



PRESS RELEASE

AZZEDINE ALAÏA COLLECTOR
ALAÏA / GRÈS
beyond fashion

Curated by Olivier Saillard

Exhibition from the 11th September, 2023 until the 11th February 2024

Open every day from 11 am to 7 pm

Full Price: 10€ - Reduced price: 3€

Métro : Hôtel de Ville

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Silent and secretive, determined to a lifetime of seclusion spent entirely in the workshop, Madame Grès (1903-1993) saw herself as a sculptor. Fully immersed in his work, with the relentless determination of tireless masters, and refusing the media excesses of his profession, Azzedine Alaïa (1935-2017) also studied sculpture at the School of Fine Arts in Tunis. This shared ambition was not corrupted by the fashion trades to which they dedicated themselves with such singularity and success. On the contrary, it elevated the art of draping for one and the art of cutting for the other to the level of guiding principles in the history of fashion.

While there is no evidence that the two couturiers ever crossed paths, their creations undoubtedly did. Apostles of a certain form of simplicity, the seemingly simple creations of Grès and Alaïa hide an inherent complexity in their cut and design. Guided by the fabric that governs controls their designs and choices, carefully collected for weeks in the decision-making process of shaping a dress, and assured in their selection of monochromatic colors, with a preference for intense black and plaster white, the two couturiers embraced a community of creation and spirit.

The drapery that Grès had elevated to the level of total art since the 1930s is embodied in Alaïa's long, fluid, and pleated dresses. The jersey embraced by the former translates into knitwear and soft materials in the latter's designs. The pursuit of proportion and the precision in cutting, whether for evening or daytime models, unite them.

"Once you find something that is personal and unique," confessed Madame Grès, "you must fully exploit make the most of it and pursue its realization without stopping, until the very end." To this, Alaïa later responded, "When an idea imposes itself on you, you have to lasso it, turn around it, and never deviate from it."

For the first time, an unprecedented exhibition brings together the works of Madame Grès and Alaïa. United by their formal principles, their cutting techniques, and the harmonious combinations of fabric and colors they commonly embraced, the evening gowns and day dresses by both couturiers invite visitors to a lesson beyond fashion. Timeless for one, and outside beyond of time for the other, the exhibited creations, totaling 60, restore the 60 creations on show re-established the dialogue between Grès and Alaïa, two solitary and determined individuals who became sculptors of dresses.

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Madame Grès, whose real name was Germaine Krebs, began working in the 1930s. In 1933, on rue de Miromesnil in Paris, she joined forces with Julie Barton to open the house Alix Barton, which became Maison Alix in 1934 on rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. She quickly achieved great success with her designs reminiscing of antique statuary and at the same time perfectly adapted to modern life thanks to her own draping technique.

Following disputes with her associates, Germaine Krebs founded the house Grès in 1942, an anagram of her husband Serge's first name. She established the white salons of her house and its workshops at 1 rue de la Paix, right in the heart of Paris. Indifferent to the trends and fads of the decades, Madame Grès presented her timeless collections here until 1987. Among her famous clients were Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Maria Casares, Delphine Seyrig, and Grace Kelly.

Azzedine Alaïa, Franco-Tunisian couturier, has created an exceptional body of work in the fashion industry, earning him his reputation as one of the most talented designers of his generation.

Upon his arrival in Paris in 1956, Azzedine Alaïa worked as a couturier for a private clientele. He was particularly influenced by the timeless elegance of some of his clients, such as Louise de Vilmorin, Arletty, Simone Zehrfuss, Cécile de Rothschild or Greta Garbo.

He presented his first ready-to-wear collection in 1982. He always remained closely connected to women, some of whom became his muses, including Grace Jones and Tina Turner. He also contributed to launching the careers of several models, including Naomi Campbell, Farida Khelfa, Stephanie Seymour, Tatjana Patitz, Cindy Crawford, and Veronica Webb.

Alaïa is one of the last couturiers to master every stage in the design and production of a garment. A master of cut and a worthy successor to the couture masters, he is also a great collector, having acquired over 15 000 pieces, bearing witness to the creations of fashion history in the 19th and 20th centuries. These include 700 dresses by Madame Grès now owned by the foundation that he wished for. A selection of models and photographs are being presented for the first time in the exhibition spaces.

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Madame Grès, c. 1963 © Colin Gray



Alaïa, Spring-Summer 1991 © Andrea&Valentina



Madame Grès, Haute Couture Spring-Summer 1975
© Colin Gray



Alaïa, Haute Couture Summer 1991
© Andrea&Valentina

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AZZEDINE ALAÏA FOUNDATION

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 past fifty years. In 2007, he set about to preserve his own work and his large holdings by founding the Association Azzedine Alaïa, later becoming the Azzedine Alaïa Foundation, with his lifetime partner, and his close friend of forty years, the publisher Carla Sozzani.

The Azzedine Alaïa Foundation has been recognized as a public utility on February 28th, 2020. The Foundation's missions are the conservation and enhancement of the work of Azzedine Alaïa, the pieces he collected throughout his life in the fields of art, fashion and design, the organization of exhibitions, and the support for cultural and educational activities.

The foundation houses its collections in Paris and exhibits Alaïa's own work as well as his collections. It is located at 18 rue de la Verrerie where he lived and work and in Sidi Bou Saïd, the town he loved so dearly.

A bookshop and café, featuring books on fashion and cultural history, are also situated at the heart of the Foundation in Paris.

The Foundation also gives awards to promising visionaries in fashion.

The signature logo of the Azzedine Alaïa Foundation was designed by Julian Schnabel.

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