

Fashion in the 1950s

[History](#)



The need to start buying goods created corporate expansion, accelerated mass production and this marked the time of important technological and economic advancement. Due to this feeling of liberation after the war, women were now able to go back to their lives instead of serving in the workforce. Most left their jobs for returning servicemen to take over and could now look forward to a new start. Although celebrations never reached the height of what it was in the past, women still wanted to flaunt their newfound sense of freedom.

Gone were the days of rationing, of constantly living in fear of invasion, of utilitarian formality. Women were more than happy to go back to being homemakers, looking perfectly groomed, with their coiffed hair and always so immaculate in the way they dressed. This is where the 'master' comes into the picture. Cristóbal Balenciaga took hold of this need for a new change and revolutionized the silhouette of women by creating the unstructured waist. He was aware of his destiny at an early age and preferred to be at the side of his mother, who was a talented seamstress in the village of Getaria.

His first ever patronage came from the Marques De Casa Tornos who was quick to notice young Balenciaga's interest in fashion. When she presented him with the means and opportunity to duplicate a designer suit of hers, he passed with flying colors and the Marques gave him the opportunity of apprenticeship with a tailor, which he took very seriously. (Myra Walker, 2006, p. 13) His balloon dresses, peasant and sailor blouses, and later on, the tunics, sack dresses, and turned-down tweed, freed the neck and wrists to highlight jewelry and hand movement. Pierre Aronson-CLC©mental, 2011, p. 37) While by day, his classic simplicity went unnoticed by the

multitudes, but by night, his stunning evening gowns and cocktail dresses were a sight to behold as they ignited the senses with their array of color and textured fabric. Figure 1 . Mantle Coat in grey wool, with draped sleeves and open at the sides, Vogue, pans, sass Figure 2. Evening dress in flocked shantung in blue and black, 1957. Balancing was considered a master of illusion and his designs concealed the 'defects' of the women who wore them.

Through them, he altered the silhouette of a women's body to flatter his client's less than perfect bodies, often defying established conventions. " A woman has no need to be perfect or even beautiful to wear my dresses, the dress will do that for her. " (Cole, Shawn, 2002, peg. 2) Balancing originally designed the set-back or standards collar for CarmelaSnow, the then editor-in-chief of Harpers Bazaar, who as she put it, " had no neck". The collar bestowed upon a woman an appearance of a long swan-like neck.

Once again, Balancing had managed to disguise a less than perfect body. He also came up with the shortened seven-eighths sleeves that gave an appearance of height that his clients did not often possess. His creations were so flattering that women often ordered more than one so that they could wear them while one was in the wash or so they could keep one at each of their houses. As Billingsgate's apparel did not require any undergarment to be worn to shape the body, they were reputed for comfort and it suited the post-war era of women.

His manipulation of the waist especially, contributed to " What is considered to be his most important contribution to the world of fashion: a new

silhouette for women. " (Arizona-CLC©mental, 2011, pag. 11) Another great technological advancement that has and still holds a colossal social impact in the world up till this day was Television (TV). This vehicle, which carried the dead of a new generation and attitude, influenced the masses more eloquently than any other media element. During the sass, TV became the commanding mass media as more families brought it into their homes.

The amount of hours that people glued themselves to the TV increased, a trend, which has not changed since that time. What was shown on TV became accepted as reality and was considered a norm. And designers, businessmen and film producers were about to take advantage of that. Audrey Hepburn was one of the rising stars in Hollywood during the sass and stood UT quite clearly against the likes of Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell. When Hubert De Given met her on the set of Sabina in 1954, he was disappointed at first owing to the fact he was supposed to receive another Hepburn.

But later on, as time went by, he soon realized this Hepburn had a perfect understanding of her own face and figure, and already possessed a clear sense of what fashion would suit her best. (Francoise Mohr, 1998, pag. 82) The style of T-shirts and boat-neck dresses of the period ended up as a style so popular that it became know as 'd©collect© Sabina'. Given had now discovered he was in the presence of an authenticpersonalityand found someone who would celebrate a new era in the history of fashion.

They remained close throughout her entire lifetime, and eventually became the sole couturier of her entire chiffonier, in life and as well as on screen.

Figure 3. Audrey Hepburn in Sabina, 1954. When Hepburn appeared in the early morning scene (which has now become famous) from *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in the elegant little black dress, white gloves and beehive hairdo, it set off media frenzy and she became synonymous with the Givenchy alienation. Not forgetting the 1957 film *Funny Face* in which Audrey Hepburn wears a black boat neck, cap sleeve dress, which catapulted her even more so, as the fashion icon of that era.

Hubert De Givenchy had finally found his muse, who was as much of a perfectionist as he was and be it whether she wore Givenchy or was divinely attired in her evening gowns crafted by Givenchy, she lived and breathed the profile of Givenchy. She served as the honorary president at the ceremony with which Givenchy was presented the California Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award in 1981 and also presided over an exhibition that was dedicated to the couturier at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York the following year in May.

Givenchy stated that during his four decades of working with Audrey Hepburn, he had never needed to change the form he had first made for her in 1954. In 1957, the actress became cited as one of the ten most fascinating women in the world by the New York Dress Institute and for decades after, up till this age, she is still considered a fashion icon. In conclusion, a time of peace and change was upon America in the sass.

It was the eight time for evolution into the next era, no more material coupons, no more restrictions, it was time to celebrate as Balenciaga had done with his waistless tunics and peasant blouses, this had great influence

in changing the way women dressed and how people viewed their silhouettes. Given, on the other hand, due to the influence of television and with the help of Audrey Hepburn, had indeed made a name for himself, so that elegance and simplicity became synonymous with his name. (1351 words) References Bradley, Becky . " 1950-1959. " American Cultural History.