

# PABLO & DELIA



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## EXHIBITION CURATOR

HORATIO GONI RINALDINI

## EXHIBITION

PABLO & DELIA

THE LONDON YEARS 1970-75

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## EXHIBITION CURATOR'S NOTES

They play. Different materials. They are serious. They are fun. They started in Buenos Aires, painting. They painted portraits of couples, of musicians and singers. Like Sonny and Cher, Antoine and Karine. Their paintings are large style paintings. They look like real life. They look real. At this point the whole idea gets more complex. They begin to design their own clothes and they begin to design clothes. The images of the paintings and their image came closer. Their first collection, in 1968, takes place and is shown in the same exhibition space as their paintings. One of the people modelling the pieces is a contemporary dance performer, Marilu Marini. The paintings come to life in the clothes. The idea is complete. Like a real fantasy the paintings come to life in a new way through the clothes. The next step is patterns, but before this they travel. They move for a brief period to New York and then London. London becomes an ideal place. A perfect scenario. The whole thing explodes. Everything takes place. This is the beginning. Their work is meticulously built up. The first elements that come are accessories. Accessories with new ideas. Accessories like purses attached to arms and knees with little belts and buckles, and chokers that emphasize the elegance of the neckline. Then, based on simple patterns their first pieces as a collection come out in 1970. The hand crafted side plays a very important role. Their ability to paint shows on the dresses so the dress becomes like a canvas. This closeness and directness of the relationship between the dress and art is at its highest point here. It is their best achievement. Fashion becomes a medium of expression that makes us slightly forget the functionality of the piece. What happens then is new materials come in. Leather is used as a basic material for many different garments and shapes and also for its different qualities. Leather becomes a common denominator for their style. Then more new materials come in. They started combining leather with beads, feather and wool. The materials start to change but the shapes remain the same. And the most important idea is that the patterns are based on flat, two-dimensional forms that they will use across all of their creations. In all the leather garments a flat shape is cut out. No darts, just the volume created by the shapes. The materials will change and be arranged according to the source of inspiration. English garden, Russian Constructivism and nature, flowers. They identified with their work directly. They portray themselves in the things that they make. Russian Constructivism inspires them to introduce separate parts into their dresses. They divide their compositions into tops and trousers. The colours become unified and the shapes are more geometrical. Their seams are straight and the lining is important as it would be in a different colour which

## PABLO & DELIA A PORTRAIT

contrasts with the overall basic colour of the garment. Like with the jersey dresses with brown lining and black jersey. Not only the forms from Constructivism inspired them but the fact that couples like Rodchenko and Stepanova or Larionov and Goncharova were working together and designing workers clothes. They see them as many men and women working together on an art project, and it touched their identity as a couple. But the feeling and the innovation are in the lightness and the simplicity of the elements within it, like the lack of decoration, which was so important in the previous ideas become plain and minimal: there would be only one or two sizes that would fit all different body shapes. Then what is interesting is their idea of how to cover a body. In contrast, the English countryside inspired the flower patterns which came from looking at petals and then comes the obvious need to change the material that would suit the idea. Mainly chiffon in different colours came as the most obvious material to be used due to its subtlety and transparent nature. The bias cut dresses are delicately embroi-



dered with sequins in circles. Keeping to the same pattern as the leather dresses, what comes out is almost diametrically opposed. Some of these dresses had a head-piece made from the same chiffon as the dress which cast shadows over the face making the person look like they are in a cloud of mist. Like a flower in early morning. Pablo and Delia came together but they were two different parts. They had completely different personalities but obviously they were perfect together. So the work comes out not as from one or the other but as one author. Their unity comes through in their work. So all the decisions that were made between them in terms of creativity were filtered into one single concept that was translated into a piece that would look like a final product made by one person. It was their *joie de vivre* that embodied the spirit of the times and that influenced the way the clothes were conceived and how to live with them. It was the starting point. It was breaking the mould. Pablo and Delia broke the mould but invented their own. This mould had many components that went from a classically romantic image to a completely innovative one. Their

## HORATIO GONI RINALDINI

style never distracted from the quality or the inherent nobility of the materials they employed. Many of their coats and jackets were made from tweed and Irish wool but the lack of a range of vivid colours in the tweeds or wools available makes them take an unexpected decision. Blankets were made in great colours and tartans, so they literally cut out coats from them. They transform necessity into innovation. Colours play a primary role in their work and they were chosen with the idea in mind as one would somehow choose a colour for a painting. They would not be restricted by the fact that certain materials that they loved would not come in the colours they needed. They would not submit to the convention, but instead they would find a way to satisfy their ideas. Bright and warm colours are associated with happiness and free spirit. It was imperative for them to be able to bring that idea to life. They used fashion as a medium to express themselves. There wasn't a big fashion culture in Argentina they had to come up with the idea of fashion in a completely new cultural context. Meeting Coddington was decisive and the work with British Vogue was the ultimate collaboration, where Vogue could play the role of an art catalogue allowing the two artists to show their work. Coddington and Shrimpton were models and inspiring muses. Their working atelier is their studio but the photo sessions themselves became their work shop. The photographer would collaborate in the process. The dress would be modified and even sometimes completed during the shoot. The face of the model, make-up and hair styling all played their part in completing their style. More and more elements were brought into the picture. Ornamental hand painted hair-pieces would complement the styling, so that a new image would emerge. Their covers for Vogue worked as a cover-story of an inventive project. But more important for them is the dress as the ultimate essence of femininity in clothes. It could be a two dimensional dress in dark corduroy cut from a simple pattern or a delicate silk chiffon dress, like "Black Bird". But in each case the dress becomes an icon, a form to be explored and developed and like paintings many of their dresses have titles. There is a gap between their concepts and the finished pieces - between a jersey black tubular dress and one in pale peach chiffon with "petals" - the making of a piece is always a transition from the concept to the object and always flawlessly done by them. All fashion is inevitably of its time and place. Every garment is a period piece telling us so much about the fashion of its time. Everything about the dress - the style, the material, beauty, idea and the emotional response they evoke transcend the period that they come from.

"Interesting if it is true. It is true."

Gertrude Stein - Autobiographie de tout le monde.



**MANIFESTO 1966** \NE LOVE SUNNY DAYS, PLANTS, THE ROLING STONES, PINK AND SILVER STOCKINGS, SONNY AND CHER, RITA TUSHINGAM AND BOB DYLAN, FURS, SAINT LAURENT AND THE YOUNG SAVAGE LOOK, THE MUSIC HITS OF TODAY, THE COUNTRYSIDE, PINK AND BLUE, SHIRTS WITH FLOWER PRINTS, SHIRTS WITH STRIPES, TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED, HAIR, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, SUNTANNED BODIES, COLOURFUL CAPS, \WHITE POWDERED FACES AND HAPPY ENDINGS, THE SEA, DANCING, MAGAZINES, THE MOVIES, ZIBELIN, RINGO AND ANTOINE, THE COLOUR BLACK, SHINY CLOTHES, BABY - GIRLS, GIRL - GIRLS, BOY - GIRLS, GIRL - BOYS AND BOY - BOYS. DELIA GANCELA / PABLO MESEJAN



## INCOVERSATION

## GRACE



## DELIA

Delia Cancela met up with Grace Coddington for an informal conversation about their work together in London during the early Seventies. They met at the US Vogue office at No. 4 Times Square, New York on 28 February 2001. We asked them to record their conversation. Below is the unedited transcript.

**Delia.** I don't have any memory. I don't remember anything

**Grace.** As I say with my book when I'm looking through I kind of remember a little bit. I remember a moment and then it all goes blank and then you ask me a date and I can't remember any date at all. Don't ask me a date because I can't answer it.

**D.** I was very worried about that because I have the same problem. I thought I was getting sick and I ask the doctor. He said it's not the age it's the stress.

**G.** You get older and you forget

**D.** And you let go. When I see a picture I remember. Now the conversation with Grace. How was our first meeting? You don't remember?

**G.** No, I don't remember.

**D.** She doesn't remember. For example, what relationship did we have. If Pablo were here he would remember. Me, what I remember is that they sent us from here, New York to London.

**G.** Who's they?

**D.** The people from American Vogue. Because I remember that Diana Vreeland...

**G.** It was Vreeland at that time and not Mirabella?

**D.** No it was Vreeland. She saw our work but she didn't let us get into the office.

**G.** Oh really. Why not?

**D.** Because we were too young. Too freaky.

**G.** Too crazy.... But she was very crazy, no?

**D.** I think she was afraid because we were Argentinean people and she didn't know if we would understand her well. We only had drawings.

**G.** But she loved drawings. They published a lot of drawings in the magazine at that time.

**D.** I remember she liked our work. We were in the other side of the office we hear "this would be okay" and I remember the person who took the drawings was saying 'oh yes, oh yes, she likes the drawings'. And then they send us to see people and the people at Vogue sent us to see people and I thought it was you.

**G.** Maybe it was Marabella?

**D.** Maybe. Somebody saw our work and we were doing only the painted accessories and drawings. Then we went to see you and I remember that you loved very much our ideas. And you asked us if we were going to stay and I was thinking that we were only going to stay one month.

**G.** I seem to remember that you said that it was day to day and if you had something to do that you could stay another day. You would maybe find the money to pay for another weeks rent. I remember that one little room that you lived in with the wash basin that you had in the same room. And did you have a cat?

**D.** No, that was later. Afterwards we had Vito and that was when we took your apartment for a while.

**G.** That's right. You stayed in my apartment for a while. Yes, you took my apartment. But where was I?

**D.** It was in St John's Wood.

**G.** Yes but that was the apartment but where was I? I know, that is when I moved in with Willy Christie. Was it that time? So now I've got the time thing. Because it was after I was married to Michael Chow. And you moved into St John's Wood. Okay. But I thought I knew you a long time before that.

**D.** No, we met... I have a souvenir of you of the first time I saw you in Vogue and immediately I saw you I had a good idea for a cover.

**G.** Yes, I remember that. I have all the tear sheets. Was it Jean Shrimpton?

**D.** We were working in Barry Lategan's studio in Rossetti studio in Flood Street (Chelsea). And we were completely crazy about it all.

**G.** But you were even sewing while we were doing the cover and you would sew a little hat and you would add a little bit.

**D.** You were doing the makeup exactly like the drawings.

**G.** Yes. With Barbara Daly doing the makeup. And Leonard or Oliver doing the hair.

**D.** Exactly. And we were doing these head pieces with leather and muslin or organza.

**G.** And you always made people look like flowers and things. I remember the Jean Shrimpton one was like a bluebell upside down like a little hat, like a little fairy, with a little stalk hanging down.

**D.** And then afterwards the caterpillar chokers and here with the stalk with all the petals and oil painted leaves. I've got a polaroid from Barry where you can see it.

**G.** Because on the Vogue cover they are cropped out.

**D.** I remember thinking 'oh God they were the most important things'.

**G.** And that was the first one?

**D.** Yes, that was the first one.

**G.** But you weren't really making whole collections at that time. You were just making pieces from time to time. You were making your drawings come alive somehow, no?

**D.** Yes.

**G.** So you would do a drawing and then you would make it into clothes or whatever and then we would go to a studio and we would get Barbara to do the make-up and the hair and they would end up looking like your drawings.

**D.** Always very beautiful. That is what Judith was very interested to know.

**G.** To capture.

**D.** Also remember, do you remember the time when you were going out of Barry's studio and it was a car.... How do you say the famous car?

**G.** A Rolls Royce?

**D.** Yes a Rolls Royce from Michael. You were just married.

**G.** From Michael?

**D.** Oui, and you were not surprised by.....

**G.** Well we were only married six months.

**D.** Yes, exactly and it was this moment that you were married that I met you and you were sent the Rolls Royce and I met Michael.

**G.** He arrived in it probably. We didn't have a chauffeur.

**D.** I don't remember that. And the other cover is the one with the pink leather.

**G.** There was one on Maudy James that I remember.

**D.** And it was for spring, but I don't remember when we did that one. I remember also the make-up we were working together with her.

**G.** We were doing a lot of beauty pictures too. Most of beauty at that time was done by or Clive Arrowsmith Maybe Clive did that cover of Maudy James and not Barry. I'm not sure. Do you remember Clive Arrowsmith. And Patricia, do you remember Patricia.

**D.** How is she?

**G.** She's very well. She's living in Palm Beach and she's married to a Polo guy who is playing Polo most of the time in Palm Beach because that is a big Polo place. She came to see me because I was shooting there and she looks great, still the same with the hair, but not as pink as before. I remember we did a picture with her with some hair pieces and some hair slides. You made lots and lots of accessories.

**D.** In the beginning we were doing accessories. And then after some months we made our first collection. The first one that is the collection which is in the Victoria and Albert museum. The Victoria and Albert has the first collection.

**G.** I will go before they close.

**D.** The dress is painted by hand.

**G.** I remember but not completely.

**D.** After the cover you made an article.....

**G.** Oh I know....Oh yeah, yeah, with me in it. There is a drawing with a cut out photograph of me with Barry in the middle with the hair like shhhew. And there is a photograph of you with Pablo.

**D.** Yes, the title was 'What's Underground and Up in the Clouds'.

**G.** I have them all in a big folder at home because the photographs were done by Barry Lategan and I have them all by photographers if you need them.

And I have all the tear sheets if you need them I can find them, but I'm sure you have them.

**D.** I got one photo of you with the dress and the same gesture and I got the page.

**G.** There was one drawing that you did with very long hair and your cat was in the picture.

**D.** It caught fire.

**G.** Ah no.

**D.** We lost a dress.

**G.** And I remember those beautiful dresses made out of jersey, silk jersey that were just like a tube and so there were no seams anywhere somehow. Genius. They were just genius.

**D.** And too ahead for their time because they were all black and they were hanging.

**G.** You could wear them again now Incredible.

**D.** The trousers were also hanging and the little tops.

**G.** I think that you had a thin belt that just tied around.

**D.** And the other ones with a little fine crepe. And the ponchos with the embroidery and at the same time Karl Lagerfeld was doing the same thing with the same spirit, very geometrical things. I remember Mrs Sydney she say that the collection was beautiful.

**G.** But she used to sell your things.

**D.** Yes, but the black ones were very difficult, she couldn't sell. You had one and I had one and Caroline Baker from Nova had one. I showed it in the exhibition in Argentina the one that I was having and I still use it sometimes.

**G.** Well it was forever.

**D.** It caught fire and I don't have the dress or the drawings. The curators have asked me what is the difference in the style at the photo sessions and how we were changing the style.

**G.** How do you mean? Do you mean that you were changing your style? Do you mean how you evolved?

**D.** How do you see it? I have my answers but I want to hear yours.

**G.** Well I think that it started out very much with you playing with fabrics more and colours and print and embroideries and things like this. And then I think you got more simple, no? Am I wrong....is my memory wrong?

**D.** Yes that's right.

**G.** I think to get simple you have to start complicated. And then work into something that's even more refined and more simple and what they now call 'minimal'. And the trouble is people think it's easy to be minimal but it's not. It's much more difficult.

**D.** Yes, much more difficult.

**G.** Much more difficult. But that dress is the epitome of minimal. It says everything. Like you said it was so refined that nobody understood it at that time.

**D.** That reminds me, of the last collection that we did in Paris some fashion people told me that we were incredibly modern.

**G.** I'm sure that you were very modern. Especially when you were doing the big big wide pants with the wool, with the elastic waist. Because again it was like one size is fitting everybody. It's what Zoran did here too much later. It was done A, with humour and B, with a wonderful sense of colour. And although it looked very complicated it was also very simple.

**D.** Also the form, the cut. They were all flat somehow.

**G.** Yes, you cut them all very flat. Maybe it was because you were in a very small room (laughs). All those things you take into account. That's how you lead your life and then you make your clothes around the way you live.

**D.** I think it was because of a different thing. Because we don't have a fashion culture in Argentina. And we were painters. We were artists.

**G.** And so that's good because you don't have any preconceived things, which is good.

**D.** And also if you think the poncho and the Indian things, flat, very geometrical simple things that you can put flat.

**G.** Also like the Japanese where everything is flat. Your pants were in a way very Japanese.

**D.** And I think that the idea was that we wanted to make dresses and the way to do it was to make it with our hands. Like Pablo was saying that 'if you can't do it with your hands then it's bad for your face'. I remember him saying that. He was always saying those things and made everyone laugh.....'

Oh it's a shame if you can't do something with your hands'. It sounds very funny but it was a good theory at the moment. But it happens now with people that have similar ideas. like people who recycle things.

**G.** I think that it's interesting. Like the Imitation of Christ. Do you know the people here?

**D.** No.

**G.** They're funny. They make one off things. They take an old dress and they turn it inside-out, upside-down, use pieces of it, add something.

**D.** I think it's interesting. For us I think that we started like for example with the black corduroy dress that was just a shape. I could do it now with no problem. I know the shape exactly.

**G.** Like a cut out paper doll.

**D.** Yes, exactly like a paper doll dress. And we were putting this binding.....

**G.** Black binding around the edge.

**D.** And then always with the big square pockets, just that.... you don't need more. It's a dress. It's a simple dress.

**G.** I think you did another drawing of me in that shape dress again with the cat. You called it the umbrella dress because I'm with an umbrella. I have it hanging on my bedroom wall in the country.

**D.** That dress for me was fantastic. It was a beautiful dress. With just having the little decoration painted.

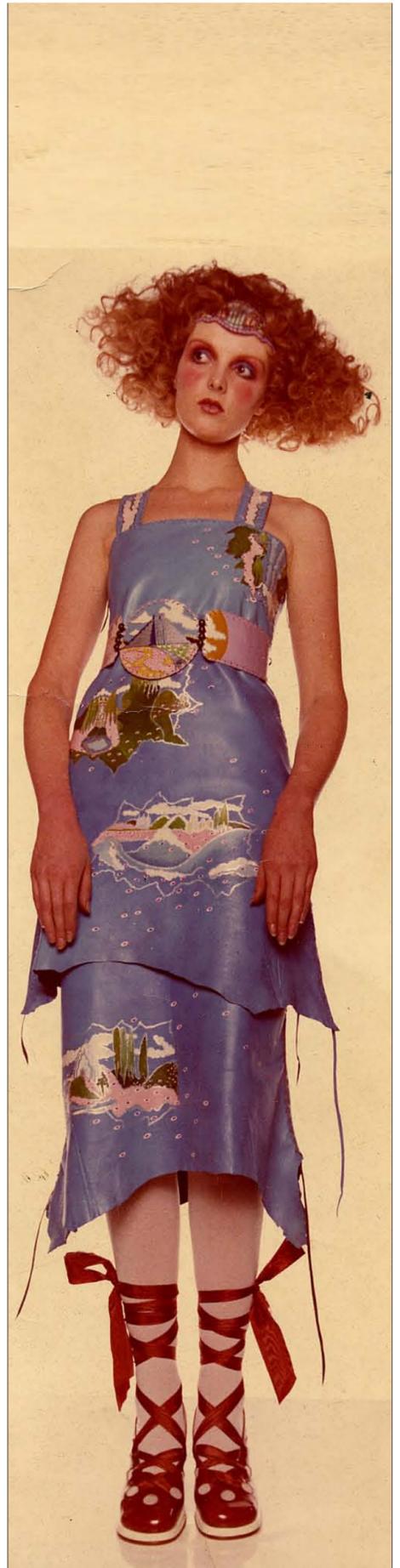
**G.** That's because you couldn't resist painting something.

**D.** We couldn't resist painting. Another thing that they asked me was how were we working in the photo sessions. In relation with you, the photographer, with us. It's different for you now?

**G.** Oh yes.

**D.** Oh yes.

**G.** I never meet the designers now. There's a few I do. Everything is such a big business now. It's kind of out of control now. A bit sad. Because I do miss that whole relationship with designers, which I used to have at British Vogue, because it is much smaller and in England there weren't as many designers and if you had time you could go and see the designer and you would do one shoot every six weeks. Here I do maybe two in a week. That's the difference. And it was interesting when I was doing my book and I had been with American Vogue for five years and I was at British Vogue for twenty years. I would tear the pages out of all my work and I had just as many pages of 20 years at British Vogue as I did with five years at American Vogue. And that's the kind of difference. That is what happened. Everything speeded up. And it's also America you know. It's extraordinary that you don't have time to meet the designer any more. It's extraordinary what happens here now there are all the different departments now in order to do two shoots a week we have to have a huge back up team, like the girl who just came in here. There is a huge team of girls at Vogue and there are the ones who pull all the clothes in for you. Of course you go to the collections and see the collections and you try to remember what you can and there are so many more collections now. I was on the road for three weeks. Out every morning. First collection at 9am and then I was back at midnight. I'm going to be 60 in a week's time. It's very tiring to go through that. Seeing all those things going by and you have to try and remember everything. We have an enormous back-up team here otherwise you would never get to do two shoots a week. They do the calling in they do the sending back. They remember the ones that you miss. They go to the in between shows that I can't go to because there's more. You tell them that you're doing a story on such and such and they are the one's that work with the designers, which I miss. We didn't have market editors at British Vogue. You were



your own market editor. You went to the designers. I would go to you and I would say let's do a story or show me your collection it works two ways. Or you show me your collection and I would say let's do four, six pages on it or I would say that I am doing a story on angels and you would make me an angel. It doesn't happen like that here. It's much more to do with merchandising and selling and it has to be in a million stores or you can't photograph it.

**D.** It's too big.

**G.** It's all about business and money and a budget. Before you go on a shoot you have to estimate every penny you are going to spend. This is what my assistant does full time she works on budgets. She calculates how much money she thinks that we are going to spend on something. It's hell. I don't want to know about it. I don't want to know how much the model is going to charge and how much the airfare is and the film. It's all comes into my job now and it's crazy. It's such a different time. You don't have time to do the beautiful pictures that you did in those days. It's a shame. A few magazines still can do it and they don't have as many commitments as we do here. But this is a really successful mag and on the other side of course I earn more money and you can't have everything in this life. I have a nice house in the country and I have a nice house here. You know but I pay for it here by being busy busy, being crazy. But that whole creative thing, there is a whole whack of it that's gone because you don't have time for it.

**D.** In the 80's I think I told you that I found myself completely lost. I think that the last collection that we did in Paris and it was minimal in the real sense of minimal. There was only black and white and pink and the fabric was cut with a knife.

**G.** Yes, which they have only just discovered nowadays and it's called laser cut or something. It's so funny I remember. It's so funny you couldn't see the edge.

**D.** And in the accessories we were having, how do you call it? A garter with the knife here and the line here and the girls were having boots with colours and the dresses here and at the moment everybody was doing glitter.

**G.** That was at the beginning of Comme Des Garçons, no? When they first started or was that more the seventies. Because I really admire Rei as she just keeps on and she doesn't listen to all that other shit. She is still so creative and she is not bothered by all of that.

**D.** Me too.

**G.** And she doesn't sway and she's so direct and she's genius.

**D.** and she has the money.

**G.** Yes and she has the money. But did she always have the money? I don't know.

**D.** Yes. Because I remember when they arrived in Paris I went to see this really incredible display. And at that moment we couldn't do it because we were coming from Argentina and we had no money. It was just ideas. Do you think we were a too savage?

**G.** Too savage? I remember being frustrated because you didn't have the money to go that stage further and I didn't have any money in those days so I certainly couldn't help you. In a funny kind of way it was a beginning of a realisation for me that you have to have money to make it more beautiful. And that's kind of weird but to be able to carry on. But it is the only way to carry on and it was the first time that I saw someone who was creative who was like stopped by something ... by the hideous thing of reality. I thought that you could stumble on and I'll stumble on and you don't really need much money and it will be fine. But you can do that to a point and then to go that one stage further you have to have backing. So that you don't have to think about the money any more. I know that you had to think about it every day. Like to eat even.

**D.** I think for myself, I cannot speak for Pablo as he is not here, but for myself I have the idea that our place was London and not in Paris.

**G.** I didn't see you when you were in Paris. I didn't see you fitting in. There is a meanness there that isn't



in England.

**D.** Yes, in the beginning I was happy to be in Paris

**G.** It's beautiful.

**D.** Yes and it was nice and we had a lot of friends. And it was fun and it was sex, drugs and rock n' roll. We became very good friends with Kenzo and all the group. But after a time I think that I'm not from here. This is not my place and I stayed in Paris because I was living there.

**G.** I was always afraid to leave London and it was only because of a series of events and a change at British Vogue and life had changed so I took the opportunity to move out here and I'm glad that I did. It was very hard to move out ....It was very nice in England and everyone is very sweet. Now I find it frustrating to go back there. To try and work and if you want to get anything done you can't. I hardly ever go. I went to see Holly Hamilton in the country, but London I haven't been to for a year. I only go once a year and that's it.

**D.** I remember the first collection when we presented ourselves as Pablo and Delia premier. From the last collection to the first collection we were working on in London you can see the primitive shape. The wool, the beautiful colours but more children like. More children's play. To a very sophisticated evening dress and elaborate.

**G.** Very elaborate. I remember I wore one once and it was very elaborate and made from pink chiffon with petals and I went to Venice and I wore it there. I can't remember what was happening. I think maybe there was a Walter Albini show and a dinner after. And you leant me this beautiful pink dress and it was like nothing else.

**D.** Like nothing else. And from the beginning to the end of our work in London I think we were growing. And we grew very fast. Because we were having nothing, it was only the two of us who was doing

everything.

**G.** And you didn't have any production.

**D.** No nothing and we were selling here and to...

**G.** You were selling as well as making. You did everything.

**D.** We were working very early till late in the night. And we were very happy but maybe it's the destiny of people, we couldn't get the backer, the person to help us. I wanted to stay in London and I was sure that I wanted to stay in London. But Pablo wanted to move.....

**G.** But I seem to remember that there were backers that they wanted to change you. They said that they wanted 300 of that dress and you didn't want that. The backers couldn't understand why you didn't want to be super commercial.

**D.** Do you think it would be nice to start again?

**G.** It would be difficult. It is such a different time. Now if you thought that you were being pressured to be commercial then.....

**D.** I would not do anything if I had to take care of the commercial part.

**G.** You see people even now who are very talented but because of the business side it is eaten out. I happen to like, talking American, Marc Jacobs. He's absolutely adorable and he's very talented which I almost didn't recognise in the beginning. When he started he went bankrupt three, maybe four times. I don't know if he went bankrupt but his business fell to pieces and whoever was backing him, well it wasn't working. Really when the LVMH people came and backed him and backed his own thing I think that was a huge pressure on him and it still is but he has got used to that. Now we are talking about ten years. It was a progress over 10 years before he became a steady strong designer and that was only when he got the money. Then he could get a team and concentrate on how to do a seam, on how to make a



button look beautiful, all the things that one does as a designer, looking at detail which now which I never would have thought it, dare I say it, coming from an American. I think it is amazing what he has achieved and how beautiful his things are and I think that it has helped him living in Paris. He comes here too but he has two collections.

One is his own and the other is for Louis Vuitton. That whole thing that is happening now I think is very frightening that designers are being owned by three different people or it's for Gucci, or it's for Louis Vuitton or it's for Prada and it's very frightening. But it's helping a lot of people and the ones that can't do it are falling by the wayside so maybe it's good that it's sorting the good ones from the bad ones. On the other hand it's frightening because some of the good people might disappear too.

**D.** I'm sure there's a lot of good people that never arrived .....

**G.** It's so tough.

**D.** it's very tough because of competition.

**G.** Nobody has time for a conversation and I always say that nobody has time for a cup of tea these days. It's true. You know it's a different time and there are different pleasures now from..... That is why I now go to the country every weekend no matter what. And I don't see anyone. I just sit there with my four cats and Didier and it's very nice. You know Didier? He was a hairdresser and he was around and I'm still with him. We've been together for fifteen years.

**D.** Oh, yes. That's a lot for people who live and work in New York. Which designer do you think you can compare today with Pablo & Delia?

**G.** You were kind of original. That's not to say that there aren't people who care like that now, of course there are. When you were trying to find backers and they were saying that you would have to do this, this and this you had to do the commercial side of the

business and you were adamant that you didn't want to do this. I don't know, but that is what I always felt. I'll tell you who's like you now, Azzedine. He's really brilliant and you can't change him. You know I want to hit him on the head sometimes because he could be a millionaire. He could be a millionaire. And he's not. Somehow he has managed this thing with the Prada people and they've given him some money and what's he going to do with it? Pay the bills I suppose. It's so funny that nothing is going to change him. And you keep thinking that he would rather lie on the street and starve rather than change.

**D.** I think that we were artists and we decided to work in fashion. We want to express ourselves in any medium. It didn't have to be paint, to make dresses but whatever way possible to express ourselves. And we took fashion in that way. And for me fashion is that. I think we were pioneers in that moment because now there is all this talk about art and fashion and fashion and art. We were just doing it.

**G.** Yes, you weren't talking about it you were just doing it. And designers say oh yes I was inspired by Picasso and that is just one moment. Next they will be saying that they were inspired by a movie and the next week they are going to be inspired by.... I don't know.... boys in the street. But you were artists for the most part.

**D.** And I think that it is a good thing because many people ask me about that, and I find if you talk to designers that they think that they know everything.

**G.** But that is the kind of arrogance that you almost have to have as a designer because you have to believe yourself. If you don't you're going to be walked all over.

**D.** I think in that moment we did have the arrogance, we knew what we were doing. But at the same time we were really open to listen to you and to listen and see what you were doing. And I sometimes

think that if I were maybe thinking that I'm too great and that I know what I'm doing and you shut up because you are the fashion editor and we are the designers and you would turn your heads and say okay.

**G.** I would. It would be fine with me.

**D.** It is equal what we are doing. We knew what we were doing and you knew what you were doing and the photographers knew what they were doing.

**G.** Definitely. And I think that it was a great kind of relationship and Barry was in that relationship too. But each person was helping the other person and one person would go to here and the other person would go to here and you build on it and I talk about doing a fitting because that is what I do. I wasn't too much involved in the process until you had done at least 60% of it. I just had to put it on the girl and that was the easy part. But then again you have to love it.

**D.** But you knew how to do it.

**G.** You have to find the right girl to put it on.

**D.** The first collection was the model.....?

**G.** Appolonina or Linda.

**D.** Do you remember the first Pablo & Delia premier with the Norman Parkinson pictures. Ah, I remember it was Pat Cleveland. You put on her a wig like my hair with a fringe.

**G.** Like Anna Wintour has now. She was with a little scooter.

**D.** When people looked at that picture they said that is you but it was not me. It is hard to find that these days. A stylist that works with the designer.

**G.** There are a few that work with designers in that way. There is a great English one called Melanie Ward who works for Bazaar and she works with Helmut Lang and a lot of other designers. She works a lot with Craig McDean and also with Helmut you can see this whole relationship. You know he does so much, but you know he's a guy and then Melanie

comes in and she's a quirky English girl but she's very intelligent too and she adds a little eccentricity to something very classic. What you get is some kind of magic. I particularly admirer her. I think she is really talented. She puts two things together that you wouldn't think would go together and she put them together they totally go together. So it does happen sometimes. But certainly not in commercial thinking. I'm totally not a commercial thinking person either. But that's the Englishness she retains.

**D.** I'd like you to continue but I don't want to take all your time. The curator he asked me what happened with Shrimpton? I don't know what happened with her, she was very quiet.

**G.** She got married.

**D.** I know what happened to her in life, but what happened at that time? She was a very nice person to work with.

**G.** I didn't work with her very much I must say and I'm not quite sure why. Maybe it was the end of her career. I started modelling just before she did I and was modelling for ten years so by the time I came to work with her when I was an editor I think it was near the end of her career. She worked a lot with people like Avedon and worked in America a lot. I think she had a beauty contract and she wound down. It was the beginning of that time when models would get beauty contracts which allowed them to do much less work and they would do one shoot every six months. And she was doing something with Bailey and she left to live in the country. She is a real beauty a true beauty.

**D.** A natural beauty.

**G.** And a very unfashionie person. She's not a business person in that way. She kind of didn't understand clothes or she did. It was just in her that she would put something on and it looked extraordinary because of her proportions. She didn't stand all modelly the whole time and she didn't try to promote herself the whole time like so many people and that came across in her pictures too. You felt there was something more than just a clotheshorse person.

**D.** What were you thinking of us in that moment? If you had any opinion of us?

**G.** What was I thinking of you? In which way?

**D.** In the way that we didn't want to get commercial. In the way that we were keeping our imagery strong.

**G.** It's frustrating but I think that it's totally admirable. It's frustrating to me because what happened was you stopped doing things and I didn't have you to work with. I think it's very admirable that you think like that but very difficult to stick to.

**D.** When we arrived we had nothing. What was it that made you offer us a cover?

**G.** Here I am. I'm not a designer or creator in that way. If something comes and sits on my plate then I

am going to eat it, you know.

**D.** Would you do it now?

**G.** If I had the chance, but mostly I'm not allowed to do it for all sorts of reasons. To have something. It's really difficult to do a cover that's arresting. You know how many covers have you seen? All covers were from the waist up and that only gives you half a person to make something different of. And I always thought that it was so weird with American Vogue because all the covers look the same. I couldn't tell the difference from January, February, March and I remember having a conversation with Alex Liberman and I remember him saying well if we know that this picture sells the magazine really well we will keep using it. We'll change the earrings but we'll keep using the same girl because it's a given that it's going to sell. I couldn't understand that way of thinking because in England if you thought that you had seen that image before then you wouldn't buy the magazine. So I don't have a new idea every month and if someone comes along with something entirely new and totally different to anything we've seen then it's really exciting. You made my job really easy. What do I have to do if you've already done everything with the little hat? All I have to do is copy you and make it appear in the picture.

**D.** But it was extreme.

**G.** It was very extreme, it was fantasy. British Vogue was known for its fantasy. And I always remember Jean Miller used to say 'enhanced reality this is what I want' and this is about fantasy. I'm really happy to have been given those 20 years. It was a wonderful time to be doing that job in England. I think in England it was more creative than a lot of places. I'm not saying that there weren't people who were doing very good things over here because there were. Certainly what Polly Mollen was doing with Avedon was extraordinary and I'm not saying that I'm better than that because I'm not.

**D.** There was an atmosphere which was very creative and very free.

**G.** Very free. Very free.

**D.** That is what I was thinking when I was living there.

**G.** Now I realise how free we were. I was not allowed to do this and I was not allowed to do that. But compared to what you're not allowed to do here now. I mean I'm not complaining, it's a different time. But we were so free. The idea that you can put a little fairy on the cover is unbelievable.

**D.** And afterwards we could sell the chokers with the caterpillars, we sold those things.

**G.** That was remarkable.

**D.** We could live off what we were doing. Because afterwards, when we went to Paris, it became more and more difficult and we had to work for other people.

**G.** Times were changing as too.

**D.** And I think now it would be completely impossible to live like this.

**G.** Yes, I know it is. I know there's a big difference in what I do. A few little things get through and when a few little creative things get through it's so exciting. But now it's a big challenge. How can you work your way around so that you don't offend anyone, so that you're using the clothes that you're supposed to use and all the things that you're not supposed to do you can do without upsetting anyone. And then when it turns out well it's really wonderful because it's much harder.

**D.** This an exhibition that I did of Barbie dolls when I got back to Buenos Aires. I just did a transformation of Barbie.

**G.** Barbie Doll? This is a Barbie Doll? She's all like messed up. It's beautiful. Because Barbie is such a commercial thing. It's so funny. It looks like you in a funny kind of way.

**D.** I change them completely. I paint them in a way that they look like sculptures. The way I was painting all the Barbie's white. Many times it wasn't looking like plastic any more,

**G.** Like porcelain.

**D.** Or ....wood because it was very opaque. And then after, I would put glass eyes. And I changed the hair. There is one where she has the hair like this. I burnt all the hair and it is beautiful like this. And I made a dress which is completely cut in paper and all the sewing is white thread. Some of them I painted silver and blue to look mechanical and also some black so that they are completely black. And also I make projects for houses for Barbie dolls....

**Grace** and **Delia** continue talking and looking at Delia's CD rom....

The pieces exhibited at Judith Clark Costume gallery come from a rare look into Delia Cancela's private archive held at her home in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her personal collection has been extended with additional garments on loan from private collections in London and New York. It is often lamented that the history of fashion during the early 1970's is largely unwritten, the exhibition represents the opportunity for the first time to view clothes alongside both their inspirational original drawings and their idealised press presentations - through access to magazine cut outs and photographs - illustrating the transition from craft to 'look', so important to the fashion system. The exhibition is compemented by a personal testimony and intimate film 'Dialogue, 1974' of the couple, Pablo and Delia, in their St Johns wood home, captured by the exhibition curator - and their friend - Horatio Goni.

Pablo Mesejean and Delia Cancela met at art school and began working in their native Buenos Aires. They were part of the Argentinean avant-garde who wanted to work free of boundaries, expressing their creativity through whatever medium possible. Through their caricature drawings and paintings they immortalised their



## Catalogue Images

### Red felt suit

This waist length, short sleeved top of red felt has a large Peter Pan collar which frames a wide V-neck which has no fastenings. The mustard coloured natural suede collar and cuffs are decorated with red, blue, pink, green, black and white intersecting strips of mustard suede to match the trimmings of the top. The boarders of the collar and cuffs are decorated with three rows of red, pink and green zig-zag stitching. The top is similar in decoration to that held in the collection at the V&A T.304-1985. This top is decorated with a two-piece collar, which is embellished in the centre with two large pompons in two shades of brown wool and with brightly coloured wooden discs.

The matching calf length pleated skirt in red wool has two 4 inch stripes of black wool which encircle the skirt, one around the hem and the other 4 inches above it. The skirt is sewn to a thin waistband made of mustard suede to match the trimmings of the top. The skirt fastens at the back with a zip. The long A-line silhouette is typical of the period and the strong colours are reminiscent of folk costume. The two dimensional graphic decoration illustrates their artistic project and here nods to Constructivism. No label. Courtesy of Caroline Collis, Browns, London.

### Unisex orange suede top

Short sleeved suede top cut to hang lose from the body. The un-hemmed edges of the hem and sleeves of the garment are cut in a jagged line to resemble natural skins. Sewn together with suede cut into ribbons, acting as both thread and decora-

contemporaries on canvas, depicting models Kouka and Jean Shrimpton and pop singers Sony and Cher and Bob Dylan.

The period documented in this exhibition, the years between 1970 and 1975, represents the period spent in London by the two Argentinean artists who under their design label Pablo and Delia and through their creative collaborations with Vogue helped to change the fashion landscape at that time. Following their stay in London, Pablo and Delia, regularly exhibited as artists, but never has an exhibition looked at their fashion project - it was during their years in London that this was central to their work.

It was Grace Coddington at British Vogue who gave them their first magazine cover, which represented the beginning of a collaboration which continued throughout the early Seventies together with photographers such as Barry Lategan, Norman Parkinson and Clive Arrowsmith. It was at the photographic shoots where their drawings came to life as the model's hair, make-up and clothes depicted the Pablo and Delia dream: a fantasy land of Alice in Wonderland imagery and caricature people. Their clothes were an immediate success, selling to Joseph



tive detail on the side seams. Overstitching around the neck. The purple suede decorative panel is applliqued around the neckline using the same stitching. The top has an open slit neck with ornamental threads ending in painted leather disks. Each surface of the disks is painted differently with pastel graphic motifs. The Pablo and Delia round logo is stamped in purple ink onto the inside collar. Courtesy of Caroline Collis, Browns, London.

### Black suede top

The small, black short-sleeved suede top has a very ornate neck decoration in mustard suede with green applique flowers and red suede stitching. Seams of red suede provide additional decoration on the shoulder seam. The side seams are both glued and machine-stitched and are concealed. The waist is brought in with two suede ribbons tied at the back in a bow. The Pablo and Delia round logo is stamped in purple ink (now very feint) on red leather, which is glued to the inside collar. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

### Brown Dress

Brown knee-length A-line dress with short sleeves. The dress has a high round neck and patch pockets. The material is gathered in the centre between the front two pockets to form an inverted square decoration. This dress was a popular design and was repeated in many different fabrics. Its simplicity is reminiscent of the development of their interest in

and Browns and worn by the likes of Jeanne Shrimpton and Bianca Jagger; their first London collection bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

At the end of the 1960s clothes with geometric lines dependent upon firm fabrics were abandoned in favour of flowing styles in soft materials. Pablo and Delia's use of simple dressmaking techniques with undisguised machine work, and naturally textured fabrics in unusual combinations, produced a bright and offbeat look that was to become typical of the early 1970's.

Their one-off accessories and dresses depicted imaginary landscapes which they applied to natural fabrics. Their flamboyant use of surface decoration emphasised their ability to use hand-crafted designs bringing to them the bright colours reminiscent of their paintings. Their romantic rainbow and fairy-tale imagery perfectly captured the prevailing fashion mood for clothing with a hippie influence using fabrics ranging from suede and leather through to chiffon. This love of escapism and fantasy could also be seen in the work of their contemporaries, notably Gina Fratini, Bill Gibb, Thea Porter, John Bates, Ossie Clark, and Zandra Rhodes.



work wear, and their interest in uniforms. No label. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

### Grey floral dress

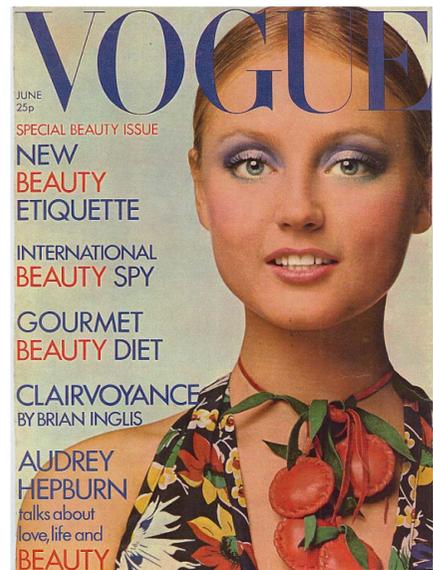
Floral knee-length A-line dress with short sleeves. The dress has a high round neck and patch pockets. There is a gathered section centred between the front pockets. This dress was a favourite design and was repeated in many different fabrics. This fabric was used throughout their collection to form different garments. There is a photograph of Pablo wearing trousers made from the same fabric in a portrait of the couple in Italian Vogue, 1973. Made in London printed label is sewn into the back of the neck. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

### Brown cotton trousers

These brown, very flared unisex trousers are gathered at the centre front with back patch pockets. They reflect the simplicity of the cut of the dress described above. The cotton is thick, and obviously intended as workwear. Worn by Pablo Mesejean. No label. Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

### Cotton and suede tunic

Green, orange and cream loosely woven checked tunic. The tunic is made from a single piece of fabric, which is folded over the shoulders and slit in the centre to form the neck opening. Suede is used to





decorate the neck-line, pockets and arm holes and around the hem. Six long mustard plaited leather ribbons are sewn onto and hang down the central section. This tunic was designed specifically as workwear and was worn by Pablo Mesejean in their workshop in London.  
No label.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

#### Burnt orange chiffon dress

The dress has a slit neckline and multi-layers of orange chiffon cut in triangular shapes which fall in layers to the ankle. The hems of the chiffon pieces are machine-stitched with white thread, which defines the boarder between each layer of chiffon. The dress is caught in at the waist by thin strips of peach chiffon that tie in a bow at the back. The dress is decorated with circular patterns of white flower sequins, smaller clear sequins, pearls, and diamante.

The dress would have been styled with a chiffon head-dress draped over the wearers face as a veil and secured around the head with a ribbon. Similar in style to the chiffon collection photographed by Guy Bourdin for English Vogue, 1974. No label.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

#### Peach chiffon top

Layers of peach chiffon are cut to fall into points at the hems. Two strips of chiffon are tied into bows to make straps which are attached to the chiffon which is cut straight across the body above the chest. A double fold of chiffon is used as decoration across the neckline. Four circular embroidered patterns made from gold sequins, silver and gold beads, decorate the front of the top. The top is similar in style to the chiffon dress described above, and believed to belong to the collection photographed by Guy Bourdin for English Vogue, 1974.



No label.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

#### Orange dress with turquoise sequins

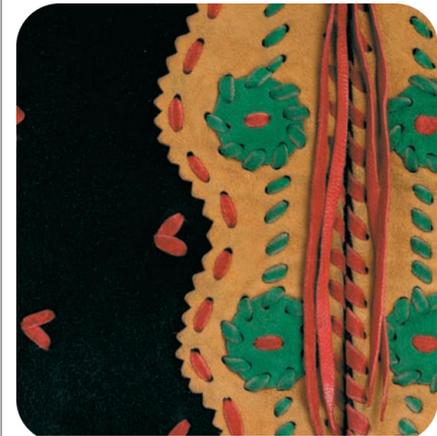
Beneath the orange chiffon top layer of the dress is a visible underlay of brown chiffon, machine hemmed using turquoise thread. This ankle length dress is made from one piece of material, folded over the shoulders and slit to create a neckline which drapes slightly to create an uneven line. The dress has no seams running down the sides, leaving the dress open. The fabric is simply caught at both sides to make armholes. Swirls of turquoise sequins decorate the neckline and the armholes.

The dress resembles a caftan and is to be worn over a coloured shift. Many designers looked to the Orient for inspiration at that time. The rich layered drapery and decorative pattern is very Middle

Eastern in feel.  
The Pablo & Delia label is sewn onto the inside collar.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

#### Wedding Skirt

Ankle length gathered skirt in leather with appliquéd red suede hearts. This skirt was part of the wedding outfit designed by Pablo and Delia and worn by the model Lynn Cohlman for her marriage to photographer Barry Lategan at the Chelsea registry office, London 1973.  
Courtesy of Lynn Cohlman, New York



#### Accessories

##### Brown suede head-dress

The brown head-band is gathered in the centre front with a circular painted motif in blue and silver painted on a mauve leather disc. The band is fastened at the back with two leather ties. Two semi-circular sections of the same suede fall down as flaps over the ears, sewn to the sides with leather stitching. The initials D.P are painted in the inside in silver.  
Courtesy of Caroline Collis, Browns, London.

Additional leather, suede and feather accessories used in styled photo shoots in London 1970-5. Restored for the exhibition by Delia Cancela, 2001.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires

##### Archive

An archive of intimate photos of Delia Cancela and Pablo Mesejean, polaroids and press documentation, together with original illustrations by Delia Cancela, and original photographs from Vogue Fashion shoots, complement the exhibition.  
Courtesy of Delia Cancela, Buenos Aires.

##### Film

Horatio Goni Rinaldini, London, 1974  
An intimate portrait of the couple in the St Johns Wood home they shared in London. Colour, Super 8, onto VHS. 10 minutes.  
Courtesy of Horatio Goni Rinaldini, Milan



From time immemorial fashion and its sparkling role in human society has engaged the minds of philosophers of all kinds and all nations. If we consider their pronouncements without bias we will find a striking difference in their evaluations that must give food for thought. To some, fashion is a manifestation of evil, it represents everything that is damnable. To others it opens up, with all its new developments, new horizons, enriches and diversifies life and makes it more attractive; it also acts as a powerful stimulus to the economy, which to its opponents seems only an inducement to luxury and the soft life and eventually to moray decay. These two opinions allow for no transitions, no compromise; there are no possibilities of conciliation, only extreme and one-sided value judgements.....

The extent to which the ambiguous attitude of the public towards fashion has been constant over thousands of years is altogether remarkable. Socrates spoke for all husbands when he rebuked his wife Xanthippe for refusing to conform to the general custom and carry his outer garment for him during a procession: 'You do not go out in order to see, but in order to be seen' as Aelian tells us. With their narrow-minded refusal to adopt any features of the Athenians' style of life, the Spartans set an example for equally parochial critics of fashion, who two thousand years later were derided by Shiller and Goethe. Xenophobia and Puritanism have been with us for a long time. In Rome we find on the one hand the arbiter elegantiarum and on the other Horace, who in his odes and satires attacked the followers of fashion of his time and those who imitated Persian customs: 'Persicos odi, puer, apparatus.' There was the same opposition at the Seleucid and Ptolemaic courts where the soldierly austerity of the diodochs was in great contrast to their late master, the ostentatious Alexander: they wore their simple field dress with soldiers' boots, chlamys, a simple cape, and the Macedonian hat instead of the luxurious Persian clothes.

Altogether, moral criticism and the criticism of fashion always go hand in hand. Thus Savanarola raged not only against the dissolute life in Rome and Florence in the fifteenth century, but also against jewellery and fashion. This did not, however, prevent him from preaching in a language which closely followed the new, aesthetically aware style of his age; sometimes fashion gets its revenge by dominating those that despise it. In sixteenth-century England, Roger Ascham, tutor of the future Queen Elizabeth I, attacked Italian fashions with unprecedented ferocity; in addition to political undertones that were hardly surprising during the struggle of they English reformers against the Church of Rome, this expressed strong anti-Italian sentiments which had their equivalent on the continent in the anti-French prejudice of the Germans. Such attitudes are closely associated with the view that regards following the whims of fashion, moral corruption, and moral lasciviousness as synonymous. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Johann Michael Moscerosch launched out in voluble tirades against the Frenchification of the Germans; he was following faithfully in the footsteps of Abraham a Santa Clara, the hellfire preacher at the Imperial Court in Vienna. At the same time numerous guide books were published on courtly manners, with a very positive approach to fashion, although their authors, like all the classical scholars, warned against bad taste and excess. During the eighteenth century fashion in Germany became totally identified with French attitudes; Lessing was the most representative of this trend.

As late as the middle of the nineteenth century Friedrich Theodor Vischer took up the same subject with singular virulence and talked about fashion and cynicism in the same breath; cynicism in this context is synonymous with wantonness. What really incensed him was the fashion of the Second Empire in France, then entering the stage of its most refined elegance; he was particularly outraged by the 'cul de Paris'. At the other extreme was the poet Baudelaire who explored

with fine intellectual distinction the relation between art and fashion, and the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt with their charming studies of women in the eighteenth century, while at the end of the nineteenth century a poet of the rank of Mallarmé did not shrink from actually becoming the editor of a fashion journal. These are only a few examples to which we could add many others. Again and again we find that concern with fashion results in two factions, uncompromising and irreconcilable. A pointed argument against Isaiah's diatribe is an observation we come across quite often during the nineteenth century: the feeling of being in harmony with fashion gives man a measure of security religion can never give him. Oscar Wilde was one of the chief proponents of this view.

Only a few decades ago the establishment of such an ambivalent and antithetical reaction would have been regarded more or less as a mere paradox, which could at best be used as a caution against any attempt of one-sided interpretation and against an underestimation of 'man and his contradictions'. But since the advent of phychoanalysis we have a much deeper understanding of these attitudes; nor do we any longer see them as simple differences or opposite views of our environment. In fact we know today that we must expect intense interest of society in the focal object or attitude whenever we encounter such rigid and irreconcilably opposed value judgements of public opinion. The Swiss phychiatrist Eugen Bleuler has coined the phrase 'ambivalence' for this phenomenon, a term adopted by Sigmund Freud as well as by phychoanalysis in general. The expression precisely describes the 'double values' of sentiment or attitude discussed here and indicates that a certain aspect of human experience has both a positive and a negative emotional side. Whereas the average person is able to weigh these various emotions against each other and somehow to balance them, the sick person leaves them to coexist in 'affective ambivalence'.

Now we do not wish to deal here with psychopathological phenomena no matter how interesting they may be; what we are concerned with is the behaviour of largely healthy people. But here too, we may sometimes find this attitude of ambivalence as soon as we are confronted with behaviour patterns in which emotions and drives in the widest sense play a part. Society itself will then evolve an ambivalent attitude. As Freud says: 'At the root of every taboo, there must be a desire.' A certain desire is perhaps present in the subconscious, which is counteracted in the conscious by appropriate rules of social behaviour. This is the 'ambivalent relation' proper. When we apply it to our present case we can claim that to the criticism of and attacks against fashion that have constantly recurred throughout known history, there is, on the other hand, a corresponding secret need for it, strong enough to break every sanction and to overcome every conceivable obstacle time and again....

Our daily lives are without doubt hedged in by an abundance of social rules and standards which surround them like fortress walls; they not only force us into certain direction but also tell us expressly how to do the right thing. These rules and precepts are the stricter the more important a certain kind of behaviour is, or appears to be, to society. Sexual taboos are thus definitive in the extreme and almost religiously unconditional; as far as some customs are concerned it might merely be suggested to us that we should observe them; a certain amount of latitude is left to personal tact and taste.

The fact that the approach to fashion can be extremely critical implies that here, too, society is deeply concerned with the behaviour of its members and their activities. It clearly means that fashion is not merely a superficial - decorative or disfiguring - feature of life, but also that it constitutes an important regulator and means of expression within the community of man. Man's self expression in society, his self-assertion - inward as well as outward - and also his social

classification and competitive distinction from his fellow man have depended, ever since he formed a community, to a truly astonishing extent on that mysterious force we call simply fashion.

Why is so much importance accorded to a seemingly harmless phenomenon such as fashion that we should mention it in the same breath as religious taboos? Are we not wildly exaggerating its significance? If we resort to the arguments of phychoanalysis, obviously not because the very aversion and outrage fashion has again and again created and of which we have mentioned a few examples is striking proof that we are confronted here by a powerful social force. Now everybody will readily agree that human dress, which appears to be the primary object of the development of fashion, is of some importance especially in northern latitudes as a protection against the rigours of the climate. On the other hand this importance cannot be all that great because a large section of mankind manages without clothes, or with very few. One would not really expect a phenomenon that fluctuates within such a wide range to arouse such strong interest. The question we have to answer, however is whether we may confine ourselves purely to the matter of dress or concede that fashion goes far beyond it.

In his book Totem and Taboo (first published in 1912) Sigmund Freud has the following observations to offer on this point:

An unconscious impulse need not have arisen at the point where it makes its appearance; it may arise from some quite other region and have applied originally to quite other persons and connections; it may have reached the place at which it attracts our attention through the mechanism of 'displacement'. Owing moreover, to the indestructibility and unsusceptibility to correction which are attributes of unconscious processes, it may have survived from very early times to which it was appropriate into later times and circumstances in which its manifestations are bound to seem strange. These are no more than hints, but if they were attentively developed their importance for our understanding of the growth of civilization would become apparent.

In other words, even if fashion seems to be associated initially with dress only, interest may largely have been attracted to it from elsewhere, for instance from eroticism. This reveals a truly instinctive root of fashion and sheds a completely different light on the controversy about it. It shows this controversy to be an expression of those social sanctions that have always opposed any manifestations of the sex urge. For this reason also J.C. Flugel, an important supporter of phychoanalysis, stresses in his Psychology of Dress (first published in 1930) that our attitude to dress has been ambivalent from the very beginning, the principal confrontation being between emphasis on adornment on one hand, and modesty or respectability on the other. Indeed, dress attempts to balance two contradictory aims: it emphasises our attractions and at the same time supports our modesty. Both aims spring from the common root of the sex urge, acknowledged in one, denied in the other. This is in agreement with the previously mentioned ambiguity of public opinion concerning fashion. The ambivalent attitude to dress is obviously a result of displacement. We are already stressing here this displacement mechanism is by no means confined to dress, but has entered many facets of civilization; so too its origins must be sought outside dress. Fashion, in the course of its development in the history of mankind, has made more and more aspects of civilisation serve its purpose, so that it now appears to be one of the most important formative principles of modern mass society. Here we find again an ambivalence of attitude in the positive or negative valuation of consumption which represents, as it were, the broadest background to the capacity of fashion to vary. From: The Restless Image, A Sociology of Fashion, 1971 By Rene König



Judith Clark Costume gallery was founded in 1998, the first experimental gallery devoted entirely to exhibiting fashion and historical dress. The curator encourages exhibition proposals to be sent to the gallery in writing. The journal both commissions original research and draws attention to seminal texts in the field of fashion and museum theory. The gallery is a U.K. registered charity (No. 1069778) and does not charge admission to exhibitions and therefore relies on sponsorship and membership to survive. To receive information on how to make donations, please write to The Membership Department, Judith Clark Costume, 112 Talbot Road, London W11 1JR. Education Programme: Please contact the gallery regarding gallery talks.

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**Forthcoming Exhibition**

Exoticism in 1920s Couture  
October 2001

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