



**BRAVE NEW WORLD**

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1911 - 1919

FASHION  
— & —  
FREEDOM

.....



APRIL 7 — MAY 7, 2011



Leonard Pearlstein Gallery

Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design, Drexel University  
33rd & Market Streets • [www.drexel.edu/westphal](http://www.drexel.edu/westphal)



**Curator:** Clare Sauro

**Graphic Designer:** Jody Graff

**Garment Photographer:** Dana Kozeff

## Acknowledgements

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ANTOINETTE WESTPHAL  
COLLEGE OF MEDIA ARTS & DESIGN



**Delphos dress detail** {back cover}

*Mariano Fortuny*

Silk & glass ♦ Circa 1919, Italy

DHCC purchase

**Walking Suit by Atelier Bachwitz** {right}

*Chic Parisien* fashion plate ♦ May 1914, France

Anonymous donation

**Delphos dress** {following page}

*Mariano Fortuny*

Silk & glass ♦ Circa 1919, Italy

DHCC purchase

**Neglige**

Silk & metallic lace ♦ Circa 1912, France

Gift of the Estate of Minnie Drexel Fell Cassatt





Without a doubt, the heart of the Drexel Historic Costume Collection (DHCC) comes from the 20th Century “teens,” and from the moment I was introduced to the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA) ~ Paris/Philadelphia 1910-2011; I knew our notable treasury of historic fashions had to be a part of the celebration. There was one key piece missing from our collection, however – a Mariano Fortuny gown. Fortunately, it seems luck was on our side, and funded in part by the “Friends of the DHCC” and the Antoinette Westphal College, we were able to acquire this magnificent pleated Fortuny gown at auction in November, 2010. Now, with a truly complete and extensive collection of outstanding garments from 1900-1920, we are poised to present a remarkable exhibition.

I would like to thank Clare Sauro—our illustrious curator—for her wonderful eye in the selection, writing and creation of the exhibition; Jody Graff for her energy, talent and exceptional graphic materials for the show; Dino Pelliccia for his expertise and patience, PIFA and Dean Allen Sabinson of the Westphal College for their generous contribution and everyone else who kindly donated their time and talent to make this a superior exhibition in every way.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I invite you to read, view and enjoy a “Brave New World!”

Roberta H. Gruber

Head- Fashion, Product and Design & Merchandising Department





**Coat & dress (left)**

Circa 1915, USA

Gift of Miss Elizabeth Jane Anderson

**Dinner Dress by Atelier Bachwitz (above)**

*Chic Parisien* fashion plate ♦ Circa 1914, France

Anonymous donation

The 1910s were a period of tremendous social, political and artistic upheaval. During this decade, many art forms struggled against tradition and sought new and often radical forms of expression. Consequently, the fashions of the 1910s were both a reflection of important political and social changes taking place and a powerful harbinger of things to come.

The fashions of the early 20th century retained the sensibility of the Victorian Era. Women's dress emphasized the tightly corseted female form with trailing skirts and heavily adorned bodices. This highly ornamented and constrictive silhouette was accented with lace, feathers, flowers and lush, abundant hair. This was further augmented by oversized hats trimmed with still more flowers, feathers and veiling.

However, significant changes were already underway. By the start of the decade, innovators—such as Mariano Fortuny and Paul Poiret—had already proposed simple garments intended to be worn without restrictive undergarments. While these radical options were adopted by an elite few, many women increasingly chose sensible walking suits and “lingerie” dresses for daywear. These options were significantly more relaxed than traditional daywear but were still worn with corsets and layered petticoats.

By 1912, popular fashions had evolved. The muted colors and hourglass silhouettes of the late nineteenth century were abandoned by an adventurous few in favor of narrow slit skirts, bright “fauvist” colors and a slim uncorseted body with mainstream fashion soon following their lead.

Dance had a profound influence on many of these new styles. The Ballets Russes (the Russian Ballet) is frequently cited as the catalyst for many of the dramatic changes that occurred in fashion during the early 1910s. Making their debut in Paris in 1909, the Ballets Russes were known for their dramatic and original approach to dance. They rejected traditional ballet and staged productions with entirely new choreography,

music, set designs and costumes. Their productions were noted for unprecedented physicality and featured costumes and sets based on folk costumes and other forms of traditional and non-western dress.

The stars of the Ballets Russes were embraced as the new physical ideal and their dramatic costumes brought about an explosion of exoticism and sensuality in the world of high fashion. Under the spell of the Ballets Russes, couturiers adopted bright colors, draped skirts and pan-Asian influences like kimono sleeves and turbans. Black, formerly the domain of widows and nuns, was suddenly chic and embraced by the daring and fashionable. While Paul Poiret is chiefly remembered as the innovator of these outré styles, Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon) and the Callot Soeurs would also make significant contributions.

Popular dance had a widespread influence as well. Partner dances such as the Tango and the Foxtrot permitted notably closer physicality than previous dances and were seen by many as a breakdown of traditional social values. Dancing in public was now a fashionable pastime and women's styles reflected an emerging need for mobility. The elongated corsets worn at the beginning of the decade were forsaken for

the elastic “Tango” or “Dance” corsets that allowed for greater flexibility and freedom. Also introduced were the daring “tango skirts” which were modestly slit to provide wearers with greater ease of movement while providing a tantalizing glimpse of ankle. These seductive skirts were frequently worn with “tango shoes” which utilized high heels and wrapped ribbon ties to further highlight

Not surprisingly, women's clothing lost the frivolity and excess seen before the war and the heavy exoticism of the early teens was exchanged for practicality.

the exposed ankles. Irene Castle, who soared to international fame with her dance partner and husband, Vernon Castle, was a champion of these new, less restrictive styles. She popularized both shorter skirts and bobbed hair, known colloquially as the “Castle clip.”



This exuberance was to be short lived. In 1914, at the height of the dance craze, war broke out in Europe. The “Great War,” as it was then known, had an indelible affect on fashions and life in general. Not surprisingly, women’s clothing lost the frivolity and excess seen before the war and the heavy exoticism of the early teens was exchanged for practicality. Tight draped and trained skirts were abandoned for short (calf length) full skirts that offered a greater range of movement. These short skirts were seen as licentious by many, but were embraced by the young, the physically active and by supporters of women’s suffrage. The suit was adopted by many women as a versatile garment to be worn for a variety of activities throughout the day, a dramatic change from Victorian etiquette which dictated several changes a day for a well-dressed woman. Not surprisingly, sensible “masculine” colors such as olive drab, navy and black were popular colors for these practical designs. Hats grew smaller and many toque styles anticipated the streamlined cloche of the 1920s.

As a counterpoint to the somewhat severe approach to daywear, eveningwear became more romantic. Soft colors like aqua and pink returned to prominence and



were frequently ornamented with silk tulle, lace and artificial flowers. These styles were often referred to as the “war crinoline,” a reference to the full skirts of the mid-19th century.

In 1917, the United States entered the war and women on the home front were encouraged to volunteer, make do and do without. Many younger women saw this as an opportunity to bob their hair, give up their corsets and adopt shorter skirts, arguing that these styles were more hygienic and sensible for war work. The famed couturière Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel rose to fame during this tumultuous period, providing simple suits and dresses made of wool jersey to a wartime audience.

Motion pictures began to challenge live theatre as the preeminent form of entertainment. Film stars and the glamorous life depicted onscreen changed notions of fashion and luxury for mass audiences and provided a powerful means of escapism. Film stars such as Gloria Swanson and Theda Bara captured the public imagination and indirectly promoted cosmetics, cigarettes and increasingly seductive styles.

The pervasive specter of death hung over the closing years of the decade. Armistice was declared in 1918 but not before the death of 37 million soldiers and civilians. The Influenza Pandemic of the same year claimed 50 million more lives, creating an environment of anxiety and general mourning. Despite this devastation, this period was also marked with renewed vigor and optimism. Fashion had adapted, survived and even thrived throughout this dark and tumultuous decade and many rightfully saw the postwar period as an opportunity for rebirth. While some were eager to return to the restrictive and formal styles of the pre-war period, it became increasingly clear that the Great War had permanently altered the world of fashion and the arts. A new way of life had already begun.

#### Evening dress {L&F}

Silk, lamé and glass ♦ Circa 1912, France?  
Gift of the Estate of Minnie Drexel Fell Cassatt







**Walking suit** {above}  
*Doucet*

Velveteen with grosgrain ribbon ♦ Circa 1916, France  
Gift of the Estate of Minnie Drexel Fell Cassatt

**Evening dress** {right}  
Silk faille with lace and metallic embroidery ♦ Circa 1916-1917, USA  
Gift of Mrs. Andrew Van Pelt





**Day ensemble** (above)  
Promotional fashion plate by Cheney Silks ♦ Spring 1918, USA  
Anonymous donation

**Day ensemble** (right)  
Promotional fashion plate by Cheney Silks ♦ Spring 1918, USA  
Anonymous donation





