

FASHION GAME CHANGERS

A woman with dark hair and red lipstick stands centrally, wearing a voluminous red cape with a high collar and a black headpiece. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is plain white.

REINVENTING
THE 20TH-CENTURY
SILHOUETTE

B L O O M S B U R Y

FASHION GAME CHANGERS
REINVENTING THE 20TH-CENTURY SILHOUETTE



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FASHION GAME CHANGERS

REINVENTING THE 20TH-CENTURY SILHOUETTE

EDITED BY KAREN VAN GODTSENHOVEN, MIREN ARZALLUZ & KAAT DEBO



B L O O M S B U R Y
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CRISTÓBAL BALenciAGA,
SPRING/SUMMER 1961.
Evening ensemble.



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COMME DES GARÇONS,
AUTUMN/WINTER 2012-13.





FASHION GAME CHANGERS: REINVENTING THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY SILHOUETTE AN INTRODUCTION

Fashion Game Changers: Reinventing the Twentieth-Century Silhouette is a tribute to those designers who radically transformed the female silhouette in the twentieth century and created alternatives to the hour-glass silhouette that had dominated women's fashion for centuries. From the early twentieth century, new silhouettes began to emerge that gave the body more freedom or interpreted the body in more abstract ways, and these continue to echo in our wardrobes today.

This book puts the Spanish designer Cristóbal Balenciaga centre stage of this revolution. His radical innovations in the mid-twentieth century connected pioneers, such as Coco Chanel, Madeleine Vionnet and Paul Poiret, to the later form-innovators of the second half of the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the avant-garde designers of the 1980s. Taking inspiration from, among other things, popular movements such as classicism and orientalism, designers such as Chanel and Vionnet, whom Balenciaga admired greatly, investigated the body's relationship to clothes, and paved the way to more freedom of movement, alternative volumes and novel proportions. In her chapter, Akiko Fukai delves into the influence of Japonism on the Western wardrobe. While Western cuts tend to follow and emphasize the body's curves and lines, traditional Japanese clothing, such as the kimono, shift the focus from the waist to the shoulders. This makes it possible to create flowing silhouettes that wrap the body more than bind it and result in, in Fukai's words, 'a gentle outfit'.

In her contribution, Miren Arzalluz argues that the cocoon or 'barrel' line found in Balenciaga's 1940s designs is strongly linked to the Japonism-inspired innovations of the early twentieth century. As Arzalluz explains, the barrel line marks the beginning of a long series of experiments with forms and shapes, with the construction predominantly emphasizing the back, obliterating the waist and creating much softer silhouettes. Balenciaga's oeuvre and technological ingenuity have exerted a great influence on the female silhouette of the twentieth century. He was a forerunner of the looser silhouette, which is so commonplace in our Western wardrobes that we can't imagine fashion without it. This element was radically reconfigured by the fashions of the 1960s and especially the 1980s by a new generation of iconoclasts.

MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
SPRING/SUMMER 1989.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
SPRING/SUMMER 1989.



IRIS VAN HERPEN, 'HACKING INFINITY',
AUTUMN/WINTER 2015–16.
Pleated dress in manmade fibre.
MoMu inv.nr. T15/728.



The contribution by Arzalluz illustrates that the mid-twentieth century cannot be simply characterized by the classic couture silhouette, which dominated the 1950s with Christian Dior's New Look. There was also room for radical experiments with forms, which were taken up by and expanded upon by the young designers of the 1960s, such as Pierre Cardin and André Courrèges. The architectural designs of the 1960s were in themselves a bridge to a new era, such as Issey Miyake's label, which was established in the 1970s. It is possible to discern a chain of innovation in the twentieth century, linking a range of otherwise disparate designers: designers who were, using their own vocabulary and in their own social context, fashion game changers. Olivier Saillard focuses on the changing body shape in twentieth-century fashion, which can be found in the collection pieces of his own museum: from Poiret and Vionnet's liberation of the curves, to Chanel's tomboy ideal, and the groundbreaking concept of Rei Kawakubo, for whom clothes became the body, Saillard discusses how shadows of the body remain in the garments after they have been worn. He also looks at the relationship between contemporary fashion and today's craze for surgically altered bodies.

In addition to the thematic chapters, this book includes pen portraits by Miren Arzalluz, Karen Van Godtsenhoven and Alexandre Samson on some of these game changers, who were truly pivotal figures: Louise Boulanger, contemporary of and inspiration to Balenciaga; the Spanish innovator Paco Rabanne; the French futurist and architectural designers from the 1960s André Courrèges and Pierre Cardin; and Briton Georgina Godley who, in the 1980s, explored the boundaries of fashion, garments and the female body. Samson shows their underlying relationships and the familiarity of their design innovations and concepts.

Anabela Becho delves further into the Japanese and Belgian schools, which succeeded each other as breakthrough pioneers on the 1980s fashion stage. Designers such as Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo from the Comme des Garçons label, and Issey Miyake, redrew and questioned the Western silhouette, starting from principles that were deeply anchored in an Eastern approach to clothes, textiles and clothing constructions. The Japanese concept of *ma*, which denotes the space or gap between the body and the garments clothing it, finds its contemporary reinterpretation in the oversized clothing in the collections of Japanese designers, and Belgian designers such as Martin Margiela. Increasingly intense abstraction, distilling shapes and experimenting with certain components such as the shoulder, collar, sleeve or back, together paved a way at the end of the twentieth century for a whole new creative fashion lexicon, and – no less important – an alternative for the then-dominant ideals about femininity.

MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
AUTUMN/WINTER 2008–09.
Wool and silk trenchcoat.
MoMu inv.nr. T09/661.



RIGHT:
MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
SPRING/SUMMER 2007.
Top and skirt of manmade
fibre net, silk underskirt,
patent leather belt, jersey
bodysuit with padded
shoulders.
MoMu inv.nr. T07/94, T07/95,
T07/92, T07/96.



COMME DES GARÇONS,
AUTUMN/WINTER 2012-13.



Hettie Judah argues that in the late twentieth century, this new vocabulary required a new visual language that could bring the object-like aspect of the garments to the fore. The Japanese and Belgian fashions, with their voluminous, abstracting and androgynous shapes, obscured the gendered body, which was the antithesis of the 1980s power woman. Judah considers this avant-garde an inclusive movement, as this was the movement where it was perfectly possible to be heavy, old, or both, and still be chic. For this publication, Judah interviewed a number of early adopters of the fashion statements by Comme des Garçons, Maison Martin Margiela or Issey Miyake. Several women told her about their personal experience wearing these clothes and the responses of their environment to these items.

Finally, Karen Van Godtsenhoven investigates in depth the diverse design practices of a number of game changers discussed in this book, and by extension explores the Western and Eastern notions of creation and inspiration. She illustrates how design methods inform the way these designers look upon the relationship between body and garment and how this translates into a specific attitude towards the female body.

This book accompanies the eponymous exhibition that will be on display in the MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp in the spring of 2016. I would like to thank the curators of this project, Miren Arzalluz and Karen Van Godtsenhoven, for their greatly valued contribution, as well as the team at MoMu. I would furthermore like to thank the contributors to this book and the lenders for the exhibition at MoMu. A final thank you goes out to the Bloomsbury team, Paul Boudens, the book's designer, and Bob Verhelst, the stage designer for the Antwerp exhibition.

— **KAAT DEBO**

Director, MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp

JIL SANDER BY RAF SIMONS,
SPRING/SUMMER 2011.
Dress in manmade fibre.
MoMu inv.nr. T12/10.



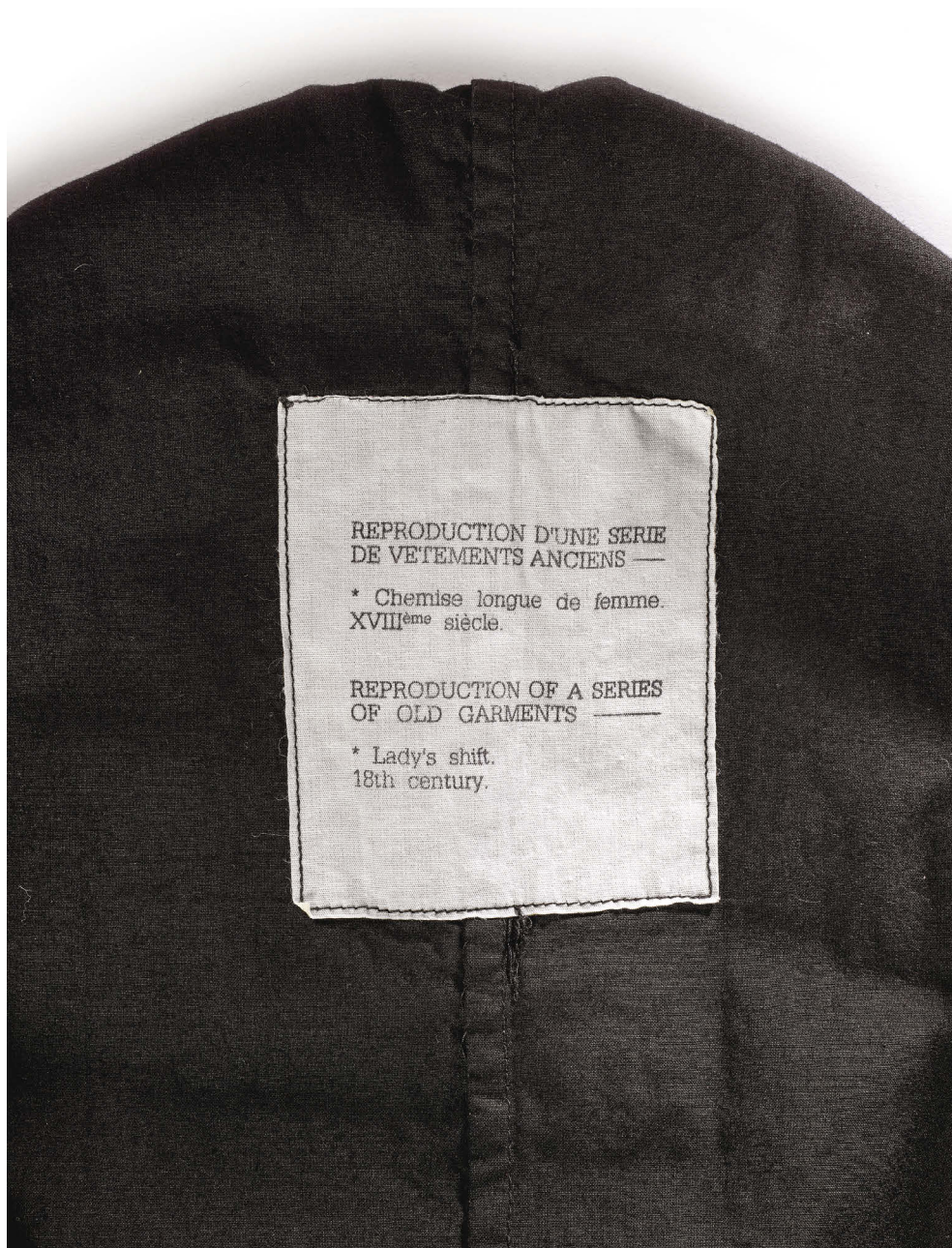
PATRICK VAN OMMESLAEGHE,
SPRING/SUMMER 2000.
Silk crêpe dress.
MoMu Inv. Nr. B02/212.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
SPRING/SUMMER 1995.
Cotton dress, replica of
an eighteenth-century shirt.
MoMu inv.nr. T96/28.



Detail of label from the Maison Martin Margiela
replica of an eighteenth-century shirt.
MoMu inv.nr. T96/28.



BERNHARD WILLHELM,
SPRING/SUMMER 2007.
Oversized cotton 'baby doll' dress,
patent leather shoes.
MoMu inv.nr. T07/156, T15/626AB.



DIRK VAN SAENE,
AUTUMN/WINTER 1999–2000.
Woollen coat with slits,
elastic waistband.
MoMu inv.nr. T99/104.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
SPRING/SUMMER 2000.
Dress in knitted wool and
manmade silk, cotton trousers.
MoMu inv.nr. T13/1329, T01/207.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
C. 1989.
Woollen jacket and jumper,
woollen and cotton skirt.
The long, narrow-shouldered
silhouette of Margiela's first
collections announced the
change in silhouette for
the 1990s.
MoMu inv.nr. T03/356,
T01/203, T13/1335.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA,
AUTUMN/WINTER 2000-01.
Jacket in wool, cotton and manmade silk,
dress in wool and manmade silk,
leather tabi shoes.
MoMu inv.nr. T00/120, B02/145, T98/15.



LANVIN, C. 1980.
Silk dress.
MoMu inv.nr. T06/1282.



ROMEO GIGLI, AUTUMN/WINTER 1989–90.

Woollen coat.

Italian designer Romeo Gigli was internationally acclaimed for his bulky, cocoon-like shapes which gracefully enveloped the body.

MoMu inv.nr. T96/33.



BRUNO PIETERS,
SPRING/SUMMER 2009.
Kimono-sleeve jacket in silk.
MoMu inv.nr. T11/298.



BRUNO PIETERS,
SPRING/SUMMER 2009.
Kimono-sleeve jacket in cotton and man-made fibre.
MoMu inv.nr. T11/301.



IRIS VAN HERPEN,
'HACKING INFINITY',
AUTUMN/WINTER 2015–16.
Hand burnished, stainless
steel gauze dress.

