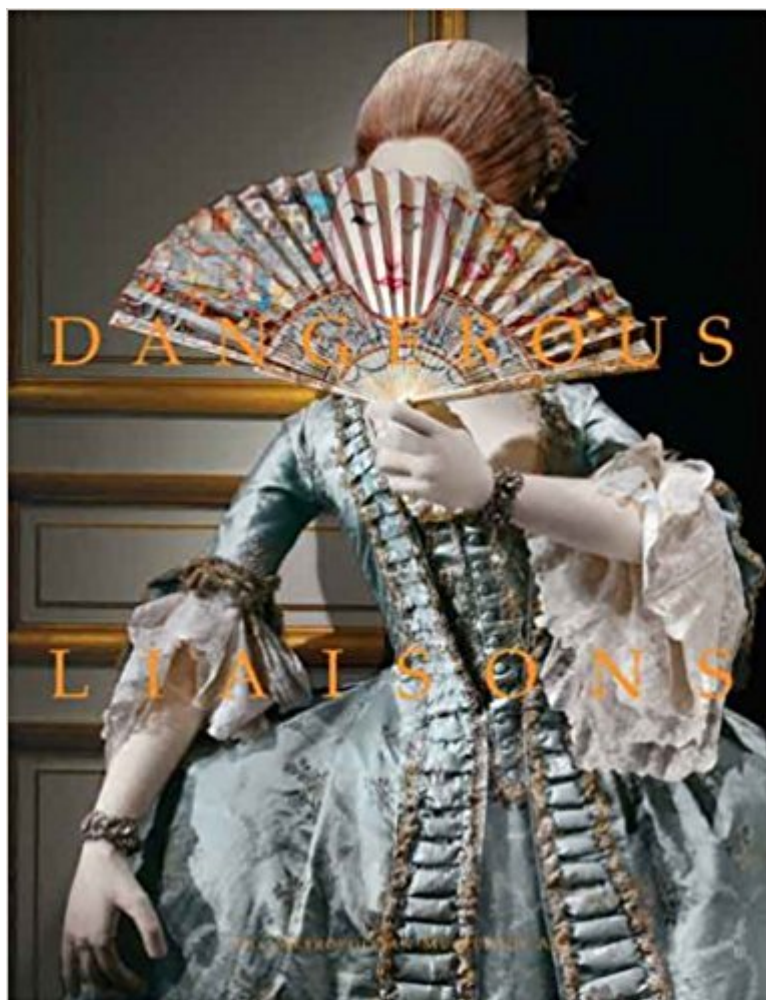


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Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion And Furniture In The Eighteenth Century (Metropolitan Museum Of Art)



Synopsis

During the reigns of Louis XV (1723-74) and Louis XVI (1774-92), fashion and furniture were not simply meant to be beautiful but were also intended to arouse, attract, and seduce. Published in response to the critically acclaimed and hugely popular exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum in the fall of 2004, *Dangerous Liaisons* focuses on fashion and its interplay with the paintings, furniture, and decorative arts of eighteenth-century France. Featuring beautiful color photographs of the exhibition's installation, details of the garments, and supplementary historical material, the book demonstrates how the extravagant clothing of the period reiterated the splendor of Rococo and Neoclassical interiors.

Book Information

Series: Metropolitan Museum of Art

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Metropolitan Museum of Art; 1st Edition edition (April 17, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300107145

ISBN-13: 978-0300107142

Product Dimensions: 12.1 x 9.4 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #683,026 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #160 in Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Furniture Design #544 in Books > Arts & Photography > Fashion > History #639 in Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Textile & Costume

Customer Reviews

During the reigns of Louis XV and XVI, fashion and furniture in France were not designed simply to be beautiful; they were also intended to arouse, attract, and seduce. This alluring book considers the interplay of French clothing and interior design in the eighteenth century and features full-color photographs from the acclaimed Metropolitan Museum exhibition.

Harold Koda is Curator in Charge and Andrew Bolton is Associate Curator of The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mimi Hellman is Assistant Professor of Art History at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York.

When I was young, I read a biography for children about the tragic Marie Antoinette, last queen of France, and found myself enthralled by the exquisite decorative arts of the time. It was a culture that viewed that every surface and substance was an opportunity to embellish and use. Sometimes the end results were overblown, but also managed to stay on the edge of good taste. In 2002, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City went through its extensive collections, and assembled a collection of rooms, clothing, everyday objects, and put them together to recreate a lost world of glamour and intrigue. Organized around a sensationalistic novella of manners and seduction, *La Maison Petit* by Jean-Francois de Bastide, the exhibit took the idea that the setting created by the aristocratic and well-to-do in eighteenth century France was not just to create a world of beauty, but one that was also meant to seduce the senses and aid in the game of sex and manners that undercut the entertainment and pastimes of the upper classes. For the exhibition, the Met took the existing French rooms that were on exhibit in their Decorative Arts galleries. Filled with the items to be found in drawing rooms, then mannikins were dressed in the period clothing -- all from the museums' extensive collection in the Costume Institute -- and then assembled in scenes of daily life. The viewer, both in the exhibition and in the catalog then becomes the voyeur, peeking into this shadowy world of delights, and just a touch of decadence. Each room of the exhibit depicts an aspect of aristocratic life, with figures engaging in conversation, getting dressed, making music, playing (or rather, cheating) at cards, two lovers being spied upon, among other activities. Along with the photographs, there are essays exploring the relationships between the aristocracy and the culture of leisure and excess that they created. One thing that I noticed clearly in this book was something that most writers never seem to mention on works on aristocratic France, and it's a telling one. The sign of a 'true' aristocrat was the appearance of never having to lift a finger, and extreme grace while doing nearly nothing. The art of moving through a room wearing cumbersome clothing -- women sometimes had to enter a room sideways with the immense skirts that they wore -- navigating through tables and chairs that often had items of porcelain, and equal delicacy on them. A *nouveau riche* could be spotted by their hesitancy, and sometimes clumsiness in handling a fragile tea service or a lace sleeve dragging through an inkwell. Another point that I really enjoyed was that these large rooms in the Met, which had before seemed too big and rather pompous, suddenly had scale with the addition of life-sized mannikins. Women with their hair dressed in towering styles appeared to fit right in, and the rooms instead became frames for sumptuous dresses and elegant courtiers in embroidered coats and vests. There were even replicas of pet dogs here and there, curled up on a chair or lolling at their mistress's feet. It's a fascinating study, and

this book is filled with the photographs from the actual exhibit, close ups of clothing and objects of art, engravings done with an eye for detail, and reproductions of paintings that helped to supply the poses and attitudes. The essays are well-written and insightful, and help to explain what is really happening in each room. At the end, there is a selected bibliography, a break down of each room -- detailing the origins of each object and the room itself -- and an index. For any student of culture, art history, or someone who wants to see some truly beautiful creations, this is a book not to be missed. Fans of the filmed versions of *Dangerous Liaisons* will have a field day with this, and perhaps inspiration to do further explorations into a world where excess was the norm, and the art of beautiful living was carried to a zenith. Five solid stars from me, and enthusiastically recommended.

A visual feast of authentic, extant, 18th Century clothing displayed on figures in historic settings. This sort of display and photography of historic clothes has seldom been seen previously. It makes the clothes come to life. The text is informative and provides some new and interesting insights into the politics of clothing of this most glamorous century.

I'm a Theatre Costume Design student. For me it's very important to be as historically accurate in my designs as possible. Sadly, there are more bad costume books out there than good ones. Since this book features pictures of actual historical costumes (costumes that were, at the point they were originally cut and sewn, physically worn), there's no doubt of its reliability as a source. I highly recommend this book not only to people like myself, who need a great book for research and inspiration, but to anyone and everyone. The pictures are high quality and excellently posed and, of course, the clothes and furniture are beautiful. Then again, 18th century France? How can they not be?

Great and unique book. why do I like it? 1. Full length color pictures on almost every page showing different scenes from wealthy 18 century house daily life. 2. Mannequins wearing original dresses, male and female, showing the full picture how people were dressed in different situations. 3. Pictures of 18 century paintings to compare styles. 4. Interesting detailed writing throughout the whole book, giving real examples from French court life and much more. 5. Great quality paper. 6. Detailed explanation of origins of every dress from every picture, as well as furniture's, in the end of the book. One of the best book of 18 century fashion I have seen so far.

This book is cover to cover color photographs of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,

including interestingly arranged vignettes that display an array of eighteenth century fashion, architecture, and furniture. It's a beautiful book with wonderful descriptions of each scene depicted. And it offers a unique examination of the eighteenth century haute ton. If you're interested in fashion history, need a resource for costumes or scenery, or are just interested in the links between high society, fashion, furniture, and architecture, then this is an excellent book to invest in. Well worth the price.

This is a fabulous insight into 18th Century French society. As a costume designer, I found the inclusion of paintings from that period, intermixed with the museum settings to be of particular interest. The close-up photographs of details were also wonderful. The text was fascinating and very enjoyable reading. It's very often tempting to take things out of context according to one's own interests. This publication opens up an intricately woven world where fashion and furniture play an equally important role in the mores of a society.

Wonderful survey of 18thc French fashions.

An incredible array of beautiful photography with amazing detail. Along with the exquisite clothing, we're shown some wonderful pieces of furniture and how they both worked for or against you in society. Recommended for all interested in the 18th century, fashion history, and wonderful photography.

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