

GABRIELLE CHANEL

MANIFESTE DE MODE

PALAIS GALLIERA

EXPOSITION
1^{ER} OCTOBRE 2020 - 14 MARS 2021

CHANEL

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PRESS VISUALS ON REQUEST

The Palais Galliera, the City of Paris Fashion Museum, reopens its doors after extension work and presents the first retrospective in Paris of a unique and remarkable fashion designer: Gabrielle Chanel (1883-1971).

At a time when Paul Poiret dominated the world of women's fashion, Gabrielle Chanel went to Deauville in 1912, then to Biarritz and Paris, and revolutionised the world of Haute Couture, adorning the bodies of her contemporaries with what amounted to *a fashion manifesto*.

The first part of the exhibition is chronological; it recounts her early beginnings with a few emblematic pieces, including the famous 1916 marinière, the sailor blouse, in jersey. You are invited to trace the development of Chanel's chic style: from the little black dresses and sporty models of the Roaring Twenties to the sophisticated dresses of the 1930s. One room is devoted entirely to N°5, created in 1921 and quintessentially the spirit of "Coco Chanel".

Ten photo portraits of Gabrielle Chanel accompany the ten chapters of the exhibition and show the extent to which the *couturière* herself was the embodiment of her brand. Then came the war and the fashion house was closed; the only things still sold in Paris, at 31 rue Cambon, were perfume and accessories. Then the arrival of Christian Dior and the New Look – the corseted style that she so objected to; Gabrielle Chanel reacted by returning to couture in 1954 and, against the trend, reaffirmed her fashion manifesto.

The second part of the exhibition is themed and you are invited to decipher her dress codes: the braided tweed suit, two-tone pumps, the 2.55 quilted bag, black and beige naturally, but also red, white and gold... and, of course, the costume and the fine jewellery that were intrinsic to the Chanel look.

Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto, covers an area of nearly 1500 m² – including the newly opened basement galleries. With more than 350 pieces from the Palais Galliera collections and Patrimoine de CHANEL, from international museums, including the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the De Young Museum in San Francisco, the Museo de la Moda in Santiago de Chile, the MoMu in Antwerp..., as well as from private collections, this exhibition is an invitation to discover a universe and a style that are truly timeless.

The exhibition has been organised with the support of CHANEL.

CURATORS

Miren Arzalluz, Director of the Palais Galliera
Véronique Belloir, Collection curator,
With the curating team of the Palais Galliera

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Olivier Saillard, fashion historian

Gabrielle Chanel devoted her long life to creating, perfecting and promoting a new kind of elegance based on freedom of movement, a natural, relaxed attitude, a subtle elegance free from extravagance, a timeless style for a new kind of woman. This was her “fashion manifesto”, an inescapable heritage that is more relevant than ever in today’s world, and which the Palais Galliera is presenting in this exhibition.

From the beginning of her career, in the early years of the 20th century, right up to the end of her life, Gabrielle Chanel defied the prevailing fashions of her time. In her youth, she emerged as a female dandy, who switched from appropriating clothes to designing garments that adapted the comfort, the functionality, the restraint and the elegance of the male wardrobe for women. By dint of careful technical experimentation, reinterpreting traditional tailoring but using soft fabrics like jersey and tweed, she introduced her version of the suit and the little black dress, in the 1910s. In the 1950s, they became symbols of a new kind of femininity on both sides of the Atlantic. Chanel developed her own distinctive, timeless style, which has stood firm against the ephemeral trends that typify the fashion world.

Chanel’s style was based on the principles of comfort and respect for the female anatomy, but also on the details and chic elegance of her designs. Chanel avoided unnecessary decoration, and her choice of colours, materials and techniques was always judicious and bold, with an emphasis on balance and a harmonious overall effect. Her garments had a sophisticated restraint that acted as a contrast to the opulence of her jewellery, which was inspired by ancient or distant civilizations and also her way of wearing an abundance of it. Her N°5 perfume was a milestone in the history of perfumery, from the moment it was created in 1921. This iconic fragrance became the invisible but essential accessory for the modern woman.

Gabrielle Chanel became a legend in her lifetime, a legend that she did much to foster and promote throughout her career. In the 1930s, both the French and the international press were already reporting versions of her biography that reinforced the confusion that she deliberately cultivated about her life and the fascination that her personality was already inspiring.

Since her death in 1971, there have been many attempts to shed light on the different facets of her history and personality. These writings have sought to unravel the mystery of her origins, the keys to her success, her involvement with the arts scene, as well as her romantic relationships and, more recently, her conduct during historical events, particularly during the Second World War. All of which has contributed to a greater understanding of the complex personality of “Coco” Chanel, while at the same time generating much discussion and controversy.

As a museum dedicated to fashion, we have chosen to focus the exhibition on the work of the seamstress who became one of the most influential fashion designers of the 20th century. The exhibition *Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto*, the first Paris retrospective dedicated to the great *couturière*, analyses her professional career, the emergence and the development of her style, the characteristics of her work, her codes, and her contribution to the history of fashion.



François Kollar. Model descending the staircase at 31 rue Cambon. Photo published in *Harper's Bazaar*, 15 September 1937. Photo Ministère de la Culture – Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / François Kollar

GABRIELLE CHANEL

Fashion Manifesto
01.10.20 – 14.03.21

EXHIBITION

“Chanel works with all ten fingers,
with her nails, the side of her hand,
her palm, pins and scissors, on the dress
itself, a white mist with long pleats,
spattered with flecks of crystal.”

Colette

SALON D'HONNEUR TOWARDS A NEW ELEGANCE

From the beginning of her career, Gabrielle Chanel was totally at odds with the fashion of her time, which was governed by passing trends and a stereotyped image of femininity.

Always the first to wear what she designed, her choices reflected her own taste.

In the 1910s, they were also inspired by the spirit of freedom that characterised fashionable society in Deauville, where she opened a boutique in 1912, then Biarritz, where she opened another in 1915.

She was also the first to recognize the changes beginning to emerge at the end of the First World War. She would allow nothing that restricted movement or interfered with the line of a garment. She rejected any superfluous ornamentation, opting for simple forms imbued with naturalness: soft and flowing garments that respect women's bodies and allow them to move with ease. It was a concept, characterised by an amazing blend of restraint and precision, and it laid the foundations for a new kind of elegance that she would pursue throughout her career. Each of her creations, whether a garment, an accessory, a piece of jewellery or a perfume, was part and parcel of that same vision, which far transcended any ephemeral fashion trend.



Coco Chanel – 1930's.

© Ministère de la Culture – Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine,
Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / André Kertész



1

1

Hat

Between 1913 and 1915

Black braided straw,
black silk satin ribbon
Paris, musée des Arts
décoratifs

© Julien T. Hamon

2

Marinière

Summer 1916

Ivory silk jersey
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon



2

SALON D'HONNEUR

THE EMERGENCE OF A STYLE

“It is the material that makes the dress and not the ornaments that can be added to it.”

Gabrielle Chanel

Although Chanel went along with the changes in the female silhouette in the 1920s and 1930s, she remained steadfast in her aesthetic choices and her personal conception of fashion. The clean, understated designs were of an elegant simplicity, the materials soft and, more often than not, monochrome. Her palette was subtle and delicate, and though dominated by shades of white and beige, it also included more intense notes of midnight blue and fiery red.

In her search for simplicity, Gabrielle Chanel only rarely and, then, with restraint, embraced the exotic, historicist trends. She also made sparing though skilful use of decorations and motifs, whether printed or embroidered. Flowers were an exception to the rule; her treatment of them and the freshness of their colours helped to convey an image of youthfulness and naturalness.

Practical and at the same time elegant, her clothes took their inspiration from sportswear and borrowed some of the codes of masculine elegance and dandyism. Taking techniques and materials hitherto unheard of in the world of haute couture, she associated the commonplace with luxury, used ordinary fabrics like jersey or tweed to create casual-looking outfits whose cut and proportions exuded refinement and distinction. With this balance, Chanel created an instantly recognizable style.

She used black, sometimes slightly offset with white, to affirm her strict, minimalist vision of fashion. The purity of the lines was even more tangible; the garment was eclipsed by a radically modern conception of chic.



Edward Steichen. Lee Miller wearing a Chanel outfit with a hat by Caroline Reboux. Photo published in *Vogue*, July 15, 1928. Credit: Edward Steichen, *Vogue* © Condé Nast



3



4



5



6



7



8

3

Dress and coat ensemble
Between 1922 and 1928
Ivory silk jersey
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

4

Blouse, skirt and belt ensemble
Spring-Summer 1927
Ivory silk fabric
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

5

Tailleur
Between 1927 and 1929
Brown and off-white
speckled wool tweed
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

6

Day dress
Between 1926 and 1928
Ivory crepe de Chine
with rust print
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

7

Dress and coat ensemble
Spring-Summer 1926
Ivory silk fabric,
black silk taffeta
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

8

Dress
1920-1923
Black silk chiffon,
black silk crêpe
embroidered with
jet beads
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

GALERIE EST

N° 5

Created in 1921, N°5, the first compounded perfume, was, just as Chanel had intended, radically different. Unlike the fragrances generally favoured at the time, it has no specific scent, her dresses were constructed and this is a constructed perfume, a mysterious, abstract fragrance. The master perfumer, Ernest Beaux, selected more than eighty components for it. The combination of rare flowers, including ylang-ylang, Royal jasmine and centifolia rose, woody and spicy notes, amplified by what was originally an accidental overdose of aldehydes (synthetic compounds), make the formula impossible to pin down.

Its container and presentation were equally innovative. Unlike the ornate phials of the Roaring Twenties, Chanel's bottle was square with restrained, angular lines. Her response to the floral, evocative names was the abstraction of a number, a lucky number. The white cardboard box with black borders was minimalist, and the purity of the graphic design was revolutionary for its time.

The radical nature of those choices mirrored the radicality of her approach to fashion. Conceived as an extension of the garment and corresponding point for point to her vision of modernity, Chanel made N°5 her signature.

Already the world's best-selling perfume, Marilyn Monroe added to its mystique with an intimate admission, which made it a legend forever.



9

Parfum N°5
1921
Glass, black cotton
cord, black wax seal,
printed paper
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

GRANDE GALERIE

THE EXPRESSION OF A STARK LUXURY

In the 1930s, Chanel's sense of line was at its peak. Her dresses defined the body but without exaggeration. The harmony of proportions and the coherence between materials and form were, once again, typical of her quest for simplicity.

For evening wear, she achieved a subtle blend of inventiveness and classicism, combining the lightest materials, black or white lace and tulle. She made chiffon dresses of incredible simplicity, *frou* dresses with inlaid decorations blending into the cut to emphasise the forms. Without ever upsetting the balance of the line, she used asymmetry, wrap-around movements and uneven lengths. With her, the vocabulary of women's fashion was restrained, the flounces were only slightly ruffled, draping barely defined, the fabric light and floating.

Chanel also used embellishment techniques in her own very personal way. She would completely cover the surface of light fabrics with beads, sequins or fringes that melted into a shimmering, shifting texture. She countered the contemporary excess of eccentricity with monochrome materials and simplicity of line.



Edward Steichen. The actress Alden Gay wears a Chanel dress.
Photo published in *Vogue*, October 15, 1924.
Credit: Edward Steichen, *Vogue* © Condé Nast



10



11



12



13

10

Evening gown

Spring-Summer 1930

Ivory silk chiffon, inlays
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

11

Evening gown

Autumn-Winter

1933-1934

Ivory silk lace and gold
wire, rhinestones
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

12

Evening gowns

Autumn-Winter

1929-1930

Blue silk tulle
embroidered with
blue fantasy sequins
Pink-beige silk tulle
embroidered with pink-
beige sequins
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

13

Evening gown

Autumn-Winter

1926-1927

Midnight blue crêpe
georgette, silk fringes
dyed in shades of blue
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

Evening gown

Spring-Summer 1927

Ivory crêpe and silk
fringes

Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

GALERIE OUEST

"BIJOUX DE DIAMANTS"

In 1932, although she was an advocate for costume jewellery, Gabrielle Chanel created a collection of fine jewellery composed solely of diamonds mounted on platinum.

This collection, financed by the International Diamond Corporation of London, was exhibited from 7 to 19 November, not in Mademoiselle Chanel's boutique, but in the salons of her private mansion at 29 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré; Paris society was wild about it.

In a departure from the usual modes of presentation, the jewels were displayed on realistic, highly expressive wax mannequins. Also original for the period was the style of the jewels; in keeping with the clothes she designed, they were graphic and understated. Their mountings were light and defined the line. Their design, which she entrusted to various illustrators including Paul Iribe, and the motifs she chose, reflected the lightness and softness of the fabrics or the airy, crystalline character of heavenly bodies. Comets, feathers, fringes and ribbons would delicately underline a décolleté, a wrist or the nape of a neck. The jewellery she designed was modular: the star motif on a necklace could be worn as a brooch or the centrepiece of a bracelet.



14

"Comet" brooch
Collection
"Bijoux de Diamants"
1932

Platinum, old European
cut diamonds
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

REZ-DE-JARDIN – GALERIE COURBE

THE SUIT OR THE EMBODIMENT OF FREEDOM

“Each suit holds the secrets of the luxury of Chanel. And that luxury is in the details.”
Vogue, September 1959

In 1954, in a context still dominated by the spirit of the New Look – the return to a silhouette exalting the old canons of femininity –, Mademoiselle Chanel, at over seventy years of age, re-launched her fashion house and, with even more fervour, took a stand against the fashion of the day.

The extreme simplicity of her *tailleur* was the epitome of the guiding principles that had made her so unique and so successful. It was, on its own, a manifesto of her vision of the modern woman. Every aspect of its construction was designed with respect for the female anatomy, perfect balance of the silhouette, and a concept of elegance that combined simplicity and naturalness.

The jacket was so soft and light that it was more like a kind of cardigan. As for the skirt, instead of nipping the waist, it rested on the top of the hips, angled slightly backwards and hanging below the knee; it was comfortable, mobile, and allowed complete freedom of movement. The trim, in contrasting colours, which was also part of its uniqueness, accentuated and visually structured the silhouette while keeping it supple. The precision and refinement of the finish, which was just as essential, became a signature. The Chanel jacket, which has become an archetype, is still a reference in women’s fashion today.



William Klein. Dorothy and Little Bara dressed as a priest.
Photo published in *Vogue*, October 1960.
© William Klein



15



16



17



18

15

Tailleur

Spring-Summer 1965

White silk cloqué,
navy print

Paris, Palais Galliera

**Jacket and skirt
ensemble**

Spring-Summer 1971

Navy printed ivory wool
jersey, gilded metal and
navy galalith

Paris, Patrimoine

de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

16

Tailleurs (detail)

Spring-summer 1961

Ficelle tweed, navy-
braided red grosgrain

Paris, Patrimoine

de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

17

Tailleur (detail)

formerly belonged
to Marlene Dietrich

Spring-Summer 1966

Navy tweed, white
cotton pique, galalith,
gilded metal

Paris, Patrimoine

de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

18

Jacket, blouse

and skirt tailleur

Spring-Summer 1964

Navy and white checked
tweed, navy printed
white silk twill

Paris, Palais Galliera

© Julien T. Hamon

GALERIE COURBE

THE CHANEL CODES

Chanel saw accessories as an essential element of a harmonious silhouette. They also reflected her pragmatic vision of fashion while at the same time contributing to the codification and unity of her style.

Launched in February 1955, the 2.55 bag, which is recognizable by its shape, its flap, the overstitching that creates a quilted effect, and its twist lock clasp, was designed to be, above all, practical. The shoulder strap, a jewellery chain or a chain threaded with leather to prevent the metal clinking, has become an emblematic feature in its own right; it allows the bag to be carried in the hand or slung over the shoulder. The interior is lined with leather or red grosgrain and has numerous pockets to help find the contents, including a dedicated lipstick compartment. Made in sheepskin, jersey or silk satin, the 2.55 is also available in three sizes to suit the different activities and circumstances of the day.

In 1957, the two-tone sling-back shoe added the finishing touch to the Chanel silhouette and brought an extra note of elegance to her style. After several trials with various different shoemakers, she plumped for the model made by Raymond Massaro. In a perfect marriage of function and form, its beige leather lengthens the leg, while its black toe protects it from traces of the weather, at the same time making the foot look smaller. The asymmetrical strap and the moderate height of the heel ensure comfort and freedom of movement.



19



20

19
The 2.55 flap bag
Between 1955 and 1971
Quilted black-dyed
sheepskin, gold-plated
metal, twist clasp
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

20
Prototype of the two-
tone sling-back shoe
Designed by CHANEL
made by Massaro
c. 1961
Beige kid, black silk satin
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

GALERIE D'HONNEUR IN PRAISE OF ADORNMENT

From the 1920s onwards, jewellery played an essential role in Gabrielle Chanel's designs and, as a counterpoint to the simplicity of her clothes, became a hallmark of her style. With accumulated rows of beads, pearls, long necklaces, short chokers, earrings, brooches and bracelets, she combined the real thing with fakes, in a blend of fine jewellery and costume jewellery. Mademoiselle Chanel also felt free to position a jewel wherever she wanted on a garment; she would happily place a brooch on the back of a sleeve, on the hip or on the shoulder, or even on the top of a hat.

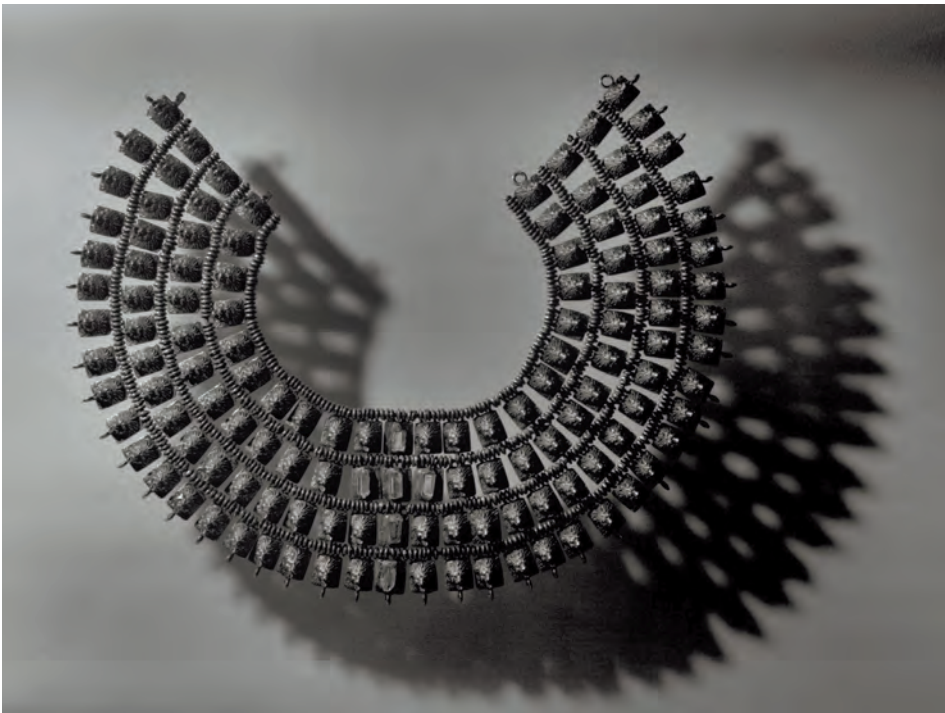
The designs for her jewellery were created in close collaboration with the jewellers Étienne de Beaumont, Fulco di Verdura, Jean Hugo, Gripoix and Robert Goossens. Historical and exotic inspirations were eventually supplemented by floral decorations, or more personal ones based on her own symbolic repertoire: the lion, the ear of wheat, the star, the sun, or the cross. All of the designs show a marked taste for opulence and profusion – the complete opposite of the restrained styling of the garments.



21

Cross
CHANEL design, made
by Goossens
Between 1954 and 1974
Gilded bronze
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon

21



22

22
Necklace
CHANEL design,
made by Goossens
Between 1965 and 1971
Gilded silver, rock
crystal
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon



23

23
Bracelet
CHANEL design,
made by Goossens
Between 1965 and 1971
Gilded silver,
polychrome glass paste
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon



24

24
Pendant
CHANEL design,
made by Goossens
1960s
Yellow gold, turquoise,
tourmaline, pearl
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL
© Julien T. Hamon



Henry Clarke. Anne Sainte Marie in a Chanel suit. Photo published in *Vogue US*, 1955.
Paris Musées © Henry Clarke, Musée Galliera / Adagp, Paris 2020

GALERIE SUD

THE REVIVED ALLURE

From 1954 onwards, Mademoiselle Chanel made the *tailleur* the most iconic piece in her collections but, at the same time, she treated the evening gown as a stylistic exercise.

While most of the great couturiers would employ embroiderers to decorate their evening wear with stones and sequins, Chanel's version of formal dress was discreet and refined.

Without ever deviating from the line she had established, she drew on each one of the basic principles that had defined her aesthetic throughout her career. For cocktail parties, she designed simple black dresses in a wide variety of materials, from classic lace, velvet and silk voile, to nylon and various other synthetic fabrics. On the most austere, she allowed the extravagant affectation of a belt or a gilded jewel illuminated with coloured stones. The sequin embroideries, similar to those of the 1930s, were monochrome. She used the elegant simplicity of chiffon and the lightness of gauze to reinvent the art of flou and freedom of movement. Keeping to her signature range of colours, she selected fabrics that blended off-white and gold. Red added piquancy to chiffon, black made it chic.

Until the spring-summer 1971 collection, her last, Mademoiselle Chanel never ceased to reinterpret, to refresh and to perfect her rules and principles. From the most emblematic creations to those that have sunk into oblivion, all of them bear witness to the enduring timelessness of her style.



Henry Clarke. Dress worn by Anouk Aimée, *French Vogue* September 1963.
Paris Musées © Henry Clarke, Musée Galliera / Adagp, Paris 2020



25



26



27



28

25

Dress

Autumn-Winter

1964-1965

Black cotton cloqué
and black organza
Paris, Palais Galliera

Dress

Spring-Summer 1959

Black chiffon, black silk
satin, turquoise pâte
de verre, rhinestones

Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

26

Cocktail dress

Spring-Summer 1959

Black Dognin lace
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

27

Evening gown

Spring-Summer 1955

Red silk chiffon
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

Evening gown

Autumn-Winter

1970-1971

Red silk chiffon
Paris, Palais Galliera
© Julien T. Hamon

28

Bolero and skirt ensemble

Autumn-Winter

1963-1964

Silk fabric embroidered
all over with white
mother of pearl sequins
Paris, Palais Galliera

Evening gown

Autumn-Winter

1965-1966

Silk embroidered all over
with white mother
of pearl sequins
Paris, Patrimoine
de CHANEL

© Julien T. Hamon

CODES AND INDIFFERENCE TO CODES

For the scenography of the exhibition, we were interested in exploring Gabrielle Chanel's taste for *mise en scène*, by reworking or amplifying some of her codes – like the screens and hidden exits in her apartment on the Rue Cambon, her taste for triptychs, the straight lines, the fragments of mirror, or deep black lacquer.

The exhibition had to take account of two considerations: first, to explore Gabrielle Chanel's unique style in an exhibition on two floors of the museum, and at the same time to show off the new exhibition rooms in the basement of the museum. With this in mind, we took the liberty of hiding the usually very prominent decor of the ground floor, in order to highlight the vaulted galleries of the basement.

The exhibition on the ground floor is set out chronologically, with the clothes from Gabrielle Chanel's first period immediately setting the tone. The magnificent decor of the Palazzo Galliera is hidden behind high, narrow screens, with mirrors. The space in which the visitor moves has been transformed to reflect Gabrielle Chanel's indifference to the fashion codes around her. In the basement, the presentation is thematic and more spaced out, with the rough brick and stone walls as the backdrop for this part of the exhibition.

The presence of the creator, follows us through the exhibition in projected portraits, underlining the extent to which her style was an embodiment of her personality. We have evoked Gabrielle Chanel's consistently incisive approach through a radically slick, sharp and precise scenography enclosed in an ivory or black setting.

Sandra Courtine and Dominique Brard
Scenographers of the exhibition



© GM pour Palais Galliera

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CHANEL: THE NEW WOMAN AS DANDY

by Caroline Evans

On a racecourse in the South of France, in 1907 or 1908, Gabrielle Chanel, aged about twenty-five, looks both chic and sporty: she is wearing a man's overcoat and a collar and tie, with a dainty boater that she made herself. Her posture also reveals her mastery of a typically masculine casualness – her hands thrust into her coat pockets and binoculars slung across her shoulder. To appear at a race track like this was a sign of effrontery at a time when women's social and economic dependence on men was signalled by their fashionable dress. Everything about Chanel's appearance distinguishes her from other female spectators, women with ornate hats and elaborate clothing, whose appearance was defined by their relationship to a man – whether it was their husband, their lover or their father. Chanel, who was a kept woman at the time, in an unconventional relationship, differentiated herself from her fellow women in paradoxical fashion by wearing men's clothing, a form of social incognito: the tie was her lover's, Étienne Balsan, and the overcoat belonged to her friend, Baron Foy.

“Before becoming a brand, Chanel was an adventuress”, writes Lilou Marquand, who was her assistant during the last years of her life.¹ From her early twenties, if not earlier, Chanel developed a unique form of dandyism, a social masquerade that she never abandoned: the possibility of seeming to be what she was not and, at the same time, not being what she seemed to be. Ellen Moers described how, in the early 20th century, the 19th century dandy gave way to the “New Woman”, a woman with “a cigarette, a bicycle and a will of her own.”² Yet there were underlying continuities between those two figures. Chanel's social mobility and her panache had much in common with the English dandy George Brummell, who used elegance, wit and a certain degree of bravado to move in aristocratic circles to which he had not been born. In his book on Brummell, the writer Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly pointed out the fundamental gender ambiguity of the dandy in a manner which anticipated Chanel's early beginnings in French society by half a century. Barbey d'Aurevilly described the dandies of the Second Regime as “hermaphrodites of History” and as “twofold and multiple natures, of an undecided intellectual sex.”³

But to reduce Chanel's dandyism to transvestism would be to seriously misinterpret the facts: the important thing is not that Chanel wore men's clothes, but rather that she understood how modern they were and that she was able, throughout her life, to unsettle the gender of every garment by contesting the fundamental nature of both masculinity and femininity.

Like Chanel, the first writers who wrote about dandyism treated gender as a serious matter: Moers reminds us that Barbey d'Aurevilly “raised dandyism to an intellectual position.”⁴ For Chanel, this became the position of a professional working in the Modernist period. As she explained to Paul Morand after the Second World War, “The paddock before 1914! I had no idea when I used to go to the races that I was witnessing the death of luxury, the death of the 19th century, the end of an era [...]. That's why I was born, that's why I have lasted, that's why the outfit I wore to the races in 1913 can still be worn in 1946, because the new social conditions are still the same as those that led me to wear it.”⁵

Chanel was alive to the rhetorical and polemical potential of fashion. At the racecourse one day, before 1914, she had admired a woman with a metal arm, seeing it as “the height of elegance”.⁶ From this perspective, a prosthesis can become an elegant accessory for a permanently evolving self: unstable, susceptible to change, shifting. Chanel understood the power of those things that linked the organic to the inorganic, in the same vein as the techniques of what Barbey d’Aurevilly called “a science of manners and attitudes.”⁷ Her detachment was the result of draconian physical discipline. Barbey d’Aurevilly described “those spirits that speak to the body through the body”; in this respect, Chanel’s relentless commitment to the powerful combination of gesture, pose and personality was very eloquent.⁸ That 1907 photograph has an anticipatory quality to it: Chanel’s eyes are firmly focused on the future as much as on the racecourse.

Another photograph, this one from 1925, shows her on the deck of the Duke of Westminster’s yacht, *Flying Cloud*. Although her clothes are conspicuously more feminine, Chanel’s pose and short hair reflect the grace of a very modern tomboy in a forty-year-old woman. Almost twenty years after the photo on the racecourse, in a world transformed by war and revolution, Chanel was already a successful designer and prominent businesswoman. She had initially made her name by designing the first women’s sportswear.

In 1916, her beige shirt dresses, which barely grazed the ankle, had “put an end to a centuries-old gesture that countless men, the moment a woman mounted a step, had voluptuously awaited: that moment when the woman discreetly gathers up her skirt. A certain era for women had come to an end,” wrote Edmonde Charles-Roux.⁹ Chanel “was a brand-new woman, a woman whose clothes were without allusions.”¹⁰ This was where her modernism crossed paths with her dandyism.

Rhonda Garelick claims that Chanel was the pivotal figure between 19th century dandyism and the 20th century cult of celebrity.¹¹ Her simple cuts encapsulated both her complex personality and what became her trademark style: she was an incendiary catalyst for the modern woman. Just as 19th-century British dandies had adapted their country hunting outfits for wearing in society, Chanel crafted “poor” fabrics into sportswear for a fashionable elite. In this photograph, she wears them with her usual élan. In addition to her discreet nonchalance, her pose is relaxed, modern, as she sits, ramrod straight, with her legs crossed. She used to say: “every joint in the body is connected to the back; all movements begin in the back.”¹² And, as Barbey d’Aurevilly pointed out, dandyism is “a way of existing” rather than a way of dressing.¹³ Chanel instructed her models to stand and move as she did, and what she provided for her clients was nothing other than a portrait of herself. It was not enough for Chanel to simply dress a woman, she wanted to shape the person, to develop her style and even her way of thinking; to teach her to “walk straight, chin out, shoulders forward, hips tilted, like a rider’s. How to run properly or to cross her legs.”¹⁴ Because, as Barbey d’Aurevilly put it, “For Dandies, as for women, to *seem* is to *be*.”¹⁵

[...]

1. Lilou Marquand, *Chanel m’a dit...*, Paris, JC Lattès, 1990, p. 7.

2. Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1960, p. 283.

3. Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Du dandysme et de G. Brummell*, Paris, Alphonse Lemerre Éditeur, 3^e éd, 1879, p. 94.

4. E. Moers, *The Dandy* [...], *op. cit.*, p. 263. See also Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993.

5. Paul Morand, *L’Allure de Chanel*, Paris, Hermann, 1976, p. 43, 45.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

7. J.-A. Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Du dandysme* [...], *op. cit.*, p. 29.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

9. Edmonde Charles-Roux, *L’Irrégulière*, Paris, Grasset & Fasquelle, 1974, p. 240.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

11. Rhonda K. Garelick, « The Layered Look : Coco Chanel and Contagious Celebrity », in Susan Fillin-Yeh (dir.), *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, New York, New York University Press, 2001, p. 35-58.

12. P. Morand, *L’Allure de Chanel*, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

13. J.-A. Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Du dandysme* [...], *op. cit.*, p. 13.

14. L. Marquand, *Chanel m’a dit...*, *op. cit.*, p. 37, 72, 104.

15. J.-A. Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Du dandysme* [...], *op. cit.*, p. 69, note 1.

THE CHANEL SUIT: THE SHAPE OF FREEDOM

by Véronique Belloir

“You could say that Chanel never or hardly ever changes her line, and that is precisely where her strength lies,” Vogue proclaimed on 1st April 1921. When the Chanel fashion house reopened in 1954, the first collections were greeted with a certain amount of reserve by the Parisian press. In a context still dominated by the spirit of the New Look – the return to a silhouette that exalted the canons of femininity –, the extreme simplicity of Chanel’s models was perceived as a lack of novelty, and the suit attracted scant attention. And yet the suit was evidence “that a formula can evolve, renew itself, and even surprise, while remaining strictly faithful to an unchanging style.”¹

A tailored suit for ladies

When Gabrielle Chanel first started out in fashion, what is still called the *costume tailleur* (tailored suit) had found its place in a woman’s wardrobe. This two-piece outfit was English in origin and intended for outdoor activities; it was first introduced in the 1850s. At that time, it was made to measure exclusively by men’s tailors. In France, although British couturier John Redfern helped to make it popular, it wasn’t until the mid-1880s that “French” houses, such as Old England, and a few other dressmakers began to make this supposedly comfortable outfit. The notion of comfort, previously absent from women’s fashion, won it supporters, while its detractors deemed the suit unflattering, too severe and masculine. In the 1910s, it was almost always made of wool fabric in neutral shades: grey, chestnut, beige-green, even a “pea soup” green. It was an outdoor outfit worn for sporting activities, travelling or morning walks; in the afternoon, it was worn to the races. It was much praised for its practicality, even though this *tailleur* was still worn with a corset. And while the skirt did not touch the ground, apparently leaving the foot free, its very narrow cut meant that the ability to move without hindrance was sacrificed to the fashion of the day. A long, tight-waisted jacket in the same fabric completed the outfit. Large *Directoire* lapels opened onto a bodice with a stiffened high collar or a fitted waistcoat, out of which a lace or pleated tulle jabot would often protrude.

Chanel, from the beginning of her career, took a stand against this conception of clothes, which was dominated by fashion trends and subjected women to a stereotyped expression of femininity. Farewell to intricate drapes, unwieldy trains, inspiration from history, and all manner of superfluous trappings. Farewell to convoluted lines, constricting cuts and distorted silhouettes. Her credo could be summed up as “subtle elegance – nothing unnecessary, artificial, purposeless, or pointless, [...] a process of deductions, measurement, logic, good sense, an elegant solution to a problem.”²

The right balance between function and form

Gabrielle Chanel, on the fringes of fashion and defying convention, created what she liked, the designs were practical but elegant. She pared things down, rejected “the ornament that destroys the line.”³ She looked for balance and simplicity, conjured up lightness; and, probably intuitively at first, invented a liberated look at the very moment when, having experienced another way of dressing during the First World War, women were beginning to feel the need for it. For this woman who didn’t make drawings but worked directly on the body, “fashion does not exist only in dresses, it is borne on the wind, you can sense it, you can breathe it, it’s in the sky and in the streets, it’s everywhere, it has to do with ideas, with social customs, with events.”⁴

If the suit, which she invented in 1954, reflected some of the principles that had made her so distinctive and successful up to then, it seemed, to a greater extent than any other of her creations, to be a consummation and a sort of manifesto.⁵ More than ever, form and elegance resulted from the quality of the chosen materials, respected the anatomy, were designed for movement and dictated by a desire for naturalness that was totally opposed to the sophisticated fashion of the post-war period. Those principles, unparalleled in the world of fashion, were reminiscent of those of the most famous architects and designers: Le Corbusier, Robert Mallet-Stevens, Jean-Michel

Frank, Eileen Gray, Pierre Chareau or Charlotte Perriand. Like them, Chanel sought the right balance between function and form, rejecting superfluous detail and appropriating techniques and materials traditionally not used in her field. As she once said: “Myself, I sell clothes and objects.”⁶

The Chanel suit shows thought in the design of every detail. And, if “designers are not, strictly speaking, those who are responsible for progress, but are those who give it a form”, Chanel is definitely one of them.⁷

Specific techniques

In 1958, *Elle* magazine first showcased the originality of the Chanel suit. Step by step, the magazine explained the manufacturing secrets of a “little Chanel suit”, created by women for all women, and even provided its readers with a pattern. Although of course it was inspired by men’s suits, the Chanel suit retained only the general idea and certain practical aspects.⁸ It was an elegant outfit, adapted to modern lifestyles, and that could be worn throughout the day but also at any age. It was designed to be comfortable, but it was still very feminine. The classic version of the suit consisted of a jacket with two or four pockets, a skirt and a blouse with a neck-line sometimes enhanced by a tie or a yachting scarf, and occasionally with cufflinks at the wrist. The concept was available in many variations, which could be combined with *marinières*, dresses or coats, and always in matching fabrics and linings. “No two were alike [...] their unity was not the product of a mould or a standardised pattern. It was a unity of style.”⁹ And although the suit started out as a daytime outfit, Chanel adapted it, by making it in glamorous materials for cocktail parties or evening dress. The line “retained the casualness of the morning, but the brilliant fabrics added a dressy note.”¹⁰ These outfits, as befitted them, were made by the tailoring workshops of the House. However, the techniques and materials prescribed by Chanel differed somewhat from the specific practices of these workshops, which were traditionally entrusted with structured garments. The suit jacket was more like a kind of cardigan: it was soft and light because there was no interfacing. The geometry of the cut was complex but unnoticeable because it blended into the material; it was this that gave structure to the line while, at the same time, preserving the softness of the fabrics. There were no form-hugging darts on the front. It consisted of four parts assembled with body seams. It did not mould the chest but emphasised it through slight tapering. “The idea was to avoid interrupting the natural lines of the body or those of the fabric.”¹¹ Two panels on the side edges define the silhouette; they graze the waist without constricting it, streamline the hips without constraining them, and ensure ease of movement.

[...]

1. “Le manifeste Chanel”, *Vogue France*, September 1958, p. 120.
2. Élisabeth Rombach, “Le talent de Chanel vu par Sem”, *Les Feuilletts Sem*, no 70, Association Sem, September 2014, p. 10 (from a handwritten note signed by Sem).
3. Paul Morand, *L’Allure de Chanel* (1976), Paris, Gallimard, “Folio”, 2018, p. 60.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
5. Voir “Le manifeste Chanel”, *Vogue France*, September 1958, p. 120.
6. *L’Express*, 11 August 1960, p. 18.
7. Olivier Assouly, “Autour des enjeux de la qualification du design. Entretien avec Catherine Geel”, Paris, Institut français de la mode, juin 2010 (<https://www.ifmparis.fr/fr/recherche-academique/autour-des-enjeux-de-laqualification-du-design>).
8. “Le costume masculin et le tailleur chanélien ont un idéal commun : la distinction”. Roland Barthes, “Le match Chanel Courrèges”, *Marie Claire*, n° 181, Septembr 1967, p. 93.
9. “La Française en uniforme”, *Vogue France*, February 1962, p. 59.
10. “Le bon ton en tailleur du soir”, *Elle*, 1 September 1961, p. 66.
11. “Chanel aujourd’hui”, *Elle*, 17 November 1958, p. 50.

GABRIELLE CHANEL

Fashion Manifesto
01.10.20 – 14.03.21

A CHANEL TIMELINE

1883 Gabrielle Chanel is born at the Saumur hospice (Maine-et-Loire) on August 19. Her family is from a modest background.

From 1907, attracted by the stage, Coco Chanel sings in cafés in Vichy. Her nickname, “Coco” stems from this period because she used to sing the song “Qui qu’a vu Coco sur le Trocadéro?”

1909 Chanel opens a hat shop at 160, Boulevard Malesherbes in Paris, with the help of expert milliner Lucienne Rabaté.

1910 Opening of the boutique “Chanel – Modes” at 21, Rue Cambon, in Paris.

On 1 October, *Comoedia Illustré* publishes two portraits of Gabrielle Chanel wearing her creations and features her on the cover.

1912 First mention of Chanel hats in the American press, on 1 October, in the famous magazine *Women’s Wear Daily*.

Chanel opens a millinery boutique in Deauville. In addition to the hats she quickly adds sportswear. Soon *marinières*, jackets and blouses are added, too.

1915 During the war, Chanel opens her first fashion house, in Biarritz, in a villa facing the casino. The Basque Coast attracted a rich cosmopolitan clientele at that time.

1916 On 3 July, the monthly magazine *Les Éléances parisiennes* publishes three Chanel outfits in jersey.

1918 Opening of a fashion house at 31, Rue Cambon in Paris. It was to become the flagship address of Chanel.

1921 Perfume N°5 created in Grasse with Ernest Beaux.

First appearance of the double C monogram.

1922 Creation of the perfume N°22.

1923 Gabrielle Chanel buys the building at 29 Rue Cambon.

Opening of a boutique in Cannes.

1924 After meeting Pierre and Paul Wertheimer Gabrielle Chanel goes into partnership with them to create the Société des Parfums Chanel on 4 April. The first Chanel make-up line is launched.

Around 1924, in her Parisian fashion house, Chanel opens a department of costume jewellery which she entrusts to Count Étienne de Beaumont.

1925 Launch of the perfume Gardénia.

1926 The “little black dress” dubbed “Chanel’s Ford” gets the seal of approval from American *Vogue*.

In April, Gabrielle Chanel buys the building at 25, Rue Cambon.

1927 Opening of a fashion house in London.

Launch of the perfume Cuir de Russie.

In October, Gabrielle Chanel acquires the buildings at 23 and 27 Rue Cambon.

Creation of the first range of skin care products.

1928 In March, in order to obtain exclusive, high-quality fabrics, Chanel creates a weaving mill in Asnières-sur-Seine, near Paris, under the name Tissus Chanel; it includes the company Tricots Chanel.

1932 Creation of the “Bijoux de Diamants” fine jewellery collection, which Chanel exhibits from 7 to 19 November in her private mansion at 29, Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.

1933 Registration of the brand Tissus Chanel.

1936 During a general strike, the staff of the Maison Chanel occupy the premises on Rue Cambon.

1939 As soon as France declared war on 3 September, the fashion house closed. The perfume and accessories shop (31, Rue Cambon) stayed open throughout the war.

1944 Chanel is arrested at the Ritz by the French Forces of the Interior because of her relationship with a German officer, Baron Hans Günther von Dincklage. She is released after a brief interrogation. For ten years Chanel lives retired from the world of haute couture and divides her time between Lausanne, Paris, La Pausa (her villa on the French Riviera) and trips to Italy and the United States.

1952 On 7 April, in *Life* magazine, to the question “What do you wear to bed?” Marilyn Monroe answers “Chanel N°5.”

1953 The fashion house reopens after fourteen years absence.

1954 Gabrielle Chanel unveils her new collection on 5 February. She is seventy-one years old.

French model and “Chanel girl”, Marie-Hélène Arnaud poses in a Chanel suit for the American photographer Henry Clarke, for *Vogue*.

1955 In February, Chanel designs the quilted, dipped lambskin bag with a chain shoulder strap. She gives it the name 2.55.

Launch of the first eau de toilette for men Pour Monsieur.

1957 The first two-tone shoe is produced by Chanel in collaboration with the shoemaker Massaro.

American businessman Stanley Marcus, owner of the Neiman Marcus department stores in Dallas, presents Mademoiselle Chanel with the “Oscar de la Mode”, in honour of “the most influential designer of the 20th century”.

1959 The N°5 bottle is presented in the exhibition “The Package” from September to November at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

1963 On 22 November, the day of the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Jackie Kennedy is wearing a pink Chanel suit from the Autumn-Winter 1961 collection.

1969 On 18 December, the musical *Coco* is staged in New York at the Mark Hellinger Theatre. American actress Katharine Hepburn plays Gabrielle Chanel.

1971 Gabrielle Chanel dies in Paris on 10 January, in her room at the Ritz. She is buried in the Bois-de-Vaux cemetery in Lausanne.

For the first time in Paris, Gabrielle Chanel is the subject of an exhibition. Not the woman, but the visionary designer, she who invented a new style and revolutionised the worlds of fashion, of accessories, of perfumes and beauty as well as fine jewellery. As the Palais Galliera re-opens, to become the first permanent fashion museum in Paris, it is clear that it is the only institution capable of devising this exhibition. The House of CHANEL is proud to partner the Palais Galliera in *Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto*, the exhibition conceived by Miren Arzalluz. This collection of more than 350 pieces, dating from the 1910s up to 1971 and drawn from the Patrimoine de CHANEL, the collections of the Palais Galliera and various international museums, sheds new light on the lasting influence of Gabrielle Chanel, the designer who brought about a permanent change in the style and the appearance of women.

All her life, Gabrielle Chanel was at the crossroads of fashion and the artistic avant-garde. By placing her own needs, her own desires and her own lifestyle at the heart of her creative work, she was a pioneer in the advancement of women and their place in society. Right from the beginning, in 1910, her take on fashion became a manifesto for liberating women's bodies from the physical constraints of the prevailing fashions, giving women the freedom at last to wear clothes in which they could move about easily, whether in sports or at work – clothes in which a woman could now feel truly independent. By simplifying the silhouette, while at the same time adding contrastingly opulent accessories and an iconic perfume, by introducing the notion of masculine/feminine, and even sportswear, this free spirit invented a look that was both elegant and functional, easy to wear, and designed to be fully in tune with women's day-to-day lives.

This was something unique in the history of fashion: by this revolution of simplicity, through her sheer boldness and her refusal to conform to the accepted norms, Gabrielle Chanel designed a look and created codes that became instantly recognizable all over the world, and that are still recognizable today. Chanel has entered the collective unconscious and has established the timelessness of a silhouette as something hugely and constantly modern. Beyond the little black dress, the tweed suit, the quilted bag or the two-tone shoes, it is this paradox that underlies Chanel's enormous contribution to fashion and her enduring influence on women.

Bruno Pavlovsky,
President of CHANEL SAS
and President of CHANEL Fashion Activities

The Palais Galliera, City of Paris Fashion Museum, is the must-see destination for fashion lovers.

Its collections, with more than 200,000 garments, accessories, photographs, drawings, illustrations and prints, are among the finest in the world. The garments reflect the dress codes and clothing habits of France from the 18th century to the present day. Extravagant or precious, plain or quotidian, they bear witness to the creative genius of fashion – through to its most contemporary expressions.

In its exhibitions – until now temporary –, the museum presented and showcased some of its priceless and fragile collections. These exhibitions, whether monographic (e.g. Givenchy, Fath, Carven, Casteljard, Grès, Alaïa, Jeanne Lanvin, Fortuny, Martin Margiela) or thematic (e.g. A History of jeans, Japonism and Fashion, Fashion and Gardens, The Roaring Twenties, *Sous l'Empire des crinolines*, The Fifties) attracted an ever-increasing number of visitors.

In response to the expectations of its public, the Palais Galliera saw the spaces in the basement as an opportunity to double its exhibition space. By combining the two levels it will now be possible to host large-scale temporary exhibitions or present the permanent collection (this will be periodically refreshed due to the fragility of the pieces) and to provide the visitor with a history of fashion from the 18th century to the present day.

Extensive refurbishment work was undertaken in the basement and the public can now enjoy the beautiful vaulted galleries. Visitors can also take advantage of an expanded range of services, including a bookshop and an educational workshop.

This building project was made possible thanks to the support of Chanel. The Palais will re-open its doors on 1 October 2020 with the retrospective Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto. To be followed in the spring by the exhibition Vogue Paris 1920-2020. The permanent collection will also be put on display.



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GABRIELLE CHANEL

Fashion Manifesto
01.10.20 – 14.03.21

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

GABRIELLE CHANEL. FASHION MANIFESTO

1 October 2020 – 14 March 2021

Palais Galliera, musée de la Mode
de la Ville de Paris
10, Avenue Pierre-I^{er}-de-Serbie
75116 Paris

GETTING THERE

Metro 9 Iéna or Alma-Marceau
RER C Pont de l'Alma
Velib' 4, rue de Longchamp /
1, rue Bassano / 2, avenue Marceau

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Reduced 12 €
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* Except the Archaeological Crypt of the Île de la Cité, the Catacombs of Paris, and Hauteville House.