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Cocktail Culture: Ritual and Invention in American Fashion, 1920-1980

April 15, 2011-July 31, 2011

Cocktail drinking inspired a new language of dress and design in the twentieth century. Distinctly American, the cocktail tradition was established during Prohibition (1919–1933), when illicit drinking took place in secret clubs and private residences. The risqué spirit of cocktail drinking—infused with exclusive company, glamour, and witty conversation and heightened by the possibility of overindulgence—continued to energize social entertaining in America through World War II, postwar suburban culture, the counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the glittering disco era.

This exhibition traces the shifting shapes, materials, and embellishments of cocktail-inspired attire and barware, highlighting their elegance and inventiveness with an eye to the rapid social changes that shaped their design. In the first half of the twentieth century, for example, a time when hemlines and roles were prescribed, the cocktail hour created an opportunity for flirtation and social climbing, and with that a desire for lighthearted yet chic fashion distinct from formal evening attire and functional day wear. By midcentury the cocktail dress, as well as fashions in shakers, glasses, and trays as promoted by women's magazines and department stores, attracted design-conscious American consumers. The flapper, resort wear, the New Look, ethnic dress, the pants suit, spangled and revealing disco attire—all of these fashions had iterations as cocktail party attire. The current resurgence of interest in all things cocktail, including ersatz urban speakeasies, elaborate mixed drinks, and Tiki bars, attests to nostalgia for the glamour and role playing of earlier eras and reminds us that cocktail drinking is a ritual with potent significance in American life and design.

Cocktail Culture is sponsored by Swarovski Elements and Swarovski Consumer Goods Business, with additional support from The Coby Foundation and the Museum Associates.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

William Steig, American, 1907-2003

Drinking Glasses, 1960s

Glass with paint

Gift of Walter Feldman 1986.030



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Oscar de la Renta, Dominican, 1932-2014, designer

Oscar de la Renta, design label

Pink and metallic patterned dress with gold trim, 1970

Silk, metallic filament, plastic, crystal; compound weave, plaited

Gift of Erma Leavitt 1986.128.2



Revlers, American

Purple and gold shoes, 1940's

Silk, leather, wood, crystal; satin, gilt leather

Gift of Erma Leavitt 1986.128.6



Elsa Schiaparelli, French, 1890-1973, designer, design house
Rose's, retailer

Taupe velvet hat with embellished net overlay, Early 1950's

Cotton, synthetic, plastic; net, cut warp pile, embellished

Gift of Janet MacCausland 1986.132.2



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Beth Levine, American, 1914-2006, designer
Herbert Levine, American, 1948 - 1975, label and manufacturer
Black suede shoes with net and velvet rosettes, 1956
Suede, wood, silk; net, cut warp pile
Gift of Courtney Brown 1986.150

Carefully selected and coordinated accessories were a cornerstone of 1950s and 1960s dressing. A simple dress could be transformed into a spectacular ensemble by a whimsical feather-trimmed cartwheel hat and sparkling jewelry. Further, not since the Gilded Age (1870s-1880s) had such importance been placed on the covering of one's hands, and gloves became a necessity. Milliners abounded, but the custom designed work of Lilly Dache for both head and hands was particularly coveted. In Dache's words, "Glamour is what makes a man ask for your telephone number. But it also is what makes a woman ask for the name of your dressmaker." Her work epitomizes the ladylike and "smart" style of the era.



Magda Polivanov, American, b. Russia, 1909-1985, designer
Mardi Gras Dress and Bolero Ensemble, ca. 1936
Cotton; plain weave, hand woodblock printed
Gift of Miss Margaret Evans 1987.053.2

Dressing for the cocktail hour in tropical climes afforded greater freedoms than "city" dressing. While on holiday men and women embraced elements of the local culture via their travel wardrobe, be it inspiration in the form of cut or pattern, as in a sequined Mariachi band adorning the playful black-and-white ensemble likely made in Mexico.



The travelers' home away from home—the cruise ship—embraced some of the most stylish graphics of the period, such as the advertising poster for the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique/French Line on the wall adjacent to this platform. A commission for the lounge of the British Cunard Lines flagship liner the "Queen Mary," the fabric *Flowers and Leaves* by Bloomsbury group designer Duncan Grant (see hanging textile on this platform), may have been too avant-garde, as the design was rejected at the final hour.

Georgianna Brown Harbeson, American, 1894-1980, designer
Repeal the 18th Amendment sampler, 1932
Wool, cotton; plain weave, embroidered
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund, Mary B. Jackson Fund and Walter H. Kimball Fund 1988.018

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Marimekko, Finnish, established 1951, design house
Design Research, American, retailer
Dress, 1966
Cotton; plain weave, screenprinted
Anonymous gift 1988.045.29

Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-and-white printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.



Roberto Juarez, American, b. 1952
Cocktail Party, 1981
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 1988.049.1



Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo, Spanish, 1871-1949
Fortuny Inc., American, 1927 - 1994
Fortuny, Italian, 1899 - 1946, design house
Delphos dress, Dress and original box 1900s-1950s
Silk, Murano glass beads; satin weave, pleated, printed, lashed
Gift in memory of William Rhys Cooper by John Cooper, Richard Cooper, Robert Cooper and Peggy Cooper 1989.063.12

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Lilly Daché, American, ca. 1904-1989, designer

Lilly Daché, design label

White knit cotton gloves, 1955-1965

Cotton, plastic; knit

Gift of Sybil Kern 1990.112.18

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Dansk International Designs Ltd., Danish, founded 1954

Jens Quistgaard, Danish, 1919 - 2008, designer

Ice Bucket, 1960

Teak

Gift of Hannah Myers 1990.123



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947, dressmaker and retailer

Black sequined dress with silver diamond detail, ca. 1925

Silk, imitation jet, glass bugle beads, stamped metal sequins, rhinestones; plain weave, embroidered, studded

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.42

While at-home cocktail attire was associated with elegance in languid motion, with the clatter of shakers and the slow glide of socializing, a night out on the town necessitated a dress made for the bustle of the illuminated city. The vitality and fast tempo of Harlem jazz clubs in the 1920s had a major influence on fashion. Whether the evening involved a clandestine visit to a speakeasy, a jaunt to a dance hall, or a trip up to Harlem's infamous clubs, the short, unstructured flapper silhouette with swaying hem and glistening beads and sequins was a lively complement to the nocturnal cocktail-fueled agenda. Similarly, the 1930s dresses with longer flowing hemline and figure-



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skimming silhouette, defined as here by ethereal chiffon or accented with swinging fringe, were created with dancing in mind. The elegant and practical design of the T-strap shoe proved indispensable for the hours of dancing that characterized a night in the city.

Simonetta (Duchesa Simonetta Colonna di Cesaro), Italian, designer
Cocktail Dress, ca. 1955
Silk and acetate compound weave
Mary B. Jackson Fund 1991.108.1

As the bleakness of war faded from memory, the mystique of Europe, and especially Paris, captured the imagination of fashionable Americans anew. When Christian Dior presented his first collection in 1947, reports from Paris flooded the news. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar, dubbed it the "New Look." A blatant repudiation of wartime austerity, Dior's collection featured a romantic and feminine hourglass silhouette with a full skirt of luxurious and expensive fabric, heightened in effect with layers of petticoats and a lengthened hemline. Padded hips, sloping shoulders, cinched waist, and a long, rounded back created a new softened posture well suited to a woman's cocktail party stance, which encouraged viewing from multiple perspectives. The cocktail dress had come into its own.

Though it was Dior who anointed the early evening dress the "cocktail dress," he credited America with its invention. Despite their homegrown innovation, American women flocked to purchase the latest cocktail attire introduced by the French couture houses, including Dior, Chanel, Balmain, and Balenciaga, and in donning them saw themselves as radiating worldly sophistication and glamour.

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947, dressmaker and retailer
F. Ducharme Silk Co., Inc., French, manufacturer
Length, 1921
Silk, wrapped metallic yarn; cut warp pile
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.48

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Norman Norell, Inc., American, 1960 - 1972, manufacturer
Norman Norell, American, 1900-1972, designer
Cocktail Dress, ca. 1969
Wool, crystal, plastic, metal, crepe yarn; twill weave, embroidered
Gift of Loretta and Max Bernegger 1992.036.11

By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.

Christian Dior, French, 1905-1957, designer
House of Dior, French, design house
Navy silk belted dress with cape collar, ca. 1954
Silk, leather; plain weave, gauze weave
Gift of Mrs. William C. Ford, Mrs. John F. Ball and Mrs. William Leatherman, The Elizabeth Parke Firestone Collection 1992.067.2

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Peter Todd Mitchell, American, 1924-1988, designer
Black-and-white checkerboard scarf printed with the signs of the zodiac, ca. 1950s

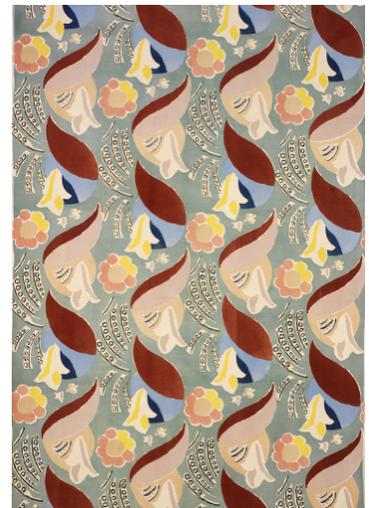
Silk; twill weave, screenprinted
Gift of Priscilla Cunningham 1992.077.1



Duncan Grant, British, 1885-1978, designer
Allan Walton Fabrics, English, manufacturer
Flowers and Leaves furnishing textile, 1936
Cotton; cut warp pile, hand screenprinted
Mary B. Jackson Fund 1993.024

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Paco Rabanne, Spanish, b. 1934, designer, design label
Purse, ca. 1965
chromium; linked disks
Gift of the Estate of Eleanor Fayerweather 1993.085.088



Adolfo Sardina, Cuban, b. 1933, designer
Adolfo, design label
White embroidered floral dress with fringed sleeves, ca. 1970
Silk, crepe yarn; satin weave, machine embroidered, knotted fringe
Gift of Isabelle Weinstein 1994.066



Saul Steinberg, American, b. Romania, 1914-1999, designer
Greeff Fabrics, manufacturer
Opera, ca. 1950
Cotton; plain weave, screenprinted
Gift of Pamela A. Parmal 1994.076



Mackay Starr, American, mid 20th century, designer
White silk with gold leather platform shoes, ca. 1950
silk, leather, wood, crystal; compound weave, gilt
Gift of Mrs. Frederic W. Schwartz 1998.54.2



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Yves Saint Laurent, French, 1936-2008, designer, design house
Green leather evening sandals, ca. 1970
Leather; pieced
Gift of Irena Urdang deTour 1998.86.11



Maija Isola, Finnish, 1927-2001, designer
Marimekko, Finnish, established 1951, design house
Ataman, 1960
cotton; plain weave, screenprinted
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1999.29.3



Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-and-white printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.

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Jean Elizabeth Muir, English, 20th century, designer
Black dotted knit dress with belt, ca. 1975
Rayon, metallic pigmen, plastic; knitted, printed
Gift of Arlene and Robert Kogod 1999.37.4

Freed of supportive internal understructures, abbreviated in length, and fashioned in lightweight rayon and silk knits, dresses previously unthinkable away from the seaside or European resort began to find their way into the city and club culture of the 1970s. Emilio Pucci's bold, multicolored design exemplifies this manner of dressing, and is evocative of the liberal and international character of the 1960s and 1970s woman. Revealing silk knits found only in swimwear and cruise attire in the 1930s and 1940s now skimmed the figures of many American women. Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy were both fans of the modern and body conscious Pucci printed silk shift. Jean Muir's black knit with gold dots translates the breezy nonchalant attitude of Pucci's designs to disco culture.



Norman Norell deftly kept pace with the times, and continued to offer women unfettered but elegant offerings into the 1970s. While appearing to be a mere wisp of a dress, with a classical Grecian overtone, Norell's 1971 cream silk dress with gold buttons possesses all the hallmarks of a couture garment, but without the overt structure of his earlier work (see the red dress with cartridge-pleated skirt on the Rules platform).

Roy Halston Frowick, American, 1932-1990, designer
Halston Enterprises, American
Pink silk knit halter dress, ca. 1980
Silk, leather; knit jersey, gilded leather
Gift of Arlene and Robert Kogod 1999.37.6

American
Cocktail Glass, 1920s
Enamel and glass
Jesse Metcalf Fund 1999.58.4

In pursuit of exuberance of the "bright young things" blazing their way through the illicit urban speakeasies during Prohibition (1919-1933), an older generation of progressives defied the laws at home, brandishing their freedoms with chic loungewear and gleaming beverage accessories. Gatherings in private houses offered opportunities to consume better spirits and to strike a fashionable but safely irreverent pose with like minds.



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The motion and nervous energy satirized by Newman Levy and John Held, Jr., in *Saturday to Monday*, a book of verse describing the antics of a weekend house party, is palpable in the angled contours of Erik Magnussen's cocktail set for Gorham. Likewise, Lurelle Guild's canapé dish was designed for mobility and multi-tasking at a party, with a graceful handle and a place to secure one's glass and nibbles.

Bianchini, Férier, French, est. 1888, manufacturer
Apparel Fabric, 1926
silk, wrapped metallic yarn; plain weave, continuous supplementary weft, roller printed
Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.7



Hubert de Givenchy, French, b. 1927, designer
House of Givenchy, French, est. 1952, design label
Orange printed silk chiffon dress, ca. 1970
Silk; plain weave, printed
Gift of Mary Douglas 1999.99.7



While the disco floor accommodated a sensational array of personalities and their individual styles, its glittering spotlight found an ideal icon in Halston, both the man and his creations. Not only did he live the life of a lounge lizard, frolicking at haunts like Studio 54 with the rich and famous, but his designs like the liquid halter dress on view here revived 1930s cocktail-infused Hollywood glamour. Also reminiscent of the fashions and flavor of cocktail culture's early heyday are the Mollie Parnis sequined pantsuit, the matelasse Pauline Trigere halter dress, and the ethereal chiffon Givenchy dress.

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Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.10

In 1950 designers Russel and Mary Wright published the pioneering book *Guide to Easier Living*, a comprehensive manual that promoted a casual and efficient approach to life in the new suburbs. Among their many recommendations for simplifying daily life, the Wrights suggested that a host and hostess work in harmony to eschew the formalities of traditional entertaining in favor of a do-it-yourself, easygoing affair. Buffets, barbecues, and cocktails served in festive glassware such as their Eclipse line, shown here, accorded with their view of the "New Hospitality" that would create a relaxing atmosphere for guests and host alike.



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Highball Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.11

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Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Old Fashioned Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.12

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Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Goblet, 1951
Glass
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.4



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Zombie Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.7



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Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Double Old Fashioned Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.8



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Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Bartlett Collins Glass Co., American, 1914-, manufacturer
Eclipse Cordial Glass, 1957
Glass with decals
Gift of Jan Howard and Dennis Teepe 2000.47.9



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Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel, French, 1883-1971, designer
House of Chanel, French, design house
Green and silver patterned tunic and skirt with rhinestone embellishment, 1967
silk, synthetic filament, wrapped metallic yarn, rhinestones;
compound weave, embroidered
Gift of Rita Grossman 2000.63.4

By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.

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James Van Der Zee, American, 1886-1983

Satin and Fur, 1932

Gelatin silver print

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.32.2

The image of a young woman dressed in a fashionable bias-cut satin gown and fur wrap comes from the studio of renowned photographer James Van Der Zee. Best known for his luminous portraits of prominent figures from the Harlem Renaissance, Van Der Zee crafted sensitive portraits of diverse sitters. By building a relationship with each patron, and accessorizing portraits with props from his studio collection to suit the sitter's personality, Van Der Zee afforded each client the most glamorous and sophisticated photograph possible. His work remained largely unknown until the 1969 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*, and has since become regarded as the premier visual resource documenting life in Harlem from 1916 to just after World War II



Purse with copper colored beads, ca.1950

Rayon, glass beads; embroidered

Gift of Phyllis Littman Corwin 2001.40

This necklace and bracelet set from Miriam Haskell—today considered one of the most collectible costume jewelry firms—is a fine example of the designer's love of unusual and often mundane materials. Far ahead of their time, Haskell and her principal designer, Frank Hess, mixed high and low materials such as shells, wood, and plastics with rhinestones and plate metals. Innovative 20th-century materials such as celluloid and Nylon adorn the streamlined shapes of this group of handbags from the 1940s and 1950s. With flat bottoms, these bags were designed to rest proudly on the bar, and were fully embellished, befitting such a prominent location. A similar dynamism is found in the design of the G. Howard Hodge hat, with its sweep of red velvet accentuating a low dip across the wearer's face.



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American

Black silk chiffon dress, ca. 1929

silk; plain weave, smocked, pleated

Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.1

While at-home cocktail attire was associated with elegance in languid motion, with the clatter of shakers and the slow glide of socializing, a night out on the town necessitated a dress made for the bustle of the illuminated city. The vitality and fast tempo of Harlem jazz clubs in the 1920s had a major influence on fashion. Whether the evening involved a clandestine visit to a speakeasy, a jaunt to a dance hall, or a trip up to Harlem's infamous clubs, the short, unstructured flapper silhouette with swaying hem and glistening beads and sequins was a lively complement to the nocturnal cocktail-fueled agenda.

Similarly, the 1930s dresses with longer flowing hemline and figure-skimming silhouette, defined as here by ethereal chiffon or accented with swinging fringe, were created with dancing in mind. The elegant and practical design of the T-strap shoe proved indispensable for the hours of dancing that characterized a night in the city.



American

Multicolored floral silk dress and short-sleeved jacket, ca. 1935

Silk, crepe yarn; compound weave, roller printed

Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.10

Dressing for the cocktail hour in tropical climes afforded greater freedoms than "city" dressing. While on holiday men and women embraced elements of the local culture via their travel wardrobe, be it inspiration in the form of cut or pattern, as in a sequined Mariachi band adorning the playful black-and-white ensemble likely made in Mexico.

The travelers' home away from home-the cruise ship-embraced some of the most stylish graphics of the period, such as the advertising poster for the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique/French Line on the wall adjacent to this platform. A commission for the lounge of the British Cunard Lines flagship liner the "Queen Mary," the fabric Flowers and Leaves by Bloomsbury group designer Duncan Grant (see hanging textile on this platform), may have been too avant-garde, as the design was rejected at the final hour.



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Reg. U.S. Pat. Office, American
Textron Incorporated, American
Cream dress printed with clover flowers and ferns, 1940s
rayon; plain weave, printed
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.15

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John W. Thomas & Co., American, 1867-1969, retailer
Light brown silk twill woman's suit, 1947
Silk; twill weave
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.18

During World War II, from 1942 until 1946, sweeping dress restrictions per Government Order L85 limited available fabric yardage and led to a pared-down silhouette. Embellishment using non-rationed materials or dressmaking flourishes-as in the pleated peplum of the black acetate Jennifer suit-added a sense of style while maintaining a remarkable economy of fabric.

The restrictions made cocktail attire more understated than in previous decades. As seen here, a new slim profile of sheath-like dresses with shortened hems and modest but eye-catching detailing replaced the long flowing bias-cut dresses of the 1930s. Slender suits allowed for a smart workday appearance to double as a practical yet elegant cocktail look.

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RISD MUSEUM

Liberty House, label

Brown floral man's shirt, ca. 1950

Rayon; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.24

In the 1930s tourists were able to step onto a luxury ocean liner in San Francisco and after five indulgent days alight on the island paradise of Hawaii. The colorful Hawaiian shirt, with patterns referencing the multiethnic population of the islands, popped into the wardrobes of Hawaiian residents in the 1930s and was quickly adopted by visitors as a souvenir. After World War II, several major retail stores on the U.S. mainland imported, or even produced, these shirts to sell to a menswear market keen on revisiting the comfort and relaxation of vacation.

Department stores like Gump's in San Francisco opened branches in Hawaii, selling elegant attire like the cream silk wrap dress on view here, which would have been perfect for enjoying an early evening cocktail at one of the famous tiki bars-Don the Beachcomber or Trader Vic's-serving rum drinks amid Pacific Island totems to thirsty patrons for decades.

Brent Sportswear from California, American, design label

Montgomery Ward, American, retailer

Green patterned man's shirt, 1950's

Rayon; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.25

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RISD MUSEUM

Yvette, American, label

Grey cotton floral halter dress with rhinestone embellishment, 1950's
Cotton, crystals; plain weave, embroidered, glazed, printed
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.27

Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-and-white printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.

Possibly; Mexican

Black-and-white printed cotton ensemble with sequins, 1950s
Cotton, sequins; plain weave, printed, hand painted, embroidered
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.28

Dressing for the cocktail hour in tropical climes afforded greater freedoms than "city" dressing. While on holiday men and women embraced elements of the local culture via their travel wardrobe, be it inspiration in the form of cut or pattern, as in a sequined Mariachi band adorning the playful black-and-white ensemble likely made in Mexico.

The travelers' home away from home-the cruise ship-embraced some of the most stylish graphics of the period, such as the advertising poster for the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique/French Line on the wall adjacent to this platform. A commission for the lounge of the British Cunard Lines flagship liner the "Queen Mary," the fabric Flowers and Leaves by Bloomsbury group designer Duncan Grant (see hanging textile on this platform), may have been too avant-garde, as the design was rejected at the final hour.



RISD MUSEUM

Mollie Parnis, American, 1905-1992, designer, design label
Gold sequin pantsuit, ca. 1967
polyester, sequins; knit
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.34



G. Howard Hodge, American, 20th century, custom milliner
Black velvet hat with red detailing, ca. 1940
Silk, rubber, cotton; cut warp pile, quilting
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.58



This necklace and bracelet set from Miriam Haskell—today considered one of the most collectible costume jewelry firms—is a fine example of the designer's love of unusual and often mundane materials. Far ahead of their time, Haskell and her principal designer, Frank Hess, mixed high and low materials such as shells, wood, and plastics with rhinestones and plate metals. Innovative 20th-century materials such

as celluloid and Nylon adorn the streamlined shapes of this group of handbags from the 1940s and 1950s. With flat bottoms, these bags were designed to rest proudly on the bar, and were fully embellished, befitting such a prominent location. A similar dynamism is found in the design of the G. Howard Hodge hat, with its sweep of red velvet accentuating a low dip across the wearer's face.

Elizabeth Arden, American, 1891-1966, designer and director
Elizabeth Arden, American, salon and design house
Black velvet and net hat, 1950's
Silk, metal; machine lace, cut warp pile
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.65

While best known today as a cosmetics firm, Elizabeth Arden employed numerous designers, including Charles James and Oscar de la Renta, to craft both apparel and accessories for the house label. James, who began his career as a milliner, worked as the head of the Arden fashion salon for several years in the 1940s, and while this demure black cocktail hat is from the 1950s, it shows his lasting influence on the house style. An architectural spiral of black velvet and net, Arden's hat offers a twist of glamour to cocktail dressing.



RISD MUSEUM

Bally, manufacturer
Schönenwerd
White leather shoes, ca. 1940
Leather, metal; plaited
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.81



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Graceline
Black purse with celluloid lid, ca. 1950
Nylon, rayon, celluloid, metal, plastic; jersey knit
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.96



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RISD MUSEUM

Jacques Griffe, French, b. 1917
Griffe of Paris, French, design house
Black tiered dress with trumpet hem, Spring/Summer 1951
Silk, nylon; plain weave
Gift of Ronald and Lillian Dick 2001.83.10

In the postwar period American designers for both interiors and fashion continued to be internationally revered as innovative and expert craftsmen. A healthy rivalry existed between American and French designers, particularly between the houses of Dior and Norman Norell. While Dior has long been credited with the creation of the New Look, Norell presented a similar silhouette in 1946, one year before Dior's famous collection. Norell gained the respect of the Parisian couturiers as his work employed fabrics, detailing, and construction on par with their own, and although produced in America, his garments commanded prices nearly the same as for a French look. Norell, along with fellow American designers Arnold Scaasi (see the red patterned strapless dress) and Philip Hulitar (see the light-brown lace dress) offered the American consumer high style ready-to-wear alternatives to the *Chambre Syndicale de la haute couture* of Paris. Upon his death, the *New York Times* proclaimed that Norell "Made 7th Ave. the Rival of Paris."

Setting the backdrop for this platform, the furnishing fabric *Trapeze* (see the hanging textile) from American textile designer Estelle Laverne echoes the dynamism found in fashion and music of the same period. Confined to a strict grid, the yellow and green triangles rhythmically bounce across the surface of this hand-screenprinted textile, where periodic moments of misregistration only add to the design's appeal.

Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel, French, 1883-1971, designer
House of Chanel, French, design house
Black lace strapless dress with velvet sash, 1958
Silk, cotton; machine lace, cut warp pile, net
Gift of Ronald and Lillian Dick 2001.83.16

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RISD MUSEUM

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Christian Dior, French, 1905-1957, designer
Christian Dior, French, design house
Black silk dress with sash, Fall/Winter 1954
Silk; satin weave
Gift of Ronald and Lillian Dick 2001.83.17

The ingredients for the perfect cocktail dress are just like those of the perfect cocktail: they must be well balanced yet dynamic, with just enough tension to make the mix at once delectable, mysterious, and memorable. Perhaps the ultimate design challenge, the cocktail dress must flatter from all angles, as the wearer spends little time seated. The garment must also display enough glamour to transition from dusk to night.

This iconic look from Christian Dior, credited as the first designer to use the phrase "cocktail dress," possesses all the right ingredients in perfect balance: it is flattering in the round, with the luxurious,

heavyweight black satin skimming the figure, simultaneously accentuating and concealing; its demure V-neck is just deep enough to frame a necklace, but not too deep as to reveal too much décolleté; and the waist is accentuated with a wide fringed sash, releasing into a full skirt, deemed the epitome of femininity. The little black cocktail dress, while a staple since the 1920s, became a truly iconic garment after the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in which star Audrey Hepburn appeared in her Givenchy rendition.



RISD MUSEUM

Cristóbal Balenciaga, Spanish, 1895-1972, designer
House of Balenciaga, Spanish, est. 1937 - ca. 1960, design house
Black suit with three-quarter sleeves, 1951
Silk, cotton, plastic; plain weave with grouped weft yarns, warp and weft floats
Gift of Ronald and Lillian Dick 2001.83.7

As the bleakness of war faded from memory, the mystique of Europe, and especially Paris, captured the imagination of fashionable Americans anew. When Christian Dior presented his first collection in 1947, reports from Paris flooded the news. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar, dubbed it the "New Look." A blatant repudiation of wartime austerity, Dior's collection featured a romantic and feminine hourglass silhouette with a full skirt of luxurious and expensive fabric, heightened in effect with layers of petticoats and a lengthened hemline. Padded hips, sloping shoulders, cinched waist, and a long, rounded back created a new softened posture well suited to a woman's cocktail party stance, which encouraged viewing from multiple perspectives. The cocktail dress had come into its own.

Though it was Dior who anointed the early evening dress the "cocktail dress," he credited America with its invention. Despite their homegrown innovation, American women flocked to purchase the latest cocktail attire introduced by the French couture houses, including Dior, Chanel, Balmain, and Balenciaga, and in donning them saw themselves as radiating worldly sophistication and glamour.

American
Animal print silk twill scarf, ca. 1950
Silk; twill weave, screenprinted
Gift of Maria Ksiezopolska 2003.129.5



RISD MUSEUM

Estelle Laverne, American, b. 1915
Laverne Originals, American, 1938-
Trapeze furnishing fabric, ca. 1954
Linen; plain weave, hand screenprinted
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.25.2

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Adele Simpson (Adele Smithline), American, 1904-1995
Adele Simpson, American, design house
Green floral belted dress, 1972
silk, leather; twill weave, printed
Gift of Mrs. Harriet Samors 2004.40.2

Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative



RISD MUSEUM

prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-and-white printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.

Roy Halston Frowick, American, 1932-1990
Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer
Black headpiece with silk flower and sequins, 1960s
Silk, plastic sequins; satin weave, net, embroidered
Gift of Hope Davidson 2004.42.4

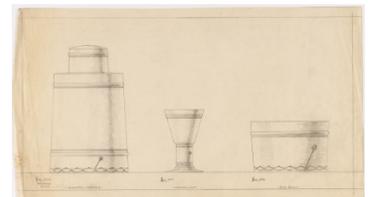


Cristóbal Balenciaga, Spanish, 1895-1972, designer
Black lace dress with bows and pleating, ca. 1967
Cotton, silk, lace, crepe yarn; machine lace, plain weave, embroidery
Transfer from The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology,
Gift of Mrs. Ephram London & Mr. Walter Eytan 2004.63.2



By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.

Gorham Manufacturing Company, American, 1831-
Design for Palm Tree Cocktail Set, 1928
Ink on waxed paper
Gift of Lenox, Incorporated 2005.118.45.971



RISD MUSEUM

Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer
Black rayon dress with white collar and bow, 1941
Rayon, crepe yarn; plain weave, embroidered
Gift of the Goddard family 2005.89.3

During World War II, from 1942 until 1946, sweeping dress restrictions per Government Order L85 limited available fabric yardage and led to a pared-down silhouette. Embellishment using non-rationed materials or dressmaking flourishes—as in the pleated peplum of the black acetate Jennifer suit—added a sense of style while maintaining a remarkable economy of fabric.

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Such straightforward design is epitomized in Claire McCardell's sophisticated and efficient strapless dress ensemble and in Isamu Noguchi's occasional table. Combining a sculptural sensibility with transparent functionality, it conceals nothing and celebrates a warm and natural minimal aesthetic.

Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer
Black silk dress with woven silver floral bands, 1936
Silk, wrapped metallic yarn; compound weave
Gift of the Goddard family 2005.89.7

While at-home cocktail attire was associated with elegance in languid motion, with the clatter of shakers and the slow glide of socializing, a night out on the town necessitated a dress made for the bustle of the illuminated city. The vitality and fast tempo of Harlem jazz clubs in the 1920s had a major influence on fashion. Whether the evening involved a clandestine visit to a speakeasy, a jaunt to a dance hall, or a trip up to Harlem's infamous clubs, the short, unstructured flapper silhouette with swaying hem and glistening beads and sequins was a lively complement to the nocturnal cocktail-fueled agenda.

Similarly, the 1930s dresses with longer flowing hemline and figure-skimming silhouette, defined as here by ethereal chiffon or accented with swinging fringe, were created with dancing in mind. The elegant and practical design of the T-strap shoe proved indispensable for the hours of dancing that characterized a night in the city.

RISD MUSEUM

Probably; French

Black silk net dress with gold sequin trim, mid 1920's
Silk, stamped metal sequins, glass beads; net, embroidery
Gift of the Goddard family 2005.89.8

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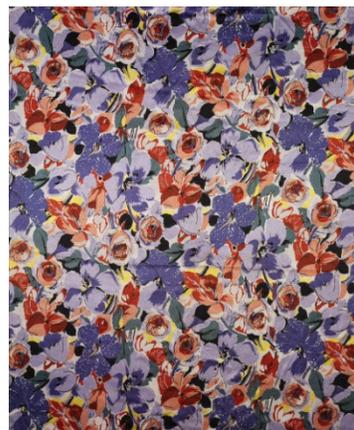
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Gorham Manufacturing Company, American, 1831-, retailer
Donald H. Colflesh, American, b. 1932, designer
Modern Beverage Server and Stirrer, 1959
Silver, plastic; electroplated
Gift of Sam Hough 2006.113.1



François Ducharne, French, 1920-present, manufacturer
Apparel Fabric, ca. 1938
Silk, crepe yarn; satin weave, roller printed
Gift of Mrs. Beatrice Murray Willis 2006.25.8

In the 1930s dresses became as streamlined as an ocean liner. Cut on the bias so that they clung to and moved with the body, they were perfectly suited to shipboard or border-town resort cocktail affairs. This exuberant printed floral apparel fabric would have been made up into a dress much like that on the adjacent platform, where the sheen of the satin weave would highlight the wearer's physique. Soieries F. Ducharne, the manufacturer of this textile, focused on prints in medium and small scales during the 1930s, and supplied well known



RISD MUSEUM

couturieres such as Madeleine Vionnet and Elsa Schiaparelli, as well as high-end American stores including Harry Angelo Company and B. Altman in New York, and dressmakers such as the exclusive Tirocchi shop in Providence.

Wohl, American, label
Cream silk belted dress with floral pattern, ca. 1960
Silk, leather; satin weave, printed warp, cut warp pile
Gift of Mark Pollack 2007.111

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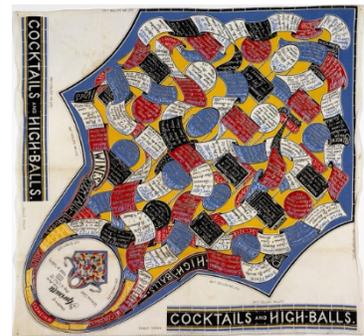
RISD MUSEUM

Martin Munkacsi, Hungarian, 1896-1963
Harper's Bazaar, American
Fashion photograph, 1935
Gelatin silver print
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2007.87



Noveltex Incorporated, manufacturer
Cocktails and Highballs cut-and-sew apron, ca. 1935
Cotton; plain weave, screenprinted
Gift of Joanne Dolan Ingersoll 2007.96

This "Cocktails and Highballs" apron pattern-with an entertaining print of recipes for a variety of cocktails-is a whimsical example of the do-it-yourself American spirit during the 1930s and 1940s. Patented in 1932, the cut-andsew engineered design was championed by its inventor for its economical use of materials that could produce a onepiece garment at low cost. Many textiles from this period featured engaging food images, an industry concept perfect for marketing in these optimistic times.



Andy Warhol, American, 1928-1987
Committee 2000 Champagne Glasses, 1982
dye diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor 2)
Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
2008.110.95



RISD MUSEUM

American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2A

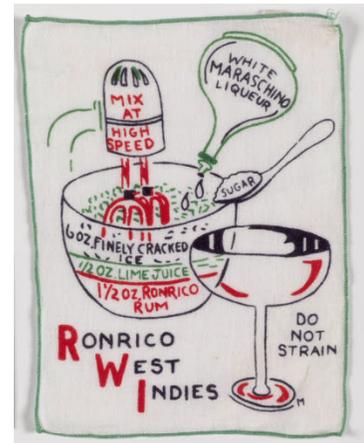


American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2B



American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2C



RISD MUSEUM

American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2D



American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2E

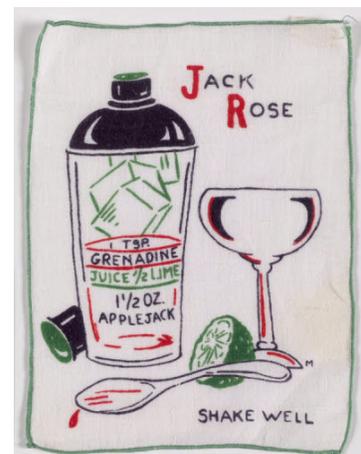


American

Printed cotton napkin, ca. 1950

linen; plain weave, screenprinted

Gift of James Brayton Hall in memory of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD
Apparel Design, Class of 1945 2008.13.2F



RISD MUSEUM

Geoffrey Beene, American, 1927-2004, designer
Grey wool dress with rhinestone embellishment, late 1960s
Wool, rhinestones; twill weave, embellished
Gift of Mark Pollack 2008.48.1



Delman, label
Gold leather shoes with rhinestone accents, 1920s
Leather, plastic, rhinestones, wood; studded
Anonymous gift 2008.71.1

The changing silhouette of the 1920s woman offered new territory from head to toe for the accessories designer. The chignon was trimmed into a fashionable bob and covered with cloche hats for both day and night. The sleeveless chemise bared arms that called out for adornment from bangles to bejeweled handbags, and designers like Cartier responded. Raised hemlines afforded a clear view of shoes, so heels studded with dazzling rhinestones and rhinestone-encrusted buckles abounded.

Norman Norell, American, 1900-1972, designer
Traina-Norell, American, 1941-1960, design house
Red silk dress with cartridge pleated skirt, ca. 1949
Silk, nylon; satin weave, cut warp pile
Gift of Mark Pollack 2009.71.2



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RISD MUSEUM

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Vera Neumann, American, 1907-1993, designer

Vera, American, design label

Perry Ellis, American, 1940-1986

Striped woven and knit ensemble, ca. 1976

cotton, nylon; plain weave, continuous supplemental weft, jersey knit
Edgar J. Lownes Fund 2009.97

Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-andwhite printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.

Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer

Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer

American Modern Cordial glass, 1951

Glass

Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.2



RISD MUSEUM

Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Cocktail Glass, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.3



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Wine Glass, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.4



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Goblet, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.5



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, engraver
American Modern Dessert Bowl, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.6



RISD MUSEUM

Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Juice Glass, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.7



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Water Glass, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.8



Russel Wright, American, 1904-1976, designer
Morgantown Glass Works, American, 1899-1965, manufacturer
American Modern Iced Tea Glass, 1951
Glass
Gift of James Brayton Hall and Mark Hambleton Stevens in honor of
Ellen Fitzgibbon Hall, RISD 1945 Apparel 2010.67.9



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House of Vionnet, French, 1912-1939, design label
Madeleine Vionnet, French, 1876-1975, designer
Pink silk embroidered chemise dress, 1920s
Silk, metallic yarn, embroidery floss, crepe yarn; ribbed plain weave;
embroidered
Gift of Elizabeth Rollins Mauran for the Estate of Helen Eitel Rollins
2010.72.1

The use of the word cocktail as a synonym for mixed drink proliferated during Prohibition, when unpleasant bootleg spirits were combined with sweeteners to disguise the taste. Previously, men had congregated in established social clubs or back parlors to drink and smoke, while respectable women retired elsewhere to sip tea or something stronger. By 1920, with men and women haunting both the law and social conventions by drinking mixed spirits together, the cocktail party was launched.

The mixing of men and women, specifically at home for the cocktail hour, explains both the ease and sensuality in the group of garments seen here. Liberating styles from the 1920s such as Vionnet's abbreviated, embroidered silk chemise dress with its raised hemline and gan;onne styling and Fortuny's adventurous pleated silk Delphos dress, each softened with a liberal dash of pink-allowed women to interact with men in an unprecedented fashion. The loosened strictures of what could be worn at home for entertaining as opposed to on the town allowed for women to don trousers, for example, which were previously only acceptable in sporty environments such as the seaside. The 1930s brown silk lounging pajamas from French designer Jean Patou and the green lounging pajamas with striped belt from American designer Jessie Franklin Turner illustrate how the vogue for hostess trousers was embraced on both sides of the Atlantic.

Christian Dior, French, 1905-1957, designer
House of Dior, French, design house
Black wool dress with net detailing at back, 1940s
Wool, nylon, plastic buttons; plain weave, machine net
Gift of Elizabeth Rollins Mauran for the Estate of Helen Eitel Rollins
2010.72.6

As the bleakness of war faded from memory, the mystique of Europe, and especially Paris, captured the imagination of fashionable Americans anew. When Christian Dior presented his first collection in 1947, reports from Paris flooded the news. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar, dubbed it the "New Look." A blatant repudiation of wartime austerity, Dior's collection featured a romantic and feminine hourglass silhouette with a full skirt of



RISD MUSEUM

luxurious and expensive fabric, heightened in effect with layers of petticoats and a lengthened hemline. Padded hips, sloping shoulders, cinched waist, and a long, rounded back created a new softened posture well suited to a woman's cocktail party stance, which encouraged viewing from multiple perspectives. The cocktail dress had come into its own.

Though it was Dior who anointed the early evening dress the "cocktail dress," he credited America with its invention. Despite their homegrown innovation, American women flocked to purchase the latest cocktail attire introduced by the French couture houses, including Dior, Chanel, Balmain, and Balenciaga, and in donning them saw themselves as radiating worldly sophistication and glamour.

Frank Majore, American, b. 1948
Cocktails, 1983
Dye destruction print (Cibachrome)
Gift of Ellen Carey 2011.10.2

Paul Colin, French, 1892-1985
Compagnie Generale Transatlantique / French Line, 1949
Lithograph
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2011.29

François Ducharne, French, 1920-present, manufacturer
Michel Dubost, French, 1879-1952, designer
Apparel Fabric, ca. 1925
Silk, wrapped metallic yarn; compound weave
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 44.275.6

Design for cocktail barware during the 1920s and early 1930s is characterized by a youthful ebullience, bursting with an air of modernity and the swagger of rebellion in the face of Prohibition. Appearing on the market one year before the devastating stock market crash of 1929, the costly sterling silver and enamel Charter Company cocktail shaker proclaims privileged indulgence in its costly materials as much as it asserts Art Deco aesthetics in its form suggesting the monumental set-back skyscraper. After Prohibition, cocktail culture saw an embrace of more mature drinking habits that defined the aspirations of a wider swath of society. In response to more Americans seeking opportunities to display sophisticated cocktail know-how, manufacturers mass produced services of less



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precious materials, such as the cheerful molded glass refreshment set and the frankly contemporary set of cups made of Catalin plastic, a slight variation of the Bakelite chemical formula.

American
Furnishing textile, ca. 1939
Linen; plain weave, hand-screenprinted
Gift of Howard and Schaffer, Inc. 48.057

The fresh tints and crisp linen ground of these home furnishing textiles, one blue and the other light brown, suggest the bracing seaside air, making them well suited for curtains in any vacation home or resort. The maritime vessels are hand-screenprinted, a technique that regained popularity in the 1930s.



American
Furnishing textile, ca. 1939
Linen; plain weave, hand-screenprinted
Gift of Howard and Schaffer, Inc. 48.060

The fresh tints and crisp linen ground of these home furnishing textiles, one blue and the other light brown, suggest the bracing seaside air, making them well suited for curtains in any vacation home or resort. The maritime vessels are hand-screenprinted, a technique that regained popularity in the 1930s.



Jessie Franklin Turner, American, 1881-1956, designer
Lounging Pajamas, 1934-1935
Silk satin weave
Anonymous gift 56.013

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Suzanne Talbot, French, 1900 - 1945, designer

Cellophane cloche, ca. 1930

Cellophane, rayon, cotton; plaited; pieced

Gift of Mrs. Robert Walker 56.050.10



Henri Bendel, American, 20th century, retailer

Cream silk dress with beaded fringe, ca. 1927

Silk, crystal, mirrored glass bugle beads; plain weave, embroidered, studded, applique

Gift of Mrs. Robert Walker 56.050.9



While at-home cocktail attire was associated with elegance in languid motion, with the clatter of shakers and the slow glide of socializing, a night out on the town necessitated a dress made for the bustle of the illuminated city. The vitality and fast tempo of Harlem jazz clubs in the 1920s had a major influence on fashion. Whether the evening involved a clandestine visit to a speakeasy, a jaunt to a dance hall, or a trip up to Harlem's infamous clubs, the short, unstructured flapper silhouette with swaying hem and glistening beads and sequins was a lively complement to the nocturnal cocktail-fueled agenda.

Similarly, the 1930s dresses with longer flowing hemline and figure-skimming silhouette, defined as here by ethereal chiffon or accented with swinging fringe, were created with dancing in mind. The elegant

RISD MUSEUM

and practical design of the T-strap shoe proved indispensable for the hours of dancing that characterized a night in the city.

Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer
Blue silk T-strap shoes with rhinestone buckles, ca. 1930
Silk, crystal, leather, wood; ribbed plain weave
Gift of Miss Eleanor Fayerweather 56.051.6

The changing silhouette of the 1920s woman offered new territory from head to toe for the accessories designer. The chignon was trimmed into a fashionable bob and covered with cloche hats for both day and night. The sleeveless chemise bared arms that called out for adornment from bangles to bejeweled handbags, and designers like Cartier responded. Raised hemlines afforded a clear view of shoes, so heels studded with dazzling rhinestones and rhinestone encrusted buckles abounded.

B. Altman Co., American, 20th century, retailer
Striped silk shoes with silver heels, ca. 1930
Leather, silk, wrapped metallic yarn, wood; compound weave, hand dyed
Gift of Miss Eleanor Fayerweather 56.051.8

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Omar Kiam, American, 1894-1954, designer
Ben Reig, American, 20th century, design house
Light brown rayon crepe two-piece dress with decorative buckle and cuff embellishment, ca. 1943
Enka Rayon, crepe yarn, plastic; plain weave
Gift of Miss Eleanor Fayerweather 56.208.1

During World War II, from 1942 until 1946, sweeping dress restrictions per Government Order L85 limited available fabric yardage and led to a pared-down silhouette. Embellishment using non-rationed materials or dressmaking flourishes—as in the pleated peplum of the black acetate Jennifer suit—added a sense of style while maintaining a remarkable economy of fabric. The restrictions made cocktail attire more understated than in previous decades. As seen here, a new slim profile of sheath-like dresses with shortened hems and modest but eye-catching detailing replaced the long flowing bias-cut dresses of the 1930s. Slender suits allowed for a smart workday appearance to double as a practical yet elegant cocktail look.

Such straightforward design is epitomized in Claire McCardell's sophisticated and efficient strapless dress ensemble and in Isamu Noguchi's occasional table. Combining a sculptural sensibility with transparent functionality, it conceals nothing and celebrates a warm and natural minimal aesthetic.

William Orpen, Irish, 1878-1931
Letter to Dr. and Mrs. Danforth, 1925
Pen and ink with wash on cream paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 58.080



American
Repeal the 18th Amendment, 1930-1933
silk; plain weave, screenprinted
Gift of Mrs. Constance Wharton Smith 58.165.32

In pursuit of exuberance of the "bright young things" blazing their way through the illicit urban speakeasies during Prohibition (1919-1933), an older generation of progressives defied the laws at home,



RISD MUSEUM

brandishing their freedoms with chic loungewear and gleaming beverage accessories. Gatherings in private houses offered opportunities to consume better spirits and to strike a fashionable but safely irreverent pose with like minds.

The motion and nervous energy satirized by Newman Levy and John Held, Jr., in *Saturday to Monday*, a book of verse describing the antics of a weekend house party, is palpable in the angled contours of Erik Magnussen's cocktail set for Gorham. Likewise, Lurelle Guild's canapé dish was designed for mobility and multi-tasking at a party, with a graceful handle and a place to secure one's glass and nibbles.

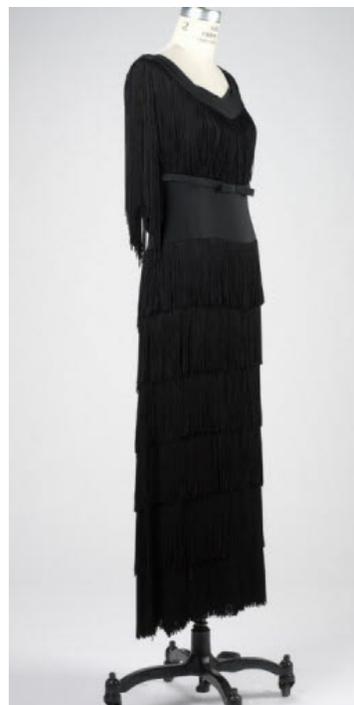
Thayer McNeil Co., American, 20th century, retailer
Cream silk oxford shoes with metallic trim, ca. 1930
silk, crystal, metal thread, wood, leather; laced, net, studded rhinestones, ribbed plain weave
Gift of Mrs. James Buckley 59.145.1



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American
Black silk dress with fringe, ca. 1939
Silk, crepe yarn; plain weave, plaited
Gift of Mrs. Elisha Dyer 60.006.5

While at-home cocktail attire was associated with elegance in languid motion, with the clatter of shakers and the slow glide of socializing, a night out on the town necessitated a dress made for the bustle of the illuminated city. The vitality and fast tempo of Harlem jazz clubs in the 1920s had a major influence on fashion. Whether the evening involved a clandestine visit to a speakeasy, a jaunt to a dance hall, or a trip up to Harlem's infamous clubs, the short, unstructured flapper silhouette with swaying hem and glistening beads and sequins was a lively complement to the nocturnal cocktail-fueled agenda. Similarly, the 1930s dresses with longer flowing hemline and figure-skimming silhouette, defined as here by ethereal chiffon or accented with swinging fringe, were created with dancing in mind. The elegant and practical design of the T-strap shoe proved indispensable for the hours of dancing that characterized a night in the city.



RISD MUSEUM

Gump's, label and retailer

Cream silk wrap dress with wool embroidery, ca. 1947

Silk, mirror, wool, brass; plain weave, embroidered

Gift of Mrs. R. L. Gilpatric 60.078.12

In the 1930s tourists were able to step onto a luxury ocean liner in San Francisco and after five indulgent days alight on the island paradise of Hawaii. The colorful Hawaiian shirt, with patterns referencing the multiethnic population of the islands, popped into the wardrobes of Hawaiian residents in the 1930s and was quickly adopted by visitors as a souvenir. After World War II, several major retail stores on the U.S. mainland imported, or even produced, these shirts to sell to a menswear market keen on revisiting the comfort and relaxation of vacation.

Department stores like Gump's in San Francisco opened branches in Hawaii, selling elegant attire like the cream silk wrap dress on view here, which would have been perfect for enjoying an early evening cocktail at one of the famous tiki bars-Don the Beachcomber or Trader Vic's-serving rum drinks amid Pacific Island totems to thirsty patrons for decades.

Philip Hulitar, American, 1905 - 1992, designer

Light brown lace dress, ca. 1950

Nylon, acetate, cotton; gauze weave, Alençon-type machine lace, hand appliquéd

Gift of Mrs. R. L. Gilpatric 60.078.7

In the postwar period American designers for both interiors and fashion continued to be internationally revered as innovative and expert craftsmen. A healthy rivalry existed between American and French designers, particularly between the houses of Dior and Norman Norell. While Dior has long been credited with the creation of the New Look, Norell presented a similar silhouette in 1946, one year before Dior's famous collection. Norell gained the respect of the Parisian couturiers as his work employed fabrics, detailing, and construction on par with their own, and although produced in America, his garments commanded prices nearly the same as for a French look. Norell, along with fellow American designers Arnold Scaasi (see the red patterned strapless dress) and Philip Hulitar (see the light-brown lace dress) offered the American consumer high style ready-to-wear alternatives to the Chambre Syndicale de la haute couture of Paris. Upon his death, the New York Times proclaimed that Norell "Made 7th Ave. the Rival of Paris."

Setting the backdrop for this platform, the furnishing fabric Trapeze (see the hanging textile) from American textile designer Estelle



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Laverne echoes the dynamism found in fashion and music of the same period. Confined to a strict grid, the yellow and green triangles rhythmically bounce across the surface of this hand-screenprinted textile, where periodic moments of misregistration only add to the design's appeal.

Carolyn Schnurer, American, 1908 - 1998, designer
Carolyn Schnurer, American, design label
Black-and-white printed cotton dress, 1955
Cotton; twill weave, printed
Gift of Design Laboratory, the Brooklyn Museum 61.095.3J

Inspired by outdoor living and active lifestyles, the New Casual mode of dressing exuded a uniquely American character. Influenced by Charles and Ray Eames, the mid-century modernist designer couple from California, and the work of fashion photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, outdoor, informal events such as the cookout and croquet game revolutionized how Americans thought about entertaining. Dress for such occasions was both practical and stylish, and the wearing of cotton lent a relaxed and playful tone to the era. In the 1950s the printed cotton casual shirt for men retained its popularity (see the "Bar-B-Quer" printed shirt), as did florals and derivative prints based on motifs of the Americas (see the black-and-white printed cotton dress). By the late 1960s and 1970s both the mini and the maxi skirt found their way to cocktail affairs, with cotton remaining the fabric of choice.



Elizabeth Hawes, American, 1902-1971
Hawes Inc., 1930 - 1940
Green and olive silk dress with red accents, 1939
Silk, crepe yarn; satin weave
Gift of Design Laboratory, the Brooklyn Museum 61.095.7

The use of the word cocktail as a synonym for mixed drink proliferated during Prohibition, when unpleasant bootleg spirits were combined with sweeteners to disguise the taste. Previously, men had congregated in established social clubs or back parlors to drink and smoke, while respectable women retired elsewhere to sip tea or something stronger. By 1920, with men and women haunting both the law and social conventions by drinking mixed spirits together, the cocktail party was launched.



The mixing of men and women, specifically at home for the cocktail hour, explains both the ease and sensuality in the group of garments seen here. Liberating styles from the 1920s such as Vionnet's abbreviated, embroidered silk chemise dress with its raised hemline

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and gan;onne styling and Fortuny's adventurous pleated silk Delphos dress, each softened with a liberal dash of pink-allowed women to interact with men in an unprecedented fashion. The loosened strictures of what could be worn at home for entertaining as opposed to on the town allowed for women to don trousers, for example, which were previously only acceptable in sporty environments such as the seaside. The 1930s brown silk lounging pajamas from French designer Jean Patou and the green lounging pajamas with striped belt from American designer Jessie Franklin Turner illustrate how the vogue for hostess trousers was embraced on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ducerf, Scavini & Fils, French, late 19th century - 1936, label
Cream and black T-strap shoes, 1925
Celluloid, wood, leather; compression molded
Gift of Mr. Rodman A. Heeren 62.017.23



The changing silhouette of the 1920s woman offered new territory from head to toe for the accessories designer. The chignon was trimmed into a fashionable bob and covered with cloche hats for both day and night. The sleeveless chemise bared arms that called out for adornment from bangles to bejeweled handbags, and designers like Cartier responded. Raised hemlines afforded a clear view of shoes, so heels studded with dazzling rhinestones and rhinestone encrusted buckles abounded.

Mainbocher, Inc., American, 1890 - 1976, design house
Main Rousseau Bocher, American, 1890 - 1976, designer
Black lace belt with pink rose detail, 1944
Silk, cotton, synthetic; machine lace (guipure), embroidered, embellished
Gift of Mr. Rodman A. Heeren 62.017.28



Mainbocher, Inc., American, 1890 - 1976, design house
Main Rousseau Bocher, American, 1890 - 1976, designer
Black and gold beaded belt with bows, ca. 1942
Silk, crepe yarn, beads, sequins; plain weave, embroidered
Gift of Mr. Rodman A. Heeren 62.017.31



RISD MUSEUM

Joseph's New York, label
Black feathered hat, 1950
Wool, silk, egret feather; felt, cording, cut warp pile
Gift of Mr. Albert E. Simonson 62.107.1

Carefully selected and coordinated accessories were a cornerstone of 1950s and 1960s dressing. A simple dress could be transformed into a spectacular ensemble by a whimsical feather-trimmed cartwheel hat and sparkling jewelry. Further, not since the Gilded Age (1870s-1880s) had such importance been placed on the covering of one's hands, and gloves became a necessity. Milliners abounded, but the customdesigned work of Lilly Dache for both head and hands was particularly coveted. In Dache's words, "Glamour is what makes a man ask for your telephone number. But it also is what makes a woman ask for the name of your dressmaker." Her work epitomizes the ladylike and "smart" style of the era.



Saks Fifth Avenue, American, 20th century, retailer
Fashion Illustration (girl with fan), ca. 1925
Ink, paper
Gift of Mrs. Matlack Price 62.111.1



Charles James, American, b. England, 1906-1978, designer
Black silk dress with velvet bow at neckline, 1962
Silk; plain weave with corded weft, cut warp pile
Gift of Mr. Rodman A. Heeren 63.040.3

By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely



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sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.

Claire McCardell, American, 1905-1958, designer
Claire McCardell Clothes by Townley, American, est. 1940, label
Light brown wool strapless dress with coordinate jacket, ca. 1950
Miron Wool; plain weave
Gift of Mrs. John Lincoln 66.074.4

During World War II, from 1942 until 1946, sweeping dress restrictions per Government Order L85 limited available fabric yardage and led to a pared-down silhouette. Embellishment using non-rationed materials or dressmaking flourishes—as in the pleated peplum of the black acetate Jennifer suit—added a sense of style while maintaining a remarkable economy of fabric.

The restrictions made cocktail attire more understated than in previous decades. As seen here, a new slim profile of sheath-like dresses with shortened hems and modest but eye-catching detailing replaced the long flowing bias-cut dresses of the 1930s. Slender suits allowed for a smart workday appearance to double as a practical yet elegant cocktail look.

Such straightforward design is epitomized in Claire McCardell's sophisticated and efficient strapless dress ensemble and in Isamu Noguchi's occasional table. Combining a sculptural sensibility with transparent functionality, it conceals nothing and celebrates a warm and natural minimal aesthetic.



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Pierre Balmain, French, 1914-1982, designer
Pierre Balmain, French, design house
Black silk long-sleeved dress with peplum, ca. 1950
silk; compound weave
Gift of Mrs. Edmund Canning 66.138

As the bleakness of war faded from memory, the mystique of Europe, and especially Paris, captured the imagination of fashionable Americans anew. When Christian Dior presented his first collection in 1947, reports from Paris flooded the news. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar, dubbed it the "New Look." A blatant repudiation of wartime austerity, Dior's collection featured a romantic and feminine hourglass silhouette with a full skirt of luxurious and expensive fabric, heightened in effect with layers of petticoats and a lengthened hemline. Padded hips, sloping shoulders, cinched waist, and a long, rounded back created a new softened posture well suited to a woman's cocktail party stance, which encouraged viewing from multiple perspectives. The cocktail dress had come into its own.

Though it was Dior who anointed the early evening dress the "cocktail dress," he credited America with its invention. Despite their homegrown innovation, American women flocked to purchase the latest cocktail attire introduced by the French couture houses, including Dior, Chanel, Balmain, and Balenciaga, and in donning them saw themselves as radiating worldly sophistication and glamour.

Wendy Hertz, American, 20th century, designer
Orange harem pant ensemble, 1965
silk, slub yarn; knit jersey, plain weave, satin weave
Gift of Rhode Island School of Design Department of Apparel Design
66.139.1

Freed of supportive internal understructures, abbreviated in length, and fashioned in lightweight rayon and silk knits, dresses previously unthinkable away from the seaside or European resort began to find their way into the city and club culture of the 1970s. Emilio Pucci's bold, multicolored design exemplifies this manner of dressing, and is evocative of the liberal and international character of the 1960s and 1970s woman. Revealing silk knits found only in swimwear and cruise attire in the 1930s and 1940s now skimmed the figures of many American women. Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy were both fans of the modern and body conscious Pucci printed silk shift. Jean Muir's black knit with gold dots translates the breezy nonchalant attitude of Pucci's designs to disco culture.

Norman Norell deftly kept pace with the times, and continued to



RISD MUSEUM

offer women unfettered but elegant offerings into the 1970s. While appearing to be a mere wisp of a dress, with a classical Grecian overtone, Norell's 1971 cream silk dress with gold buttons possesses all the hallmarks of a couture garment, but without the overt structure of his earlier work (see the red dress with cartridge-pleated skirt on the Rules platform).

Maxen-Gantiez, French, label

Evening shoes, ca. 1925

SSilk, jet beads, rhinestones, leather, wood; satin weave, embroidered

Gift of the grand-daughters of Mrs. Robert Ives Gammel: Mrs. Carlton R. Mabely, Jr., and Mrs. Curtis B. Brooks 67.005.8



Saks Fifth Avenue, American, 20th century, retailer

Black velvet shoes with studded crystal heels, ca. 1925

Cotton, crystal, metal, leather, wood; cut warp pile, embellished

Gift of the Estate of Miss Ethel Merriman 68.108.2



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Topal-Carlson, label

Green chemise dress with beaded embellishment, ca. 1965

Silk, nylon, plastic, beads, sequins; plain weave, embroidered

Gift of Mrs. Irving I. Fain 73.163.4



By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.

RISD MUSEUM

Norman Norell, American, 1900-1972, designer
Norman Norell, Inc., American, 1960 - 1972
Cream silk dress with gold buttons, 1971
Silk, rhinestones, gold toned metal; ribbed plain weave
Gift of Mrs. Milton Cassel 77.028.2

Freed of supportive internal understructures, abbreviated in length, and fashioned in lightweight rayon and silk knits, dresses previously unthinkable away from the seaside or European resort began to find their way into the city and club culture of the 1970s. Emilio Pucci's bold, multicolored design exemplifies this manner of dressing, and is evocative of the liberal and international character of the 1960s and 1970s woman. Revealing silk knits found only in swimwear and cruise attire in the 1930s and 1940s now skimmed the figures of many American women. Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy were both fans of the modern and body conscious Pucci printed silk shift. Jean Muir's black knit with gold dots translates the breezy nonchalant attitude of Pucci's designs to disco culture.

Norman Norell deftly kept pace with the times, and continued to offer women unfettered but elegant offerings into the 1970s. While appearing to be a mere wisp of a dress, with a classical Grecian overtone, Norell's 1971 cream silk dress with gold buttons possesses all the hallmarks of a couture garment, but without the overt structure of his earlier work (see the red dress with cartridge-pleated skirt on the Rules platform).

Mollie Parnis, American, 1905-1992, designer
Mollie Parnis, American, 1905-1992, design label
Yellow, long-sleeved net dress with rhinestone embellishment, ca. 1965
Nylon, rhinestone, metallic thread; gauze weave, embroidered
Gift of Mrs. Reuben Horowitz 77.136.2

By the 1960s, the youth counterculture that emerged to challenge old-world institutions began to impact cocktail culture. A variety of subcultural street fashions flavored designer cocktail apparel, as seen here in the hippiechic Indian references of the Mollie Parnis and Chanel ensembles and the sharp mod line of the grey wool Beene dress. The sleek black dress, however, still trumped all, whether it was a coy lace Balenciaga, a short Norell with dazzling embellishment, or a discreet Charles James number. Referencing a history of steely sophistication since its popularization by Chanel in the mid-1920s, the black dress in a simple package gave its wearer an air of inscrutability and allure.



RISD MUSEUM

Jean Patou, French, 1887-1936, designer
Jean Patou, French, 1887-1936, design house
Brown silk lounging pajamas, ca. 1930
Silk, crepe yarn; satin weave, plain weave, printed
Gift of Mrs. Harry E. Darrah 78.079.08

The changing silhouette of the 1920s woman offered new territory from head to toe for the accessories designer. The chignon was trimmed into a fashionable bob and covered with cloche hats for both day and night. The sleeveless chemise bared arms that called out for adornment from bangles to bejeweled handbags, and designers like Cartier responded. Raised hemlines afforded a clear view of shoes, so heels studded with dazzling rhinestones and rhinestone encrusted buckles abounded.



A la Gavotte, French, label
Patterned silk shoes with rhinestone embellishment, ca. 1927
Silk, wrapped metallic yarn, metallic yarn, crystal, leather, wood; satin weave, continuous and discontinuous supplemental weft patterning, embroidered
Gift of Mrs. Harry E. Darrah 78.079.26

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American
Ratify for Repeal, ca. 1933
Silk; plain weave, screenprinted
Gift of Mrs. E. F. Smith and Mrs. Peter McBean 78.192.10A



RISD MUSEUM

Pauline Trigère, American, 1908-2002, designer, label
White cotton halter dress with crystal buttons, ca. 1970
cotton, crystal; compound weave
Gift of Mrs. Joseph M. P. Ott 79.155.5



Lurelle Guild, American, 1898-1985, designer
Chase Brass and Copper Company, American, 1837 -, manufacturer
Canapé Plate, 1933
Chrome-plated copper
Gift of Christopher P. Monkhouse in honor of Rodolfo Machado,
former Head, Department of Architecture, Rhode Island School of
Design 80.126



In pursuit of exuberance of the "bright young things" blazing their way through the illicit urban speakeasies during Prohibition (1919-1933), an older generation of progressives defied the laws at home, brandishing their freedoms with chic loungewear and gleaming beverage accessories. Gatherings in private houses offered opportunities to consume better spirits and to strike a fashionable but safely irreverent pose with like minds.

The motion and nervous energy satirized by Newman Levy and John Held, Jr., in *Saturday to Monday*, a book of verse describing the antics of a weekend house party, is palpable in the angled contours of Erik Magnussen's cocktail set for Gorham. Likewise, Lurelle Guild's canapé dish was designed for mobility and multi-tasking at a party, with a graceful handle and a place to secure one's glass and nibbles.

Mr. John, American, 1906-1993, designer
Yellow-patterned silk turban-style hat, ca. 1960
Silk, nylon; plain weave, printed
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe 82.075



RISD MUSEUM

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

Cabaret Strip Dancer, from the series "Harlem Document" ca. 1937

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Matrix Publications, Inc. and Alpha Partners 83.031.33

The image of a young woman dressed in a fashionable bias-cut satin gown and fur wrap comes from the studio of renowned photographer James Van Der Zee. Best known for his luminous portraits of prominent figures from the Harlem Renaissance, Van Der Zee crafted sensitive portraits of diverse sitters. By building a relationship with each patron, and accessorizing portraits with props from his studio collection to suit the sitter's personality, Van Der Zee afforded each client the most glamorous and sophisticated photograph possible. His work remained largely unknown until the 1969 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*, and has since become regarded as the premier visual resource documenting life in Harlem from 1916 to just after World War II.



Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976, Photography)

Saloon, Small's Paradise, from the series "Harlem Document" 1937

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Matrix Publications, Inc. and Alpha Partners 83.031.35

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RISD MUSEUM

American

Black acetate woman's suit with ruching, ca. 1945

Acetate, plastic; ribbed plain weave

Gift of Mrs. Harry Darrah 83.109.1

During World War II, from 1942 until 1946, sweeping dress restrictions per Government Order L85 limited available fabric yardage and led to a pared-down silhouette. Embellishment using non-rationed materials or dressmaking flourishes—as in the pleated peplum of the black acetate Jennifer suit—added a sense of style while maintaining a remarkable economy of fabric.

The restrictions made cocktail attire more understated than in previous decades. As seen here, a new slim profile of sheath-like dresses with shortened hems and modest but eye-catching detailing replaced the long flowing bias-cut dresses of the 1930s. Slender suits allowed for a smart workday appearance to double as a practical yet elegant cocktail look.

Such straightforward design is epitomized in Claire McCardell's sophisticated and efficient strapless dress ensemble and in Isamu Noguchi's occasional table. Combining a sculptural sensibility with transparent functionality, it conceals nothing and celebrates a warm and natural minimal aesthetic.



Fenton Footwear, manufacturer

Saks Fifth Avenue, American, 20th century, retailer

Black studded suede shoes with platform heel, late 1940s

Leather, wood, brass; studded

Gift of Mrs. Harry Darrah 83.109.2



Saks Fifth Avenue, American, 20th century, retailer

Yellow shoes with rhinestones, 1960's

Silk, rhinestones; satin weave, cut warp pile, embellished

Gift of Gardiner Grant from the estate of his mother, Mrs. Milton

Sapinsky 84.075.7



RISD MUSEUM

Vincent Mignon, American, label
Light-green satin dress with corsage, 1950s
acetate, silk; satin weave
Gift of Mrs. Dorothy Trower 84.078.4

As the bleakness of war faded from memory, the mystique of Europe, and especially Paris, captured the imagination of fashionable Americans anew. When Christian Dior presented his first collection in 1947, reports from Paris flooded the news. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar, dubbed it the "New Look." A blatant repudiation of wartime austerity, Dior's collection featured a romantic and feminine hourglass silhouette with a full skirt of luxurious and expensive fabric, heightened in effect with layers of petticoats and a lengthened hemline. Padded hips, sloping shoulders, cinched waist, and a long, rounded back created a new softened posture well suited to a woman's cocktail party stance, which encouraged viewing from multiple perspectives. The cocktail dress had come into its own.

Though it was Dior who anointed the early evening dress the "cocktail dress," he credited America with its invention. Despite their homegrown innovation, American women flocked to purchase the latest cocktail attire introduced by the French couture houses, including Dior, Chanel, Balmain, and Balenciaga, and in donning them saw themselves as radiating worldly sophistication and glamour.

Emilio Pucci, Italian, 1914-1992, designer
Emilio Pucci, Italian, design house
Multicolored printed silk knit dress, ca. 1970
Silk, plastic; knit jersey, screenprinted
Gift of Mrs. Wayne D. Sherwood 85.105.6

Freed of supportive internal understructures, abbreviated in length, and fashioned in lightweight rayon and silk knits, dresses previously unthinkable away from the seaside or European resort began to find their way into the city and club culture of the 1970s. Emilio Pucci's bold, multicolored design exemplifies this manner of dressing, and is evocative of the liberal and international character of the 1960s and 1970s woman. Revealing silk knits found only in swimwear and cruise attire in the 1930s and 1940s now skimmed the figures of many American women. Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy were both fans of the modern and body conscious Pucci printed silk shift. Jean Muir's black knit with gold dots translates the breezy nonchalant attitude of Pucci's designs to disco culture.

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French

Embellished velvet cloche hat, ca. 1925

Silk, sequins, beads; cut warp pile, appliquéd, beaded
Museum Collection 85.122

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I. Magnin & Co., American, 20th century, retailer
Shoes, ca. 1966

Leather, vinyl; cutwork
Museum Collection S1993.077

Mr. John, American, 1906-1993, designer, milliner

Black silk hat with jeweled accents, 1960's

Silk, crystal, metal; satin weave
Museum Collection S85.123

