Development of a women's costume model inspired by the fashion work of Christian Dior

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Professional paper**

As one of the most important fashion designers of the 20th century, Christian Dior and his fashion work were selected for this research. For this purpose, the cut and design of a women's costume were developed. Dior's first collection, called the "New Look", featured dresses with silhouettes resembling a lily, a flower (corolla line), and the number 8. "The Bar" jacket from this collection became synonymous with the collection itself and was frequently reinterpreted in the subsequent work of the fashion house. For this reason, the women's costume was inspired by Dior's number 8 silhouette and "The Bar" jacket. The designed models from the collection have been adapted to contemporary fashion and times. As a result of the research, in the Technological Laboratory for Clothing Technology Processes, a model of a women's costume was made according to the author's own measurements (A.P.).

Keywords: *Christian Dior; clothing construction; women's costume; clothing production*

Stručni rad**

Razvoj modela ženskog kostima inspiriranog modnim opusom Christiana Diora

Kao jedan od najvažnijih modnih dizajnera 20. stoljeća, Christian Dior i njegov modni opus odabrani su za ovo istraživanje. Tom prilikom razvijen je kroj i model ženskog kostima. Diorova prva kolekcija nazvana "New Look" prikazuje haljine čija je silueta imala oblik krina, cvijeta (corolla line) i oblika broja 8. "The Bar" jakna iz kolekcije postala je jedan od sinonima same kolekcije te je kroz daljnji rad modne kuće često reinterpretirana. Iz tog razloga ženski kostim je inspiriran Diorovom siluetom oblika broja 8 i "The Bar" jaknom. Osmišljeni modeli iz kolekcije prilagođeni su današnjoj modi i vremenu. Kao rezultat istraživanja, u Tehnološkom laboratoriju za procese odjevnih tehnologija, izrađen je jedan model ženskog kostima prema vlastitim mjerama autorice rada (A.P.).

Ključne riječi: *Christian Dior; konstrukcija odjeće; ženski kostim; izrada odjeće*

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1. Introduction

On 12th February 1947, the fashion house Christian Dior presented its first spring haute couture collection, which would shape 20th-century fashion. Disregarding recent trends, Dior created something new: an impression of softness and fragility, *la femme fleur* ("woman flower"), with tight-fitting bodices like buds that shaped a narrow waist and emphasised the bust and hips, and a skirt that expanded like a flower and rose to mid-calf. It was a fashion for a new era that softened the rigours of wartime [1].

Inspired by Dior's first collection, the "New Look", as well as his other collections up to 1956, the experimental part of this work presents designed models of women's costumes. In addition to dresses, one of the most famous pieces from the collection is "The Bar" jacket, paired with a black wool skirt in a full circle cut. The issue addressed in this work is that, although inspired by Dior, the designed models should be adapted to contemporary fashion, the present day, and the needs of modern women. This means the clothing must be comfortable, easy to wear, and should not restrict everyday movement, while still exuding the elegance and femininity characteristic of Dior's era. Instead of corsets, heavy petticoats, and various fillers that Dior used to further emphasise the natural silhouette of the female body, this work uses only garment forms and cuts that visually create the silhouette for which Dior is known – namely, a narrow waist and accentuated hips. As a result, a women's costume was created according to the body measurements of one of the authors of the paper (A.P.).

2. Theoretical part

2.1. Christian Dior's fashion work

Photographs of Christian Dior's dresses, worn by impeccably styled and coiffed models, dominated the fashion press [2]. Dior's influence on fashion and style since the mid-20th century has been extensive and powerful. His meteoric rise and international success have been hailed as the rise of a phoenix from the ashes of war-torn Paris [2]. While designing for the house of Robert Piguet, Dior created gently curvaceous styles with defined waists and full skirts, foreshadowing the look that would make him a global celebrity [1]. His later work for Lucien Lelong followed similar lines, with clothes that created a silhouette appearing softer and more feminine [1]. Dior's silhouette is strong and easily defined, consisting of a narrow waist and a full skirt, and the dresses were masterpieces of design (Fig.1) [1].



Fig.1 The “Junon” dress from the 1949 *haute couture* collection [1]

The specificity of each Dior creation emphasised the leading role of French know-how; even today, the techniques and craftsmen who made Dior's clothes can only be found in France, in the haute couture fashion houses [1]. Some of his signature design elements include provocative hints of lingerie, the déshabillé; the pairing of delicate lace with thicker wool; the use of fabrics such as flannel and tweed; and floral patterns on dresses that seem to grow around the female body. The colours on his palette were: geranium red, Dior's lucky colour; pink, which reminded him of the exterior of his childhood home in Granville; and a symphony of greys, tones that Dior considered the most elegant in all of fashion. One shade of pearl grey, still on the walls of Avenue Montaigne, became so associated with vertical house that it was called "Dior Grey" [2].

Dior revolutionised fashion season after season in the 1940s and 1950s, transforming women into different abstract forms every two years (Fig.2) [1]. Dior's haute couture collections consisted of 200 to 300 new models, shown twice a year, with each collection requiring around 5,000 hours of work [2].



Fig.2 Day and evening wear, photograph from the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Dior fashion house [1]

2.2. "New Look" collection

The collection was presented at the final haute couture show of the season by the newly established house Christian Dior. The show lasted more than two hours, and Dior's models moved with a distinctive, graceful gait, sweeping everything around them with richly pleated, voluminous skirts as they walked the narrow runway. The abundance of fabric marked a departure from thrift and mending clothes, which had symbolised wartime hardship. Dior's fashion moment represented the pinnacle of perfect fashion, perfectly timed [1].

"The New York Times" described the collection as youthful and graceful, while British "Vogue" credited Dior with reviving soporific fashion that season. Carmel Snow's detailed and euphoric reports for "Harper's Bazaar" were highly influential; she coined the term "New Look" for this style [2]. The genius of Dior's "New Look" lay in his absolute certainty in what he proposed because, as Hegel states, his spirit was fused with the spirit of his time [1]. What Dior did, and what was so new, was to offer a remedy for a world wounded by World War II, erasing the fears and limitations that still lingered. The “New Look” became a symbol of youth and the future [3].

The collection comprised two main silhouettes: the corolla line, which was dance-like, featuring a full skirt, a high-profile bust, and a narrow waist (Fig.3); and the 8 line, which was clean and rounded, with a defined bust, a waist that appeared hollowed out, with accentuated hips (Fig.4). The lines of this first spring collection were distinctly feminine and designed to flatter the women who wore them. Skirts were longer, waists were clearly defined, and jackets were often shortened, all contributing to a slimmer silhouette [1].



Fig.3 Photograph from the 1947 fashion show – “New Look” collection [1]

Key colours were described as navy, grey, taupe, and black. Each style was constructed with expert tailoring to accentuate the feminine figure. The collection’s key model was “The Bar,” an architectural marvel, made from three metres of shantung silk in a delicate ivory grey and padded at the hips for a more rounded, feminine shape (Fig.4). The jacket was paired with a pleated, voluminous black corolla skirt, at a time when fabric consumption was still limited [5].



Fig.4 "The Bar" [1]

"The Bar" is both a representation of femininity and the supremacy of high fashion [1]. Christian Dior once stated that his aim was to save women from nature; "The Bar" highlights nature, but then exaggerates it, creating an idealised version of the female body [2]. The jacket "The Bar" was allegedly named after the bar at the Plaza Athénée, which Dior often visited. The jacket was so successful in sales that it was widely copied and replicated. Dior continually reworked his main garment, which appeared in various versions in almost all of the 22 *haute couture* collections he designed until his sudden death in 1957 [5].

3. Experimental part

The paper presents three models of women's costumes inspired by the fashion oeuvre of Christian Dior, with one model selected for detailed processing and manufacture. For the chosen model, the construction, modelling, cutting parts, and the finished garment are presented.

3.1. Collection of women's costume models

Figure 5 shows sketches of three women's costume models inspired by Dior's "The Bar" costume and other collections. The common features among the models are skirts that fall below the knee, accentuated busts, single-breasted fastenings, visually narrowed waists, and jackets with peplums. The sketches display the costumes from the side, front, and back.

Model 1 from the collection (Fig.5a) was selected for manufacture. The costume consists of a women's jacket and skirt.

The jacket features a deep boat neckline with a wide shawl collar. There are no visible sleeves, but short raglan sleeves beneath the collar support the jacket and reinforce the collar. The upper part of the princess-cut jacket fits closely to the body. The fastening is single-breasted with four buttons. The lower part of the jacket forms a peplum skirt at hip height, with six pleats at the front and back.

The skirt is narrow and below knee length. From mid-thigh to hem, there are concealed godet pleats at the front and back. The skirt fastens at the side seam with a concealed zip.

Fig.6 shows the fabric to be used in the production of the women's costume model. The trade name of this material is brocade. The material has two faces, and both sides will be used in the production of the model, or the reverse side will be used to make the shawl collar.



Fig.6 Fabric for making a model of a women's costume [6]

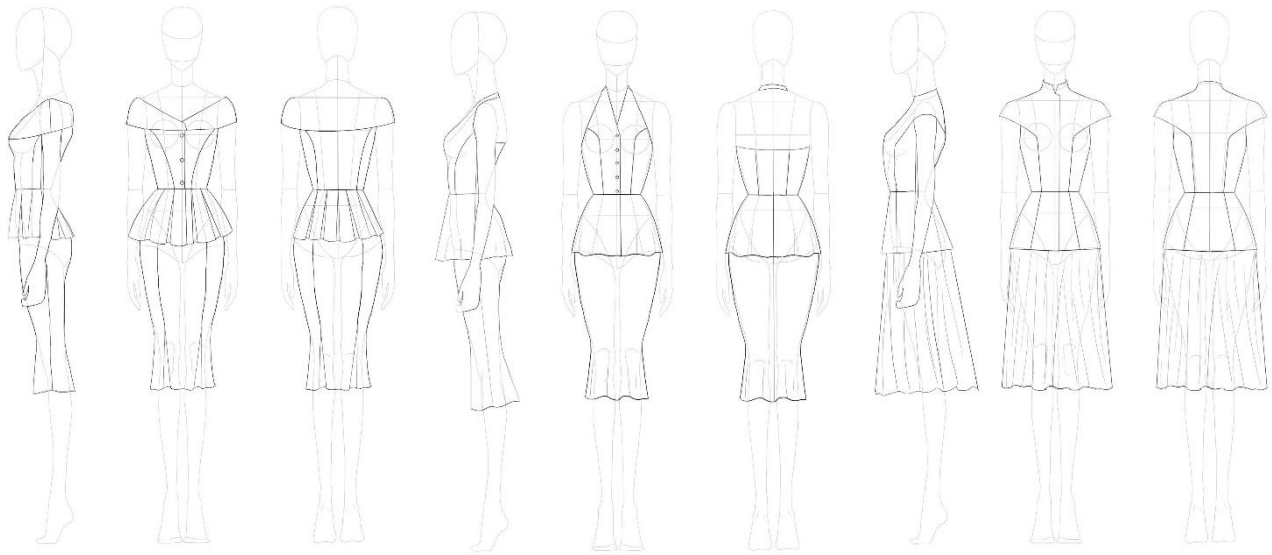
4. Results

4.1. Modelling and cutting parts of the selected women's costume model from the collection

Fig.7 shows the jacket model. Fig. 8 shows the cutting parts of the costume with seam allowances. A 1 cm seam allowance was added to all cutting parts, except for the hem of both the jacket and skirt, where 2 cm was added [6].

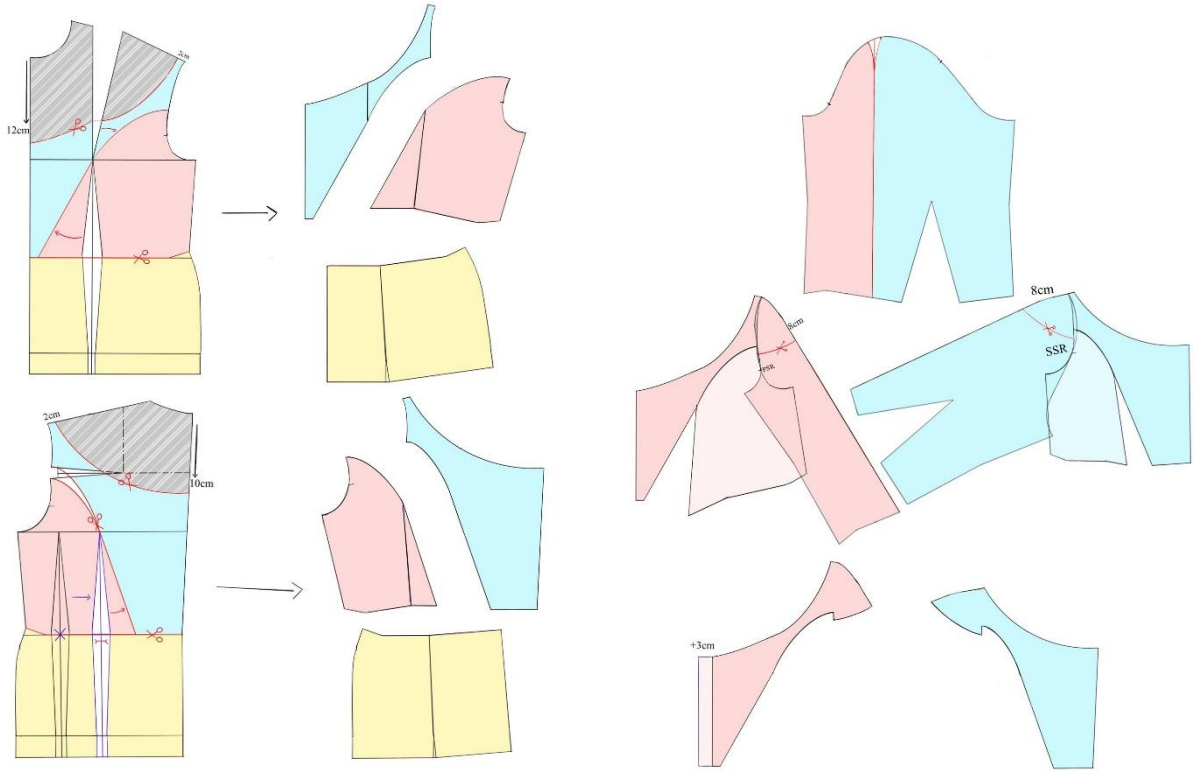
4.2. Detailed presentation of the production process and the finished model of a women's costume

The model of the women's costume consists of two parts: the upper part is a princess-cut jacket with an accentuated peplum, and the lower part is a corresponding tight skirt with inserted pleats to ensure comfort and freedom of movement.



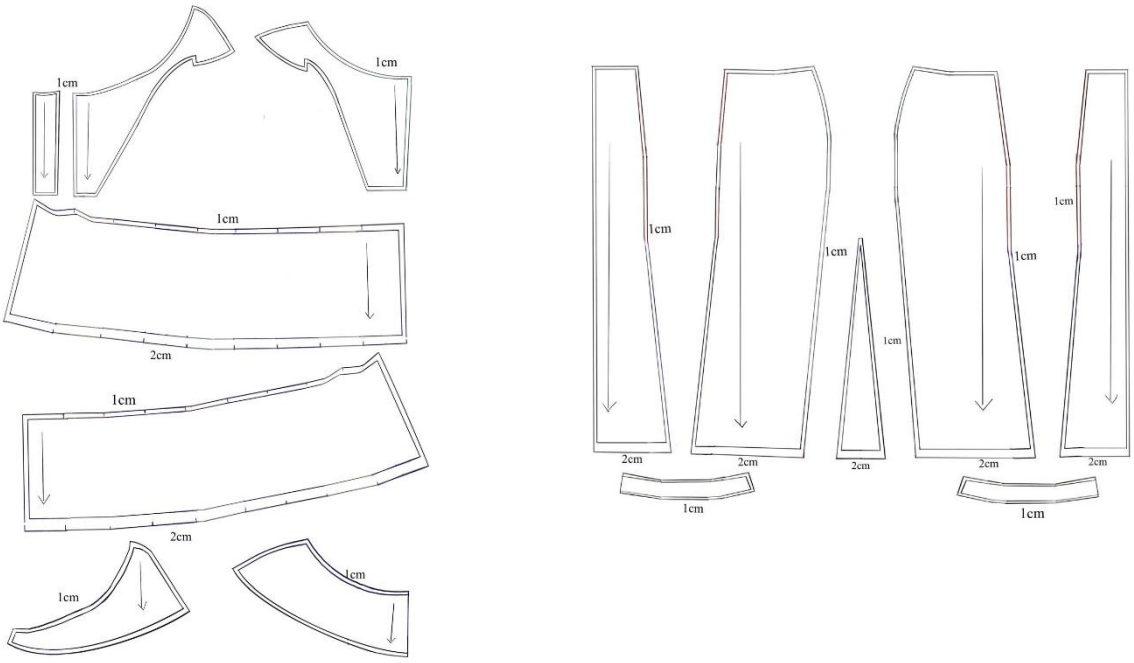
a. b. c.

Fig.5 Sketches of models from the women's costume collection: a. model 1, b. model 2, c. model 3 [6]



a. b.

Fig.7 a. Modelling the front and back of a women's jacket, b. Modelling the sleeves of a women's jacket [6]



a. b.

Fig.8 a.Cutting parts of a women's jacket with seam allowances, b. Cutting parts of a women's skirt with seam allowances [6]

Fig.9a shows the details of the women's jacket and skirt during production.

Fig.9b shows the final appearance of the women's costume, presented by the author of the work.



a. b.

Fig.9 a. View of the details of making a women's jacket and skirt, b. View of the finished model of a women's costume [6]

5. Conclusion

This paper examines the fashion *oeuvre* of Christian Dior for the purpose of inspiration and the realisation of an original model of the women's costume. When researching Dior's fashion *oeuvre*, most attention was paid to his 1947 "New Look" collection, which marked Dior's ten-year work at the eponymous fashion house, as well as fashion in general. Dior's influence on fashion and style since the mid-20th century was far-reaching and powerful, creating a "new" path for fashion. The aim of the research was to create a model of a women's costume adapted to contemporary times, but which retains the features and elements of Dior's design as part of the spring collection.

To avoid using large amounts of material and corsets, techniques involving cuts and pleating were employed to visually create the X silhouette characteristic of Dior's collections. The model was developed in the Technological Laboratory for Clothing Technology Processes at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Textile Technology. The completed women's costume model emphasises elegance and femininity in a sophisticated and modern manner.

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