

Shocking!

The surreal world of Elsa Schiaparelli

—
Press kit

Elsa Schiaparelli. Details of the *Phoebus Cloak*. Winter 1937-1938. Wool, silk and embroidery. Musée des Arts décoratifs © Valérie Belin

July 6, 2022
— Jan 22, 2023




**RÉPUBLIQUE
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Schiaparelli

Support is provided by Marina Kellen French
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marie claire   

MUSÉE DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS

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Press release



"Being able to work with artists such as B  b   B  rard, Jean Cocteau, Salvador Dal  , Vert  s and Van Dongen, with photographers like Honinggen-Huene, Horst, Cecil Beaton and Man Ray was thrilling. We felt helped, encouraged, way beyond the material and dull reality of the making of a dress to sell".

Shocking life, Elsa Schiaparelli – 1954



1. Horst P Horst —
Vogue USA
March 15, 1937

From July 6, 2022, to January 22, 2023, the Mus  e des Arts D  coratifs in Paris will celebrate the bold and exciting creations of Italian couturi  re Elsa Schiaparelli (b. September 10, 1890, Rome – d. November 13, 1973, Paris), who drew much of her inspiration from her close ties to the Parisian avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s. Nearly 20 years since the last retrospective devoted to Schiaparelli at the Mus  e des Arts D  coratifs, the time has come to revisit this extraordinary designer's work, her innovative sense of feminine style, her sophisticated, often eccentric designs, and the thrill that she brought to the world of fashion.

***Shocking! The surreal world of Elsa Schiaparelli* brings together 520 works including 272 silhouettes and accessories by Schiaparelli herself, displayed alongside iconic paintings, sculptures, jewelry, perfumes, ceramics, posters, and photographs by the likes of Schiaparelli's dear friends and contemporaries: Man Ray, Salvador Dal  , Jean Cocteau, Meret Oppenheim and Elsa Triolet. The retrospective, a highlight of the 2022/2023 Exhibition Calendar, will also showcase creations designed in honor of Schiaparelli by fashion icons including Yves Saint Laurent, Azzedine Ala  a, John Galiano and Christian Lacroix. Daniel Roseberry, artistic director of the House of Schiaparelli since 2019, also boldly interprets the heritage of Elsa Schiaparelli with a design of his own. The poetic and immersive scenography of *Shocking! The surreal world of Elsa Schiaparelli* has been entrusted to Nathalie Crini  re. The exhibition will be presented in the Christine & Stephen A. Schwarzman fashion galleries of the Mus  e des Arts D  coratifs.**

1.

2. Elsa Schiaparelli —

Evening gown

Summer 1939

Silk

Musée des Arts décoratifs

© Les Arts Décoratifs /

Christophe Dellière

3. Jean Clément —

Necklace

1938

Golden metal

mounted on fabric

Musée des Arts décoratifs

© Les Arts Décoratifs /

Jean Tholance

© Adagp, Paris, 2022

4. Leonor Fini &

Fernand Guéry-Colas —

Shocking perfume bottle

1937

Crystal and glass

© Schiaparelli Archives

© Adagp, Paris, 2022

In contemporary times, the creative dialogue that exists between fashion and art has become a matter of fact, and very few have done more to shape this conversation than Elsa Schiaparelli, an “inspired” seamstress as she often referred to herself. Raised in a humanist and erudite environment, Elsa Schiaparelli embraced fashion through her deep fascination with art and artists. She became a creator of image, playing with haute couture designs, fashioning evening dresses, styling street clothes, dressing sports models, crafting accessories and mixing perfumes. Avoiding the dullness of “society,” Schiaparelli was free to explore her inspirations, particularly through her friendships with artists, many of whom considered Schiaparelli to be a full-fledged artist in her own right.



3.



2.



4.

Displayed on two levels, the exhibition is organized both thematically and chronologically around key moments in the career of Elsa Schiaparelli, linking her most remarkable collections from year to year with the works of friends and contemporaries who inspired her fashion designs. These works are placed throughout the exhibition, punctuating important stages in Schiaparelli’s life and the evolution of her design. The introductory room, a vast and immersive space, is dedicated to the drawings of the couturière which number in their hundreds, conveying the extent of her work. The awakening of the artist in fashion and modernity is explored alongside the defining role that designer Paul Poiret played as a mentor in Schiaparelli’s life beginning in 1922.



5.

5. Elsa Schiaparelli in collaboration with Salvador Dalí — *Evening gown* 1937 Silk © Philadelphia Museum of Art

Elsa Schiaparelli went on to design her *trompe l'œil* patterned sweaters, an idea as brilliant as it is radical, which awakened in her a taste for Art Deco, particularly after her contact with Jean Dunand, who designed for Schiaparelli a refined dress with lacquer painted pleats. Schiaparelli then inaugurates a series of collaborations with a variety of artists including Ela Triolet, Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dalí. She develops her acute sense of detail through models largely inspired by the Surrealist aesthetic, introducing marvelous patterns and materials in transparent plastics, crawfish shaped buttons, “drawer pockets,” and lobsters. She inspires Man Ray and becomes his model as seen through the many photographs that testify to this fruitful relationship.

6. George Platt Lynes — *Salvador Dalí* 1939 Photograph © Estate of George Platt Lynes

7. Salvador Dalí — *Telephone powder compact* 1935 Resin and metal © Schiaparelli Archives © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí / Adagp, Paris

The exhibition continues with thematic collections that Elsa Schiaparelli initiates alone around sources of inspiration that are dear to her – Italian antiquity, nature and music.



6.

The *Pagan Collection* gives a nod to Antiquity with references to Ovid’s metamorphoses while the *Butterfly Collection* is an ode to insects (a source of inspiration she shares with Surrealist artists) and the *Music Collection* from 1939 seems to infinitely stretch and extend the silhouette of the modern woman. The mythical collaboration formed between Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí, enhanced by a taste for scandal and artistic provocation, is highlighted in a room dedicated to Dalí, showcasing his iconic “Lobster Dress” or the famous “Hat Shoe,” a sort of Surrealist fascinator.

The second floor opens onto the reconstruction of Elsa Schiaparelli’s couture salons, then located at 21 Place Vendôme in Paris, which she inaugurated in 1935. For interior design and decorations, Schiaparelli calls upon Jean-Michel Frank for his sleek, ultra-chic and elegant lines. There, she dresses the planet’s most extravagant ladies and quickly acquires an international reputation



7.

The perfume cage delicately showcases her original olfactory creations, including the legendary “Shocking” which becomes a worldwide success, demonstrating the incredible marketing sense of its creator.

Emphasis is also placed on the intricate and luxurious art of embroidery and Schiaparelli’s taste for the works of Maison Lesage, founded in 1924, who created bespoke embroideries for her and other important fashion houses and continues to do so. The collections from 1938 to 1939 summon the imagination with the likes of the “commedia dell’arte,” inspired by the characters of the colorful 18th century Italian comedy, the *Astrological Collection*, which blends Baroque references linked to Versailles with the Sun King celebrating the 17th century, and lastly, the *Circus Collection* with its sumptuous boleros embroidered with horses, acrobats, and elephants. Pre-war designs show a rather narrow cigarette-like silhouette while post-war designs are looser and more constructed.

8. Marcel Vertès —
Schiaparelli,
21 place Vendôme
1953
Gluing and painting
on panel
© Schiaparelli Archives

9. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Evening coat
Winter 1938-1939
Wool, silk and china
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs /
Christophe Dellière



The journey ends with the contemporary silhouette created by Daniel Roseberry with a spectacular finale that translates the Surrealist inspiration of the fashion houses eminent founder with sensitivity and strength.

In just twenty-five years, Elsa Schiaparelli turned fashion into a natural element of the avant-garde; a playground in which she recreated the interaction between women and femininity, allure and spirit, while remaining strikingly relevant today. She embodied a vision of a bright and vibrant Paris, curious about everything, enjoying each novelty that came her way. It is this freedom that *Shocking! The surreal world of Elsa Schiaparelli* offers to the visitor – freedom to create, freedom to converse, freedom to be oneself – through models, jewelry, and thousands of drawings, all of which were donated by Elsa Schiaparelli to l’Union Française des Arts du Costume in 1973, whose holdings are now preserved by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. As a final modern gesture, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs continues to preserve the timeless works of Elsa Schiaparelli and thus, allows her art and design to live on.

8. Support is provided by Marina Kellen French and the Anna-Maria & Stephen Kellen Foundation.

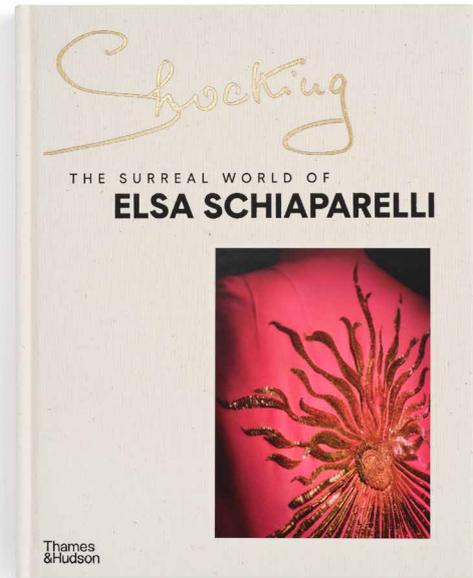
About the exhibition catalogue



10. Catalogue *Shocking: The Surreal World of Elsa Schiaparelli* —
288 pages
550 illustrations
24 x 30,5 cm
Hardcover
55 €
ISBN 978-2-38314-000-9
Éditions des
Arts Décoratifs

The couturiere Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973) was a key figure in Paris fashion between the two World Wars. Following in the footsteps of her mentor Paul Poiret, she designed her first knitwear collection in January 1927. Decorated with trompe-l'oeil motifs in black and white, her sweaters were an immediate success in both France and the US. In 1935, the Maison Schiaparelli opened in the Place Vendôme in Paris, selling collections designed for sports, city, and evening wear.

Like her arch-rival Gabrielle Chanel, Schiaparelli also worked closely with artists, including Man Ray, Jean Cocteau, and Salvador Dalí, with whom she created a lobster dress. Taking a cue from Surrealism, her creations were hugely imaginative and made use of innovative new materials. The “Schiap” style continued to develop through the 1930s. Her most famous collections had themes including the circus (summer 1938) and astrology (winter 1938-39). In 1937, Schiaparelli launched the fragrance *Shocking*, named after shocking pink, which had become her signature color.



10.

Alongside vintage photographs, sketches, and contemporary features from *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, this volume presents specially photographed masterpieces from the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. All 120 garments and accessories from the Schiaparelli archive are illustrated, along with a selection of her drawings dating from 1933 to 1953.

Elsa Schiaparelli biography

—

11. Teddy Piaz —
*Portrait of Elsa
Schiaparelli*
Circa 1935
Silver print
© Archives Schiaparelli



11.

September 10, 1890

Elsa Schiaparelli was born in Rome, to a family of Italian intellectuals and aristocrats living at Palazzo Corsini.

1913

Elsa discovers Paris and London, where she meets her future husband, the Count William de Wendt de Kerlor. They go on to marry in 1914.

1916

The couple moves to the United States – New York City and then Boston – and has a daughter nicknamed Gogo.

1920

Elsa Schiaparelli meets Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, who photographs her at his studio.

1922

After separating from her unfaithful husband, Elsa Schiaparelli goes home to Europe with Gogo and makes friends with the Dadaists of Paris.

1927

She presents her first collection of sweaters adorned with a trompe-l'œil of bows and neckties, and meets with initial renown.

1935

In January, she relocates her salon from her cramped apartment on Rue de la Paix to a townhouse on 21, Place Vendôme, which she asked Jean-Michel Frank to modernize.

1936

She collaborates for the first time with Salvador Dalí to design fashion pieces.

1937

On April 29th, Maison Schiaparelli launches the perfume *Shocking*, with a pink bottle designed by Leonor Fini.

1940

In July, Schiaparelli leaves wartime France and moves to the United States, entrusting the management of her Place Vendôme salon to Irène Dana in her absence.

1945

Elsa returns to France and presents her first post-war collection.

1947

Elsa calls on Hubert de Givenchy, at 19 years of age, to become her first assistant; he goes on to be appointed artistic director of the boutique.

1954

On February 3rd, the Maison presents its last couture collection. On December 13th, for lack of success since the end of the war, the Schiaparelli couture salon closes. The designer consecrates her energy to writing her memoirs before retiring from the scene.

November 13, 1973

At 83 years of age, Elsa Schiaparelli dies in her sleep at her home in Paris.

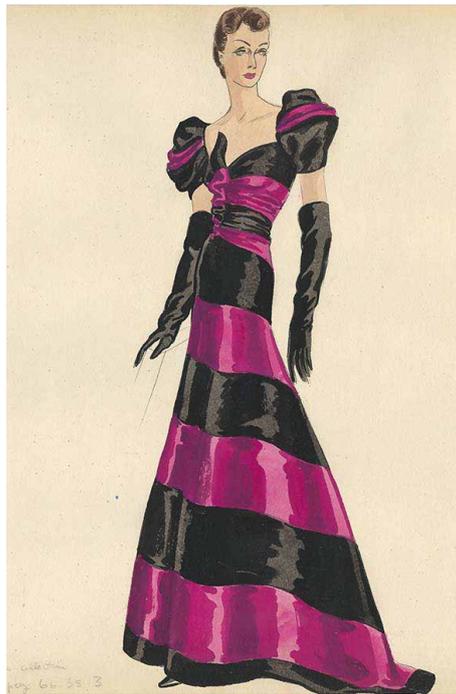
Excerpts from the catalogue



Elsa Schiaparelli, a last dance

Olivier Gabet, Director, musée des Arts décoratifs

12. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Collection Drawing
Winter 1938-1939
Drawing
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs



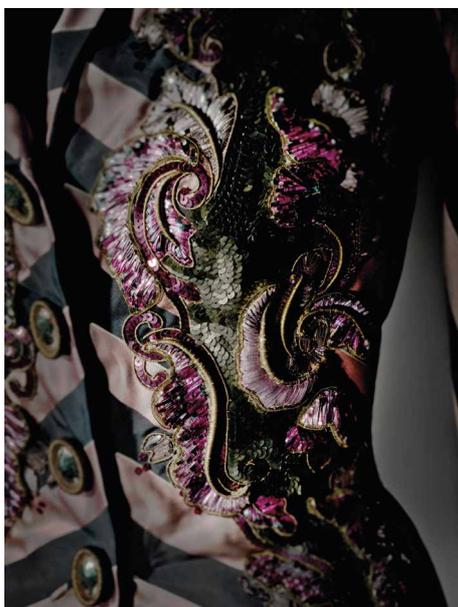
12.

Every adjective, catchphrase, hasty sketch, and carefully composed portrait by the world's greatest photographers (with a predilection for May Ray) has been used to describe Elsa Schiaparelli. The pages that follow provide a masterful description of her and offer a new perspective on her work; not an Impressionist landscape composed of many discrete strokes, but a kaleidoscopic panorama, fragments of faces placed next to each other like a collage caught between keepsakes of elegant Victorian engravings and the exquisite corpses of Schiaparelli's surrealist friends.



13.

A woman rooted in two centuries, planted firmly between two worlds bordered with Roman palazzi and Louis XIV buildings, she grew up in the shadow of the generous humanism of her father and his family, patiently erudite and brilliant. From this brilliance, Schiaparelli created a life and a celebrated body of work, an achievement not within everyone's reach. [...]

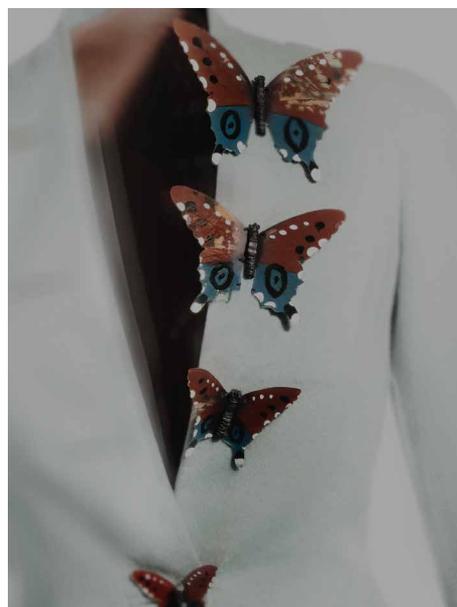


14.

14. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Details of an evening
jacket
Spring 1947
Embroidered silk
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Valérie Belin

15. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Details of the *Butterfly*
Jacket
Summer 1937, Wool
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Valérie Belin

Over a period of some fifteen years, this daughter of an orientalist scholar laid — with rigor and whimsy — the austere foundations of an elaborate grammar and an emancipated vocabulary, recognizable in every respect. Elsa Schiaparelli illustrated with panache the continent's last dance on a volcano during the 1930s. Energetic and creative, she evaded the role of muse, to which so many women are reduced, to concentrate on the essentials: being a client, becoming a designer, never surrendering, being true to herself. She was perceived as full of zest and she knew how to be, she was unconventionally attractive, the very definition of chic for women around the world — Diana Vreeland most of all — but she was also hardworking, visionary, and tender when she spoke of the child she once was and of her loved ones. The last page of her memoirs forever links her to her granddaughters, Marisa and Berry, evoking hands that clasp each other, lifelines blurring together. She could write: her memoirs, *Shocking Life*, published in 1954, are proof of this. She knew how to choose her words to craft compelling hooks and cheeky names for her perfumes. [...]



15.

Today the Schiaparelli story continues, in a different way, and with the immensely talented Daniel Roseberry, who, with humility and elegance, expresses the contemporary relevance of what Schiaparelli has represented for nearly a century. She loved to dress women, not to disguise them but to elevate them. She would surely have been proud to see a woman wearing a dress bearing her name on one exceptional day in American history, performing at the president's inauguration. [...]

On this occasion, it would be marvelous to conclude with the beginning, the opening words of Schiaparelli's biography: "I merely know Schiap by hearsay. I have only seen her in a mirror. She is, for me, some kind of fifth dimension".

More Beautiful When Broken

A Conversation with Daniel Roseberry

Hanya Yanagihara*

16. Daniel Roseberry —
*Bella Hadid wearing
Schiaparelli at the
Cannes Festival 2021*
2021
Photograph, © Getty /
Andreas Rentz



HY. I always think that one of the things that distinguishes your work is how powerfully it conveys emotion—and you, in your personal life, are also unafraid of being emotionally expressive. You can very easily access a wide range of feelings, from sorrow to—wonderfully—joy. This is reductive, but if we think of designers as either cerebral or intuitive, I consider you largely intuitive. How do you assess the designers you admire, like Alexander McQueen or Yves Saint Laurent?

DR. I do think every designer has to choose a lane. And I think when it works it's because the work and the lane are consistent with who the designer really is. When you sense the designer is trying to be somebody else, or trying to be an elevated version of themselves, the work itself tends to be less powerful. The designers I admire, like McQueen and Yves and Karl Lagerfeld, were all making work that in some way harmoniously and truthfully reflected who they really were: The romantic. The genius. The showman.

HY. Some of your most powerful and signature designs play with the idea of anatomical displacements and exaggerations: noses migrate to earlobes, nipples make their way into chokers, breasts take on pyramidal proportions. How much of this (or how little) is a projection of your own relationship with your body?

DR. [...] It wasn't until around thirty that I started to really embrace and befriend my own body. There's something inexpressibly glorious about the human body. [...] In my designs, I try to treat all body parts with some level of democracy. Breasts are considered as precious as eyes, toes are as sexy as your ass. It's a way of glorifying the body without oversexualizing it.

HY. Talk to me about what it's like to both create within a legacy — that of Madame Schiaparelli — while, at the same time, making something of your own. Does the ghost of Elsa ever feel oppressive, or do you feel you have a balanced relationship with her?



17. Daniel Roseberry —
Look 02
 Fall-Winter 2021-2022
 Photograph, © Maison
 Schiaparelli

DR. At the beginning of my time here at Schiaparelli I really didn't focus on her work. [...] I was trying to elicit the same emotional response that you might have had during her lifetime, looking at her work. [...] But now, a few years into this tenure here, I feel much more at ease with her legacy and the archives, and more inclined to embrace certain parts of them with each season. But I've never felt oppressed by her legacy, though I've also always kept it at arm's length. [...] I don't think she would be interested in seeing her work reissued over and over again, a century later. I think she would be championing the new, and I can only hope that that would include me.

17.

HY. What is the point and purpose of a dress in 2022? [...] Will you talk about your philosophy (if you have one) about what a dress should be and do?

DR. I think there's a reason why the dress is a forever piece, and it's the same reason why the suit is also timeless. It's because it was designed to amplify the most beautiful parts of a woman's body, and also create some ease around the parts of the body that sometimes need a helping hand. I think a great dress is defined by how generous it is. How much confidence does it give you? [...] Dresses can look incredible on men, and suits can look absolutely stunning on women. I think we're seeing today that these rules about dressing are even more beautiful when they're broken.

HY. The term "surreal" gets tossed around a lot these days as a short hand for anything that seems absurd, ridiculous, or strange. And yet the word, as defined by the writer André Breton in 1924, meant something specific: the space between the dream life and the real one, and the struggle to settle them. But what does the term mean to you, and how does that belief express itself in your designs?

DR. [...] Something that is between fantasy and reality, something that's between darkness and light. The refusal to be either one is indicative of surreal work. I also think it has to arouse some level of curiosity in the viewer [...] The surreal feels just out of reach, but its emotional punch is visceral and sometimes even urgent. Maybe that's what Breton meant when he speaks of the struggle to settle two opposing realities. We always talk about contradiction in the studio: how can we make something baroque and minimal at the same time, for example. We want something both male and female, soft and hard, pop and couture. The two extremes need each other, and on top of that, they want each other, too.

HY. Let's talk more broadly about the fashion world and industry, which we've discussed many times over the years. I always say that there's perhaps no other business in which the gap between the perceived glamor of the job and its daily reality is wider. Is that dissonance ever difficult for you to navigate?

DR. This is something that's on my mind and something that I have to navigate [...] every other day. But those days are not the majority of days, and accepting this has been something that I think anyone who works in fashion, and maybe especially anyone who is a designer, has to reckon with. For me, the hardest part is the rate at which you're expected to come up with ideas worth sharing with the world. Social media has made this even more demanding, even more relentless, and I think that's why there's so much fluffy fashion out there—it's simply not possible for the same team or the same designer to create magical, earth-shattering ideas en masse, four times a year. [...] In other industries, those periods could last for years. But in fashion, you get two weeks between collections, if any at all. If you take off any more than two weeks, you're already behind. The glamorous facade of the industry feels necessary. It's what draws people in, and it's what people want it to be. But that glamor is also the exception that proves the rule.

18. Daniel Roseberry —
Look 06
Fall-Winter 2021-2022
Photograph, © Maison
Schiaparelli



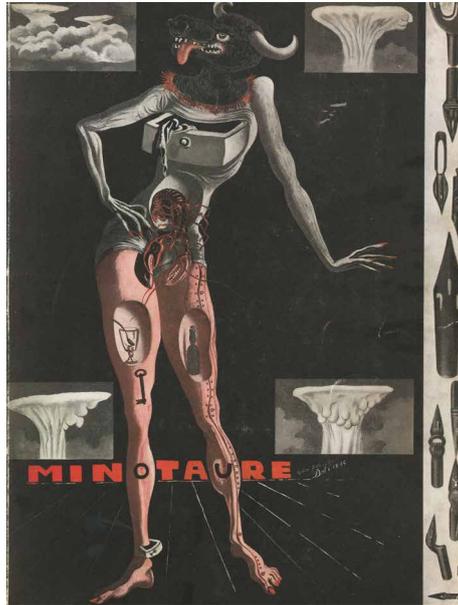
HY. Before you arrived at the maison in 2019, you had worked at the American brand Thom Browne for ten years, eventually rising to become the design director for both the men's and women's collections. You mentioned that you've noticed that young people these days hope to go directly from design school to helming their own brand. Yet, you've always said, there are good reasons to be the number two at a fashion house. Tell me about them, and what you learned from your years at Thom Browne.

DR. The first thing I realized at Thom Browne was that I really didn't know anything at all. Which meant that I made a lot of mistakes— and fortunately, I had Thom to protect me from those mistakes, and to mentor and to train me. There are so many different ways to mess up in this industry. There are all of the professional ways: The missed opportunities, the overexposure or the underexposure, and all of the relentless, unforgiving realities of lead times and delivery windows and sell-throughs and all of that. But more importantly, there's the chance you'll blow your chance to become the person that you're meant to become. I've always felt like it's a very dangerous place to be in, to be a young person learning about who they are, or rather, who they're becoming, while also being expected to deal with the pressures of the industry. [...] I will be forever grateful that I was a number two for over a decade. The one thing that I don't think that you learn as a number two is what your own process will look like when you're out on your own. When I started at Schiaparelli, I [...] had to figure out how to tap into my own vision: My own way of working and my own way of building a collection. This can be really traumatic to do in public. But it's also a necessary part of the process. All you can ask for is patience—from the industry and, more importantly, from yourself.

* Author of three novels, including *To Paradise*. She lives in New York .

When Dalí Discovered Fashion

Jean-Louis Gaillemin



19. Salvador Dalí —
Cover for *Minotaure*
1936
Oil painting and collage
on cardboard
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs

The lobster dress

Appearing on the head of a strange spy in the painting *Gala and the Angelus of Millet* in 1933, the lobster also decorated Gala's head (*Portrait of Gala with a Lobster*, 1933) and, in 1934, Dalí devised for American Weekly his first lobster telephone where a frightened man tries to put his hand on the putrid lobster that has replaced the earpiece. The following year, Dalí recreated his *Woman with a Head of Roses* painting in the Bonwit Teller store window in New York. It features his first lobster telephone perched on an anthropomorphic cabinet. From organized cracks in the walls emerged the arms of the woman's admirers who held either gifts or threatening objects. Although, in the end, the drawers' erotic allusions went unnoticed, the same was not the case for Schiaparelli's lobster dress in the summer of 1937. Here the crustacean emerging from the stomach of the castrating "female minotaur" surges from the model's crotch onto immaculate white silk. Certainly, this new lobster was less terrifying than the female minotaur but the lobster's placement is clear as seen in a photograph of Wallis Simpson by Cecil Beaton for *Vogue* shortly before her marriage.

Was the future Duchess of Windsor so naive as to not notice the hidden erotic message behind the humorous nature of the dress? Or did she instead use the occasion to assert her reputation as an independent, manipulative woman?

The shoe hat

Your little tootsies, playing footsie—many expressions and metaphors make women's shoes a favorite with fetishists. [...] In his 1931 article on "objects with a symbolic function", [Dalí] describes his *Scatological Object with a Symbolic Function (Gala's Shoe)* as "a woman's shoe inside of which I placed a warm glass of milk in the center of a paste in a ductile shape that was the color of excrement." [...] The woman's shoe appeared in painting during this period, furtive, hidden in paintings as if it made us afraid. We can guess at its presence under a shrouds draped over the young, ashamed man Dalí incarnated in the summer of 1933 in Man Ray's photograph: wearing a shoe on his head or neck as he poses "upside down," the shoes are objects of desire and shame. Two depicted here, with their heels placed on the toes of a phantom Dalí, even provoke a shameful practice that the shroud can barely hide. Dalí's sketched proposals for the shoe hat play with curves and arches without realistic details, a pure, formal allusion ultimately found in Schiaparelli's final object made all in black (Only the shocking pink heel adds a provocative accent. Though the hat was extremely successful as an image, few clients were daring enough to wear it. We see a leopard skin version of the shoe hat worn by Katherine Helmond in Terry Gilliam's movie *Brazil* (1985), another example of an upside-down world. Schiaparelli's mastery of couture techniques always meant that she could temper Dalí's delirious ideas in the final object, even if some, as the designer recalls, were used, above all, to generate publicity: "There were another hat resembling a lamb cutlet with a white frill on the bone, and this, more than anything else, contributed to Schiap's fame for eccentricity. She wore it defiantly and certain newspaper columnists have never forgotten it."

19.

Wall panels



20.

20. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Collection drawing
Summer 1939
Drawing
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs

The 6,387 drawings of collection

The donation made by Elsa Schiaparelli to the UFAC in 1973 included 6,387 collection sketches dated from 1933 to 1953 and compiled in 55 bound and loose-leaf albums. These unsigned drawings were made in graphite, coloured pencil, ink, felt-tipped pen, watercolour or gouache on drawing paper. Following the presentation of a collection in the salons of the maison de couture, artists, employed by the Maison Schiaparelli, would rapidly and carefully reproduce the silhouette of a model wearing the design. [...] Unlike drawings signed by illustrators in fashion magazines, these drawings were never intended to be published. Along with the programme that indicated the theme and trends of the collection and was distributed to those invited to see the collection, the drawings were intended as tools to convey technical information and promote the collection to clients unable to see the collection in person, allowing them to place orders from a distance. [...]

The collection drawings constitute a living memory of the numerous pieces created by Schiaparelli over twenty years and four annual collections: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. They show the rich variations in a collection and the ever-active power of seduction of Elsa Schiaparelli's creations.

Costume Jewellery

The Schiaparelli silhouette was composed of clothing, accessories – hat and gloves – and jewellery, made by master jewellers, that lent a harmonious and ornamental touch to the ensemble. Called “paruriers,” these makers of costume jewellery worked in the background and never signed their contributions. The theme of each collection was transmitted to the artisans, who then proposed jewellery in the same spirit. Schiaparelli surrounded herself with people who had strong personalities, capable of understanding her fantastical vision and also surprise her. Jean Schlumberger interpreted with elegance the Surrealist spirit of the couturière. The jewels of artists Alberto Giacometti and Meret Oppenheim were equally surprising. In her memoirs, Schiaparelli spoke glowingly about other collaborators: faithful Jean Clément “a genius at what he did,” Elsa Triolet, the wife of poet Louis Aragon, who created necklaces in the form of aspirin tablets, and silversmith François Hugo, the great-nephew of Victor Hugo, who made buttons for the designer.



21.

21. Alberto Giacometti —
Button
1937
Golden bronze
Musée des Arts décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs

22. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Boléro
 Summer 1938
 Silk satin, trimmings,
 laces silk chenille
 embroidery and
 rhinestones by Lesage
 Musée des Arts décoratifs
 © Les Arts Décoratifs

23. Elsa Schiaparelli —
Evening Coat
 Fall 1937
 Rayon knit, Silk
 embroidery and flowers
 by Lesage
 © Philadelphia Museum
 of Art

Jean Cocteau, A Poetic Line

As proof of their friendship, poet Jean Cocteau offered two drawings to Elsa Schiaparelli, whom he considered to be “the most eccentric of designers.” The couturière transferred the drawings to an evening coat and a suit jacket in the Fall 1937 collection. The continuous line of the drawing embroidered onto the back of the coat gave the illusion of a double image: that of two faces in profile looking at each other, and that of a vase sitting on a fluted column, crowned by a bouquet of roses. The collaboration, which exalted poetic imagination, was also evident on the evening jacket in the form of a line that traced the contours of a feminine face with long golden hair embroidered down the sleeve. The name Jean punctuated with a star was Cocteau’s monogram. In her memoirs, Schiaparelli calls his film *Blood of a Poet* (1930) Surrealist, though he always refused the label. According to the artist, he was attempting to imitate a waking dream, which allows one, like magic, to pass through to the other side of the mirror.



22.



23.

The Butterfly and its Metamorphosis

Elsa Schiaparelli chose a theme for each of her collections. For Summer 1937 it was the butterfly. According to the presentation in the show’s programme, the collection’s summer prints were intended to evoke a dance in which singing birds, buzzing bees and joyful butterflies all united in harmony. For the designer, as for the Surrealists, the butterfly was a source of marvel and aesthetic emotion. Because they are born from an egg, transformed into caterpillars and then ugly chrysalids, butterflies were considered to be a symbol of the fragility of beauty and the brevity of life. The beautiful insect, with its fluid movements and velvety wings, always flying just out of grasp, was compared, like a fairy tale, to women and their inconstant hearts. The butterfly is at the origin of Apuleius’ 2nd Century story of the beautiful Psyche (a Greek word that means both soul and moth) who falls under the spell of a monstrous god.



24. François Kollar —
Madame Schiaparelli
 1938
 Photograph, © RMN –
 Gestion droit
 d'auteur François
 Kollar, Charenton-le-
 Pont, Médiathèque
 du patrimoine
 et de la photographie
 © Ministère de la Culture
 - Médiathèque
 du patrimoine
 et de la photographie,
 Dist. RMN-Grand Palais /
 François Kollar

Meret Oppenheim, Surrealist Artist

Swiss – German by birth, artist Meret Oppenheim arrived in Paris in 1932 where she became close to André Breton, head of the Surrealist movement, and photographer Man Ray. In the spring of 1936, she sold Elsa Schiaparelli a design for a piece of jewellery: a brass bracelet covered in animal fur that Schiaparelli included in her Winter 1936 – 37 collection. Meret wore the bracelet at the Café de Flore in the company of Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar, who admired it. Over the course of their conversation, a project was born to cover every object on the table in fur. Their tea having gone cold, they ordered a “bit more fur” from the waiter! Invited by Breton the following May to participate in an exhibition of Surrealist objects at the Galerie Charles Ratton, Oppenheim presented *Le Déjeuner en fourrure* (*Lunch in Fur*): a teacup, saucer, and spoon, covered in fur. This surrealist set of objects was bought by Alfred H. Barr for the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

24.

Leonor Fini, The Triumphant Femininity of Shocking Perfume

Born in Buenos Aires of Italian origin (from Trieste), Leonor Fini arrived in Paris in 1931. Presented to Christian Dior by Max Jacob, she showed her paintings in the Galerie Bonjean directed by Dior. Schiaparelli discovered her fantastical creative universe peopled with mythological feminine figures. In 1936 she painted the portrait of Gogo Schiaparelli, Elsa's daughter. At the couturière's request, Fini designed the *Shocking* perfume bottle.

Place Vendôme

By the mid-1930s, Elsa Schiaparelli had come to the forefront as a premier couturière. In 1933, she opened a boutique in London and in January 1935 she moved out of her shop at 4, Rue de la Paix, which had become too small. She chose to open her new Paris shop in a mansion at 21, Place Vendôme, whose façade dated from the 17th Century. [...] On the ground floor of the building, was the Boutique Schiap which sold, “prêt-à-porter:” evening sweaters, skirts, blouses and accessories. She called on Jean-Michel Frank for the interior design of the three principal salons de couture whose Louis XV woodwork was painted white. For Frank, elegance meant eliminating things to attain simplicity. He worked with Alberto Giacometti to design the rare decorative elements, like the plaster columns topped with shells that housed lighting. Dramatically draped curtains lent a theatrical touch to presentations of the collections by models in the streamlined, monochrome rooms. Light played a fundamental role in shaping the space and contributed to creating a surreal and strange atmosphere, in the manner of a Dalí landscape. The central presence of the Vendôme column is felt in a collage given by Marcel Vertès to Schiaparelli in 1953, the year before the company closed. A veritable resumé of the designer's most emblematic pieces, the work, by the artist of Hungarian origin, was a vibrant homage to Schiaparelli's inventions.

25. Nepo Arik —
Elsa Schiaparelli
dancing with a man
wearing a Schiaparelli
jacket at a Fath Ball
at Corbeille
 1952

© Elsa Schiaparelli SAS
 © Droits réservés, Paris,
 Palais Galliera - Musée
 de la mode
 © Paris Musées, Palais
 Galliera, Dist. RMN-
 Grand Palais / image ville
 de Paris

26. Marcel Vertès —
 Advertisement for the
 Schiaparelli perfume
Sleeping
 1945

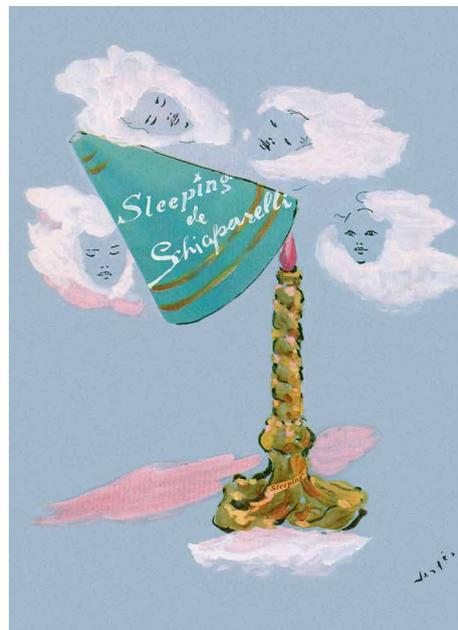
© Archives Schiaparelli



25.

The Perfume Cage

In February 1934, Elsa Schiaparelli, superstitious, launched three perfumes: *Soucis*, *Salut* and *Schiap*, all three of which began with the letter 'S'. The trapezoidal bottle for *Salut* and its cork box were designed by Jean-Michel Frank. In June of 1935, on the ground floor of the maison de couture, a perfume cage imagined by Frank was installed. Its structure, in golden bamboo and black metal, allowed for a spectacular presentation of perfume and cosmetics. The Boutique Schiap raised the curiosity of tourists to meet the wooden couple holding court: Pascal "the permanently Greek beauty" and his faithful Pascaline. In April 1935, the perfume *Shocking*, with its bottle designed by artist Leonor Fini, became the successful signature of the house. In January 1947, the Parfums Schiaparelli group moved to a modern laboratory in Bois-Colombes where the perfume *Le Roy Soleil*, with its Baccarat crystal bottle designed by surrealist artist Dalí, was produced in a very limited edition.



26.

The Commedia dell'Arte

The theme of Commedia dell'Arte defined the Spring 1939 collection. This form of comic theatre originated in the popular Italian culture of the 16th Century. The plays were performed by masked characters, identifiable by their familiar costumes, speaking improvised dialogues that made the public laugh and react out loud. Arlequin's costume, a diamond mosaic, was reinterpreted with elegance by Schiaparelli in a series of evening coats. A great lover of the sumptuous masked balls and costume parties organized by her clients, Schiaparelli developed in this collection her taste for amusing disguises. Her theatrical references were shared by painter André Derain who painted Arlequin and Pierrot with great melancholy. The title of the collection, likely intended to be ironic, echoed the worrisome comedy being played out on Europe's stage that year following the Munich accords that had been signed in September 1938.



27.

27. Salvador Dalí and Baccarat —
Perfume Bottle
Le Roy Soleil
1946
Crystal
© Archives Schiaparelli

The Signs of the Zodiac

Observing Elsa Schiaparelli's face, her astronomer uncle Giovanni Schiaparelli compared the beauty spots on her left cheek to the seven stars in the Big Dipper constellation. She made it her personal trademark and often decorated her creations with it, along with other celestial motifs. The Winter 1938 – 39 collection shone with signs of the Zodiac, planets and constellations. The theme was fleshed out with references to the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV, the château, and gardens of Versailles where, harmonious connections between the seasons and the planets were represented throughout the interior and exterior design. A cape was embroidered with Phoebus, a reference to the Sun King, while the Manufacture de Sèvres, created by Louis the 15th, inspired the decoration of a coat. A jacket covered in fragments of mirrors in baroque-style golden frames, was perhaps inspired by the doors in the Versailles Salons of War and of Peace.

28. Daniel Roseberry —
Look 10
Spring-Summer 2022
Photograph, © Maison Schiaparelli

Circus

The Summer 1938 collection was built around a circus theme. Its presentation, the 4th of February 1938 in the private salons at Place Vendôme, took the form of a burlesque show that enchanted those present. Elsa Schiaparelli wrote in her memoirs that it was the most “tumultuous, most audacious, collection” where clowns were let loose in a crazy dance. Elephants, trapeze artists and horses decorated the bolero evening jackets. Composed of 132 pieces, the inventive and joyous collection combined references to the circus with the Surrealist movement. And indeed, the collection's show coincided with the International Surrealism Exhibition, organized in Paris by André Breton and Paul Eluard, in which artists Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Pierre Roy and Salvador Dalí, among others, participated. The human-skeleton circus number was at the outset a bony skeleton embroidered on an evening gown, inspired by a Dalí drawing.



28.

29. Elsa Schiaparelli —
 Details of the Bolero
Circus
 Summer 1938
 Silk embroidery, laces,
 tiles, pearls and mirrors
 by Lesage
 Musée des Arts décoratifs
 © Valérie Belin

30. Elsa Schiaparelli —
 Bolero *Circus*
 Summer 1938
 Silk embroidery, laces,
 tiles, pearls and mirrors
 by Lesage
 Musée des Arts décoratifs
 © Les Arts Décoratifs /
 Christophe Dellière

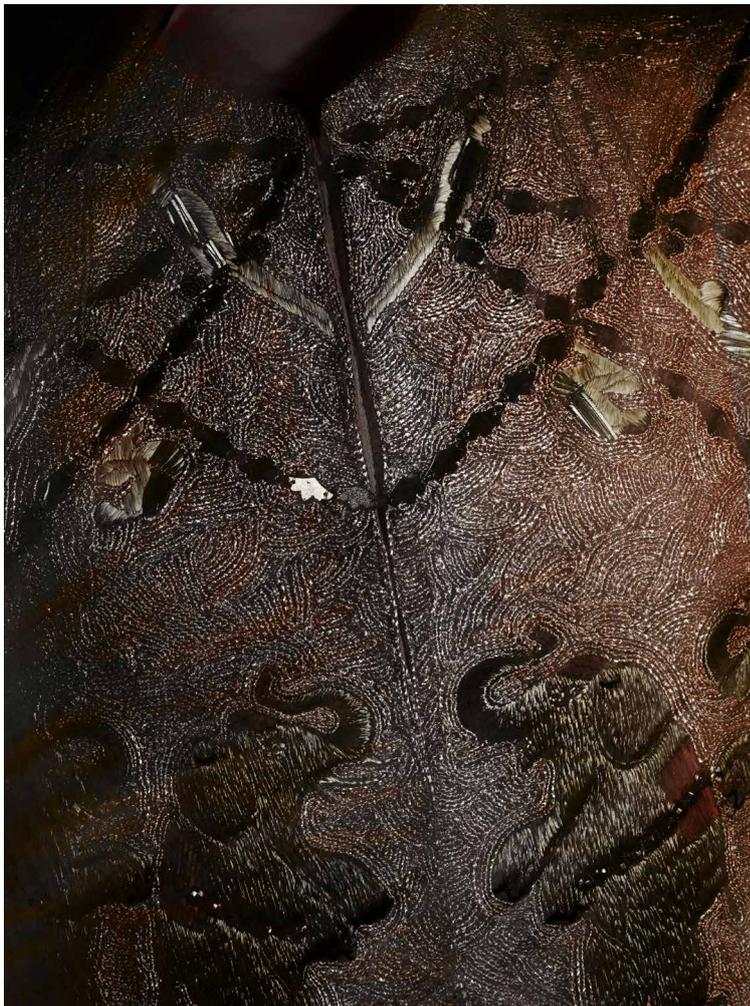
31. Daniel Roseberry —
 Look 08
 Spring-Summer 2021
 Photograph, © Maison
 Schiaparelli

The art of Embroidery

In 1934, Elsa Schiaparelli asked Albert Lesage, head of an embroidery studio, to work on several embroidered belts. The collaboration went well and from 1936 on she turned to him to add hand-embroidered decoration to her creations, illustrating the themes of her collections. Highly regarded for his creative talent and his savoir-faire, Albert Lesage's embroidery was faithful to Schiaparelli's inventiveness and her fine sense of humour. It was a stimulating exchange: an embroidery sample could end up influencing the design of a dress. For a collaboration with Cocteau in 1937, Lesage embroidered the poet's drawings, in particular that of a magnificent woman with golden hair, on a linen jacket. The Lesage studio also fabricated the little bouquets of flowers that decorate the *Shocking* perfume bottle. In 1949, François Lesage succeeded his father and pursued the studio's collaboration with Schiaparelli until 1954.



30.



29.



31.

Scenography



32.



33.

32. & 33. *Shocking! The Surrealist World of Elsa Schiaparelli* exhibition views
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière

agence
Nathalie Crinière

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 11th 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.

Public programs



FOR CHILDREN

TOUR BOOKLET

Designed as an invitation to discover the exhibition, the booklet encourages children to take inspiration from the themes and works on display to imagine and design their own fashion collection.

*Audience: 5 years and up /
Rate: Available free of charge at the museum entrance*

GUIDED FAMILY TOUR

“Elsa Schiaparelli: la belle et la mode” (“Elsa Schiaparelli: Beauty and the Fashion”)

A shoe hat, drawer pockets or butterfly buttons: the world of the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli reserves many a surprise. In the spirit of Jean Cocteau’s *Beauty and the Beast*, you’ll discover the fantasy, poetry and modernity of her designs when you register for this tour, an experience to share with the whole family.

*Available alternately on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. / Audience: 7 years and up /
Duration: 1hr 30min /
Rate: Adults €18, Children €8*

WORKSHOPS

“Clin d’œil” (“Wink Wink”)

Whimsy and the effect of surprise are the keys to this workshop, dedicated to the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli. Beginning with their tour of the exhibition, children are encouraged to find and reproduce the decors and accessories inspired by the human body. At this workshop, they transform the shapes of eyes, mouths and hands in order to create a spectacular mask-hat.

*Available alternately on Sundays 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*

“La main créatrice” (“The Creative Hand”)

An “inspired” designer, as she described herself, Elsa Schiaparelli considered fashion design to be an art form.

To comprehend her approach, the tour-workshop invites participants to identify the designer’s sources of inspiration for the compilation of a graphic research notebook. From patterns to colors and from materials to techniques, these experimentations lead to the project of a glove, a fashion accessory with a surrealist spirit.

*Available alternately on Sundays 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*

“Ceci n’est pas un col” (“This Is Not a Collar”)

A fashion workshop dedicated to Elsa Schiaparelli, by Michèle Obriot, textile designer

Materials used in unexpected ways, peek-a-boo effects, appliqués and embroideries are all techniques that are brought up in this training course, which culminates in the creation of a trompe-l’œil “collar.” Design, cut and decoration: at every step of the creative process, this piece of clothing pays tribute to the free-spirited, fantastic world of the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli.

*During school vacation periods, from Tuesday to Friday 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and/or 2:30p.m.-5:00 p.m.
Audience: 11-14 years of age /
Duration: 4 days-2hrs 30min / Rate: €76*

FOR ADULTS

GUIDED TOUR

“Shocking! Les mondes surréalistes d’Elsa Schiaparelli” (“Shocking! The Surrealist World of Elsa Schiaparelli”)

Costumes and fashion accessories are juxtaposed with paintings, sculptures, jewelry, perfume bottles, posters and photographs by the greatest names of the surrealist period (Man Ray, Salvador Dalí, and others) to reveal to spectators the whimsy and artistic modernity of the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli, at the avant-garde of 1920s and 1930s fashion.

*Available alternately on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. / Fridays at 12:30 p.m. / Saturdays at 11:30 a.m. and/or 4:00 p.m.
Audience: 15 years and up / Duration: 1hr 30min / Rate: €8 + museum admission*

Useful information

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— Curators

Olivier Gabet
Museum Director

Marie-Sophie Carron de la Carrière
Chief Curator

#ExpoSchiaparelli
#SchiaparelliExhibition

— Les Arts Décoratifs

Johannes Huth, President
Sylvie Corréard, Chief executive officer
Olivier Gabet, Director of Museums
Yvon Figueras, Director of international development and production
Olivier Hassler, Director of Communication

— Musée des Arts décoratifs

Olivier Gabet, Director of Museum
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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

Rates

→ general admission: €14
→ concession: €10
→ free admission for age 26 and under

— Musée Nissim de Camondo

Olivier Gabet, Director of Museum
63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris
+33 (0) 1 53 89 06 40
Open 10 am–5:30 pm
Closed Monday and Tuesday
→ general admission: €12
→ concession: €9

— Library

Stéphanie Rivoire, Director of Library and Resources
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

Chloé Demey, Head of Department
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— Visitor engagement

→ Activities for individuals

Reservation via the online ticketing

→ Activities for groups

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jeune@madparis.fr / 01 44 55 59 26
→ Adult public, higher education, social field & disability:
adac@madparis.fr / 01 44 55 59 25

→ Conferences, round tables and colloquiums

Information and reservations:
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— Museum shop

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 am
+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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