (from 1947) and contemporary creation.

About the book :

In some forty chronicles illustrated by a variety of documents, photographs, magazines and invitations, this catalogue retraces, month by month, the chronology of this pivotal year in the history of contemporary fashion. A preface by Marc Lambron and several thematic essays complete this panorama.

THE EXTRAORDINARY BLAST THAT SHOOK FASHION IN 1997

- by Miren Arzalluz

' *The Big Bang*.' was splashed across the cover of March 1997 Vogue Paris, the issue dedicated to the haute couture collections that, over the course of an unforgettable week, had simultaneously dazzled, fascinated, exasperated and scandalised absolutely everybody. Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler were making their debuts, as was Alexander McQueen. Amid great expectations Alexander McQueen had taken over at Givenchy from John Galliano who had been appointed head of Christian Dior. In their editorial, Vogue interpreted this frenetic chain of events as «*an extraordinary blast at the very idea of couture*» and likened this new couture to «*a fun fair, a celebration, a mustering of talent. A big bang, a galactic event, an opportunity for pride and the vortex of a general change in attitude.*»¹ In contrast to the optimistic enthusiasm of Vogue, Laurence Benaïm, writing in Le Monde, deplored what she considered to be «*the cheerful, gilded funeral of haute couture, the death of a profession,*» and she deemed that this spectacular game of musical chairs within the profession betrayed «*the blitheness with which financiers speculate on benchmark names, with complete disregard for the craftsmanship and know-how behind them, and whose future is now linked to nothing more than exercises in public relations.*»² In the same column, Laurence Benaïm reported the indignation of a distinguished spectator who, after John Galliano's first runway show, had privately dismissed him as «*an insult to the memory of the House of Dior,*» and she quoted Yves Saint Laurent himself as saying that he thought it was nothing but «*music hall*». Galliano's collection was a celebration of the legendary house's fifty-year history, with fifty creations reflecting a multitude of worlds, from exuberant historicism to sartorial tradition of the most rigorous kind, taking in exotic fantasies and imagination; it was a display of technical excellence and material sumptuousness.

Half a century earlier, in February 1947, Christian Dior, with the powerful and vital financial backing of Marcel Boussac, launched the fashion house that bears his name with a collection of voluminous silhouettes marked by nostalgia and history. It was a major media and public relations operation. The collection was an unprecedented commercial success and had a significant cultural and social impact on the international scene, but it also generated controversy. Dior was severely criticised by many who saw his work as a display of opulence in a world still suffering from the deprivations and restrictions of the Second World War. The New Look was a watershed moment. It was a harbinger of the fashion of the next decade, until the prêt-à-porter revolution in the 1960s.

The excitement and upheaval of the fashion industry in 1997 was quickly reflected in the international cultural scene, particularly in museums. Between December 1996 and March 1997, the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) presented an exhibition, devised by curators Richard Martin and Harold Koda, to celebrate the historic anniversary of the New Look. It presented more than eighty creations by Christian Dior himself, most of which were taken from the museum's own collections. The opening of the exhibition was also the opportunity to hold the «*Party of the Year*» – forerunner of the now famous MET Gala – with the newly appointed John Galliano and Diana, Princess of Wales, as guests of honour. For the occasion, Princess Diana wore the first dress Galliano had designed for Dior. As part of the event, the Costume Institute, in collaboration with Maison Dior, presented a special one-night installation entitled Christian Dior Spirit. This ephemeral exhibition featured thirty designs by some of Dior's successors at the House; the models were drawn from Maison Dior's Parisian archives as well as from the wardrobes of some of their important clients. That opening was a prelude to the lavish splendours that were to take place in celebration of Dior's legacy, in Paris a month later, in an internationally renowned museum.

A year after the great Dior event, the Costume Institute paid tribute to Gianni Versace in an exhibition retracing the career of the iconic Italian designer and acknowledging his contribution to fashion history. The tragic murder of Versace in July 1997 had shocked the industry and the world alike, prompting a retrospective of his work at one of the museums he admired most. It was no coincidence that the designer's family in the United States chose the MET as the venue for a

private memorial service. In a moving foreword to the exhibition catalogue, Philippe de Montebello, then director of the MET, recalled the inspiration Versace would draw from the MET's collections and how they enriched his work.³ He gave as an example the Byzantine crosses that had featured in Versace's last couture collection, just a few months after he had visited the major exhibition *The Glory of Byzantium* in New York. Richard Martin, curator of the exhibition, pointed out the artistic as well as the cultural significance of Versace's work, arguing that it should not only be analysed but that it should also be displayed in a museum setting. Contrary to a commonly held view, Martin maintained that if Gianni Versace's creations were displayed in the museum as objects decontextualised from their usual environment, they would emerge as key documents of our time. The famous curator drew this categorical conclusion in his introduction to the catalogue: "*Cynics say of contemporary fashion, especially of Versace: take away the rock and roll, the advertising budgets, and the super-models, and what have you got? They expect the answer to be nothing. For Versace, the answer is: incredible fashion that answers still to the indomitable spirit of [this] century's finale.*"⁴

Richard Martin's words speak volumes about prevailing prejudices about fashion in cultural circles in 1997. Many were dubious about the heritage and artistic value of fashion and, by extension, its legitimacy as an object to be collected and exhibited in a museum. The MET itself had not devoted an exhibition to a contemporary fashion designer since the controversial Yves Saint Laurent retrospective that Diana Vreeland devised and directed in 1983. It was a substantive, conceptual debate: the commercial dimension of fashion, as well as its inherently ephemeral nature, were major arguments for its detractors to deny its quality as an artistic endeavour; and as long as fashion was not considered to be art, it did not deserve its place in the temples of eternal beauty and excellence.

The emergence and gradual integration into the haute couture landscape, in the 1980s and 1990s, of Japanese and Belgian designers who challenged both the established canons of beauty and the fashion system itself, gave new life to those who championed fashion as art. For some critics, the work of designers such as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Martin Margiela seemed to transcend the commercial and utilitarian considerations that hitherto had made fashion a somewhat mundane form of expression. This new sensibility quickly became apparent in exhibition projects that focused on the intersection of fashion and art, and explored the symbiotic relationship between the two. It was exemplified in the exhibition *«Art/Fashion»*, originally devised by Germano Celant, Luigi Settembrini and Ingrid Sischy for the Florence Biennale in the autumn of 1996, and presented in an expanded version at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo between March and June 1997, in New York. *«Art/Fashion»* provided a historical review of artists who had collaborated with fashion designers or incorporated fashion themes into their work. The exhibition also featured works by eight contemporary artists who used fashion to address a wide variety of themes, including the body, gender and sexuality. At the same time, in Paris, Valérie Guillaume was preparing an exhibition for the summer of 1997 at the Musée de la Mode et du Costume, now the Palais Galliera, entitled *«Europe 1919-1939. Quand l'art habillait le vêtement»* [*"Europe 1919-1939. When Clothes were Clad in Art"*]. She was concerned with the fertile interactions between the artistic avant-garde and fashion during the interwar period, focusing in particular on works by the Italian Futurists and the Russian Constructivists and their links with leading Parisian fashion designers such as Madeleine Vionnet and Gabrielle Chanel.⁵

New ways of looking at fashion were also emerging in the world of Paris museums. Located in the Palais Galliera since 1977, the Musée de la Mode et du Costume de la Ville de Paris changed its name in 1997, deleting the term «costume» from its letterhead. The directors and curators claimed that fashion, whether historical or contemporary, deserved its place in a museum, not only because of its artistic aspect, but also because of its relevance as a cultural expression and sociological phenomenon, as well as its importance as a creative industry working in a field of experimentation and technical innovation. The creation of new institutions such as the Christian Dior Museum in Granville or the Fashion Museum in Kobe, Japan, reflected this development in attitudes. In January 1997, the renovated Musée de la Mode et du Textile was inaugurated as part of *« Opération Grand Louvre »*. Lydia Kamitsis, the museum's curator and academic adviser responsible for programming, spoke of the vision guiding the project: *«A fashion museum, as we understand it, [is] a place where that quest for a multiple identity, which clothes allow us to achieve,*

can be traced, it is also a place that measures the steps by which materials are conquered, and the way in which they are made to coincide with people's fluctuating desires and aspirations.»⁶

As the newspaper archives of the time show, there was considerable criticism both from cultural gatekeepers and the fashion industry itself and the heads of both museums felt constantly under pressure to justify the legitimacy of collecting, studying and exhibiting fashion in a museum.

Unlike what was happening in other disciplines, specialists in fashion in French museums (with a few notable exceptions) operated without the support of any academic community which, in its own way, might have been interested in fashion as a field of research. In spite of France's long history as an international fashion centre, its abundant archives on haute couture and the textile industry, not to mention an interest in clothing stretching back to the sixteenth century, the situation of what is these days called fashion studies was, in France in 1997, the very antithesis of the situation regarding fashion itself.⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, French theorists such as Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu and Gilles Lipovetsky had been at the forefront of the discipline. It was they who were in large part responsible for providing the theoretical tools at the heart of fashion studies.⁸ But it was outside France, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, that, for decades, their work was to inform research into fashion and the development of a thriving new discipline.

If 1997 was a turning point in the international field of fashion studies, a key factor was also the creation of the academic journal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* by cultural historian Valerie Steele, «the first journal to seriously examine the intersection of dress, body and culture.» Its stated aim was to provide an international, interdisciplinary forum for the analysis of phenomena in the fashion field.⁹ Still in 1997, Valerie Steele, who also holds a doctorate from Yale University – where she had to fight to be able to write her thesis on eroticism in Victorian fashion – was appointed director of the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Her first exhibition, «*Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*», instead of focusing exclusively on the aesthetic shifts in the objects on display, addressed the impact that various historical events, whether social, political, economic or cultural, had had on fashion during the decades in question. It amounted to a veritable manifesto on the significance and importance of fashion in our society. All in all, the year 1997 was a turning point in the fashion industry and in fashion design, as well as in the perception of fashion as a discipline in its own right, both on the international museum scene and in the academic world. Since the late 1990s, fashion has become one of the most prominent themes in museums around the world, particularly in France. It attracts an increasingly large and well-informed public, eager for new and enlightening material on the subject. At the same time, the latest generation of scholars now studies fashion from a broad range of disciplines and perspectives. They work in close collaboration with cultural professionals and have established a vibrant body of thinkers around the phenomenon of fashion. The cultural legacy of 1997 has inspired ground-breaking ways of addressing the challenges of the future.

1 Joan Juliet Buck, «Le point de vue de Vogue Paris», *Vogue Paris*, March 1997, p. 149.

2 Laurence Benaïm, «La haute couture entre le délié à la française et les corsets d'Albion», *Le Monde*, 26 January 1997.

3 Philippe de Montebello, «Foreword», in *Richard Martin, Gianni Versace*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997, p. 9.

4 Richard Martin, *Gianni Versace*, op. cit., p. 14

5 Valérie Guillaume, «Esthétiques du vêtement nouveau. Genèse de l'exposition», in *Europe 1919- 1939. Quand l'art habillait le vêtement* (exhib. cat., Paris, Musée de la Mode et du Costume, 1997), Paris, Paris-Musées, 1997, p. 8-19.

6 Lydia Kamitsis, «Musée de la Mode et du Textile. Le Louvre lui donne des ailes,» *Jardin des modes*, Winter 1996-1997, p. 29.

7 Maude Bass-Krueger and Sophie Kurkdjian, «The state of Fashion Studies in France: Past, Present, Future», *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, vol. 5, no 1, April 2018, p. 228.

8 Ibid.

9 Valerie Steele, "Letter from the Editor", *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, vol. 1, no 1, 1997, p. 1-2.

CHRONICLE - **COMME DES GARÇONS, THE 'BODY MEETS DRESS, DRESS MEETS BODY' COLLECTION** - by Alexandre Samson

The show began at 8.30 pm in a monastic silence. In the centre of a white rectangle forming the stage, fifty-seven pieces from one of the most famous collections in the history of contemporary fashion – and one of the most emblematic in the career of its designer, Rei Kawakubo – were presented one after another. The body, reshaped by dramatic asymmetric protrusions was sheathed in stretch dresses, tops and skirts. Stretch gingham prints visually enhanced the impression of distortion, alongside solid colours or multicoloured geometric prints. Organza tops, smocked according to the shibori pleating technique, were worn over round, brown paper skirts. The collection concluded with oversized padding, swaddling the body in bright red jersey. The collection, entitled «*Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body*», merged the garment with the body and the piece with its support. The deformities, the colours and the prints almost made you forget the complexity of the garments' structure and design. The collection included no accessories. With the exception of ballet flats, the only thing that interested Rei Kawakubo was the garment.

“*At one point, as a model emerged, her shoulders stuffed, a photographer yelled out ‘Quasimodo’ into the deathly silent presentation, with no music and certainly no chatting.*”¹ In spite of the limited number of guests (three hundred as opposed to nearly a thousand in the 1980s) – all selected for their affinity with Comme des Garçons creativity – the performance was striking. Sixteen years after her first Parisian show, Kawakubo once again divided the critics, eliciting silent admiration or embarrassed laughter. As Suzy Menkes commented in the International Herald Tribune, «*The result was perturbing, suggesting growths and gargoyles and phantom pregnancies. [...] As an intellectual exercise in exploring femininity, Kawakubo’s fashion thesis was intriguing. [...] But [...] out of fashion, rather than avant-garde.*»² Laurence Benaïm, writing in *Le Monde*, was more convinced. This was a collection that «*provokes questions, beyond the ugly or the beautiful, beyond normality or madness. [...] It seems that in her dresses she shows everything that others seek to conceal.*»³ A few months later, Laurence Benaïm came back to the subject: «*The absolute reference of the year remains the shock collection by Comme des Garçons (Rei Kawakubo), which the newspaper Libération dubbed ‘Comme des bossus’ and which, with silk cushions and artificial kidneys, presented the body in a state of transformation, bristling with bulges and humps totally at odds with the flawless image of contemporary beauty.*»⁴ Other journalists, however, rejected the collection out of hand: “*In what could be deemed one of the worst looks of 1997, Rei Kawakubo stuffed stretch-jersey tube dresses with strategically placed pillows. She claimed she was reinventing the body, but it looked more like she was outfitting the cast of the Hunchback of Notre-Dame,*” was the judgement of American Vogue in January 1998.⁵ They went on to devote an entire article to the women who dared wear those dresses, and the reactions – between enthusiasm and mockery – that they garnered.⁶

If this show was Kawakubo's fight against the facile nature of what the marketing departments were offering and the references to the past that abounded at the end of the 1990s, it was also a statement against the uniformity of fashion design. It was apparently prompted by Kawakubo's anger at a Gap shop window filled with commonplace black garments.⁷ In its reference-free approach, «*Comme des Garçons's stated aim is to create radically new clothes, each season, shapes that have never been seen before,*» Kawakubo explained in 1998. «*[...] I maintain that getting to see experimental clothes is a kind of mental release for everyone. It opens the mind.*»⁸ This collection did not interrogate the garment, it interrogated the body, it interrogated beauty and the proportions that form the basis of Western taste, which is one of the reasons why it was so important. In 1981, Rei Kawakubo's first creations challenged the Western vision of clothing, and they were vilified by a large section of the press. In the 1997 show, she challenged the canons of female beauty that have prevailed since Antiquity.

1 Amy M. Spindler, “Is It New and Fresh or Merely Strange?”, *The New York Times*, 10 October 1996, section c, p. 18.

2 Suzy Menkes, “Pop Romance Sets Tone for Summer”, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 October 1996.

3 Laurence Benaïm, “Les manifestes de Rei Kawakubo et Martin Margiela”, *Le Monde*, 19 October 1996.

4 Laurence Benaïm, “Le style Nu-Look”, *L'Officiel*, no 814, April 1997, p. 157.

5 Katherine Betts, « The Best & Worst of 1997 », *Vogue USA*, janvier 1998, p.150

6 Plum Sykes, «Doing the Bump», *American Vogue*, March 1998, p. 188.

7 Adrian Joffe, Director General of Comme des Garçons, in *Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: The Art of the In-Between*, New York, The MET, 2017, p. 132.

8 In conversation with François Baudot, *Elle*, n° 2718, 2 February 1998, p. 68.

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WHAT'S ON DURING THE EXHIBITION

FASHION BIG BANG

Reservation : www.billetterie-parismusees.paris.fr

Information : www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr

07.03 - 16.07.2023

FILM FESTIVAL

Alongside the 1997 Fashion Big Bang exhibition, Palais Galliera will present the second edition of its open-air film festival in June 2023. The public will be able to (re)discover the hit films of 1997, such as Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*, showcased in the exhibition.

WORKSHOPS AND GUIDED VISITS *

Children (8-12 years old)

“Invitation to the Fashion Show” Workshop - 3 hrs (visit + workshop), 8 participants

The children select their favourite silhouettes and combine them to design a pop-up invitation card.

“Textile Design” Workshop - 3 hrs (visit + workshop), 8 participants

The children create a textile drawing (on paper) using personal designs and/or designs inspired by scarves from the houses of Versace or Pucci.

Teenagers (13-18 years old)

“Accessories & Creations” Workshop - 4 hrs (visit + workshop), 6 participants

The participants create an original accessory – a cuff, shoulder or neck strap – using suitable sewing techniques and various materials.

Adults

Guided Visit - 1 hr 30, 18 participants

- For individual visitors on Saturdays at 2 pm and 4 pm

- For groups on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, by reservation

Families

Sketchy family visit (7 years and up) - 2 hrs, 8 participants

During the visit, the participants are invited to create a series of sketches of emblematic silhouettes from the exhibition.

“Textile Design” Workshop (8 years and up) - 3 hrs (visit + workshop), 8 participants

The participants create a textile drawing (on paper) using personal designs and/or designs inspired by scarves from the houses of Versace or Pucci.

Public with disabilities

Guided Visits in French Sign Language (15 years and up) - 1 hr 30, 15 participants

Visits in FSL take place on Thursdays at 6 pm and Saturdays at 2 pm.

Lip-Reading Visits (15 years and up) - 1 hr 30, 15 participants

Guided visits may be provided by a tour guide trained in lip reading.

Adapted Guided Visits involving Touching Fabrics - 1 hr 30, 12 participants (6 visitors with disabilities and their accompanying adult)

The descriptive and tactile (touching fabrics) guided visit presents the exhibition through its key sections. Based on a selection of models, the guide invites participants to touch a few samples of fabrics that were used for the outfit (or similar to the ones used).

* Activities in French only

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FASHION BIG BANG

07.03 - 16.07.2023

PALAIS GALLIERA, MUSÉE DE LA MODE DE PARIS

10, avenue Pierre 1^{er} de Serbie, Paris 16^e

Getting there

By métro line 9, Léna or Alma-Marceau stops

By RER line C, Pont de l'Alma stop

By Vélib', stations at: 4, rue de Longchamp ; 1, rue Bassano ; 2, avenue Marceau

By bicycle: lock-up points in front of the museum

Opening times

Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm

Open late on Thursdays and Fridays until 9pm

Closed on Mondays and 1 May.

Rates

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Free to people under 18 years

Reservation highly recommended

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PARIS MUSÉES

The City of Paris museum network.

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Paris Musées was founded in 2013. Its mission is to promote, curate and present the collections of the City of Paris museums, which contain one million works of art and are open to the public free of charge. Paris Musées also offers free and unrestricted (Open Content) access to 350,000 high-definition digital reproductions of works from the collections of the City of Paris museums. Constant attention is paid to research and the conservation of the collections as well as to their enlargement through donations and acquisitions.

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Most of the museums have been renovated in recent years and now offer services and visitor experiences adapted to the needs of the public, thanks in particular to an innovative digital policy both in the museums and online.

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