

Dior: Living the dreams

Haute couture meets homeware as we travel through time to translate some of the French fashion house's most inventive and iconic looks.

WORDS PHILIPPA PRENTICE

Christian Dior 1946–1957:

Founded in Paris in December 1946, the House of Dior led by Christian Dior showed its first collection in February 1947. The 90 looks, deemed by US *Harper's Bazaar's* Carmel Snow to be the 'New Look', were exemplified by fitted jackets (the iconic Bar jacket is pictured above) and calf-length full skirts. The average dress is said to have been crafted from 20 yards of fabric, an opulence that was a welcome contrast to the post-war austerity of the time. If women couldn't afford the real thing, many made their own – using curtain fabric if they had to.



Christian Dior in his Paris atelier with model Lucie Daouphars, 1952.



Opera Bouffe gown, A/W 1956.

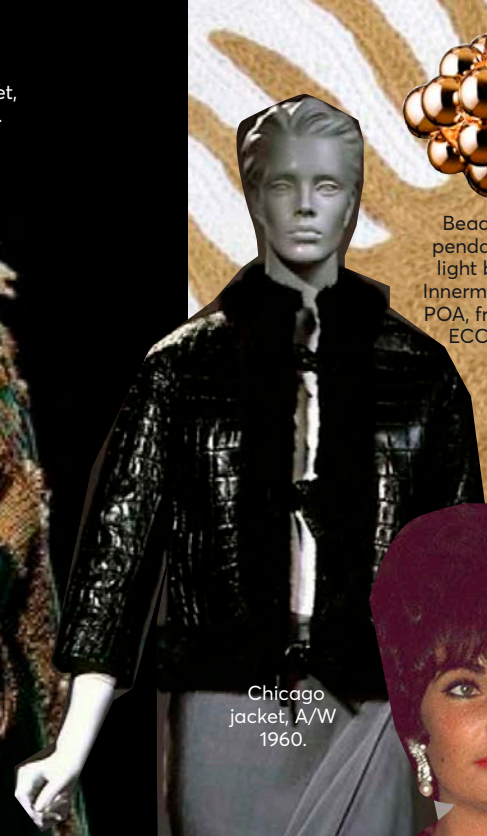
Paris corner chairs by Montigney, POA, from Archipro.

Dogwood pillowcase by Bonnie and Neil, \$110, from Small Acorns.

Negus jacket, A/W 1948.



Chicago jacket, A/W 1960.



Beads pendant light by Innermost, POA, from ECC.



Eléphant Blanc gown, 1958.



Lady Dior bag, \$600, by Dior.



Palladio gown, S/S 1992.



Ripple Front drawers, \$1342, from The Hotel Space.

Marc Bohan 1960–1989:

The hallmark of Marc Bohan's 30-year stint at the helm was deceptively simple designs that combined classic Dior shapes with innovation. He drew inspiration from the 1920s while embracing the 60s mini, and is credited with changing the Dior line from his very first haute couture collection, S/S 1961's Slim Line. It was a more modern version of the Dior shape and proved extremely popular; Hollywood royalty Elizabeth Taylor bought 12 dresses from the range.

Best Actress Liz Taylor in the Soirée à Rio gown at the 1961 Academy Awards.



Nadja Auermann in a look from Gianfranco Ferré's A/W 1989 show.



Yves Saint Laurent 1957–1960:

Eighteen-year-old wunderkind Yves Saint Laurent was appointed Dior's assistant in 1955 and promoted to head designer in 1957, aged just 21. His first collection, *Trapèze*, in 1958, marked a shift from the cinched-waist styles Christian Dior had favoured and introduced a fresh silhouette with narrower shoulders and a flared hem, setting the tone for a brave new era. His 1960 collection, *Beat*, was influenced by Paris streetwear and youth culture and by the beatniks of the time – a fundamental shift in fashion. It proposed a leather jacket (pictured far left) as a couture item for women, a move that proved to be too much of a departure from the then-conservative label's traditional ladylike look and saw the designer controversially fired.

Gianfranco Ferré 1989–1996:

Known as the "architect of fashion" thanks to his university degree in the subject, Gianfranco Ferré was the first non-Frenchman to lead the house and brought to it a flamboyant Italian appeal. His first collection in 1989 was acclaimed and awarded the prestigious *Dé d'Or* (Golden Thimble) couture award. In 1994, a then unnamed bag was launched that quickly became a favourite of Princess Diana's. It went on to be christened *Lady Dior* in her honour and has become one of the most loved It-bags of all time.

heritage



Alexandra Pavlova in the A/W 2000 haute couture presentation, which opened with a lavish wedding.

John Galliano 1996–2011:

Although they often harked back to original Dior styles, John Galliano's offerings were daring, sculptural and romantic, and defined by his love of theatre. During his reign, the world's most famous supermodels lined up to walk in his amazing shows, which ranged from highly controversial (such as A/W 2000's so-called "hobo" couture collection, inspired by Paris's homeless population) to utterly fantastical.

Kasia Pysiak in a look from S/S 1998.



Clairefontaine perfume bottle by Lalique, POA, from Cavit & Co.

To research his S/S 2004 couture collection, Galliano took to the skies over Egypt in an air balloon. Erin O'Connor (pictured) opened the show.



Nicole Kidman wore a chartreuse sheath from the S/S 1997 show to that year's Oscars.



Egg chair, \$1495, from Me & My Trend.

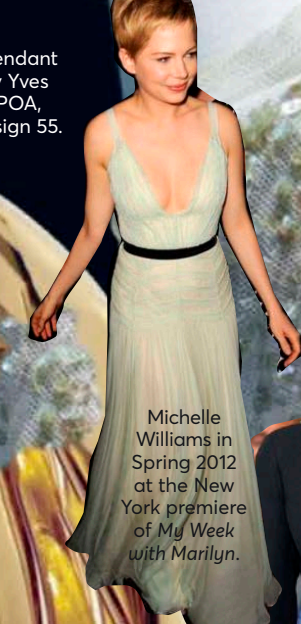


Basket Weave cushion, \$30, from Freedom Furniture.

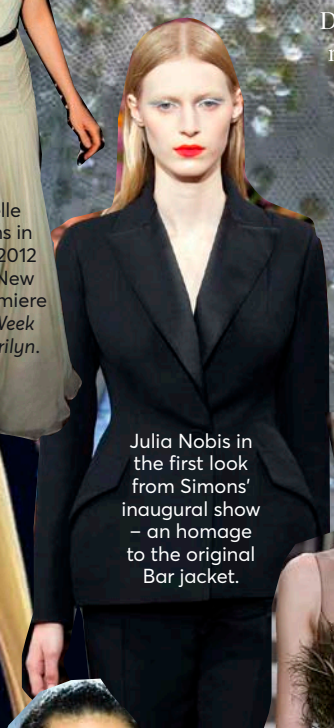
Lotus pendant light by Yves Klein, POA, from Design 55.



Michelle Williams in Spring 2012 at the New York premiere of *My Week with Marilyn*.



Julia Nobis in the first look from Simons' inaugural show – an homage to the original Bar jacket.



S/S 2018 RTW's mirrored gowns were informed by the work of artist Niki de Saint Phalle.



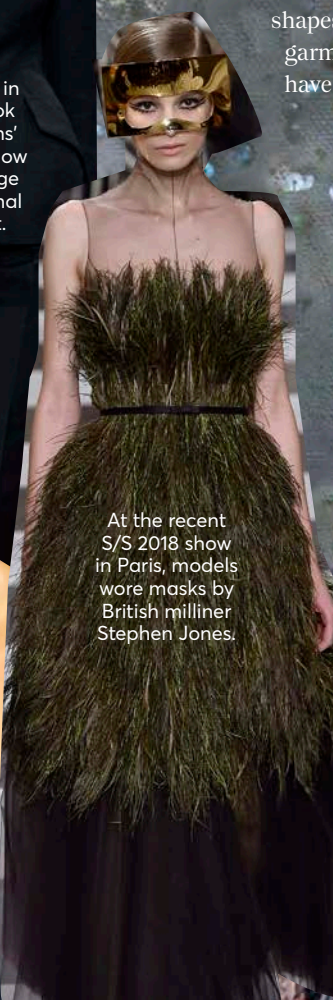
Amami pouf by Moooi, POA, from ECC.



Raf Simons 2012–2015:

During his time as creative director, Belgian Raf Simons quietly and expertly honoured the Dior aesthetic while ushering it firmly into the now (gowns with pockets, anyone?). Featuring sharp tailoring and artistic combinations of colour, his magnificent first show, A/W 2012 Haute Couture – set against floor-to-ceiling backdrops of blooms at a private residence in Paris (in a nod to Christian Dior's love of flowers) and immortalised in documentary *Dior & I* – proved a sign of things to come. Under his restrained eye, classic Dior shapes became the modern garments we would all have killed to wear.

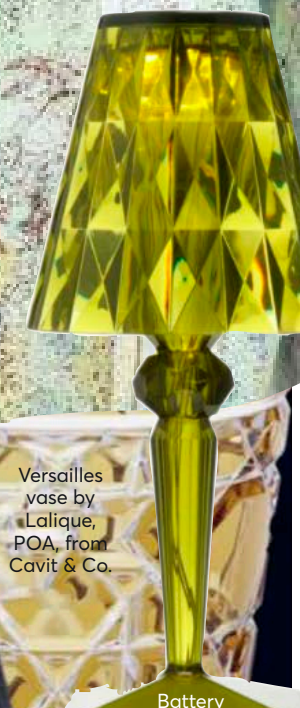
At the recent S/S 2018 show in Paris, models wore masks by British milliner Stephen Jones.



A sequined lace shift and floral-print plastic coat in the Spring 2015 couture show.



Versailles vase by Lalique, POA, from Cavit & Co.



Battery lamp, POA, from Kartell.

Africa Penlver in the A/W 2017-18 show – one of several models sent down the runway in flats.



Maria Grazia Chiuri 2016–today:

The first lady to take the lead in the label's 70-year history, Maria Grazia Chiuri is swiftly reinventing Dior's concept of femininity. Among the most talked-about pieces in her first show, Spring 2017 Ready to Wear, was her "We should all be feminists" slogan tee (a vibe she reprised for S/S 2018 RTW, as seen on model/artist Sasha Pivovarova, left), and her second show, A/W 2017-18 Haute Couture, celebrated female explorers and heroines. In January, her S/S 2018 Haute Couture collection was presented at Paris Fashion Week to rapturous applause, onlookers mesmerised by the sartorial tribute to surrealism influenced by Argentinian painter Leonor Fini, who was known for her depictions of powerful women.

