



PRESS RELEASE

# Azzedine Alaïa *and* Christian Dior

## Two masters of Haute Couture

Curated by Olivier Saillard

**Exhibition from December 15<sup>th</sup>, until May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Open every day from 11 am to 7 pm

Full Price: 10€ - Reduced price: 3€

Métro : Hôtel de Ville

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In 1956, Paris was no longer the distant horizon that the young Azzedine Alaïa gazed at dreamily as he leafed through fashion magazines. Leaving Tunis with nothing but a letter of recommendation in his pocket, he arrived in the capital and, killing two birds with one stone, crossed the threshold of the largest fashion house. Encouraged by Habiba Menchari, a figurehead of women's emancipation in Tunisia and mother of Leila, a close friend, Azzedine Alaïa arrived at the airport and went straight to the Champ de Mars, to the home of Madame Lévy-Despas, a client of Christian Dior. She found him an internship in the workshops. At a time when Dior's fashion dominated the world and the decade, the couturier of the New Look was still alive. Alaïa arrived on tiptoe on June 25, 1956, but only stayed a few days in the workshops on Rue François 1<sup>er</sup>. Sometimes life decides otherwise.

But the budding couturier would harbour boundless admiration for Dior, whose dresses, veritable architectures of levitating petticoats, never ceased to fascinate him. The first dresses that Alaïa made for a few clients summed up his passion for the Parisian-style dresses so glamorously mastered by Christian Dior. These cocktail dresses, which, in his words, 'seemed to stand up on their own,' led him to the mysteries of cutting that he sought to solve throughout his life, becoming himself the most virtuoso couturier of his time.

Throughout his career, Alaïa's work remained a silent witness to the youthful impression Dior's suits and coats, short and long dresses had made on him. He shared Dior's taste for accentuated waists, sculpted shoulders, curved hips and voluminous skirts. They were also united by a shared heritage of refined fabrics and colours, such as the immoderate use of all shades of black and grey, which transformed dresses into timeless statements. A couturier who never refused the lessons of his masters and predecessors, whose documents and creations he tracked down, Alaïa was also an inspired and extravagant collector. Throughout his life, he acquired more than 500 Christian Dior designs, thus protecting them from possible loss or damage.

The exhibition *'Azzedine Alaïa and Christian Dior, Two Masters of Haute Couture'* brings together nearly 70 designs by the two couturiers. Archives from the 1950<sup>s</sup> and creations by Azzedine Alaïa, all from the collections he painstakingly assembled and which are now preserved in his foundation, engage in a subtle dialogue. Despite the decades that separate them, formal agreements, colour combinations, similarities in ornamentation and inspiration attest to the reconciliation of fashion and time that these two great couturiers naturally led and governed.

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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, Christoph von Weyhe 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 at 18 Rue de la Verrerie, where he lived and worked. Here the Foundation shows exhibitions about Azzedine Alaïa own work as well his collections of the History of Fashion, photography and design.

A bookshop and café restaurant, 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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