



Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

WORTH

Inventing haute couture

7 May - 7 September 2025



Worth, *Tea gown*, circa 1897. Palais Galliera, Fashion museum of the City of Paris © Paris Musées / Palais Galliera, Fashion museum of the City of Paris / Photo Stanislas Wolff

With the exceptional contribution of the Palais Galliera, the Petit Palais presents the first exhibition dedicated to the Worth fashion house.

Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895) founded a fashion house that became the epitome of Parisian luxury and as such played a pivotal role in the history of fashion. Born in England and widely recognised as the inventor of haute couture, he established the "Worth & Bobergh" house in Paris at 7 Rue de la Paix in 1858. Headed by four generations of Worths, it was the embodiment of French refinement and savoir-faire for nearly a century.

This unprecedented retrospective, presented in the 1,100 square metres of the Petit Palais grand galleries, features more than 400 works, including clothing, accessories, *objets d'art*, paintings and graphics, forming an immersive fresco that highlights not only the creations of the House of Worth but also the illustrious names associated with the maison. The broad-ranging exhibition includes pieces from the Palais Galliera collections as well as rare and prestigious items on loan from leading international museums such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art,

PRESS RELEASE

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GENERAL CURATORSHIP:

Annick Lemoine, Chief Curator,
Director of the Petit Palais

Miren Arzalluz, Director of the
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao,
Director Emeritus of the Palais
Galliera

SCIENTIFIC CURATORSHIP :

Sophie Grossiord, General Curator,
Fashion Department, first half of the
20th century at the Palais Galliera

Marine Kisiel, Heritage Curator,
Fashion Department, 19th century at
the Palais Galliera

Raphaële Martin-Pigalle, Chief
Heritage Curator, Modern Paintings
Department (1890-1914) at the Petit
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the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Palazzo Pitti, and many private collections.

In a chronological overview of the evolution of the house from the Second Empire to the inter-war period, the exhibition reveals how Worth's international vision contributed to make the label an undisputed authority and Paris the capital of fashion.

The first part of the exhibition chronicles the beginnings of the House of Worth, from 1858 to the outbreak of the First World War, its early success and clientele. Charles Frederick Worth arrived in Paris in 1846 and began working as a salesclerk for Gagelin, a well-known textile merchant. He quickly made a name for himself and in 1858, with the Swede Otto Gustav Bobergh, founded "Worth & Bobergh" on the first floor of 7 Rue de la Paix.

The house dressed the Princess von Metternich, the imperial court and the Empress Eugénie, quickly confirming its prominence in Parisian fashion. In 1870, Worth ended his collaboration with Bobergh and his creations were from then on labelled "Worth". From daywear to opera coats, tea gowns to ballgowns, the exhibition presents Worth's inimitable style for silhouettes worn for all moments of a day.

The exhibition also highlights the house's prestigious clientele, the Italian Franca Florio, the American Lady Curzon and the emblematic Countess Greffulhe, who was the inspiration for Marcel Proust's Duchesse de Guermantes. Portraits painted by Carolus-Duran, La Gandara, Louise Breslau and others punctuate the exhibition and demonstrate these wealthy women's desire to be portrayed in their most beautiful Worth gown.

The year 1895 marked a turning point in the history of the house, when Charles Frederick passed away and his sons, Jean-Philippe and Gaston Worth, took over.

The exhibition brings to life the mythical Rue de la Paix and its many fashion houses including Paquin, Doucet and Doeuvillet. Poiret, the couturier who debuted his career at Worth, opened his own atelier in 1903. Documents and photographs provide an insight into the daily operations of the house, which involved thousands of people, from the sewing atelier to the packing department, the photography studio to the luxurious salons frequented by its international clientele.

The final section focuses on the house's new golden age in the early 20th century. Under the direction of Jean-Philippe and Gaston Worth it continued to grow. At this time, First Empire styles were making a comeback, while fashion was also responding to new societal aspirations for more understated, straight and tapered silhouettes. Worth's creations, promoted by the specialised press, such as *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, consolidated its reputation.

In the 1920s, Gaston's own sons, Jean-Charles and Jacques took control of the House of Worth which fully embraced modernity. Each season it presented new collections of coats, capes, day and

INFORMATIONS PRATIQUES

PETIT PALAIS - MUSÉE DES
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petitpalais.paris.en

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm.
Late-night opening on Fridays and
Saturdays until 8pm.

Prices

Full price: €17
Reduced rate: €15

We recommend booking a visit
at petitpalais.paris.en

Accessible to visitors with
disabilities.

evening dresses, and the house's signature "Worth blue" reigned supreme. In 1924, Worth launched its first perfume, *Dans la Nuit*. It was followed by several others with flacons also designed by Lalique such as *Vers le Jour*, *Sans Adieu* and *Je Reviens*. An exceptional collaboration with the International Perfume Conservatory Osmothèque allows visitors to experience the revived scent of *Je reviens*.

The exhibition features four videos, made by journalist Loïc Prigent that reveal the makings of four iconic garments and the behind-the-scenes process of dressing the mannequins. Various film clips and audio stations immerse visitors in the everyday hustle and bustle of a fashion house. Furthermore, an activity trail invites 7 to 10-year-olds to experience the world of fashion and help the famous couturier invent haute couture.

The exhibition proposes an immersive experience of a legendary institution that established and defined French luxury and elegance. It opens a page in the history of fashion and of a system that remains relevant, from the catwalks and the clever marketing to the invention of the great couturier, the direct ancestor of today's star designers.

Exhibition conceived and produced with

PALAIS
MUSEE DE LA MODE
GALLIERA
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

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Worth, *Evening cape*, circa 1890-1900. Grey satin and silk chiffon. Flowers in mauve and green cotton plain weave and silk-wrapped wire. Ivory silk satin lining. Palais Galliera, Fashion museum of the City of Paris CC0 Paris Musées / Palais Galliera, Fashion museum of the City of Paris