



# ALAÏA

DU 28 SEPTEMBRE 2013  
AU 26 JANVIER 2014

PALAIS  
— MUSÉE DE LA MODE —  
GALLIERA

DE LA VILLE DE PARIS



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MUSÉE  
D'ART  
MODERNE  
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

ALAÏA  
28 SEPTEMBER  
26 JANUARY



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PRESS VISUALS ON DEMAND

ALAÏA  
28 SEPTEMBER  
26 JANUARY

PRESS RELEASE



The Palais Galliera is honouring Azzedine Alaïa with its opening exhibition. This first Paris retrospective, presented in the Palais's newly renovated galleries and in the Matisse Room at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, comprises a selection of seventy iconic models retracing a unique creative career. Alaïa's formative years were intimately linked to the clients who fell under the spell of his made-to-measure garments, among them such legendary figures as Louise de Vilmorin, Arletty and Greta Garbo. Encouraged by his friend Thierry Mugler, he presented his first signature collection in 1979, already adopting an approach to leather that rendered it more fragile and more sensual. His draping of bodies with jersey and stretch fabrics is an allusion to his sculpture studies at art school in Tunis: 'When I'm working on a garment, it has to flow over the body, in profile and in back view.' Zips make their way around the dresses, eyelets pierce the coats, stitching accentuates the curves of the suits. Alaïa fashioned a new body, like a sculptor working with muslin and leather. He was, too, one of the rare couturiers to master every step in the making of a garment: drawing a pattern, transferring directly onto the cloth the forms and volumes he saw in his mind's eye, then cutting and sewing the fabric as he bends it to his will.

Inventing new shapes out of simple interplay between complex stitchings, Alaïa became the creator of a timeless body of work. His influence on today's fashion is fundamental. An indefatigable worker and a sublime shaper of his own persona, he continues to go his own way, preferring 'garments that last' to those that vanish with the season. An insatiable lover of the opposite sex, he likes to say, 'I make clothes, women make fashion.' The models and women friends he has brought to the world – among others Naomi Campbell, Stephanie Seymour, Linda Spierings, Linda Evangelista, Veronica Webb and Yasmin Le Bon – are also his most faithful admirers.

In 1985, he won two Fashion Oscars in Paris and was fêted at the CAPC Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux with Dan Flavin's sculptures. Still in 1985, Jean Paul Goude was the artistic director for his NYC Palladium show. In 1996, a solo exhibition at the Palazzo Corsini in Florence was followed by one with Julian Schnabel's paintings at the Biennale della Moda. 1998 saw his first retrospective at the Groninger Museum in Holland, where his models were displayed side by side with works by Pablo Picasso, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Anselm Kiefer, Christophe von Weyhe... In 2000, his work was exhibited alongside paintings by Andy Warhol.

At the Palais Galliera – where Warhol had his first Paris exhibition – Alaïa's remarkable dresses are on display in a scenography by designer Martin Szekely. In the Matisse Room at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, they continue the dialogue with art so dear to their creator's heart.

SALLE MATISSE  
MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE  
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS



In celebration of the reopening of the Palais Galliera, the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris presents a retrospective focusing on the career of Azzedine Alaïa, featuring a selection of exceptional creations by the designer. Consisting of one-off evening dresses and dresses designed for iconic models, these rare items will be presented in the midst of the permanent collections in one of the museum's most iconic rooms: the Salle Henri Matisse.

Alaïa's dresses are positioned alongside the painter's compositions (*La Danse ou Lutte des Nymphes*, 1931 and *La Danse inachevée*, 1931-1933) and Daniel Buren's *Murs de peintures*, 1995. The juxtaposition of these artistic creations highlights their shared aesthetic affinities. In many ways Alaïa's approach to form, volume and material resembles the work of a painter or sculptor, his constant adjustments and experiments reflecting a tireless creative spirit, blurring the boundaries between fashion and art.

This exhibition is testament to the strength of the collaboration between the Palais Galliera and the Musée d'Art moderne. By supporting the dialogue between high art and the applied arts, this show pays tribute to the pioneering vision of avant-garde designers and other creators operating outside traditional artistic fields.

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSÉE D'ART  
MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS:  
FABRICE HERGOTT

COORDINATOR OF THE MUSÉE  
D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE  
DE PARIS: JESSICA CASTEX

# EXHIBITION CURATOR

OLIVIER SAILLARD,  
DIRECTOR OF THE PALAIS GALLIERA,  
THE CITY OF PARIS' FASHION MUSEUM

# SCENOGRAPHY

MARTIN SZEKELY, DESIGNER



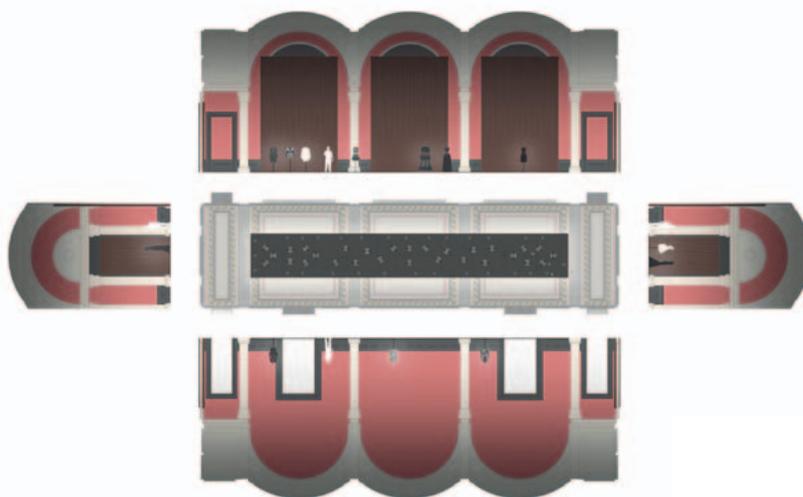
The symmetry of the palace is centred around the main gallery. By adopting this gallery as the exhibition's central axis, the layout accentuates the sense of grandeur.

The slightly raised black exhibition platforms define the contours of the space. With the palace itself cast in a sort of twilight, the spot lighting invites us to contemplate the sculptural qualities of the clothes on display.

Seen from the reception hall through the monumental door leading to the vast Salon d'Honneur, the first dresses in the exhibition act as an invitation. Visitors are free to wander about, following their own path as they explore the exhibition and discover the palace. The Salon d'Honneur leads to the Grande Galerie, a long high space with exhibits spread throughout a large central area. In the Petit Salon the stage is notably higher, focusing the eye on the final works exhibited, while simultaneously concealing the exit. Visitors then pass through an intermediary zone before finding themselves back in the light of day.

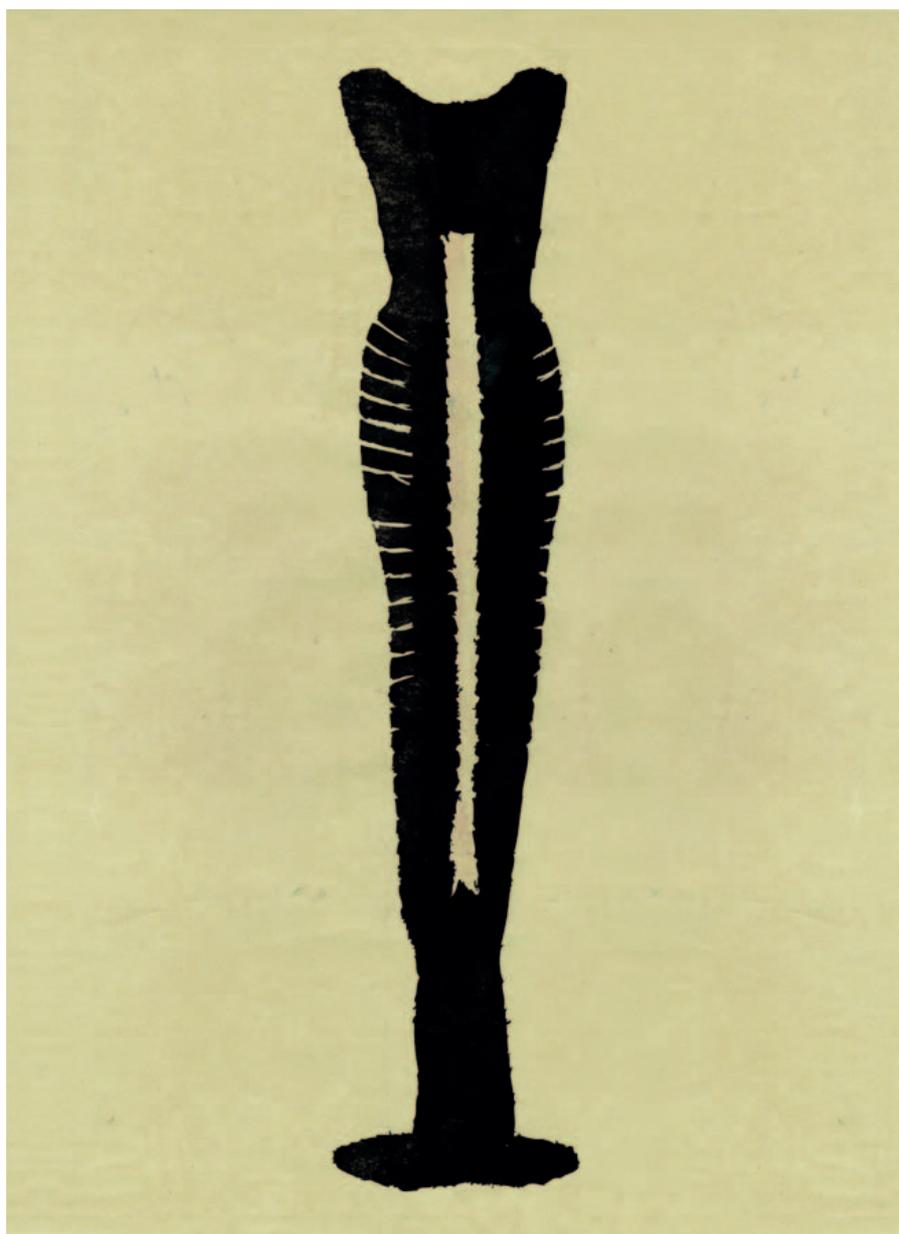
The exhibition is continued in the Salle Matisse of the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

The same slightly raised platforms are used to delimit the space, but here they are white.



MARTIN SZEKELY,  
JANUARY 2013

LONG SHEATH DRESS  
KNOWN AS "POWDER PUFF"



SPRING-SUMMER 1994  
FLUFFY STRETCH RAYON STRIPS  
MONSIEUR ALAÏA PERSONAL  
ARCHIVES  
© DRAWING BY AURORE  
DE LA MORINERIE - 2013

## CATALOGUE



*Alaïa*, edited by Olivier Saillard

Éditions Paris Musées

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128 colour and black & white illustrations

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Gilles Bensimon, Arthur Elgort, Ilvio Gallo, Jean-Paul Goude,  
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# THEMES AND VARIATIONS

BY OLIVIER SAILLARD, EXTRACTS  
FROM THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



## ZIP !

Although in person Alaïa is affable and talkative, his style is anything but overstated. He cuts straight to the essence of each garment, though this directness certainly does not preclude extreme sophistication and often quite complex cuts. The creations which emerge from the designer's studios conceal their mystery beneath a veneer of simplicity which is often breath-taking. There is little room for adornment. It is tolerated for its structural value only. This is the case with the silver or white metal zippers that Alaïa adopted after 1981. They criss-cross the body like railway lines, pulling the garments together and adding a final decorative flourish, like a brooch on a lapel. With a simple, decisive line the zipper completes the garment, providing the only adornment it needs. When the zip curves around the silhouette, it serves as a subtle homage to Arletty's wardrobe in *Hôtel du Nord* (Marcel Carné, 1938), while also cementing the idea of the designer as sculptor. No fewer than 3.40 metres of these metal links wind their way around the autumn-winter 1982-1983 jersey dress, while the 2003 haute couture collection required nearly 7 metres of zipper. Sometimes the zipper will venture to the top of a hood, as in 1986, or around the hips, as in 1983. The zipper is like a flash of lightning, a bolt of creative inspiration, and whether it serves to hold a piece together, or unfolds like a peeling fruit, this sassy and lascivious feature remains the distinctive hallmark of the designer.

## ALAÏA, WOMEN

"A woman is like an actress: always on stage. She has to be beautiful and feel good. Her clothes should be a part of her, she should feel them on her body. I prefer people to notice the woman and not her clothes. Her face, her body, her hands – the clothes she wears should dress her, underscore her qualities and make her beautiful." When asked about his creations, Alaïa likes nothing better than talking of women. His creations are like second skins: simple, straightforward and clinging tight to the curves of the women who become as one with them, rather than merely wearing them. They are not grand creative statements, intended to transform women into harbingers of the designer's genius. Alaïa is an expert commentator on the bodies he describes, rectifies, ennobles. His eyes are his language. The eyes that Louise de Vilmorin described as being "like stilettos" are constantly observing the people he meets, whether they are clients or simply passers-by. His pins, scissors and hands are the vocabulary with which he maintains his constant dialogue with the human form. Without showiness or pretension, his dresses are statements capable of resounding influence.

## THREAD AND DRESSES

Alaïa models fabrics in the same way as a sculptor shapes earth or marble. For him, “a material can trigger a form”. Beginning in 1981, his knits were a triumph with the critics and on women’s bodies. The designer then graduated from sculpture to alchemy by making knits the main focus of his research. Again and again he experimented with these simple and supple materials, endowing them from the very beginning with a stretch element that transformed dresses into sheaths, lending the suppleness of the fabric to figure-hugging garments while simultaneously supporting the body. On this point the creator confessed in 1979: “I’m happy when I manage to save, to make beautiful.” His collaboration with an Italian textile mill resulted in a sort of competition that sometimes seemed to surpass the simple creator-supplier relationship, easily comparable to the relationship between designer Cristóbal Balenciaga and the Zurich-based silk producer Abraham in the 1950s. His wizardry with fabrics is plain to see in his dresses: jersey with viscose and moiré acetate, a revolutionary anti-stress fibre in 1992, felted wool knits in 1993 and downy stretch materials inspired by the powder puffs used by elegant ladies in the 19th century.

## FABRICS AND MATERIALS

“I have the freedom of a poor man who lives in comfort.” Azzedine Alaïa is exactly like Madame Grès. People thought she could express herself with excellence only with noble fabrics, silk jersey and heavy taffeta. However, toward the end of her life she demonstrated that with her artistry and skill she could use plain and simple fabrics to produce equally sumptuous dresses. Of course Alaïa has always been deeply involved with research into fabrics of all kinds. It was his pioneering work that introduced felted wool to the vocabulary of high fashion. White cottons have gained new prominence thanks to his influence. Thanks to Alaïa knits, stretch, embroidered and pierced fabrics like lace have all have acquired a status to rival velvet or crepe. There is no hierarchy in his work. The beige pattern canvases used as templates for his final garments are almost complete creations in their own right, such is his attention to detail. One thing is sure: Alaïa is capable of bending any fabric to his artistic will. He rarely uses embroidered fabrics, imbuing his creations with a sense of timelessness. The shapes he constructs are bold creative statements in their own right, with no need for further adornment.

## TIME ACCORDING TO ALAÏA

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Alaïa is not the kind of designer who sees the constant succession of new collections and seasons as a necessary creative stimulant. The tyranny of present time is not conducive to reflection and work for him. Working from his home before he even presented his first collections, he refined his technique for nearly twenty years by making made-to-measure garments dictated by the desires of his stylish clients. Encouraged by his friend Thierry Mugler, his first show in 1979 was a gracefully improvised series of suits and coats, strolling between his kitchen and living room. His life has always depended on maintaining a balance between the living space and the work space. First in the Rue de Bellechasse and later the Rue de la Verrerie, Azzedine Alaïa lives where he works and works where he lives. In 1987 he decided to break with the creative calendar as dictated by the world of fashion. He was the only designer to revolt against this absurd need for novelty. Since then, he has presented his creations a week or a month after all the others, forgoing certain collections in order to focus all the more on others. Buyers and journalists nevertheless throng to see them. This apparent slowness makes Alaïa the first in everything. The designer, who mischievously insists that “I have erased the dates, not the memories”, is always a winner.

## A TASTE FOR THE HISTORY OF FASHION

As a designer whose influence on women's fashion has been palpable since the 1980s, Azzedine Alaïa was also quick to assert his credentials as a defender of sartorial heritage. This includes his own creations, which he archives carefully and meticulously, but also those of his contemporaries and predecessors. Ever since he became, with the closure of the house of Balenciaga in 1968, the unwitting owner of one of the master's dresses, Alaïa has always defended those who have contributed to the history of fashion. The work of Madeline Vionnet has earned more widespread recognition thanks to his insightful analysis and praise. Public opinion of Paul Poiret was revised when Alaïa cast new light on his fundamental modernity. And he has nothing but admiration for Charles James and Madame Grès, rebellious and autonomous spirits like himself. In the course of his collections he has paid homage to such designers with delicacy and admiration, a fellow artist offering tribute to past masters. In his work we can see the outline of the 1930s, of which he is the supreme heir, but also the more streamlined lines of the 1950s as illustrated in his suits. The choice of materials, the technical innovations and the cuts invented by Alaïa are all completely his own. His knowledge of the craft and his love of history and women has produced a wardrobe that serves as a revealing illustration of our times.

## ALAÏA, FROM CATWALK TO HIGH STREET

Azzedine Alaïa can pride himself on having bent fashion to his own unique vision. Echoes of his innovations can be seen all over the high street, with popular designers massively adopting the leggings and tight dresses whose cut he refined while expanding their possibilities. His influence on the decade is unmistakable, stunning his fellow creators with fresh takes on styles and materials that have opened up new sartorial horizons for women. For someone who knows how to cut a garment like no one else, there are no humble materials. Noble fabrics, skins, leathers and modest cottons: each has its own virtues that must be respected. In the spring-summer collection of 1991, Alaïa worked in collaboration with Julian Schnabel for the Tati brand, known for its affordable products and emblematic pink and white gingham. The collaborative collection included a bag, a T-shirt and espadrilles, single-handedly establishing the trend for designer-chain store partnerships which endures to this day. Alaïa used the famous gingham pattern in both canvas and denim, while also adding his own inimitable touch. Used in these over-sized jackets, short and waisted blousons, Parisian caps, skin-tight trousers and hot pants, the almost-tartan pink and white strike an insolent note. Cocking his nose at convention, he decided to apply his unique talents to creating stylish streetwear that everybody can afford.

## ALAÏA, SCULPTING THE BODY

The designers who have made a lasting impression on the history of fashion are those who have concentrated on celebrating and liberating the body. Of all contemporary creators, it is Alaïa who has best embodied this spirit since the 1980s, using precise seams and darts to produce a silhouette that has become his hallmark. Born of a long apprenticeship with women, the practice of making made-to-measure garments dictated his first creations. It taught him the tricks of the trade, like how to cut a dress which celebrates a woman's assets and hides her flaws. He drew inspiration from the spirited style and arrogance of personalities like Arletty and Louise de Vilmorin. In 1979 when Alaïa was commissioned to create costumes for the dancers of famous Parisian cabaret the Crazy Horse, his tasteful cutting framed that bare skin like never before. The arched backs and stunning legs, the gently encompassed hips and highlighted

waists made history. Alaïa's raw material is the body itself. The seams he traced, the volumes he established, have established his reputation as part fashion designer, part sculptor. This ongoing quest is also a testimony to his timelessness. His garments cling to the skin, an effect that is fundamental to his work. To journalists who ask him about the mystery of creation, he responds that the success of a dress depends on its ability to disappear, focusing all eyes on the woman wearing it.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF AFRICA

Alaïa travels little. A collection, a fitting session or putting the final touches to a new dress always takes precedence over the temptation of a holiday. In his workshop, between a television screen that looks out at the world and bolts of fabric that form cheerful frontiers of colour, the designer claims to travel without needing to move. But when restoration work was required on his Rue de la Verrerie base, Alaïa discovered old geographical maps painted on the walls at the beginning of the 20th century. He was careful to preserve these visual traces of great historic expeditions. In his collections, he is reluctant to accept any outside influence that might transform a garment into a postcard of the country visited. Africa is nevertheless a source of constant inspiration: particularly visible in the spring-summer 1990 collection, the continent is a subtle presence in all of his work. The big game of the autumn-winter 1991-1992 collection leave their stamp on the prints and tame the slender bodies with a palette consisting of ochres, yellows and sub-burnt dust tones. Braided dresses and totemic forms, divorced from any mythical context, are a testament to Alaïa's attachment to Africa, and to the many beautiful black women who have inspired his creations.

BUSTIER DRESS TRIMMED  
WITH SHELLS



SPRING-SUMMER 1994  
STRING AND SPANDEX  
MONSIEUR ALAÏA  
PERSONAL ARCHIVES  
© DRAWING BY AURORE  
DE LA MORINERIE - 2013

# QUOTATIONS FROM AZZEDINE ALAÏA

TAKEN FROM THE INTERVIEW  
PUBLISHED IN THE CATALOGUE



## HIS CAREER

### THE EARLY DAYS IN TUNIS

“Madame Pineau was like a second mother to me. I devoured catalogues at her place, medical reviews with reproductions of art works and a few fashion magazines where I remember admiring the latest creations by Dior and Balenciaga. I used to wonder how the dresses held together. Because she believed I was artistically inclined, Madame Pineau lied to the director of the École des Beaux-Arts by swearing that I really was sixteen years old. She urged me to take the entrance exam at the age of fifteen without my father’s knowledge. There were only four Arabs taking the exam. I used to spend my nights oversewing dresses for a local dressmaker in order to pay for my school equipment. I learned the different stitches by doing my sister Hafida’s sewing exercises because she wasn’t very keen on manual skills. Using the squares of unbleached linen handed out by the nuns of Notre-Dame-de-Sion, where she went to school, I learned to sew by following the instructions given to the girls.

In Tunis it was unusual for a boy to do needlework. Two girls from a well-known Tunisian family who lived across the road from the dressmaker I worked for at night were intrigued by my comings and goings and asked to see me. They told their family and friends about me and recommended me to Madame Richard, one of the two dressmakers who worked for the city’s upper class ladies. It was then that the Bey’s favourite daughter asked to meet me. I made her a red coat, with a hole for a white surat scarf with red polka dots. I also sewed a pair of cotton shorts for my anatomy professor at the École des Beaux-Arts, where I was enrolled to study sculpture.”

### THE EARLY DAYS IN PARIS

“Leïla Menchari had become a very close friend. She was a painter and an artist who had moved to Paris a short while before, where she was to have a fine career at Hermès. Her mother was very emancipated and was one of the first Tunisian women to abandon the veil. She encouraged me to leave for Paris by recommending me to a rich client, originally from Tunisia, who wore Dior clothes. This enabled me to join the famous house. I was offered the choice between the studio and the workshop. Of course I chose the workshop. I could smell the scent of perfume through the windows at Dior and I could see the sales women dressed all in black with fine pearl necklaces. I loved all that. Even though I got the sack after five days, I felt I had seen everything and grasped everything. Leila Menchari helped me find a garret in the rue Lord-Byron, where she herself lived. The

conciierge agreed to let me have the room as long as I made her a few blouses and distributed the mail. Then I spent a little more than a year near the Parc Monceau, at the Marquise de Mazan's, an Italian lady for whom I did some dressmaking. I dressed her. Through her I met the Comtesse de Blégiers, for whom I then spent five years cooking and looking after her children. Thanks to Madame Delacombe, whom I knew from Tunis, I then worked for two seasons for Guy Laroche. That's where I met Simone Zehrfuss, the architect's wife. She took a liking to me and we became friends. She introduced me to many personalities of the day, including Louise de Vilmorin. The first time we met, being afraid to mispronounce my name, she asked me to write it on a piece of paper that she slipped into her bag with a knowing look, telling me: "It's in the bag"!

#### AZZEDINE ALAÏA AND FRANCE

"In the course of my career, several ministers for culture wished to pin decorations on me that it would be an honour to wear. I invariably responded very politely and very sincerely to each and every one of them that I received my greatest award the day I was granted French citizenship. For the festivities celebrating the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, I had the honour of making the dress that the singer Jessye Norman wore for the parade staged by Jean-Paul Goude. I used the French flag to make the red, white and blue dress of this country that welcomed me so warmly. Jessye Norman sang *La Marseillaise* in that dress, that was more of a symbol than an actual piece of clothing, and which I still consider to be the finest testimony to my achievement as a Parisian designer."

### SPECIAL MUSES WOMEN IN GENERAL

#### ARLETTY

"She's the one who gave me the idea of making skin-tight dresses. She was used to adjusting the volume of her skirt with a pin. "It falls too well, she used to say. It has to be skewed somewhere." With Arletty I learned the tricks they don't tell you about Parisian chic, she was a great influence on me. My zipper dress that turns around the body was inspired by the one she wore in *Hôtel du Nord*. The dresses in the form of a troubadour's tunic and the pants she wore in *Les Visiteurs du Soir* inspired several dresses in the autumn-winter 1988-1989 collection. The butterflies in the 1991-1992 autumn-winter collection are a homage to Elsa Schiaparelli as much as to Arletty and the combination she wore in the film *Tempête*. Her wit, her impertinence and her insolence gave me the idea. She often used to say she was "devoid of any decoration". This drove me to eliminate jewels and accessories from my collections in order to focus on the garment in its purest form. She was so simple, so full of grandeur, at once working-class and majestic. Arletty was the incarnation of the Parisienne."

## GRETA GARBO

“She came with a friend, Cécile de Rothschild, and wanted me to make a very full-bodied coat. I remember some fitting sessions and measuring sessions.

The coat was never big enough for her taste. At a time when everything was tight-fitting, the 1970s, I had to make an immense, navy-blue coat for her, with turned-up sleeves. (...)

In the 1980s and 1990s, I often presented huge coats with generous shoulders, a definite nod to Garbo, to her inimitable and avant-gardist style. The double-breasted trouser-suits that frequently appeared in my collections at the time are also a reminder of “La Divine”. Making the right volume is a technique that is just as complex as any other. It demands good mathematics. Today’s coats are more fitted, the trousers fall in a straighter line, but that popular ‘schoolboy’ look still bears the traces of the masculine style that Garbo wore with such grace.”

## LOUISE DE VILMORIN

“Meeting her I realized that Parisian chic was all about the little details. One evening when Louise de Vilmorin was supposed to go to a dinner, she asked me to help her put the finishing touches to her outfit. She remembered that she had seen a concierge wearing a cardigan from a department store like Prisunic so we bought it. We replaced the buttons with something more elaborate in metal and put a long ordinary chain around her neck that she rolled up and plunged into a pocket. It was a demonstration in just a few seconds of her inimitable sense of style, and she got a lot of envious looks that evening.”

## MODELS

If I don’t have models before my eyes I have no ideas. I need to see their bodies near me. Naomi Campbell, Farida Khelfa, Veronica Webb, Stephanie Seymour, Marie-Sophie Wilson, I am grateful to them all for accompanying me through all the research and the long posing, fitting and tweaking sessions”.

## WOMEN

“I have never followed fashion. Women have always dictated my behaviour. I have never thought of anything but them for I am convinced that they have more talent than any designer. It is essential to be learn from their bodies in order to anticipate their desires. Over the years, I have followed the teachings of their silhouettes. The shoulder is essential, the waist is primordial. The curve of their backs and their derrieres are of capital importance. The bust, we can always come to terms with it. The neck, if it is short, must be flattered by a high collar and little epaulettes. In 1993 I wanted to break with the system imposed by the seasonal shows in order to concentrate on the clothes and not on the vagaries of fashion.

I think I can say that my clothes are undatable, they were made to last. Since I arrived in Paris in the 1950s, I don’t believe I have responded to any demands or imperatives other than those of the women who surrounded me and continue to surround me.”

## FAVOURITE MATERIALS

“Materials have also been very important to me. Leather is a material I sometimes wanted to make more feminine, more delicate, more fragile. I treated it in the same way as other haute couture fabrics, whether for evening or day wear. Denim is a contemporary material in which I like to cut refined dresses that are comfortable, like an old travelling jacket. I mould it like a bas-relief. Very early on I also used lots of crepe de Chine which, because it is transparent, gives us a glimpse of the tone of the skin. I have used studs, button holes and nails – these commonplace, utilitarian materials – on garments with very refined and sumptuous fabrics. A huge variety of jerseys have figured in all my creations. For me, stretch knits are a natural byproduct of couture jersey. Rather than use only its elasticity, which hugs the body naturally, I wanted to use it as a fabric that I could cut and model around the silhouette. I cut it, pinned it and assembled it. I worked with the Copini company in Italy, conducting painstaking, innovative research in order to find downy felted wools capable of lending relief and depth to garments. For me, haute couture is not merely a question of techniques and labels, there has to be a spirit of innovation.”

SHORT DRESS  
WITH PANTHER  
ANAMORPHOUS MOTIVE



FALL-WINTER 2010  
KNITTED WOOL AND  
SPANDEX JACQUARD  
MONSIEUR ALAÏA  
PERSONAL ARCHIVES  
© DRAWING BY AURORE  
DE LA MORINERIE - 2013

## BIOGRAPHY



AZZEDINE ALAÏA WAS BORN IN TUNIS.

**THE 1950S** Unbeknown to his father, Azzedine Alaïa attends the École des Beaux-arts in Tunis. To pay for his studies he does little sewing jobs for a local dressmaker. He is subsequently employed by Madame Richard, a French dressmaker who bought many haute couture patterns from Paris and reproduced them for her Tunisian clientele. The mother of his friend, Leïla Menchari, now a window designer for Hermès, encouraged Azzedine Alaïa to move to Paris.

**1960** Azzedine Alaïa meets Arletty at the Théâtre de la Renaissance where she is starring in *L'Étouffe-Chrétien* by Félicien Marceau.

**TOWARD 1961** Azzedine Alaïa is taken on by the tailoring workshop of Guy Laroche. Two years later he decides to branch out on his own.

**TOWARD 1962-1963** Azzedine Alaïa meets Louise de Vilmorin. A true friendship develops between the designer and the author, evident from the made-to-measure creations he produced for her.

**1964** Azzedine Alaïa moves to 60 Rue de Bellechasse in Paris, where he works as a designer for a private clientele.

**TOWARD 1971** Azzedine Alaïa meets and dresses Greta Garbo.

**1978** He collaborates as a creator with various prêt à porter houses.

**1979** Thierry Mugler pays homage to Alaïa for having helped him make the series of tuxedos that closed his show. Melka Tréanton and Nicole Crassat, two of the most influential fashion editors, are among the first to believe in him and to bring his talents to a wider audience.

Invited by Alain Bernardin, he designs and creates the costumes for the twenty-three dancers of the Crazy Horse cabaret.

- 1981 He presents his first collection to the press in his studio on the Rue de Bellechasse. The women's press praises the new creator to the heavens. For Women's Wear Daily, Bill Cunningham photographs editors Nicole Crassat, Brigitte Langevin and Carlyne Cerf wearing creations by Alaïa.  
Outstanding themes in the S/S 1981 collection: leather or waxed fabrics perforated with eyelets, skirts laced at the back, metal zippers running from the neckline to the hemline, tight and structured leather suits.
- 1982 Azzedine Alaïa is invited to New York by Bergdorf Goodman and presents a show on September 8.  
Alaïa makes special creations for the Les Trois Suisses catalogue.  
A/W 1982-1983: seamed stretch jersey dresses, long transparent chiffon on naked skin.
- 1983 The first official Alaïa fashion show in is held in October 1983, Rue de Bellechasse.  
S/S 1983: body-hugging designs inspired by Arletty  
A/W 1983-1984 black leather tube dress with asymmetrical folds revealing the naked skin, closed on the side with a series of metal buckles.
- 1984 Alaïa moves to 17, Rue du Parc-Royal, a town house decorated by Andrée Putman.  
S/S 1984: stretch jersey hood dresses; stretch jersey boxer-pants.  
A/W 1984-1985: coats with hood-collars and large reversible boleros with strips of mink.
- 1985 Invited to the Palladium in New York by Ian Schrager, Alaïa presents a show directed by Jean-Paul Goude. "From the New York Times to the Washington Post, the press was unanimous: they'd never seen anything like it." (Michel Cressole, Libération, 11 Sept. 1985)  
Azzedine Alaïa wins two Fashion Oscars, for 'Designer of the Year' and "Best French Collection", presented during the ceremony by Grace Jones dressed in a famous Alaïa dress.  
The exhibition-show 'Fashion 1980-1985: A day with Azzedine Alaïa' is presented at the CAPC Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux  
The creator designs most of Grace Jones's costumes for John Glen's James Bond movie *A View to a Kill*.  
S/S 1985: towelling bathrobe-coats with a bare back and large hood closed with a corselet belt; topstitched denim blousons and figure-hugging skirts, underscored with metal zippers.
- 1986 Azzedine Alaïa presents Naomi Campbell in her first fashion show, aged sixteen.  
S/S 1986: Tube dresses with body-hugging jersey bandages, inspired by Egyptian mummies.  
A/W 1986-1987: white poplin jackets and shirt-dresses inspired by men's clothing.
- 1987 Azzedine Alaïa acquires the former BHV warehouses at 18 Rue de la Verrerie which, when restored, become his living quarters, workshop and boutique. His friend the painter Julian Schnabel is commissioned to decorate the boutique.

- 1988 Opening of the first Alaïa boutique in New York, again designed by Julian Schnabel.  
The S/S 1988 parade is held at the Rue de la Verrerie. It is presented in May, two months after other designers' collections. From this date on, he no longer presents his shows in accordance with the official calendar but at his own pace and under the glass roof at his home/headquarters.  
S/S 1988: long jersey tube dresses with viscose, elastane and stretch polyamide, the seams and open cuts being held together with crochet stitches.  
A/W 1988-1989: unbleached wool and elastane jersey high-necked pullovers with flat ribbing worn with shorts or miniskirts, a tribute to Arletty's look in Marcel Carné's film *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (1942).
- 1989 For the bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution, directed by Jean-Paul Goude, Alaïa creates a dress in the colours of the French flag, worn by Jessye Norman.
- 1990 S/S 1990: "bandage" or "openwork" dresses made entirely from strips of stretch rayon; African-inspired dresses with raffia and elastane thread with shellfish fringes.
- 1991 Collaborating with Tati, Alaïa makes a bag, a T-shirt and a pair of espadrilles.  
S/S 1991: dresses and suits in the Tati pink or black print; denim crop top and shorts with laced back with two extended strips wrapping around the legs; silk jersey draped dresses.  
A/W 1991-1992: a homage to Arletty in *Tempête* (1939, dir. Dominique Bernard-Deschamps), with a series of "cage-dresses" with multicoloured butterfly motifs and combinations with black stretch lace and velvet inset; panther print knit dresses, suits and coats.
- 1992 S/S 1992: basque jackets with trapeze neckline over broderie anglaise bras; stretch knit jacquard striped sheathe dresses sometimes bearing the inscription "My heart belongs to Daddy".
- 1994 S/S 1994: a long mermaid dress with trompe l'œil drape effect consisting of downy viscose "powder puff" strips.
- 1995 Creates costumes for Carolyn Carlson's ballet *Vue d'ici, the View*, presented at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. The "powder puff" dress was used in the ballet.
- 1996 First retrospective at the Palazzo Corsini in Florence.  
For the centenary of Louis Vuitton, Azzedine Alaïa creates a series of accessories, including a bag that combines faux panther skin with monogrammed leather.
- 1997 "Alaïa" at the Groninger Museum (7 December 1997 - 8 March 1998, Groningen, Holland) in which the designer's dresses are juxtaposed with works by Pablo Picasso, Julian Schnabel, Anselm Kiefer, Andy Warhol and César.
- 1999 S/S 1999: glazed lambskin ensembles consisting of a crossover top and flounced skirt.

- 2000 The Prada group obtains a share in the capital of Alaïa's business, which it retains until 2007.  
Retrospective at the New York Guggenheim Museum (22 September - 15 November) with works by Andy Warhol, on loan from collector and friend Peter Brandt.
- 2003 S/S 2003: Long-sleeved jersey tube dresses closed with a zipper that snakes from the neckline to the hemline; untreated crocodile skin inset into the back of a black woollen jacket; black leather figure-hugging bustier, crocodile inset over a long, flared taffeta skirt. In this collection Azzedine Alaïa plays with his own visual trademarks.
- 2007 Azzedine Alaïa collaborates with the Richemont group.  
A/W 2007-2008: leather dresses and coats whose panels are held in place with chevron stitching; a short blue woollen dress entirely embroidered with tailor's tacking.
- 2011 "Azzedine Alaïa in the 21st century" exhibition in the Groninger Museum (11 December - 6 May 2012).  
A/W 2011-2012: notable creations in this haute couture collection include shiny black crocodile skin jackets bordered with Mongolian lambswool and long openwork leather dresses with metal embroidery.
- 2013 Alaïa designs the costumes for Angelin Preljocaj's ballet *Les Nuits*, created for the Montpellier Dance Festival. He also creates the costumes for the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, directed by Christopher Alden with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.  
"Azzedine Alaïa in the 21st century" exhibition at the NRW-Forum in Düsseldorf (8 June - 8 September).

TACKING STITCHES  
EMBROIDERED DRESS



FALL-WINTER 2007-2008  
WOOL CREPE  
MONSIEUR ALAÏA  
PERSONAL ARCHIVES  
© DRAWING BY AURORE  
DE LA MORINERIE - 2013

## ACTIVITIES FOR VISITORS



### CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS

#### WORKSHOP FOR 4-6 YEAR-OLDS

##### LITTLE FASHION EXPLORERS

Duration: 1h30 / Advance booking required.

A tour of the Alaïa exhibition tailored to young children, enabling them to discover the designer's unique artistic worldview. The guide will help our young visitors to observe the form of the creations, their originality and the materials used.

At the end the kids will receive a design sketch to colour in. Will they add their own details, or imitate the printed motif?

#### WORKSHOP FOR 7-12 YEAR-OLDS

##### THE POP-UP FASHION SHOW

Duration: 2h / Advance booking required.

After a tour of the Alaïa exhibition, budding fashionistas will be invited to imagine their own catwalk show using stylised models, adhesive coloured ribbons and a healthy dose of imagination.

#### WORKSHOP FOR 7-12 YEAR-OLDS

##### MY DESIGNER BRACELET

Duration: 2h / Advance booking required.

Kids can design and create their own elaborate bracelet, drawing inspiration from Azzedine Alaïa's sophisticated leather garments and belts.

#### TOUR-INTRODUCTION FOR 7-11 YEAR-OLDS

Duration: 1h30 / Advance booking required.

Accompanied by a guide, and a special guide book, this tour is designed with kids in mind. An informative visit full of artistic discoveries, with games and experiments including an emphasis on the texture and feeling of the textiles, allowing young visitors to explore their creative side.

#### VISIT-INTRODUCTION FOR 13- 16 YEAR-OLDS

##### A WALK THROUGH FASHION

Duration: 1h30 / Advance booking required.

A tour of the exhibition created with teenagers in mind, exploring Azzedine Alaïa's unique personal vision: a designer who controls every step of the creative process from the initial idea through to the final execution. The tour introduces fashion-conscious teens to the work behind the scenes of haute couture, the world of designers and stylists.

## FOR ALL THE FAMILY

### STORIES FOR 6 YEAR-OLDS AND OLDER

Duration: 1h30 / Advance booking required.

The exhibition comes to life, with stories of shape-shifting animals and intrepid heroines casting these extravagant creations in a new light. Includes the story of the woman who wove a web using the colours of freedom...

## ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS

### TOUR-LECTURE

Duration: 1h30 / No booking required

Every Saturday at 2:30 pm and 4:00 pm, a maximum of 15 people per group.

In the newly reopened Palais Galliera, a lecture on the history of the museum and the “Alaïa” exhibition.

### READINGS

Duration: 1h / Reservation only

Texts by Louise de Vilmorin: her correspondence, notebooks, fashion articles, prose and poems. The author was a close friend of the designer.

### INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS:

Marie-Jeanne Fuster / Laure Bernard

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## USEFUL INFORMATION



### ALAÏA FROM 28 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO 26 JANUARY 2014

Palais Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris  
10 avenue Pierre Ier de Serbie, 75116 Paris  
Tel: 01 56 52 86 00 - [www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr](http://www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr)

OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY: 10:00 AM TO 6:00 PM,  
EXCEPT FOR HOLIDAYS  
LATE CLOSING ON THURSDAYS AT 9:00 PM

#### ENTRANCE\*:

Full rate €8  
Reduced rate €6  
Young adults (14-26 year-olds): €4 €  
Free for under 14 year-olds

THE EXHIBITION IS EXTENDED IN THE MUSÉE D'ART  
MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS IN THE SALLE MATISSE  
11 avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris  
Tel: 01 53 67 40 00 - [www.mam.paris.fr](http://www.mam.paris.fr)

OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY, 10:00 AM TO 6:00 PM,  
EXCEPT FOR HOLIDAYS  
LATE CLOSING ON THURSDAYS AT 9:00 PM  
FREE ENTRY

#### ACCESS

Metro Iéna, Alma-Marceau  
RER C Pont de l'Alma  
Bus 32, 63, 72, 82, 92  
Vélib' Station 2 avenue Marceau - 4 rue de Longchamp

\*SPECIAL FREE ENTRY  
ON SATURDAY 28  
AND SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER