

**WHY IT DOES
NOT HAVE TO FIT**



WHY IT DOES NOT HAVE TO FIT

MODERN FASHION EXPLAINED

MARNIE FOGG

PRESTEL
MUNICH • LONDON • NEW YORK

CONTENTS

- Introduction 6
- Index 220
- Picture credits 223

CHAPTER ONE FANTASY

10

- Lampshade Dress* Poiret 12
- Carnival Style*
Carmen Miranda 14
- Caftan* Pucci 16
- Chain-link Dress* Paco Rabanne 18
- Showgirl* Bob Mackie 20
- Sweet Lolita* 22
- Feathered Cape*
Yves Saint Laurent 24
- Baby-doll Dress*
Leigh Bowery 26
- Equestrian Outfit* Dior 28
- Paper-doll Dress*
John Galliano 30
- Ostrich Dress* Marjan Pejoski 32
- Couture Wedding Dress*
Christian Lacroix 34
- Extended Kilt*
House of Holland 36
- Cruciform Necklace*
Ziad Ghanem 38
- Duck-feather Dress*
Alexander McQueen 40
- Gothic Romani*
Meadham Kirchhoff 42
- Aphrodite: Les Folies*
Dolce & Gabbana 44
- Insect Dress* Bora Aksu 46
- Skeleton Dress* Iris Van Herpen 48
- Rug Coat*
Walter Van Beirendonck 50
- Pom-pom Coat* Sister by Sibling 52
- Red Queen Dress* Thom Browne 54

CHAPTER TWO DISPLACEMENT

56

- Skeleton Dress* Schiaparelli 58
- Head-to-Toe Print*
Rudi Gernreich 60
- The Souper Dress* 62
- Ping-pong Dress* Ungaro 64
- Homage to Braque*
Yves Saint Laurent 66
- Automotive Corset Dress*
Thierry Mugler 68
- Paper Suit* James Rosenquist for Hugo Boss 70
- Spray-paint Dress*
Alexander McQueen 72
- Sugar-glass Dress*
Hussein Chalayan 74
- Protective Clothing* Boudicca 76
- Newspaper* John Galliano 78
- Check Wrap Coat* Gareth Pugh 80
- Slip Dress and Fur Mittens*
Balenciaga 82
- Hair Coat*
Maison Martin Margiela 84
- Warhol Dress*
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac 86
- Umbrella Suit*
Agatha Ruiz de la Prada 88
- Backless Dress*
Eiko Ishioka 90
- Pierrot Costume*
Amaya Arzuaga 92
- Skeleton Show Costume*
Haus of Gaga 94
- Body Parts* Katie Eary 96
- Surreal Print Dress* Giles 98
- Typewriter Dress*
Mary Katrantzou 100
- Frilled Shorts* J. W. Anderson 102
- Oversized Fox-head Dress*
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac 104
- Multipatterned Coat*
Thom Browne 106

CHAPTER THREE PROVOCATION 108

- Flying Banana Skirt*
Josephine Baker 110
- Playboy Bunny Costume*
Zelda Wynn Valdes 112
- The Monokini* Rudi Gernreich 114
- Hot Pants* 116
- Destroy T-shirt*
Vivienne Westwood 118
- Male Skirt*
Jean Paul Gaultier 120
- Barely There Dress*
Julien Macdonald 122
- Burnster Jeans*
Alexander McQueen 124
- Poetic Androgyny*
Ann Demeulemeester 126
- Cut-out Dress* Ashish 128
- Meat Dress* Franc Fernandez 130
- Printed Wool Jacket and Totem Hat*
Isabel Mastache 132
- Laser-cut Back Dress*
Vilbøl de Arce 134
- Fur Bikini*
Jeremy Scott 136
- Leather Jacket and Chaps*
Versace 138
- Trompe l'Oeil Costume*
Phillipe and David Blond 140
- Catsuit* Pam Hogg 142
- Leopard-print Burka*
Jeremy Scott 144

CHAPTER FOUR VOLUME 146

- Zoot Suit* 148
- Hostess Gown* Adrian 150
- Four-leaf-clover Gown*
Charles James 152
- Unisex Caftan*
Rudi Gernreich 154
- Big Suit for David Byrne* 156
- Lumps and Bumps Dress*
Comme des Garçons 158
- Architectural Skirt* Boudicca 160
- Exaggerated Bell-shape Cape*
Balenciaga 162
- Puffa Dress* Junya Watanabe for
Comme des Garçons 164
- Origami Dress*
Louise Goldin 166
- Inflated Torso Jacket*
Walter Van Beirendonck 168
- Topiary Dress*
Viktor & Rolf 170
- Barrel Skirt*
Maison Martin Margiela 172
- Bridal Gown*
Comme des Garçons 174
- Oversized Coat* Céline 176
- Oversized Hat* Marc Jacobs 178
- Extreme Peplum Dress*
David Koma 180
- Oversized Blazer*
Thom Browne 182

CHAPTER FIVE DISTORTION 184

- Striped Bodysuit*
Kansai Yamamoto 186
- Flying Saucer Dress*
Issey Miyake 188
- Op Art Jumpsuit*
Jean Paul Gaultier 190
- Polyurethane Dress*
Yoshiki Hishinuma 192
- Oversized Ruff* Junya Watanabe
for Comme des Garçons 194
- Reconfigured Kimono*
Alexander McQueen 196
- Scaffolding Dress*
Viktor & Rolf 198
- Draped Dress and Head Wrap*
Junya Watanabe for Comme
des Garçons 200
- Kendo Armor* Gareth Pugh 202
- LEGO®Suit*
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac 204
- Twinned Garment*
Comme des Garçons 206
- Rectangle Dress*
Agatha Ruiz de la Prada 208
- Ovoid Jacket* Givenchy 210
- Oversized Cardigan*
Sister by Sibling 212
- Dress of Ridged Tubes*
Junko Koshino 214
- Trash-bag Coat*
Gareth Pugh 216
- Sculptured Headpiece*
Craig Green 218

INTRODUCTION

MARNIE FOGG

The history of fashion is marked by rebellion: the more radical the change, the stronger the opprobrium against early adopters. Each significant moment of transition hinges upon the experimentation of new outré shapes by avant-garde protagonists, who have undermined the traditional notions of volume and fit, introduced ideas of displacement, challenged the ideals of male and female beauty, or fashioned a new fantasy identity.

Why It Does Not Have to Fit champions the improbable, the provocative, the uncomfortable, and even the seemingly ridiculous. Inspired by a range of diverse sources, theories, and concepts, as well as by the development of futuristic textiles and techniques, the book explores and celebrates the work of designers who strive to extend the boundaries of their imagination and creativity. It is a misapprehension that to be fashionable hinges upon mindless adherence to imposed patterns of dress. Indeed, in order to make clothing eloquent or outspoken, it is necessary to expose such patterns as démodé. *Why It Does Not Have to Fit* explains how ignoring set precedents is both powerful and contentious. Divided into five chapters—Fantasy, Displacement, Provocation, Volume, and Distortion—the book identifies and analyzes the designs that most tellingly represent each particular concept.

Fantasy fashion is distinct from dressing up and costume. At the turn of the 20th century, Paul Poiret eschewed the rigidity of structure and overt femininity that dominated the period and tapped into the fantasy of the Arabian nights to introduce into mainstream fashion his lampshade tunic dress and other designs of Eastern influence. Later, Paco Rabanne used innovative construction techniques to create his chain-link dress, which represented a break from the formality of the 1950s and the hourglass figure, and became a symbol of youth and the triumph of science over nostalgia.

Fashionable fantasy allows the wearer to enhance their identity in ways that exaggerate and expand upon their innate characteristics without taking on another persona. When Bob Mackie designed outfits for Cher in the 1980s, such as the showgirl costume, he captured the essence of Cher and exploited it. Likewise, Dolce & Gabbana's designs ensured that Kylie remained Kylie in spite of her Aphrodite robes. Occasionally, fantasy fashion is used by groups to define their status: in Japan, youth subculture is influenced heavily by teenage girls who adopt certain styles of dress, such as Sweet Lolita, based on historical and cartoon trends.

Displacement is fashion's answer to Surrealism. Founded in the 1920s by French writer and poet André Breton, Surrealism subverts inanimate objects and places them in a new, unsettling context. In fashion, the most obvious example of displacement is the transposition of the inside of the body to the outside, with bones, muscles and the circulatory system appropriated by designers as surface decoration. In the 1930s, influenced by Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí, Elsa Schiaparelli applied an image of the upper part of the human skeleton to an all-black evening gown. Since then, variations have appeared in numerous collections, including menswear by Katie Eary, and as stage costumes, such as the skeleton corset worn by pop diva Lady Gaga. Displacement in fashion has also allowed British design duo Boudicca to offer a glimpse of a dystopian future, creating a world in which protective clothing is deemed a necessary accoutrement to survival.

It is important to distinguish between garments that feature objects as ornamentation, such as the typewriter

dress by Mary Katrantzou and the augmented anatomies of Thierry Mugler's automotive corset dress, and those garments that fully adopt an inanimate identity, such as the hair dress by Maison Martin Margiela, which summons a feeling of unease, and the umbrella dress by Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, which evokes only humor. Displaced materials such as paper have also been used regularly to make clothes: the 1960s witnessed a trend for throwaway paper dresses; later, Hussein Chalayan constructed his "Ventriloquy" collection from sugar glass in his anti-consumerism manifesto.

In contemporary fashion, it has become increasingly difficult to spark a reaction to the wearing of provocative dress. There is an almost limitless tolerance of the wider reaches of perceived decency: the outrage caused by the near nudity of singer Josephine Baker in the 1920s and by the topless bathing suit of US designer Rudi Gernreich in the purportedly permissive 1960s is now reserved for those insensitive to religious or cultural taboos. What was once perceived as risqué—the Playboy bunny with her corseted figure and pneumatic breasts, wearing the now-iconic uniform of the nightclub waitress—is rendered a tired cliché and perceived as quaintly old-fashioned, an attitude that is symptomatic of changing aesthetic and sexual values. In the 21st century, a sense of irony is necessary to promulgate female stereotypes with conviction, evidenced by Jeremy Scott's fur bikini worn beneath a transparent plastic raincoat and Pam Hogg's streamlined Catwoman all-in-one subverted by a three-dimensional rectangle for a hat.

Shifts in the erogenous zones, always the subject of various theories and debates, reveal parts of the body previously concealed or deemed shocking. Alexander McQueen's bumster jeans, with a low rise that reveals the top of the buttocks, changed the cut of pants for more than a decade. Provocation is not necessarily sexual: fashion has long been used to disseminate revolutionary ideas, seen in the nihilism of Vivienne Westwood's punk T-shirt in 1977. When Lady Gaga bound raw meat to her body with butcher's string in 2010, in a suggestion of flayed flesh, it gave a whole new meaning to red-carpet dressing. Commonly, the red

carpet is an arena for provocative dress, seen in the barely there dresses by Julien Macdonald and the extreme cut-outs of Ashish's sequin dress.

Generally, the boundaries of the human body are adhered to by fashion designers, with all the salient points—breasts, waist, and hips—acknowledged with varying degrees of accuracy and intent. These variations may lead to the subtle readjustment of the silhouette, exemplified by the striped silk peplum on David Koma's summer dress and jacket, and the architectural origami shapes evident in Louise Goldin's knitwear, or to extreme volume, seen in the deep billowing frill of Balenciaga's cape-like jacket and the enveloping folds of Céline's cocoon coat. Designers such as Junya Watanabe, with his puffa dress, merely inflate the silhouette, whereas design duo Viktor & Rolf adapts the disciplines of topiary to create new forms. More extreme is the pumped-up volume of Thom Browne's fluorescent PVC jacket, featuring a sculpted six pack and perfect pecs. Although the designer is renowned for his shrunken, cropped version of the classic Brooks Brothers suit, he also plays with volume by referencing Herman Munster in a cartoon-like preppy blazer.

Throughout the evolution of fashion, designers have played with the notion of distortion and directly confronted the idea of fit and its relation to the form of the body. In the 1990s, Issey Miyake took liberty with the silhouette and changed the natural form of the body by subordinating shape in favor of the active characteristics of innovative textiles. The following decade, Junya Watanabe for Comme des Garçons added a fold-down portable ruff to a minimal panné velvet sheath dress, elevating a simple garment to extraordinary status by the addition of an oversized accessory. Distortion can also be effected by a play on surfaces, most particularly the visual conundrum created by optical illusion, seen in Jean Paul Gaultier's Op art jumpsuit.

There are no fixed elements to the one hundred designs in *Why It Does Not Have to Fit*. The garments do not have to fulfill a function, keep the wearer warm, or increase sexual attraction, nor do they have to beguile or disarm. Their purpose is to show that there are no limits to the creative imagination in clothing the human form.

GUIDE TO SYMBOLS



Explains why the design is important in the creative development of fashion.



Describes the designer's approach, process, and technique.



Locates the design in its historic and fashion context.



Unattributed quotes are by the designer featured.



Provides additional incidental information.



Lists examples of similar garments and their designers.





CHAPTER ONE FANTASY

Fueling a fantasy is about attaining the unattainable. Fantasy fashion not only embraces the light-hearted, as seen in John Galliano's two-dimensional paper-doll dress and Meadham Kirchhoff's princess bride, but also it can have a darker, more gothic edge. Edgar Allan Poe's narrative poem "The Raven" (1845) inspired Alexander McQueen to create a brooding masterpiece. Constructed from deep-dyed feathers, it is a walking facsimile of the bird of ill omen.

Fantasy fashion can be as simple as appearing as an animated pom-pom in Sister by Sibling's all-white coat, or more complex, such as the elaborate arrangement of references seen in Thom Browne's Red Queen dress.



A master of self-promotion, Poiret used novel methods to introduce his designs to a wide clientele. In 1908, he commissioned artist Paul Iribe to illustrate a bound album of his creations, *Les robes de Paul Poiret*—a radical departure from the existing tradition of fashion illustration—to be circulated among potential clients. A few years later, in 1911, Poiret held “The Thousand and Second Night” party, a lavish ball in which Ottoman-influenced costumes were provided for any of the 300 guests who attended unsuitably attired.



In 1911, Poiret founded Ecole Martine, where disadvantaged girls were taught the decorative arts.



Gowns that Express Poetic Ideas, 1913
Lucile (Lady Duff-Gordon)

Leopard print lampshade dress, S/S 2007
Chanel

Strapless evening gown, 2007
Marchesa

LAMPSHADE DRESS

POIRET

1913

At the beginning of the 20th century, Paul Poiret (1879–1944) directly opposed the rigidity of the prevailing “S”-shape corset and the matronly curves of the belle époque with costumes that evoked

the Near, Middle, and Far East. His designs included the introduction of the Directoire silhouette in 1906, a revisiting of the columnar shape popular during the French Directory period (1795–99), which was, in turn, modeled on ancient Greek dress. Launched in 1913, the “lampshade” dress—worn by French actress Cora Laparcerie—is lightly gathered from a horizontal band above the breasts and caught in at the high waist with a matching band of embroidered fabric. The overskirt is wired at the base to provide a rigid circular hem, which is edged with a deep lampshade fringe. This is worn over diaphanous harem pants, in lavishly embroidered silk, gathered at the ankle. In a further pastiche of Ottoman court costume, an aigrette is perched on the turban. The aigrette originally consisted of the head plumes of the egret bird and, when worn by the sultan, the headdress was studded with diamonds and rubies. The “Arabian” slippers curl upward and inward at the toe, and festoons of pearl necklaces cascade around the head and body.



After working for Jacques Doucet and the House of Worth, Poiret opened his own couture house on rue Auber in Paris in 1903. His revolutionary approach to dressmaking and his interpretation of exoticism secured him international recognition until after World War I, when the modernity of the streamlined chemise replaced Poiret’s complex embellishment. The house closed in 1929.



Poiret was one of the first couturiers to disseminate to a wider audience the dazzling colors and exuberant embellishment of Léon Bakst's costume designs for the Ballets Russes, launched in Paris in 1909. He also introduced the bifurcation of women's dress with Persian-inspired *jupes-culottes* in 1911, one of the first examples of pants for women outside of Amelia Bloomer's practical cycling bloomers.



Despite regulation L85, announced in 1942 by the US War Production Board, which limited the amount and type of permissible clothing materials and decreed that the silhouette remain unchanged, the singer's multipatterned sarongs and ruffled boleros could be made easily by the home dressmaker and tapped into the growing US trend for resort wear. Carmen Miranda also popularized costume jewelry, which was large and theatrical and made no attempt to imitate precious jewels.

CARNIVAL STYLE CARMEN MIRANDA 1941

Known as “the lady in the tutti-frutti hat” after her appearance in the Busby Berkeley musical *The Gang’s All Here* (1943), Carmen Miranda became the most popular entertainer in the United States in the 1940s by successfully adapting Bahian style and the Brazilian samba for a wider audience. Only five feet (1.5 m) tall, the singer created her indelible image of fruit- and flower-festooned headdresses and towering sequinned platform-soled shoes to create greater impact on stage and screen. Her appearances also included a lavish application of outsize costume jewelry, then at the height of its popularity. In the late 1930s, Art Deco was reworked into a dramatic style of abstract and geometric shapes, seen here in the square pendant set with large, semi-precious stones that the actress donned in *That Night in Rio* (1941). It is worn alongside tetrahedron-shaped baubles and strands of beads, as well as beaded bracelets and earrings formed from clusters of multicolored glass flowers. Wartime exigencies included tucking the hair into a turban for factory work, and Carmen Miranda glamorized the style by using gold lamé and adding height with fabric flowers with curled stamens projecting outward. The midriff-baring, off-the-shoulder blouse with voluminous puffed sleeves has single paillettes tucked here and there among the folds. The high-waisted skirt with geometric patterning emphasizes the singer’s tiny waist.

Known as “the lady in the tutti-frutti hat” after her appearance in the Busby Berkeley musical *The Gang’s All Here* (1943), Carmen Miranda became the most popular entertainer in the United States in the 1940s by

With her Latin rhythms and flamboyant costumes, Carmen Miranda provided a welcome distraction from wartime austerity. Her outfits were made using materials that replaced those rationed by the government, such as leather, wool, straw, and raffia, with cork and wood used for the platforms of her shoes. Many of these were designed by Ted Saval of California, who produced a less extreme version for her followers. The elevated sole, with the toe lower than the heel and without a distinctive heel, formed the wedge shoe, which was popularized further by Italian shoemaker Salvatore Ferragamo.



Bettina blouse, 1952
Givenchy

Puffed sleeve dress,
S/S 2008
Christian Lacroix



Look at me and tell me if I don’t have Brazil in every curve of my body.

Carmen Miranda was born Maria do Carmo Miranda da Cunha in 1909. She first appeared on Broadway in 1939 and within five years she had become the highest-paid actress in Hollywood. She symbolized not only Brazil but also South American Latino style.



One of the most enduring status symbols in 1960s fashion is a dress of silk jersey with the signature “Emilio” worked into the border of the polychromatic abstract print. Pucci recognized the need for high-end, lightweight, travel-friendly leisurewear when jet aircraft went into wide-scale commercial service in 1960, bringing the leisured “beautiful people” to the playground shores of the Italian coast. The designer introduced stretch into fabrics with “Emilioform,” an elasticized silk shantung that showcased his distinctive engineered prints, and Capri pants, a cropped narrow-legged trouser that has become a fashion staple.

Blue silk caftan, 1965
Bill Blass

Yellow print caftan, 1969
Zandra Rhodes

Chiffon print caftan, 1969
Ossie Clark

CAFTAN

PUCCI

1967



Designed by renowned 20th-century print maestro Emilio Pucci (1914–92), the caftan is worn by model Simone D'Aillencourt inside Lake Palace in Udaipur, India, a favored destination in the 1960s of the newly

mobile jet set, which included style icon Jacqueline Kennedy. Preferred garb of the counterculture that sourced the vernacular garment on the hippy trail to India, the caftan was appropriated by designers and reimagined in luxurious fabrics and embellishment. The transparent silk chiffon, with a psychedelia-inspired print in fuchsia, red, pistachio green, aqua, and yellow, is fashioned into a simply constructed “T” shape: the sleeves are cut in one with the body of the garment and slashed at the neck, utilizing the width of the fabric. Each color of the print required a separate silk screen, thus allowing no overlapping or overprinting of color and resulting in the clarity and definition of the distinctive design. The caftan is partnered with a pair of solid-color, loose, wide-legged pants with a narrow decorated hem. The full maquillage, lavish jewelry, and high-piled hair distance the Pucci caftan from its more informal counterpart.



In 1947, Pucci set up an haute couture house in the fashionable resort of Canzone del Mare on Capri, later moving to Rome and establishing headquarters in Florence. He was honored with a special award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America in 1990. The brand suffered from the introduction of mass-produced copies and lost authority during the minimalistic 1990s, but the renewed popularity of print in the 21st century has seen the label revive under the direction of Pucci’s daughter, Laudomia.



Vernacular garments from the hippy trail to India and the Far East, including variations of the "T"-shape caftan, appeared as high-fashion garments in the collections of leading European and US designers such as Thea Porter, Zandra Rhodes, and Bill Gibb during the 1960s. The printed caftan continues to have overtones of a hippy, laid-back lifestyle and remains a resort favorite, produced by contemporary designers such as Allegra Hicks and Matthew Williamson.



I enjoy much more designing informal clothes where the imagination is set free.

EMILIO PUCCI



The experimental fashion of Rabanne, alongside fellow designers of futuristic fashion André Courrèges and Pierre Cardin, was adopted by mass-market manufacturers using inferior fabrics. Chain mail was difficult to replicate, and its weight and rigidity rendered it impractical for daily wear. However, Rabanne achieved commercial success with chain-mail accessories, such as belts and his cult chain-mail bags. Modern techniques of textile development are capable of producing similar effects to chain mail without the drawbacks of inflexibility and volume.

 *Moon Girl collection, 1964*
André Courrèges

Metallic foil dress, 1966
Betsey Johnson

Dress with silver hardware and cut-outs, 1968
Pierre Cardin

CHAIN-LINK DRESS

PACO RABANNE

1969

Spanish-born Francisco Rabaneda y Cuervo (1934–), known as Paco Rabanne, eschewed traditional techniques and dressmaking processes to produce his signature chain-link dresses that were

futuristic in style and yet resonant of medieval armor. In this example, the medieval warrior transmutes into an impermeable 1960s chick, with a streamlined shimmer of an abbreviated tabard, or habergeon. The apron front is constructed from a metallic knitted mesh and worn over a skirt of overlaid metal disks. The chain links on the front panel of the tabard are attached to the fabric beneath, leaving the side panels bare for ease of movement. As with armor, the metal sleeves are not inserted into the arm scye but attached only at the sleeve head and allowed to fall into a wide, trumpet shape. The tabard is secured with a broad chain-link belt that is fastened with a circle of raised disks. The chain-mail hood extends into a hauberk, armor for the neck, below which three-dimensional metal disks are joined to form a camail, or mail collar. Further acknowledgment of medieval armor is seen in the flourishes of marabou feathers on the metal coif and woven into the mesh of the sleeves, where they are interspersed with rectangles of Rhodoid.



An eager exponent of new materials and techniques, fashion iconoclast Rabanne brought his experience of industrial design to his first “body jewelry” collection of dresses in 1966. Constructed using metal cutters, pliers, and a blowtorch, rather than a sewing machine and thread, the collection was a provocative manifesto titled “Twelve Unwearable Dresses in Contemporary Materials.” The designer experimented with squares and disks of Rhodoid—a cellulose acetate—hammered metal, knitted fur, aluminum jersey, and fluorescent leather and glass fiber. Rabanne patented the Giffo process in 1968, in which all the component parts of garments, including the buttons and pockets, were molded in one piece.



Fashion, product design, and interiors were enlivened by futuristic influences during the 1960s, prompted by the Space Race and the first moon landing. The streamlined styles heralded a period that looked forward to infinite progress and a future free of constraints, particularly sexual inhibitions, epitomized by Rabanne’s costumes for Jane Fonda in Roger Vadim’s sci-fi sex romp *Barbarella* (1968).



The woman of tomorrow will be efficacious, seductive, and without contest superior to man. It is for this woman that I conceive my designs.



One rhinestone is never enough when two or six hundred will do. Mackie's approach to dressing performers is one of high-octane glamour and virtual undress, a style that is well suited to the Las Vegas Strip-based burlesque shows *Hallelujah Hollywood* (1974–80) and *Jubilee!* (1981–), for which he designed the costumes. His slashed, tasseled, feathered, and frilled thigh-grazing dresses, beaded bra tops, sweeping capes, and shiny stretch pants can also be seen on a range of collectible Barbie dolls, including Brazilian Banana Bonanza Barbie.



Cheryl Cole's dress, 2009
Julien Macdonald

Knitted dress, 2011
Mark Fast



Those crazy outfits for Cher weren't fashion, just goofy get-ups that were fun or stylish in their way.

SHOWGIRL BOB MACKIE 1986



Introduced by actress Jane Fonda with the words, "Wait'll you see what's gonna come out here," Cher emerged onto the stage at the Academy Awards ceremony in 1986 wearing a showstopping barely there outfit by the

quintessential celebrity designer Robert Gordon "Bob" Mackie (1940–). It was inspired by the lavish costumes designed by Erté, the leading exponent of extravagant theatricality for the *Ziegfeld Follies*, a series of revues on Broadway, and with it Mackie created a female archetype: the celebrity showgirl. His combination of the black strapping of the dominatrix with burlesque feathers and tassels makes this one of the most memorable Oscar outfits of all time. The serrated edge of the skirt, poised perilously just below the hip bone, is matched to the points of the bra top. Diamonds are placed discreetly over the nipples, and rhinestone-encrusted latticework extends to the high neckline, each section studded with gems. The towering Mohican headdress, sprouting black plumes one-and-a-half-times the height of Cher's head, is held in place with a zigzag rhinestone headband. Black stretch pants provide a novel opacity, worn beneath a bejeweled loincloth and with pointed high-heeled boots. A silk-satin rhinestone-studded cape draped over one shoulder adds a note of flying wonder woman.



Mackie first worked as a sketch artist for legendary costumier Edith Head in 1961 while employed as a novice designer at Paramount Studios in California. A nine-times Emmy Award winner and Academy Award nominee, the designer is best known for his association with entertainment luminaries such as Judy Garland, Diana Ross, and Liza Minnelli.



?

In the tradition of exhibitionism, the showgirl costume sits outside mainstream fashion: as an archetype of female glamour, certain components are required to remain the same. These include the feathered headdress, rhinestone-covered bra top and tailpiece. Since its inception in the 19th century, the costume has morphed into that worn by the surgically enhanced Las Vegas showgirl of today.