



Janet Reuter

April 2019

**Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams.****A glorious new exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.****Christian Dior 1905 to 1957, designer of the New Look of 1947**

And what a dream this evening gown was to every girl when it was first seen in the 1950's. It is a highlight of the exhibition and was created for Princess Margaret's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations in 1951. For me as a small child it was the epitome of glamour and elegance, and so uplifting for my mother's generation who had lived through the hard times of the 1930's and 1940's. The one-shoulder off white tulle gown, decorated with asymmetric gold embroidery, was immortalized in Margaret's official birthday portrait by the famous photographer Cecil Beaton. Dior was delighted to count Princess Margaret, who visited his boutique in Paris during her first European holiday in 1949, as one of his clients. This was a coup as the Queen and Princess Elizabeth preferred, for patriotic reasons, to wear British fashion from Norman Hartnell. Princess Margaret did not have to keep to this protocol. He was very proud of the secret fashion shows staged for the royal family. After he had shown his first collection at The Savoy Hotel in 1950, he presented his designs to the Queen, Princess Margaret, Princess Marina and Princess Olga of Greece at the French Embassy in London. For Dior this was such an honour and for the royals a new fashion experience. Dior made no profit from his first British show at the Savoy but it generated such positive press both in print and newsreel film that he frequently returned to present charity fashion shows. This first show at the Savoy raised money for the Fashion Museum in Bath. Many of the garments presented were made from British woollen fabrics and cottons produced and printed in Britain. Dior loved Britain, it is even said he loved English food. A Frenchman? Dior greatly admired the then very classic and understated English country style. Mary Spencer-Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, came to visit Dior in Paris in 1954 and asked Dior if he would hold a charity show at Blenheim Palace, to raise money for the Red Cross for which she was president. This was truly a good cause. The Duchess was a very tall and elegant lady and came dressed in her Red Cross uniform. Dior was thrilled with her appearance thinking that she looked *tres chic for a Brit*. Dior agreed and soon after their meeting he was able to stage a glamorous fashion show in November of the same year in Blenheim Palace with Princess Margaret as the guest of honour. What a glamorous society event this must have been!

April 2019

## Christian Dior (continued)

Following the success of Blenheim Palace, further charity shows took place in Britain. In 1955 two were held in Scotland in aid of the Friends of France, a war time charity, and Dior fell in love with the traditional Scottish fabrics and kilts worn by the attending Scottish nobility. He developed a love of British textiles and tailoring into his fashion creations.

The appetite for Dior clothes among British consumers was growing very fast and women were very dissatisfied that there were no ready to wear garments for sale in London. It was time to set up a Dior branch in Britain! Paris fashion in the heart of London.

The newly established Christian Dior London branch produced ready made Dior garments based on the main Paris haute couture collections and designed at the atelier in Maddox Street. These garments were mainly made from British fabrics and were for sale in Britain and the British Commonwealth. Christian Dior attended the launch of the first collection, held once again at the Savoy Hotel in 1952. From the showroom in Stratford Place, Laura Ward, the Countess of Dudley was responsible for choosing which designs would be reproduced for Britain each season. The Countess was known as one of society's best dressed woman and her task was to kill off the old legend of the dowdy Englishwoman!

Nancy Mitford, the society lady and novelist who wrote *The Blessing*, one of my favourite books, and the famous prima ballerina Margot Fonteyn who danced with the Russian Rudolf Nureyev were ladies dressing in the new image of Dior British style!

Dior continued to develop his use of British fabrics, knitwear and accessories. One of Dior's earliest partnerships was with the Hawick based knitwear company Lyle & Scott to make his sweaters. The 100 hundred year old company Symington produced his underwear. Silks were made by Ascher and Cumberland Silk Mills. This was a cross channel relationship with British tweeds, woollens, silks and jerseys being used for his Paris collections as well. The licence deals with British manufactures meant that women could dress almost head to toe in British made Christian Dior.

The Christian Dior London branch also continued to put on charity fashion shows in grand houses around Britain, a practice that would continue well into the 1960's.

These shows raised money for the Royal College of Nursing and the Save the Children Fund amongst others. In November 1958 the House of Dior returned to Blenheim Palace to again raise funds for the Red Cross. Dior himself could not attend this as he tragically died from a heart attack after a flu infection in 1957.



The show was taken over by his very young creative director, Yves Saint Laurent. Princess Margaret was again guest of honour.

The show was filmed for the British Pathé news. The commentator summed up the atmosphere of all who attended when he commented that Dior himself is dead but not his world of haute couture, The King is dead, Long live the King.

The creative designers to follow after Yves Saint Laurent were Marc Bohan, Gianfranco Ferré, John Galiano, Raf Simons and currently Maria Grazia Chiuri.

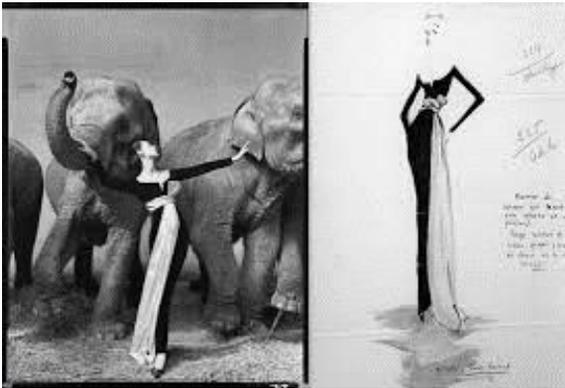
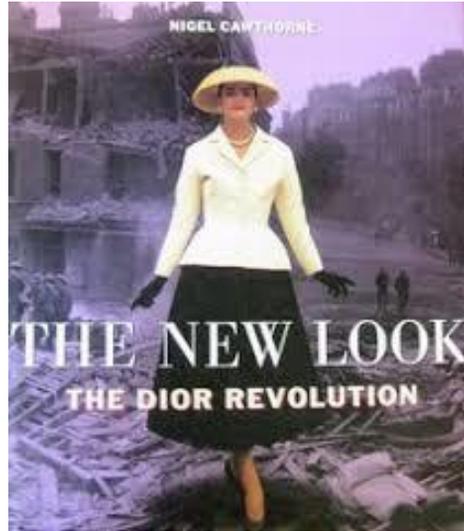
In total there are 500 objects on show and 200 haute couture ensembles.

There are accessories, fashion photography, film, makeup, illustrations and some of Dior's personal possessions. **It is sold out until 10th July!** No chance to get in!

April 2019

## Christian Dior (continued)

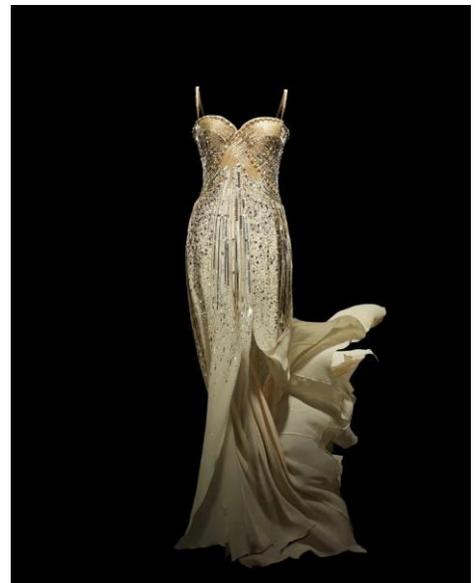
Christian Dior unveiled his first haute couture collection in 1947 in Paris. Carmel Snow the editor of US Harper's Bazaar named it The New Look. The Bar suit became the emblem of the New look. Its exquisitely sculpted jacket and full pleated skirt epitomized the fashionable new silhouette. The jackets had nipped-in waists, soft shoulders and wide or pencil skirts.



Yves Saint Laurent was only 21 years old when he became creative director of Dior in 1957.

His designs were instantly a great success. He presented a more youthful approach, with his Beatnik aesthetic of Paris in 1957 to 1960. Mostly black and white with slim elongated waistlines. Elegant and simple images. Skirts worn over trousers and geometric cuts. This famous photo was taken by Richard Avedon.

The London designer John Galliano became creative director in 1996. He was the most outstanding and controversial of all the Dior designers. Not only were his clothes a wild mix of creative elements but his fashion shows transported the audiences into an entirely new world. He pushed the borders of fashion mixing subversive social themes with a vast range of fashion content, using lavish hand worked fabrics and embroidery. This dress is the icon dress for the Dior perfume **J'adore** worn by Charlize Theron in the advertising campaign.



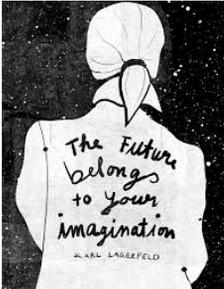
April 2019

## Still on the topic of fashion: Adieu, Karl 1933-2019, the Zsar of German fashion



The news of the death of Karl Lagerfeld came as quite a shock even though he had retired from the spotlight and not personally attended the last Paris show of Coco Chanel. He was a great self invented creation, a dandy, ever present and famous for much more than his talent for designing elegant and striking clothes for the rich high society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He will be greatly missed and there is sadly no one in German fashion to follow him. Rather than looking only at his clothes which can be seen in all the magazines, lets look at some of his drawings and quotes for which he was also very famous!

Elegance is an attitude



I hate the word cheap  
People are cheap  
Clothes are expensive  
or not so expensive



Sweatpants are a sign of defeat  
You lost control of your life  
So you bought some sweatpants



A woman without style has also no  
style when she wears stylish clothes

Keep the best, forget the rest

It is all very simple for me, my life  
starts with me and my life ends with me



April 2019

## News about and for the English ladies



### This is a film biography of the early life of the American Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg played by Felicity Jones and her fight against discrimination on the basis of sex.

This film is called Die Berufung in German.

As a young woman, Ruth is patronised at Harvard Law School by male professors who are full of their own importance. There is a horribly authentic looking scene in which new women students are humiliated by the dean (Sam Waterston) at a special dinner given allegedly in their honour. She finally has to leave for Columbia Law School, unable to take a Harvard degree, due to family pressures (she is already married with a small child). The dean finds a way to prove that a woman has not the same rights that male students in similar circumstances have which allowed the men to graduate from that university.

In New York, finding a job as a practising lawyer is almost impossible. "A woman and a mother and a Jew to boot!" says one interviewer. So Ruth must content herself with an academic position, and searches for the key case that will take on male privilege and sex discrimination. Shrewdly, she finds it in the case of a wronged man, Charles M Moritz, looking after his ageing mother but refused the right to deduct the cost of hiring a nurse against tax because he was a man, and crucially unmarried. It was sex discrimination, pure and simple. A very hard task taken on by a very strong and determined woman!



### Holmes and Watson. A new Sherlock Holmes comedy film.

Holmes and Watson join forces to investigate a mysterious murder at Buckingham Palace. It seems like an open and shut case as all signs point to Professor Moriarty, the criminal mastermind and enemy of the detective duo. However it is not so easy and so Holmes and his trusted assistant must now use all their skills to try to catch the killer before Queen Victoria becomes the next victim.

Of course the Queen was not amused!

## Birthdays in April

Heidrun Niederschuh

Doris Bühner

Anke Rübsamen Schön

Happy Birthday Ladies !!

