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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 18TH CENTURY GARMETS AND INTERIOR DESIGN

The Relationship Between the 18th Century Garment and Interior Design

Introduction

The 18th century fashion encompasses the characteristics that earned its distinction of opulence. The period is renowned for elaborate clothing paired with wigs with rich intricate of embroideries particularly on women's clothing of full gowns worn during special occasions in the court. The Mantua gowns embodies the epitome of design elegance during the era, but the most notable characteristics of 18th century fashion is striking relationship between the clothing design and craftsmanship embedded on the interior design. The discussion will highlight this relationship by identifying the stylistics, similarities of materials, and how the people wearing the 18th century clothes associate themselves to the interior design. It can be assumed from examining the intricacies of the 18th century interior and fashion that both share the principles and practice of creating designs. It furthermore takes advantage of space in an ensemble of silhouette, focal point, and balancing of details and proportion.

Literature

The visual characteristics of the 18th century clothing can be observed in Robe a la Francaise. In terms of interior decoration, a replica of the room from the Hotel de Varengeville exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum embody the era's careful attention to details. Annas (1983) described the 18th century fashion as wearable art to highlight elegance. The literature mentioned the key attitudes attributed to clothing designs in the period such

as outweighing physical comfort in exchange for demonstrating status. The quality and intricacies of clothing in the 18th century demonstrates the social status of the person wearing them. For instance, the Duchess of Devonshire in her letter a friend in 1778 tells about how uncomfortable she feels on her arms and thighs, but all worth it because of the pride gained from admiration. The principles behind the aesthetics of the 18th century fashion was drawn from the pursuit of pleasure. Furthermore, the encompassing objective of constructing the clothes as they were suggests that the people in the era enjoyed attention and each day of promenading in a park was like a daily search for admiration, which can be easily obtained by wearing elaborately embellished clothing.

Consistency is important for the people in the 18th century as the aesthetical brilliance of the clothing were matched by the equally elaborate interiors. Koda and Bolton (2004) describes the 18th century fashion and interiors as dangerous liaisons working together in creating an environment that is both elegant and conducive to intimate encounters. In the 18th century, elaborate interiors were matched by equally elaborate clothing. The interiors are where the elite social interaction takes place and given the nature of purpose that the interior serves, the clothes were regarded as an important component that completes the entire elegant settings. Spacious interiors of homes function as dining, playing, socializing, reading, conversation, and letter writing activities. For a modern perspective, the purpose seems trivial, but the people in the 18th century regarded the activities as important activities that constitute self-definition. The abundance of the materials and the availability of craftsmen during the period enables the higher social class to

embellish their homes with furnishings made upholstered in silk, which in return demonstrate the people's pursuit of leisure, refinement, and luxury.

Harmony in Fashion and Interiors

Observing the intricacies of the Robe a la Francaise and the replica room of Hotel de Varengeville reflects the harmony and consistency of creating a solid artistic theme. The interior embodies the use of space in terms of highlighting all the elements that composes the design. The flow of artistic techniques applied on the rag, seat upholstery and wall ornaments compliment each other. For example, the floral patterns on the seats matches the pattern on other furnishings. Color consistency is also apparent in the interior, which suggests the use of a color theme. The same can be said with the make of the Robe a la Francaise. The color of the dress matches the embellishments and embroideries. The most striking resemblance between the interior design and the dress is the use of floral pattern and symmetry. The aforementioned similarity demonstrates the fusion of space and identity.

For example, the chair has a partial armrest unlike the modern sofas that has full armrest version that covers both sides of the chair. This implies that use of open armrest allows dress to flow freely from the waist even when seated. It is apparent that women wear a corset back in the 18th century and the use of the garment serves a purpose on how women move. The corset allows a woman to straighten posture, which is apparent when walking and when seated. Posture also complies with the structure of the chair. It can be noticed that the chair in the Hotel de Varengeville room replica has a very straight backrest. It is one of those characteristics that

eliminate slouching as the fixed chair fixture prevents reclining. Such structure also emphasizes the elegant posture that a woman dressed in Robe a la Francaise encompasses. Furthermore, the gap between the components in the interior enables free movement.

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