



FASHION IN THE MAKING

PHOTOGRAPHS OF 1920S AND 1930S DESIGNS

FROM 6 NOVEMBER 2024 TO 26 JANUARY 2025

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

107 RUE DE RIVOLI – 75001 PARIS

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DÉCORATIFS



Anonymous
Design registration for a dress by Marcel Rochas, 1932
Gelatin silver print
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Welcome to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the exhibition 'Fashion in the making. Photographs of 1920s and 1930s designs'. Enjoy your visit!

Counterfeiting is not unique to consumer society; it has existed since Antiquity and continuously evolved along with technology. It is ubiquitous: in art, objects of leisure, hygienic products, medicine, even food. Highly common in the textile sector, it has been fought by designers since the dawn of haute couture. In the struggle against 'pillagers of elegance' or 'fashion poachers', as they have been dubbed by journalists and designers, design registration has proven to be the most effective tool to establish the originality of a garment in lawsuits. It consists of a photographic or drawn representation of the object to be protected, if not the object itself, sometimes accompanied by a technical description and a sample of the materials, placed in a box that is numbered, dated, and signed before being sealed and filed with a judicial body.

More than 70,000 photographs from design registrations were transferred to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs by the industrial tribunal of Paris in 1940, at the end of their period of protection. These images conjure up the practice of counterfeiting during the interwar period. The role of photography was at once essential and double-edged: while seeking to ensure protection from counterfeiting, it also enabled it by providing a means of spying and reproduction.

A documentary image destined for archives or courts, with economic and political aspects, design registration photography reveals facets of fashion that go beyond the stylistic evolution of clothing, plunging us into the world of fashion houses, couturiers, models, and designs.

FOR THE COMFORT AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ALL, FOLDING SEATS, WHEELCHAIRS, MAGNETIC INDUCTION LOOPS, BABY CARRIERS, AND CHANGING TABLES ARE AVAILABLE ON LEVEL -1 NEAR THE CLOAKROOMS.



Anonymous
Dress design n° 53 by Maggy Rouff, February 1932
Gelatin silver print
© Les Arts Décoratifs

FASHION AT THE COURTS

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented rise in counterfeiting in the fashion industry. The methods of copying original outfits were various: bribing fashion house staff to snatch sketches and samples, purchasing clothing items to reproduce on a large scale, or spying during fashion shows and press presentations. Figures within the industry turned to the courts to obtain justice. Two protectional regimes were at their disposal: first, copyright, established by the revolutionary laws of July 19 and 24, 1793 on literary and artistic property, reinforced in 1902; second, the protection of designs and models of manufacture, enshrined in the decree of March 18, 1806, establishing an industrial tribunal first in Lyon, later extended across France in 1825. The courts however were reluctant to recognize protection, deeming fashion ephemeral and without utility. Haute couture was weakened as a result and those within the industry had to fight constantly to win their cases.

INDICES OF FASHION

Design registrations can be seen as ‘indices’, imbued with moments, places, figures, and professions that contribute to an understanding of what the fashion world used to be like. For reasons of security, photographers often went to fashion showrooms themselves. Once there they had to work quickly. The decor, often improvised, evokes the interior and activity of the room. While the outfits are reproduced precisely, the bodies of the models are often blurred, captured in the movement of the shot. A series of shots for Maggy Rouff in 1932 suggests the way photo sessions would unfold: the models follow one another before the lens, without seeking to perform and without being singled out. Arms and hands appear at the edges of the images, giving an impression of fragmented bodies. If the very concept of the archive and administrative photography conjures notions of the masses and of dehumanization, design registrations reinforce the effect.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

The mirror, a symbol of truth in classical literature, is often used as a prop in design registrations as it allows the photographer to show the various facets of a single garment in a single image. Every couture house was equipped with mirrors for fittings: triptych mirrors from the Maison Brot, mirrors mounted in furniture, even mirrored booths. This is how Madeleine Vionnet’s photographer, from 1927, depicted models in a mirrored booth, delivering hypnotic compositions that are reminiscent of the aesthetics of surrealism and the New Vision. The model sits in majesty, but without glory, as the photographs remain locked away in albums and archive boxes awaiting potential trials. The model Sonia Colmer, who appeared in many of these design registrations, was Vionnet’s muse. She was also photographed by Man Ray, Hoyningen-Huene and Horst.

WHICH PHOTOGRAPHERS

FOR DESIGN REGISTRATIONS?

The vast majority of design registrations do not include the name of the photographer. The failure to claim authorship indicates the low regard in which this type of production was held by contemporaries, photographers and clients alike, who considered it commercial, utilitarian, and even, in the case of design registrations, invisible. However, some photographs bear stamps that give some clues: often it is a matter of portraitists, sometimes from more or less modest studios, with certain rare exceptions of major names recognized today, such as Laure Albin Guillot or Man Ray. The Chambre syndicale de la couture parisienne tried at least twice, in 1914 and then in 1945, to simplify the process of taking these photos by encouraging the hire of designated photographers to work for its members.

A DESIGN REGISTRATION FOR EVERYTHING

The Paris industrial tribunal was established in 1844 and took over from the court registries. The 'design and model', which protects the shape or appearance of a common object, became the preferred legal tool of protection in French industry. Several sectors of activity stood to benefit from this: metals, chemicals, various industries, and fabrics. Fashion professionals had the most difficulty in getting their rights recognized; for a long time, French courts refused to grant protection for designs and models to fashion items, which were considered 'frivolous' and 'without utility'. While mainly concerned with outfits for women, the fabric registry received items ranging from accessories, stage outfits, and aeronautical clothing, to toys, wax or plaster mannequins, and posters designs.

IN THE LAND OF THE MODELS

In his 1928 book *Au pays des mannequins*, Louis Roubaud evokes the daily life and stories of fitting models, who specialized in sample fittings, client presentations, and photo shoots for design registrations. Only their first names are mentioned, evidence that until the Second World War, models were often consigned to anonymity. Some, however, managed to attract enough attention to escape from the dressing room and onto fashion runways and into the press, such as Sonia Colmer for Vionnet or Ann-Emily Lacey for Rouff. Bella Ariel, a fitting model for Jeanne Lanvin as of 1934, also posed for Man Ray, D'Ora, and Lipnitzki. During the Occupation, she continued to walk in shows but in 1943, following a denunciation, she was arrested by the anti-Jewish police and murdered in the Auschwitz extermination camp.

Anonymous
Design registration for a theatre costume
by an unidentified fashion house, circa 1920-1930
Gelatin silver print
© Les Arts Décoratifs

CONCLUSION

The French textile industry did not emerge untouched from the Second World War, in a context of continued growth for counterfeiting and foreign competition. March 1952 saw the passing of the law 'suppressing the counterfeiting of creations of the industries of seasonal clothing and finery.' This strengthened sanctions and attempted to ease the complex and costly procedures that had rendered the laws ineffective up to that point. The intellectual property code established in 1992 placed literary and artistic property under the same regulations as industrial property, thus encompassing copyright, design registration, and trademark law. However, counterfeiting persists and has even intensified with globalization as of the 1990s, followed by fast fashion and online commerce as of the 2000s.

Today, technical drawings and photographs remain tools in the ongoing struggle against counterfeiting, which affects products as well as logos and packaging. New strategies of protection are being established with the development of artificial intelligence. From this perspective, it has been through machines and the collection of considerable masses of visual data that public authorities and creators alike have sought to put an end to counterfeiting, ever since the nineteenth century. A technological utopia?



PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

The photography collection at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which features over 350,000 phototypes, brings together fashion, architecture, landscape and interiors photographs, as well as advertising images, from the 1840s to the most recent creations.

From documentary images to artistic images, the collections perfectly illustrate the different uses of photography. Nevertheless, they stand out for the evidence they provide on the uses of imagery specific to the decorative arts and publishing professions, in particular for the purposes of education, illustration or documentation.

It includes proofs from major names such as Henri Le Secq, Eugène Atget, Laure Albin Guillot, Man Ray, Robert Doisneau, Bettina Rheims and David Seidner.

As these works are sensitive to light, they are presented on an ad-hoc basis along the visitor route and as part of exhibitions.

YOUR TICKET GIVES YOU ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE MUSEUM, SO MAKE THE MOST OF IT AND CONTINUE YOUR VISIT WITH A TOUR OF THE COLLECTIONS BY HEADING UP TO THE 3RD FLOOR.



Eugène Atget (1857-1927)
Staircase, 25 rue des Blancs-Manteaux in Paris,
1890-1926
Albumen print
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellièvre



Raimund von Stillfried (1839-1911)
Samurai, circa 1882
Albumen print enhanced with colours
Donated by Hugues Krafft, 1914
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

INDIVIDUALS

Guided tour

Offered on the following dates:

Saturday 23 November from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM ; Saturday 7 December from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM ; Saturday 4 January from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM ; Saturday 18 January from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Lecture

Thursday 14 November 2024 from 6:30 PM to 8 PM (in French only)

« Les couturiers, « pionniers » de la propriété intellectuelle ? ». By Géraldine Blanche, lawyer in intellectual property law, doctoral student at the Sciences Po Law School.

GROUPS

Guided tour - in French or in English - are available for adults as well as youths, according to profile (student groups, recreation centers, higher education, associations, companies), at the day and time of their choice.

To book a guided tour: reservation@madparis.fr / +33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66.

You are looking for a time slot for your group tour (with no guided tour): book a self-guided group ticket at <https://billetterie.madparis.fr>

Scan this code to find all the information about the exhibition and to book activities:



CURATOR

Sébastien Quéquet

Assisted by Özgül Demir

GRAPHISME

CL DESIGN

GRAPHIC DESIGN OF THE BOOKLET

Catherine Barluet

#ModeenModeles

EXHIBITION ALBUM

The exhibition album is available from the museum bookshop (48 pages, €12).

COVER : *Robe du Soir*, Madeleine Vionnet, août 1938
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière
Graphic Design : Catherine Barluet

Les Arts Décoratifs is a non-profit association that brings together the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Camondo School, the Ateliers du Carrousel and the library.

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

107 rue de Rivoli – 75001 Paris

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Tickets on madparis.fr

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VOGUE

Discover the collections and exhibitions of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs with our digital guide, available on the free Bloomberg Connects app

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