THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The Fine Art of Fashion 1700–1800
Week One: Fashion or Fancy Dress? 1700-1750

Thursday, 23 November, 3.30 – 5.30 GMT
Course Tutor: Jacqui Ansell

Overview:

Liotard was known for his unconventional dress and hairstyle, and also for creating exquisite pastel portraits that record minute details of dress. In order to appreciate his life, work and individuality it's useful to have an overview of the evolution of fashion in his day. The early years of the eighteenth century were dominated by extravagantly high hairstyles for men. Long luxuriant locks signified purchasing power - even now we call important people 'Big Wigs'. The equivalent status symbol for women were enormously voluminous skirts. With a focus on work by Hogarth and Gainsborough we will chart the key stylistic developments of the first half of the eighteenth century for men, women and children of the upper – and aspiring middle - classes.

In the second section of the session we will consider the fashion for fancy dress costume inspired by seventeenth century portraits by Rubens and Van Dyck. This was worn at masquerade balls and recorded in art. By the end of the session you should be able to determine the difference between clothing and 'costume' and appreciate the rapid pace of fashion change.

Learning Outcomes:

• Introduce Liotard, and his personal style

• Consider the main developments in fashionable dress and hairstyles 1700-1750

• Understand the key elements of fancy dress and its use in European art and culture

Glossary Terms:

Men	Women
Shirt (linen T-shape washable layer)	**Shift/Chemise** (linen T-shape washable layer)
Cravat & sleeve ruffles (lace, lawn)	**Fichu** (triangular in-fill or 'tucker' long scarf)
Waistcoat (embroidered or brocade/woven	**Stays/Corset** (linen stiffened with whalebone)
Frock coat (with turn down collar – from 1740s)	**Gown** (closed or open down front)
Doublet/Coat (no collar, heavy turn-back cuffs)	**Mantua** (most formal – with a train – for court)
Breeches (buckles at knee)	**Robe à l'anglaise** (fitting tightly at back)
Stockings (silk over linen)	**Robe à la francaise/Sack/Sacque** (loose pleat)
Shoes (lose square toes by 1730)	**Hoops** (whalebone – square in 1740s/50s)
Van Dyck dress (fancy dress)	**Van Dyck dress/habit = C17th style)**
(ribbons/roses on shoes; turn down collar with zig-zag edge; ostrich feather in hat)	(pearls worn asymmetrically; ribbon criss-crossing stomacher; feathered hat, cocked on one
Banyan/Indian Gown (fashionable undress)	**Lappets** (streamers of lace worn on the head)

Key Terms Explained in the Lectures (as the basis for your own notes):

- Bag wig
- Banyan
- Bizarre Silk
- Bobbin lace/Brussels lace
- Brocade
- Campaign wig
- Corset/Stays
- Cravat
- Damask
- Falbala/Furbelow
- Fly braid
- Fontage,
- Frock Coat
- Frogging
- Lappets
- Lawn
- Mantua
- Muslin
- Parure
- Petenlair
- Polonaise
- Queue
- Robe à l'anglaise
- Robe à la française
- Robe volante
- Robings
- Sack/Sacque
- Steinkirk

Taking it Further:

Further Reading:

- Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1 – Englishwomen's dresses and their Construction c.1660-1860,* Macmillan, 1972

- Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 20th Century*, Bloomsbury, 2017

- Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Suit: A Guide to Changing Men's Fashion from the 17th to the 20th Century*, Bloomsbury, 2020

- Francesca Whitlum-Cooper and Iris Moon, *Discover Liotard & The Lavergne Family Breakfast*, National Gallery, 2023

Online Resources:

- **The Metropolitan Museum of Art has excellent timelines and information from the Costume Institute**
    - https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?showOnly=highlights&department=8&era=A.D.+1600-1800

- **The Fashion History Timeline is an excellent, illustrated free resource:**
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/panniers/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/category/18th-century/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/robe-a-la-francaise/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1700-1709/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1710-1719/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1720-1729/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1730-1739/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1740-1749/
    - https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1750-1759/

- **Googling the dress terms listed also above yields useful results**
    - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banyan_(clothing)
    - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bizarre_silk

Visits:

Tate Britain, London – Looking at portraits in chronological layout can be really helpful to reinforce your knowledge of details of dress. Look out for masterpieces by Hogarth and his contemporaries.

The National Portrait Gallery, London – A sense of the personalities behind the portraits is useful. Plenty of 'Big Wigs' here. I recommend a look at the 'Kit Kat' club portraits of early eighteenth-century gentlemen.

The Victoria & Albert Museum, London – You will find a wealth of surviving dress here, often in surprising places. As well as the dedicated dress court there are excellent examples of eighteenth-century clothing in the Baroque galleries on the lower ground floor, as well as the Indian gallery on the ground floor, and the British Galleries on the upper floors. Definitely worth more than one visit – and virtual ones via their excellent website.

Optional homework:

- How did Liotard's dress and appearance differ from the fashionable masculine norms of his day?
- What is a 'sack dress', in which decade did it come into fashion, and by what other names is it known?

Share your homework responses with us on Padlet by clicking the link:

https://nationalgallery.padlet.org/NationalGallery/the-fine-art-of-fashion-1700-1800-week-1-ue8k6ogcufgctdy7

or by scanning the QR code: