



Cristobal Balenciaga, Philippe Venet, Hubert de Givenchy: Grand Traditions in French Couture

Christiane de Nicolay-Mazery

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Exquisite dresses from three masters of the grand tradition of French fashion whose contributions have set the standard for haute couture. Cristóbal Balenciaga, Philippe Venet, and Hubert de Givenchy are unparalleled masters, and their individual contributions have set the standard for haute couture. Not only did the great Spanish designer Cristóbal Balenciaga create a style, but he also invented a technique. He was an architect of haute couture and has had a prevailing influence upon the international world of fashion. His trademarks were his astounding creativity, exceptional command of tailoring, and timeless elegance. Philippe Venet has experience and respect for the traditions of haute couture, but distinguishes himself with his use of colors, and his innovative and imaginative tailoring. The 1960s were marked by his "kite" coats whereas his designs of the 1980s and 1990s with their fresh, lively colors maintain a youthful appeal. Hubert de Givenchy, the aristocrat of haute couture, still inspires the fashion world with his sense of perfection. The Givenchy style was an alliance between pure, classic lines and high quality fabrics, whether lavish or light, black or colorful. His designs--often exhibiting floral and foliate themes--reveal his deep-rooted love for nature. Givenchy initiated and was actively involved in the creation of this handsome work, which recalls the precious "compacts" of centuries past--miniature gift cases of gold, enamel, or mother-of-pearl that were offered as a sign of friendship. These extraordinary evening gowns were selected by Hubert de Givenchy, President of the Cristóbal Balenciaga Foundation, along with Philippe Venet, and the Princess of Château Beauvau Craon. Highlights include Queen Fabiola of Belgium's wedding dress created by Balenciaga and the unforgettable black dress created by Givenchy for Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's.

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