



Smithsonian Associates

Lunchtime with a Curator: Decorative Arts Design Series

With Elizabeth Lay

Monday, July 19, 2021 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. ET

The *Théâtre de la Mode*: A Love Letter to the World

Steven L. Grafe, Maryhill Museum of Art

Important Dates

14 June 1940–25 August 1944: German occupation of Paris.

November 1940: Lucien Lelong's first visit to Berlin to lobby against the relocation of the Parisian fashion industry to Berlin and Vienna.

October 1944: a project benefiting war relief efforts and showing the continuing vitality of the couture industry is approved by the Chambre Syndicale.

28 March 1945: The *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition opens in the Grand Gallery of the *Pavillon de Marsan* of the Louvre Museum. It remains on view for about two months and is visited by more than 100,000 people.

8 May 1945: Germany surrenders (VE Day).

12 September 1945: The *Théâtre de la Mode* opens in The Prince's Gallery, Picadilly, London. Other 1945–1946 venues include Barcelona, Leeds, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Vienna.

1 May 1946: The *Théâtre de la Mode* opens in New York with new décors and spring/summer 1946 fashions. It then travels to San Francisco and opens on 12 September 1946.

March 1952: After several years in storage in the City of Paris department store in San Francisco, the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins arrive at Maryhill Museum of Art. By this time, the original stage sets have been lost.

1988–1990: The mannequins return to Paris and are conserved there. Nine replica stage sets (eight from the 1946 Paris exhibition) are created by Anne Surgers.

Noteworthy Personalities

Christian Bérard (French, 1902–1949) served as the overall artistic director for *Théâtre de la Mode* and was the designer of its *Le Théâtre décor*.

Béla Bernand (Hungarian, 1911–1967); press photographer who took numerous photos of the staging of the 1945 Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition.

Éliane Bonabel (French, 1920–2000) conceived the design of the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins.

Louis Chéronnet (French, 1899–1950); Paris-based art critic and writer who provided the descriptive text for the 1945 and 1946 *Théâtre de la Mode* catalogues.

Lucien Lelong (French, 1889–1958); couturier who served as was president of the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne from 1937–1945.

Joan Rebull (Spanish [Catalan], 1899–1981) created the plaster heads for the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins.

Robert Ricci (French, 1905–1988); business manager of the Nina Ricci fashion house and PR/Marketing director for the Chambre Syndicale. With Paul Caldaguès and Lucien Lelong, Ricci was responsible for the creation and administration of the *Théâtre de la Mode*.

Jean Saint-Martin (French, 1899–1988) built the many *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins.

Anne Surgers (French); theater historian who created nine replica stage sets in 1988–1990.

References and Links

The main reference text for the *Théâtre de la Mode* is:

Edmonde Charles-Roux, Herbert R. Lottman, Stanley Garfinkel, et al, *Théâtre de la Mode: Fashion Dolls: The Survival of Haute Couture* (Portland, OR: Palmer-Pletsch Associates, 2002).

These books provide context about the German Occupation of Paris:

- Lou Taylor and Marie McLoughlin, eds., *Paris Fashion and World War Two. Global Diffusion and Nazi Control* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).
- Dominique Veillon, *Fashion Under the Occupation* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

This link leads to a large group of 1945 *Théâtre de la Mode* photos by Béla Bernand:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/belabernand/albums/72157626989884840>

The two links below take one to online exhibitions about the *Théâtre de la Mode*.

Both are provided as PDF files and they can be downloaded. The first is a general history and the second discusses only the décors:

- <https://www.maryhillmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Theatre-de-la-Mode-ONLINE-Dec-8-2020.pdf>
- https://www.maryhillmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/TDLM-The-Decors-ONLINE.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1fA27IECI7k7k1PiPx3N7noyylhV6XVJq2P9-IV88K_8V1pi7qJMaBQyY

Here is the Maryhill Museum of Art page on the Google Arts & Culture website. It shows 80 items from the museum collection:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/maryhill-museum-of-art>

This Facebook video presents drone footage of Maryhill Museum of Art and environs as they appeared near the end of October 2020. The faux Stonehenge that is seen at the beginning of the video is a World War I memorial to local men who died in the Great War. There is no accompanying audio:

<https://www.facebook.com/71142572667/videos/688482918530378>