

# kostuum

1999



# Kostuum 1999

## Table of contents

Galina Vlasova

'We will rebuild our world, we will build a new world!'

Pages from the history of Soviet textile

Ingrid Grunnill

Fashion and the Titanic

Vincent Hofman

The regional dress of the region of Cadzand

Jacoba de Jonge

The secret of the pocket

Mariken J.H. van Rooijen-Buchwaldt

Liveries on Middachten Castle

The costume collection at Middachten Castle

Martine Lemmens

The influence of surrealism on fashion photography

'Inspiration, not information is the connecting power between all creative deeds'

## SUMMARIES

**'We will rebuild our world, we will build a new world!'**

Pages from the history of Soviet textile

Galina Vlasova

This line from the proletarian hymn *The Internationale* sums up the mood of the Russian people after the October Revolution of 1917. Art became the herald of the revolution and we can find a record of these years even in textile design, especially in the fabrics with thematic patterns.

An interesting collection of these Soviet fabrics, produced in the late twenties and early thirties, is kept in the Museum of Applied Art of the St. Petersburg State Academy of Art and Design. There were numerous exhibitions of the collection, the most representative and successful of these being the one in the Netherlands in 1992.

There were 900 textile mills in pre-revolutionary Russia, and after World War I only 300 remained. But peace had come and people wanted new clothes, so production concentrated on cheap fabrics with simplified patterns, as dyes were scarce.

Textile designers then knew nothing about printing cotton. The first to stress the importance of knowledge of industrial technology were the constructivist artists Lubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova. Their designs were highly acclaimed at the Applied Art World's Fair of 1925 in Paris. Unfortunately their creative enthusiasm outstripped the mills' capabilities.

At this time there was a great deal of discussion about the direction industrial design should take, ending in bitter polemics. The 'war for the thematic Soviet pattern' formed an important part of these discussions.

Of course thematic patterns were not new, but the Soviet fabrics of the 1920s went a lot further and became political posters. Maslov managed to give his decorative fabric *Tractor* the depth of a painting. Design students enthusiastically embraced the movement for radical reform of textile design. Between 1929 and 1931 thousands upon thousands of metres of printed cotton left the mills, unrolling Soviet history as if on film. Thematic motifs included the mechanisation of agriculture, the navy, people of the Soviet East, proletarian festivals, skiing and the joys of childhood. They were often similar to the subjects of well-known paintings. However in their ideological zeal these young artists forgot that utilitarian fabrics serve purposes which are quite different from decorative ones. During a conference about textiles in 1931 it was said that the more extensive thematic designs incorporating human figures were not appropriate for dress fabrics. All the same, these designs continued to be produced for a few more years. No examples of clothes made of fabrics with thematic designs survive, not even in photographs or drawings.

The communist party condemned 'these bad and inappropriate patterns' and so they disappeared. But fabrics with new thematic patterns appeared in the 1950s. And the old patterns are still being studied by future designers at the Academy of Art and Design.

## **Fashion and the Titanic**

Ingrid Grunnill

The blockbuster film *Titanic* is set in one of my favourite periods of costume history and as a collector I can never resist buying dresses from the 1909-1914 period. They are so exotic and extravagant and radically different from what went before. This article concerns four of my most beautiful dresses: an afternoon dress and three evening dresses, of which two are in the bright colours that came as such a shock after the pastel shades that had dominated fashion for so long.

The dress which is characteristic of that period is an evening dress of peacock blue satin under a green/blue shot silk voile tunic with an asymmetric hem. Hem and sleeves are edged with fur. This undoubtedly very expensive dress is beautifully made; it has been altered though, probably for dressing-up parties.

The bright pink satin evening dress covered with black net is different in construction from the other three. It is made in the old-fashioned way with a boned bodice and a separate waistband. The other three do not have bones in the front panel and the skirts are suspended from the top of sturdy waistbands. This might mean that the pink dress was made earlier than the other three. On the other hand comparison with other, labelled dresses shows that English dressmakers still kept to the tradition of making boned dresses, when Paris couture houses had started to use a supporting waistband. The tentative conclusion is that the origin of the bright pink dress lies in England, and those of the other three in Paris.

All four dresses have the slightly raised waistline which at the time was seen as a revival of the fashions of the first decades of the 19th century. The straight silhouette and the use of transparent tunics were also part of this revival. The other big fashion inspiration was the exotic, as expressed in the use of bright colours for instance.

The third evening dress is of a pale blue – then one of the favourite colours - silk crêpe over cream tamped net with a pale blue silk lining. It has the modern construction without boning and its design makes subtle use of the transparency of its layers, allowing the arms to shimmer through.

My favourite is the afternoon dress of pale pink and beige gauze over a lining of cream

silk. The difference between the colours is very slight and here too the design plays with transparency which causes an innocent looking effect. This is very much a dress for a (rich) young girl.

We may conclude that there are several similarities between these four dresses, notably the raised waistline and the use of transparent fabrics. When we look at the drawings we notice another similarity: thanks to the concealed fastenings the front and back of each dress are nearly identical. This observation gives rise to the conjecture that this perfect symmetry was the origin of the desire to negate it again with the asymmetric effects which to modern eyes are so typical of the period.

## **The regional dress of the region of Cadzand**

Vincent Hofman

The region of Cadzand is the western part of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, which on the map looks as if belonging to Belgium; it is part of the Dutch province of Zeeland though.

The regional dress of Cadzand is now extinct. It was exclusively worn by the Protestant farming population. Not much is known about children's dress. Girls started to wear adult women's dress at the age of twelve or fourteen. Men's dress of the late nineteenth century was black and was worn with a high silk cap.

Women's dress consisted of a dark green, blue or black jacket with a peplum all the way to the knees, with a skirt of black merino wool. Underneath this came a skirt of watered silk with a purple border over a white cotton or flannel petticoat. A small black satin or silk apron edged with lace often completed this. A full-length cape with a hood was worn over this dress when going out. A black woollen crochet shawl was worn when it was cold. For everyday wear women wore a white crochet cap or just the undercap, and a cotton apron.

The Sunday cap of embroidered net was worn without an *oorijzer* (the metal frame usually worn inside the cap). The cap's lace border however was reinforced with copper wire wound with blue silk thread. The cap framed the face so tight that earrings could no longer be worn in the ears but were hooked as 'cap rings' into the black undercap instead. However, as they were covered by the white cap very little of them could be seen. Women also wore four strands of coral beads with a square golden clasp.

Mourning might continue as long as two years. For this period women wore caps of plain white lawn and silver cap rings. Instead of coral beads black beads were worn with a silver clasp. Women's dress was already predominantly black, so that the change was not very visible. Only the satin apron was replaced by one made of a dull fabric. Until the early twentieth century men wore a wide band of mourning crêpe wound around a top hat, and reaching down towards the knees.

The traditional dress of Cadzand disappeared because the proper fabrics were no longer available after World War II, and also because mainstream fashion became more and more popular. By 1974 only a few women in their eighties still wore the regional dress.

## The secret of the pocket

Jacoba de Jonge

Whilst making a description of a Dutch wedding dress from 1882, a pocket was found sewn into the back of the skirt, hidden in the folds of material draped around the hips. This pocket had not been noticed by the previous owners of the dress: the bridal gloves were still inside it. Further study of bustle dresses reveals that these nearly always have a sewn-in pocket hidden between the draped pleats at the back. Sometimes the pocket may only be reached by lifting the bodice or part of the draperies. Towards 1900 one usually finds skirt pockets right at centre-back, sometimes even under the fastening of the placket. To the modern observer it may seem very awkward to have a pocket in such a spot, and neither does it seem very decent to have to dig for a handkerchief right there.

Together with fashionable posture and gestures the evolution of fashion explains the place and use of skirt pockets. The hip pockets which had been used for centuries could no longer be worn under the high-waisted, straight and transparent dresses of the first decades of the nineteenth century. Dresses were still made with **side vents**, but these no longer served a purpose. It was not customary to sew a pocket into the right front seam of the skirt until wide pleated skirts appeared again around 1840. As the fullness of the skirt moved increasingly to the back over the course of the century, the position of the pocket moved along with it.

A posture which involves pulling the shoulders far back and results in a slightly stuck-out chest and a hollow back, has long been required for ladies and gentlemen of rank. In surviving fashionable clothes the back panels of women's and men's clothes are always much narrower than the front panels. Around 1900 this line was reinforced even further by the straight-fronted corset. The only fullness in the skirt was then found in the centre-back pleat, which usually was also trained. To walk, sit or move in such a dress always involved lifting up the fullness at the back. This could either be done from the left or from the right, depending on the etiquette of the moment. Moving one's hand to centre-back was therefore quite normal, and far from an indelicate gesture.

By 1910 skirts fitted smoothly over the hips and the extra fullness centre-back had disappeared. The placket was now moved to left-front, being too conspicuous at the back. A pocket was inserted in the left-front placket for a while longer, but in a smooth-fitting skirt this had become useless. Just as in the case of the **side vents** in the early 19th century, sewing traditions played a more important role than practicality.

## The liveries at Middachten Castle

The costume collection of Middachten castle

Mariken J.H. van Rooijen-Buchwaldt

Middachten Castle is situated in the village of De Steeg, in the Dutch province of Gelderland. Ca. 1990 Middachten's present lady, I.A. Countess zu Ortenburg-van Aldenburg Bentinck discovered a collection of garments worn by her ancestors, as well as liveries worn by certain servants, scattered over **several wardrobes and trunks in the castle**. In the years after this discovery the collection was brought together, inventarized and properly stored.

Among the diverse garments those of the servants are the most special ones. They consist of the liveries for important functions worn by the man-servants working in the house and the stables, and by the porter and the gamekeeper. Most of the liveries date from 1870 to 1930. These garments give us an insight in the tasks performed by man-servants in a noble home.

The liveries are of very good quality; they were made by the best tailors and manufacturers in the Netherlands, Germany and England. The noble family purchased the liveries and paid for the costs of keeping them in good condition. In turn the servants dressed in these beautiful garments indirectly demonstrated the family's standing. They represented the social position of the Bentinck family.

### **The influence of Surrealism on fashion photography**

'Inspiration, not information is the connecting power between all creative deeds'

Martine Lemmens

Both Surrealism and fashion photography are bound by rules. Surrealism formulated its own rules in two manifestos. In practice these rules were used loosely and proved capable of adapting themselves to fashion photography. The unreal, often even dreamlike atmosphere of the surrealist image was eminently suited to advertising fashion and supplied an appealing fashion photograph. Only a selected number of elements from Surrealism were allowed into fashion photography, as the fashion photograph had to comply with the demands of commerce and the standards of the public. Fashion photography used only the elements of fantasy, mystery, dream and irony of Surrealism, and avoided the shocking images.

During the '20s and '30s one finds surrealist characteristics in the fashion photographs of several photographers. The surrealist influence is strongest in the case of Man Ray, Cecil Beaton, Erwin Blumenfeld and Horst P. Horst. Among them Man Ray was an utter surrealist. It is difficult to find out whether the use of surrealist characteristics by the other three was also inspired by an inner need to penetrate the unconscious. Commercial considerations may have played a role too. Horst and Beaton especially seem to have gone for artificial effects with their Surrealism.

One can subdivide the surrealist characteristics of fashion photographs into a number of categories. Man Ray and Blumenfeld are characterized by experimentation in the dark room, and in this they seem to be influenced by abstract Surrealism. Beaton and Horst are characterized by the manipulation of the image in front of the camera, which refers to academic Surrealism. Their brand of Surrealism is far more moderate than Man Ray's and Blumenfeld's, whose fashion photographs were published in the fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar*, which put minimal restrictions on its photographers. The more conservative magazine *Vogue* did put restrictions on Beaton and Horst though. These photographers kept trying out new things in their fashion photographs, but their clients made them stay within the bounds of the public's standards. The number of photographs with a surrealist influence printed in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* is very small.

In post-World War II fashion photography the surrealist influence is not very detectable. The most important message of Surrealism to fashion photography was probably that the public always had to be slightly provoked. This provocative element may still be found in contemporary fashion photography.