

# Fashion in the making: Photographs of 1920s and 1930s designs

Press release



Madeleine Vionnet. Evening dress. August 1938. Gelatin silver print © Les Arts Décoratifs

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FRANÇAISE**  
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PHOTO

**M**  
Le magazine du Monde

**VOGUE**

**MUSÉE DES ARTS  
DÉCORATIFS**

# Fashion in the making: Photographs of 1920s and 1930s designs

1. Jeanne Lanvin  
House —  
Evening Dress *Bacchante*  
1934  
Crepe and fibers  
© Les Arts Décoratifs /  
Christophe Dellière

2. Wladimir Rehbinder —  
Design Deposit for a Coat  
by Sonia Delaunay  
1924  
Gelatin silver print  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

The Musée des Arts Décoratifs is presenting, on the occasion of Paris Photo, *Fashion in Models: Photographs from the 1920s-1930s*. This exhibition highlights the *model deposit*, a key tool in the fight against counterfeiting in the world of pre-war fashion. Over 120 photographs from the collections are displayed alongside fashion silhouettes and accessories from renowned designers, including Jeanne Lanvin, Jean Patou, Marcel Rochas, Madeleine Vionnet, Jeanne Paquin, and Elsa Schiaparelli.



1.



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All of them used these images, a new genre, taken candidly or staged, to testify to the authenticity of a Parisian brand. Deposited at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1940, these unique images have now become a visual resource for major fashion houses that visit the institution in search of inspiration and models. The exhibition is curated by Sébastien Quéquet, who oversees the photographic collections at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.



3.

3. Anonymous —  
Design Deposit for an  
Ensemble by Jean Patou  
Circa 1920-1922  
Gelatin silver print  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

4. Henri Manuel —  
Model Dress from the  
House of Paul Poiret  
August 17, 1922  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

### Intellectual and Industrial Property

While the main vehicle for fashion is press photography, there exists another iconography, as little known as it is mysterious: model deposits. Model deposits are a component of industrial property, like patents and trademarks. Filed with the labor courts or the court registry until 1979, they allowed for the legal protection of a creation and the possibility of taking legal action in cases of counterfeiting. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, amid the development of Parisian haute couture and, simultaneously, the counterfeiting it suffered, these photographs acquired the status of evidence in the numerous lawsuits that made headlines, such as the one filed by the *geometer of fashion* Madeleine Vionnet in 1921.

Press articles, films, and documentaries also recount the growing phenomenon of counterfeiting, sometimes in a romanticized way, as in the film *Les Pirates de la mode* by William Dieterle and Busby Berkeley (titled *Fashions* of 1934 in English). These model deposits are inspired by the frontal and profile views introduced by criminologist Alphonse Bertillon for judicial photography in the 1880s, which later led to the development of fingerprint identification.

PRESS RELEASE



4.



5. Studio Jarach —  
Design Deposit for an  
Evening Dress by the  
House of Valrose  
Circa 1920-1930  
Gelatin silver print  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

6. Anonymous —  
Design Deposit for a Hat  
by Suzanne Talbot  
1928  
Gelatin silver print  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

### The Preservation and Renewal of a Visual Heritage

This exceptional photographic collection, assembled in the 1940s, offers a surprising visual panorama of Parisian fashion and haute couture between 1917 and 1934. It showcases the most prominent names, from the oldest house, Worth, to Chéruit, Hermès, Callot Soeurs, and Lanvin, as well as Edward Molyneux, Jean Patou, Jeanne Paquin, Lucien Lelong, and many others.



5.

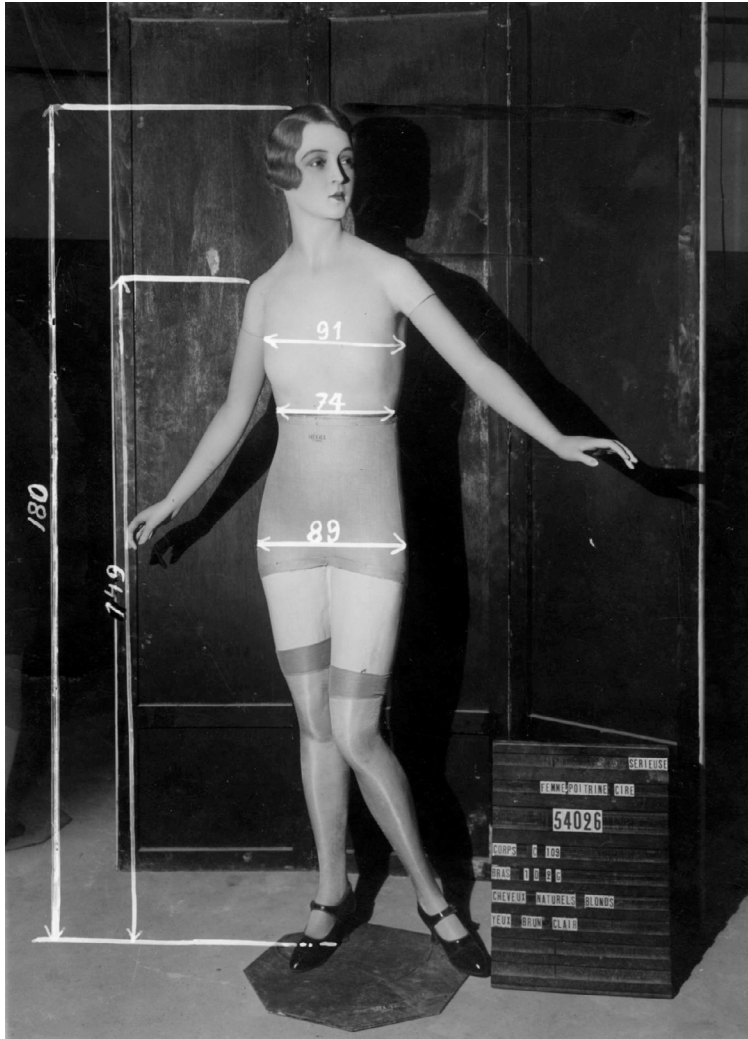


6.

### In Images, a Certain History of Fashion

Very quickly, photography became essential for capturing a model and a collection, opening up a real market for photographers and studios at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The numerous model deposits produced now have a photographic signature: Man Ray, Gilbert René, as well as Pierre Choumoff, Henri Manuel, Thérèse Bonney, Paul Méjat, and Henri Martinie are some of the most famous representatives. These photographs, taken in the intimacy of the ateliers, are often less valued than prints made for the press or exhibitions. Intended for legal and archival purposes, the deposits were not always signed by well-known photographers and did not feature famous actresses or models. However, these images remain a rich source for writing the history of fashion and fashion photography, and they also contribute to the analysis of the economy of the entire fashion industry.





7.

7. Anonymous —  
Design Deposit for the  
Wax Mannequin *Serious  
Woman* by Siegel  
Circa 1920-1930  
Gelatin silver print  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

8. Philippe and Gaston —  
Design Deposit for the  
*Romance Dress* (Detail)  
Circa 1920-1930  
Pencil, gouache  
on cardboard  
© Les Arts Décoratifs

### A New Type of Fashion Image: Model Deposits

The model deposit takes several photographic forms: an assembly of two or three photographs that becomes a diptych or triptych; a photographic system that combines multiple lenses; or a booth with an angular arrangement of mirrors, allowing for different views of the outfit: front, back, and profile, like those created by Madeleine Vionnet. These deposits contain several indications of their legal status: on the front, the model number in the collection, and on the back, the signature and stamp of the depositor. It is also possible to see the photographer's stamp. Finally, the image features an order number assigned to the model within the deposit.

### A Photograph Between Function and Creation

The staging of these images reveals the care given to the model deposit: some couturiers created small, minimalist spaces within their ateliers, while others designed more inventive setups, such as Madeleine Vionnet's graphic mirror effects. Some placed their models within true environments composed of furniture and works of art, like those created by Paul Poiret.

Through this photographic collection, never presented at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, a veil is lifted on a practice that marked the fashion world at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its purpose, to protect models from counterfeiting, remains highly relevant today, given the possibilities offered by the digital revolution and artificial intelligence.



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# Activities for the public

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## GUIDED TOUR FOR ADULTS (15 YEARS AND OLDER)

### “Fashion as a Model”

The presentation of photographs intended to legally protect fashion models leads visitors to discover a lesser-known aspect of the role played by photography in the history of fashion. It is also an opportunity to admire the models and photographs of major names in 1920s-1930s fashion.

## CONFERENCE

### Fashion Designers: “Pioneers” of Intellectual Property?

Counterfeiting in fashion is not a recent phenomenon. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrialists and major fashion houses have been trying to combat “fashion pirates.” One of their main tools is the use of intellectual property law, including designs and models, copyright, and trademarks. These rights have influenced and supported the transformations in the role of the fashion designer—sometimes an artist, sometimes an industrialist, sometimes a financial player. Pioneers in the fight against counterfeiting, Poiret, Paquin, and Vionnet—emblematic figures—tried to curb the phenomenon of copying. But how effective were their efforts? What remains of their battles today in the context of a fashion industry where production and consumption have accelerated, as seen in “fast fashion”?

→ Speaker

Géraldine Blanche, an intellectual property lawyer, is currently a doctoral candidate at the Law School of Sciences Po. Her research focuses on intellectual property strategies in the fashion industry. Driven by her desire to make legal knowledge more accessible to creatives, she teaches and trains emerging talents at fashion schools and advises innovative players in the industry.

*Thursday, November 14  
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM*

# Useful informations

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## — Presse contacts

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+ 33 (0) 1 44 55 58 78  
presse@madparis.fr

## — Curator

Sébastien Quéquet,  
Conservator in Charge  
of the Photographic Collections  
of the Graphic Arts Department

## #ModeEnModeles

## — Les Arts Décoratifs

**The not-for-profit organization  
Les Arts Décoratifs brings together  
the Musée des Arts Décoratifs,  
the Musée Nissim de Camondo,  
the Camondo School, the Ateliers  
du Carrousel, and the Library.**

Johannes Huth, President  
Sylvie Corréard, Chief executive  
officer  
Bénédicte Gady, Acting museum  
director

## — Musée des Arts Décoratifs

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 50  
Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides,  
Tuileries

### Opening hours

→ Tuesday to Friday, 11 am – 6 pm  
→ Open late in temporary exhibition  
on Thursdays until 9 pm

### Admission

→ General admission: € 15  
→ Concession: € 10  
→ Free for under 26

## — Musée Nissim de Camondo

63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 53 89 06 40

### Opening hours

Closed from August 4, 2024  
to early 2026

## — Library

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 36  
Open Monday to Friday 10 am – 6 pm

## — Publications and images

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 68

## — Visitor engagement

### Activities for individuals

Reservation via the online ticketing

### Activities for groups

reservation@madparis.fr  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66

### Conferences, round tables and colloquiums

Reservation via the online ticketing  
conference@madparis.fr  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 26

## — École Camondo

266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 43 35 44 28

## — Ateliers du Carrousel

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris  
63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 02

## — Bookshop & Gift Store

105 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 42 60 64 94  
Open 11 am – 18:30 pm  
Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm  
Closed Monday

## — Loulou Restaurant

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
or access via the Carrousel gardens  
Open daily 12 pm – 2:30 pm  
and 7 pm – 11 pm  
+33 (0) 1 42 60 41 96

## — Le Camondo Restaurant

61 bis rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
Open Tuesday to Saturday from  
noon to midnight and Sunday during  
the day  
+33 (0) 1 45 63 40 40

## — Internet and social media

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