



PRESS RELEASE

THE SECRET ALCHEMY OF A COLLECTION

CURATED BY OLIVIER SAILLARD

Exhibition from July 2nd, 2018 to January 6th 2019

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In 1987 Azzedine Alaïa bought the former "hôtel des évêques de Beauvais" in the Marais where he moved with Christoph von Weyhe in 1991. It was to be both his new work place and home. And it was from here that he received the inspiration for his first collection in the new atelier. Summer 1992.

During the renovation work, Alaïa was surprised to discover frescos on the walls. Driven by his curiosity, he wanted to learn everything he could about these works of art. His patient research was rewarded. Alaïa discovered that a young girl, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, had once lived in his building. The young girl would later take the name of Madame de Pompadour. Alaïa liked to think that it was here where she would have studied with the best teachers of the day and been taught dancing, drawing, painting, engraving, theatre, and all the arts that opened for her the path to the court of Versailles. Pompadour was not born into the aristocracy, but her power and influence on the kingdom of France was legendary. These shadows of Pompadour's presence infused Alaïa's imagination. Pompadour's authority and grace in all matters of beauty and style became for Alaïa the symbol of the freedom of the truly feminine.

He started to work on his Summer collection with these images planted in his mind; incorporating elements reminiscent of XVIII century gowns and corsets, with the hint of a pannier, all in delicate "broderie anglaise". But the frills and lace were in contemporary Alaïa style, with closely fitted body silhouettes. Shirts were gathered up at the back, and short, which made them easy to move around in; practical, with a nod to the stripes of more masculine shirts and jackets. Masculine fashion lines also appeared in short jackets and long sleeves, as well as redingotes and light coats, halfway between a cape and an overcoat. And he added humorous and ironical trompe l'oeil "mon coeur est à papa", while embroidered and printed floral motifs decorated the stretch dresses. The 1992 Summer collection was the largest Azzedine Alaïa had ever presented, with over 115 outfits. Months and months of preparation went into the conception and execution of each piece. Always personally crafted by him, his creative work was done in the solitude of his new home, standing at the table in his studio during long nights spent cutting and sewing. All his emotional forces were joined and grew into this collection where his fascination with Madam Pompadour met his fascination with the power and freedom of a truly feminine woman.

The exhibition is accompanied by a book "**The secret alchemy of a collection**" published by Assouline. In 1991 Prosper Assouline was given an entree into the intensely charged atmosphere of the working studio of Azzedine Alaïa. Never before had an artist allowed the secrets of his atelier to be so fully documented. The result was this book, a reflection on the creative chaos and the fragile and wonderful craziness of the inner workings of the Alaïa Summer 1992 collection.



L'ASSOCIATION AZZEDINE ALAÏA

Azzedine Alaïa lived a life filled with fashion, art, design, architecture, music and theatre.

Mr. Alaïa had been an avid collector in the creative and cultural disciplines for the last fifty years. In 2007, he set about to preserve his own work and his large holdings by founding the Association Azzedine Alaïa to become the Foundation Azzedine Alaïa with his lifetime partner, the painter Christoph Von Weyhe, and his close friend of forty years, the publisher Carla Sozzani.

Through engagement with a variety of cultural institutions, the Foundation will assume the patronage of the cultural programs of the Association and will continue all relevant public functions that the Association has supported for the past 11 years.

The Foundation's treasures will continue to be housed in Paris and will exhibit Alaïa's own work and his collections in Paris, 18 rue de la Verrerie, where he lived and work, and in Sidi Bou Saïd, the town he loved so dearly. In Paris there will be also a library and a bookshop of fashion and cultural history for research and development, and funding of scholarships for promising visionaries in fashion.