



WANDERING WARDROBE



3.1 LESSON: FASHION ILLUSTRATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Lesson engages in analysis of a 1920's garment and introduces context on the ways fashion was presented at the time. The activity asks students to recognize the relationship between illustration and photography to communicate mood, fashion, and artistic concept.

Associated garment: 1920's dress

Associated web page: onstead.unt.edu/1920s-dress

Subject Areas: Theatre, Visual Arts

Grades: High school

Topics/Themes: fashion illustration, fashion photography, 1920's history

Set-up: Place the garment in its display box on a table in the classroom that students can gather around and see easily; remind students not to touch

Materials: 1920's dress, projector and screen. Optional: paper, pencils and other illustration media, camera phones,

Note: This lesson will take 2-5 class periods

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- Identify fashion styles from different time periods and compare/contrast visual design elements
- Understand how art, fashion, and popular culture influence each other
- Analyze the ways photography and illustration communicate the fashionable ideal differently
- Better understand the importance of choice of medium

TERMINOLOGY

- Fashion Illustration – Drawings of garments on the figure that communicate the fashion, silhouette, and important details of the garment design. These important details could be mood,

embellishments, color, or silhouette. Before photography, these were the primary means to communicate this. www.encyclopeadia.com

- Fashion Photography – Photography work that records the details of clothing but also communicates the fabrics, materials, embellishments, and other details of the garment. Furthermore, “the most memorable images fulfil or challenge the desires and aspirations of the viewer.” They often also reflect the zeitgeist of the times. Victoria & Albert Museum

DAY 1: OBSERVATION USING MATERIAL ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

- Introduce students to the garment, and ask them to carefully observe the details of the garment:
 - Ask students questions to prompt investigation: What kinds of important details do you notice? What kind of garment is this? Who might have worn this?
 - Encourage students to ask their own questions or write them down to research.
 - Share [images](#) of clothing from the time period from the Victoria and Albert Museum; contrast how the garment looks in person versus images and illustrations.
- Teacher will briefly discuss historical context and influences during the 1920s:
 - **World War I** – While many men were away fighting, women became more independent as they had to take jobs and earn incomes; after the war, many women continued to embrace this new independence. Also, the seriousness of war was followed by a prosperous decade led to a spirit of independence, pleasure, and freedom. These all influenced the shape of women’s clothing in a short amount of time. Women even began wearing trousers and foregoing gloves.
 - **Jazz** – the rise in popularity of Jazz music and its dances such as the Charleston influenced fashionable attire in Western society. The African-American roots of the genre was made more ‘commercial’ for wider popularity and dancing during World War I. The energetic rhythms and exuberant dances provided a contrast to the war-torn past. Clothing suitable for dancing embraced this movement, including ignorant Western notions of an ‘exotic African culture’ inspiring the use of fringe and materials that would make noise while dancing.
 - **Prohibition** – A religious revival phase, a rise in women’s temperance movements, and support from manufacturers wanting more productive workers all contributed to support of the ban of alcoholic drinks and bars and clubs that sold them. In 1919 the 18th Amendment prohibiting the sale of alcohol was passed by Congress and was quickly ratified by the states and put into effect a year later. Initial positive results were soon overcome by the rise of illegal production, distribution, underground clubs, and gang violence from gangsters such as Al Capone. These problems along with need for jobs and commerce to recover from the Great Depression led to the eventual repeal via the 21st Amendment in 1933.

- **The “Flapper”** – An adapted slang term used to describe young women who challenged traditional behaviors, appearance, and lifestyles. They wore shorter dresses and skirts, sleeveless garments, flashy dresses for dancing, and less restrictive undergarments. Hair was cut short, make-up or “rouge” visibly applied, and stockings were rolled below the knees or foregone altogether. The Flapper embodied the modern woman, and while most women did not adopt the most extreme version of this look, many women wore bobbed hairstyles and shorter skirts.
- **Social & Artistic Movements** – Following WWI, dissatisfaction with conventional thinking led to an interest in psychology, feminism, and alternative lifestyles in intellectual and artistic circles. Looser, bohemian, and even more athletic styles of dress emerged, an additional influence on the more unstructured clothing and style of the time.

Resources:

[Kent State Museum](#)

[Museum of London: "How to dress - 1920s" Part 1,](#)

[Museum of London: “How to dress – 1920s” Part 2](#)

[3.2.1 GreenwichVillageChapter Support File](#)

[Wall Street Journal: WWI Legacies](#)

[Prohibition – History.com](#)

[3.2.2 Jazz Support File](#)

[3.2.3 Flappers Support File](#)

- Leave time for final questions and observations. (let students know that lesson will continue tomorrow)

DAY 2: Fashion Photography and Illustration: Compare and Contrast

- Share contextual Introduction to Project
 - **Fashion Design, Illustration, & Photography**
Before the fashion changes of the 1920's, designers such as Paul Poiret were paving the way with innovative, provocative, artistic designs. Additionally, artists such as Paul Iribe, George Lepape, and Edward Steichen were changing the way illustrations and photography captured fashion beyond simply being used for commercial purposes.
 - **Paul Poiret** (Images of work: [MET exhibition](#))
As a designer, Poiret moved away from the traditional ways of making clothing using patterns, instead draping fabric directly across the body in a fluid manner. Furthermore, his column-shaped dresses, tunics, and harem pants for women were meant to be worn without a corset. This fluid way of dressing contributed

greatly to modern ways of dressing for women. He viewed his work as an art form and likened the creation of his clothes to the creation of a painting. In Poiret's words, "A garment is like a good portrait—the expression of a spiritual state and there are robes [dresses] that sing the joy of living as others that herald tragic ends." - [FIT blog](#)

- [3.1.1 Supporting document: Paul Poiret Biography](#)

- **Paul Iribe & Geoge Lepape**

Previously, fashion illustration was used to communicate detail and design, with minimal artistic personality. When artist Paul Iribe was commissioned by Poiret to produce a limited-edition book to share his latest designs with his highest-profile clients, Iribe took inspiration from Japanese woodblock prints and focused on the mood, colors, and shapes of the clothing. "Iribe's illustrations concerned themselves less with line-for-line renderings [as past fashion illustrations had] and instead focused on conveying the spirit or mood of the dress." - [FIT blog](#) Three years later artist George Lepape would be commissioned to produce a second book for Poiret. These two works were significant because they presented clothing design to clients in a way that represented a lifestyle or feeling, and it also elevated fashion illustration to an artistic endeavor.

- Poiret design albums: [Les robes de Paul Poiret](#) & [Les Choses de Paul Poiret](#)

- **Edward Steichen**

Two months after Lepape's book was released, the April 1911 edition of *Art et Décoration*, an architecture and interior design magazine, included an article "The Art of Dress" featuring Steichen's fashion photography (seen on the [FIT blog](#)). Instead of the careful staging of models in a studio setting, these photos recall the movement, mood, and life of the Iribe and Lepape illustrations. The influence of these illustrations on Steichen's work seems very apparent when compared to each other:

- [3.1.3 Support document: Art of the Dress \(article\)](#)

- Through Poiret's progressive designs and art commissions, Iribe, Lepape and Steichen initiated important changes by portraying fashion through art, making fashion illustration and photography a form of artwork rather than simply a commercial activity. These works show the capability of artistic use of illustration and photography to communicate a designer's concept, as well as promote and market this idea to clients and consumers. Furthermore, this work contributed to the creation of dialogue between fashion and art. Additional Resources:

- [3.1.2 Supporting document: Paul Iribe Biography](#)
- [MetMuseum Poiret Bio](#)
- [Other Art & Fashion Collaborations](#)

- Compare and Contrast the two mediums of illustration and photography using the Poiret design albums - [Les robes de Paul Poiret](#) & [Les Choses de Paul Poiret](#) and [3.1.3 Support document: Art of the Dress \(article\)](#)
 - Discuss the art and design principles and elements used in the illustrations and photographs.
 - Suggested prompting questions: What elements are highlighted in each medium? What details create mood in each: the illustration, and in the photography? How are the details communicated to the viewer in each? What do you feel the mood evokes?
- Project Preview, to begin the following class period:
 - Students will work in pairs to create a 1 - fashion illustration, then a 2 - fashion photograph that draws on the formal elements of the illustration.
 - To prepare for the project, have students get into pairs and spend the remainder of class brainstorming what style/mood they want to portray. Suggest drawing inspiration from their own wardrobe, as they will be wearing their own clothing in the photos; additionally, suggest they think about artistic fashion photoshoots versus shopping website or photography portion of the project.

DAY 3-5: Fashion Illustration and Photography Activity

- Begin with 1 - Fashion Illustration:
 - Illustrations need not be limited to what will be worn in the photographs. Remind students that the photograph will mimic formal elements of the illustration but does not need to completely match. Remind them to consider the environment/setting of the illustration.
 - Students may need more than one day to work on illustrations.
- Once illustrations are completed move to 2- fashion photographs:
 - Use phone cameras to pose and take photos
 - Limit photography to classroom and hallway if necessary
- Once complete, have student prepare for a final discussion:
 - Have students create a presentation showing the illustration and photo side-by-side; this could be a powerpoint slide or printed photos next to original illustrations. *(If necessary, schedule the final discussion several class periods later to give students time to prepare)*
 - Facilitate discussion; Prompts could include questions about process, challenges, realizations, context, relationship to Poiret/Irbe/Steichen

MATERIALS

Illustration media (paper, graphite and colored pencils, paint)

Digital camera, phone with digital camera