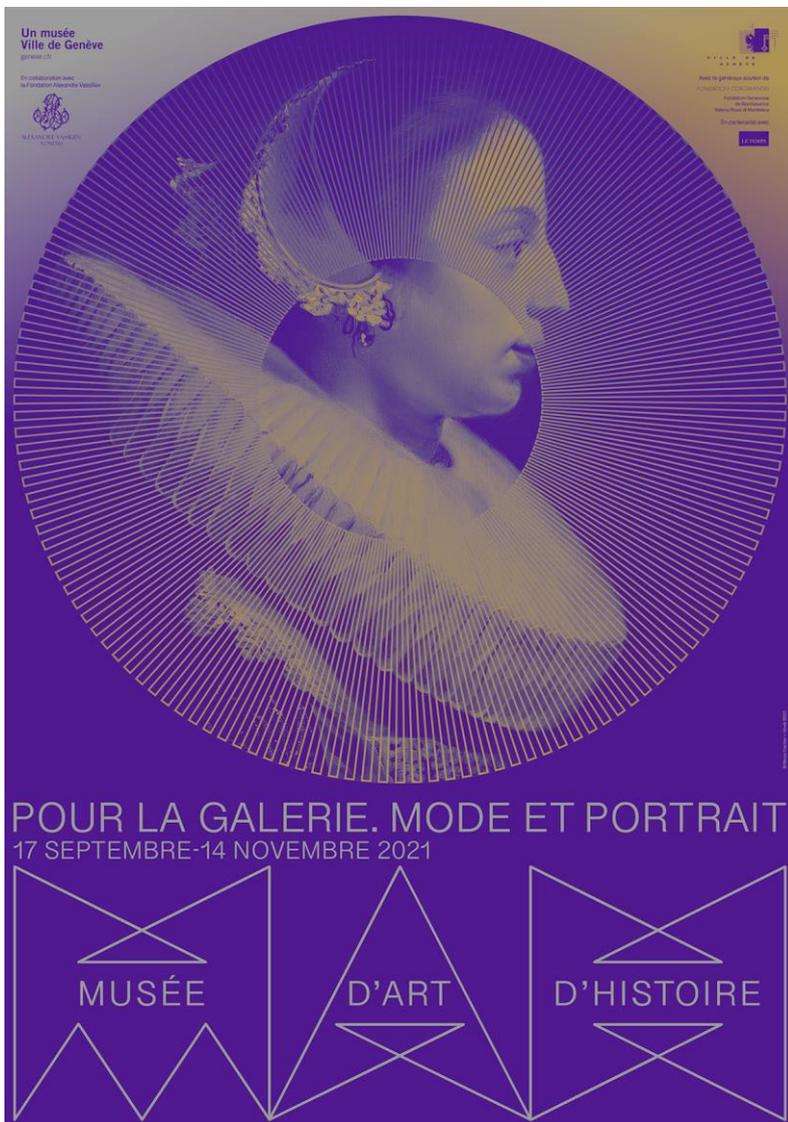


## PRESS KIT

TO PLAY TO THE GALLERY. FASHION AND PORTRAIT  
17 SEPTEMBER – 14 NOVEMBER 2021



MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE  
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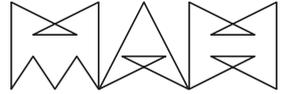
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## To play to the Gallery. Fashion and Portrait

*Geneva, July 2021* – From September 17, a new exhibition is coming to the MAH's palatial halls: *To play for the Gallery. Fashion and Portrait*. This second stage of the museum's new annual programme will be launched with a focus on Fashion and portrait. The "L" exhibition, produced in collaboration with the Alexander Vassiliev Foundation, brings together works from the MAH with a selection of the foundation's fashion pieces. *To play for the Gallery* will reveal several centuries of the history of fashion and portraiture, as well as the inner workings of self-image.

The history of clothing provides keys to deciphering paintings and other images. Many of the MAH collection portraits contain clues, signs and even symbols that our eyes no longer know how to interpret. *To play for the Gallery* sheds light on these hidden meanings and, more broadly, provides a panorama of the major trends that have shaped the way people look and dress.

Thematically, the exhibition approaches clothing and its uses from several angles: respecting conventions to distinguish oneself, and indicate superior status or power; finding inspiration in exotic fabrics, patterns and cuts to give a sense of escape and an atmosphere of far off lands; the technical know-how and different stages of dressing, whose sophistication sometimes requires the help of more than one assistant; seduction through clothing and accessories, and the way they are worn; the desire to control one's appearance and, better still, one's public image at any cost.

This exhibition brings together the great names of European art (Rosalba Carriera, Gustave Courbet, Thomas de Keyser, Nicolas de Largillière, Auguste Renoir, James Tissot...), and Swiss art (Alice Bailly, Alexandre Blanchet, Ferdinand Hodler, Jean-Étienne Liotard, Firmin Massot, Félix Vallotton...), as well as contemporary artists (Emmanuelle Antille, John Armleder, Sylvie Fleury, Ali Kazma...) and some major figures from the world of fashion such as Dior, House of Worth, Paul Poiret or Paco Rabanne. The exhibition includes around 200 paintings, costumes, accessories, graphic works, applied artworks, videos and art installations.



<b>Curators</b>	Lada Umstätter (MAH), curator and chief curator of fine arts Alexandre Vassiliev, associated curator, fashion historian and president of the Alexandre Vassiliev foundation,  Assisted by Joanna Haefeli, Martine Struelens, Sylvie Aballea, Marie Barras (MAH)
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<b>Lenders</b>	Fondation Alexandre Vassiliev Bibliothèque de Genève, Geneva Galerie Analix Forever, Geneva/Ali Kazma Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig-Berlin / Olaf Nicolai Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (MAMCO) Musée International d'horlogerie, La Chaux-de-Fonds (MIH) Musée Suisse de la Mode, Yverdon-les-Bains Sylvie Fleury, Geneva Jean-Paul Goude, Paris
<b>Publication</b>	In partnership with Le Temps (T-Magazine)
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<b>Information</b>	Museum of Art and History (MAH) 2, rue Charles-Galland – 1206 Genève Hours 11am – 6pm Closed Monday Admission free
<b>Inauguration</b>	16 September 2021, from 6 p.m.  Website : mahmah.ch Blog : mahmah.ch/blog Online Collection : mahmah.ch/collection Facebook : facebook.com/mahgeneve Twitter : @mahgeneve



## 1. Concept of the Exhibition

Long the exclusive preserve of the elite, but today within reach of any mobile phone, the portrait is the quintessential medium for the projection and creation of one's self-image. Attire, from the sumptuous folds of ceremonial portraits to the wide variety of contemporary apparel, is a key element: a means of distinguishing oneself from others, situated between conformity and the quest for originality. And beyond everything that defines a particular era, codes span fashions like so many signs of a real or imagined status.

In confronting the collections of paintings of the MAH and the costumes of the Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present, the exhibition invites us to launch ourselves into a whirlwind of materials and colours, a grand procession unfolding in the "Palatine" rooms of the museum, transformed into galleries of mirrors. As instruments of power, of seduction, or escapism, fashion and portraiture take us on a tour of a vanity fair, in which the full range of human aspirations and emotions can be expressed, be they of a dazzling or derisory nature.

4/16

## 2. Overview of the Exhibition

### a. Power and its Dress Codes

In many civilisations, clothing is a marker of social distinction. In Europe, fabrics, colours, cuts and trimmings all constitute conventional symbols, some of which are used exclusively by those in power.

From the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, sumptuary laws which included rules relating to attire were enacted by the elite, determining what this or that social class was permitted to wear. To assert their power, kings and princes reserved certain dress codes for themselves, which changed according to technical or commercial innovations. To this end, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, black, obtained from costly imported pigments, became the colour attributed to princes, and was particularly favoured by Charles VI, and henceforth by the ruling classes until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As for fur, only the most highly regarded species were destined for the nobility. The leopard was one such species, and its fur was admired from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As an instrument and expression of power, these dress codes inspired 20<sup>th</sup> century haute couture, from which, for example, the leopard motif arose.

### b. Exotic Escape

As travel became more accessible, brushes and needles came to life, charting a seductive contrast, oscillating between ethnographic precision and exotic fantasies.

Between 1738 to 1742, Liotard settled in Constantinople. There, he would adopt Turkish clothing to better depict the shimmering drapery of traditional costumes.

An imaginary world came into being, feeding creators in search of originality. From 1909, the *Ballets Russes* triumphed in Paris, and Paul Poiret designed forms that were unheard of at the time. He would be among the first couturiers to go on tour with his models.



Far from being objective, it was the West itself that dreamt of being draped in Oriental fashion. Designers drew their inspiration from travellers' accounts and marvellous tales, and then projected - sometimes unconsciously - an essentialised image of Elsewhere. In this way, artists sublimated their thirst for the picturesque and the oneiric through the golden embroidery of Russian Orthodox churches, Japanese crane motifs, and the feathers of birds of paradise.

**c. Backstage**

The crafts and skill of the textile industry are often eclipsed by the latest sales and the flashbulbs of the catwalk. When comparing haute couture and prêt-à-porter, it is common to frame quality and quantity as opposites, while neglecting any notion of time. Prior to the factories and sewing machines of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, clothes were made entirely by hand, and it is this practice that continues to make the great fashion houses unique, as opposed to the industrial production demonstrated by Ali Kazma's *Jeans Factory*. Untouched by time, the seamstresses, also referred to as *petites-mains*, perform a dance of rigour and patience, stitch by stitch.

The temporal dimension was also central to the ritual of getting dressed. Much like Madame d'Épinay, the 18<sup>th</sup> century woman was squeezed into a lace up corset, a pannier, and numerous other undergarments. This meticulous and daily assembly, which today is a quick and solitary business, required a helping hand—a reality at a considerable remove from the prêt-à-porter industry.

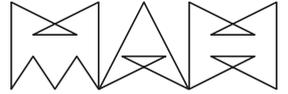
**d. At the Seduction Ball**

In a game that mixes restraint with provocation, appearances lead the way in a society that has turned to spectacle. The strategies of seduction are abundant in clothing, materials, colours, patterns, accessories, gestures and looks, according to the social and aesthetic codifications of culture, fashion, and the era.

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, François-Elie Vincent had his wife lean against a stone ledge, softened by the folds of a curtain, flowers, jewels, a book... Nearly two centuries later, for his staging of the model in *Le Portrait de la Générale d'Osnobichine* ("Portrait of Madam the General of Osnobishin"), François Flameng preferred to play on suggestion, concealing and revealing certain parts of the body: here an immaculate décolleté, there a delicate shoulder. But hidden in the light, the challenge was to win a smile, or even a wedding ring, as in the aristocratic tradition of sending portraits of young girls to be married.

**e. Vanity Fair**

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all... In an age of selfies, Tiktok, and videoconferencing, self-imagery is at the centre of our social interactions, now more than ever. This practice of identity construction is encouraged by tools such as filters or photo-editing software that freely blur the boundaries of reality. Social networks therefore function as living spaces, but also as fields upon which to play. The user, both actor and spectator, shares, transforms, and appropriates content. This more or less conscious process of appropriation ensures a constant return and renewal of forms and aesthetics. As illustrated by the House of Courrèges, which drew inspiration from the works of Mondrian, or the House of Elio Berhanyer, which reinterpreted the optical art of Victor Vasarely, this phenomenon has always existed independently of the digital world.



### 3. Seven works presented in the exhibition

a.



Hyacinthe Rigaud (Perpignan, 1659 — Paris, 1743)

*Portrait of Elisabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, Duchess of Orléans (1652-1722), 1718*

Oil on canvas, 147 x 116 cm

Beq. Jacques-Antoine Arlaud, 1742, inv. 1843-0003

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : B. Jacot-Descombes

In this official portrait, the Princess Palatine is depicted in royal attire. Her coat, decorated with fleur-de-lis, is lined with ermine, distinctive emblems of her high rank. In 1713, far from the idealisation of the past centuries, Hyacinthe Rigaud portrays her as she was, at the age of 61, thick-set and “ugly”, as recounted in her correspondence. She then ordered several copies from Rigaud’s workshop, to serve as gifts to the princely courts or to her entourage. This was the version she offered to the Genevan painter Jacques-Antoine Arlaud (1668–1743), advisor to the Regent, her son, Philippe II, Duke of Orléans.

b.



**Cocktail Dress**

House of Yves Saint Laurent, founded in France in 1961

Paris, 1967

Sequins

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, inv. 2019.6.6.4.CW.DR.1965.FR

© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev

Exotic and precious materials have been worn by rulers through the ages, in order to evince wealth and openness to the world. In 1967, Yves Saint Laurent was inspired by an imaginary Africa for his spring-summer collection. Accustomed at the time to more luxurious materials, the fashion world was amazed to discover evening dresses that were as delicate as they were powerful, made of raffia, wooden beads or shells, all



combined with sparkling sequins and gold thread. YSL boldly mixed luxury with natural materials—unheard of in haute couture—and would be the first to feature black models, from 1962.

c.



Rosalba Carriera (Venice, 1675 – Venice, 1757)

*Portrait of Felicità Sartori in Turkish Costume, before 1740*

Pastel on paper

On permanent loan from the Fondation Jean-Louis Prevost, 2004, inv. BA 2004-0003-D  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : B. Jacot-Descombes

7/16

Internationally renowned Venetian pastellist Rosalba Carriera gave birth to the fashion of pastel portraits at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was instrumental in the dissemination of this technique, which inspired several artists to adopt it, including Maurice Quentin de La Tour. A brilliant Rococo image, this portrait *à la turque* alludes to the Venice of masquerade balls, but also embodies the Enlightenment's taste for fanciful Orientalism. In her hand, the model holds a mask in the style of Thalia, the Muse of comedy. However, allegories aside, the features of Felicità Sartori, one of Rosalba's closest pupils, are clearly discernible.

d.



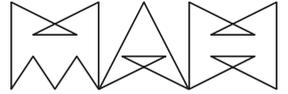
Charles Giron (Geneva, 1850 — Genthod, 1914)

*Portrait of Madame Agostino Soldati, née Mary Hazel Hubbard de Veux, 1900*

Oil on canvas, 210 x 98 cm

Purchased with the help of the fund Galland and the fund Brunswick, 1920,  
inv. 1920-0039

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : F. Bevilacqua



Charles Giron moved to Paris and joined Alexandre Cabanel's workshop in 1872. Attracted to Parisian life, its shows, opera, travel and cosmopolitan encounters, he quickly gained the appreciation of international high society for his portraits of women in the *Belle Époque* style. Here, he expresses the distinction and grand style of Madame Soldati in a black evening gown, enhanced by a two-tone veil adding a note of fluidity to the silhouette, and with neither jewellery nor accessories, except for a subtle blue flourish. A pale light directs the attention to the face and the gaze receding into the shadow of illness.

e.



**Mauveine-coloured Ball Gown**

France, circa 1865  
 Silk, cotton, Chantilly lace, rhinestone  
 Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
 Inv. 2019.1.21.2ac.CW.DR.C1865.FR  
 © Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev

The intense colour of this dress is due to mauveine, discovered by chance in 1856. The 18-year-old chemist William Henry Perkin (1838-1907) was working with quinine to find a cure for malaria. He failed to do so and, out of frustration, oxidised aniline, which left a brownish residue at the bottom of the test tube. When he tried to clean it with alcohol, a deep purple solution appeared: he had just discovered the first synthetic industrial dye! Mauveine was to become the fashionable colour *par excellence*, and spread all across London. Other aniline-based pigments would follow: *fuchsine* (also called *magenta*), *safranine*, *induline* or *alizarin*.

f.



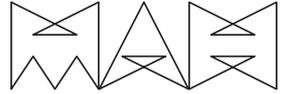
**Maurice Barraud (Genève, 1889 — Genève, 1954)**

*The Woman in Fur*, 1921

Oil on canvas, 73 x 63 cm

Purchased with the help of the Diday Foundation, 1922, inv. 1922-0024

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : Y. Siza



From a modest background and fascinated by the female figure, Maurice Barraud depicted light-hearted girls in his initial paintings. His success quickly brought him into contact with a wealthy public. A far cry from this underprivileged and disenfranchised world, the figures in his paintings become elegant and radiant young women. By concealing the identity of his models, the artist was completely free with regard to setting, poses, clothes and accessories, all of which he chose with great care. This trick allowed him to maintain the ambiguity between the portrait and the fantasy figure. Is this portrait of a bourgeois woman or of a prostitute?

g.



Dress "Souper Dress"

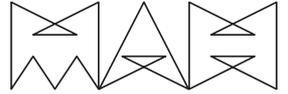
United States, circa 1966

Paper

Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation, inv. 2018.2.22.17.CW.DR.C1966.US

© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev

Between 1966 and 1968, the soup brand *Campbell's* created an original marketing campaign: in exchange for a dollar and two coupons collected from soup cans, the company offered a dress inspired by Andy Warhol, who had begun his career as a stylist before becoming one of the main exponents of Pop Art. Customers were encouraged to wear the paper dress just once before throwing it away, just as they would have done with a can of soup. In this way, the *Souper Dress* embodies the mass consumption of the 1960s and the taste for disposable objects, ideal materials for advertising.



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**Thomas de Keyser**  
(Amsterdam, 1596/1597 — 1667)  
*Portrait of a Woman*, circa 1630-1635

Oil on wood, 69 x 54 cm  
Beq. Gustave Revilliod, 1890, inv. CR 0112  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo :  
B. Jacot-Descombes



**Hyacinthe Rigaud**  
(Perpignan, 1659 — Paris, 1743)  
*Portrait of Elisabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate,  
Duchess of Orléans (1652-1722)*, 1718

Oil on canvas, 147 x 116 cm  
Beq. Jacques-Antoine Arlaud, 1742, inv. 1843-0003  
Painting restored with the help of the BNP Paribas  
Foundation, Switzerland  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo :  
B. Jacot-Descombes



**Horace Vernet** (Paris, 1789 — Paris, 1863)  
*Portrait of Anna Eynard-Lullin (1793-1868)*, 1831

Oil on canvas, 99,9 x 74,8 cm  
Gift from the Inheritors of Mme Diodati-Eynard, 1905  
Inv. 1905-0068  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo :  
F. Bevilacqua



**Jean-Marc Nattier** (Paris, 1685 — Paris, 1766)  
*Portrait of Daniel-François de Gélos de Voisins  
d'Ambres, Count of Lautrec (1683-1762)*,  
Between 1744 et 1750

Oil on canvas, 81,5 x 92 cm  
Gift from Jean-Vincent Capponier de Gauffecourt, 1751  
Inv. 1908-0005  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : J.-M. Yersin



### Evening Dress

House of Paco Rabanne  
(Founded in France in 1966)  
Paco Rabanne (Pasaia, 1934)

Paris, circa 1966  
Plastic, metal  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2019.6.7.7.CW.DR.C1966.FR  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



### Cocktail Dress

House of Yves Saint Laurent  
Founded in France in 1961

Paris, 1967  
Sequins  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2019.6.6.4.CW.DR.1965.FR  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



### Jean-Étienne Liotard

(Geneva, 1702 — Geneva, 1789)  
*Portrait of Jean-Antoine Guainier-Gautier (1716-1801), 1758-1762*

Pastel on paper pasted on canvas  
645 x 530 mm  
Purchase, 1941, inv. 1941-0010  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo : B. Jacot-Descombes



### Concert Gown

Michael Novarese  
(Memphis, 1926 — Los Angeles, 2010)

United States, circa 1966  
Cotton, beads, feathers  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2020.9.13.3.CW.DR.C1966.US  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Rosalba Carriera** (Venice, 1675 – Venice, 1757)  
*Portrait of Felicita Sartori in Turkish Costume,*  
before 1740

Pastel on paper, 640 x 525 mm  
On permanent loan from the Foundation Jean-Louis  
Prevost, 2004  
Inv. BA 2004-0003-D  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo. :  
B. Jacot-Descombes



**Jean-Étienne Liotard**  
(Geneva, 1702 — Geneva, 1789)  
*Portrait of Madame Denis-Joseph La Live  
d'Épinay, née Louise-Florence-Pétronille  
de Tardieu d'Esclavelles, known as Madame  
d'Épinay (1726-1783),* 1759

Pastel on parchment, 690 x 550 mm  
Gift from Charles Tronchin-Bertrand, 1826  
Inv. 1826-0007  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : Y. Siza



**Alexandre Blanchet**  
(Pforzheim, 1882 — Geneva, 1961)  
*The Two Friends,* 1912

Oil on canvas, 160 x 113 cm  
On permanent loan from the Foundation Gottfried Keller,  
1986  
Inv. 1986-0091  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : J.-M. Yersin



**James Tissot**  
(Nantes, 1836 — Chenecey-Buillon, 1902)  
*The Fashionable Beauty, between 1883 and  
1885*

Oil on canvas, 146,3 x 101,6 cm  
Beq. Pamela Sherek, 1998  
Inv. BA 1998-0239  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo :  
B. Jacot-Descombes



**Charles Giron (Genève, 1850 — Genthod, 1914)**  
*Portrait of Madame Agostino Soldati, née Mary Hazel Hubbard de Veux, 1900*

Oil on canvas, 210 x 98 cm  
Purchased with the help of the fund Galland and the fund Brunswick, 1920, inv. 1920-0039  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : F. Bevilacqua



**Evening Gown**  
Made exclusively for Neiman Marcus (department stores, United States, founded in 1907)

New York, circa 1964  
Silk, rooster feathers  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2018.2.24.2.CW.DR.C1964.US  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Sophie-Véra Seippel-Bovet (Geneva, 1865 — Zurich, 1936)**  
*Portrait of Berthe Jacques, future Madame Ferdinand Hodler, 1876-1936*

Pastel, 1150 x 900 mm  
Gift from the artist, 1935, inv. 1935-0016  
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**Mauveine-coloured Ball Gown**

France, circa 1865  
Silk, cotton, Chantilly lace, rhinestone  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2019.1.21.2ac.CW.DR.C1865.FR  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Evening Gown and Cape**  
House of Zandra Rhodes  
Founded in Great Britain in 1966

Great Britain, circa 1968  
Silk, ostrich feathers  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2018.2.21.5ab.CW.SU.C1968.GB  
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**Promenade Dress**

Moscow, circa 1866  
Printed Mulhouse wool  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2018.2.22.19ac.CW.DR.C1866.RU  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Evening Gown**

Western Europe, circa 1905  
Silk, tulle, velvet, chiffon, feathers  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2018.6.29.11ab.CW.DR.C1905.FR  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Evening Dress**  
House of Courrèges  
Founded in France in 1961

Paris, circa 1967  
Organza  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2019.6.4.1.CW.DR.C1967.FR  
© Foundation Alexandre Vassiliev



**Maurice Barraud**  
(Geneva, 1889 — Geneva, 1954)  
*The Woman in Fur*, 1921

Oil in canvas, 73 x 63 cm  
Purchased with the help of the Diday Foundation, 1922,  
inv. 1922-0024  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo : Y. Siza



**Félix Edouard Vallotton**  
(Lausanne, 1865 — Neuilly, 1925)  
*The Red Jumper*, 1913

Oil on canvas, 89 x 116 cm  
Purchase, 2002, inv. BA 2002-0002  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo :  
B. Jacot-Descombes



**Dress "Souper Dress"**

United States, circa 1966  
Paper  
Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation  
Inv. 2018.2.22.17.CW.DR.C1966.US  
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