

THE HOUSE OF DIOR SEVENTY YEARS OF HAUTE COUTURE

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The House of Dior: Seventy Years of Haute Couture

Christian Dior was a designer, entrepreneur and visionary who made a lasting impact on mid twentieth-century fashion and culture. Founding his couture house at age forty-one, in December 1946, and presenting his first collection in February 1947, Dior reinvigorated an ailing postwar French fashion industry. His 'New Look' transformed how women dressed, introducing a silhouette comprising rounded shoulders, exaggerated padded hips and full skirts made with an abundance of fabric. It is still one of the most recognisable styles in the history of fashion.

Overseeing his enterprise until his death in 1957, Dior created a couture house whose global reach and relevance is still felt today. In celebration of the house's seventieth anniversary, *The House of Dior: Seventy Years of Haute Couture* presents more than 140 garments from Christian Dior Couture designed between 1947 and 2017. Showcasing the rich history of the fashion house, this exhibition considers Christian Dior's early influences, the design codes synonymous with Dior and the legacies of its six successive designers: Yves Saint Laurent, Marc Bohan, Gianfranco Ferré, John Galliano, Raf Simons and Maria Grazia Chiuri. *The House of Dior* also explores Dior's unique affinity with Australia, including material from the historic Dior fashion parade at David Jones, Sydney, in July 1948.

Drawing on key works from the NGV Collection and the House of Dior archive in Paris, this exhibition is also augmented by important loans from private and public collections from around the world.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Bar, afternoon ensemble

1947 designed, 1987 made, *Corolla (Corolle)* line, spring–summer 1947

silk (shantung), wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.1

The single most discussed and photographed work from Dior's debut collection is the *Bar suit*, with its twelve metres of black pleated wool and highly sculpted cream jacket. Named after the bar at the Hôtel Plaza Athénée in Paris, this ensemble became the archetype of the 'New Look', a term coined by American fashion journalist Carmel Snow. Viewing the presentation in 1947, Snow declared: 'Dear Christian, your dresses have such a new look'.

'I wanted a house in which every single thing would be new, from the ambience and staff down to the furniture and even address. All around us life was beginning anew: it was time for a new trend in fashion.'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1957

Early years

Christian Dior was born into a comfortable middle-class family in 1905 in Granville, a seaside resort in north-western France. At the age of five his family relocated to Paris where, as a young man, Dior developed an interest in architecture and art. Initially studying political science to appease his parents, Dior eventually persuaded them to provide financial backing for a contemporary art gallery, which he established in partnership with good friend Jacques Bonjean. While this enterprise was short-lived, Dior opened a second art gallery with Pierre Colle in the early 1930s, further developing creative connections with Salvador Dalí and Christian Bérard that remained key throughout his life.

For Dior, the 1920s were punctuated by periods of military service and family misfortune, including the deaths of his brother and mother, and the loss of the family business. Without an income, Dior was encouraged by a friend to try his hand at fashion sketching. Stints as a fashion illustrator for local couturiers, milliners and newspapers soon followed, and in 1938 Dior was hired as a design assistant for fashion house Robert Piguet. By the time the war was over, Dior was employed as a designer at Lucien Lelong, the largest and most prestigious couture house in Paris.

Early years

In 1946 Dior was invited to take on Phillippe et Gaston, a flagging couture house owned by the powerful textile industrialist Marcel Boussac. Instead, Dior proposed to establish his own premises, and Boussac agreed to fund him. By December, the House of Dior had set up at 30 Avenue Montaigne. Within weeks, Dior and designer Victor Grandpierre had begun transforming the interior of the building. Dior also carefully selected and defined the roles of ninety staff. Among them were four women: Raymonde Zehnacker, director of the designers' studio; Marguerite Carré, his technical director; Mitzah Bricard, his muse and head of the hat department; and childhood friend Suzanne Luling, who oversaw the salons and the in-house models. Invitations to the presentation of the first collection were highly coveted. After years of wartime hardship in France, the arrival of Dior on the Paris fashion landscape had all the ingredients of a fairytale. On 12 February 1947, the House of Dior opened.

The hats and headpieces that feature in this exhibition are a combination of original archival works and custom-made designs commissioned by the NGV from British milliner Stephen Jones. Jones has been creating hats for the House of Dior since 1996, working with designers John Galliano, Raf Simons and Maria Grazia Chiuri.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Adventure (*Aventure*), jacket

1948 *Flight (Envol)* line, spring–summer 1948

wool

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

A key work from the *Flight* line, *Adventure* was one of the fifty original Christian Dior works to travel to Australia in July 1948 for the first-ever Dior parades in the country, at David Jones in Sydney.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Go anywhere (*Passe Partout*), day suit

1947 *Figure eight (En huit)* line, spring–summer 1947

wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.8

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Chimène, gala dress

1952 *Profile (Profilée)* line,

autumn–winter 1952–53

velvet, wool

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

This dramatic strapless evening gown layers plush black velvet with a bodice and overskirt of heavy wool lozenges and dozens of handmade tassels. It is a great example of the way that Dior liked to work in contrasts. Here he combines unlikely materials and textures to striking new effect.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Kirghise, dress

1947 *Corolla* (*Corolle*) line, autumn–winter 1947–48
wool, leather

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Mrs Benjamin Shaw, 1974

1974.258.1a-c

This black wool day dress is cut beautifully, with its raglan sleeves and sweeping hip detail emphasising the symmetrical ornament of several rows of glossy black buttons. Dior loved using buttons as a decorative device or to highlight the cut and drape of a garment. Combining the functional aspects of a dress, such as fastenings and pockets, in unexpected ways was also a signature of the designer.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Mirza, afternoon dress

1951 *Natural (Naturelle)* line, spring–summer 1951
silk (twill, velvet)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1995.1

This dress was made for Mrs Firestone, an early and faithful American client of Christian Dior. She entrusted Dior at the very start of his career with the dress she wore in 1947 to her daughter's high-profile wedding to the grandson of car manufacturing magnate Henry Ford. American clients were very important to the success of the house in the early years, due to their relative wealth and love of all things French.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Day dress

1949 *Trompe-l'œil* line, spring–summer 1949

wool

The Kyoto Costume Institute

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Mexico, evening dress

1953 *Tulip* (*Tulipe*) line, spring–summer 1953

silk (organza)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

(T.264&A-1981)

The petal-like layered skirt panels of *Mexico*, from Christian Dior's *Tulip* line, spiral to the waistline, exaggerating the movement and volume of its flower-like form. The dress was featured in French *Vogue* and *L'Officiel* in March and April 1953, and several months later a Dior dress made in the same fabric was pictured in the 15 August edition of American *Vogue*, when Mrs Wallis Simpson wore it to the Circus Ball in Paris.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Pré Catelan, dress

1947 *Figure eight (En huit)* line, spring–summer 1947
linen, glass (beads)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Dominique Sirop Collection.

Purchased with funds donated by Mrs Krystyna Campbell-Pretty
in memory of Mr Harold Campbell-Pretty, 2015

2015.608

Dior's success was swift and emphatic. Only ten days after showing its spring–summer collection, the fledgling couture house had already reached its projected financial goals for the whole of 1947. By the mid 1950s Christian Dior Couture produced 12,000 garments annually, sixty per cent of which were for private clients. In its earliest years the House of Dior alone was responsible for seventy-five per cent of French fashion exports.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Aladin, cocktail dress

1947 *Corolla* (*Corolle*) line, autumn–winter 1947–48
acetate (satin), leather (reproduction belt)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Dominique Sirop Collection.

Purchased with funds donated by Mrs Krystyna Campbell-Pretty
in memory of Mr Harold Campbell-Pretty, 2015

2015.609

Despite its plunging décolletage, *Aladin* was affectionately nicknamed the ‘Mother Hubbard’ dress by American fashion magazine *Harper’s Bazaar* for its loose-fitting and voluminous form. With echoes of an informal housecoat or eighteenth-century mantua robe, *Aladin* still retains the signature cinched, belted waistline that Dior favoured. In spite of its relaxed style, *Aladin* is designed to make an impression with its metres of jewel-like silk-satin.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Cavalière, suit

1948 *Flight (Envol)* line, spring–summer 1948

wool, silk (velvet)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Dominique Sirop Collection.

Purchased with funds donated by Mrs Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

in memory of Mr Harold Campbell-Pretty, 2015

2015.610

Dior maintained that, 'The suit is without doubt the most important piece in the female wardrobe, for it is the best adapted to today's lifestyle'. To this end, many of his collections featured ingenious examples of tailored day wear. Dior believed the suit was capable of displaying just as much technical prowess and fashionable appeal as a daring cocktail dress or a dazzling evening gown.

Christian Dior, Paris (couture house)

est. 1946

Collection chart

1948 spring–summer 1948

paper, pencil, metal, wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Zélie, cocktail dress

1954 *H* line, autumn–winter 1954–55
silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2006

2006.488

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Ulysse, coat

1952 *Profile* (*Profilée*) line, autumn–winter 1952–53
wool

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

At the final rehearsal of his parades Christian Dior would determine the exact order of garments to be presented. In general the sequence was suits, day clothes, cocktail dresses, short and long evening wear, gala dresses and then wedding gowns. Sometimes Dior slipped in an unexpected work out of order, often in vibrant red, to revive the attention of viewers.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

New York, coat

1950 *Oblique* line, autumn–winter 1950–51

wool

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art,

Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Jeanne Eddy, 1961

2009.300.299

Each of the garments created during the ten-year period that Christian Dior was director was given a name. Many collections numbered more than 150 pieces and were named in honour of people, places, flowers and even his beloved dog Bobby. The United States was a very important early market for Dior's couture clients, and the title 'New York' was used several times by the designer during the first decade of the House. In 1948 Dior opened Christian Dior New York, producing adapted lines to cater to this burgeoning clientele.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Good fortune (*Bonne Fortune*), day dress

1950 *Vertical (Verticale)* line, spring–summer 1950
wool, leather (belt)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1989.16

Dior had great success with his shirtwaist dresses. With a button-through bodice and full skirt, they became one of the most reproduced and popular dress styles of 1950s. This example was made for a key American client of Dior in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Bon voyage, travel dress

1948 *Winged (Ailée)* line, autumn–winter 1948–49
wool, leather (belt)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1989.12

Christian Dior, Paris (couture house)

est. 1946

Collection chart

1954 *H* line, autumn–winter 1954–55

paper, pencil, metal, wool, silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

**December evening (*Soirée de
Décembre*), evening dress**
1955 Y line, autumn–winter 1955–66
silk (faille, tulle)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Given by Dame Margot Fonteyn

T.118-1974

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Banco, evening dress

1948 *Zig-zag* line, spring–summer 1948

silk (faille)

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

'I designed clothes for flower-like women, with rounded shoulders, full feminine busts, and handspan waists above enormous spreading skirts.'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1957

Codes of Dior

With every collection, Christian Dior introduced a new line, silhouette and series of themes, establishing a repertoire of design codes that are now synonymous with the house. Revisited and recalibrated since his death, these codes were critical to Dior's creative vocabulary and have endured as part of the language of the house as expressed by subsequent creative directors. Four codes key to Dior and his legacy are examined in this room: the New Look, the line, the flower and the eighteenth century.

The New Look

The first collection presented in spring 1947, with its revolutionary *Corolla* (*Corolle*) and *Figure eight* (*En 8*) lines, established Dior's hourglass silhouette, popularly known as the 'New Look'. Globally influential, the New Look celebrated femininity and elegance and was an optimistic embrace of fashion's capacity to present itself anew each season. An enduring reference point for the house, the New Look has been a compelling source of inspiration ever since.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Diosera, ensemble

1997, spring–summer 1997

wool (crepe), leather

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1997.6

Working in the same palette used for Christian Dior's *Bar suit*, Galliano presented *Diosera* as part of his first couture collection for Dior. The fringed wool jacket has all the hallmarks of the original, but rather than adhering to the New Look template this version is paired with a very short black leather skirt and topped with an oversized fedora hat.

Serge Ruffieux designer

born Switzerland 1974

Lucie Meier designer

born Switzerland 1983

Look 21, Bar jacket and skirt ensemble

2016 autumn–winter 2016–17

wool, silk (organza, tulle), lace, embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2017.82

Following Raf Simons's departure from Dior in 2015 and before the appointment of Maria Grazia Chiuri, two of the designers who worked with Simons presented two couture collections. With this ensemble they chose to execute their own interpretation of the infamous *Bar* jacket and its voluminous skirt, using folding, pleating and gathering techniques to mimic the iconic lines of the original.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 25, dress

2011 spring–summer 2011

silk (tulle), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2011.34

For his final collection at Dior, Galliano designed an overtly romantic homage to the Christian Dior era. Borrowing from the delicate colour palette and fabrics of the early 1950s, this work echoes the swirling tulle skirts and gloved detailing familiar to Dior.

The line

During his ten-year tenure, Dior designed twenty-two collections, each numbering well over 150 pieces. An ingenious designer, he continuously manipulated hemlines, bustlines and waistlines in the pursuit of new articulations of the female form. Many of Dior's designs were based around a single line, ranging from the alphabetical to the abstract. With his continuous reinvention of the silhouette during the 1950s Dior brought a new fervour of anticipation to his twice-yearly collections and their associated lines.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Milky Way (*Voie Lactée*), dinner dress

1950 *Oblique* line, autumn–winter 1950–51

silk (satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2003.1

Red has long been a signature colour for the House of Dior. It was used regularly by Christian Dior and those who followed him to create impact and emphasise the line of the garment. With its figure-hugging silhouette and draped bodice, this dramatic dinner dress perfectly demonstrates the enormous appeal that Dior's works had for Hollywood stars wishing to make an entrance. Dior attracted a number of leading ladies as regular clients, including Marlene Dietrich, Lauren Bacall, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Ingrid Bergman, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

La Cigale, short dinner dress

1952 *Profile* (*Profilée*) line, autumn–winter 1952–53
silk

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Irene Stone, in memory of her daughter,
Mrs. Ethel S. Greene, 1959

C.I.59.26.3a, b

Working with a series of geometric pattern pieces and a heavy grey moiré fabric, Dior has cut and shaped the cloth to create *La Cigale*'s dramatic cantilevered silhouette. The 1 September 1952 edition of *Vogue* described it as a 'masterpiece of construction and execution', and the same month *Harper's Bazaar* noted that the moiré was 'so heavy it looks like pliant metal'. *La Cigale* exemplifies the powerful role that the line or architecture of Dior's designs played in his vision for contemporary fashionable dress.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Caprice, day dress

1948 *Zig-zag* line, spring–summer 1948

wool, leather (belt)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1989.1

Referencing the bell-shaped skirts and bustles of the late nineteenth century, this dress is a quintessential example of the skilful way that Dior balanced nostalgia with an appreciation for the spirit of a new age. The *Zig-zag* line that informs its silhouette is clearly expressed in the generous cascading panels of wool cloth that create volume and dynamic movement through the back without the rigid understructures and padded bustles of its historical precedents.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Jean-Pierre Grédy, cocktail ensemble

1952 *Sinuous* (*Sinueuse*) line, spring–summer 1952
silk (starella, chiffon)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1989.3

Jean-Pierre Grédy is the name of a well-known French playwright. For this collection, the couturier gave his loveliest dresses the names of authors and playwrights he admired. This striking ensemble features a separate skirt, blouse and wrap. Instead of relying on tailoring techniques to create the silhouette, Dior has worked over a structured underbodice and has skilfully draped the chiffon and taffeta to achieve the same fitted effect.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Cachottière, afternoon dress

1953 *Tulip (Tulipe)* line, spring–summer 1953

wool (twill), silk (crepe), cotton (tulle), metal, rubber, taffeta (lining)

Musée Christian Dior, Granville

2001.7.4

Dior was unafraid of working in black. In fact, he believed in its dramatic power, stating: ‘The violent accent of black makes it the most elegant colour’. Dior also had a reverence for the purist articulation of each design, evident in his statement that: ‘It is one of the great secrets of haute couture that a well-cut dress is the dress which contains the least cuts’. This reductive approach is visible in the simplified construction of *Cachottière*.

'A passion for flowers inherited from my mother meant that I was at my happiest among plants and flowerbeds.'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1957

The flower

Christian Dior used the flower as an inspiration for the structure of his garments and as a motif for embellishment, richly decorating the surfaces of fabrics. On ball gowns and cocktail dresses alike, exquisite embroideries, beadwork and patterns contributed a sense of beauty and extravagance. Other designs took a more sculptural approach. Three-dimensional flowers appeared in a number of collections that were named in their honour, such as the *Tulip (Tulipe)* line, spring–summer 1953, and *Lily-of-the-Valley (Muguet)* line, spring–summer 1954. Symbolically potent, the flower has remained a recurrent theme in the designs created by the House of Dior.

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

**Village party (*Fête au Village*),
evening dress**

1955 A line, spring–summer 1955
silk (organza), embroidery, acetate, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Promised gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 47, evening dress

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

silk (chiffon), tulle

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PDC.2014.3213

The flower has long been a core source of inspiration at the House of Dior. Here Simons creates a simple streamlined silhouette and uses subtle shifts in colour palette and the placement of hundreds of delicate chiffon petals over the entire surface to evoke a pointillist-inspired flowerbed. This dress was worn by Natalie Portman for the Miss Dior perfume commercial.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Porcelaine, short evening dress

1958 *Trapèze* line, spring–summer 1958
silk (faïlle)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, 2017

From Yves Saint Laurent's first collection at Dior, this sculptural evening dress makes the most of the three-dimensional form of the rose. Saint Laurent's design focus demonstrates his youthful translation of one of the key Dior codes, the ever-present flower.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 3, ensemble

2010 autumn–winter 2010–11

wool, silk (organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2011.45

Inspired by the childhood gardens of Dior's family home in Granville, Galliano devoted an entire collection to the flowers that were a key design source for the founder. A technicolour garden was presented in garment form. In this ensemble, the shape and surface of the skirt and even the scalloped edging of the jacket are each direct references to the flower.

The eighteenth century

Christian Dior was enamoured with the art and history of the eighteenth century. He collected furniture and decorative arts of the period, and referenced the era in the interiors of his fashion house, as well as in the lines, names and embellishments of his garments. Dior's successive designers have also taken inspiration from the period's exaggerated silhouettes, architecture, decorative arts and the heavily embroidered and woven silks of the time. The influence can be seen, for example, in Dior's highly decorative scrolling prints and embroideries imitating the ornamental forms of the Rococo, and the direct references to wide panniered skirts of the early 1700s.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 6, dress

2014 autumn–winter 2014–15

silk, cotton (jacquard), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.13

The work is one of a series of eight that drew directly from the distinctive flattened bell-shaped volumes found in women's dress of the 1700s. The three-quarter-length skirts and simple tank-top style bodice place the design squarely in the twenty-first century, but the exquisite silk jacquard fabric, with its sprigged floral motifs, is also a reference to Dior's love of all things eighteenth century.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Almée, short evening dress

1955 A line, spring–summer 1955

silk (organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2004.2

While the short A-line silhouette of this evening dress bears no relation to the floor-length robes of the eighteenth century, Christian Dior was sure to make the reference point clear by specifically listing the richly embroidered bands used in its creation as ‘Versailles’ braid in royal red. Speaking about the embroideries in the collection, he also stated: ‘The simplicity of the lines is perfectly suited to the sumptuousness which they add. As discreet as they are magnificent, they find their theme in India just as easily as Trianon’.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 53, evening dress

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

silk (organza, crepe), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.80

With this evening dress Simons draws directly on eighteenth-century fashion references, revisiting a favourite period of Christian Dior. The exaggerated volumes cascading through the back reference the sack-back gown or *robe à la française*, popular in women's fashion of the eighteenth century. This style of gown had fabric at the back arranged in box pleats, which fell loosely from the shoulder to the floor with a slight train. Simons's version, however, has a streamlined contemporary bustline and falls just below the knee.

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Short evening dress

1955 Y line, autumn–winter 1955–66
silk (faille), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.6

'Everything I know, see or hear, every part of my life I turn into dresses. They are my daydreams, but they have passed from dreamland into the world of everyday items to wear.'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1957

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 7, Bar jacket and pants ensemble

2014 spring–summer 2014

wool, silk (satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.92

In his first and subsequent collections for Dior, Raf Simons sought to interrogate the iconic New Look *Bar suit*. By replacing its pleated skirt with slimline black wool pants, he set about evolving this key silhouette. He said: 'I wanted to define the *Bar suit* in a new way, so I contrasted the feminised tailoring of the jacket with its curved construction over the hips against black cigarette pants as opposed to a full skirt. I wanted it to be a new take on the tuxedo and very directly bring the feminine and the masculine together'.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 54, dress

2015 spring–summer 2015

silk (organza, tulle), wool, synthetic horsehair

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Dior's debut spring–summer collection of 1947 demonstrated a mastery of pleats, full skirts and exaggerated hip lines. These are all elements that Simons returns to here, in a strikingly contemporary way. Employing traditional techniques, but making them his own through a modernist-inspired colour palette and material choices, Simons has succeeded in re-energising the familiar.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Chérie, dress

1947 *Corolla* (*Corolle*) line, spring–summer 1947

silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1983.1

Deceptively simple at first glance, *Chérie*, with its luxurious deep blue taffeta, is the embodiment of Dior's influential New Look silhouette. A key work in Christian Dior's first collection, it combines the signature sloped shoulder line, elevated bustline and immense volumes in the long skirt falling from an exaggerated padded hipline. The skirt alone required an impressive 23 metres of fabric. Dior celebrated evidence of the hand in the making of his designs, and in this case the vast quantities of silk are discreetly anchored in place with a series of visible hand stitches.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

**Journey of the soul (*Voyage de l'âme*),
Bar jacket and skirt**

2017 spring–summer 2017

wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Working entirely in black wool, Maria Grazia Chiuri has evoked the New Look with her own softly pleated version of Christian Dior's *Bar suit* – a fitting homage for a collection that marks the seventieth anniversary of couture at the House of Dior.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 12, Jacket and skirt ensemble

2009 spring–summer 2009

wool, silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2009.60

Although the colour is a departure from the original, this two-piece ensemble is drawn directly from the New Look Bar suit. The bodice features sharp sloping shoulders, floating hip panels and a wide skirt shaped like a three-leaf clover.

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Zémire, cocktail dress
1955 Y line, autumn–winter 1955–66
silk (faille)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.144

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Monte Carlo, short evening dress

1956 *Arrow (Flèche)* line, spring–summer 1956

silk (faille), cotton (tulle), metal (zip)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Linda Fisher Dora, 2016

2016.360.a-b

Christian Dior stated 'A collection must be built up with a fairly small number of ideas – a dozen at most. One has to know how to vary them ... assert them, enforce them. From these ten or twelve ideas the whole collection is constructed'. Created to mimic the dynamic line of the arrow, this deceptively simple dress incorporates a high waist, minimal bodice and streamlined skirt panel to reassert an upward motion.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Promise (*Promesse*), reception dress

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58

silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.302

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Celebration day (*Jour de Fête*), evening dress

1955 A line, spring–summer 1955

silk (organza)

Musée Christian Dior, Granville

2010.6.1

Typically, Dior would develop his initial designs at his country home, Moulin de Coudret, near Fontainebleau. He would generate several hundred sketches of each, working in bed, in the bath, at the table and even in the car. These were then taken back to Avenue Montaigne, reduced to a core group and then made into cotton toiles. After modifications to the toiles, fabrics were selected and each garment was allocated to house a mannequin (model) who would wear the look for the final fittings and presentation.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Cléo de Mérode, evening dress

1997 *Mucha-inspired Art Nouveau artists' muses*, autumn–winter 1997–98

silk (tulle, crepe), gold, enamel

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1998.20

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Brahms, evening dress

1950 *Vertical (Verticale)* line, spring–summer 1950
silk (organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.36

Flowers have been the inspiration for many of Christian Dior's creations. He even named three collections in their honour – the *Corolla*, *Lily of the Valley* and *Tulip* lines. He shared a passion for flowers with his mother and his younger sister Catherine, who became a horticulturist and worked as a sales agent at Les Halles wholesale flower markets in Paris for many years.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Look 67, evening dress

2017 spring–summer 2017

silk, raffia

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

In April 2017 Maria Grazia Chiuri presented her spring–summer couture collection in Tokyo, adding nine new looks featuring cherry blossom in honour of the longstanding connection between Dior and Japan. In 1953 Christian Dior had designed an afternoon ensemble named *Jardin japonais* in pink fabric printed with bunches of cherry blossoms, a reference to the festival of *hanami*, which celebrates viewing cherry blossoms and the arrival of spring. The accompanying cherry blossom is by Claude Lallanne

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Salade, short evening dress

1960 *Silhouette of tomorrow (Silhouette de demain)* line, spring–summer 1960

silk (taffeta, organza, tulle), metal

Musée Christian Dior, Granville

1999.6.1

The abstracted floral motifs in this printed taffeta evening dress were created by famed Swiss textile manufacturer Abraham. Often suppliers would meet with couturiers ahead of the collection being developed and collaborate in the creation of specific prints. Abraham established a close working relationship with Christian Dior in the 1950s, and the house's connection with Abraham continued into the Yves Saint Laurent era.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 43, coat

2005 spring–summer 2005

silk (satin), embroidery, feathers

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2005.60

With this collection Galliano wanted to convey the true essence of couture. He brought the audience close to the works to enable them to hear the crunching of satin, experience all the exquisite embroidery and feel the rustle of taffeta as it brushed over their feet. One of his muses for the collection was Napoleon's wife, Empress Josephine. Her influence is overt in this richly embroidered evening coat, with its exaggerated empire silhouette and oversized headdress.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 27, dress

2004 autumn–winter 2004–05

hand-painted silk (satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2005.28

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Grand bal

1956 *Arrow (Flèche)* line, spring–summer 1956

silk (satin, thread, tulle), rhinestones, beads, sequins

The atelier

Haute couture is seen as fashion at its most brilliant. Since 1946 the House of Dior has maintained specialist ateliers to execute its couture designs. Divided into two streams: *fleur* (soft dressmaking) and *tailleur* (tailoring), with each under the supervision of a *première* (head), the workrooms are home to exceptional craftsmanship. Employees in the *fleur* typically work with fine wools, crepes, chiffons and silk, while those in the *tailleur* handle heavy or dense materials. Sometimes, however, different parts of the one outfit are sent to different workrooms, as in the case of the famous *Bar suit*, 1947.

During Dior's heyday there were twenty-eight workrooms across five buildings, with 572 staff. Today there are only sixty permanent staff across the two specialist workrooms. Despite this, little about the dressmaking process has changed. Every couture garment is first made up as a *toile* (prototype) by the atelier for review with the designer. Once approved, the work is then made up in the final fabric to the client's individual measurements.

Look 10, Bar coat

In 2012 Raf Simons presented *Look 10, Bar coat* as part of his couture debut for the House of Dior. The collection drew heavily on house codes, such as the use of red, floral motifs and the iconic *Bar suit*, 1947, with Simons adapting the New Look silhouette for a contemporary context. Commissioned for acquisition by the NGV in late 2016, this coat was remade in early 2017 by the Dior *tailleur*. Made using traditional handstitching, *picotage*, pressing and moulding techniques for suiting, the coat took more than 180 hours to create.

Comprising fewer pattern pieces and with less hip padding than the original *Bar suit* design, *Look 10, Bar coat* highlights Simons's reductive approach to design and construction. Interestingly, the *toile* (pattern) for this work shows two parallel rows of buttons down its centre front that did not appear in the final runway look. Instead, concealed fastenings and a burnished belt were used to produce a streamlined form typical of Simons's aesthetic.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Toile for Look 1

2015 spring–summer 2015

cotton

Toile for Look 21

2012 autumn–winter 2012

cotton

Toile for Look 10

2012 autumn–winter 2012

cotton

Toile for Look 08

2013 autumn–winter 2013

cotton

Toile for Look 51

2015 spring–summer 2015

silk (organza, tulle), synthetic horsehair

Toile for Look 06

2014 autumn–winter 2014

cotton, paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

A prototype for the final garment, the unbleached cotton toile has been a part of the couture process since the late nineteenth century. For Dior, toiles were a key means of communication with his workrooms. Ferried up and down the circular stairs connecting the studio and the atelier by junior seamstresses, the toiles left as the very essence of a design, showing only line, fabric bias, principal seams, balance and volume, and returned cross-examined and corrected, marked up for further adjustments. Today, toiles remain critical to achieving the flawless fit and exacting finish demanded of couture.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 10, Bar coat

2012 designed, 2017 made, autumn–winter 2012–13
wool (cashmere), silk, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
David Richards Bequest, 2017

Bar coat, 2012, remade 2017, a homage to Dior's *Bar suit*, 1947, was presented as *Look 10* in Raf Simons's debut couture collection. Made in the *tailleur* using traditional handstitching picotage, pinning, pressing and moulding techniques for suiting, the coat took 180 hours to make. Comprising fewer pattern pieces and with less hip padding than the original suit, *Bar coat* highlights Simons's reductive approach to construction.

This footage from inside the Dior *tailleur* follows the making of the NGV's *Bar coat*, on display in this room. Highlighting the specialist techniques, tools and production methods behind its creation, the film also shows the numerous stages of construction required to achieve the coat's exacting line.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Toile for Look 1

2007 spring–summer 2007
cotton

Toile for Look 8

2007 spring–summer 2007
cotton

Toile for Look 4

2010 spring–summer 2010
cotton

Toile for Look 30

2010 spring–summer 2010
cotton

Toile for Look 4

2011 spring–summer 2011
cotton

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

A prototype for the final garment, the unbleached cotton toile has been a part of the couture process since the late nineteenth century. For Dior, toiles were a key means of communication with his workrooms. Ferried up and down the circular stairs connecting the studio and the atelier by junior seamstresses, the toiles left as the very essence of a design, showing only line, fabric bias, principal seams, balance and volume, and returned cross-examined and corrected, marked up for further adjustments. Today, toiles remain critical to achieving the flawless fit and exacting finish demanded of couture.

This footage follows the making of *Essence d'Herbier*, 2017, from Maria Grazia Chiuri's first couture collection for Dior. First embroidered and then made up in the *tailleur*, the dress is the result of the broader, but diminishing, network of specialist or artisanal workshops that couture houses rely upon to realise their designs.

Dior reinvented

In its first decade, under founder and creative director Christian Dior, the House of Dior achieved international acclaim and global influence. When Dior died suddenly in 1957, there was considerable speculation about the fate of the House. Yet from the tenureship of Christian Dior's first successor, a young Yves Saint Laurent, to that of the latest designer, Maria Grazia Chiuri, the House has remained a leading force in the world of couture.

To Dior's established codes of femininity and luxury, each creative director has added their own distinctive inflection, ensuring relevance and evolution in balance with tradition and heritage. In 1958 Saint Laurent introduced youthfulness and contemporaneity. This was succeeded by Bohan's sleek sophistication, and in 1989 Ferré's lavish and sculptural design sensibility. In 1997, fifty years after the founding of the house, Galliano revived theatricality and exquisite craftsmanship; this was followed by the streamlined modernism of Simons and now Chiuri's languid and feminine delicacy.

Unquestionably, the task of designing for Dior is a formidable and exhilarating one. 'Dior reinvented' considers how each subsequent designer since Dior has responded to this challenge in order to leave their own mark and to guarantee couture's enduring appeal for contemporary audiences.

Yves Saint Laurent

In late 1957 twenty-one-year-old Yves Saint Laurent became the creative director of Dior. Already working as an assistant in the house, Saint Laurent was thrown into the spotlight as a result of Dior's death and was called upon to set the design agenda. Over the next three years, Saint Laurent produced six couture collections that forged a new direction for Dior.

Taking inspiration from contemporary culture, Saint Laurent introduced a radical youth-driven perspective that reflected the energy of the early 1960s, and he courted a new generation of clientele. His first collection, spring–summer 1958, was a range of triangular silhouettes, named the *Trapeze* (*Trapèze*) line, and it was a popular success. Saint Laurent's impact was visible in garments that comprised less inner structure and which followed softer lines. Many of his innovations, such as the controversial 'hobble' skirt and bohemian elements, received mixed responses from the fashion establishment, but are now seen as pioneering.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Marilyn, short evening dress

1959 1960 line, autumn–winter 1959–60
silk (taffeta)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, 2017

By 1959 suggestions of the future became apparent in Saint Laurent's collections. Clothing was less demure, hemlines were higher and silhouettes were often elongated and flattened. Encapsulating this idea, the aptly named *Marilyn*, from the 1960 collection, possesses a lithe and sensuous line that is accentuated by the dropped waistline and textural effects produced by horizontal ruching.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Zenaide, short evening dress

1959 1960 line, autumn–winter 1959–60
silk (taffeta)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, 2017

Black was one of Yves Saint Laurent's favourite colours. He stated, 'I love black because it affirms, designs and styles. A woman in a black dress is a pencil stroke'.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Cascade, short evening dress

1959 1960 line, autumn–winter 1959–60
silk (tulle), embroidery, sequins, pearls

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

New York, afternoon dress

1960 *Silhouette of tomorrow (Silhouette de demain)* line, spring–summer 1960

wool, silk

Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent,
Paris

HC1960E124H, HC1960E124J

From the very beginning, Dior injected an international feel into his designs by naming them after famous venues, cities or countries. Model garments titled *Australie* appeared in no less than six collections between 1947 and 1957. *New York* was another popular design. Here, Yves Saint Laurent continues this tradition, presenting a cleverly constructed blouson top over another Dior staple – the pencil skirt.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Flash, ensemble

1960 *Softness, lightness, life* (*Souplesse, légèreté, vie*)
line, autumn–winter 1960–61
wool

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Saint Laurent endeavoured to adapt couture for a younger clientele. Many of his collections drew upon currents within contemporary culture. *Softness, lightness, life*, autumn–winter 1960–61, his final collection for Dior, was inspired by the existentialists of Paris's bohemian Left Bank. Featuring mostly black clothing, turtlenecks, leathers and skins, the avant-garde presentation anticipated the so-called 'youthquake' of the 1960s. *Flash, ensemble*, with its shortened puff-ball skirt and dropped waistline, shows the beginning of the end of cumbersome undergarments.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Climène, long evening dress

1959 1960 line, autumn–winter 1959–60
silk (faille)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1990.5

In the latter part of his time at Dior, Yves Saint Laurent developed a preference for an elongated vertical silhouette. In this full-length evening gown he manipulated the proportions further by truncating and encircling the skirt with an oversized sash and bow to create a gathered hobble effect.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Zouzou, day ensemble

1958 *Trapèze* line, spring–summer 1958
wool (flannel), silk (pongé, taffeta)

Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent,
Paris

HC1958E178H, HC1958E178R, HC1958E178V

In 1955 Dior produced a day ensemble comprising a long-line, double-breasted jacket and pleated skirt for his *A-line* collection. Executed in grey wool, the outfit transposed material and structural conventions associated with menswear onto a practical and architectural outfit for women. *Zouzou*, pays homage to this work and another of his hallmarks, the cropped jacket, but reconceives the outfit according to Saint Laurent's own personal aesthetic. Softening the collar, shortening the jacket length and sleeves and adding pockets, Saint Laurent maintains the primacy of the line while introducing a vivacity absent from the original design.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died France 2008

Mascarade, short evening dress

1958 *Trapèze* line, spring–summer 1958
silk (faille)

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

When Dior died unexpectedly in 1957, twenty-one-year-old Yves Saint Laurent became chief designer for the house, presenting his first collection in January 1958. Dubbed the *Trapèze* line for its triangular silhouette, the collection was hailed as a triumph, with daily newspaper *Le Figaro* declaring, 'Saint Laurent has saved France'. *Mascarade* shows Saint Laurent's transition away from the work of his predecessor. At the front, the tight-fitting bodice, bows and bell-shaped skirt recall the codes of Dior's earlier designs, while at the rear a loose-fitting sack-back presages a more contemporary mood.

Yves Saint Laurent designer

born Algeria 1936, worked in France 1954–2008, died
France 2008

Bavardage, coat

1958 *Trapèze* line, spring–summer 1958
wool

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Marc Bohan

Marc Bohan was the head designer for the House of Dior for twenty-nine years, during which time he presided over fifty-seven haute couture collections. Schooled at a number of Parisian couture houses, Bohan first joined Dior as designer for the London ready-to-wear line in 1958. In 1960 he replaced Yves Saint Laurent as creative director of Dior.

Bohan's tenure at Dior was characterised by streamlined simplicity and a refined sensibility. His designs balanced traditions of elegance and luxury with crisp modern styling, evident in fluid lines, innovative suiting and striking evening wear. Restrained but never stuffy, Bohan's designs reflected couture's contemporary mood throughout the 1960s, and his classicism held wide appeal into the following decades. Representative of an era of restraint at Dior, Bohan presented his last collection for the house, *The Year of India*, in 1989.

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

San Carlo, long evening ensemble

1961 *Slim Look* collection, spring–summer 1961

silk (faïlle)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.285

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Copenhagen (*Copenhagen*), day dress

1964 autumn–winter 1964–65

wool, suede (belt)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.266

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Maxim's, dress

1963 *Arrow (Flèche)* line, autumn–winter 1963–64

silk (satin), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.309

Interviewed by *Vogue* magazine in 1963, Marc Bohan summarised his design philosophy as '*N'oubliez pas la femme*' (Never forget the woman). A pragmatist, Bohan's garments flattered and accommodated the wearer, while exclusive fabrics and an exacting attention to detail honoured couture traditions. *Maxim's* references a dress of the same name from Dior's New Look collection of 1947; the name Maxim's refers to a famous Parisian bistro popular with high society. Here, Bohan reinterprets the original work, a wool and velvet 'restaurant dress', as a slender cocktail dress with an hourglass silhouette.

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Dress

1961 *Slim Look* collection, spring–summer 1961

linen

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Enthusiasm and a sense of relief accompanied Marc Bohan's first couture collection for Dior in 1961. Press and clients who had found Saint Laurent's avant-gardism too challenging applauded the chic modernity of Bohan's designs. *The New York Times* reported that a 'shouting, clapping, surging mob at the showing caused chaos in the elegant salon ... Chairs were toppled'. *Dress* shows the clean lines and easy luxury that were a feature of Bohan's 1920s-inspired *Slim Look* collection. With its short hemline and absence of under-structures, *Dress* is a fine example of the quiet innovation and classicism that defined Bohan's tenure at Dior.

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Look 52, day dress

1969 autumn–winter 1969–70

silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.268

This short day dress highlights the way in which a greater informality had penetrated haute couture by the end of Bohan's first decade. In addition to a simplicity of line, Bohan added ease of movement and youthful energy. While this style is not risqué for the period in which it was made, the A-line silhouette and plunging tie-front neckline shows how greatly street fashions of the 1960s were influencing couture.

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Evening dress

1983 spring–summer 1983

silk, linen

Collection of Shirley Guo, Sydney

Marc Bohan designer

born France 1926

Look 103

1986 spring–summer 1986

silk (taffeta)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.183

1982 was the year that the last in-house collection was shown at Dior. In the 1980s the runway became a platform for dramatic presentations that made use of glamorous models, theatrical lighting and popular music. It was the perfect backdrop for the powerful and sexually charged silhouettes of the era. Here, Bohan seduces the audience with a striking evening gown that contrasts angularity with softness, and concealment with exposure.

Gianfranco Ferré

Dubbed the 'architect of fashion' by the international press due to his highly engineered aesthetic, Italian-born Gianfranco Ferré spent fifteen seasons at Christian Dior. Presenting a reserved first collection in 1989, Ferré soon introduced a lavish and sculptural design sensibility to Dior, reinterpreting the house's codes in a modern mood. He promoted a formidable version of femininity, evident in precisely tailored suiting and daywear, and highly dramatic evening gowns.

An exuberant designer, Ferré favoured stark colour and striking prints, and he employed fine detailing, such as embroidery, beadwork and fringing. Many of his collections and parades during the mid 1990s were emblematic of the opulence associated with haute couture, and his glamorous styles attracted a notable clientele. Ferré's last couture collection for Dior, inspired by the Orient, was autumn–winter 1996–97.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Fleur de Biscuit, evening ensemble

1990 *Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Songes d'une nuit d'été*)
collection, spring–summer 1990

silk (organza, crepe), cotton, embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1990.28

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Corolla (Corolle), dress

1991 *Date (Rendez-vous d'amour)* collection,
spring–summer 1991

silk (crepe, organza, damask), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1991.24

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

On the terrace (*Sur la terrasse*)

1991 *Date (Rendez-vous d'amour)* collection,
spring–summer 1991

Toile de Jouy printed silk (gazar), silk (tulle), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Ferré's evening wear was characterised by an opulent flamboyance evident in richly textured fabrics and vibrant colour. Referencing a popular eighteenth-century print style known as *toile de Jouy*, this gown, with its scrolling pattern, creates an impression of gilded luxury. Like Dior, Ferré was fascinated by the decorative arts of the late Rococo period. Here, the formality of the design is relieved by cascading panels of softly gathered tulle that introduce a gentle asymmetry to the work.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Dorique, sheath dress

1992 *In balmy summer breezes (Au vent léger d'un été)*
collection, spring–summer 1992
silk (georgette crepe, organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1992.24

Gianfranco Ferré's 1992 spring–summer couture show featured a rollcall of 1990s supermodels. Among them were Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington and, in this dress, Carla Bruni, who would later become first lady of France. Dominating the runway with their statuesque glamour and attitude, the supermodels brought a formidable version of femininity to the architecture of Ferré's designs. Classical in line, *Dorique* shows Ferré's appreciation of sculptural form in the use of monochromatic colour and sinuous line to focus attention on the female body.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Venise, venise, short evening dress

1991 *Autumn splendour (Soleils d'automne)* collection,
autumn–winter 1991–92

silk, embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1992.13

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Luna, coat dress

1991 *Autumn splendour (Soleils d'automne)* collection,
autumn–winter 1991–92

silk

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Bangalore, evening suit

1996 *Indian passion* (*Passion Indienne*) collection,
autumn–winter 1996–97

silk (jacquard), gold (thread), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1996.40

Prior to arriving at Dior, Ferré worked in India for an Italian clothing manufacturer. During this time, he gained a long-lasting appreciation for the country's culture and rich textile traditions. *Indian passion*, Ferré's final collection for Dior, was especially informed by this experience. *Bangalore* was the last look on the runway and was a clever reconceptualisation of traditional Indian dress forms.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Disney, evening suit

1989 *Ascot – Cecil Beaton* collection, autumn–winter
1989–90

wool (*grain de poudre*), silk (organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1990.8

The first non-French designer to head Dior, Gianfranco Ferré brought a flamboyant and theatrical design sensibility to the house that helped to return attention to couture. For his first collection, autumn–winter 1989, Ferré presented a range inspired by Cecil Beaton's black-and-white *Ascot* scene from the film *My Fair Lady*. His expert tailoring and skilful balance of severity and sophistication earned him a Dé d'Or (Golden Thimble) award for best couture show. *Disney*, with its playful cartoon references and nod to Christian Dior's love of polka dots, is typical of the architectural symmetry of Ferré's design aesthetic.

John Galliano

John Galliano held the post of creative director of Dior for twenty-nine seasons, commencing on the fiftieth anniversary of house's debut in 1997. After just a year at Givenchy, Galliano's appointment was a bold choice. Dramatic and postmodern in his approach, but technically brilliant, Galliano showed that he had much in common creatively with Christian Dior. From his first collection, Galliano connected with the heritage of the house, remaking its feminine ideals and codes, and showing a deep understanding of fashion history.

Galliano revitalised Dior with his highly theatrical and innovative presentations and extravagant design palettes. To Dior's original vocabulary, Galliano added eclectic sources of inspiration and an emphasis on narrative, coupled with his signature use of bias-cut, exacting tailoring and celebration of crafts such as embroidery, leatherwork and pleating. Dismissed from Dior amid controversy in 2011, Galliano's tenure is nevertheless seen as an exciting era of creative excess.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Théodora, evening ensemble

1997 *Lovely ladies at evenings chez Klimt*, autumn–winter 1997–98

wool silk (taffeta, satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1998.29

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Absinthe, long sheath dinner dress

1997 spring–summer 1997

silk (crepe, organza), embroidery, fur

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1997.16

Most famously worn by Nicole Kidman to the Oscars in 1997, this striking gown is from Galliano's debut collection for Dior, presented on the fiftieth anniversary of the first Dior parade. A celebration of fashion and modernity, Galliano's collection revived and dramatically recalibrated Dior's house codes for contemporary audiences. The sensual *Absinthe* is a fusion of Galliano's signature bias-cut techniques with Orientalist affectations, evident in the fringing, knotting and embroidery.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 16, ensemble

2006 autumn–winter 2006–07

wool (crepe), silk (taffeta, *pongé*), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.20

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 22, suit

2008 spring–summer 2008

silk (triple organza, taffeta), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2008.74

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Princess Afsharid, day suit

1997 *The Edwardian Raj princesses chez Dior*, autumn–winter 1997–98

wool (tweed), silver

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Ginette, dress

2005 autumn–winter 2005–06

tulle, silk (georgette crepe), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2006.3

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Victoire, dress

2005 autumn–winter 2005–06

silk (taffeta, tulle)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2006.7

In 2005, at a moment when couture was perceived to be languishing, Galliano presented a collection that drew attention to the specialist art of dressmaking and tailoring. A tribute to the atelier and a reflection on the process of creation, the collection featured several gowns that explicitly referenced the workroom dressmaker's dummy, with lengthy swathes of tulle and taffeta pinned to foundations of nude tulle corsetry. In exposing the artifice of the New Look, Galliano also paid tribute to House history: *Victoire* is named after one of Christian Dior's favorite mannequins.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Cee-Shi-San

2007 spring–summer 2007

wool (crepe), silk (faille, *pongé*)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.48

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Mimi-san, suit

2007 spring–summer 2007

silk (triple organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.70

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Konnici-Kate, suit

2007 spring–summer 2007

silk (triple organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.42

The theatricality and complexity of Galliano's design aesthetic can be seen in this vivid suit, *Konichi-Kate*. From a collection inspired by the opera *Madame Butterfly*, and traditional Japanese costume, Galliano makes a feature of origami-style folds in the large shawl collar and pockets in combination with delicate floral embellishments. He also quotes the wasp-waisted silhouette of the New Look in the tightly composed lines of this bodice.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 39, ensemble

2000 spring–summer 2000

silk, paint, lacquer, metal, viscose, nylon, leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through the NGV Foundation by

Norma and Stuart Leslie, Governors, 2002

2002.417.a-d

This work was commissioned by the NGV in 2000 from Galliano's controversial spring–summer 2000 collection, christened 'hobo couture' by the press. With its references to squalor and homelessness, the collection was poorly received. What was not understood was that Galliano was also referencing nineteenth-century rag balls, where French aristocrats dressed up as the poor. Made to look tattered, with raw seams, paint splatters and protruding boning, *Look 39* simultaneously deconstructs nineteenth-century corsetry and the historicism of the New Look that it inspired.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Caradior, short dinner dress

1997 spring–summer 1997

hand-painted silk (crepe), lace

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1997.15

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Dame Collet Monté, ensemble

1998 *A voyage on the Diorient Express* or *The story of the Princess Pocahontas* collection, autumn–winter 1998–99
wool, cotton, metal

Collection of Louise McBride, Sydney

Like many of Galliano's collections, *A voyage on the Diorient Express* was both sensational and incendiary when it was released. Fusing centuries past and present alongside references to Native American dress and Medici princesses, Galliano constructed a fantastical rendition of the Pocahontas story. The fashion parade was held at the Austerlitz railway station, Paris. Models arrived by train, disembarking to strut in front of guests seated on a sand-covered platform decorated with Louis Vuitton trunks. In line with the narrative accompanying the collection, many outfits were awarded personalities. Here, the Renaissance-inspired *Dame Collet Monté* is a figure of severity and latent sensuality, palpable in the sinuous line.

Raf Simons

Belgian designer Raf Simons held the role of creative director at Dior from 2012 to 2015, presenting a total of seven couture collections during this period. Known for his minimalist and streetwise aesthetic, Simons's debut collection for autumn–winter 2012 drew on Dior's foundation years, notably the *Bar* jacket in dialogue with contemporary sources, such as Sterling Ruby's paintings. Simons paired the jacket with trousers for the first time, proposing a fresh iteration of the iconic piece. The production of this collection became the subject of the 2014 documentary film *Dior and I*, by Frédéric Tcheng.

The Simons era was an exercise in streamlined modernity that referenced the house's founding codes in an abstract, ahistorical way. Reductive in his approach, Simons made cut and line a focus. His collections privileged exceptional tailoring and technical work along with a vision of tough femininity that found expression in hybrid ensembles and architectural ball gowns. These were amplified by electric colour schemes and innovative material treatments and combinations. In 2015, Simons presented his final couture collection for Dior, autumn–winter 2015, before departing the house that October.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 25, evening ensemble

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

wool, silk

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.51

In bringing his minimalist design sensibility to Dior, Raf Simons demonstrated an appreciation of line and form, highlighted by the use of bold panels of distinct colour. Here, contrasting hues underscore the masculine and feminine elements that inform this evening ensemble. Part ball gown, part trouser suit, the work is typical of the inventiveness and ease that characterised Simons's approach to couture.

Raf Simons designer
born Belgium 1968

Look 8, cocktail dress

2013 autumn–winter 2013–14
wool (crepe), silk (satin crepe)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.40

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 3, ensemble

2013 autumn–winter 2013–14

wool, silk (Duchess satin), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.35

Raf Simons designer
born Belgium 1968

Look 52, coat dress
2014 autumn–winter 2014–15
wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.57

Raf Simons designer
born Belgium 1968

Look 13, coat dress
2012 autumn–winter 2012–13
wool, silk, cotton

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.38

Raf Simons designer
born Belgium 1968

Look 39, Bar coat
2012 autumn–winter 2012–13
wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.65

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 34, jumpsuit

2014 spring–summer 2014

wool, silk, embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.120

One of Simons's more poetic works, *Look 34, jumpsuit* demonstrates the extraordinary level of craftsmanship that goes into a couture work. Here, an all-over pattern of semicircles has been cut out of the fabric and hand-embroidered with thousands of small purple beads. On the body, the work gives an impression of softness and sensuality, created by the subtle movement of the fabric and glimpses of flesh.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 24, ensemble

2015 spring–summer 2015

polyvinyl chloride, silk (organza, crepe), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.100

Showcasing an astonishing range of technical and material treatments, Simons's collection for spring–summer 2015 was considered one of his most original. Mixing lace, plastic, sequins, print and colour, and swapping between gowns, miniskirts and bodysuits, Simons showed a vision of couture as counterculture. This work, with its 1960s references, clean lines and patterned layers, brings a youthful energy into play.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 38, evening dress

2013 autumn–winter 2013–14

silk (crepe), synthetic horsehair, leather, metal

Collection of Erica Packer, Los Angeles

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 45, evening dress

2013 spring–summer 2013

silk (organza), cotton (guipure lace)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.127

Like Dior, Simons has a professed a love of the countryside, flowers and gardening. For this collection, presented in the Tuileries Garden, Paris, Simons adopted the flower as his leitmotif. Embellishing cocktail dresses and ball gowns with delicate blossoms in atypical colours, Simons paid homage to Dior and to the craftsmanship of the ateliers. This gown also shows the amalgamation of new and old in the innovative addition of deep side pockets to an otherwise classic form.

'My aim was to capture the juxtaposition of the different influences contained within the House's exceptional archives and thus merge them with my own sensibility, my spirit and my aesthetics – in short, my personality as a woman anchored in her own era.'

MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI, 2017

Maria Grazia Chiuri

In July 2016 Maria Grazia Chiuri became the seventh designer and first female creative director at Dior, presenting her first couture collection for the house in January 2017. Coinciding with the seventieth anniversary of the house, the presentation at Musée Rodin combined established house codes, such as the New Look, the flower and astrology, with a spirit of romantic youthfulness that was unapologetically feminine. Black tailored suits and soft pleating recalibrated the influential *Bar* jacket, while ball gowns were made ethereal by delicate embroideries, translucency and lace.

For Chiuri, the process of discovery and reinterpretation of the house's heritage has guided the application of her own individual design aesthetic and vision for couture. Notions of the cosmopolitan and universal woman figure largely in her design philosophy at Dior. Chiuri's clothes are not only beautiful but also functional, and her collections, such as that of July 2017, strike a careful balance between tailored suiting and highly decorated evening wear.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Look 66 evening coat

2017 spring–summer 2017

silk, jute

Jewellery by Claude Lalanne
Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Taking inspiration from Christian Dior's afternoon ensemble, *Jardin Japonais*, 1953 – a pink day ensemble printed with cherry blossoms – Maria Grazia Chiuri created nine new works for the re-presentation of her spring–summer 2017 haute couture collection in Tokyo. Echoing Dior's appreciation for Japanese art and culture, Chiuri made a feature of embroidered and three-dimensional floral blooms, branches, mistletoe and feathers. Here, the embroidery follows eighteenth-century conventions, with parallel lines of flowers running down the centre front and densely executed panels below.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Constellations, ball gown

2017 spring–summer 2017

silk (taffeta, velvet), tulle

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Chiuri made her couture debut for Dior in January 2017. The spring–summer collection acknowledged well-established house codes as well as taking inspiration from Dior himself. Here, bold handpainted and embroidered astrological motifs reference Dior's love of astrology and his superstitious nature, while the combination of soft velvet and crisp taffeta fabrics evoke the youthful and romantic aesthetic that Chiuri's evening wear is known for.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

**Endless reverie (*Rêverie infinie*),
bustier dress**

2017 spring–summer 2017

wool (crepe)

Jewellery by Claude Lalanne
Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Thesis (*Thésée*), architectural tailored suit

2017 spring-summer 2017

wool, silk (satin crepe, organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

The iconography of the *Bar suit* has become a recognisable part of the design language at Dior in recent decades. It is not only a link between past and present, but also symbolic of the ideals of femininity that each successive designer has propounded in their work. Female empowerment has been a strong narrative in Chiuri's designs. Here, the suggested informality of softly draped sleeves, wide-legged trousers and a gentle peplum cleverly reconfigure the structured lines of the original *Bar suit*.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Broussaille, evening dress

2017 spring–summer 2017

tulle, rafia, silk (embroidery)

Jewellery by Claude Lalanne
Dior Heritage collection, Paris

In recent times, contemporary designers have shown a renewed interest in the artisanal practices associated with haute couture, such as embroidery, pleating and flower-making. Highlighting the extraordinary levels of craftsmanship demanded by high fashion, a number of dresses in Chiuri's first collection featured designs executed in three-dimensional raffia and silk thread embroidery. *Broussaille*, with its abstracted motifs and atypical palette, was worn by Nicole Kidman to the Cannes Film Festival in May 2017.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

**Baroque garden (*Jardin baroque*), coat
dress**

2017 spring–summer 2017

silk (taffeta, satin crepe)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

'The well-dressed woman will possess an outfit for every occasion; by the word "outfit" I mean everything that goes into making up perfection, planned and thought through to the last detail, from the fur coat to the shoes'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1951

Top to toe

From its establishment, Dior's vision for his couture house encompassed all aspects of what it meant to be fashionably well-dressed. Beyond garments, he envisaged a 'top to toe' approach to dressing that included hosiery, hats, shoes, bags, make-up and fragrances. In the early years, many accessories were designed by Christian Dior himself and created in collaboration with technical specialists, such as milliners, shoemakers and perfumers. Many of these items have become as important to the house's identity as the couture collections they adorned. Over its seventy year history the House of Dior has collaborated with leading creatives in specialist fields, such as perfumer Paul Vacher, shoe designer Roger Vivier and milliner Stephen Jones.

Hats

With his previous experiences selling and illustrating millinery early in his career, Dior played a lead role in selecting and finessing the right hat for each of his garments. After working with external milliners to create his first two collections in 1947, Dior announced the establishment of his own millinery department in 1948, run by his confidante and muse Madame Mitzah Bricard. Since then, the only other milliner to exert such an influence is British milliner Stephen Jones, who has created the hats for Dior for the past twenty years. Collaborating with Galliano, then Simons and now Chiuri, Jones has demonstrated the important role that hats continue to play in extending and communicating the designer's vision.

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Cap

2007 spring–summer 2007

artificial straw

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.49.e

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Headdress

2007 spring–summer 2007

brass, polyvinyl chloride, satin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.79.e

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2008 spring–summer 2008

feathers (turkey), strass, pearls, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2008.86.e

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Headdress

2007 spring–summer 2007

straw

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.45.d

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Boater

1998 spring–summer 1998

sisal, silk (tulle, velvet)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1998.42.d

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2013 spring–summer 2013

horsehair

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.126.d

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

1999 autumn–winter 1999–2000

straw, silk (satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2000.31.c

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

1998 spring–summer 1998

artificial straw, silk, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1998.39.d

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Visor

2017 spring–summer 2017

silver

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2007 spring–summer 2007

cotton, sequins, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2007.77.f

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2007 autumn–winter 2007–08

rabbit (felt), brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2008.10.e

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2011 spring–summer 2011

horsehair

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2011.26.e

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Cloche

2008 autumn–winter 2008–09

lambskin, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2009.15.f

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Cloche

2008 autumn–winter 2008–09

lambskin, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2009.30.f

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Beret

1999 spring–summer 1999

wool, fur (fox, silver fox)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1999.35

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2003 spring–summer 2003

wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2003.24.c

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2003 spring–summer 2003

latex, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2003.44.d

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Hat

1968

straw, painted plastic, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1972

D59-1972

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Headdress

2003 spring–summer 2003

cotton, brass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2003.72.c

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2005 autumn–winter 2005–06

brass, jet

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Swallow mask

2017 spring–summer 2017

synthetic horsehair

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Stephen Jones milliner

England born 1957

Hat

2007 autumn–winter 2007–08

felt, sequins, wood

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2008.14.a

Perfume

The launch of Dior's first fashion collection in February 1947 was followed several months later by the official debut of his first fragrance, Miss Dior, named after his beloved younger sister Catherine. At the presentation of the first collection, Dior infused the salon with the scent of two quarts of Miss Dior, creating a sensory dimension to the experience for gathered clients, journalists and buyers. As important to his business as clothing, Dior's perfumes were supported by striking advertising campaigns using René Gruau's illustrations. Dior also promoted the connection between his perfumes and his fashion collections: the original Miss Dior bottle, designed by Fernand Guéry-Colas, was said to echo the archetypal curvaceous lines of his first collection. In the decade from 1947 to 1957, several hundred couture outfits bore a name linked to perfumery, with scented flowers foremost among them.

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house

est. 1946

Baccarat, Baccarat manufacturer

est. 1764

Diorling

1963

crystal, metal, gilt

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2014.3091.1a2

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house
est. 1946

Miss Dior Amphoras
1949–51
crystal, enamel, gilt

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2015.3435,
PCD.2014.2406, PCD.2014.2839,

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house
est. 1946

J'Adore

2001

crystal, metal, gilt

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2016.61

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house
est. 1946

Miss Dior XVIII inspiration display
1950

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2014.694, PCD.2016.12

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house

est. 1946

Baccarat, Baccarat manufacturer

est. 1764

Miss Dior Obelisk

1950

crystal

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2014.514.1a3

Christian Dior Parfum, Paris perfume
house
est. 1946

Diorissimo
1956
crystal, metal, gilt

Christian Dior Parfum collection, Paris

PCD.2014.3087.1a2

Shoes

Shoe design was one creative area in which Dior could not claim experience, and he was happy to enlist the skills of others. The most important creative relationship for Dior in relation to footwear was with French designer Roger Vivier, whom he first met socially in 1949. The working relationship with Dior began in January 1953 and lasted for ten years. In recognition of his creative status, Vivier's name was stamped into the insole alongside that of Dior. Vivier was the only person to enjoy the privilege of being a Dior co-signatory in this way. Vivier's shoes for Dior are widely acknowledged as being as luxurious and influential as the clothing. His exquisite embroideries and opulent fabrics as well as his iconic heel silhouettes, such as the curving comma and towering stiletto, still resonate today.

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Evening pump

c. 1961

silk (taffeta), metal, strass, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2006.84

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Evening pump

1958 autumn–winter 1958–59

silk (satin), tulle, calfskin, silk (velvet), strass

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.145

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Versailles, pump

1960

cotton (ottoman), calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2012.109

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Evening pump

1961 spring–summer 1961

silk (shantung), guipure lace, strass, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.165

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Pumps

1959

satin, suede, pearls, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.317

Roger Vivier designer
French 1907–98

9 design sketches
coloured pencil on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Roger Vivier designer
French 1907–98

Evening pump

c. 1960

silk (velvet), calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.143

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Pumps

c. 1962–63

silk (satin), calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2001.79

Roger Vivier designer

French 1907–98

Soraya, evening pumps

c. 1962–63

satin, brocade, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.313

Delman, New York manufacturer

est. 1919

Shoes, evening pumps

c. 1956

suede, strass, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2012.105

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Hat

c. 1953

straw

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Pillbox hat

1947 autumn–winter 1947–48

silk (velvet), taffeta, feathers (egret)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.320

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Sun hat

1951 spring–summer 1951
straw, silk (velvet)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.154

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Bell hat

c. 1960

felt

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1987.348

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Hat

c. 1948–49

straw

Collection of Hamish Bowles, New York

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

George V, beret

1954 spring–summer 1954
straw, cotton (ottoman)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.164

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Ankle boot, prototype

1966 autumn–winter 1966–67

silk (satin), calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.128

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Evening ankle boot

1967 autumn–winter 1967–68
satin, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.183

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Diorêve

calfskin, synthetic tulle, wool

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Boots

2015 spring–summer 2015

polyvinyl chloride, metal, strass, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.97.b.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Sandals

2014 spring–summer 2014

satin, polyvinyl chloride, cotton, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.281.b.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Shoes

2017 spring–summer 2017
calfskin, synthetic tulle

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Shoes

2016 spring–summer 2016

calfskin, ponyskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.377.d.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Pumps

2013 spring–summer 2013
metal, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.209.b.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house
est. 1946

Sneaker heels

2014 autumn–winter 2014–15

leather, rubber

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Fashion and Textiles, 2017

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Shoes

2014 spring–summer 2014
neoprene, rubber, plastic

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.105.c.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Pumps

2014 autumn–winter 2014–15
flocked velvet, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.48.d.1-2

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Pumps

2014 spring–summer 2014
metal, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris fashion house

est. 1946

Ankle boots

2014 autumn–winter 2014–15
flocked velvet, calfskin

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.36.c.1-2

Dior in Australia

Australians were among the first internationally to witness, model and purchase original Dior designs. Less than a week after Dior's dramatic debut of February 1947, articles celebrating his talent appeared in Australian newspapers. By March, buyers from major department stores (as well as fashion editors) had added the House to their Paris itineraries, returning with the latest New Look garments for their spring parades. In 1948 Australians also saw the first-ever representative collection of original Dior fashions to be shown outside of Paris. Presented by David Jones, Sydney, the fifty-piece collection of day, cocktail and eveningwear was shown in Australia for two weeks, ahead of New York and London. Opening to great fanfare on 31 July, the extravaganza saw twelve flawlessly groomed Australian mannequins, most with 48-centimetre waists, parade the original Dior garments alongside thirty-four locally made reproductions. Audiences were completely enthralled.

When Dior died unexpectedly in October 1957 plans to bring a second major couture parade to Australia were already in place. Organised by David Jones and the *Australian Women's Weekly*, the event still went ahead and in late November eighty-three outfits from Dior's final collection, *Spindle (Fuseau)* arrived, along with seven of Dior's house mannequins. Included in the selection were model garments titled *Sydney*, *Melbourne*, *Canberra* and *Wattle* – a sure sign of the impact that Australia had on Dior.

On 9 March 1948 David Jones's fashion coordinator, Alice Shiell, and her companion, buyer Gwen Constance, arrived in Paris to conduct negotiations with Christian Dior. Over the course of three weeks, and in an atmosphere of uncertainty, Shiell brokered an exclusive deal that saw Dior give approval for fifty couture garments to be sent to Australia, the largest collection ever presented outside of Paris.

This footage shows Australian mannequins presenting a number of Dior garments brought out for the 1948 parades. In some instances, the original garment is presented alongside its locally made counterpart. Licensing agreements and collaborations such as this were another of Dior's great innovations. Highly regulated, these systems helped the house to curtail illegal copying by making Dior designs widely available at various price points and suited to the tastes and needs of individual markets.

Qantas Airways, Queensland

est. 1920

Airway

August 1947

magazine: coloured inks on paper print

Qantas Heritage Collection, Sydney

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

David Jones' News

front page 15 May 1947
newspaper: ink on paper

David Jones Archive, Sydney

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

David Jones' News

page 3, 15 May 1947
newspaper: ink on paper

David Jones Archive, Sydney

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

David Jones' News

front page 23 July 1947
newspaper: ink on paper

David Jones Archive, Sydney

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

**Program for French Fashions for
All parades, Sydney**
1947
coloured inks on paper

Private collection, Sydney

David Jones's *French Fashions for All parades* were the first opportunity Australian and New Zealand women had to see original Dior garments locally. As part of a new store policy to bring current-season couture within the reach of all Australian women, David Jones secured the rights to show and reproduce affordable copies of French model garments. In May, when photographs of the boxes being opened in the store's Marlborough Street workrooms were published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, special mention was made of Dior's 'sensational' checked wool suit, which featured a padded and boned sixteen-gore skirt.

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

**Publicity photograph for Christian Dior
parades, Sydney**

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

David Jones Archive, Sydney

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

**Dossier, Christian Dior parades,
Sydney**
1948
coloured inks on paper

Dior Heritage Collection, Paris

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

Programme for Christian Dior parades, Sydney

1948 spring–summer 1948
coloured inks on paper print

Dior Heritage Collection, Paris

In June 1948 ten packing cases containing fifty original Christian Dior garments arrived in Sydney by Lancastrian plane. Almost immediately, David Jones's Marlborough Street workrooms began reproducing and adapting individual designs. This parade program for the gala premiere lists the order in which garments appeared on the runway and reveals the number and style chosen for replication.

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

**Poster for Christian Dior parades,
Sydney**

1948 spring–summer 1948, printed 2017
inkjet print on paper

Dior Heritage Collection, Paris

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

**Seating plan for Christian Dior parades,
Sydney**

1948 spring–summer 1948, printed 2017
inkjet print on paper

Dior Heritage Collection, Paris

These sketches, produced in-house by the drawing department at Dior, were typically handed out to press and buyers at collection presentations. Here, they form a visual record of the diversity of styles that were brought to Australia for the 1948 parades.

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Crowbar (*Pied de Biche*), press sketch
1948 spring–summer 1948
pen and ink on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Pedro, press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948

pen and ink on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Miss Dior, press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948

pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

**Perfect happiness (*Bonheur Parfait*),
press sketch**

1948 spring–summer 1948
pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Joyful (*Joyeuse*), press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948

pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Isabelle, press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948
pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Atlantide, press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948

pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Borneo, press sketch

1948 Flight (Envol) line, spring–summer 1948
pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Caprice, day dress, press sketch

1948 Zig-zag line, spring–summer 1948

pen and ink on paper

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Dolly, press sketch

1948 spring–summer 1948
pen and ink on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Postwar, *The Australian Women's Weekly* helped to champion an appreciation and desire for French couture in Australia. Via a series of annual parades, glamorous covers and countless pages of editorial, the *Weekly* gave readers advice and access to the very latest in imported French style. In 1957, the magazine was instrumental in bringing Dior's final collection to Australia. Ahead of the event, the *Weekly* published instalments of his biography, previews of the fabulous gowns and features on the glamorous house mannequins that would accompany them.

Svetlana Lloyd was twenty-three when she began working as a house model at Dior. In 1957, after only two seasons, Lloyd was chosen as one of seven mannequins sent to Australia with Dior's final collection. As the only English speaker, Lloyd was interviewed extensively by local newspapers.

David Jones, Sydney retailer
and manufacturer
est. 1838

**Compere's script for Christian Dior
parades, Sydney**

1948 spring–summer 1948, printed 2017
ink on paper

Unknown, Australia

**Program for Christian Dior parades,
Sydney**

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
coloured inks on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Unknown, Australia

**Program for Christian Dior parades,
Melbourne**

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
coloured inks on paper

Collection of Gabrielle Talmadge, Melbourne

Unknown, Australia

**Ticket for Christian Dior parades,
Melbourne**

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
coloured inks on paper print

Collection of Gabrielle Talmadge, Melbourne

Unknown, Australia

Ticket for Christian Dior parades, Sydney

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957
coloured inks on paper print

David Jones Archive, Sydney

Unknown, Australia

Program for Gala premiere, Melbourne

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58

ink on paper, printed 2017

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Unknown, Australia

Program for Gala premiere, Melbourne

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58

ink on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Unknown, Australia

**Menu for Christian Dior parades,
Melbourne and Sydney**

1957

coloured inks on paper print

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Sydney, fashion photograph

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Sydney, fashion photograph

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Australia (*Australie*)

1955 A line, spring–summer 1955
gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Christian Dior, Paris couture house
est. 1946

Australia (*Australie*), press sketch
1955 A line, spring–summer 1955
pen and ink on paper

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Australian Women's Weekly, Sydney

est. 1933

Magazine

pages 16 and 17, 9 February 1955, printed 2017

inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of Bauer Media Pty Limited and The Australian Women's Weekly

Australian Women's Weekly, Sydney

est. 1933

Magazine

pages 8 and 9, 13 November 1957, printed 2017

inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of Bauer Media Pty Limited and The Australian Women's Weekly

In the postwar period, *The Australian Women's Weekly* helped to champion an appreciation and desire for French couture in Australia. Via a series of annual parades, glamorous covers and countless pages of editorial, the *Weekly* gave readers advice and access to the very latest in imported French style. In 1957 the magazine was instrumental in bringing Dior's final collection to Australia. Ahead of the event, the *Weekly* published instalments of the designer's biography, previews of the fabulous gowns and features on the glamorous house mannequins that would accompany them.

Australian Women's Weekly, Sydney

est. 1933

Magazine

cover 30 July 1949, printed 2017

inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of Bauer Media Pty Limited and The Australian Women's Weekly

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Adélaïde, fashion photograph

1948 *Envol* line, spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

**Latin Quarter (*Quartier Latin*), fashion
photograph**

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Monte Carlo, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Pondichéry, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Rosière, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

**Compere, Christian Dior parades,
Sydney**

1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Bon voyage, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Diorette, fashion photograph

1948 Envol line, spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Drags, fashion photograph

1948 Envol line, spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Dolly, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Patience, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Ray Leighton

Australia 1917–2002

Bornéo, fashion photograph

1948 spring–summer 1948

gelatin silver photograph

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

These photographs show some of the outfits modelled at the David Jones Dior parades, including the impressive *Dolly*, worn by June Dally-Watkins, with its bands of lace and pleated organdie.

Magnificent Dior

The House of Dior has long been synonymous with dramatic evening dresses and sweeping ball gowns made from metres of sumptuous cloth and featuring intricate beading and decadent embroidery. These magnificent gowns have become red-carpet staples, the pinnacle of haute couture brilliance and a unique showcase for the many specialised skills and crafts that make Parisian couture unique. Throughout the seventy-year history of the House, Dior has produced some of the world's most memorable gowns, perfect for making a grand entrance or dazzling with elegant luxury.

From the ballroom elegance of the 1950s and the statement dressing of the 1980s to the theatricality of Galliano and the fluid femininity of Chiuri, the House of Dior's designs continue to satisfy clients' desire for impactful glamour. Playing with volume and form, each of the Dior designers has worked with velvet, brocade, satin, taffeta, sequins, tulle and lace, with each piece skilfully embellished with beading, sequins and metallic thread to reveal the transformative power of dressing up.

'My dresses are fantasies, but they are tamed fantasies that have passed from the realm of dreams into the world of everyday items that are meant to be worn.'

CHRISTIAN DIOR, 1956

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 52, evening dress

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

silk (organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.79

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Wedding gown

2017

silk (Mikado, organza, taffeta), polyamide (tulle)

Collection of Miranda Kerr

This custom wedding gown was commissioned by Australian model Miranda Kerr for her marriage to Evan Spiegel in May 2017. Classical, with a simplicity of line, the dress's decorous design was intended to evoke 'purity and mystery', according to Kerr. Echoes of romance and nostalgia are also present, however, in the delicate lily-of-the-valley appliqué sprays that adorn the surface of the gown and in the floral and pearl-encrusted headpiece designed by Stephen Jones.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 42, ball gown

2013 spring–summer 2013

silk (Duchess satin), cotton (satin crepe), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.124

With this voluminous gown Simons combines the lines of a traditional strapless ball gown with a more contemporary short-sleeved embroidered top. The resulting hybrid is a refreshing take on the classic high-impact evening dress and it is further enhanced by Simons's architectural use of a sleek undulating train, with its tiered forms demanding focus on the back of the gown.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Fanny, ball gown

1953 *Living (Vivante)* line,
autumn–winter 1953–54
silk, nylon, metal

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1987

NGA 87.1481.A-C

With its delicate colour and artfully gathered skirts, this ball gown embodies the very best of Dior's early 1950s evening wear. The dynamic fullness of the skirt is heightened by the ascending cloud-like puffs of draped taffeta that cross dramatically from the hip to the hemline. The collection listing for Dior's autumn–winter collection for 1953–54 details this work as a gala gown in the aptly named hue of celestial blue.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 21, evening dress

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

silk (organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.46

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Kamata, ballgown

1997 spring–summer 1997
silk (tulle, organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1997.28

Kamata featured on the cover of French *Vogue* in March 1997, worn by New Zealand model Kylie Bax. It was part of the collection that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the first Dior collection and introduced the latest creative director with a spectacular array of works that drew on numerous sources from both within and beyond the house. With its sunset-shaded layered skirts and train and Maasai-inspired necklace and breastplate, *Kamata* remains one of the most memorable looks from Galliano's time at Dior.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 11, coat

2003 spring–summer 2003

silk (satin crepe), lame

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2003.53

Inspired by his travels in China and Japan, Galliano took the idea of volume to new extremes in this collection. Drawing on the kimono, wrapped garment forms and richly woven fabrics, Galliano has even made the decorative floral embellishments in this design larger than life.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Zerline, evening dress

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
silk (taffeta), tulle, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Promised gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

Zerline is a key work from Dior's final collection. The look, incorporating skilfully arranged crisp silk taffeta in jet black with a dramatic shawl collar to frame the wearer's décolletage, is completed by an oversized black silk rose corsage. *Zerline* proves again how central the use of black in all its forms has been to the creation of magnificent Dior designs.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Sonatine, short evening dress

1957 *Spindle (Fuseau)* line, autumn–winter 1957–58
silk (velvet, *point d'esprit* tulle)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, 2017

Favourites of the Dior design repertoire, rich silk velvet and delicately spotted white tulle come together with great effect in this dramatic evening dress from the late 1950s. Satin, taffeta, velvet, lace and tulle are mainstays in the creation of luxurious evening wear and have been consistently revisited by designers at Dior since its beginning.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 33, evening dress

2012 autumn–winter 2012–13

silk (Duchess satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2013.58

For his first collection at Dior, Simons created a series of silk garments inspired by the large-scale spray-painted canvases created by his long-time friend and collaborator, American artist Sterling Ruby. The tent-like form of this evening dress, with its streamlined volumes, allows the composition to be viewed to maximum effect.

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

**Crescent moon (*Croissant de Lune*),
ball gown**

2017 spring–summer 2017

tulle, silk (velvet)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

For any couturier, the creation of a ball gown offers the ultimate opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of the atelier and to appeal to our desire for dressing up on a grand scale. With this example, Chiuri has used contrasting layers of pleated tulle to create volume and texture, and the rich velvet crescent moon envelops the gown from the bust to the hemline.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Salomé, evening ensemble

1998 *A poetic tribute to the Marquesa Casati (Hommage poétique à la Marquise Casati)* line, spring–summer 1998 silk (satin, velvet, satin crepe), leather, pearls, gold (thread, pompoms), rubies, garnets, Mongolian lamb

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1998.54

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Well of love (*Puits d'Amour*)

1948 *Winged (Ailée)* line, autumn–winter 1948–49
silk, acetate, viscose, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Promised gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

**Conservatory (*Conservatoire*),
evening gown**

1949 *Mid century (Milieu du siècle)* line, autumn–winter
1949–50
silk (velvet, grosgrain)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.483

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Mexico (*Mexique*), evening gown

1951 *Long* (*Longue*) line, autumn–winter 1951–52
silk (tulle, velvet), gold (thread)

Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

The exaggerated volume of this gown shows a favourite design device of Christian Dior. It was created by the atelier using multiple layers of tulle. The high bustline is accentuated by the placement of the plush velvet bow and helps to reinforce the elongated silhouette that underpinned Dior's collection for 1951. The *Long* line, as it was called, was to be his favourite. The exquisite graduated hand-embroidery mimics the repeated forms of a crescent moon reflected on the water.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Hellébore, dress

1995 *Extreme... (Extrême...)* collection, spring–summer
1995

silk (organza, satin)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1995.15

Ferré often favoured striking prints in his designs, and *Hellébore* is a fine example of the kind of vibrant colour and volume that he employed. Given his high-impact approach, it is no surprise that Ferré had a devoted client base, which included Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor, Sharon Stone and Diana, Princess of Wales.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Adriatic (*Adriatique*), dance dress

1956 *Arrow (Flèche)* line, spring–summer 1956

silk (taffeta)

The Kyoto Costume Institute

AC5489

Colour and volume are used to dramatic effect in this arresting work from the mid 1950s. Intended to evoke the deep sparkling blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, the crisp silk fabric is skilfully gathered in floating layers around the body, creating the illusion of serene weightlessness.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 27, evening dress

2010 autumn–winter 2010–11

silk (triple organza), tulle

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2011.69

This collection pays homage to Christian Dior's iconic *Tulip* collection of 1953, a sculptural meditation on floral forms. Featuring multiple layers of petal skirts and handpainted organza detailing, the dress is completed by Stephen Jones's evocative tinted cellophane headdresses. In 2010 Galliano said, 'I wanted to bring a bold new bloom into the salon and let the colour, texture and structure of flowers inspire a new beauty and create the contemporary Ligne Florale'.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Elixir, long evening dress

1996 *Indian passion (Passion Indienne)* collection,
autumn–winter 1996–97

silk (tulle), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1996.39

Maria Grazia Chiuri designer

born Italy 1964

Spirit of Herbarium (*Essence d'Herbier*), cocktail dress

2017 spring–summer 2017

silk (organza), tulle, embroidery, raffia

Jewellery by Claude Lalanne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

David Richards Bequest and NGV Supporters of Fashion and Textiles, 2017

The design for this raffia cocktail dress was inspired by a sample produced by French embroidery house Rébé for Christian Dior in the 1950s. It was first sent to the embroidery atelier Safrane Cortambert as ten individual organza panels: seven for the bodice and three for the skirt. Stretched over a frame, the panels were then worked on by up to seven needleworkers, beginning with the floral sprays, followed by the surrounding raffia and finished with the beadwork. Requiring more than a month and several thousand hours to complete, the embroidered panels were then returned to the atelier for fitting, shaping and assembly.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 44, dress

2014 autumn–winter 2014–15

silk (organza), glass (beads), acrylic

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.49

Magnificence comes in many forms, and in this dress the understated qualities of the silhouette are transformed by the addition of extravagant, three-dimensional tassels. These have been made from pressed droplets of paint and attached in strands to the surface of the fabric.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Périchole, dance dress

1953 *Tulip (Tulipe)* line, spring–summer 1953

silk (organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris
Jewellery by Maryse Blanchard
Promised gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

1991.27

The flower motif was used by Christian Dior both literally, in beautiful floral prints, and sculpturally, in more stylised interpretations of blooms. This glittering dress is embellished with a repeat design of flowers and foliage designed to reflect the light in motion on a dance floor.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 52, evening dress

2014 spring–summer 2014

silk (organza), embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.138

This evening dress has a kinetic quality when worn. The crisp white organza has been carefully incised and beaded to create delicate movement across the entire surface, from the bodice to the gathered volumes in the generous train at the back of the dress.

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Dancing dress

c. 1950

silk (tulle), sequins, metal thread embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2016.298

The creation of gowns that use exquisite embellishment which sparkle under lights has long been a specialty of the House of Dior. This rare early work enlivens a classic princess-line silhouette in pale grey tulle with row upon row of graduated shimmering iridescent sequins, beads and diamantés. The use of reflective silver and gold metallic thread and beading can be seen in many examples of magnificent Dior gowns.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 37, evening dress

2013 autumn–winter 2013–14

silk (organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2014.69

Volume is frequently used in the creation of magnificent gowns worthy of the red carpet. For this work, from his second autumn–winter collection, Simons worked in a limited palette of black and white, with the elongated, gathered tube dress punctuated by two simple black bands.

Christian Dior designer
born France 1905, died Italy 1957

**Bright evening (*Soirée Brillante*),
evening gown**

1955 Y line, autumn–winter 1955–66
silk (satin, tulle), silver (thread, sequins)

The Kyoto Costume Institute

AC7081 92-8-5

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Périchole, Look 68

1956 *Magnet (Aimant)* line, autumn–winter 1956–57
nylon, silk, metallic thread, plastic (sequins), metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 1993

Jewellery by Roger Scemama

Promised gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

CT5.a-b-1993

Christian Dior designer

born France 1905, died Italy 1957

Lahore evening (*Soirée de Lahore*), short evening dress

1955 Y line, autumn–winter 1955–56

silk (organza), metallic thread, diamantés

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Dominique Sirop Collection.

Purchased with funds donated by Mrs Krystyna Campbell-Pretty

in memory of Mr Harold Campbell-Pretty, 2015

2015.617

From the outset, Christian Dior was global in his outlook, and frequently made overt international references in the names of his garments and in their fabrication. Drawing directly on the luxurious fabrics used in the draped saris worn in India and Pakistan, Dior incorporates bronze embroidered motifs into this work. He has also constructed the asymmetrical shoulder line so as to mimic the strong diagonal associated with the sari bodice.

Raf Simons designer

born Belgium 1968

Look 41, bodysuit

2015 spring–summer 2015

silk (organza, satin crepe), embroidery, sequins

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2015.115

Densely applied sequins and beading have long been used in the creation of striking evening wear and party wear. With this striped, body-skimming statement piece Simons has brought a bold, youthful energy to the notion of dressing up in Dior.

Gianfranco Ferré designer

Italy 1944–2007

Scala, long evening dress

1989 *Ascot – Cecil Beaton* collection, autumn–winter

1989–90

cotton (lace), silk (tulle, lace, organza)

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

1990.20

A luxurious gown from Ferré's first collection at Dior, *Scala* embodies the grandeur and opulence that he brought to the house in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Layers of sumptuous lace and tulle in combinations of black and cream are used to create contrast and drama, which culminates in a densely embroidered bodice adorned with crystals, silk roses and lily-of-the-valley. A skilful tailor with a reputation for suiting, Ferré was also capable of creating exuberant gowns that ensured a grand entrance.

John Galliano designer

born Gibraltar 1960, emigrated to England 1966, worked in France 1991–

Look 44, evening dress

2008 autumn–winter 2008–09

horsehair, tulle, embroidery

Dior Heritage collection, Paris

2009.49

The art of couture embroidery reaches its zenith in this spectacular gown. References to early Dior also abound, with the cinched waist, exaggerated 'bar' hipline and gravity-defying folds in full flight at the back of the gown. The dense embroidery spills across the skirts in crescent forms that mimic the iconic beadwork on Christian Dior's *Mexique*, 1951, also on display in this room.