

# Iris van Herpen

## Sculpting the Senses

—  
Press kit



# MUSEUM

MUSÉE DES ARTS  
DÉCORATIFS

Solve Sundsbø for Iris van Herpen. *Hypersonic Speed Top*. *Capriote Collection*. 2018. Iris van Herpen private collection

29 Nov 2023  
— 28 April 2024

  
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*Liberté  
Égalité  
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MANNEQUINS

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BeauxArts  
Magazine



madame  
TIZARD

PARIS  
PREMIÈRE

# Summary

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# Press release



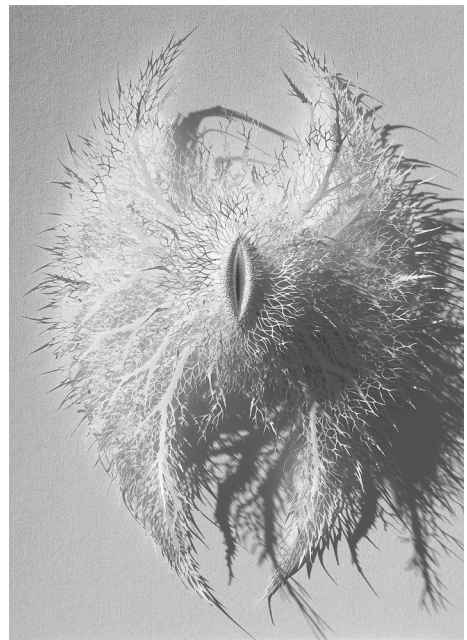
1. Carla van de Puttelaar  
for Iris van Herpen —  
Various collections  
2020  
Iris van Herpen  
private collection

2. Rogan Brown —  
*Fallen Angel Wings*  
2014  
© Rogan Brown

**Held at the Musée des Arts décoratifs, from 29 November 2023 to 28 April 2024, the exhibition *Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses* pays tribute to one of the most forward-thinking fashion designers. A pioneer in the use of new technologies in her discipline, Iris van Herpen transgresses conventional clothing norms, while embracing both traditional Couture craftsmanship and innovative techniques.**



1.



2.

Ranging from micro to macro, the exhibition questions the place of the body in space, its relationship to clothing and its environment, and its future in a rapidly changing world. A selection of over one hundred haute couture pieces made by Iris van Herpen dialogue with works of contemporary art, by artists like Philip Beesley, the Collectif Mé, Wim Delvoye, Kate MccGwire, Damien Jalet, Kohei Nawa, Casey Curran, Rogan Borwn, Jacques Rougerie and design pieces by Neri Oxman, Ren Ri, Ferruccio Laviani, and Tomáš Libertíny, in addition to items from the spheres of the natural sciences, such as skeletons and fossils, thereby instilling a unique resonance with historical pieces. The exhibition will be presented in the Christine & Stephen A. Schwarzman Galleries, and curated by Cloé Pitiot and assistant curator Louise Curtis, with the scenography entrusted to the Studio Nathalie Crinière.





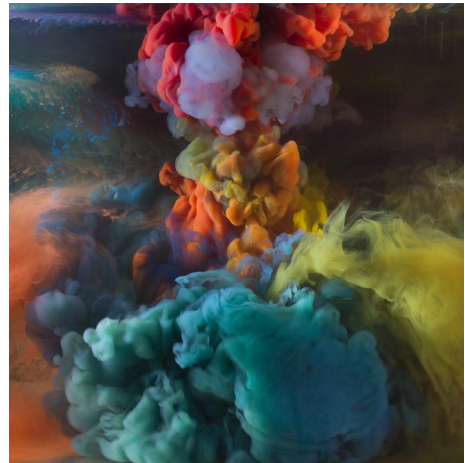
3.

3. Warren du Preez  
& Nick Thornton Jones  
for Iris van Herpen —  
*Cosmica Dress*,  
in collaboration with Kim  
Keever (print)  
*Shift Souls* Collection  
2019  
Iris van Herpen  
private collection

4. Kim Keever —  
*Abstract 46682*  
2019  
© Kim Keever

Born in 1984, Iris van Herpen grew up in the village of Wamel (Netherlands) in harmony with nature and the living world, which are, along with the classical dance she practiced intensively from an early age, the founding elements of her relationship to the body and clothing. After a formative period with Alexander McQueen and Claudy Jongstra, she founded the Maison Iris van Herpen in Amsterdam in 2007, combining the subtleties of craftsmanship with the pioneering spirit of innovation, decompartmentalising and opening up her practice to a host of other disciplines, resulting in sensorial design that capture the intricacy and diversity of a natural world.

Four years later, she joined the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* in Paris. The year 2010 marked a turning point in her career: she presented her first 3D-printed dress from the *Crystallization* Collection, currently conserved by the *Musée des Arts décoratifs*. In the manner of the iconic piece made in collaboration with Daniel Widrig and the *Materialise* company, Iris van Herpen contemplates fashion as an interdisciplinary language and a dynamic entity, the result of the cross-pollination of various fields: art, chemistry, dance, physics, architecture, biology, design, and technology. By collaborating with creatives and thinkers of all stripes, she seeks to challenge our notions of *Haute-Couture*.



4.

Conscious of the issues of her time, for the past number of years, she has privileged eco-responsible manufacturing methods, as evidenced by certain creations made from recycled plastic or 3D printed cocoa beans. In 2012, the Groninger Museum devoted a first major exhibition to her work. Today, Iris van Herpen is internationally recognized as one of the most remarkable and surprising fashion designers of her generation.

Iris van Herpen's commitment to slow fashion and thoughtfully allow her multi-disciplinary to transcend boundaries, inspiring a reimagining of our relationship with fashion and extending the realm of imagination.

Celebrating her unique approach, this retrospective, organized around nine themes, identifies the essence of her work, merging fashion, contemporary art, design, and science. The theme of water and the origins of life, omnipresent in the designer's work, opens the exhibition. Her latest collection, entitled *Carte Blanche*, showcased in this space, dialogues with David Spriggs' work *Origins*, literally inviting the visitor to immerse themselves in the designer's aquatic universe. Water is also touched on in terms of the scale of the immensity of the ocean with the wave realized by the Collectif Mé. A special space reveals the natural environments invisible to the naked eye already unveiled in the 19th century in the illustrations of Ernst Haeckel or in the remarkable glass models by Léopold and Rudolf Blaschka. Works by Ren Ri and Tomáš Libertíny, made by bees, contrast with the fragility Rogan Brown's paper works.

5. Wim Delvoye —  
*Nautilus*  
2017  
© Adagp, Paris

6. Luigi and Iango  
for Iris van Herpen —  
*Skeleton Dress*,  
in collaboration  
with Isaie Bloch  
*Capriole* Collection  
2020  
Iris van Herpen  
private collection



5.



6.

The theme of the skeleton is inaugurated by the *Skeleton* dress echoing the hybrid skeleton of a work by Japanese artist Heishihiro Ishino. The place of the body is also evoked at the heart of organic and architectural networks, represented by means of a dress, a metaphor for a Gothic cathedral, but also by Ferruccio Laviani's *Gothic cabinet*, and a documentary by Yann Arthus-Bertrand and Michael Pitiot entitled *Terra*, committed to the defence of life and the interconnections between ecosystems. Next, visitors are invited to leave the physical dimension of their body to explore the sensory world and through photographs by Tim Walker, a sculpture by Matthew Harrison. Finally, the shadows of mythology around the theme of the medusa created by Phillip Beesley enter into a dialogue with works by Kate MccGwire, EcoLogicStudio and a piece of Samurai armour. In the next section dedicated to new nature, the installation *Living Shadows* by Beesley comes to life as a derivative of physical dress and infiltrate its surroundings. An installation by Casey Curran offers a reflection on the place and the physical and spiritual future of human beings.



7.

7. David Uzochukwu  
for Iris van Herpen —  
*Hydrozoa Dress*  
*Sensory Seas* Collection  
2020  
Iris van Herpen  
private collection

The exhibition ends with a presentation of Iris van Herpen's works as if projected in the immensity of the cosmos. Her dresses dance across the sky, with bodies floating through space and time. The photographic works of artist Kim Keever, as well as images of nebulae encourage visitors to experience the world in a more holistic fashion.

8. David Uzochukwu  
for Iris van Herpen —  
*Sensory Seas Dress*  
& *Nautiloid Dress*  
*Sensory Seas* Collection  
2020  
Iris van Herpen  
private collection

Three spaces bring the exhibition to a close: an evocation of Iris van Herpen's studio, in which visitors are immersed into the atelier process through hundreds of material samples, a cabinet of curiosities presenting her accessories (shoes, masks, and hairstyling items), alongside elements from the natural sciences and videos, and a room celebrating the living and moving body through videos of the designer's catwalk shows.



8.

The exhibition is accompanied by a sound composition created by Salvador Breed, which challenges the senses and further immerses the visitor in this journey around the body and the themes close to the designer.

Much more than an exhibition devoted to Haute Couture, *Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses* takes visitors on an immersive journey through this singular and hybrid universe, punctuated by the designer's research and experiments.



# About the exhibition catalogue



9. *Iris van Herpen.*  
*Sculpting the Senses*  
Catalogue —  
330 x 250 mm  
256 pages  
ISBN 9789401496063  
November 2023  
€65  
Éditions Lannoo

*Sculpting the Senses* presents an overview of Iris van Herpen's work spanning the past 16 years. It not only showcases her most iconic designs but also delves deeper into her visionary approach to fashion. Through the lens of 100 dresses, the book reveals how the designer continually pushes the boundaries of haute couture. *Sculpting the Senses* invites you to immerse yourself in van Herpen's captivating sensory universe, where fashion, contemporary art, design and science converge. Organized around nine thematic chapters, the book encapsulates the very essence of van Herpen's artistic journey.

Iris van Herpen founded her fashion house in 2007. Known for her blend of technology and traditional craftsmanship and for her vision of fashion as an interdisciplinary language and dynamic entity, she now belongs to the Fédération de la Haute Couture. Her collaborations are also distinctive, including with sculptor Anthony Howe, architect Philip Beesley and artist Casey Curran.

Cloé Pitiot is curator of the exhibition *Sculpting the Senses* at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, to which she is affiliated, and Louise Curtis is assistant curator of the same expo. Ariane Koek founded the first "arts" program within CERN and is an independent producer, writer, speaker, curator known for her multi-disciplinary approach.



9.

# Excerpts from the catalogue

10. Iris van Herpen —  
In collaboration  
with Daniel Widrig  
and Materialise  
*Crystallization* top and  
skirt, “Crystallization”  
collection 2010  
3D-printed polyamide  
(Selective Laser  
Sintering), eco-leather,  
nylon  
© Les Arts Décoratifs /  
Christophe Dellière

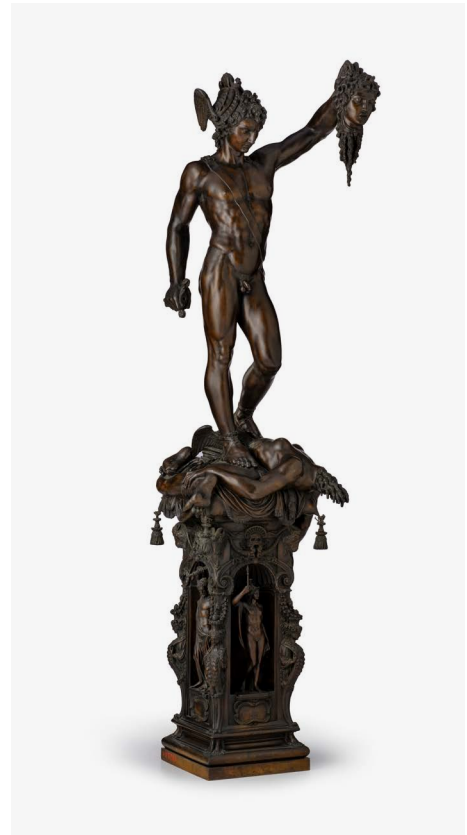
11. Papi (foundry),  
Italy —  
*Perseus showing  
Medusa's head*  
Florence,  
late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
After the original work  
by Benvenuto Cellini,  
1545, Italy  
Bronze with brown patina  
© Les Arts Décoratifs /  
Christophe Dellière

## Metamorphoses of the body Cloé Pitiot

Iris van Herpen [...] is a designer with a mind as prolific as it is rigorous. She holds a very special place in the history of fashion. The range of her research and experimentation aims to uncover the mysteries of the human body. Dynamic tension, fluidity, delicacy and complexity, as well as poetry and philosophy: these are the main elements of the dialogues she establishes between body and clothing, which allow her to convey a new, rich, enthusiastic perspective on the world to come. A world where body, mind and soul engage in invisible, yet increasingly intense, communication.



10.



11.

Since 2007, Iris van Herpen's creations have been disrupting the codes of fashion and opening doors to universes seemingly unrelated to her discipline. Her insatiable curiosity leads her to explore distant domains, drawing inspiration from contemporary art, architecture, the life sciences, art history, alchemy and mysticism alike. [...] She expertly wields both traditional craftsmanship and cutting-edge technologies. [...] Her encounters and collaborations with creators, past and present, constitute forays into uncharted territories, constant self-examination and unparalleled perspectives, intended to disrupt the established order and the foundations of fashion. [...] The natural world, as well as classical and contemporary dance, which she practised intensively from a young age, are foundational elements of her relationship with the body and with clothing. [...]





12.

12. Iris van Herpen —  
*Arachne* bustier,  
 “Meta Morphism”  
 collection  
 2022  
 Polyester silk, mylar,  
 tulle, Swarovski crystals,  
 embroidery thread,  
 stainless steel  
 Iris van Herpen  
 Collection  
 © Dominique Maitre

13. Ferruccio Laviani —  
*Gothik-A Cabinet*  
 2022  
 Oak, glass  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Christophe Dellière

She is fascinated by the water, which is visible everywhere from her studio and which she crosses every morning to reach her workplace. From this harbour, she draws an infinite universe of intuitions. As Gaston Bachelard, ‘[...] Water is also a type of destiny, not just the vain destiny of fleeting images, the vain destiny of a dream that does not end, but an essential destiny that constantly transforms the substance of the being.’ And it is possible that this close relationship with water, its multiple states and its ability to metamorphose, allows Iris van Herpen to transpose the philosophy of this element into her creations. From the tiny raindrop fallen from the troposphere to the vastness of the ocean, she amplifies the play of scales and takes constant leaps between the infinitely small and the infinitely large, between the past and the present, between today and tomorrow, between a world that is suffering and another world that is still to come. She creates for physical, mental, emotional, ethereal bodies, seeking to trigger a dialogue between the body and the senses – and all through clothing. Her dresses are an invitation to enter a society in full transformation, to experience sensory and extrasensory experiences.



13.

As a multi-talented creator, she allows her hands and her machines to bring forth much more than just dresses. Philosophically, poetically and with deep commitment, she is questioning a modern world caught up in paradoxes, suffocated by climate and societal crises. Season after season, her sensitive, enlightened collaborations with architects, contemporary artists and designers address specific themes: water, air, weightlessness, the skeleton, crystallization, metamorphosis, hybridization, hypnosis, the soul, synaesthesia, lucid dreaming, rebirth... By energetically pushing the boundaries of classic and traditional ways of thinking and seeing, she examines the imagination’s potential to transform the perception of the world, a world she loves to enchant anew.

## Under the skin

14. Iris van Herpen —  
*Symbiotic* dress  
“Shift Souls” collection  
2019  
Silk organza, crepe, PetG  
Iris van Herpen  
Collection  
© Dominique Maitre

15. Iris van Herpen —  
In collaboration with  
Perry Hall  
*Fractal Flows* dress  
“Sensory Seas” collection  
2020  
Glass organza, Komon  
Kobo, tulle  
Iris van Herpen  
Collection  
© Dominique Maitre



14.

In our increasingly connected world, Iris van Herpen has the knowledge and the knack to surround herself with the most inventive and innovative creators of our time, to exchange ideas and skills. Her strength lies in the power and originality of her collaborations: she knows how to both transmit and receive, and how to create unique works from these intellectual and sensory exchanges. In her projects with such architects as Philip Beesley, Isaïe Bloch and Neri Oxman, she opens up the dimension of the body to the dimensions of space. Her observation of the work of Zaha Hadid guides her in the fusion she sparks between organic design and futurism, between sculpture and architecture. She draws inspiration from spaces created by Santiago Calatrava, to extract from them concepts of lightness and weightlessness.



15.

Like an architect, she too designs habitats for moving bodies, bodies projected with both density and lightness onto a planet in perpetual transformation. This is reflected in the compositions of the looks she creates, as well as in her runway shows, within spaces that are open to movements of the body and beats of the soul.

The facades of contemporary buildings, veritable architectural skins, are now redefining the way we live in them, thanks to intelligent building materials from both the natural world and new technologies. Now, Iris van Herpen's dresses are also reinventing modes of inhabiting a garment. Her textiles have become innovative, hybrid materials, the results of 3D printing, laser cutting and 'connected textiles'. By generating these totally new materials in fashion and putting such revolutionary textures to use, Iris van Herpen creates micro-architectures, just as builders of edifices do. Unlike traditional architectural structures, however, hers are in constant motion. Her dresses come to life with the slightest movement of the body, creating a ballet of textures and materials, friction and shifts, colours and transparency. Motions are followed by countermotions: the second skin in which she covers our first skin triggers micro-dances that create spaces for breathing, meditation and reflection. The intimate dialogues between the private body and the public body that Iris van Herpen's creations really are explore the infinite, yet razor-thin space between body and garment, the invisible frontier on the surface of the skin where the senses flourish.





16.

16. Iris van Herpen —  
*Epicycle* dress  
 “Hypnosis” collection  
 2019  
 Glass organza, crepe,  
 PetG, mylar  
 Iris van Herpen  
 Collection  
 © Dominique Maitre

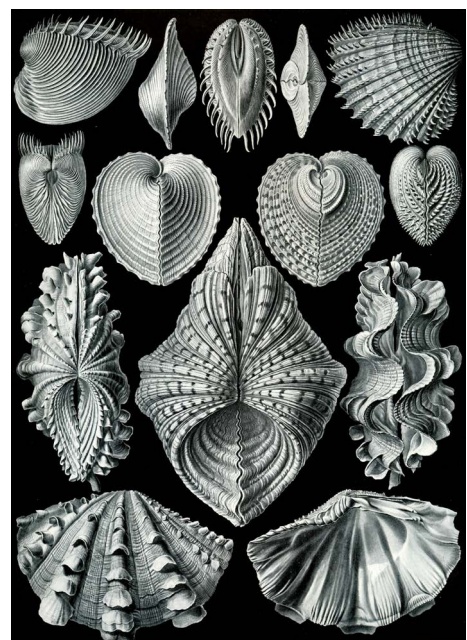
17. Ernst Haeckel —  
*Kunstformen der Natur*  
 1899-1904  
 Color lithograph  
 © Bibliothèque nationale  
 de France, Paris

In 2010, these fertile discussions about architecture were cross-pollinations that resulted in Iris van Herpen becoming the first to showcase a 3D-printed runway look. Her collaborations with artists such as David Altmejd led her to reflect on the body as fiction. Clad in both concept and clothing, bodies dressed in Van Herpen’s creations established close connections with the past, evoking mythological reminiscences and fantastical narratives. In collaboration with another artist, Anthony Howe, she has propelled human beings into an imaginary future, where the garment itself is moving, a kinetic garment in dialogue with complex human anatomy, with beauty and with the diversity of its environment.

For a joint art project with Kim Keever, Iris van Herpen has made human bodies float weightlessly, cradled by the colours of the cosmos, adorned with the vibrant hues of nebulae. Bodies lose their bearings and go floating off into infinity. Unhindered by frontiers or limits, her garments stretch, become diaphanous and silky, and unfold in dazzling chromatic ranges. Iris van Herpen’s universe become a poetic explosion of vibrant pigments. In contrast, with sculptor Rogan Brown, she returned to the study of the infinitely small, viruses or bacteria, transposing them to the human scale on a body covered with laser- or scalpel-cut lace, an interpretation of the world of invisible living creatures, a dreamlike life, shaped like the multiple forms of plankton blooms, explosions of the forms of life thriving in aquatic environments.

She pushes new boundaries, setting up collaborations with high-level athletes who allow her to test the limits of bodies and of materials. With skydiving world champion Domitille Kiger, she braves the sky; with Julie Gautier, a free-diving champion, she braves the depths of water and the resulting pressure. Van Herpen’s decision to combine fashion and extreme sports in two ‘performance shows’, *Earthrise* in 2021 and *Carte Blanche* in 2023, has resulted in a combination of opposites that transgresses all expectations, and is a continuation of her research into a body [...] competing with the elements, a body reborn.

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17.





18.

18. Iris van Herpen —  
En collaboration avec  
Philip Beesley  
Robe et cape *Hypnosis*,  
collection «Hypnosis»  
2019  
Satin duchesse, mylar,  
tulle  
Collection  
Iris van Herpen  
© Dominique Maitre

### In a body-to-body movement

The purpose of each creation by Iris van Herpen, who selected clothing as her mode of transmission, seems to be to translate the invisible, the imperceptible, the impenetrable. Her deep sensitivity leads her, on the one hand, to holistically examine the world around her, from the smallest scale of living to the largest, and on the other hand to interpret it by dressing not just the body but also the soul. Her looks allow us to see and perceive her current concerns. A body dressed in a garment by Van Herpen becomes an object of reflection, an inquiry into humanity. It is no longer just a physical body: it is a representation of the present time, an open door to the past and the future.

19. Iris van Herpen —  
Robe *Hydromedusa*,  
collection «Sensory Seas»  
2020  
Organza, Komon Koubou,  
mylar, tulle  
Collection  
Iris van Herpen  
© Dominique Maitre



19.

Fashion, she says, should not be a static, fixed discipline. It is intended to be a metamorphic process. As a practitioner of classical and contemporary dance, Iris van Herpen has derived rigour and improvisation from these performing arts, two concepts she transposes into every step of her creative process. Thanks to her years of dance practice, she has acquired an ability to transform the body, an understanding of its fluidity through movement. She has consistently retained this fluid connection to the moving body, with its propensity to reveal what seems to be the very nature of being. She is close to avant-garde choreographers, including Damien Jalet, and does not hesitate to draw, as he does, from other forms of dance, such as Butoh.

# Biography

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## Iris van Herpen

Since its establishment in 2007 and its prestigious membership in the Fédération de la Haute Couture, the Maison of Iris van Herpen has consistently combined innovative techniques with traditional Couture craftsmanship, resulting in sensorial designs that beautifully capture the intricacy and diversity of the natural world.

## The house of Iris van Herpen

At the maison of Iris van Herpen, Haute Couture is a transformative force that transcends boundaries and unites multi-disciplinary technologies with intricate artisanal craftsmanship. The brand's visionary creations merge pioneering techniques and luxurious materials, often evoking a sense of avant-garde wonder. Whether shaping a dress through electromagnetic weaving or sculpting one from 3D hand-cast transparent leather, the maison challenges traditional notions of the handmade to create ethereal garments that are radically future-facing and exquisitely feminine.

The maison's ambition to reinvent the métier as the engine of innovation, pushing forward sustainability as second nature and materiality is mirrored in its interdisciplinary approach to art and fashion. Each collection is a quest to venture beyond today's definition of a garment, exploring new forms of expression for a more meaningful, diverse and conscious fashion for the future.

Celebrating female empowerment, the maison values a collaborative design process with inspirational women such as the brand's cherished global clientele and extraordinary muses like Cate Blanchett, Beyoncé, Scarlett Johansson, Lady Gaga, Fan Bingbing and Naomi Campbell. Through symbiotic collaborations with artists from all stripes such as the choreographer Damien Jalet, the performative artist Björk, the kinetic artist Anthony Howe, the trans-disciplinary architect Philip Beesley or the computational artist Neri Oxman the brand challenges the future of fashion by rethinking previously unimaginable ways of Haute Couture.

# Wall panels



20. Iris van Herpen —  
*Suminagashi* dress  
“Hypnosis” collection  
2019  
Polyurethane, mylar, tulle  
Iris van Herpen  
Collection  
© Dominique Maitre

21. Iris van Herpen —  
In collaboration  
with Kim Keever  
*Cosmica* minidress  
“Shift Souls” collection  
2019  
Silk organza, cotton  
Iris van Herpen  
Collection  
© Dominique Maitre



20.

## Water and dreams

Liquid, frozen, or as gas, water is regularly present in Iris van Herpen’s work, even becoming the principal focus of her 2010 “Crystallization” collection. Major component of the human body, water splashes out of her dresses to transcend the invisible flux that constitutes our very essence. On every level—from drop of rain to tsunami, as a poetical allegory or gate to the shadow world, representing both harmony and chaos, in the form of foam, crystallized liquid or waves, water inspires the designer’s fertile creativity. Bubbles suspended in space, transparent fields of mist, turquoise or deep blue waves, Iris van Herpen’s aquatic pieces reveal the mystery and metaphorical power of water, manifested across a multitude of fabrics, materials, and techniques from blown glass to thermoformed Plexiglas, from laser cutting to Suminagashi, a Japanese technique of marbled ink drawings.

## Sensory sea life

Under the surface of the oceans, there is a world invisible to the naked eye, nonetheless fundamental to life on Earth. Iris van Herpen’s 2020 collection, “Sensory Seas”, draws inspiration from this ecosystem and its planktonic bestiary, and on a broader scale, from sea animals, that shape the designs and textures of her dresses. Single-cell organisms and the hydrozoa family like jellyfish, are the designer’s most constant form of inspiration. They are her fundamental reference point as she seeks to put them into light in her works. Just as 19<sup>th</sup> century master glassmakers Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka revealed this elusive world with their astonishing pedagogical models, Iris van Herpen takes up the same subjects and transposes them, between craftsmanship and new technologies, into the field of Haute Couture.



21.



22. Janaina  
Mello Landini —  
*Ciclotrama 310*  
(from the *Superstrato*  
series)  
2023

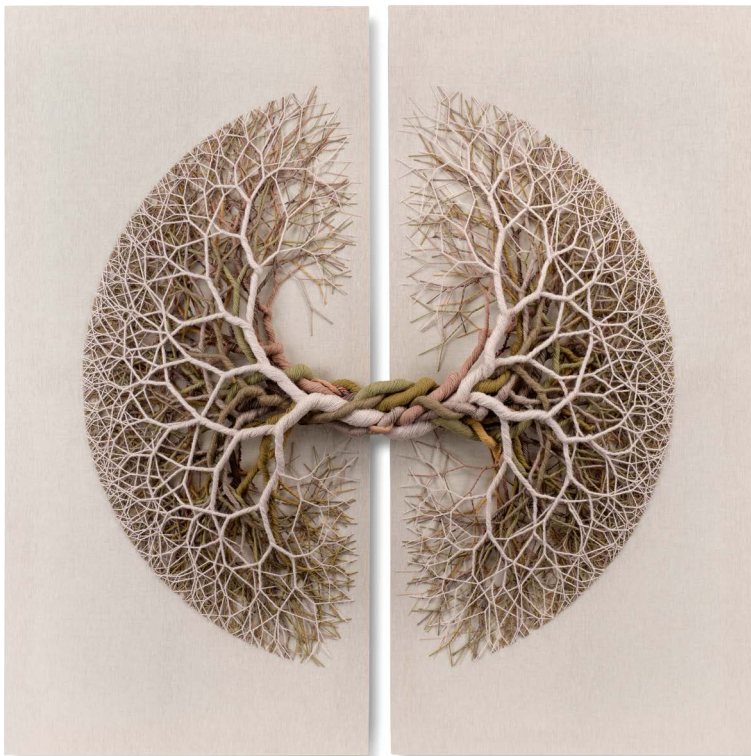
Various threads (sisal,  
cotton) on linen canvas  
© Les Arts Décoratifs /  
Christophe Dellière

23. Iris van Herpen —  
*Frozen Falls* dress and  
headdress  
“Syntopia” collection  
2018

Komon Kobo, organza,  
mylar, tulle  
Iris van Herpen collection  
© Dominique Maitre

### Forces behind the forms

Iris van Herpen’s fascination for shapes found in nature has led her to reflect on morphogenesis and the creative forces at the origin of life. The microscopically small has asserted itself as revelatory of the beauty of invisible bestiaries and pointed her towards a new aesthetic grammar and materials that transcend the field of fashion. In that perspective, she manifests a particular interest in biologist Ernst Haeckel, whose illustrated plates shed light on microscopic beings, in the 19th century. Mixing art and science, the designer explores terrestrial and marine worlds to unearth new structures and textures. Her preoccupation with the preservation of the environment has led her to re-examine how we see the world, notably in her “Earthrise” collection, created with artist Rogan Brown, in which she chooses to magnify recycled plastic.



22.



23.

### Skeletal embodiment

Cabinets of curiosities and anatomical museums are fertile ground for Iris van Herpen. Like Michelangelo and Jean-Antoine Houdon, who also studied anatomical representations of the human being, the designer analyses the skeleton, muscles, fascias, and the systems of the body to create figures that wear like a second skin. Her dresses are hybrid structures, becoming a projection of our intrinsic constitution, creating the fiction of a new body. Exploring the frontier between living and inert, Iris van Herpen gives new life to the silhouette. Her clothing, like a mutation of complex anatomical forms, is an extension of the body. She brings light and perspective to that which is barely perceptible through the skin’s transparency, only able to be revealed through technology. Her designs are an artistic MRI, a creative x-ray of the structure of living things.

### Growth systems

Thanks to her holistic approach, Iris van Herpen is interested in the existence of all structures, whether natural or artificial, organic or architectural. The human body is both unique and part of a whole, connected to, and by, its physicality, but also its spirit, soul, memory, and roots. From the singularities of the living world, Iris van Herpen extracts ecosystems, processes of growth, interconnections. Mushrooms, one of the reigning species of our planet, are part of the underworld, weaving connections with filaments of mycelium that seduce the designer both with their beauty and the intelligence of their generative system. An ode to nature, the "Roots of Rebirth" collection is an homage to this infinitesimally thin underground organic web. A celebration of flamboyant Gothic, her Cathedral Dress reinvents the codes of fashion.

### Synaesthesia

The body's materiality, anatomy, and sensory systems clearly resonate throughout Iris van Herpen's creations, but other dimensions of the human experience also fascinate and inspire her. The interest she takes in the brain, and more particularly in synesthesia and complex phenomena of modified states of consciousness, such as lucid dreaming and hypnosis, permit her to stretch the boundaries of fashion to something more than just a visual or tangible experience of a piece of clothing. Fascinated by neurological research, she seeks to trouble perception, to magnify the senses, to sculpt them along with the materials she chooses. How to dilute the frontiers of perception? How to stimulate the brain with all five senses working together to provoke a new emotional experience?

### Alchemic atelier

The Alchemic Atelier pays tribute to Iris van Herpen's career with a presentation of hundreds of spectacular samples, created in collaboration with numerous artists, architects, designers and scientists. Revealing the multiple processes that she used, these pieces result from a combination of new technologies and traditional craftsmanship.

### Cabinet of curiosities

Organized like a 21<sup>st</sup> Century cabinet of curiosities, this space reflects Iris van Herpen's multiple sources of inspiration. This eclectic selection reveals her love of discovery, her interest in disciplines both adjacent to and distant from fashion, and her fascination with our world's richness and diversity. An encyclopaedic representation of Iris van Herpen's career, this cabinet is a synthesis of her endless creativity, her holistic approach and her talent for generating connections between worlds.

### The mythology of fear

Iris van Herpen was born in the village of Wamel, near Den Bosch, town of Flemish painter Hieronymus Bosch. She grew up examining with intensity the artist's fantastical figures that mix alchemy, mysticism, and allegory. From her study of Bosch, she retains a certain taste for hybridization, an incessant questioning of human and animal nature, and an interest in fusing both into chimerical beings. In parallel, she explores the emotion of fear inside these imaginary worlds, through her discoveries made in the collections of the Embassy of the Free Mind, in Amsterdam, and in cabinets of curiosities encountered in her studies of Art History. Symbolist and Surrealist literature, have also led her to venture metaphor as a prism for expression, elevating her work above conventional dressing classifications. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Japanese mythology, she loves reinterpreting the mutations of our world.



24.

24. Ferruccio Laviani —  
*Good Vibrations Cabinet*  
 2013  
 Designed for Fratelli Boffi  
 Solid walnut, oak finish,  
 carved, chiselled and  
 digitally engraved  
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /  
 Christophe Dellière

25. Iris van Herpen —  
 In collaboration with  
 Philip Beesley  
*Galactic Glitch* dress  
 “Shift Souls” collection  
 2019  
 Komon Kobo, mylar  
 Iris van Herpen  
 Collection  
 © Dominique Maitre

### New nature

In many of her collections, Iris van Herpen’s life-line silhouettes celebrate a new and futuristic concept of nature. In her perception of an imaginary future, she is above all interested in the distinction between nature and artifice in a society caught up in its fascination with the growing presence of virtual reality. By questioning the presence of the body in a post-human world, the designer invites us to contemplate a society that is increasingly living “inside-out.” In her “Syntopia,” “Escapism,” and “Voltage” collections, she interrogates the link between technology and science. Fascinated by the world of tomorrow, Iris van Herpen melds disciplines, weaving them together, giving birth to a new definition of fashion in which the garment creates a metamorphosis, transforming the body into a hybrid creature – the incarnation of a futuristic world view.



25.

### Cosmic bloom

In her exploration of the cosmos, Iris van Herpen shows her talent for synthesis, combining the latest scientific discoveries with the history of art and science, blending the ancient maps of Andreas Cellarius with images from the James Webb telescope. The cosmos and its mysteries pique her imagination and her creativity. Like a metaphor of her holistic approach, the cosmos incarnates a space in which one can deploy oneself without limit, a symbol of absolute liberty. Colours float and come alive, offering new horizons for a body in levitation. For the designer, to understand the cosmos is to overturn the order of time and space and achieve elevation. The world becomes an all-encompassing entity, greater than the confines of planet Earth. It no longer develops from bottom up or top down, but in all of its dimensions simultaneously, as a multiverse, with no borders except those of the mind and the imagination, the soul and its cosmic journey.



# Scenography



## The NC Agency

The NC Agency's mission is to explore all the possibilities offered by staging exhibitions and museum visits. The agency stamps its distinctive style on a huge variety of projects, permanent and temporary, heritage and themebased, modest and spectacular. The agency works from a courtyard in the 11<sup>th</sup> district of Paris, where it produces outstanding layout designs thanks to an atmosphere focused on creativity and innovation. With an approach rooted in intuition and a thirst for knowledge, the NC Agency makes a unique contribution to an emerging discipline that combines the art of the ephemeral, expertise, heritage, and entertainment. A contribution based on the agency's quest to remain attentive to the needs of general public, while placing enchantment at the very heart of the art of transmission

## Nathalie Crinière

Nathalie Crinière is a graduate of the École Boulle and the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, where she studied interior architecture and industrial design respectively. After working in the USA then Barcelona, she returned to Paris, where she joined various agencies before setting up as a freelancer, then founding her own business.



Hans Boodt Mannequins is a window mannequin production studio set up in Rotterdam at the turn of the 2000s by its eponymous founder, a former visual merchandiser. Thanks to daring, even provocative, creative choices and a keen sense of staging, the label quickly shook up the industry's codes, spreading its reputation as a "character maker" (creator of charismatic characters rather than mannequins) to major international brands. With a growing affinity for selective labels, Hans Boodt Mannequins develops collections with more advanced finishes in terms of detail and innovation. Above all, it deploys bespoke design techniques using 3D modeling and printing.

## Exhibition scenography

The scenography of the Iris van Herpen exhibition finds its singularity in the echo it gives to the designer's work. Elements constructed for the presentation of the works slip into the spaces and infiltrate the museum like organic elements, dematerialized by the presence of mirrors, giving the scenography a vaporous, moving effect. Dresses and works of art find a natural setting in which to be magnified.

Between black and white, the rooms follow one another, transforming themselves as the exhibition unfolds. At the center of the exhibition, two rooms dedicated to Iris van Herpen's studio and her research into materials break with the curved vocabulary of the scenography. They present the designer's research and inspirations in a highly orthonormal fashion. Samples are displayed from floor to ceiling on the entire perimeter wall, as well as on a long table echoing laboratory tables. Visitors are plunged into the very heart of Iris van Herpen's experiments with materials. The stroll continues and finally ends in a spectacular room where the dresses suddenly defy the laws of gravity. Here, there is no top or bottom, no floor or ceiling, but a global space where the works and dresses complement each other, highlighting the designer's innovative power.

This know-how in cutting-edge creative production enabled Iris Van Herpen, with the complicity of Canadian architect-designer Philip Beesley, to imagine special models for her *Sculpting the Senses* exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Designed to the same exacting standards as a couture piece, these mannequins required months of research, the use of special resins and the exploration of unprecedented manufacturing techniques. Thanks to their transparency, their light yet solid appearance, mirrors the concept of the first rooms of the exhibition, entitled *Water and Dreams*.

# Public programs

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## FOR CHILDREN

### GUIDED FAMILY TOUR

**“Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses”**  
From the depths of the ocean floor to the cosmos, the tour takes children and adults on a voyage of discovery into the world of the fashion designer Iris van Herpen. It shows how she draws inspiration from the extraordinary richness of life's forms, as well as from art, craft and new technologies, to create sculptural and spectacular dresses.

### WORKSHOPS

#### “Mini merveilles”

Drops, skeletons, honeycombs – the shapes of nature are all sources of inspiration for the designer Iris van Herpen. By folding and superimposing, the shapes metamorphose under children's fingers to create a delicate paper sculpture.

*Available alternately on Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m. and during school vacation periods, from Tuesday to Friday at 10:30 a.m. and/or 2:30 p.m. / Audience: 4-6 and 7-10 years of age / Duration: 2hrs / Rate: €12*

#### “Explorations naturelles”

By observing nature's incredible repertoire of shapes, the youth create a research notebook in which they interpret them in folded, pleated, embossed or cut-out paper. Using these samples, each of them composes a dress for a 2D fashion silhouette.

*Available alternately on Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m. and during school vacation periods, from Tuesday to Friday at 10:30 a.m. and/or 2:30 p.m. / Audience: 11-14 years of age / Duration: 2hrs / Rate: €12*

### “L'atelier de la mode”

Following the footsteps of Iris van Herpen, this workshop, offered in 4 sessions of 2h30, invites you to experience the work of a fashion designer. From exploration to the creation of a paper mannequin, this workshop gives you the opportunity to exercise your creativity by experimenting with the properties and techniques of paper, a material both familiar and extraordinary.

## FOR ADULTS

### GUIDED TOUR

#### “Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses”

Through a journey where fashion, contemporary art, design and science intersect and merge, the tour reveals Iris van Herpen's collaborations and creative processes. From her sources of inspiration to her universes, from her research to her breathtaking collections, the fashion designer's entire approach is revealed.

# Useful Information

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## — Press contacts

Isabelle Mendoza  
Guillaume Del Rio  
+ 33 (0) 1 44 55 58 78  
presse@madparis.fr

## — Curators

Cloé Pitiot, Curator,  
modern and contemporary  
department

## Associate curator :

Louise Curtis, Assistant curator,  
modern and contemporary  
department

## #Expo\_IrisvanHerpen

## — 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  
Christine Macel, Director  
of Museums, Deputy chief  
executive officer

## — Musée des Arts décoratifs

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 50

Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides,  
Tuileries

### Hours

Permanent collections:

→ Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm

Temporary exhibitions:

→ Tuesday and Wednesday,  
11 am–6 pm

→ Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm

### Admission

→ General admission: €14

→ Concession: €10

→ Free for under 26

## — Musée Nissim de Camondo

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

### Hours

Open 10 am – 5:30 pm

Closed Monday and Tuesday

### Admission

→ General admission: €12

→ Concession: €9

→ Free for under 26

## — Library

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 36

Open Monday 1 pm – 6 pm  
and Tuesday 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

madparis.fr

facebook.com/madparis

twitter.com/madparisfr

instagram.com/madparis