

GEOMETRIC SHAPES THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTES OF DIOR'S
FASHIONS FROM 1947 TO 1957

by 602

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Master's Report follows closely earlier work of Assistant Professor Barbara Craigie, who used geometric shapes to analyze Dior's silhouettes in three talks over KSAC Radio Station in 1958 and 1959, entitled: Fashion is a Jig-saw Puzzle, Fashion Geometry, and Fashion is Mainly Shapes.

The method of geometrical analysis, using a chart of possible pair-combinations of square, circle and triangle, as presented on April 3, 1959 in Fashion is Mainly Shapes was followed in this Report, although the instrumental chart is reduced from the complete sixteen possible pair-combinations (with triangle in both pyramid and inverted positions) to a simplified form with nine combinations only. Following Mrs. Craigie's method, triplet combinations and proportional variations or sections of each shape were used as well.

As in her 1958 presentation, these geometric analyses were used to demonstrate changes in Dior's designs over the 1947-1957 decade, and all geometric diagrams were adapted from her original illustrations obtained through personal communication.

In the Conclusions in this report, the progressive sequence of Dior's design changes from the body-contour related curvilinear silhouette to the geometry-related rectangular silhouette was based on Mrs. Craigie's earlier work.

Photographs were selected as a basis for tracings to be used to compare the actual design and the geometric analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

For several years after 1957 when Christian Dior showed the first single-shape costume (the sack dress), the silhouettes of many haute couture and ready-to-wear fashions resembled simple geometric shapes. How this single-shape silhouette had come about was the query of this study.

Women's fashion silhouettes in the period 1947-1957 changed annually, and the shapes that formed these silhouettes--the bodice, the skirt, and the sleeves--changed, also. In 1947 many shapes formed the silhouette, but by 1957 only one shape formed the silhouette. The purpose of this project was to study the changes in women's fashion silhouettes from 1947 to 1957 in order to show the transition to the sack silhouette of 1957.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were

1. to study and compare trend-setting costumes Dior showed each year during the period 1947-1957,
2. to translate the silhouettes of these costumes into the contained geometric shapes, and
3. to show through diagrams of geometric shapes which represented these silhouettes, the transition from the multi-shape silhouette of 1947 to the single shape silhouette of 1957.

Since 1957, many contemporary women's fashions have silhouettes

that can be reduced to simple geometric shapes. An analysis of the silhouettes of high fashion costumes shown prior to 1957 will show this trend toward the silhouette based on geometric shape. The history of costume shows that there have been several approaches to clothing the female figure: the ancients' "protection" approach, the Greco-Roman aesthetic approach, and the duplication-of-body-contour approach where western civilization from medieval times to the twentieth century was concerned with fit. By the twentieth century the problems of fit could be solved, and the shape of the female body could be duplicated in fabric. A knowledge of all of the above approaches to clothing is helpful in analyzing the silhouette of women's fashions. This analysis of silhouette and of the shapes that formed the silhouettes will show the transition from multi-shape silhouettes which were body-contour-related to single-shape silhouettes which were geometry-related.

Definitions of Terms Used

1. Body-contour-related--associated with the exterior structure of the body by shapes within the silhouette that suggest a duplication of body contour.
2. Geometry-related--associated with abstract shapes which neither duplicate, characterize, nor reveal body contour.

Organization of the Report

A brief review of literature on shape will be discussed: shapes in nature, man-made shapes, and combinations of geometric shapes that can be used to diagram the costume silhouette. Selected costume

silhouettes of the ancient world will be considered in reference to the relation of silhouette to body contour or to simple geometric shape. From this discussion, observations and generalizations will be made applicable to relating geometric shapes to costume silhouettes of women's fashions from 1947 to 1957.

BACKGROUND CONCEPTS RELATED TO SHAPE

In costume the silhouette is the basis of fashion, and changes in silhouette denote changes in fashion. These changes can be seen in the shapes that form the silhouette. A brief review of literature on shape: shapes in nature, man-made shapes, and combinations of geometric shapes that can be used to diagram costume silhouettes will be discussed.

Shape as a Concept

Shape is an intellectual concept, as it is "something we perceive, something which has meaning" (7, Feldman, p. 234). In his book, Art as Image and Idea, Edmund Feldman (7) stated that people see images, not things, an image being the result of endowing optical sensations with meaning, and when we focus attention on part of an image, that part or that element becomes the meaningful focus of our attention. According to Rudolph Arnheim (1), any one of the visual elements can become the focal point in a work of art, but most people react as strongly to shape as they do to color. As with color and the other visual elements, shape is determined by more than what strikes the eye at the time of observation. The experience of the present moment is never isolated. It is the most recent among an infinite number of sensory experiences that have occurred throughout the person's past life. Meanings can be attached to any of the visual elements, since these elements do represent intelligible qualities and relationships (7, Feldman). "Shape is one of the essential

characteristics of objects grasped by the eyes" (1, Arnheim, p. 37).

It concerns the boundaries of masses.

Natural and Man-made Shapes

In his book, Form, Space, and Vision, Graham Collier (5) stated that there are two extremes in form (he used "form" and "shape" interchangeably)--one being biomorphic which is organic, impressive, and expressive. Many shapes in nature are biomorphic. Feldman (7) defined biomorphic as the term, "which designates artistic forms (shapes) which look as if they had developed in the same way that all living organisms develop, through the division of cells" (7, p. 276). The human body is a source of irregular shapes which seem to have organic or biomorphic qualities, and there are shapes in art that are modelled ultimately on the pattern of organic growth through the division of cells. Shapes in nature are usually characterized by irregularity and variety (1, Arnheim).

The opposite extreme of biomorphic shape is geometric shape, which Feldman (7) regards as the product of the intellect. Feldman also pointed out that the human body is not only a source for irregular or biomorphic shapes but an indirect source for intellectual order as well.

The immediate source of proportions for order and beauty was, according to the Greeks, the human body. They made a momentous aesthetic discovery in concluding that what we call "beautiful" is the result of a harmonious relationship among the parts of any whole, and that a mathematical ratio based on the human figure lies behind every visual harmony. The human body is beautiful, they believed, because it is an expression of the intellectual order which can be found in the entire universe (7, Feldman, p. 162).

Geometric shapes are products of the intellect and as such these man-made shapes are abstract. In order to fully understand the nature of geometric shapes, abstraction must be considered. The designer, like the artist, "tries to redefine the conventional properties of shape through total organization of the visual elements" (7, Feldman, p. 234). The female figure is a series of curving forms which a designer handles in a way much like three-dimensional sculpture. A designer simplifies the figure and divides it into body areas to be covered by shapes of fabric. This simplification aids in the creative process, for

. . . when things are arranged in such a way that when they are represented to us by the senses we can easily imagine and, in consequence remember them, we call them well ordered and, in the opposite case, call them badly ordered or confused (2, Arnheim, p. 44).

When shapes are simplified and still refer to the original, they become stylized, but when they no longer refer to the original, they become abstract.

The shapes which artists (and designers) create have a variety of sources. Some are directly drawn from nature or the man-made world; others reflect the characteristic mark of the tool used to create them; there are also shapes which do not apparently occur in nature or the manufactured environment but are invented by the artist (7, Feldman, p. 233).

Body Contour and Geometric Shapes

There is not necessarily a repetition of the body contour in silhouettes where geometric shapes are used to form the skirt, bodice, or sleeve contours. Helen Brockman stated in her book, The Theory of Fashion Design,

The bony structure of the body is indeed stable, and certain parts such as the ridge of the pelvis and the ball-and-socket shoulder joint, define body contour in a strong, unyielding way. But the rib cage, which gives the upper part of the body its form, does not extend much below the bust and thus does not furnish a rigid framework for the flesh at the waistline . . . For this reason the contour of the body can be molded or compressed to adjust to quite a range of silhouette variation (4, p. 136).

There is no necessary relation between body contour and geometric shapes, however these shapes can be used to disguise the contour of the figure in costume silhouettes. Pure geometric shapes, in contrast to the curved shapes of the body, connote harshness, austerity, and strength (3, Beam), and they appear to be pure products of the intellect, read as "machine" forms (7, Feldman).

Simple Geometric Shapes

The square, the triangle, and the circle are the simplest of all the geometric shapes. Eugen Neuhaus (19) and George Ferguson (9) defined and discussed these shapes along with the symbolism attached to them. This section will be concerned with a review of these discussions and the suitability of each shape for forming body areas within a silhouette.

The square, a four-sided shape with its equal sides at right angles, is perhaps the least interesting of all forms (19, Neuhaus). In addition, the square can also be a two-dimensional version of the cube. Because of its lack of contrast in proportion, it has little aesthetic appeal, although the square is suggestive of strength and resistance (19, Neuhaus). A variation of the square, the rectangle, differs from its parent shape in that it has an element of variety, the

result of the different pairs of sides.

While the square is non-committal as to direction, the rectangle has a directive effect upon the mind according to use (19, Neuhaus, pp. 168-169).

As the shape of the total costume silhouette or the shape of one of the body areas within the silhouette, the rectangle, when used, emphasizes the verticality of the figure.

George Ferguson, in his book Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, stated, "The circle has been universally accepted as the symbol of eternity and never-ending existence" (9, p. 275).

Of all forms the circle is one of the most beautiful, although it lacks variety. It possesses harmony to an absolute degree, all points being equidistant from the center. No more simple form exists than the sphere, and the circle carries with it all the movement and beauty belonging to the sphere; but owing to its lack of a definite support, it sometimes gives the feeling of instability (19, Neuhaus, p. 170).

The oval, as a variation of the circle, retains the curving form of the circle but is more stable and more interesting because of the variety in its sides (9, Ferguson).

"The triangle is markedly static in feeling. Resting on its base it is the well known symbol of absolute repose . . ." (19, Neuhaus, p. 170). Feldman stated that the viewer,

. . . cannot see a triangle without regarding its angles as sharp and hence related, however remotely to something which has a point, which can puncture, which is potentially dangerous. A triangle resting on its base also suggests stability like a football lineman crouched in a three-point stance. The meaning and operation of a triangular shape ultimately depend on which of the potential properties of a triangle the artist chooses to emphasize (7, p. 234).

The triangle as the shape of the total silhouette or as the shape a

body area within the silhouette can be upright or inverted.

The three body areas within the silhouette (bodice, skirt, and sleeves) can be reduced to these simple geometric shapes or variations or sections of them. Costume silhouettes are merely flat shapes which represent three-dimensional clothed figures, and simple geometric shapes can represent three dimensional forms: the square may represent the cube, the triangle may represent the cone or pyramid, and the circle may represent the sphere.

Combinations of Geometric Shapes

In her book, The Arts of Costume and Personal Appearance, Grace Morton named as the two shapes she considered to be of value for costume the oblong and the oval or ovoid. The curving form of the female figure suggests the circle as an ideal shape for costume silhouettes that would give the illusion of feminine grace yet no major body area is a pure geometrically defined circle. Morton (17) stated, "geometric shapes of equal measure such as the square, the circle, and the triangle are static and without value for costume" (p. 77). However, at the time of this publication (1943, revised 1955, revised 1964), the trend toward geometry-related shapes within the silhouette and geometrically shaped total silhouettes had not been definitely established. Geometric shapes of equal measure are seldom found as shapes of body areas within the costume silhouette: however variations which refer to the parent shape approximate costume proportions. When silhouettes are simplified to pure geometric shapes and their variations, the diagrams

show the number and type of shapes used to form the silhouette.

Combinations of geometric shapes were used to describe costumes for a study conducted by Look Magazine. These shapes (Plate II) were used to indicate internal seams and divisions within the costume. This device in which geometric shapes were used to diagram costumes can be used to diagram silhouettes also. Plate I shows the shape combinations possible using two geometric shapes; each individual shape represents the parent shape, its variations, and its sections (40, Craigie).

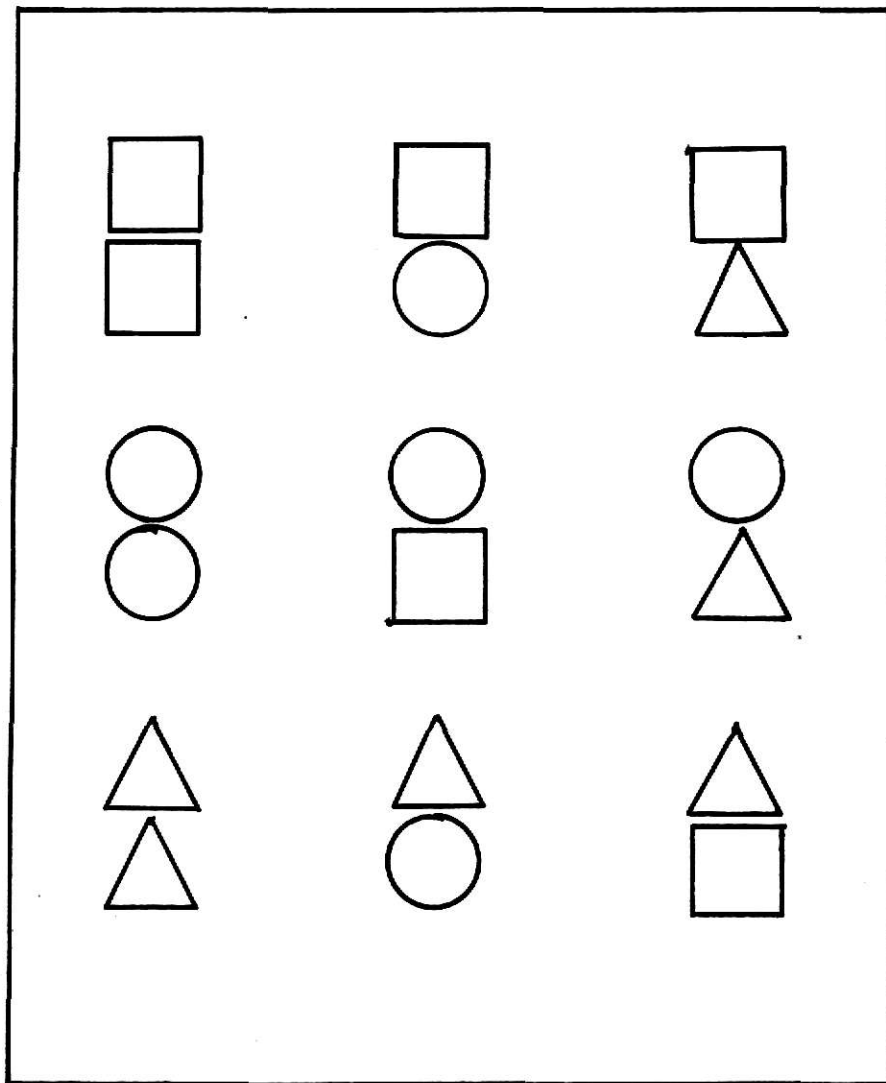
EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

COMBINATIONS OF SIMPLE GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Each shape represents not only the shape diagrammed, but also its variations and its parts.

Adapted from Barbara Craigie, Fashion is Mainly Shapes, radio talk over Radio Station KSAC, April 1959.

PLATE I

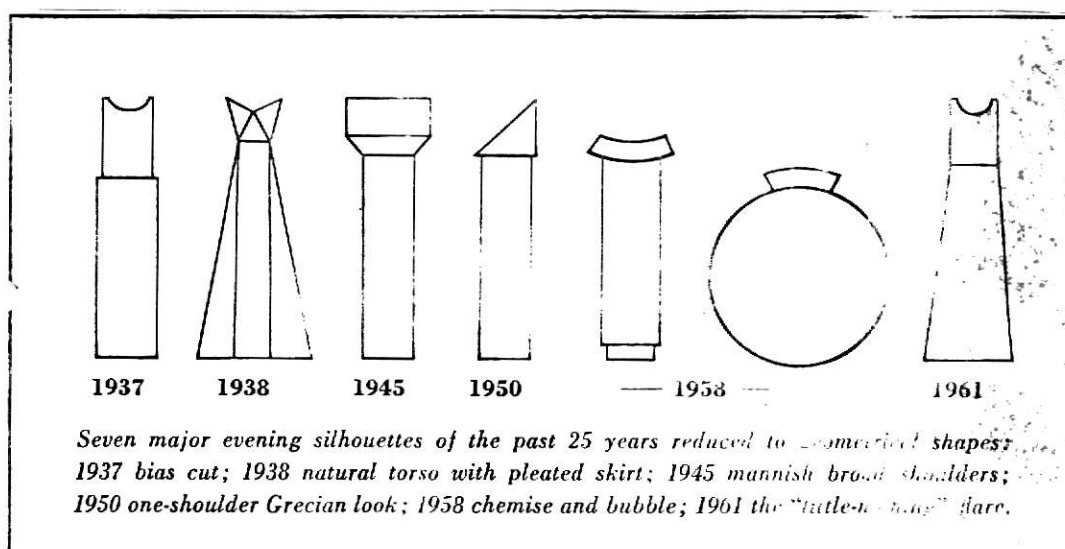


EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

TREND-SETTING SILHOUETTES REDUCED TO
GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Look, 26:43, Jan. 16, 1962

PLATE II



PROCEDURE

To begin the study of women's fashions from 1947 to 1957, historical costumes were studied to determine the relation of silhouette to body contour or to simple geometric shapes. From this study, observations were made relating to combinations of shapes in the past and the sequence in which they occurred. Although the period 1947-1957 was fairly recent, a reliable source for the silhouettes to be used in the study had to be chosen. A random sampling of illustrations, line drawings, and photographs from fashion magazines and books on costume for the period from 1947 to 1957 was made. Fashion illustrations from magazines were eliminated as a source because in some cases the artist's interpretation of the costume caused severe distortions in the illustration which did not present a true picture of the silhouette. Drawings from books on costume were not consistent in that ready-to-wear clothing was often included, and this study was concerned only with high-fashion apparel. Photographs were the most authentic source as they showed the silhouette shape as well as the style features of the costumes with very little distortion. Therefore the primary source for the apparel silhouettes used in the study for this period was photographs. These silhouettes were adapted from Vogue since Juanita Noel, in a pilot study for a dissertation, showed that of the high fashion magazines (including Harper's Bazaar and Town and Country), the number of years in operation, circulation, reader appeal, and accuracy of data for Vogue were most impressive.

Christian Dior was the trend-setting designer during the period 1947-1957; his designs were selected to be used for the silhouette analysis. Dior's designs for both February and August collections were examined in order to determine which collection showed the costume that was most representative of each year. In most cases the trend-setting costume was shown in the August collection. In cases where a major trend-setting costume was first shown in the February collection, it was interpreted in heavy fabric and shown again in the fall collection.

The style features of the costumes shown each year were studied in order to understand the nature of the silhouettes. Contours of the costumes were traced from the photographs, and then simple geometric shape combinations representing the bodice and skirt in each silhouette were made. The shape-diagrams were arranged in sequence by years, and from this arrangement, observations regarding the shapes that formed the silhouettes of women's fashions from 1947 to 1957 were made.

RÉSUMÉ OF HISTORICAL COSTUMES

Historical costume descriptions by Payne, Contini, Laver, and Brockman will be summarized in this section in order to show whether the silhouettes suggested a relationship to body contour or to simple geometric shapes.

Selected Costumes and Silhouettes of the Ancient World

Egyptian interest in architecture and structural beauty can be seen in costumes of 3000 B.C. Numerous artifacts, wall paintings in tombs, and recovered articles of dress show the stark simplicity of their clothing. Perhaps the style of their architecture accounts for the fact that paintings of Egyptian costume resembled compositions of geometric shapes, while the actual garments wrapped and tied on, revealing body contours except when pleated. As pictured in the wall paintings, the loin cloth worn by men and women during the Middle Kingdom was rectangular in silhouette (Plate III, Fig. 2). The tubular Egyptian kalisiris was simple in contour. Intricate pleating and jewelled designs were used as decorative shapes within the silhouette, thus adding variety and interest to the costume (6, Contini). The one-shoulder kalisiris was the only costume with silhouette-division which resembled a triangle plus a rectangle.

Mycenaean costume in silhouette was more body contour-related. In contrast to the Egyptian dress, Mycenaean costumes defined the waistline by a bodice and skirt division, thus having two shapes within the body silhouette (Plate IV, Fig. 1); where many Egyptian costumes

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN COSTUME SILHOUETTES

Fig. 1. Silhouette of ancient Egyptian kalisiris.

Fig. 2. Silhouette of ancient Egyptian loin cloth.

Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 4.

PLATE III



Fig. 1

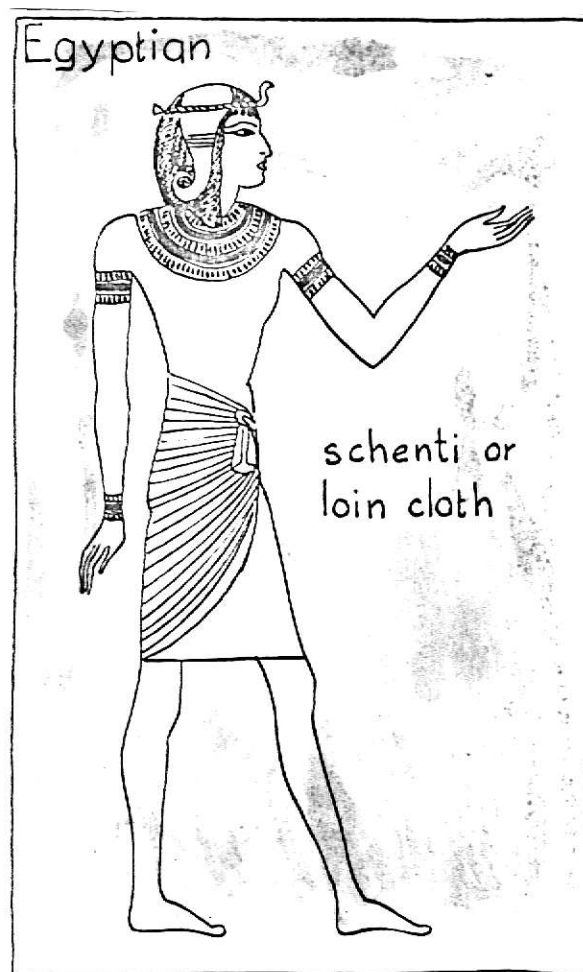


Fig. 2

were basically single-shape garments with no seams for division of body areas. The Mycenaean bodice fitted tightly at the waist and left the bust exposed: the skirt which was triangular in silhouette, was formed of tiers of leather strips (39, Brockman).

Mycenaean-Minoan costume was related to anatomy by fit and selected exposure; while Greek costume (Plate IV, Fig. 3) and Roman costume (Plate IV, Fig. 2) were related to anatomy through drapery which followed the lines of the body. A great love of beauty and nature spurred the Greeks and the Romans to develop beautiful bodies. Degarmo Winslow, in his book Essentials of Design, wrote

When a people has become obsessed by a notion of developing beautiful bodies, would it not be unreasonable to expect them to proceed forthwith to conceal or distort this beauty with clothing, the style of which was designed not according to art but fashion (23, p. 211)?

Greco-Roman costumes showed a harmonious correlation of anatomy and dress, and the costumes as well as the art and ideas of this civilization have come to be regarded as classic. While the various items of dress were draped from simple geometric shapes of fabric--the Greek chiton from a rectangular length of fabric, and the Roman toga from a semicircular shape of fabric (15, Laver)--the resulting silhouettes were not geometric.

From the study of costumes of the ancient world, it was observed that a primary reason for clothing the figure was to protect the body from climatic conditions or cover or expose it according to climatic conditions. This approach to costume allowed for a variety of silhouette shapes: the conditional geometric shape of Egyptian costume

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

ANCIENT MYCENAEAN/MINOAN, ROMAN, AND GREEK COSTUMES

Fig. 1. Mycenaean/Minoan costume.

Fig. 2. Greek costume showing Ionic chiton with Himation.

Fig. 3. Roman costume showing the tunic with stola and
palla.

Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, pp. 16, 23.

PLATE IV

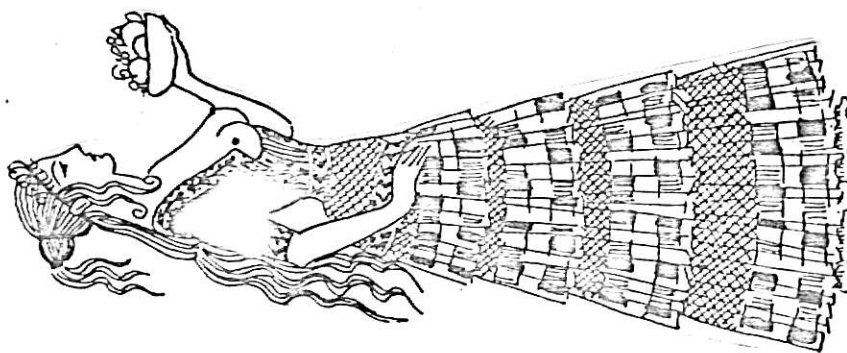


Fig. 1

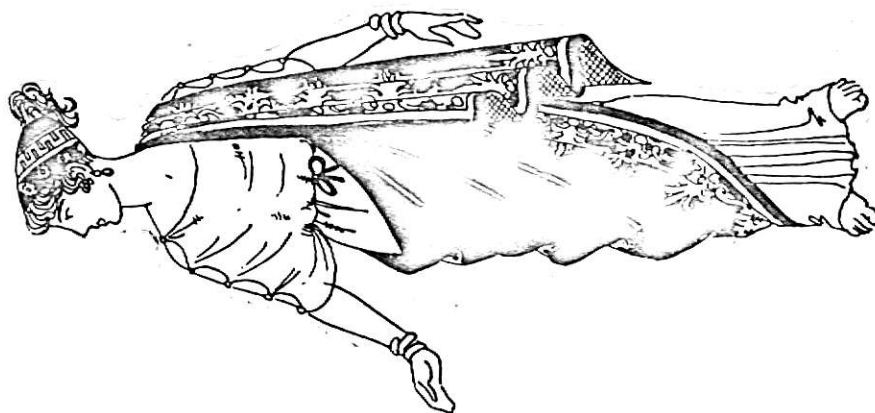


Fig. 2

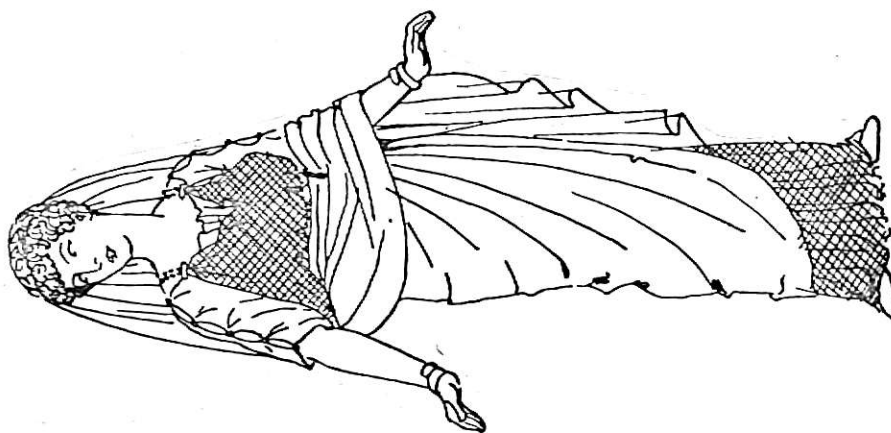


Fig. 3

silhouettes, the anatomy-related shape of Greco-Roman costume silhouettes, and the combination of geometry-related shapes with anatomy-related shapes of Mycenaean-Minoan costume silhouettes. Warm climates allowed for more exposure of the body. The opposite held true for cold regions and the resulting costume silhouette was generally anatomy-related.

Selected Costumes and Silhouettes of the Modern World

Brockman (39) and Young (25) found trends in modern costume related to silhouette shape. The transition from costume in antiquity to costume of the modern world was best seen in Medieval dress. At the beginning of the twelfth century the basic garment was the T-shaped tunic (Plate V, Figs. 1 and 2), a sleeved garment with no fit at all through the bodice and the skirt, with a girdle around the waist. Religion influenced all aspects of civilization during this period, and costume was considered merely a covering for the body. The tunic was floor length and it left no part of the body exposed. The first innovation for this rectangular-shaped garment was back lacing (Plate V, Figs. 3 and 4) which gave more fit through the bosom and midriff (39, Brockman).

Next the silhouette was widened at the bottom, and lacing on the sides replaced back-lacing (Plate V, Fig. 5). From the side-lacing evolved the deep armhole (Plate VI, Figs. 1 and 2) which was cut deep into the bodice and the skirt so that the panel effect in front gave the impression of a narrower figure and closer fit (39, Brockman).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

MEDIEVAL COSTUMES*

- Fig. 1. Medieval T-shaped tunic or bliaud.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 66.
- Fig. 2. Pattern diagram of the T-shaped tunic.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.
- Fig. 3. Pattern diagram for tunic with back lacing.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.
- Fig. 4. Medieval tunic with back-lacing.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 62.
- Fig. 5. Pattern for Medieval tunic with side lacing.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.

*As some clothed figures shown represent an artist's interpretation of costumes, essential seamlines may have been omitted. The costumes accompanying the pattern diagrams in the following plates were the best available illustrations for the Brockman theory of fashion evolution.



Fig. 1

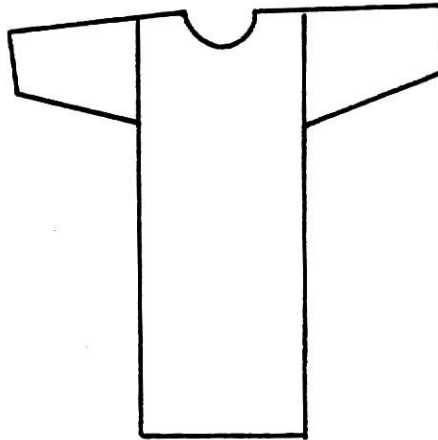


Fig. 2



Fig. 4

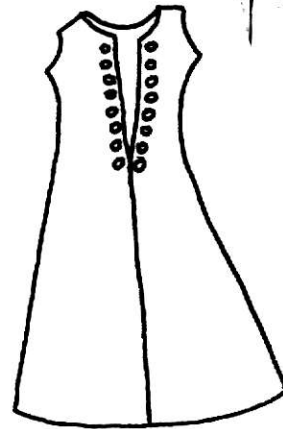


Fig. 3



Fig. 5



EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

MEDIEVAL COSTUMES

- Fig. 1. Medieval surcote with deep armholes.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 61.
- Fig. 2. Pattern diagram of Medieval surcote.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.
- Fig. 3. Medieval gown with set-in sleeves and underarm gore.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 66.
- Fig. 4. Pattern diagram of Medieval gown with set-in sleeve and underarm gore.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.
- Fig. 5. Medieval gown with gore construction.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 61.
- Fig. 6. Pattern diagram of gore constructed gown.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.



Fig. 1

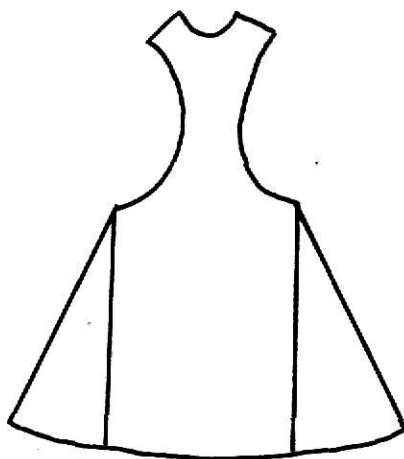


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

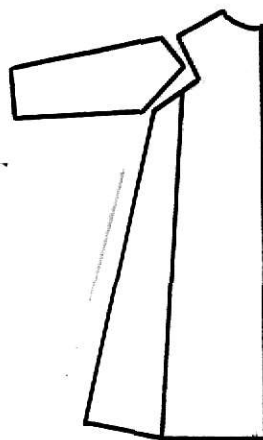


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

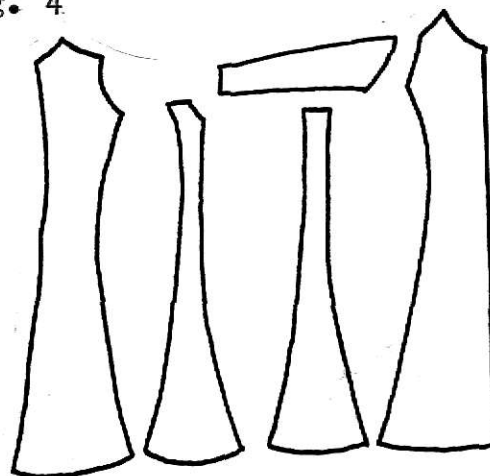


Fig. 6

The costume that followed differed as the deep armholes were replaced by sleeves in the outer garment, and gores added width to the hemline (Plate VI, Figs. 3 and 4). A girdle sometimes circled the waist (6, Contini). Although the garment was basically of single shape construction, it gave the impression of two shapes within the silhouette when the waist was girdled. When the girdle was omitted in the succeeding costume, the garment (Plate VI, Figs. 5 and 6) was again a relatively simple shape in silhouette. The silhouette was more closely related to body contour as shaped seams and gores allowed closer fit through the bust, rib cage, and waistline (39, Brockman).

As yet no method for fitting the bust smoothly and snugly had evolved. The next fashion cut the garment just under the bust and used pleats or gathers at the high waistline (39, Brockman, unpublished class notes).

The silhouette was then made up of two shapes with the skirt being the larger shape. With the skirt and bodice cut separately (Plate VII, Figs. 1 and 2), a new era of fashion set in.

The study of costumes from Medieval times to Renaissance times showed the transition in clothing the female figure from an interest in protection only to an interest in fit. From a clothing-construction point of view, it was apparent that the most noteworthy achievements in costume were made in getting dress to conform more closely to the contour of the body through gores and shaped seams. Although the silhouette could be diagrammed using geometric shapes, the costumes were anatomy-related as they were decidedly concerned with reproducing body contour.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

MEDIEVAL HOUPPELANDE AND RENAISSANCE GOWNS

- Fig. 1. Houppelande with raised waistline and full skirt.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 53.
- Fig. 2. Pattern diagram of the houppelande.
Helen Brockman, Unpublished class notes.
- Figs. 3 and 4. Renaissance gowns.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 100.

PLATE VII



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Women's fashions during the Renaissance differed from Medieval costumes. The pointed bodices were tightly fitted through the rib cage and waistline while the skirts were enormously full (Plate VII, Figs. 3 and 4). As hand crafts were an important part of the period, Renaissance costumes were made of lush fabrics and often ornately trimmed with embroidery and beading. Sleeves and neckline treatments changed throughout the period but the stiff bodice and bell skirt shapes continued through the seventeenth century. The bodice contour resembled an inverted triangle, while the skirt contour resembled a half-circle.

For the remaining costumes Young's study of costumes from 1760 to 1937 was considered. In her book, Recurring Cycles of Fashion, Young observed that fashions for this period recurred in definite cycles. Skirt silhouettes were used in this study. The shapes found were bell and tubular or had back interest. The fashion silhouette of the eighteenth century was characterized by fitted bodices and wide skirts supported by paniers which gave an exaggerated side width (Plate VIIIA and Plate IX, Fig. 1 (25, Young)).

The fullness in the skirt was moved from the sides to the back, and this was the first back fullness skirt in Young's fashion cycle (Plate VIIIA). The back fullness of the skirt varied from 1760 to 1790. Some gowns were draped for side width while others were pulled back over paniers. The only all-in-one gown during this era was seen in the eighteenth century (Plate IX, Figs. 2 and 3). It was called the Watteau gown (6, Contini) or flying gown (24, Wilcox).

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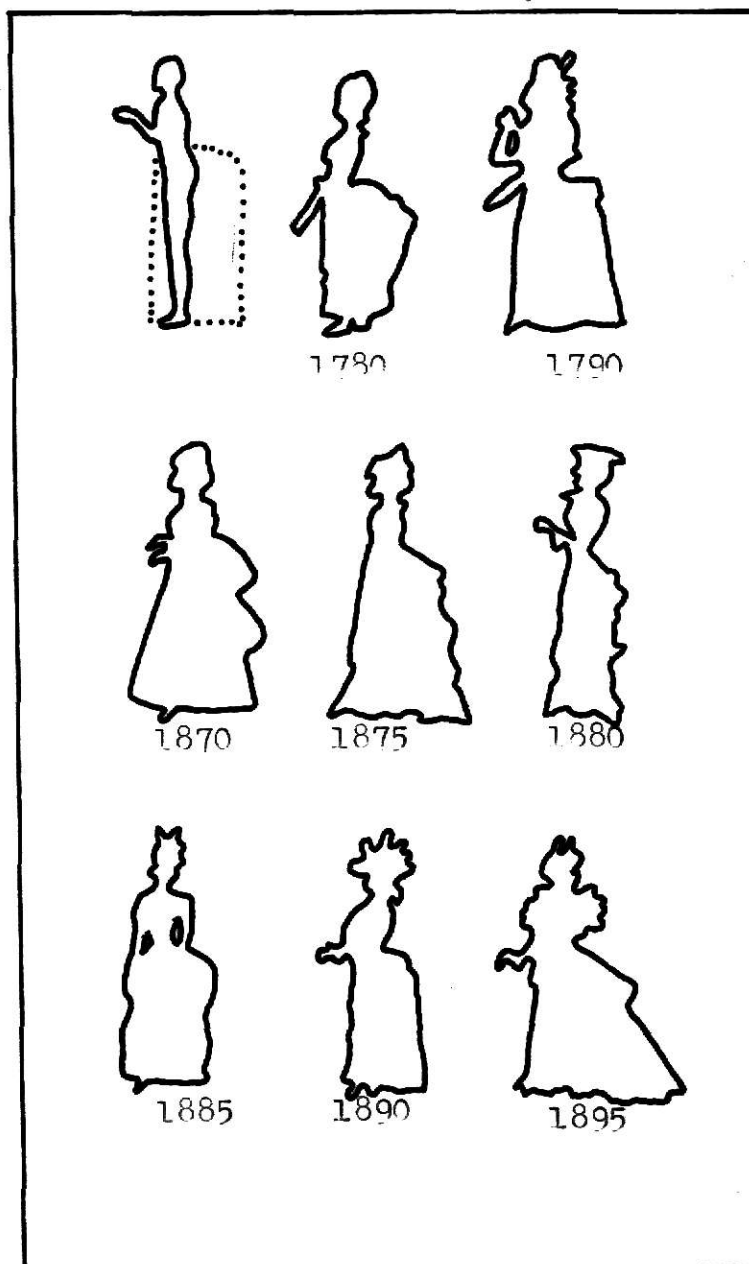
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EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIIIa

EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURY COSTUME SILHOUETTES
WITH BACK INTEREST

Adapted from Agnes Young, Recurring Cycles of Fashion, p. 14.

PLATE VIII

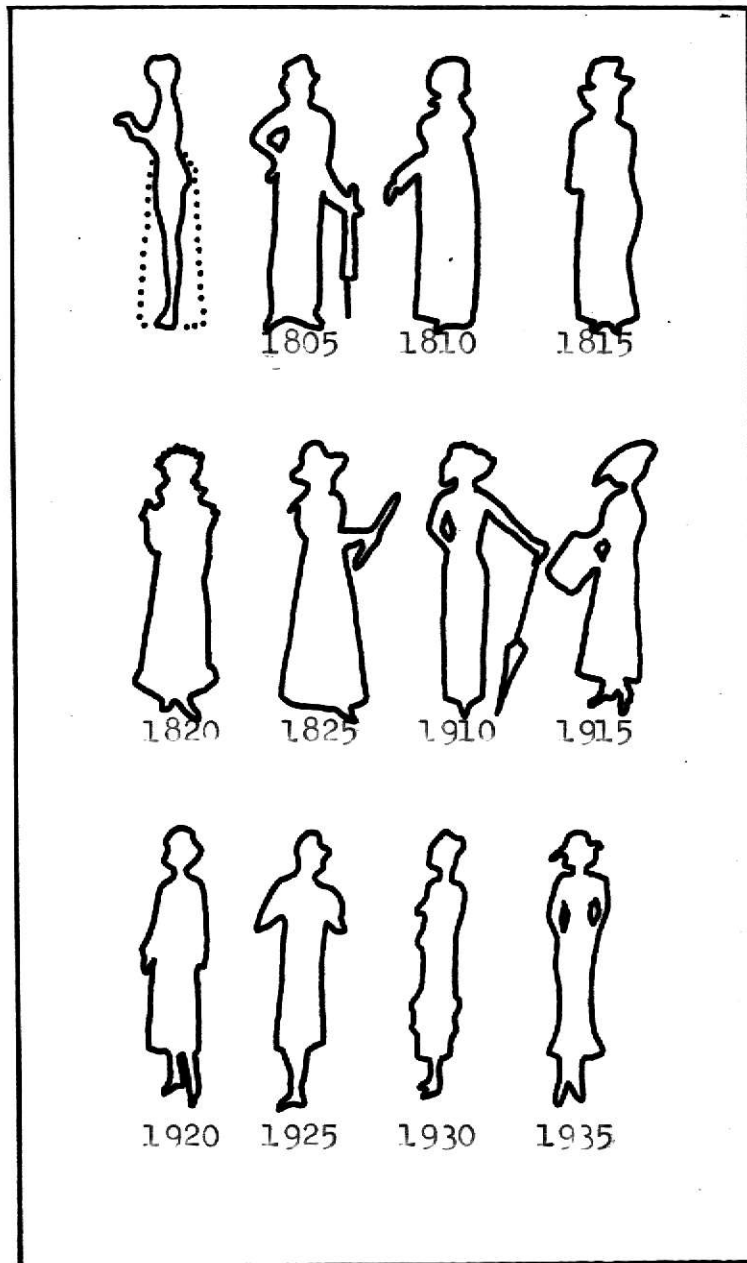


EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIIIb

NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY COSTUME SILHOUETTES
WITH TUBULAR SKIRTS

Adapted from Agnes Young, Recurring Cycles of Fashion, p. 15.

PLATE VIIIb

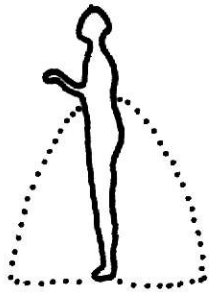


EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIIIc

NINETEENTH CENTURY COSTUME SILHOUETTES WITH
BELL-SHAPED SKIRTS

Adapted from Agnes Young, Recurring Cycles of Fashion, p. 16.

PLATE VIIIe



1830



1840



1850



1855



1860

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COSTUMES

- Fig. 1. Eighteenth century costume with exaggerated side width.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode of Costume, p. 216.
- Fig. 2. Back view of the Watteau or flying gown.
- Fig. 3. Front view of the Watteau or flying gown.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 202.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The Watteau pleats remained fashionable on women's dresses for a long time, especially at the back of the dress, where they started from the shoulders, widened at the hips and came down to the hem of the dress, thus giving an appearance of greater fullness (6, Contini, p. 189).

Nineteenth century and early twentieth century costumes influenced Dior designs during the period 1947-1957. The outstanding characteristic of early nineteenth century costumes was the tubular skirt. Nineteenth century costumes completely covered the body. The skirt silhouette was loosely rectangular, and the waistline varied between just under the bust and just below the natural waistline. By 1830 the tubular skirt had disappeared and the ankle-length, bell-shaped skirt (Plate VIIIc) was the distinguishing characteristic of the new fashion silhouette. The shape of the skirt was maintained by stiff crinoline petticoats worn underneath. Similar petticoats were worn under Dior's 1947 "New Look" costumes (see silhouette, Plate XII). Skirt lengths fell, and by 1860 the skirt was floor length and fuller than it had been during the eighteenth century (20, Payne). The bodice shape remained the same throughout the bell skirt phase of Young's fashion cycle. It was snugly fitted, and the waistline was pulled in with cinchers. Cinchers were also an important undergarment in Dior's 1947 "New Look" collection.

The second back fullness phase began in 1870 (Plate VIIIA and Plate X, Fig. 2) when again the fullness of the bell skirt was shifted to the back for a bustle-like effect (25, Young). This phase was in and out several times during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In the first decade of the twentieth century Paul Poiret

EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY COSTUMES

- Fig. 1. French empire costume.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 245.
- Fig. 2. 1810 bustle costume.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 310.
- Fig. 3. 1910 costume, after Poiret.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 360.

PLATE X

fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 3



straightened the silhouette, and the new silhouette was based on the verticality of the figure. This same emphasis on figure verticality marked Dior's 1957 sack dress silhouette (Plate XXIV, Fig. 1).

Poiret's silhouette resembled a vertical rectangle. The tubular skirts remained floor length like the skirts in the preceding back interest cycle. Long box-shaped jackets were added to the costumes. By 1915 skirts were shorter (Plate XI, Fig. 1), and in 1925 they were the shortest (to the knee) they had been in centuries (Plate XI, Fig. 2) (6, Contini). The tubular-shaped costume was characteristic of the early twentieth century, and its contour was one of the first single shaped silhouettes of the periods.

Great advances in science and technology were made during the twentieth century and fashion as a mirror of the times reflected these advances. Early in the twentieth century Gabrielle Chanel developed the dart as a means of accomplishing an easy fit--an accomplishment which spurred the development of the ready-to-wear industry and made fashion available to many more people. The tubular skirt silhouette continued to be fashionable with Vionnet's bias cut in the thirties, and the broad-shouldered silhouette (Plate XI, Fig. 3) from the early thirties until Dior changed it in 1947. It was not until Christian Dior introduced his "New Look" collection in 1947 that the skirt shape in the silhouette changed noticeably.

The study of costumes and silhouettes of the modern world showed that clothing the figure continued to be approached from the stand-point of fit. Silhouettes changed and recurred in cycles, the

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

TWENTIETH CENTURY COSTUMES

- Fig. 1. 1915 costume with short skirt and box jacket.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 360.
- Fig. 2. Costume of the '20's with short skirt and unfitted bodice.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 374.
- Fig. 3. Broad-shouldered costume of the late thirties and early forties.
Ruth Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 385.

PLATE XI

fig. 1.

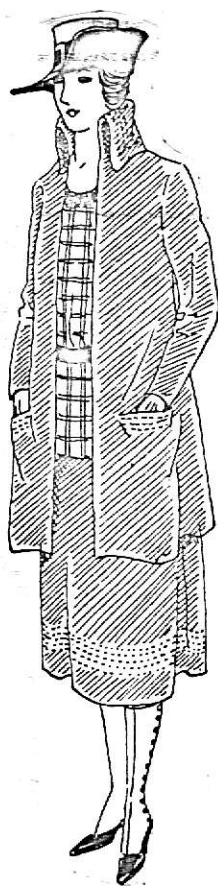


fig. 2



fig. 3



last phase being the tubular silhouette. In comparing nineteenth century and early twentieth century costume silhouettes with the Dior costume silhouettes of the period 1947-1957, it is apparent that historical costumes, although body-contour-related, did influence the new geometry-related silhouettes of that decade. An analysis of the Dior costume silhouettes in which the bodice and skirt are reduced to simple geometric shapes will show the relation of the new geometry-related costumes to historic silhouettes, and show the transition from body-contour-related design to geometry-related design.

SHAPES THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTES OF WOMEN'S
FASHIONS FROM 1947 TO 1957

Costume silhouettes may be diagrammed using a given geometric shape alone, using it in combinations in which the same shape is repeated, is varied, is sectional or using it with other geometric shapes and their variations and sections. The shape analyses of fashionable costumes shown in the fall collections of Christian Dior during the period 1947-1957, when silhouettes changed almost annually will be discussed. As sleeve shapes generally remained the same throughout this period, the sleeve shapes will not be included in the analyses of the silhouettes.

Christian Dior and the "New Look" of 1947

Dior's "New Look" was a complete change in the fashion silhouette. Sloping shoulders, tiny waists, and rounded hips replaced the broad-shouldered, slim-hipped silhouette of the early forties. All over the world women adopted the "New Look," and Dior's name became synonymous with Paris fashion. His creative genius and sense of timing established him as a trend-setter, and this position was never threatened throughout the ten years that he headed the House of Dior (4, Brockman).

The 1947 collection, like the succeeding collections, was built around several ideas all of which were fresh, artistic, and trend-setting. A change in the silhouette was long overdue, and the "New Look" was an instant success. Dior's intention was to design clothes

that would make women seem more feminine than fashions of the preceding years had made them seem and the femininity of the "New Look" influenced the tastes of women for many years thereafter (6, Contini).

In comparison with costumes shown the preceding year, the garments shown in the 1947 collection were worthy of the term, "New Look." This new silhouette (Plate XII) had narrow shoulders, the waistline in the normal place, a new emphasis on the bust, and a longish skirt with a wide hem (37, Vogue, 109:167-179, Sept. 1, 1947). Emphasis was placed on the volumetric form of the figure. Many devices were used to achieve the various details of the "New Look." Necklines which were close to the neck were built up with padding so that the shoulders could slope into the sleeves and eliminate sharp angles at the shoulder joints. Ruffled undergarments were worn to round out the hips and bust. Waistlines were pinched in. The illusion of a tiny waist was achieved by foundation garments called waistpinchers which pulled inches off the natural waistline, and hips were padded out to make the waistline seem even smaller (37, Vogue, 109:167-179, Sept. 1, 1947).

The "New Look," at its inception was a throw-back to historical costumes. Vogue (37) called the costume shape the "Infanta silhouette," as it did resemble the fashion silhouette of the eighteenth century. Besides the costumes with historical reference, the 1947 collection also included costumes with silhouettes which resembled simple geometric shapes. The coats in the collection were of three silhouettes, and Vogue (37) labelled these shapes, "The infanta silhouette" (the same shape as the "New Look" shown in Plate XII), "The Cocoon," and the

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

DIOR'S 1947 "NEW LOOK" SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

Fig. 1. The silhouette.

From Vogue 109:139, Sept. 1, 1947.

Fig. 2. The shape diagram.

From Craigie.

PLATE XII

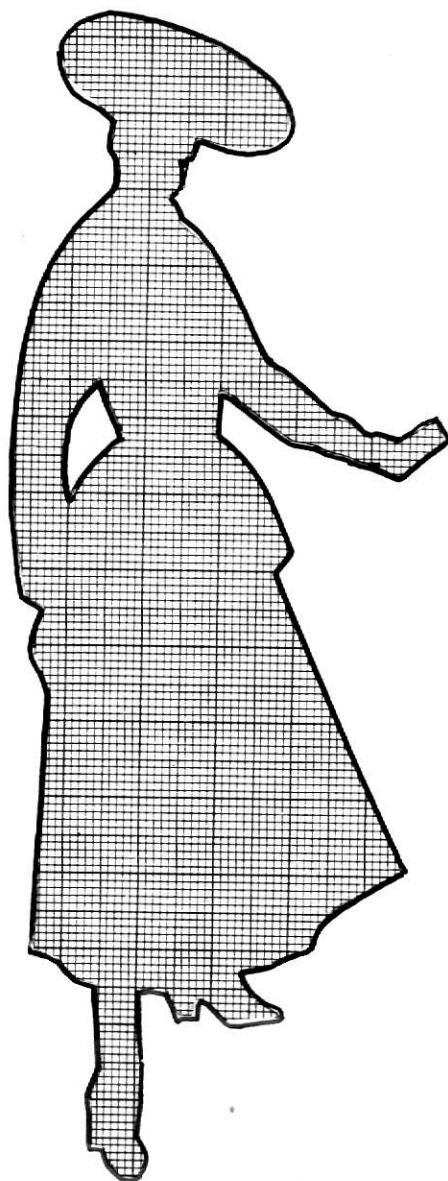


Fig. 1

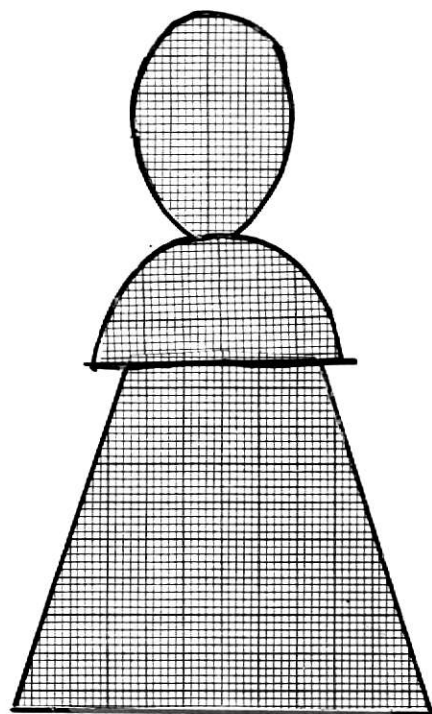


Fig. 2

"Triangle" (Plate XIII).

The "Infanta (coat) silhouette" was styled like the suits and dresses in the "New Look" collection, with sloping shoulders, a defined waist, and full hips. "The cocoon," a slim coat with a heavy collar which framed the face, wrapped in front--the wearer held it closed as it had no buttons--and resembled the style of the late 20's. The "triangle" coat was designed to go over any shape, for its large folds fell from the shoulders into a wide hemline.

The silhouette of the "New Look," though anatomy-related, is diagrammed as simple geometric shapes. Stiffening and padding in the actual garments and the undergarments simplified and generalized individual contours. In this study it was observed that when silhouettes were more anatomy-related than geometry-related, more shapes could diagram the silhouette. The "New Look" silhouette was diagrammed as an oval, a semicircle, and a truncated triangle (Plate XII, Fig. 2).

1948

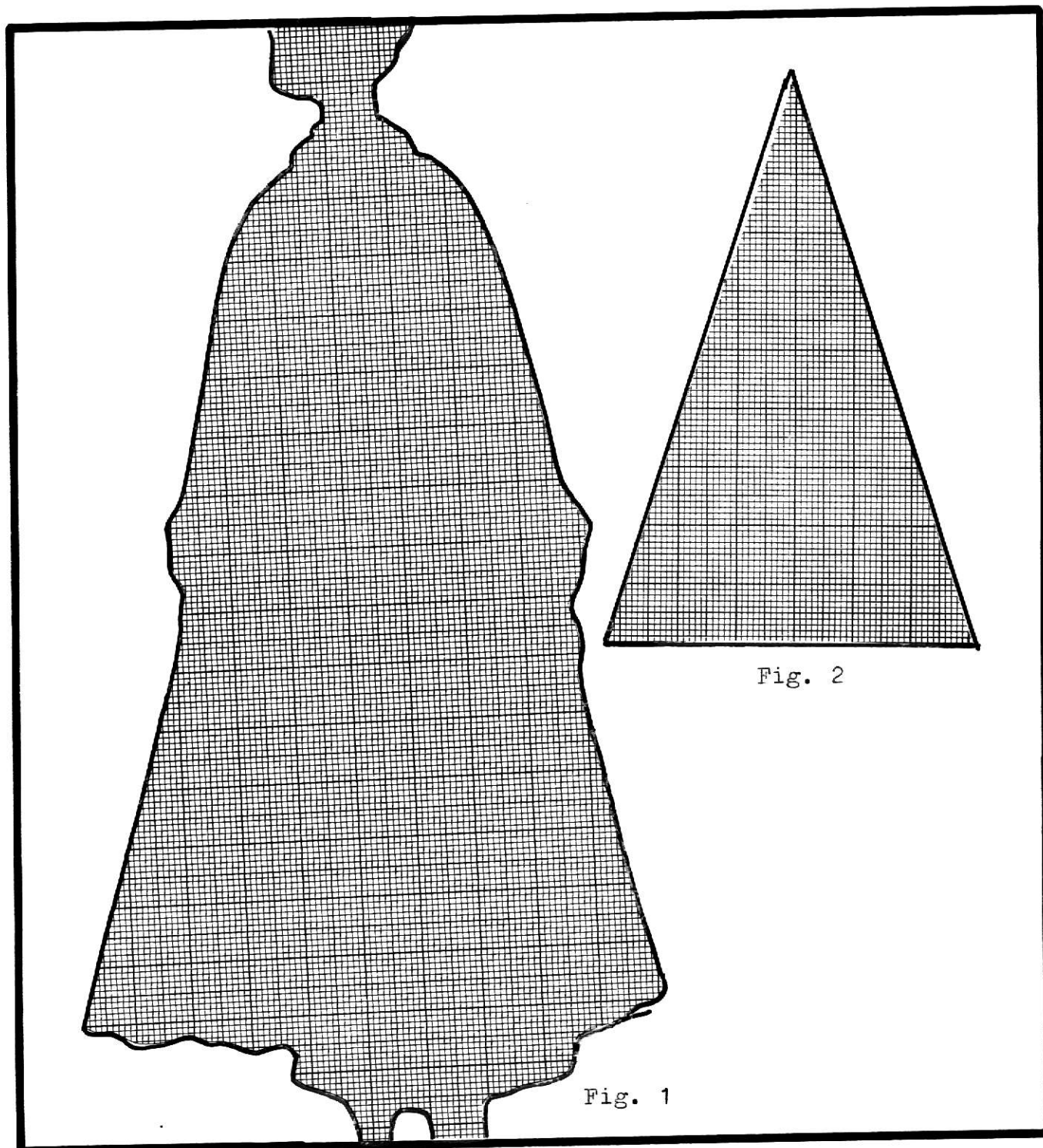
Dior's 1948 collection included additions to the "New Look" of the previous year: costumes with even wider skirts, and costumes with back interest. Prior to this year most of the phases in the fashion cycles as established by Young for the period 1805-1935 occurred at given intervals, but in 1948 Dior showed two of her three basic skirt shapes in one collection. This was an indication that other factors including faster transportation and improved communications would affect the rate of fashion changes in the following years (41, McIntyre).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII

DIOR'S 1947 "TRIANGLE" COAT SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue 109:168, Sept. 1, 1947.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XIII



The "New Look" silhouette of the previous year did not change, however some of the all-around emphasis in costumes shown in 1947 was shifted to the back of the costume in 1948. The skirt was the dominant body area in the silhouette as it became wider and longer (Plate XIV). Most of the fashion points of the 1947 "New Look" remained, including the natural shoulders and emphasis on the bust. The waistline was accented by narrow belts, and hips were rounded with padding (29, Vogue, 112:164, Sept. 1, 1948).

Most of the collection news . . . (was) detail. A skirt length, a cuff, a detail . . . (was) suddenly more important than any one silhouette. In fact details . . . (were) so pronounced that their sum . . . (made) the silhouette . . . (29, "Paris Points," Vogue, 112:164, Sept. 1, 1948).

The newest detail was the deeply plunged V-shaped neckline at both front and back of the costumes. The V shape marked dresses, suits and evening dresses alike, baring the bosom and the back. In suits, the new, more angular peplums jutted out at the back as well as the sides, and wing-shaped collars jutted out behind the neckline. Cuffs were added to the long fitted sleeves (29, Vogue, 112:164, Sept. 1, 1948).

The costume silhouette characteristic of the year 1948 was diagrammed using geometric shapes: an oval, a triangle, and a truncated triangle (Plate XIV, Fig. 2).

1949

By 1949 the original "New Look" of 1947 was well established, and costumes since 1947 were merely variations of the "New Look."

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIV

DIOR'S 1948 BACK-INTEREST SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue 112:132, Sept. 1, 1948.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XIV

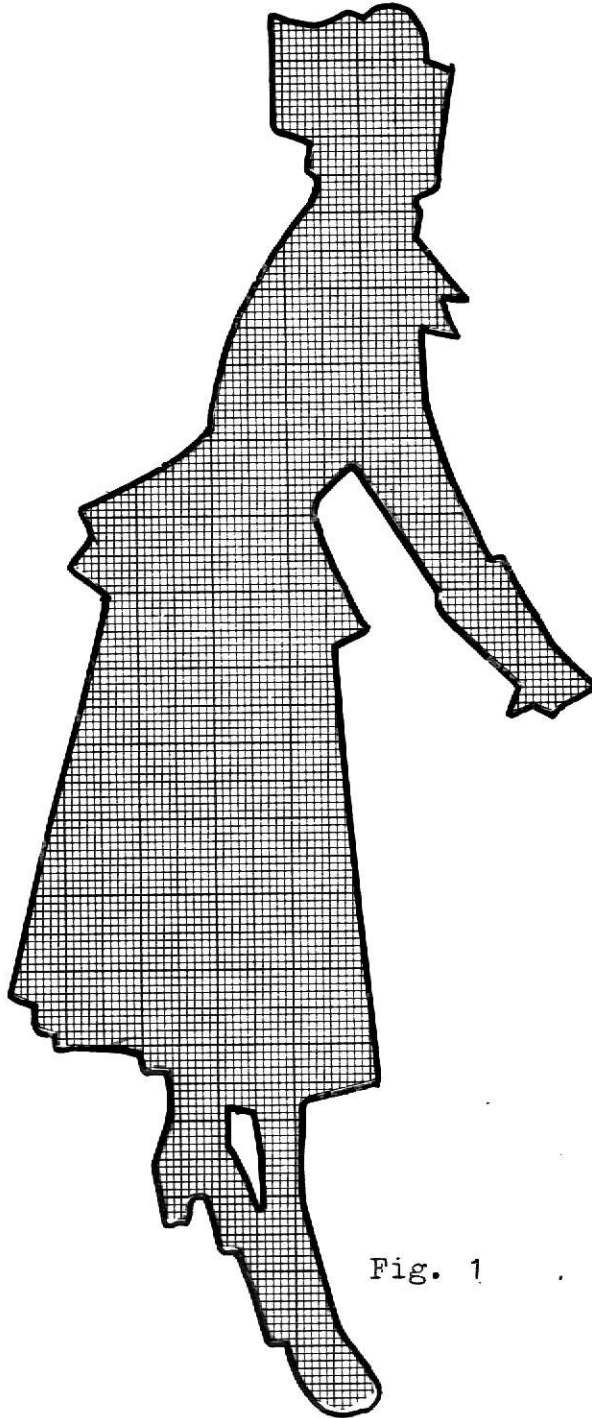


Fig. 1

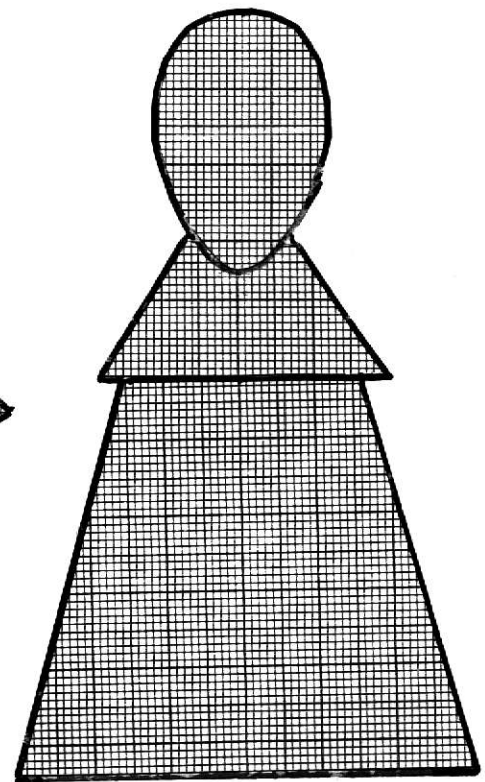


Fig. 2

Following the wide skirts shown in 1948, skirts became narrower, though still triangular. The dress was the most important costume look of that year. Skirts were shirred at the waistline, and panels or pleats hung to the hemline. Sleeves were long and cuffed (28, Vogue, 114:134, Sept. 1, 1949). Tiny belts pulled in the soft blousing in the bodice, and the prevailing skirt was wide at the hem (Plate XV, Fig. 1).

The silhouette characteristic of the year 1949 was formed by an oval bodice and a narrow triangular skirt (Plate XV, Fig. 2). Compared to the fashion silhouette of the previous year, 1948 (Plate XXV, Figs. 1 and 2), the shapes that formed the silhouette in 1949 were narrower: however, the same general shapes (an oval and a triangle) were seen.

1950

The tunic silhouette was the trend-setting shape for 1950. Paris collections included overskirts on dresses and long, belted jackets with slim skirts. Natural shoulders without padding marked the jackets, and skirts were so narrow that seams were slit to allow for walking. The overall costume silhouette was reminiscent of the dress silhouette shown the year before, especially the bodice shape. The oval continued to represent the bodice, its shoulders still round with folds caught at the waist with tightly pulled-in belts. The natural waistline remained (see Plate XVI, Fig. 1) (33, Vogue, 116:121, Sept. 1, 1950).

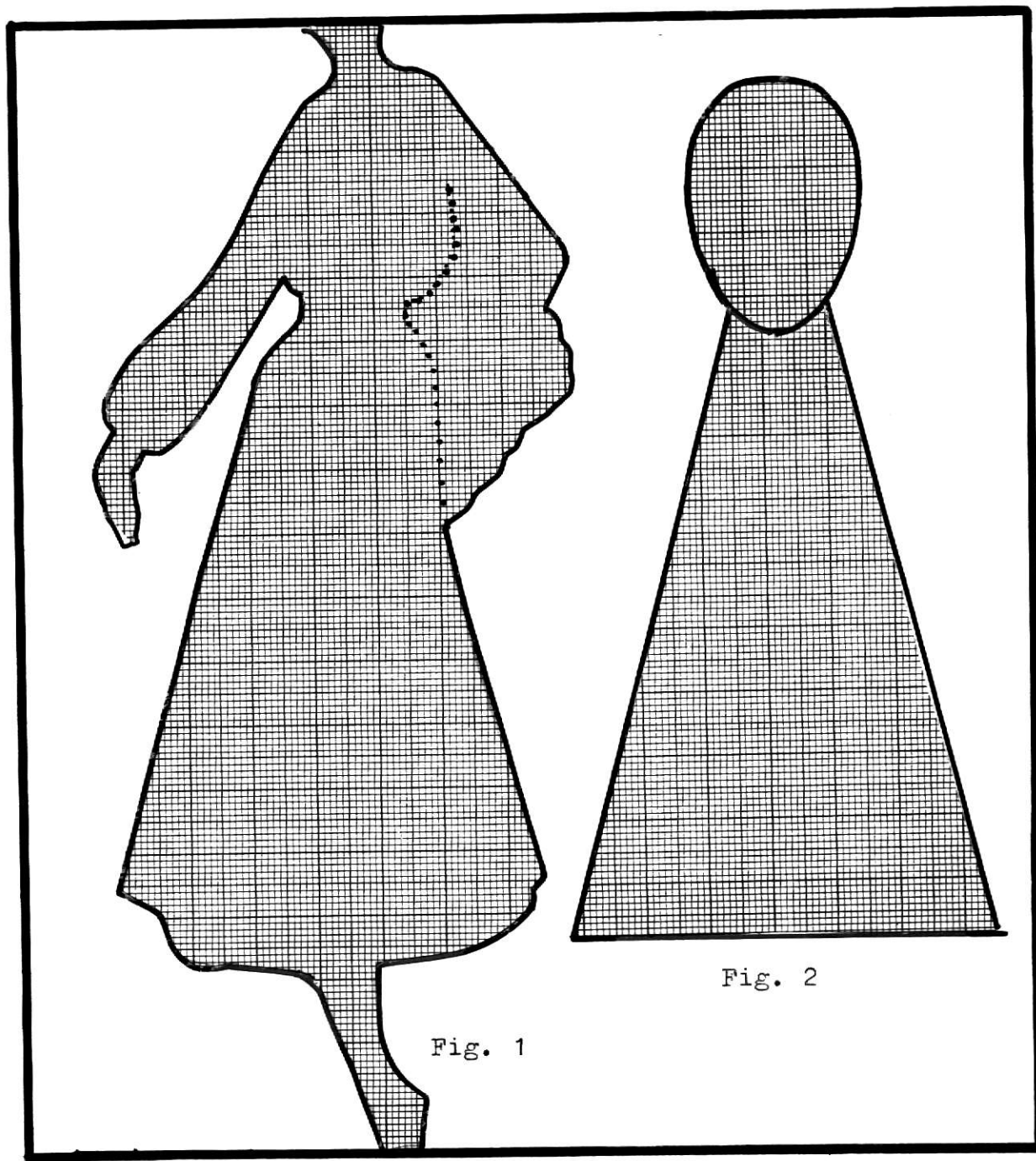
Hips were once again emphasized, but in a way different from costumes of the three years preceding 1950. Jackets were longer,

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV

DIOR'S 1949 COSTUME SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue 114:141, Sept. 1, 1949.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XV



wider, and full below the cinched-in waist. Large pockets with flaps were placed symmetrically where the fullness of the jacket arched downward so that the pockets became part of the silhouette and increased the width of the figure at the hip line. The bottom of the jacket was about fifteen inches below the waist. The length of the skirt was five inches below the knee, which was shorter than the skirt lengths of the previous three years (33, Vogue, 116:121, Sept. 1, 1950).

The tunic look was shown in dresses as well as suits. However the tunic look in dresses was interpreted in over-skirts gathered in to a small waist and worn over slim skirts. Fullness at the bustline and hips was more pronounced in the dresses than in suit costumes. The waistline was always accented with a small, tightly pulled-in belt (33, Vogue, 116:121, Sept. 1, 1950).

The fashion news at the House of Dior in 1950 was the oblique line shown throughout the collection, especially in the coats. Button closings on coats slanted from the left side of the neck to the right side of the hemline the full length. The triangle-shaped coat, a carry-over from the 1947 collection, grew in popularity, and it was worn over everything (33, Vogue, 116:121, Sept. 1, 1950).

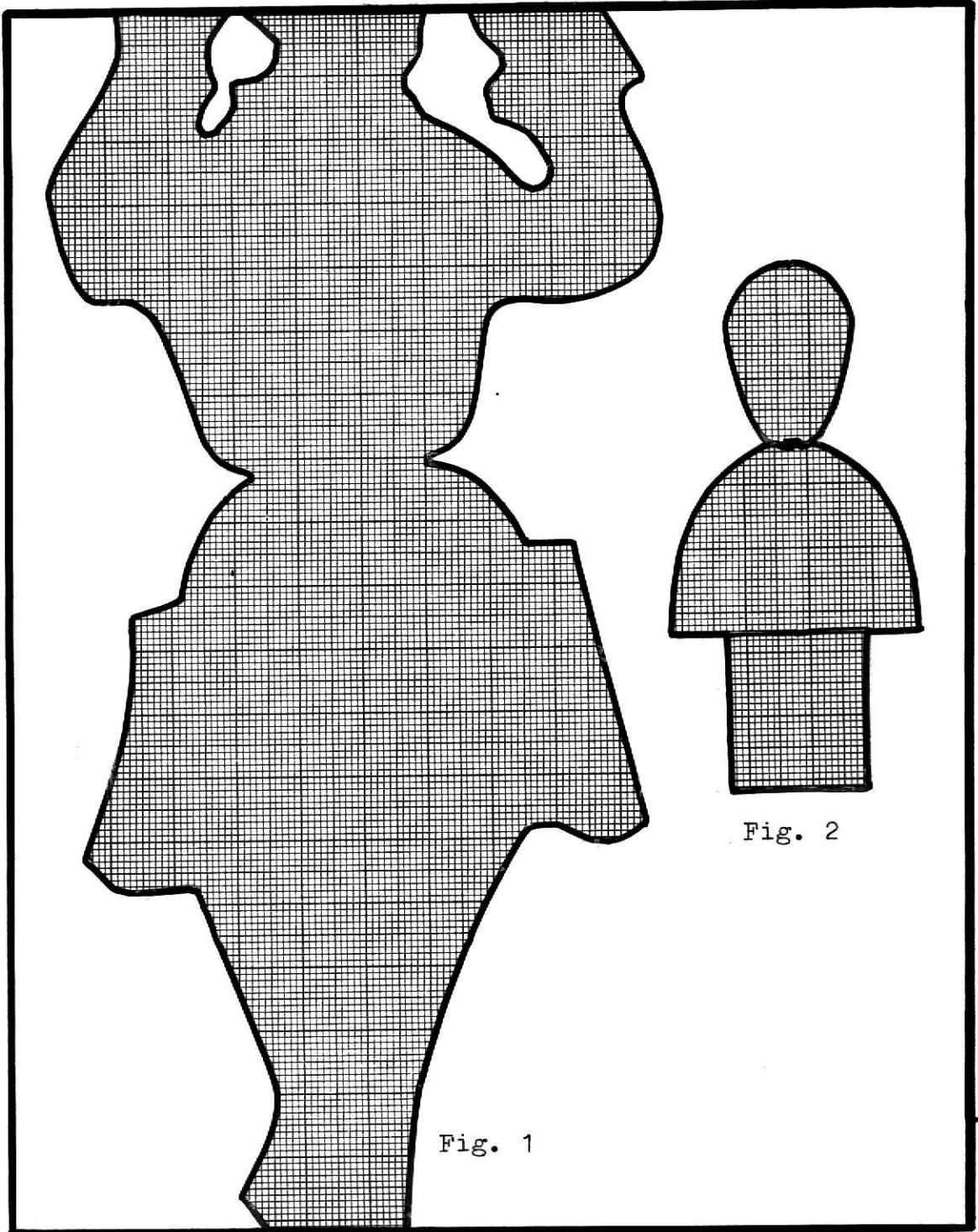
In silhouette the tunic costume of 1950 has been diagrammed as three geometric shapes (Plate XVI, Fig. 2): an oval, a semi-circle, and a rectangle. The two-shape 1949 silhouette (Plate XV) was maintained; the 1950 silhouette (Plate XVI) reverted to three shapes. The most noticeable change occurred in the skirt. Skirt shapes since 1947 have been diagrammed as triangles, and each year the size of the triangle

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI

DIOR'S 1950 TUNIC SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue 116:121, Sept. 1, 1950.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XVI



changed: starting with a medium-sized triangle (by comparison with the succeeding year) in 1947; a larger, wider triangle in 1948; and a narrower triangle in 1949. Two shapes below the waistline were used in 1950 with the combination of semi-circle and rectangle.

The rectangular shaped skirt was new to the Dior silhouette; it softened the rounded hip of the jacket. A different fabric was used for the jacket, and sometimes a different color.

1951

For the first time in the period studied, the waistline was not in its natural position, but just under the bust (Plate XVII). The raised waistline gave the illusion of added length to body lines (32, Vogue, 118:168-183d, Sept. 1, 1951).

Dior's 1951 collection showed two new silhouettes: the raised waistline silhouette (Plate XVII) and the unfitted jacket silhouette (Plate XVIII). The costumes with the raised waistline continued the trend of one dominant body area in the costume. Short jackets stopped at just under the bust and were worn over flared, triangular shaped dresses that fitted snugly through the rib cage and flared out over the hips. Usually the jacket was of a color or fabric different from that of the dress, and a scarf of a third color or print was tucked into the neckline. The emphasis was high on the figure (32, Vogue, 118:168-183d, Sept. 1, 1951).

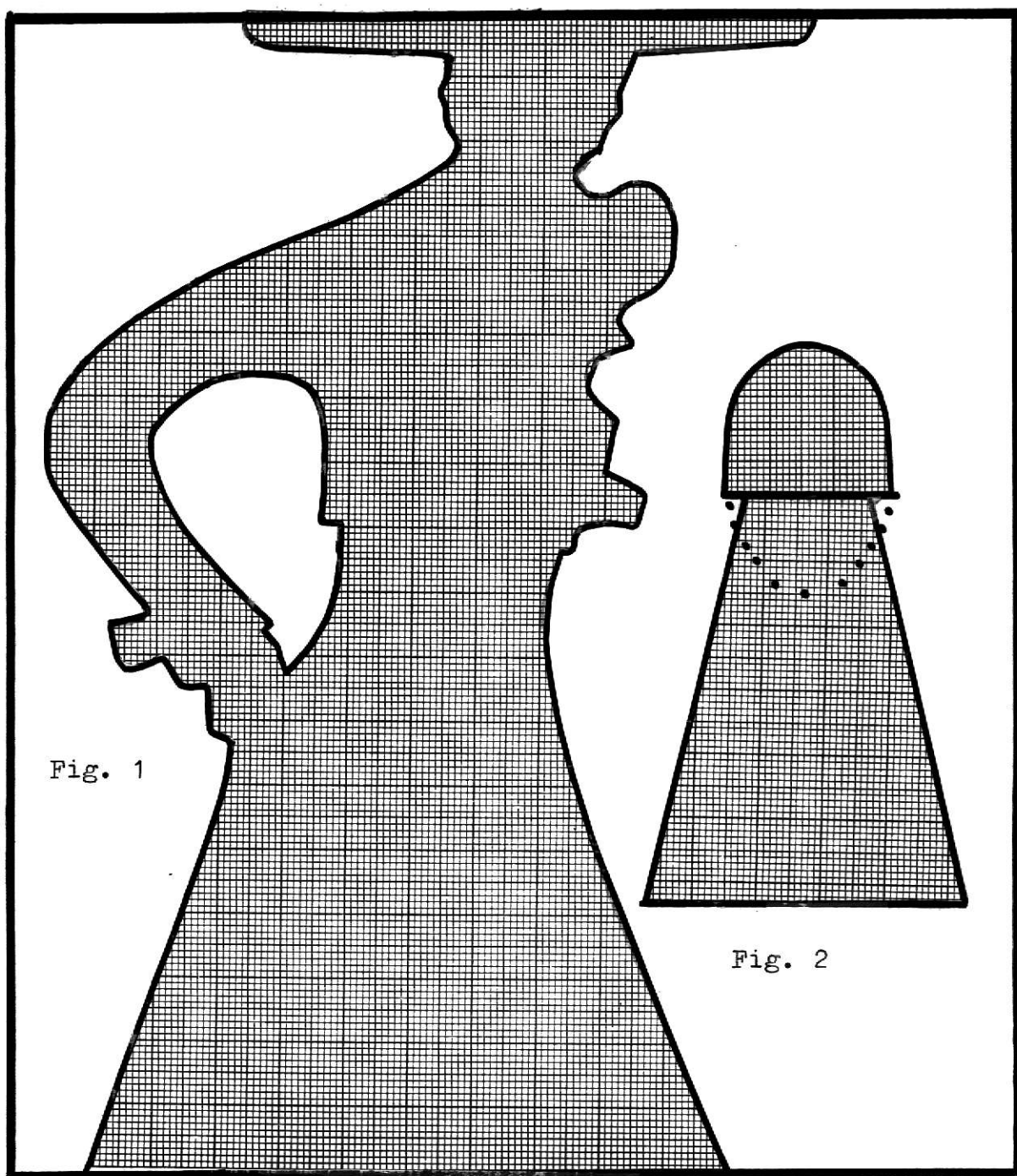
In the unfitted jacket silhouette, hip-length jackets were unbelted in the collection. The back view showed a partial belt

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVII

DIOR'S 1951 RAISED WAISTLINE SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue 118:183b, Sept. 1, 1951.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XVII



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVIII

DIOR'S 1951 UNFITTED JACKET SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

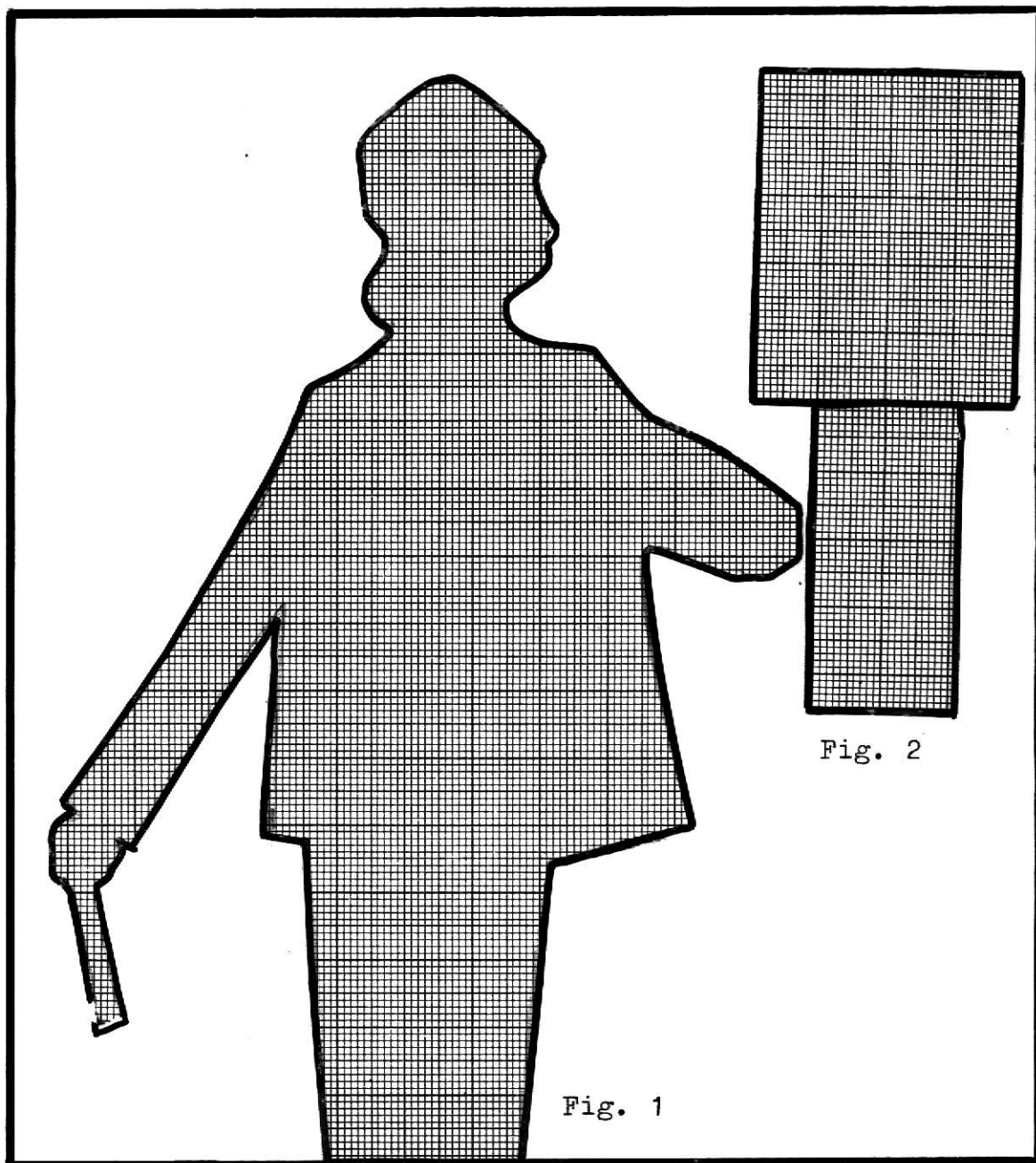
Fig. 1. The silhouette.

From Vogue, 118:168, Sept. 1, 1951.

Fig. 2. The shape diagram.

From Craigie.

PLATE XVIII



buttoned high in back, almost to the shoulder blades. Sleeves were still straight and cuffed (32, Vogue, 118:168-183d, Sept. 1, 1951).

The newest look of the 1951 collection hinted of future silhouette shapes. A hip-length jacket that hung straight from the shoulders was shown with no waistline indentation, and the dress had very little emphasis at the waistline. The jacket and the dress were of the same fabric, and when the jacket was buttoned, the ensemble looked like the suits shown in the collection. Not since the 1920's (Plate XI, Figs. 1 and 2) had the waist been without indentation, as it appeared in this dress and jacket (32, Vogue, 118:168-183d, Sept. 1, 1951).

Two silhouettes were diagrammed for the year 1951: the raised waistline was diagrammed as a truncated oval and a truncated triangle; the unfitted jacket silhouette was diagrammed as two rectangles.

In the raised waistline silhouette, the truncated oval was used to diagram the brief jacket. The resulting skirt shapes were dominant. It was a flaring triangular shape that fitted the midriff and fell over the hips down to a wide hemline.

The rectangular silhouette was related to the look by placing a high belt at the back of the jacket. The shapes in this silhouette were diagrammed as two vertical rectangles (Plate XVIII, Fig. 2), forming the jacket shape, and the slim, tubular skirt. These shapes were significant in that this was the earliest appearance in the period studied of two similar shapes or two shapes from the same family within the silhouette. In addition, the rectangular jacket was the first appearance of a non-circular shape for the upper part of the figure.

1952

In 1952 women's fashions were more body conscious. The silhouette was closer to the body, continuing the one piece style started in 1951 (Plate XVIII). Several costumes showed references to styles shown earlier: the reed slim skirt shown in 1952 was previously shown in 1950, but the difference was in the fabrics used; slim skirts in 1952 were made of light-weight fabrics that clung to the figure (27, Vogue, 120:160-171, Sept. 1, 1952) in contrast to the coarse, heavy fabrics of slim skirts in 1950. Costumes shown in 1952 thus emphasized the curves of the figure. Shoulders were still rounded, and sleeves were still long and fitted. The bust was full, enhanced by padded undergarments. The natural waistline became important again. Padding rounded out the hipline and added width to the silhouette. Narrow skirts fell to three inches over the knee (27, Vogue, 120:160-171, Sept. 1, 1952).

The silhouette was formed by two truncated ovals (Plate XIX, Fig. 2). The shapes used to diagram the 1952 silhouette were different from the shapes used to diagram the silhouette in 1951, however the duplication of shapes to form both body areas within the silhouette was seen in 1951 also. As in 1951, both bodice and skirt were of similar geometric shape, although curvilinear in 1952.

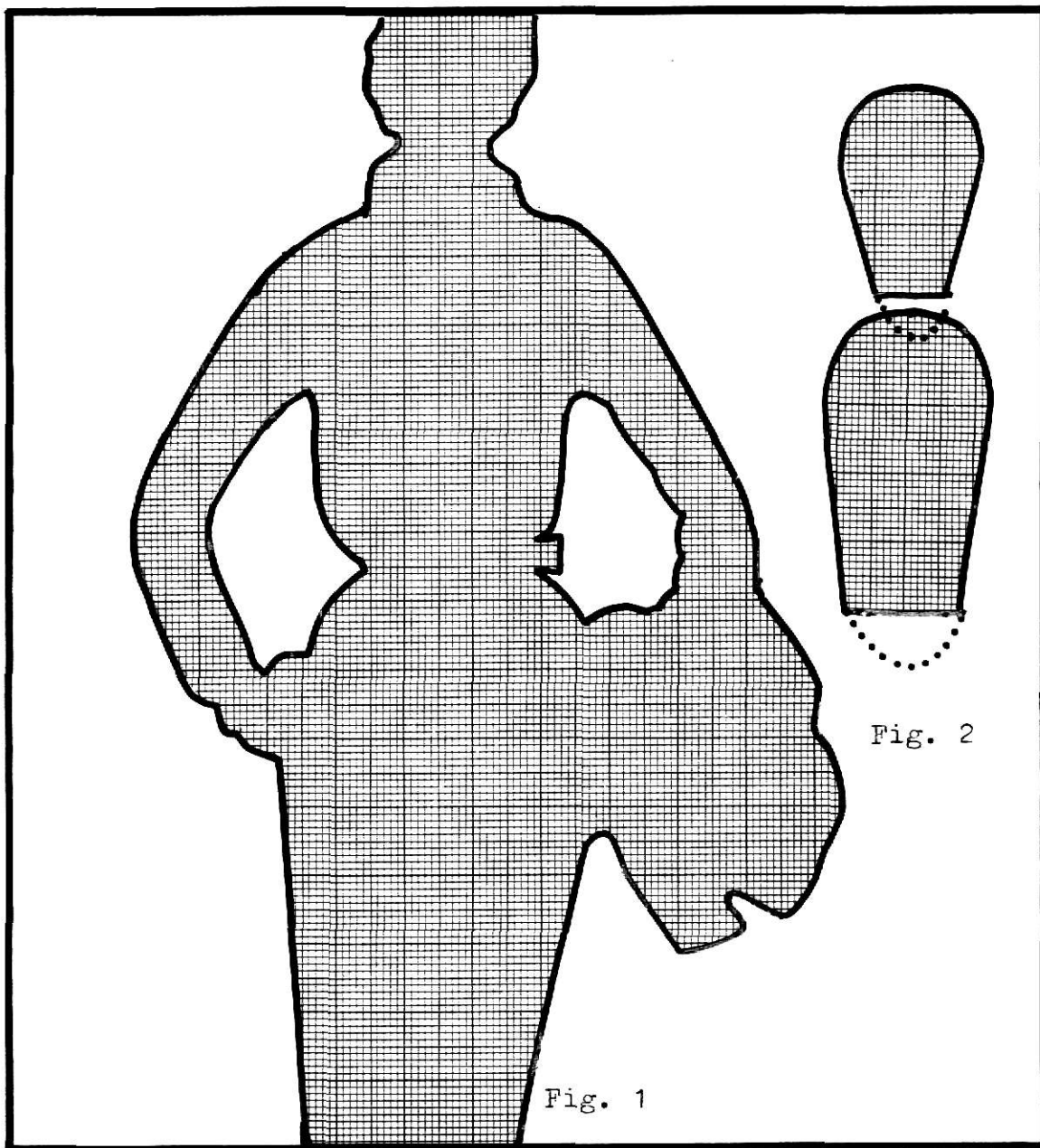
A truncated oval was used to diagram the rounded shoulders, full bust, and tiny waistline of the bodice in the 1952 sheath silhouette, and a similar shape was used to diagram the narrow hemline and rounded hips of the skirt (Plate XIX, Fig. 2).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIX

DIOR'S 1952 SHEATH SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue, 120:161, Sept. 1, 1952.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XIX



1953

The year 1953 was the year of the cupola silhouette (Plate XX). The figure was surrounded by a large oval, and the silhouette made little reference to anatomy as far as following the contour of the figure was concerned. Dior's cupola silhouette was the rage of the Paris collections, and in succeeding years other designers, especially Balenciaga, showed the circular influence of the cupola. "The shape . . . mark(ed) the beginning of a new phase in fashion" (30, "Paris: The Cupola Idea," Vogue, 122:121, Sept. 15, 1953).

The cupola silhouette was shown in coats and suits (Plate XX, Fig. 1). Jackets had added importance because of their sculptural shapes. The body of the jackets was shaped into a huge oval with the same curving line repeated in the cut of the sleeves. Wide bands circled the barrel-like jackets just below the waistline, and instead of buttons, large buckles were used as closings. Skirts remained straight (Plate XX, Fig. 1) (30, Vogue, 122:145-153, Sept. 1, 1953).

The shapes that formed the 1953 cupola silhouette (a truncated oval and a rectangle, Plate XX, Fig. 2) were larger in comparison to the shapes that formed the sheath silhouette in 1952 (Plate XIX).

1954

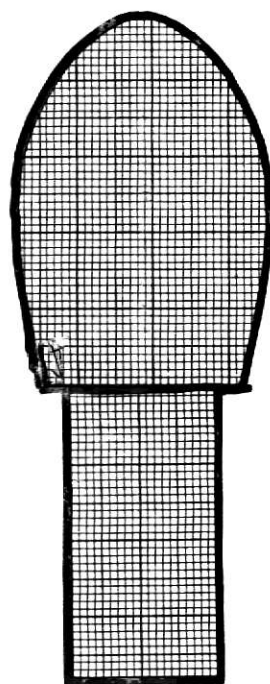
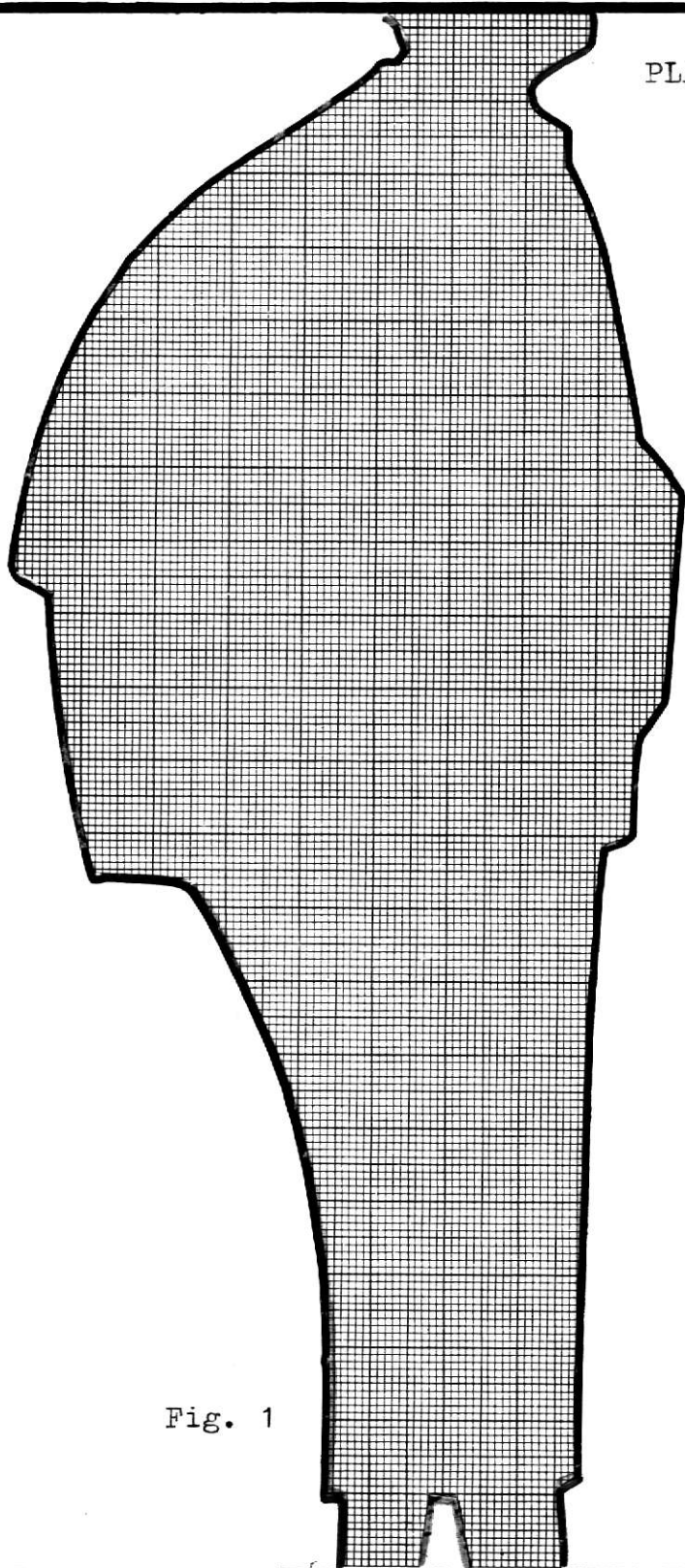
In 1954 Dior straightened the curved contour of the cupola silhouette. The circular volumetric look given to the figure in the cupola silhouette was discarded and the figure was sheathed in costumes that fitted close to the body in order to accent its verticality and

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XX

DIOR'S 1953 CUPOLA SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue, 122:151, Sept. 1, 1953.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XX



give the illusion of slender length (Plate XXI). Emphasis for the overall costume was achieved by de-emphasizing the volumetric characteristics of the figure. All padding was discarded. Shoulders and hips were natural, and in some cases, even tightly fitted. The bust was raised to seem smaller and rounder. Close fit in the bosom minimized the width in the bodice, and straight skirts minimized the width below the waistline so that the overall costume gave the illusion of slender length (34, Vogue, 124:149-171, Sept. 1, 1954). The suit jacket was long in 1954, and unlike the jackets of previous years, they fitted close to the figure through the bust and hip. Sleeves were also tightly fitted. Double rows of buttons fastened the jackets, and stand-away collars finished the neckline. Narrow skirts completed the costume.

In silhouette the all-over slenderness of costumes shown in 1954 (Plate XXI, Fig. 1) was diagrammed using two rectangles (Plate XXI, Fig. 2). The skirt rectangle of the year before was repeated in 1954, but the cupola jacket was not. Instead the close fit and rectangular shape of the skirt was repeated in the jacket. The repetition of a shape (the oval) to form the skirt and bodice shapes in silhouette was seen in the sheath silhouette of 1952 (Plate XIX, Fig. 2) just before a larger, dominant shape (the cupola, Plate XX, Fig. 2) was introduced in 1953.

1955

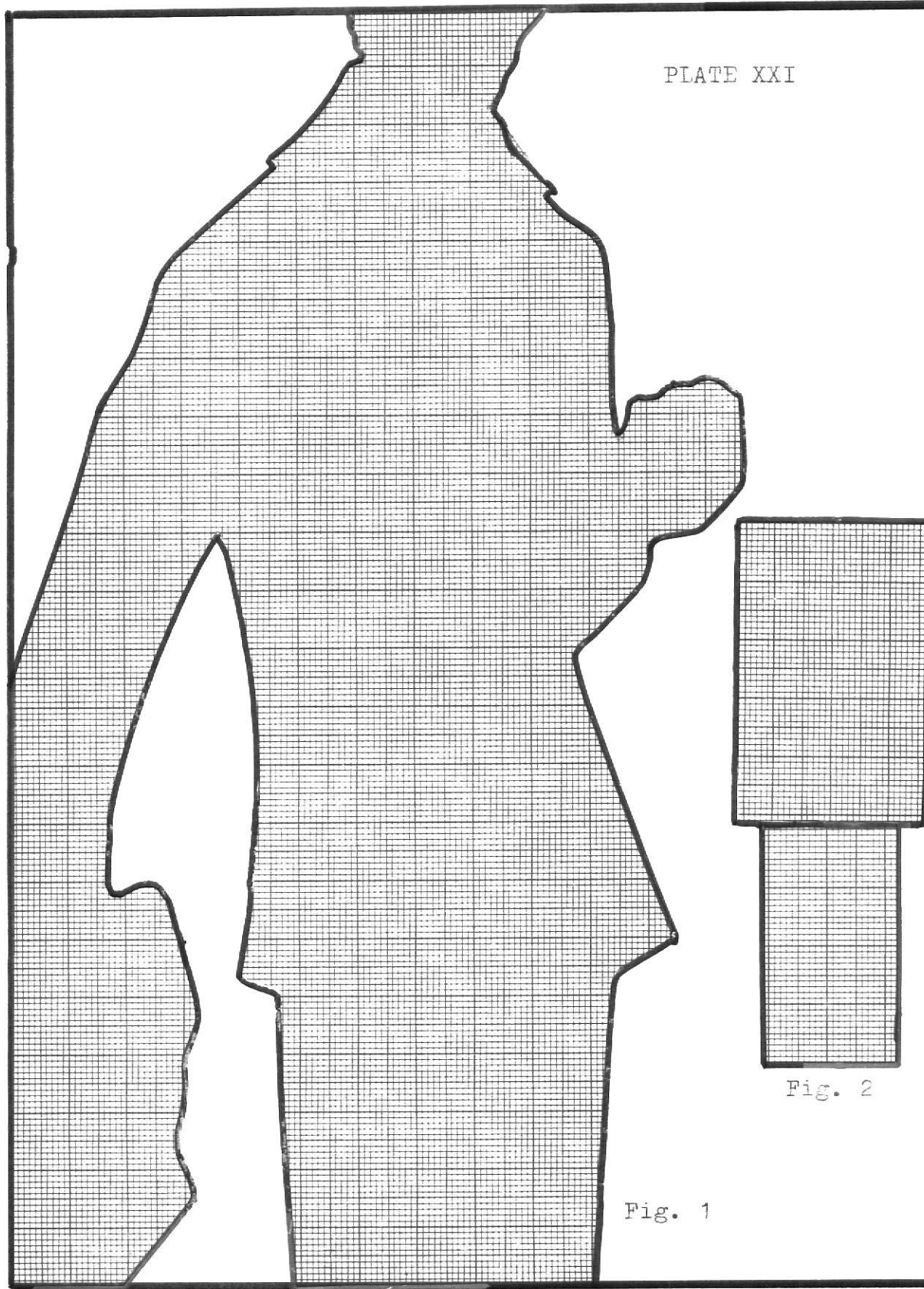
The new look for 1955 differed from costumes of the year before.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXI

DIOR'S 1954 SUIT SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue, 124:155, Sept. 1, 1954.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XXI



There was bulk in the garments, either in the fabric or in the way fabrics were used. Width was kept high on the figure. Bulky fabrics formed the large collars, and big cuffs were turned back onto straight sleeves. In the preceding year, jackets were long and fitted, but in 1955 jackets were short (just above waist level) and boxy. The 1954 skirt was replaced by a dress worn with the jacket to form an ensemble, the costume characteristic of that year. Slim hips remained, and emphasis was high on the figure again.

Boxy jackets that hung from the shoulder to just above the waist were worn over slim dresses that only hinted that the waistline existed. There was no waistline seam to break the illusion of slender length in the dress, and darts only suggested the waistline underneath (31, Vogue, 126:183-205, Sept. 1, 1955). The sheath was supple, allowing more freedom for movement. It clung to the figure, and it was usually of a fabric lighter in weight than that of the jacket. This combination of the short jacket over the sheath gave the impression of a raised waistline, but other than the bottom edge of the jacket, there was no horizontal line to indicate a waist (31, Vogue, 126:183-205, Sept. 1, 1955).

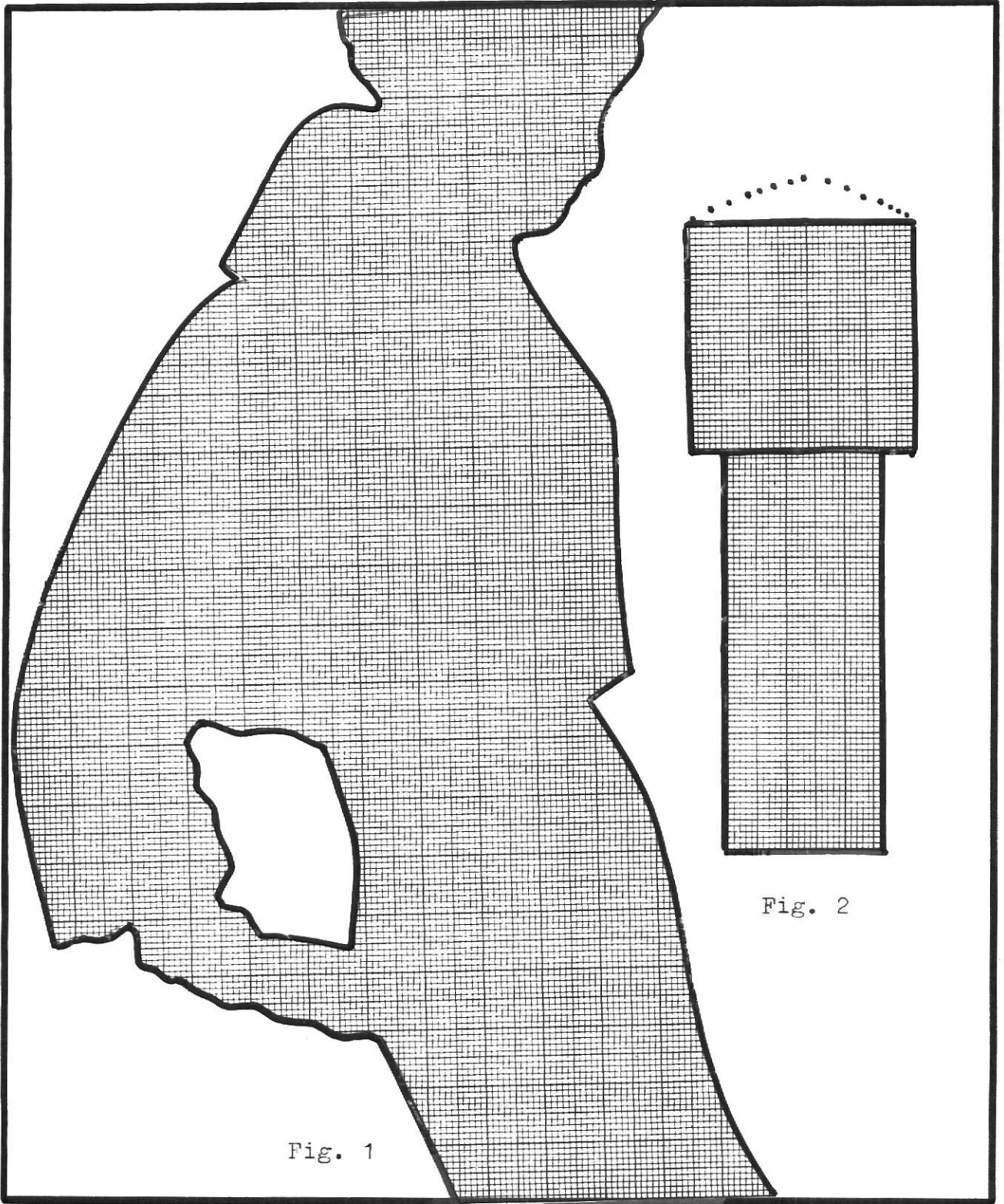
The costume silhouette shown in 1955 was diagrammed with two geometric shapes: a square and a rectangle; in this case the collar is indicated with dots as it constituted most of the bulk in the short jacket (Plate XXII, Fig. 2).

The feeling for overall slimness and verticality continued from 1954 through 1955. However the illusion of slimness was stopped just

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXII

DIOR'S 1955 BULKY SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue, 126:184, Sept. 1, 1955.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.



above the waistline. From this point to the shoulders and neckline the costume was bulky with heavy fabrics and large collars that in silhouette (Plate XXII) became fullness high on the figure.

1956

The bulk and fullness in the 1955 costumes became more pronounced in the costumes shown in 1956, however instead of heavy fabrics, soft fabrics were used to form the bulk. Capes and large stoles were used to wrap suits and coats. The bulk extended from shoulder area in one large shape (Plate XXIII). The cape shape was the core of Dior's collection in 1956. He showed jackets and coats that were actually shaped capes (35, Vogue, 128:203-225, Sept. 1, 1956). By 1955 hemlines had escalated to just below the knee, so Dior, in an effort to bring hemlines down again, included in his collection day costumes with ankle-length skirts. Some fashion magazines, including Vogue (35, 128:203-225, Sept. 1, 1956), heralded that length as being prophetic of future costumes; however this prophesy proved false for the next ten years.

The costume silhouette characteristic of the year 1956 is diagrammed as a large truncated oval and a rectangle (Plate XXIII, Fig. 2).

1957

In 1957, like the preceding ten years, the silhouette changed again. The silhouette was shocking at its inception, however as the year wore on, some of the shock disappeared, and the new silhouette gained wide acceptance. The dress that caused so much controversy that

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXIII

DIOR'S 1956 SHAPED CAPE SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPES
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

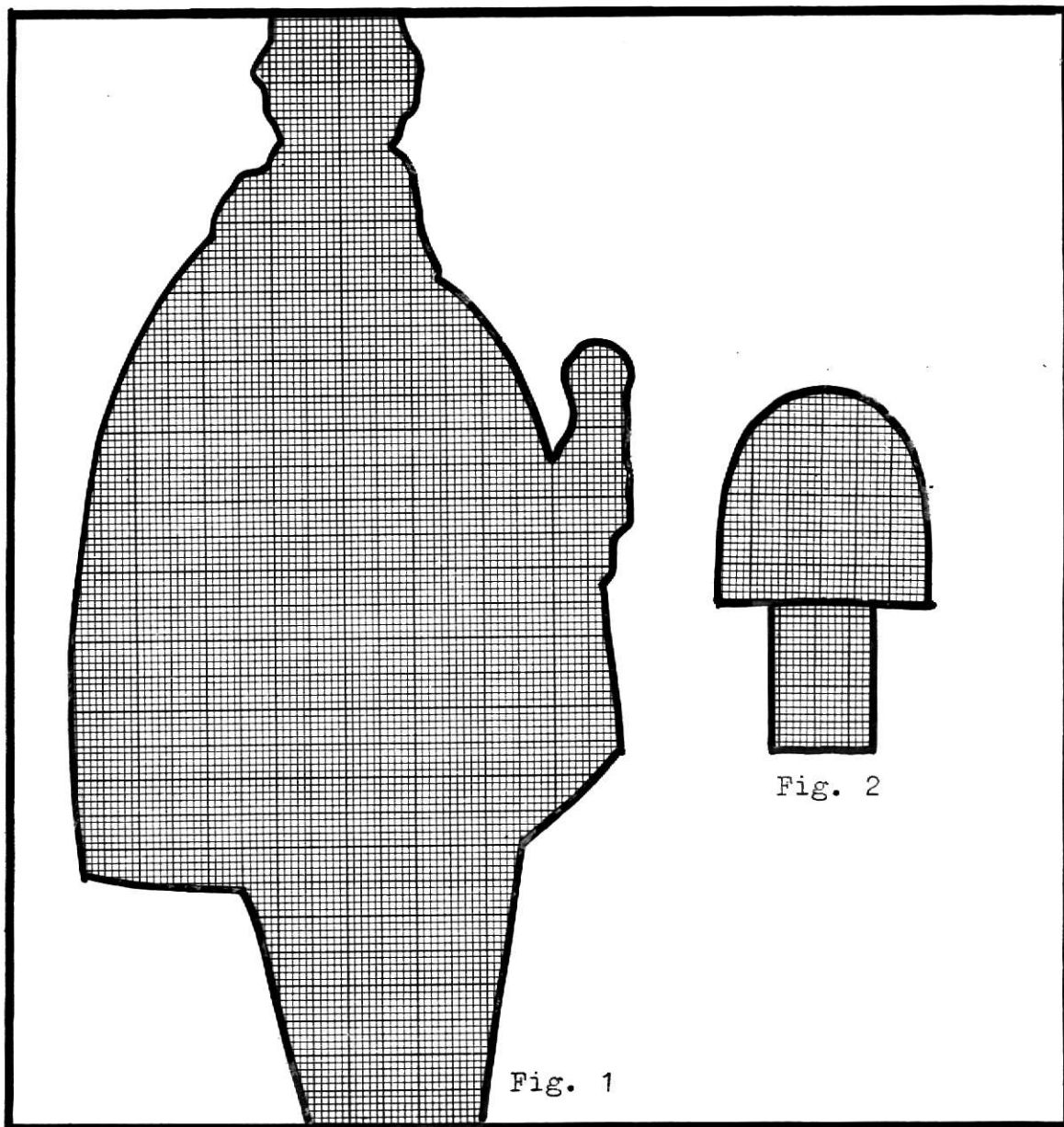
Fig. 1. The silhouette.

From Vogue, 128:223, Sept. 1, 1956.

Fig. 2. The shape diagram.

From Craigie.

PLATE XXIII



year was called the "sack" at Dior and the "chemise" at Balenciaga (38, Vogue, 130:187, Sept. 1, 1957). It returned to the trend of emphasizing figure verticality. In fact, the sack emphasized verticality in its simplest form, a straight vertical line.

The controversy over the new sack dress was caused by the complete disappearance of the waistline from the costume. There were no darts through the midriff to suggest, even, that the figure had a waist. There were darts only to fit the bust. The sack hung straight from the shoulders to the hem without confining (38, Vogue, 130:187-190, Sept. 1, 1957). Women came to recognize the concept behind the design as an assertion of new freedom in the wearing of clothes and the sack dress became popular (6, Contini).

In Paris the sack dress was shown in many fabrics with each dress expressing individuality through texture, decoration, and cut. The overall shape of the dress was the same throughout the French collections; however, the personality of each couture house was stamped on the dress by the designer's approach to the new shape.

The 1957 sack dress in silhouette (Plate XXIV, Fig. 1) was the first single shape dress of the period starting in 1947, however Dior showed a triangular-shaped coat in the 1947 "New Look" collection (Plate XIII). The sack dress is diagrammed as a rectangle (Plate XIV, Fig. 2).

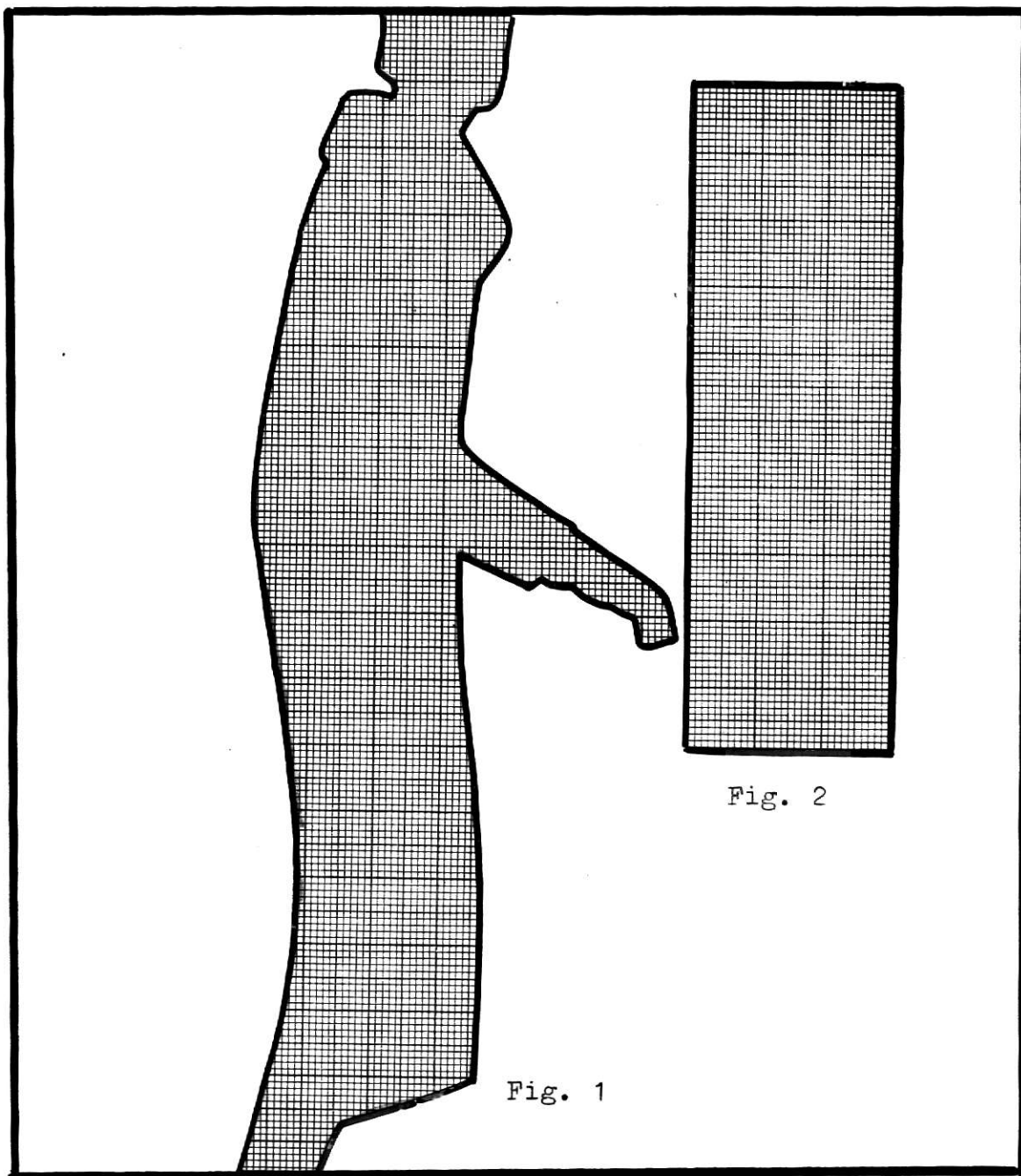
This new costume was reminiscent of the costumes popular during the 1920's. Like the 20's costumes (Plate XI, Figs. 1 and 2) it did not fit the waistline, but unlike the 20's costumes which did fit

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXIV

DIOR'S 1957 SACK DRESS SILHOUETTE AND THE SHAPE
THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTE

- Fig. 1. The silhouette.
From Vogue, 130:215, Sept. 1, 1957.
- Fig. 2. The shape diagram.
From Craigie.

PLATE XXIV



through the hip, the sack dress fell straight from the shoulders with no fit at the hip. Because there was no reference to the figure underneath through fit at the waistline, the silhouette resembled a geometric shape.

The single-shape sack dress was the costume that introduced a new approach to the design of women's fashions. Immediately after 1957 the dress silhouette was completely released from relation to body shape. The unbroken silhouette gained importance, and more single shape garments were designed drawing inspiration from other geometric shapes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Costume in antiquity had a simple silhouette. It was used primarily to cover the body and provide protection from the elements. As the visual aspect of clothing became important, the silhouette developed a more formal shape. The visual aspect of women's clothing was the area of concentration for this study. The purpose of this project was to study the changes in silhouette of women's fashions from 1947 to 1957 in order to show the transition from the body-contour-related silhouette of historical costumes to a new geometry-related silhouette.

The method of silhouette analysis used in the study was one in which geometric shapes were used to diagram the silhouettes. Costume silhouettes selected from the period 1947-1957 were diagrammed with a curvilinear or angular geometric shape in combination with a second shape of the same type or a variation of it; or with other geometric shapes and their variations. Plate XXV shows the shape-diagrams used for each year in the period studied.

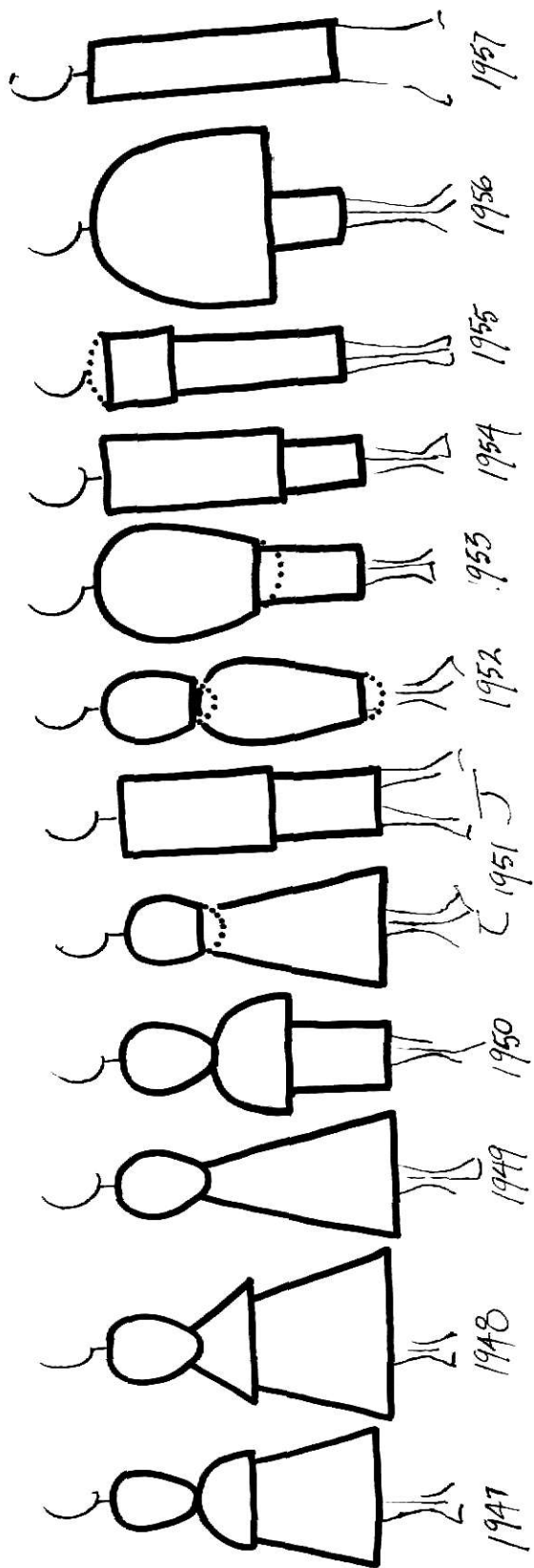
The varying importance, or lack of importance, of the waistline in costume was observed for this period. During several periods in history the waistline was very important as at the beginning of the period but by 1957 the waistline had disappeared from the costume and the silhouette. Throughout the period the waist level changed. In 1947 it was natural, just under the bust in 1951, again at the natural position in 1952 and obscured by long jackets in 1954.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXV

SILHOUETTES OF WOMEN'S FASHIONS FROM 1947 TO 1957
REDUCED TO BASIC SHAPE EQUIVALENTS

From Craigie.

PLATE XXV



There was a different silhouette for each year, and these differences became more obvious when the silhouettes were reduced to geometric shapes. In general, each silhouette, when reduced to a combination of geometric shapes, showed some relation to shape combinations that formed the silhouette of costumes shown the preceding year. It was observed that geometric shapes not only could be used to analyze a silhouette but could be used to suggest a silhouette in the initial design process.

The study showed that it was not the number but the kinds of shapes--especially the shape of the upper part of the silhouette--that best showed how the single-shape silhouette evolved. In 1947 the "New Look" emphasized the volume of the figure and the silhouette was diagrammed as three geometric shapes, two of which were curvilinear. The silhouettes from 1948 through 1950 seemed merely variations of the 1947 "New Look" but the silhouette of the 1951 jacket-dress ensemble did not reflect the curvilinear shapes of the "New Look." This was the first of four angular silhouettes seen in the period. After Dior showed his angular unfitted jacket-dress ensemble in 1951, he reverted to curvilinear silhouettes (1952 sheath silhouette and 1953 cupola silhouette). Again he showed angular silhouettes in 1954 and 1955. In 1956 his shaped-cape costumes were a combination of curvilinear and angular shapes. The last of the four angular silhouettes was the rectangular-shaped sack dress which firmly established the trend toward geometry-inspired design of women's fashion.

The resulting observations of this study lend implications for

further research. As high fashion silhouettes were used in the project, the findings were limited to haute couture. A similar study using ready-to-wear costume silhouettes could complete the fashion picture for this decade. Geometric shapes have symbolic connotations. Perhaps a theory could be formulated through a study that would investigate and determine what, if any, relationships exist between the shapes that formed the silhouettes and the social, economic, and political attitudes of the times.

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GEOMETRIC SHAPES THAT FORMED THE SILHOUETTES OF DIOR'S
FASHIONS FROM 1947 TO 1957

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The silhouette is the base on which fashion is built, and changes in silhouette denote changes in fashion. The purpose of this study was to investigate the changes in women's fashions from 1947 to 1957 in order to show the transition in costume design from body contour-related silhouettes of historic dress to a new geometry-related silhouette. To this end, selected historic costumes were considered in reference to the relation of silhouette to body contour and to simple geometric shapes. Observations regarding the combinations and sequence of shapes that formed the silhouettes were made in analyzing the trend of women's fashion silhouettes in the decade studied. Costume silhouettes from each year in the decade were reduced to combinations of simple geometric shapes.

This method of silhouette analysis in which geometric shapes were used to diagram the silhouettes showed that the volumetric forms of the figure emphasized in Christian Dior's 1947 "New Look" added width and complexity to the silhouette. The directional emphasis shifted from width to length in 1954 and made the silhouette shape simpler. In general, this vertical emphasis continued through 1957 when the sack dress stressed figure verticality in its simplest and most emphatic form.

The study showed that it was not the number, but the kinds of shapes--especially the shape of the upper part of the silhouette--that best showed how the single-shape, geometry-related silhouette evolved. The 1947 "New Look" was influenced by historic dress, and its silhouette showed references to body contour; it was diagrammed using three

geometric shapes, two of which were curvilinear. In the latter part of the decade, four silhouettes were diagrammed using fewer shapes, and those shapes were angular. The single-shape sack dress was the last of those angular-shaped silhouettes, and this costume firmly established the trend toward the geometry-inspired design of women's fashion.