

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

self-guided tour



**MUSEUM
OF FINE ARTS
ST. PETERSBURG**

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Fashion is more than just fabric and accessories. It is a means of conveying without words, ideas about yourself—your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. When viewing a work of art, what the subjects wear, be it a robe, dress, suit, or ruff, provides a wealth of information about their roles, self-perception, and the worlds in which they lived.



SCAN THIS CODE FOR A MAP IDENTIFYING THE LOCATIONS OF THE ARTWORKS

THE VEIL BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

Kline Monument, A.D. 175–200

FIND THIS IN THE ANCIENT ART GALLERIES

The woman reclining on this massive marble sculpture has died, and her husband behind her, headless and with his right hand resting on her right shoulder, has commissioned this funerary monument in remembrance of their love and life together. The winged children cavorting around them are *erotes* or cupids, personifications of love. The veil she wears is symbolic of her transition into the spirit world of the afterlife. In her left hand she clutches her veil, a separate article of clothing, perhaps the *amictus*, or *flammeum*, both Latin words for such head coverings. This gesture means that she has transitioned into the world of the dead. Yet her right hand pulls up delicately on a garland, simultaneously being pulled down on by a pair of *erotes*, indicating that she hasn't completely left the world of the living. Certainly memory of her will live on in her grieving husband.



DIVINE GARMENTS

Manjushri, c. 1000s

FIND THIS IN THE ASIAN ART GALLERIES

Bodhisattvas are complex figures in the Buddhist religion generally associated with an individual's search for spiritual enlightenment. In some beliefs, bodhisattvas are those individuals on the verge of enlightenment who remain behind in order to help others on their path. Known bodhisattvas vary from culture to culture, depending on the form of Buddhism practiced. However, most share a similar set of sartorial traits, including elaborate accessories, scarves, and princely ornaments such as those seen here. Interestingly, the garments of a bodhisattva are often more refined and sumptuous than those of a Buddha leading some to believe they reflect royal attire.



RUFF AND CAP

Studio of Michiel van Mierevelt, *Portrait of Margaretha van Santen*, 1615

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

Wealth and privilege are cleverly alluded to through the use of clothing in this Dutch Golden Age portrait. Fabrics, such as the brocades and linens seen here, would have indicated to contemporaries the sitter's respectability and high social status. One of the more intricate elements of her outfit is the bleached linen ruff she wears around her neck. Ruffs were precisely folded, starched, collars often embellished at the edges with fine lace. They came in a variety of forms with some fully encircling the neck and others remaining open at the front. Framing her face, and modestly covering her hair, is a lace-edged, linen diadem cap. The linen of the cap and the ruff nicely frame her face and provide a bright contrast to the darker brocades of her gown.



ECCLESIASTICAL GARB

St. Ghislain in a Landscape, c. 1500

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

Although clothing is central to the story of St. Ghislain—in that he had to chase after his garments when they were stolen by a bear—here, he is shown dressed in very fine, expensive vestments of a Roman Catholic bishop. Over a simple tunic called an alb, he wears a golden robe known as a chasuble. This was usually of very expensive materials as it was worn by a priest during religious services. This example is of thread that has been wrapped with thin sheets of gold, and has a green silk fringe. The saint's outermost garment, woven of scarlet silk, is called a cope. It is held together by a massive brooch of gilded silver known as a morse.



EMPIRE DRESS

Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, *Julie Lebrun as Flora, Roman Goddess of Flowers*, 1799

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN ART, 13TH-18TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

The end of the eighteenth century witnessed an abrupt shift in French fashions. Gone were the large-skirted gowns, comprised of yards of expensive fabric, and tight, restrictive, bodices in favor of simpler silhouettes, inspired by those of ancient Rome. Here, Elisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun cleverly incorporates these references to antiquity in her portrait of her daughter, Julie, fashionably depicted as Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers. Gowns such as this were often constructed of light, airy, fabrics and cinched under the wearer's breasts. Many who wore these dresses accessorized with large, colorful shawls, seemingly mimicking the *stola* and *palla* discussed above. The popularity of this look would become more refined under the French Empress Josephine Bonaparte—whose fashions influenced what was later termed the Empire style.



FEATHERS AND FABRICS

Richard Hall, *Gathering at the Church Entrance*, 1884

FIND THIS IN THE EUROPEAN & AMERICAN ART, 19TH-20TH CENTURIES GALLERIES

Towards the end of the nineteenth century daywear for many in America and Europe became marked by dark colors and rich, luxurious, fabrics. For men, black coats, trousers, and top hats were considered appropriate, while women's dress featured form fitting bodices and straight skirts embellished with a train or bustle. The central figure of this painting is depicted wearing an expensive day dress comprised of a dark, fur-trimmed coat, a gown likely made of silk, and a hat trimmed with decorative feathers. This luxury serves as a severe contrast to the woman at left wearing a plain woolen gown. Here, Hall uses dress to convey the vast discrepancies between rich and poor in Paris during the so-called *belle époque*, or beautiful age.



FERTILITY

Figure, 20th Century

FIND THIS IN THE AFRICAN ART GALLERY

Traditionally when a Dowayo woman was proposed to, her fiancé would give her a small wooden figure such as this. It represented the couple's wish for children, and was taken care of by the woman like a child until she bore her first infant. Typically, it would be dressed in beads, metal rings, small coins, and cowrie shells, all of which were used as currency. This represents how boys are dressed when they complete the initiation process into adulthood. Wherever the woman went, she carried the figure with her, either on her back like an actual infant, or as a necklace with the figure touching her belly. This embodied not only a desire for children, but the aspiration for them to become successful young adults.



DRESSED FOR DINNER

Guy Pène Du Bois, *Café Madrid (Mr. and Mrs. Chester Dale)*, 1925

FIND THIS IN THE AMERICAN ART, 19TH-21ST CENTURIES GALLERIES

For women, fashion changed drastically in the 1920s—to some extent reflecting slight advances in women's rights during the period. Raised hems, a dropped waist, and a loose silhouette allowed for freedom of movement and liberation from the constraining corsets of the past. No longer was emphasis placed on highlighting curves, instead straight lines were desired. Dresses, such as the one worn by Mrs. Dale, would have likely been constructed of a light fabric and embellished with sparkly, eye-catching beadwork sewn in intricate patterns. By contrast, men's fashion changed very little in the 1920s. Here, Mr. Dale wears a black suit jacket and trouser similar to those worn decades earlier.



Cover: Studio of Michiel van Mierevelt; *Portrait of Margaretha van Santen* (detail), 1615, Bequest of Daniel M. Sourbeer
Inside: *Manjushri*, c. 1000s, Gift of Gail and Gary L. Damkoehler

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