

Le Théâtre de la Mode: The Décors

*“... a little theater in which [each artist]
would build his set....”*

Robert Ricci, 1945

The Théâtre de la Mode: The Décors

The general history of the *Théâtre de la Mode* is well known. In the fall of 1944, Raoul Dautry, president of l'Œuvre de l'Entr'aide Française, spoke to Robert Ricci about a project benefiting war relief efforts and showing the continuing vitality of the couture industry. Ricci, who was head of press and public relations for the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne, took the idea to an executive meeting of the Syndicale—of which Lucien Lelong was president—and it was approved. Ricci and fashion journalist Paul Caldaguès were tasked with organizing the venture and they agreed that Paris' most prominent and *en vogue* artists should be associated with it.

Caldaguès was the individual who suggested a benefit exhibition using dolls that were dressed by the couture houses. It was agreed that a new kind of doll was needed for the project. Éliane Bonabel later recalled that, “We immediately thought that these dolls should not be too solid as they would be reminiscent of a toy. I thought of something transparent...” Jean Saint-Martin was tasked with building them and Joan Rebull was asked to create plaster heads that could have coiffures and hats to complete the costumes. He only “asked that his heads not have makeup ... they should be small sculptures...”

The organizers were concerned to show off the work of each artist and couturier to its fullest advantage. Robert Ricci eventually imagined the final format: “It was I who had the idea ... of a little theater in which [each artist] would build his set ... and we would place in them the dolls dressed by the couturiers. And it was then that I thought we should name it the ‘Théâtre de la Mode.’” As one observer noted, “Little figures were to emerge and invade Lilliputian stages, the scenery of which—expressing all the enchantment of Paris—was to be worthy of their elegance.”

From this beginning (as noted by Edmonde Charles-Roux in her 1991 “The Théâtre de la Mode or the Return of Hope” essay), “The painters of Montmartre collaborated with the decorators of the ‘beau monde,’ while editors of fashion magazines and editors of art books ... set to and worked together. Adieu old rivalries! The hatchet was buried.”

A period description recalls the Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* installation at its opening:

Christian Bérard, magical creator of all these delights, had, with a sumptuous and delicate touch, organized the general setting of this manifestation, and Boris Kochno, with consummate art, was responsible for the arrangement of the figures. One passed, as in a fairy palace, from room to room where everything, bathed in the mysterious and shaded light of the crystal chandeliers, so ably handled by Boris Kochno, was hung with velvet ... and gold passementerie. And in each room, resembling the interior of a giant magic casket, were the little theatres where the marvelous world of smiling figures appeared like dream visions; the little figures, finally dressed, women at last....

Maryhill Museum of Art is now home to nine *Théâtre de la Mode* stage sets, and several rotate onto view every other year. The original décors were lost but replicated in Paris by Anne Surgers in 1988–1990, while the miniature mannequins were there being restored. The décors are well known to *Théâtre de la Mode* aficionados from museum displays and the book, *Théâtre de la Mode: Fashion Dolls: The Survival of Haute Couture* by Edmonde Charles-Roux, et al (2002).

The *Fashion Dolls* book pairs the reproduction sets with historic 1945 photos. It also provides images of four sets that are described as “The Lost Décors” (pp. 64-66). That may leave readers to believe that a



Left: Robert Ricci (French, 1905–1988) (left) and Lucien Lelong (French, 1889–1958) with a *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequin, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.

With Paul Caldaguès, these individuals were responsible for the creation and administration of the *Théâtre de la Mode*. Lucien Lelong previously played a pivotal role in keeping the couture industry in Paris during the Nazi Occupation. The Germans sought to move it to Berlin and Vienna.

The *Théâtre de la Mode* was on view in the Grand Gallery of the *Pavillon de Marsan* of the Louvre Museum from 25 March–May 1945.

total of 13 *Théâtre de la Mode* sets were created in 1945 and 1946, but that was not the case. The Paris and London versions of the *Théâtre de la Mode* each featured 12 stage sets. The 1946 New York exhibition catalogue suggests that fewer décors were shown in other European cities.

Prior to appearing in New York and San Francisco, the 1945 clothing was removed from the mannequins and replaced by new, spring/summer 1946 attire. At the same time, new stage sets were produced. Of the 12 stage sets shown in Paris and London, only five were shown in North America and three of those were modified from their original appearance. The others were newly made.

The written descriptions that follow owe much to **Louis Chéronnet** (French, 1899–1950). Chéronnet was a Paris-based art critic, journalist, and author. His publications include *A Paris ... Vers 1900* (1932) and *Paris Imprévu* (1946). He wrote about the history of the *Théâtre de la Mode*, its set designers, and its décors in the 1945 and 1946 exhibition catalogues.

Many of the historic 1945 photos here were taken by **Béla Bernand** (French [b. Hungary], 1911–1967). He was born in Budapest, studied in England, then moved to Paris in 1933 and worked there as a press photographer. In 1962, Bernand founded his own photo bureau: Agence de Presse Bernand. He took several hundred photos of the staging of the 1945 Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition and some of those photos are used here with permission of his family.

Steven L. Grafe, Ph.D.
Curator of Art

This chart compares the décors that were created for the 1945 Paris and London *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibitions and the décors that appeared in New York and San Francisco in 1946.

Artist	Paris and London (1945)	North America (1946)
André Dignimont	<i>At the Palais-Royale</i>	The Street Fair (right)
Jean-Denis Maclès	<i>Le Jardin Incomparable</i>	“Scenery for a Comedy-Ballet” (Night Scenes #2)
Georges Douking	<i>L’Île de la Cité</i>	<i>L’Île de la Cité</i> (modified) (Paris #1)
Louis Touchagues	<i>La Rue de la Paix...</i>	<i>The Street Fair</i> (left)
Jean Saint-Martin	<i>Croquis de Paris</i>	<i>Croquis de Paris</i> (redesigned) (Paris #2)
Emilio Grau Sala	<i>Matins dans le Champs-Élysées</i>	
Georges Wakhévitch	<i>Le Port du Nulle Part</i>	<i>Place des Vosges</i> (Paris #3)
André Beaurepaire	<i>La Grotte Enchantée</i>	“An Enchanted Palace” (Night Scenes #3)
Georges Geffroy	<i>Un Salon de Style</i>	“The interior decoration for the exhibition...”
Emilio Terry		“A Temple of Love” (Night Scenes #1)
Jean Cocteau	<i>Hommage à René Clair</i>	<i>Hommage à René Clair</i>
Christian Bérard	<i>Le Théâtre</i>	<i>Le Théâtre</i>
Joan Rebull	<i>Le Carrousel</i>	<i>Le Carrousel</i> (modified)

The décor titles that are highlighted in **red** are the ones that were replicated in 1988–1990 and that are now displayed at Maryhill Museum of Art. Two sets—*Hommage à René Clair* and *Le Théâtre*—appeared essentially unchanged in both 1945 and 1946. *L’Île de la Cité* and *Le Carrousel* displayed modest changes when shown in North America in 1946. The 1945 and 1946 *Croquis de Paris* décors shared a name but differed dramatically. In total, there were 20 different stage sets.

LE THEATRE DE LA MODE

LES DÉCORS

du THÉÂTRE DE LA MODE
ont été exécutés d'après des maquettes originales de

DIGNIMONT
J.-D. MALCLÈS
DOUKING
TOUCHAGUES
J. SAINT-MARTIN
GRAU-SALA
WAKHEVITCH
BEAUREPAIRE
G. GEFFROY
Jean COCTEAU
et
Christian BÉRARD

Les sujets allégoriques du Manège ont été sculptés par
REBULL

Tous les éclairages ont été spécialement réglés par
BORIS KOCHNO

Le décor musical est de
Henri SAUGUET

LES PERSONNAGES

ont été étudiés et réalisés par
Jean SAINT-MARTIN
d'après des dessins originaux d'
Eliane BONABEL

Les visages ont été moulés d'après
des sculptures originales de
REBULL

This page from the 1945 *Théâtre de la Mode* Paris catalogue lists the event's décor designers ("Les Décors") and its mannequin fabricators (under the "Les Personnages" heading).

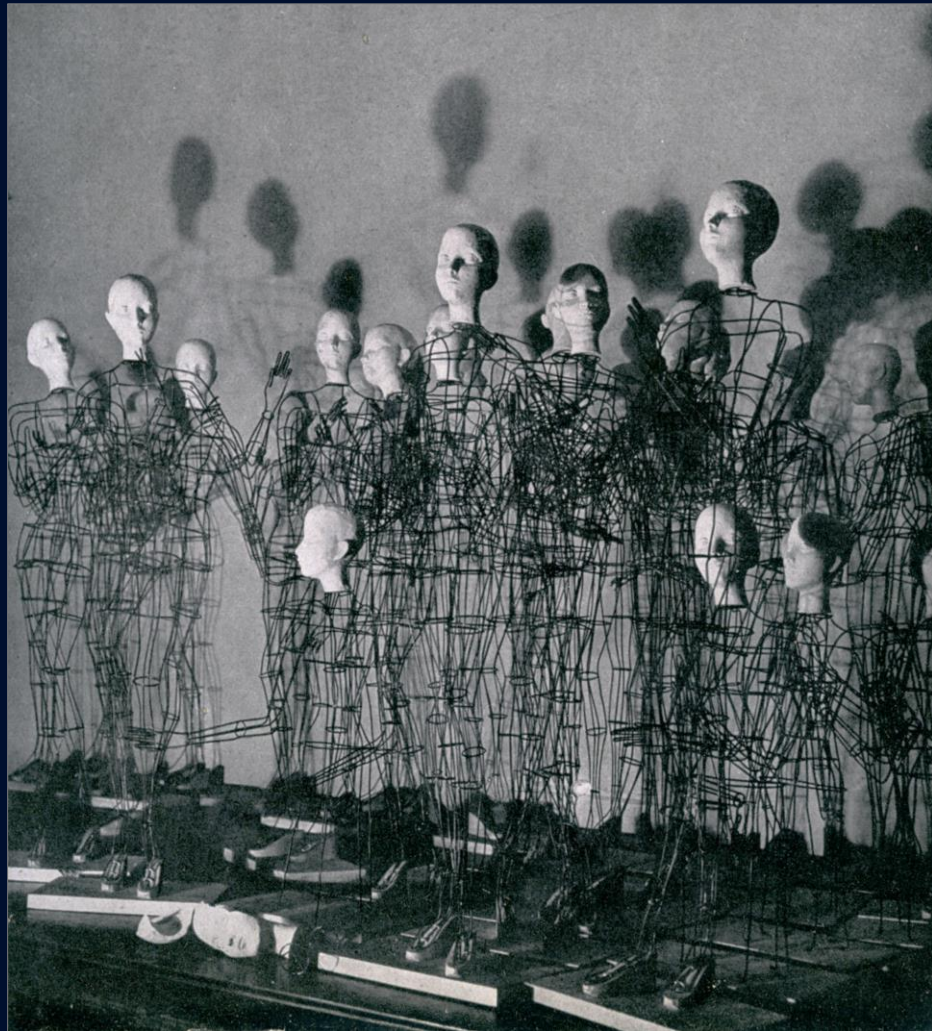
The 12 Paris décors that follow are shown in the same order as they appear in the 1945 catalogue:

André Dignimont
Jean-Denis Malclès
Georges Douking
Louis Touchagues
Jean Saint-Martin
Emilio Grau Sala
Georges Wakhévitch
André Beaurepaire
Georges Geffroy
Jean Cocteau
Christian Bérard

LES PERSONNAGES



Éliane Bonabel (French, 1920–2000) conceived the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins, an example of which appears at left. At right, Bonabel is shown with mannequins in the *At the Palais-Royal* décor, in London on September 11, 1945; photo by Bishop Marshall for the *Daily Herald* newspaper.



Théâtre de la Mode mannequin inventory from the 1946 New York catalogue (left) and Jean Saint-Martin (French, 1899–1988) in his workroom constructing wire *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.

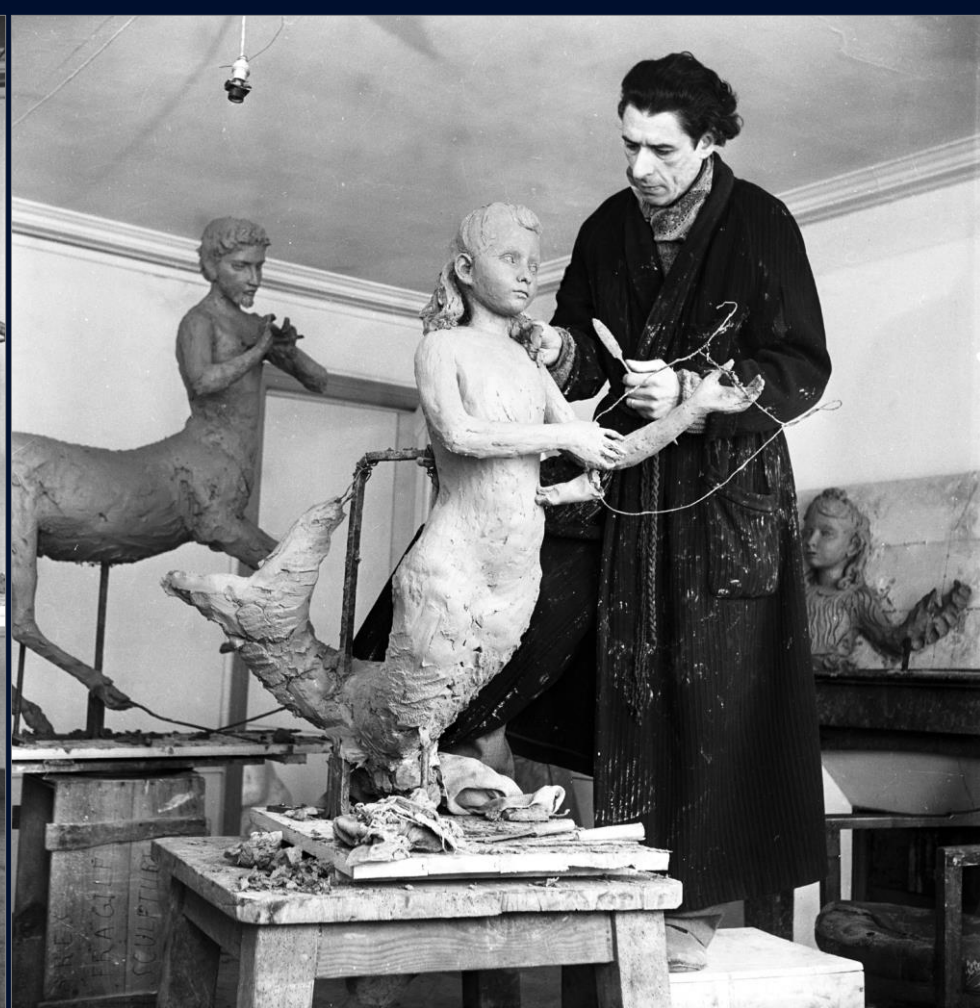
In the 1946 catalogue, Louis Chéronnet recalled that Saint-Martin's studio was "in a middle-class apartment, [and] was nothing more than a little room delightfully decorated with Éliane Bonabel's diagrams representing the ideal prototype of the female form. It looked like a miniature factory...."



Jean Saint-Martin was interested in being a sculptor, but he worked for many years for Siegel Paris, a maker of wax mannequins. He began his tenure there when he was only 16 years old.

Saint-Martin and Bonabel formed a business partnership and produced mannequins together from 1945–1968. Bonabel also continued working as an illustrator, produced window displays for Hermès, and worked on commissions for various couturiers.

Left: Éliane Bonabel and Jean Saint-Martin working on a *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequin, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Joan Rebull (Spanish [Catalan], 1899–1981) created the heads for the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins. He is shown here in his studio, with a model and among his sculptures, 1945; photos by Béla Bernard, used with permission of his family.

Louis Chéronnet in the 1946 New York catalogue: “Since [1938, Rebull] has taken root in Paris, where his delicate art is more and more appreciated. His studio is installed at the top of an old house on the left bank. There, in rough and natural clay, he models the slender bodies of young girls and children’s heads....”



"Faïence" (strapless long evening dress) by Lucien Lelong, coiffure by Charbonnier, shoes by Elie, gloves by Faré, c. 1946, 27½" tall; from Christian Bérard's *Le Théâtre décor*.



Lucien Lelong with a *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequin, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Nina Ricci (French [b. Italy], 1883–1970), 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family. The Nina Ricci fashion house was founded in Paris by Nina and Robert Ricci in 1932.



Cocktail dress by Nina Ricci, coiffure by Pourrière, shoes by Léandre, c. 1946, 27½" tall; from Jean Saint-Martin's *Croquis de Paris* décor.

LES DÉCORS

Paris, 1945



Craftsmen working on a larger-than-life *Théâtre de la Mode* figure (left, with Jean Saint-Martin standing on a crate at right) and André Dignimont's *At the Palais Royale* décor (right), 1945; photos by Béla Bernard, used with permission of his family.

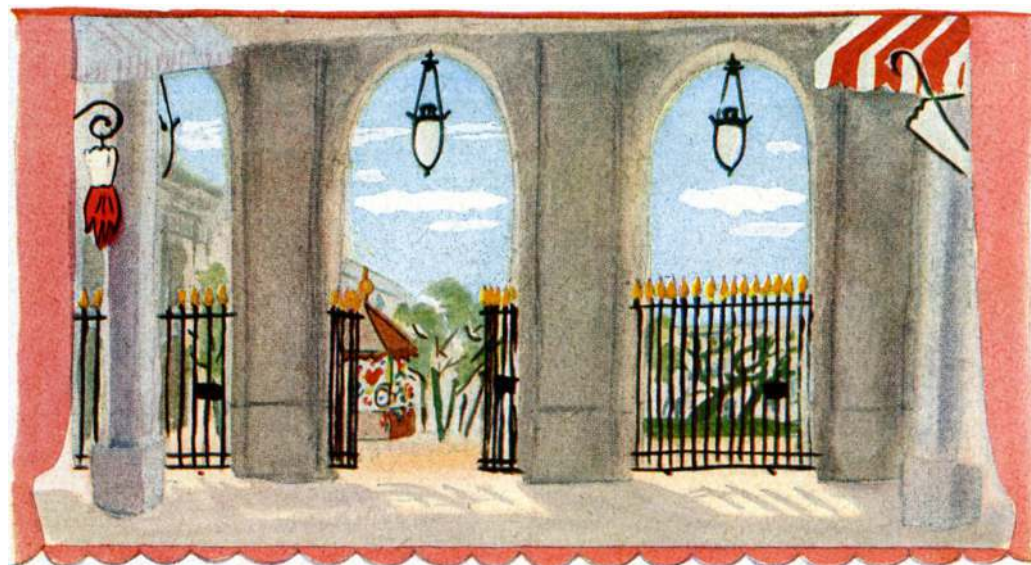
André Dignimont
At the Palais-Royale décor

André Dignimont (French, 1891–1965) worked in Paris as an artist and illustrator for more than 40 years and he is especially remembered for his watercolors. His work captures images of café life and its personalities. Dignimont also created set designs for opera and the theater. The 1946 New York catalogue says this about him:

Dignimont plays the accordion like a sailor. He has a weakness for bad boys and thinks that women in ports and suburbs; with their fine, glowing skin, make admirable models....

In the 1945 London catalogue, Louis Chéronnet describes *At the Palais-Royale*:

The Palais Royal holds so many memories that it always seems new to Parisians. Nowadays of course its long galleries are deserted, those galleries where, for nearly a hundred years, the crowds of the Revolution, the Directory and the Romantic period used to throng. In those days, the Palais Royal contained the most famous cafés and restaurants of the capital, gaming houses, and all kinds of amusements. It is now a peaceful and quiet spot with its garden like a pool of greenery in a stone setting. The shops look shabby, rather countrified. But everything bears the stamp of nobility and breeding, as well as a charm, which cannot fail to strike any passer-by. It is this atmosphere of poetry that has been so happily created in the view of this spot. On either side an old shop, with its cheerful striped awnings and old-fashioned signpost. In between the pillars, through the lantern-hung arches, the melancholy and quiet garden is to be seen, clothed in light. Let us stroll. Let us dream.



Sketch for André Dignimont's *At the Palais-Royale* décor, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946.



André Dignimont working on his *At the Palais-Royale* décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



At the Palais-Royale, original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1945 décor by André Dignimont (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. The original décor was only used in 1945.

“The Palais Royal holds so many memories that it always seems new to Parisians.... It is now a peaceful and quiet spot with its garden like a pool of greenery in a stone setting. The shops look shabby, rather countrified. But everything bears the stamp of nobility and breeding.” (Chéronnet, 1945)

Jean-Denis Malclès
***Le Jardin Incomparable* (The Matchless Garden)**

Jean-Denis Malclès (French, 1912–2002) grew up in Avignon. In Paris, he was a painter, poster and book illustrator, decorator, and a costume and set designer. During his career, he created more than 300 sets for the Digimon's opera and theater. In the 1945 *Théâtre de la Mode* London catalogue, Louis Chéronnet describes Malclès and *Le Jardin Incomparable* in this way:

Jean-Denis Malclès is still young, yet for the past seven years he has been one of the prodigies of the Salon de l'Imagerie. The Salon ... appeals especially to intellectuals since it introduces and combines good taste and original ideas in everyday subjects, such as fabrics, wallpaper, calendars, schoolbooks, packaging, and posters....

I think that in this garden, spring and his joys reign all the year round. Only the ever-juvenile woman, knowing nothing except how to laugh, to dance, to skip and to swing will be admitted....

A little madness reigns everywhere. It makes me think of by-gone garden-parties with a charming touch of "Bergeries accompanied by the tunes of violins and épinette." I remember Watteau, Verlaine, Francis Jammes! We have attained the "pays du Tendre." And the reign of phantasy, found in the republic of the young girls in full bloom....

It matters little that the brightest colours are blended together ... nothing matters! Life is beautiful. Let us always be twenty years old!

Below: Jean-Denis Malclès with a mannequin in his *Le Jardin Incomparable* décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Right: Sketches for *Le Jardin Incomparable* décor by Jean-Denis Malclès: preliminary (top) and from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue (bottom).





Le Jardin Incomparable (The Matchless Garden), original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1945 décor by Jean-Denis Malclès (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. The décor was not shown in North America in 1946.

“... in this garden, spring and his joys reign all the year round.... A little madness reigns everywhere. It makes me think of by-gone garden-parties with a charming touch of ‘Bergeries accompanied by the tunes of violins and épinette.’ I remember Watteau, Verlaine, Francis Jammes!” (Chéronnet, 1945)

Georges Douking
L'Île de la Cité décor

Georges Douking (French, 1902–1987) was a painter but he is best remembered as an actor. He appeared on stage, on television, and in more than 75 films. The 1945 London catalog links Douking's *Théâtre de la Mode décor* to the ancient Roman city of Lutetia (1st century BCE) that was the predecessor of present-day Paris. Louis Chéronnet says:

Here is the end of that isle, placed in the middle of the river, which was to produce, almost two thousand years ago, the Capital of France. A small island between two banks of the Seine. A little boat shaped island, which was quickly joined by means of two bridges to the river shores. It looks like a pebble thrown into the water, whose ripples have extended as far as the earth around in a series of concentric circles. Ancient Lutetia has grown. Her inhabitants have multiplied.

They have drained marshes, cleared forest, built walls, which the centuries have since effaced, carved out roads of which some are still traced on present-day plans. And Paris was born. Paris, which is a world, but which always remembers, even in its coat of arms, that it drew life from among strong, rhythmic waves. And the City is still there, including to the East the Cathedral, then in the Centre its Law Courts, its Police Courts which were to be the first bastion, during the wonderful days of the Liberation, of the revolt against the forces of the oppressor. Finally, when the sun sets, this whole, composed merely of a majestic double bridge, of two old pink houses and a stretch of earth, becomes a green and victorious patch advancing in the river. It is this end which is here shown us in its halo of all the colors of the rainbow.



Sketch for *L'Île de la Cité décor* by Georges Douking, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue.



Georges Douking with mannequins in his *L'Île de la Cité décor*, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



L'Île de la Cité, original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a décor by Georges Douking (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. This décor is based on the 1945 prototype. A modified version appeared in North America in 1946.

“Here is the end of that isle, placed in the middle of the river, which was to produce, almost two thousand years ago, the Capital of France. A small island between two banks of the Seine.... And Paris was born.” (Chéronnet, 1945)

Louis Touchagues
La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme décor

Louis Touchagues (1893–1974) began his artistic career in Paris in 1923, where he worked as an illustrator and magazine designer. He is also remembered as a muralist, interior decorator, and as a creator of theater sets and costumes.

The artist and his set are described in the 1945 London *Théâtre de la Mode* catalogue:

I have always thought that the uniform of the Foreign Legion would suit Touchagues very well. He looks like a “tough guy.” And I should think that some tatooings—naturally of his own design—would go very well as illustrations against his dark skin....

In the theatre his décor is not merely a background—it is part of the show. Sometimes, even, you feel that it is that which gives the note for the acting of the players by its strength and symbolism....

Like others, he too feels the appeal of the retrospective aspect of the 19th century and responds to the effects that can be derived therefrom—what I might call the primitivism of our modern times....

There is no spot in the world where the “Rue de la Paix” or “Place Vendôme” do not conjure up smart and luxurious elegance. Indeed, that street and that square do really represent the aristocracy of French creativity. They comprise a heart, a mind, an intelligence, which foresee, decide, conceive, select, and also the hands which work: all have an innate taste, an instinct for the beautiful which approached the miraculous.



Louis Touchagues working on his *La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme* décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Sketch for *La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme* décor by Louis Touchagues, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946.



La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme, original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1945 décor by Louis Touchagues (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. The décor only appeared in Paris in 1945.

“There is no spot in the world where the ‘Rue de la Paix’ or ‘Place Vendôme’ do not conjure up smart and luxurious elegance. Indeed, that street and that square do really represent the aristocracy of French creativity.” (Chéronnet, 1945)

Jean Saint-Martin *Croquis de Paris* (Paris Sketch) décor

Jean Saint-Martin had helped create a new style of model for Paris' 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Moderne. He progressed to creating mannequins in wire. The figures were widely used for publicity purposes, interior decoration, and in high-end fashion boutiques. In 1945, Saint-Martin used the same bent-wire technique he had used when creating the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins to create his *Croquis de Paris* stage set. It outlines famous Paris landmarks—at the center of the scene is Montmartre, crowned by the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paris. Louis Chéronnet says this about the artist in the 1945 London catalogue:

Quite early in his career, Jean Saint-Martin was attracted, not so much by actual sculpture as by the desire to create a more lifelike type of feminine figure for show purposes. For him it was not a question of reproducing the classic figure of a woman but to invent a modern figurine which would take the place of the old-fashioned and hackneyed type of mannequin.

It should be explained here that, from the start, Jean Saint-Martin was intensely interested in the art of display. It had fallen into a rut and appeared content to remain a stereotyped and uninspired thing....

In Jean Saint-Martin, we find a perfect combination of the artist and the artisan. It is he who made the actual mannequins for this exhibition. It is he who cut, twisted, and joined the metal wire of which they are composed in a tiny room transformed by him into a veritable Vulcan's forge. A tiny "factory," its walls were decorated with drawings by Éliane Bonabel depicting the ideal feminine form. Gradually it filled with his supple wire frames. Like etchings come to life, and the touch of his fingers.



Preliminary drawing for the *Croquis de Paris* (Paris Sketch) décor by Jean Saint-Martin, from the 1945 Paris catalogue. This décor was redesigned before being shown in North America in 1946.

Jean Saint-Martin working with the wire in his *Croquis de Paris* (Paris Sketch) décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family. Saint-Martin's maquette can be seen in the left foreground.



Croquis de Paris (Paris Sketch), original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1945 décor by Jean Saint-Martin (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. A modified version of this décor appeared in North America in 1946.

“In Jean Saint-Martin, we find a perfect combination of the artist and the artisan. It is he who made the actual mannequins for this exhibition. It is he who cut, twisted, and joined the metal wire of which they are composed.” (Chéronnet, 1945)

Emilio Grau Sala

Matins dans le Champs Élysées (Morning in the Champs Élysées) décor

Emilio Grau Sala (Spanish [Catalan], 1911–1975) was a well-known painter who studied in Barcelona but fled to Paris at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936). Chéronnet says (1945):

If you do not know the charm of a fine morning in Spring in the Champs Élysées or the Avenue Foch, near the Bois de Boulogne, you do not know one of the most characteristic charms of Paris. A light and soft atmosphere seems to float beneath a sky of tender blue. Through the fresh green leaves of the trees... the sunlight penetrates and makes trembling splashes of gold on the soil. The smallest colour shades ... and ... still more those of the flowers in the gardens, take on an amazing intensity! In such spots the necessities of 1945 make a deliriously “Pre-1914 war” atmosphere: the horse cabs and bicycles pass one another on the roads which have become silent and free of dust. And all this, which Grau Sala has felt very distinctly, he who is a connoisseur in Parisian elegance, adds still more to that charm which attracts the Parisians for their walks. Such an atmosphere gives them free play for any eccentricity, gives them the courage to bring out the most daring of fashion’s creations.

As this joy and happiness are in the air, we have only to allow ourselves to enjoy these vivid tones so light and lively, and to revel in the pleasure of the most varied inspirations. Here all styles may confront one another. Fashion seems to have slackened its iron discipline. One glance is enough to show this....

And so, with all the others which fill us with pleasure, and create that inimitable atmosphere which may be termed... Paris Chic....



Sketch for the *Matins dans le Champs Élysées* (Morning in the Champs Élysées) décor by Emilio Grau Sala, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946, nor did Grau Sala provide another.



Emilio Grau Sala with a mannequin in his *Matins dans le Champs-Élysées* (Morning in the Champs Élysées) décor, Paris, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Matins dans le Champs-Élysées (Morning in the Champs Élysées) décor by Emilio Grau Sala as it appeared in the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. The décor was only used in 1945.

"If you do not know the charm of a fine morning in Spring in the Champs Élysées or the Avenue Foch ... you do not know one of the most characteristic charms of Paris." (Chéronnet, 1945)

Georges Wakhévitch
***Le Port du Nulle Part* (The Port of Nowhere) décor**

Georges Wakhévitch (French [b. Ukraine], 1907–1984) was born in Odessa but moved to Paris as a teenager. Although he studied painting, he is remembered as a designer of costumes and sets for the stage—the theater, ballet, and opera—in both Paris and London.

The 1945 London catalogue includes Louis Chéronnet's word picture of this *Théâtre de la Mode* décor:

Have they just landed on the quay-side or are they ready to go off in the ghost-boat, all these smart women in afternoon dresses who look as though they had made such a strange halt only to have a cocktail? But where is the bar, or even the sailors' taverns on this god-forsaken jetty, surrounded by a Roman ruin draped with a blue fishing net like a gigantic spider's web?

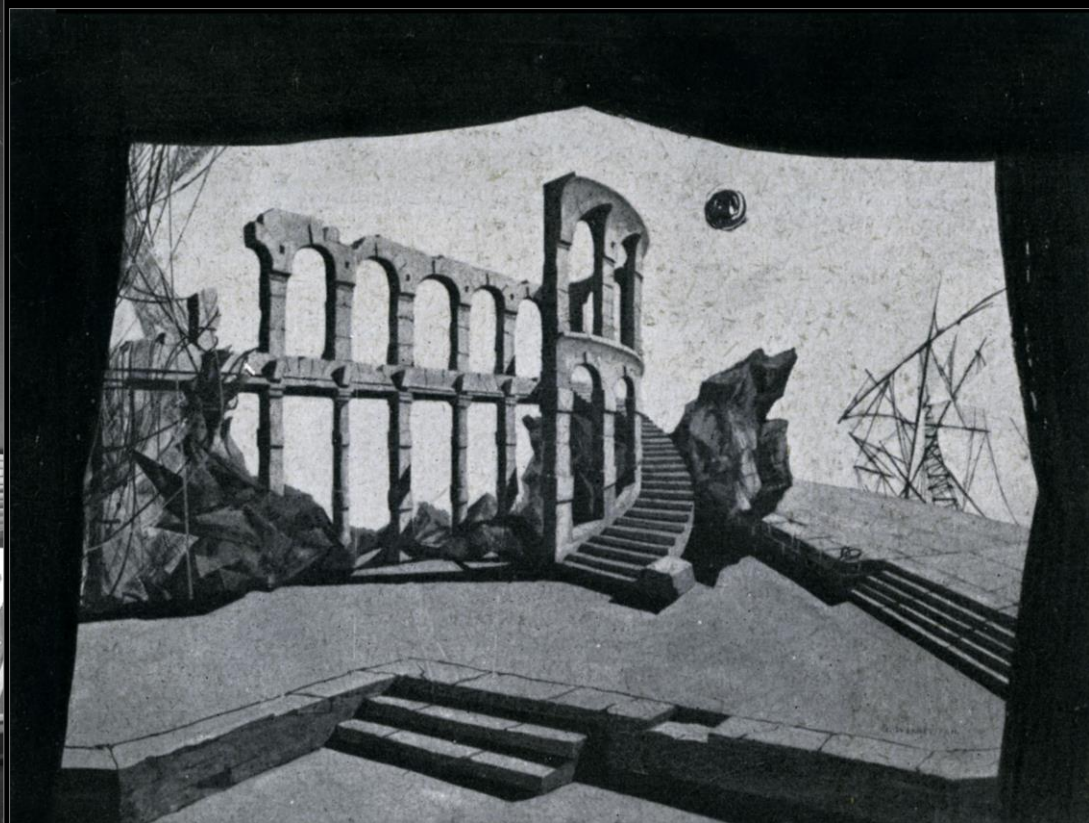
In the background the wind makes the sails of the brig dance like the wings of a russet-coloured bat in the splendour of the setting sun.

What conquerors have already passed through here? Empire builders or pirates, drunk with liberty, gold, or tropical spirits?

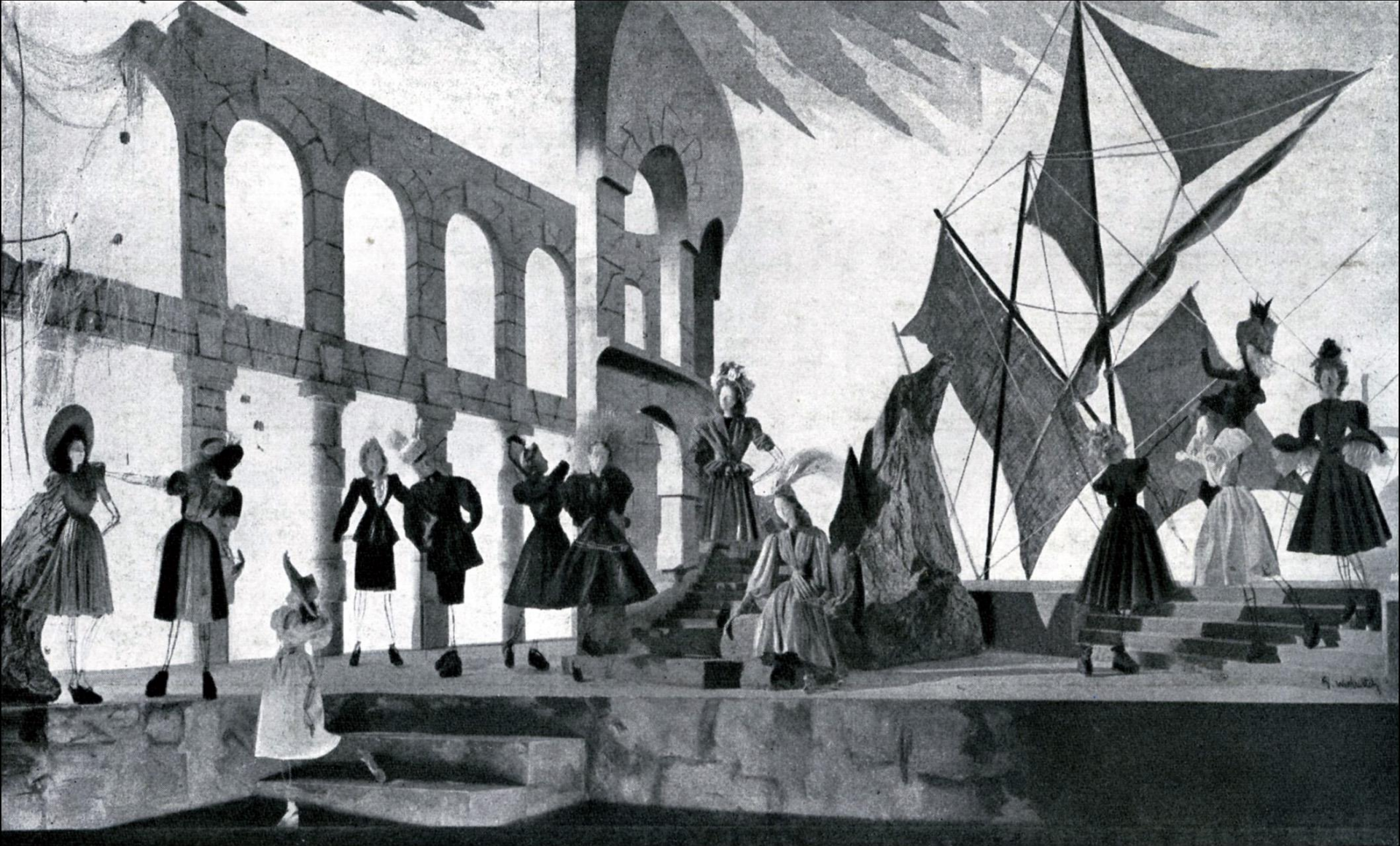
But these women are alone. One of them, like a home-sick emigrant, is seated on the steps of a staircase and dreams of yet more countries. Another one, her hands cupped, calls her companions. The others stroll about at the same pace they would in Hyde Park, the Champs Élysées or on 5th Avenue.



Georges Wakhévitch working on his *Le Port du Nulle Part* (The Port of Nowhere) décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Sketch for *Le Port du Nulle Part* (The Port of Nowhere) décor by Georges Wakhévitch, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946.



Le Port du Nulle Part (The Port of Nowhere) décor by Georges Wakhévitch, from the 1945 Paris catalogue.

“Have they just landed on the quay-side or are they ready to go off in the ghost-boat, all these smart women in afternoon dresses who look as though they had made such a strange halt only to have a cocktail?”
(Chéronnet, 1945)

André Beaurepaire
***La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto) décor**

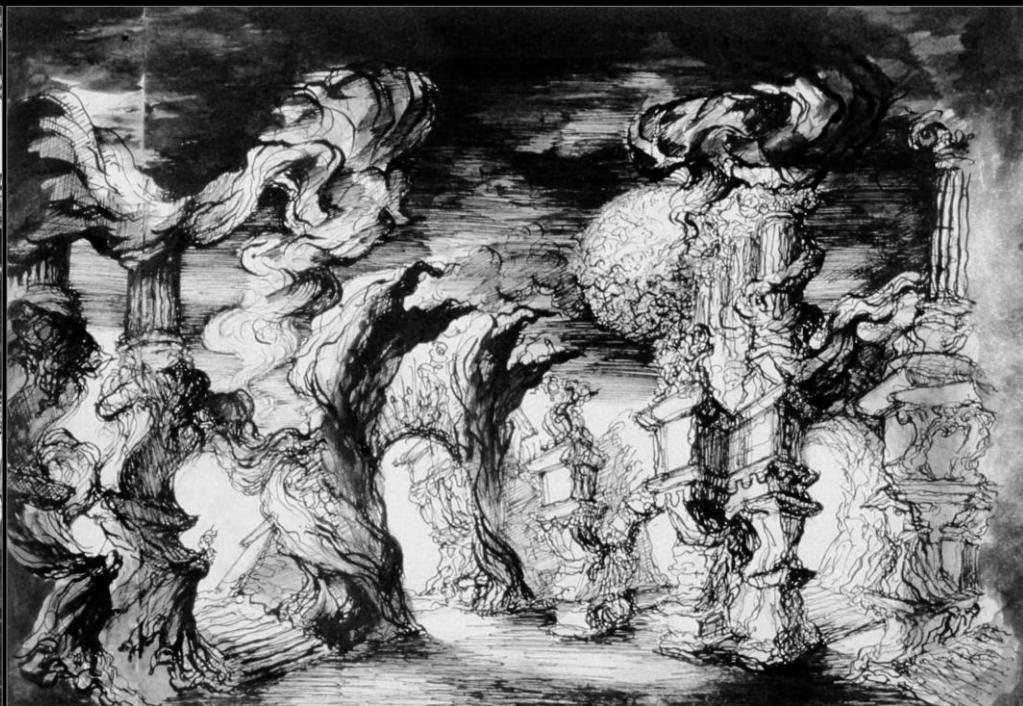
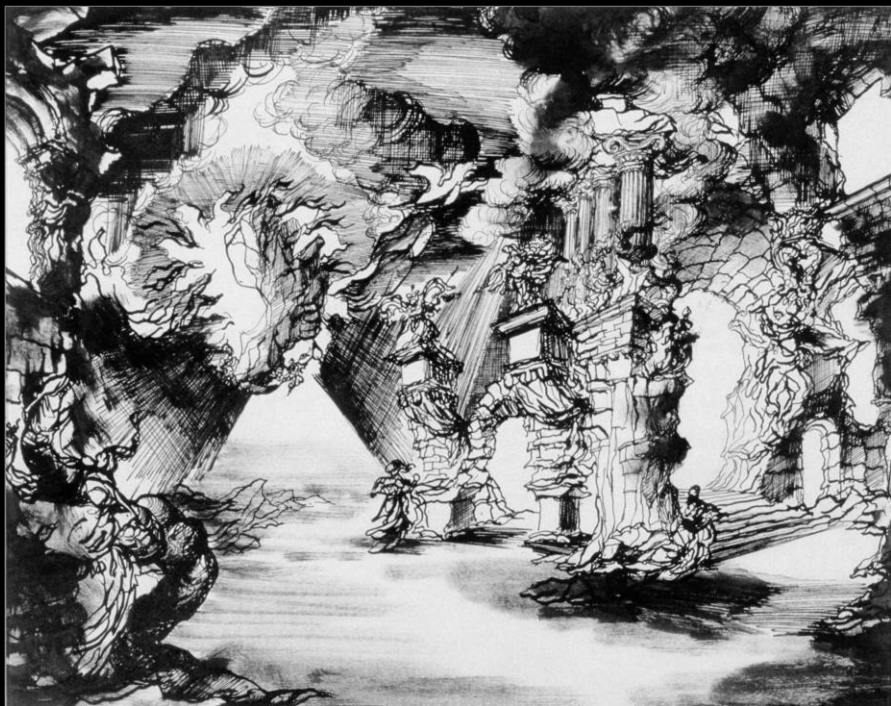
André Beaurepaire (French, 1924–2012)—at age 20—was the youngest of the *Théâtre de la Mode* set designers and his participation in the undertaking gave his career a boost. In addition to his career as a painter, Beaurepaire designed costumes and sets for the Opera de Paris, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Royal Opera House in London, and the Royal Opera in Amsterdam.

Louis Chéronnet described *La Grotte Enchantée* in the 1945 London catalogue:

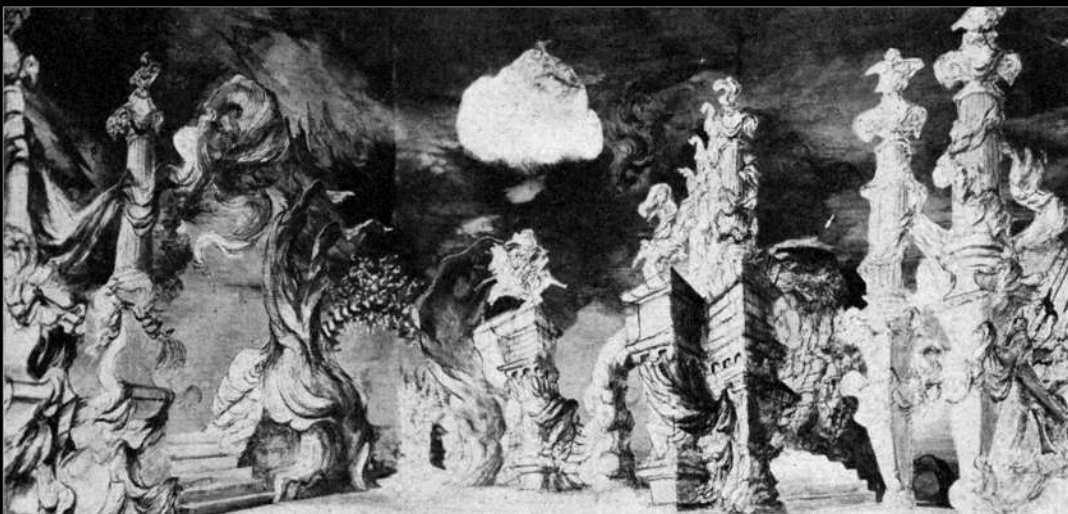
We find ourselves here in a wonderful spot, a fairyland such as is only to be seen in dreams. From out of the ground appears to rise a fantastic architecture of gigantic pillars, of draperies static in the tumult of a great storm, of plumed trophies, of rugged rocks, of walls as strong and massive as those of Piranesi, of staircases coming from everywhere and leading nowhere, of majestic mantlings, of half-ruined arches linked by waving garlands ... Yet this wild and striking architecture has not the many colours of marble, it is not illuminated as are frescoes and tapestries: its originator has intended to remain in the tones of a delicate grey cameo.

An ingenious device increases even more the unreal effect of such a construction and shows up in a sumptuous fashion the deep colouring of the dresses which ... materialize out of an atmosphere of mist....

The time has come for the magician to arrive who is to free these captives from an enchanted spot, so that they may resume the position due to them in the splendours and the luxury of the real world....



These preliminary sketches by André Beaurepaire for his 1945 *La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto) décor were shown in the 1990 Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition. They were loaned by the artist.



This final sketch for *La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto) décor by André Beaurepaire appeared in the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. The décor was not shown in North America in 1946.



Craftsmen working on André Beaurepaire's *La Grotte Enchantée* décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Craftsmen working on André Beaurepaire's *La Grotte Enchantée* décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



André Beaurepaire adjusting part of his *La Grotte Enchantée* stage set, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



This three-dimensional, small-scale mock-up of André Beaurepaire's 1945 *La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto) décor was created by Anne Surgers while the *Théâtre de la Mode* fashions and its mannequins were in Paris for restoration in 1988–1990. The mock-up was made prior to production of the replica stage set that is now at Maryhill Museum of Art. It was shown as part of the 1990 *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition in Paris.



La Grotte Enchantée (The Enchanted Grotto), original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1945 décor by André Beaurepaire (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946.

"We find ourselves here in a wonderful spot, a fairyland such as is only to be seen in dreams. From out of the ground appears to rise a fantastic architecture of gigantic pillars, of draperies static in the tumult of a great storm, of plumed trophies, of rugged rocks, of walls as strong and massive." (Chéronnet 1945)

Georges Geffroy

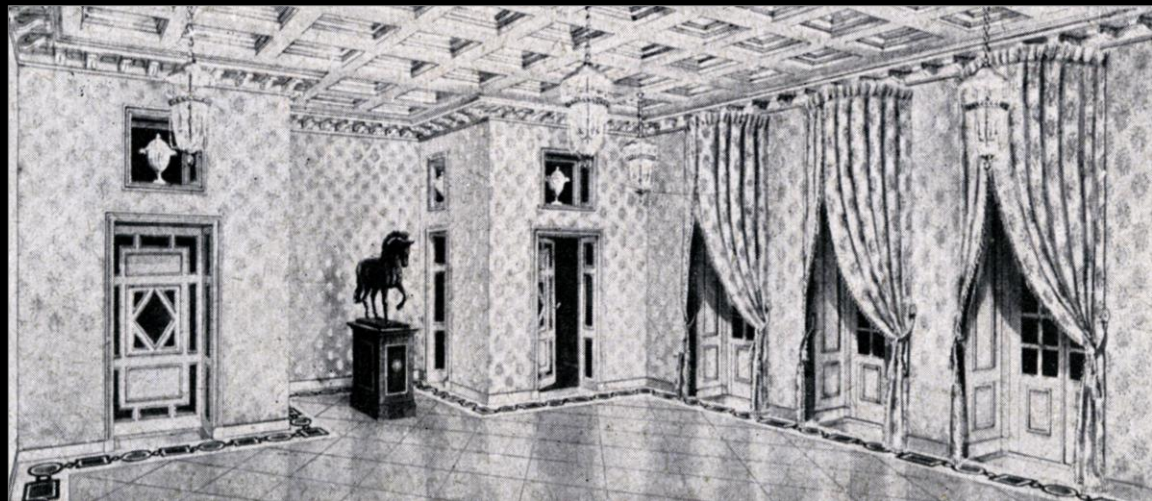
Un Salon de Style (An At-Home) décor

Georges Geffroy (French, 1903–1971) was a celebrated mid-century interior designer. A contemporary described him as “handsome, slightly Asian in countenance, a snob, and part of Café Society.” As a young man, Geffroy worked in the fashion industry producing hats for Redfern and Paul Poiret and designing clothes at Jean Patou. By the 1930s, he was working as an interior decorator and designing theater sets. His life is profiled in Maureen Footer and Hamish Bowles, *Dior and His Decorators: Victor Grandpierre, Georges Geffroy, and the New Look* (2018).

Louis Chéronnet's 1945 description of Geffroy's *Un Salon de Style* décor says:

Look at this drawing room belonging to some aristocratic home! Beyond the heavily curtained windows we feel the presence of the town with its glamour, its lights, and its crowd. But we really want to forget all those details. This drawing-room is like the inside of a golden casket. Everything is golden! The hangings, the curtain folds, the caissons of the ceiling. Some flower vases in a niche and a bronze horse are the only decorative elements of this room in spite of sumptuous simplicity. Why load its walls with pictures and its glass cases with all kinds of trinkets? Luxury and wealth exist in the proportion of its surfaces, and in the rhythm of its openings, there is something superlative in this golden bareness. Our attention is not distracted and concentrates itself on the noble elegance of those party dresses; long, high necked robes....

“Come in!” says the hostess to her friends. You are at home: your movements should be full of harmony to set off so much refinement in the art of draping and pleating the materials....



Sketch for *Un Salon de Style* (An At-Home) décor by Georges Geffroy, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue. This décor was not shown in North America in 1946.



Georges Geffroy during the construction of his *Un Salon de Style* (An At-Home), 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Un Salon de Style (An At-Home) décor by Georges Geffroy as it appeared in Paris in 1945; photo by Pierre Jahan (French, 1909–2003). The décor was only used in 1945.

“Look at this drawing room belonging to some aristocratic home! Beyond the heavily curtained windows we feel the presence of the town with its glamour, its lights, and its crowd. But we really want to forget all those details. This drawing-room is like the inside of a golden casket.” (Chéronnet 1945)

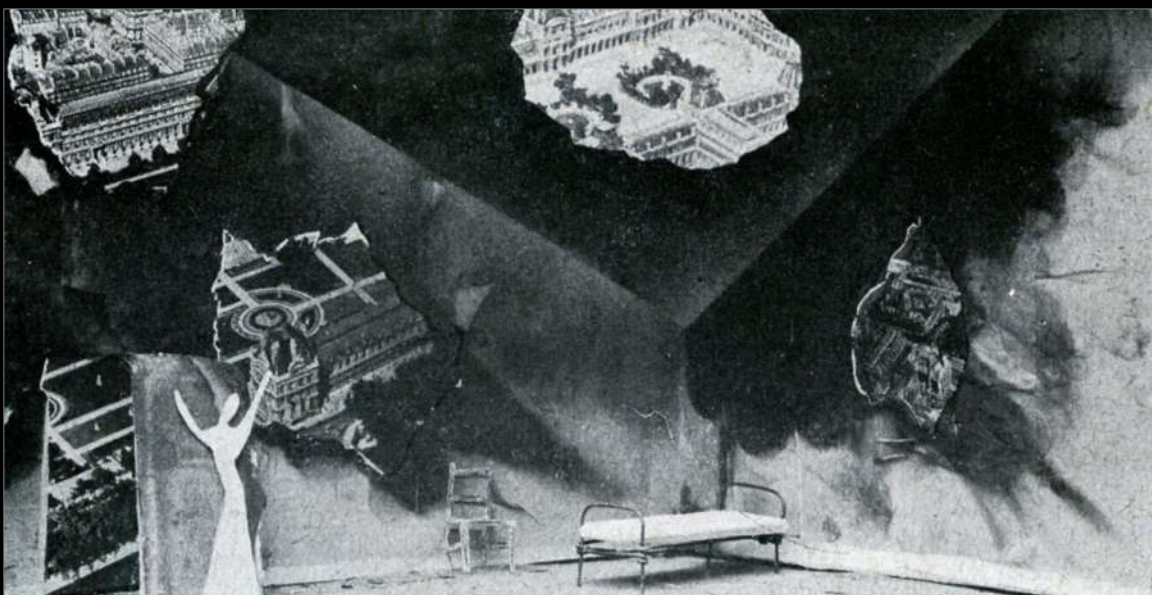
Jean Cocteau

Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Sorcière (My Wife is a Witch) décor

Jean Cocteau (French, 1889–1963) was a poet, novelist, playwright, librettist, screenwriter, director, and visual artist. In 1945, he used his décor to pay homage to French filmmaker René Clair (1898–1981). It was the sole *Théâtre de la Mode* set to show a scene of war and destruction. Louis Chéronnet says:

Here Jean Cocteau has wished to render tribute to René Clair, author of the film “I Married a Witch.” He has intended to conjure up the fantastic atmosphere of that exquisite film. In one stroke he has succeeded.... Everything is there: the feminine doubling, the devilry mixed with charm and drama, the rhythm of the film, and its colour. All this is already well depicted. But there is more to come.... Another variation ... has been added to the chief theme. For a bridal chamber to burn, explode and the bride to escape astride a broomstick which is the distinctive symbol of her true inner nature and of her supernatural powers: that is comedy. But five years of war, with those nights which no one has yet forgotten, have given another meaning to such a scene. The imaginary, the incredible, here become an everyday occurrence and nothing out of the ordinary.

For a view of Paris to appear beyond the gaping cracks and it is no more a matter of inner humour, but of drama from the outside. That spot seems at once to have made a terrible rendez-vous with Fate. The miracle lies in the fact that this kind of superimpression appears normal to us and that our sensibility, now touched by this anachronism, this derivation, perceives beyond the tribute restricted to a given work, a much rarer tribute, much deeper, to a city which, in spite of its sufferings, sorrows, and dangers, continued to create, to persist in maintaining with dignity ... its reputation for good taste in creation and for quality in its realizations.



Sketch for the *Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Scorcière* (My Wife is a Witch) décor by Jean Cocteau, from the 1945 Paris exhibition catalogue.



Jean Cocteau (French, 1889–1963) at right, and Jean Saint-Martin with mannequins in the *Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Scorcière* (My Wife is a Witch) décor, 1945; photo by Béla Bernand, used with permission of his family.



Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Sorcière (My Wife is a Witch), 1946 fashions and mannequins from a 1945–1946 décor by Jean Cocteau (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art.

“Carried away by his idea, Jean Cocteau has exceeded his intention. Another interpretation has grafted itself onto the principal theme.... Five years of war and nights of which nobody has yet lost the memory may give another meaning to the scene.” (Chéronnet, 1946)

Christian Bérard

Le Théâtre décor

Louis Chéronnet's 1945 descriptions of Christian Bérard and his *Le Théâtre décor*:

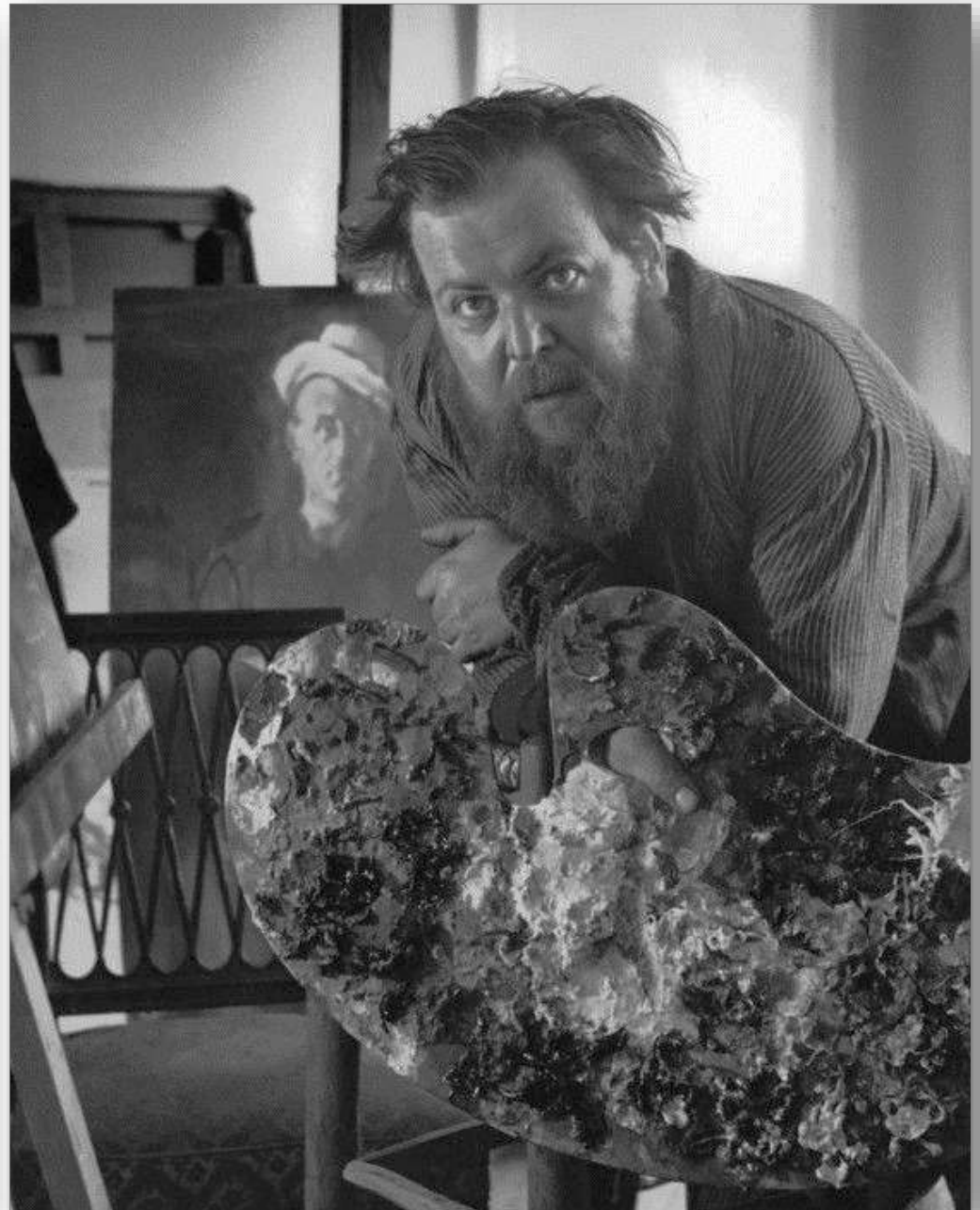
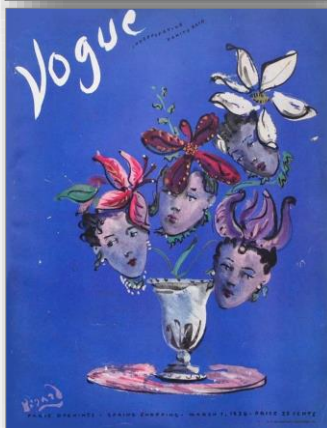
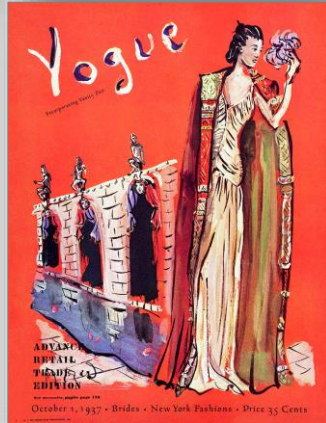
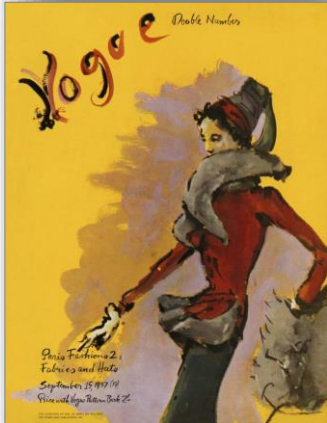
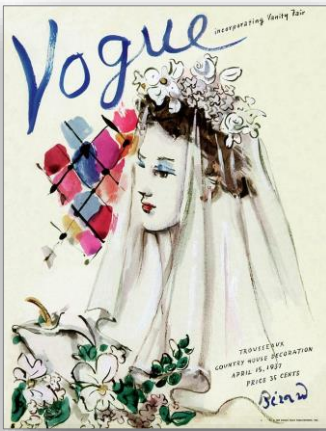
It was while he was working for "Vogue" and "Harper's Bazaar" that he created an entirely new style of fashion drawing, an art which since the early endeavors of "Bon Ton," carried out by a previous generation of artists, had made little headway.

At the same time Christian Bérard quickly acquired a well-deserved renown as a scenic designer....

This [décor] gives an authentic picture of all we are accustomed to include under the name of theatre. Pure, bewitching theatre, like the one we have dreamt of since childhood, when we were building our first puppet show. Still more so, when our memory calls back the theatres of our first evenings in one of those wonderful places where, during three hours, you could live a different life. Fabulous happenings, made of gold and purple in the magic blaze of the lights....

The actors in their luminous realm lose their own personality and embody in our own mind our wish to be "someone else" together with those wishes and those fears which we dare not always acknowledge to ourselves....

During the pauses, when we emerge from the seductive mystery of the house, how gratefully do we realize that the theatre is not a place like all the others but resembles a house with rooms full of wonders: majestic hangings, complicated statues, glistening pictures, dazzling chandeliers, prospects of long rows of columns ... all endlessly reflected by multifold mirrors.



Vogue covers by Christian Bérard, 1936–1939.

Christian Bérard in his studio, 1944. Bérard served as the overall artistic director for *Théâtre de la Mode*.



“Good fairies must have been at the christening of this Dionysius who, pink-cheeked, red-bearded, velvet-coated, might have been painted by Renoir. They endowed him with their most exquisite gifts. A few splashes of colour, which seem to have fallen just by chance ... are enough to allow Christian Bérard to bring to life the most fugitive, the most ephemeral effects of movement and light.”
(Chéronnet, 1945)

Left: Christian Bérard working on his *Le Théâtre décor*, “Jacinthe” in the foreground, 1945; photo by Béla Bernard, used with permission of his family.



Le Théâtre, 1946 fashions and mannequins from a 1945–1946 décor by Christian Bérard (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art.

Joan Rebull
***Le Carrousel* (The Merry-Go-Round) décor**

Joan Rebull was responsible for creating all the heads for the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins. In the 1945 London catalogue, Louis Chéronnet says this about Rebull's original *Le Carrousel* décor:

This roundabout does not move. It has stopped with its menagerie of mythological Centaurs, Sirens, Unicorns and Pegasus, just as in the castle of Sleeping Beauty. And the princesses who, in all their finery, attended the last ball, have also stopped their dance. They are motionless in attitudes full of a royal grace.

How well they know, while seated on the steps, as though they were on horseback, how to spread the full draperies of their dress like a flower, to lean negligently on the necks of the fantastic animals (they appear to have tamed them once and for all). As masters of horsemanship, they ride their unbridled mounts.

They will have to await now the Prince Charming, doubtless, who will restore them to life....

The festivities are over; the roundabout no longer turns with its quiet and monotonous giddiness. Only some music still issues forth, as though to charm the long moments of waiting and hoping ... and to make the Sleeping Beauties forget the anxieties of the awakening: When they once more come to life will they still be in the fashion? Well, at least, the tune, as the poet says (speaking as a matter of fact of a barrel organ), "in the twilight of remembrance will have made them dream hopelessly" ... And so have we.



Le Carrousel (The Merry-Go-Round) décor by Joan Rebull, as it appeared in Paris in 1945, from the 1945 London catalogue.



Joan Rebull during the assembly of his *Le Carrousel* (The Merry-Go-Round) décor, 1945.



Joan Rebull's *Le Carrousel* (The Merry-Go-Round) décor as it appeared in 1945.

"This roundabout does not move. It has stopped with its menagerie of mythological Centaurs, Sirens, Unicorns and Pegasus.... And the princesses who, in all their finery, attended the last ball, have also stopped their dance.... They will have to await now the Prince Charming, doubtless, who will restore them to life." (Chéronnet, 1945)

1945–1946 Exhibition History

Paris

25 March– 6 May 1945

Barcelona (partial only)

Summer 1945

London

Opened 12 September 1945

Leeds

Opened 2 January 1946

Copenhagen (partial only)

24 January–24 February 1946

Stockholm (partial only)

Fall/Winter 1945–46

Vienna (partial only)

Fall/Winter 1945–46

New York (1946 fashions)

1 May–June 1946

San Francisco (1946 fashions)

12 September–mid-October 1946



Her Majesty Queen Mary (1867–1953) (at right) visiting the *Théâtre de la Mode* during a private viewing at The Prince's Gallery, Picadilly, London, 1945, from the 1946 New York catalogue. The London exhibition was subtitled "The Fantasy of Fashion." Louis Touchagues' *La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme* décor is shown at left.

LES DÉCORS

North America, 1946



The *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition appeared at the Whitelaw Reid House in New York City in May and June 1946. In the early 1880s, McKim, Mead and White designed this Gilded Age six-house complex (later referred to as the Whitelaw Reid House) for railroad magnate and publisher Henry Villard. Villard moved into the lavish structure at the end of 1883, but only lived there for a few months before entering bankruptcy.

LE THEATRE DE LA MODE

Organized by

THE CHAMBRE SYNDICALE DE LA COUTURE PARISIENNE

was created by French artists and designers

The general presentation of the miniature theatres is by

CHRISTIAN BERARD

The arrangement of the figures and the lighting is by

BORIS KOCHNO

The interior decoration for the exhibition is by

GEORGES GEFFROY

Individual settings were designed by the following

The Street Fair — DIGNIMONT — TOUCHAGUES —

Allegorical groups by REBULL

Paris — DOUKING — JEAN SAINT-MARTIN — WAKHEVITCH

Night Scenes — EMILIO TERRY — J. D. MALCLES — BEAUREPAIRE

Tribute to René Clair — JEAN COCTEAU

The Theatre — CHRISTIAN BERARD

The wire figurines were created by JEAN SAINT-MARTIN from designs by ELIANE BONABEL

The faces were moulded from original sculptures by REBULL

This page is taken from a program for the 1946 *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition in New York City.

The program lists 11 décors, “interior decoration” by Georges Geffroy, and “Allegorical groups” by Joan Rebull

The lineup of artists differs from the 1945 Paris edition in that no décor by Emilio Grau Sala is featured here and one by Emilio Terry has been added.

In another departure from the Paris presentation, eight décors were shown in thematic groups. Two illustrate “The Street Fair,” three are placed together under a “Paris” heading, and three others are called “Night Scenes.” Jean Cocteau’s *Tribute to René Clair* and Christian Bérard’s *Le Théâtre* are the only North American décors that appeared as they had in Paris.

Georges Geffroy
“The interior decoration for the exhibition”

The 1945 edition of the *Theatre de la Mode* included Georges Geffroy's *Un Salon de Style décor*—a finely decorated miniature home interior. In North America, Geffroy did not create a décor but he was instead responsible for decorating the rooms in which the décors were placed. As described by Louis Chéronnet in the 1946 catalogue:

The different stands are found in a long gallery decorated by Geffroy. In the ensemble he has created, this refined artist has known how to express in a pleasing and clever manner both the taste of Paris and the great French tradition. Against a background of yellow velvet, he has conceived a rhythmical effect of columns, also twisted with yellow velvet, which form a series of frames against a foundation of green velvet. Between the columns “Still Life” motives are suspended on sky blue moiré ribbon. In addition, the whole is presented with decorations of heavy drapery held by loops of brightly-coloured flowers. It must be remembered that all this work, as well as this artist's scenery on the second floor, was executed in France in the record time of four weeks. The execution and finish prove that the best qualities of artisan workmanship are still very much alive in France.

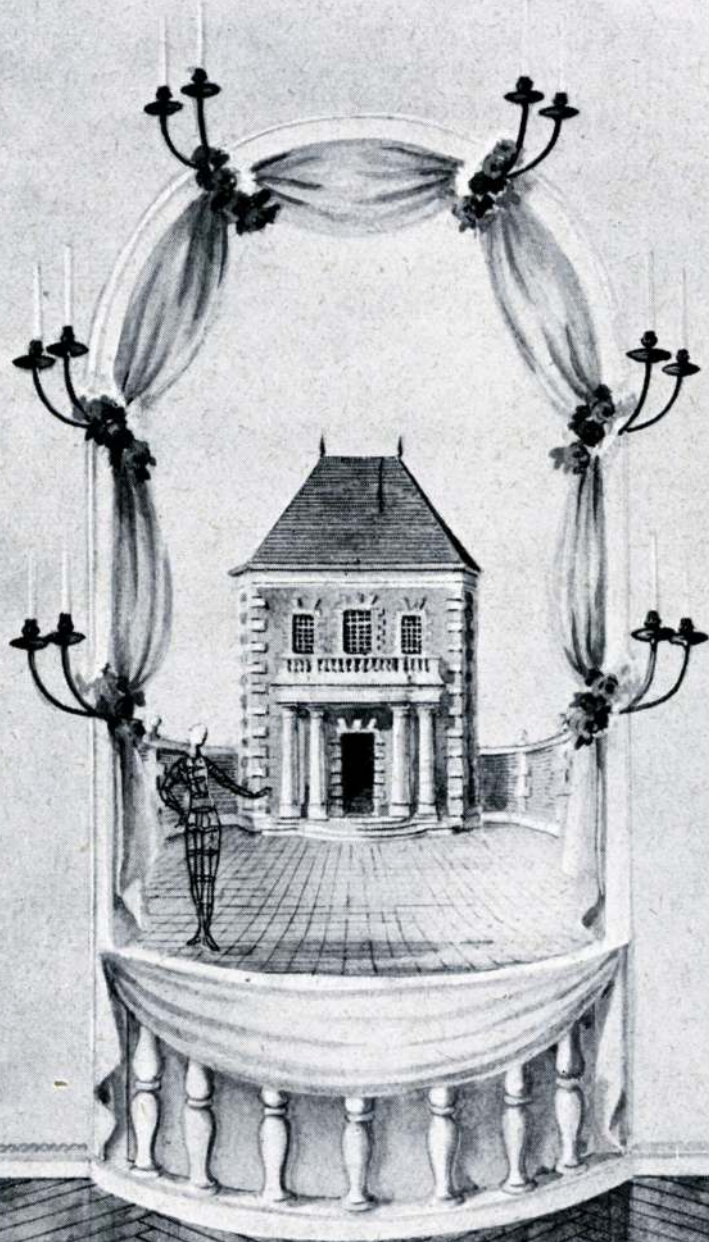
There are also three small constructions in the style of comedy decoration of the 17th century and garden layouts of the 18th by Geffroy. At the back of a richly-draped niche is a small Louis 18th house in a mixture of brick and stone ... and the presentation, far at the end of a small courtyard, is pleasingly audacious. Then there is a circular column surrounded by delicately-wrought railings and surmounted on a dais in the manner of Chinese ornaments. Finally, a structure resembles a Chinese pavilion, exhibiting bygone fashions accessories in its windows. No better Temple of Fashion could be imagined.

Below: Entrance layout for hall decorated by Georges Geffroy, from the 1946 New York catalogue.



Right: Photo of a portion of “the interior decoration for the exhibition” as designed by Georges Geffroy, New York, 1945.





“There are also three small constructions in the style of comedy decoration of the 17th century and garden layouts of the 18th by Geffroy. At the back of a richly-draped niche is a small Louis 18th house in a mixture of brick and stone ... and the presentation, far at the end of a small courtyard, is pleasingly audacious. Then there is a circular column surrounded by delicately-wrought railings and surmounted on a dais in the manner or Chinese ornaments. Finally, a structure resembles a Chinese pavilion, exhibiting bygone fashions accessories in its windows. No better Temples of Fashion could be imagined.” (Chéronnet, 1946)

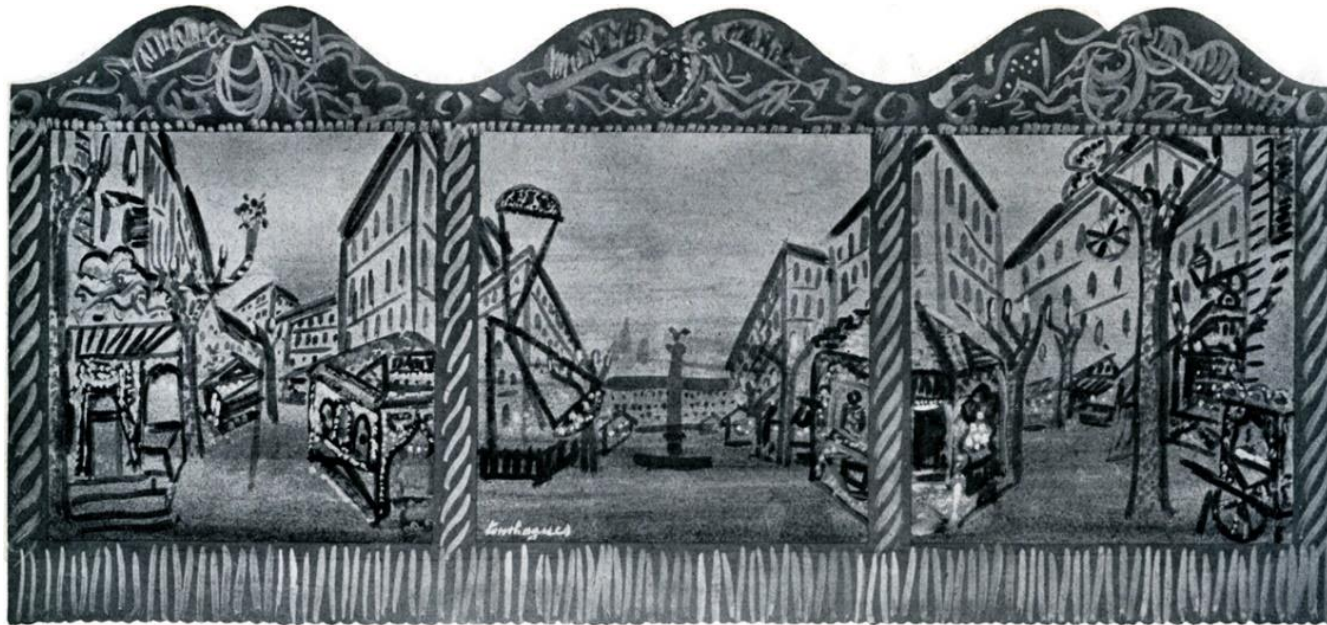
Louis XVIII House by Georges Geffroy, from the 1946 New York catalogue.

Louis Touchagues
***The Street Fair* décor (left)**

André Dignimont
***The Street Fair* décor (right)**

For the 1945 Paris exhibition, Louis Touchagues and André Dignimont produced the *La Rue de la Paix en la Place Vendôme* and *At the Palais-Royale* décors. These were later recreated by Anne Surgers for display at Maryhill Museum of Art. The 1946 décors that these two artists designed for the *Théâtre de la Mode*'s North American tour were together called *The Street Fair*. They were the first décors that visitors encountered when entering the New York and San Francisco exhibitions. In the 1946 New York catalogue, Louis Chéronnet says:

It only seems right to me that at the entrance one begins with poetic evocations of Paris under the most diverse aspects. First there are realistic scenes of the Paris streets which we owe to Touchagues and Dignimont, who have always best understood the picturesque quality of the eternal Paris. One knows that one of the charms of Paris is the amusement fairs which come and periodically install themselves along the wide highways and in the public places, covering them with long rows of attraction booths. Circuses, lotteries, displays of monsters, boxing-rings and merry-go-rounds invade the pavement which they submerge in loud music and blinding light. This atmosphere has been recaptured and the dolls idling there naturally wear day clothes and sports ensembles.



Artist sketches for *The Street Fair* décors by Louis Touchagues (top) and André Dignimont (bottom), as they appeared in New York and San Francisco in 1946, from the 1946 New York exhibition catalogue.



The Street Fair décors by Louis Touchagues (left) and André Dignimont as they appeared in New York and San Francisco in 1946. These two sets appeared only at those North American venues.

“First there are realistic scenes of the Paris streets which we owe to Touchagues and Dignimont, who have always best understood the picturesque quality of the eternal Paris ... One of the charms of Paris is the amusement fairs which come and periodically install themselves along the wide highways and in the public places, covering them with long rows of attraction booths.” (Chéronnet, 1946)

Joan Rebull
***Le Carrousel* (The Merry-Go-Round) décor**

Joan Rebull's 1946 *Le Carrousel* décor was markedly different from the version that he designed for the 1945 Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition. His original creation featured diverse mythological creatures. They were replaced on the second edition by more youthful characters.

In the 1946 New York catalogue, Louis Chéronnet says this about Rebull and his work:

In the course of an eventful career, the Catalonian sculptor, Joan Rebull, has been true to Paris. When only ten years old, he learnt to carve wood in a workshop of religious images at Reus, Catalonia, his birthplace.... At twenty-two, he obtained a traveling scholarship making it possible for him to spend a month in London and four months in Paris. He then returned to his own country, but soon Paris called and he went back to live there from 1926 to 1930.... The Spanish government sent him to Paris in December 1938 to execute the magnificent sculptures which adorned the front of the Spanish Pavilion at the New York Exhibition. Since then he has taken root in Paris, where his delicate art is more and more appreciated....

In the middle of the first room, a merry-go-round with sirens and centaurs, designed by Rebull and Wakhévitch, has been installed. It is the real merry-go-round which, with its mirrors, gold, red velvet and richly-sculptured heads, makes the crowd dream. Naturally, it doesn't move. With its immobile mythological beasts and beautiful riders leaning negligently on the necks of these fantastic animals, it seems to have stopped for eternity, the fair once over. It no longer turns in a soft, monotonous frenzy. Only the music continues to play as if to charm the long moments of waiting and hope ...



Joan Rebull was the artist responsible for creating the plaster heads for all the *Théâtre de la Mode* mannequins.

The artist's 1945 *Le Carrousel* décor was very different from the one that appeared at the 1946 North American venues. In the initial version, the carousel deck was populated with miniature fashion mannequins, as well as centaurs, sirens, unicorns, and a winged horse. Conversely, the merry-go-round that appeared in New York and San Francisco was populated with mannequins and an abundance of cherubic children—although a young mermaid (siren) and young centaur can also be seen in this photo.

Left: *Le Carrousel* (The Merry-Go-Round) décor by Joan Rebull, as it appeared in New York and San Francisco in 1946.

Georges Douking
L'Île de la Cité décor

Jean Saint-Martin
Croquis de Paris (Paris Sketch) décor

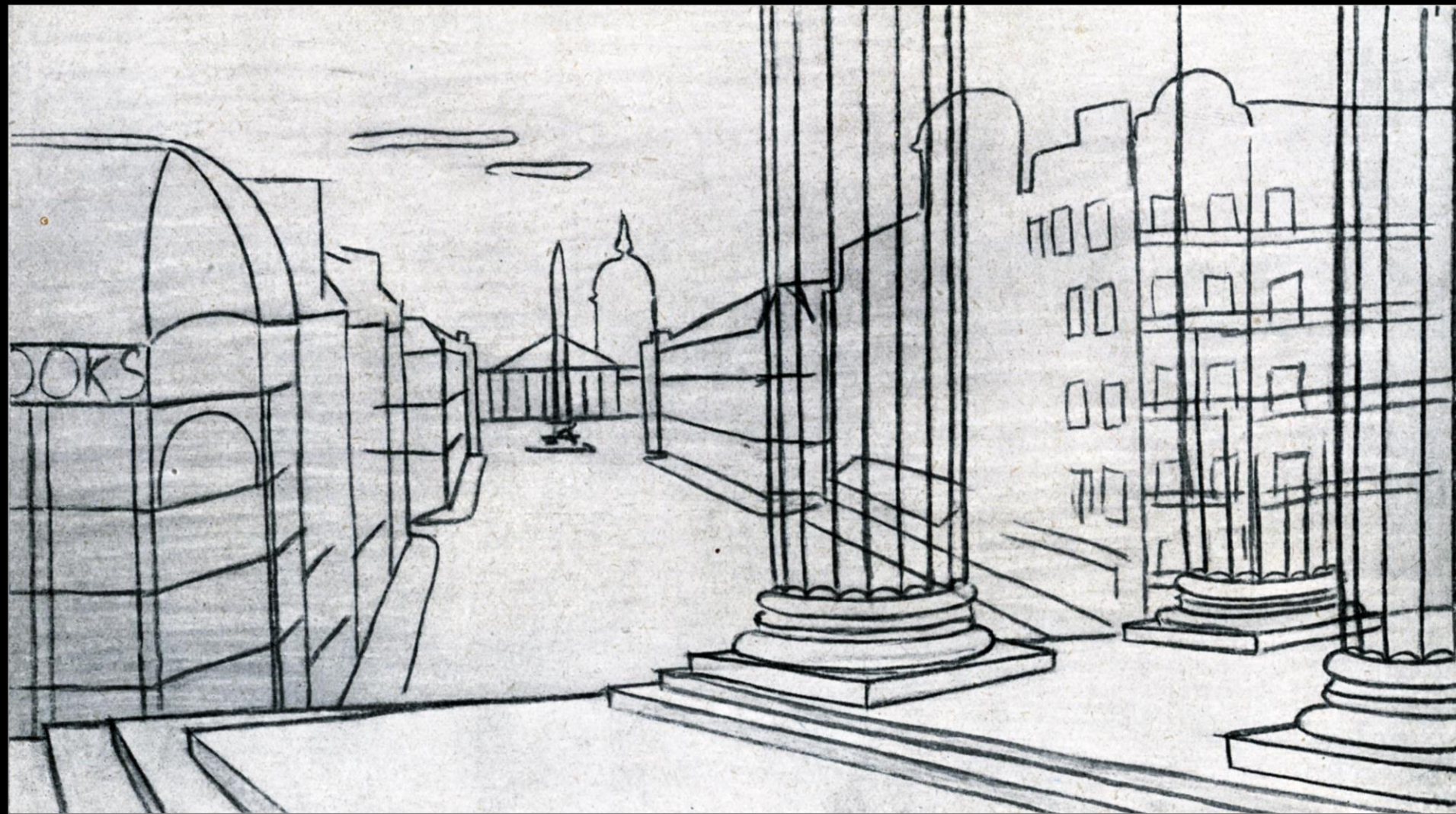
Georges Wakhévitch
Place des Vosges décor

These three stage sets appeared together in 1946, as a group dedicated to “Paris.” Douking’s *L'Île de la Cité décor* was very similar his 1945 creation but Saint-Martin’s *Croquis de Paris* was entirely redesigned. Georges Wakhévitch’s *Place des Vosges* was a new décor and it only appeared in North America. Louis Chéronnet’s New York catalogue description says:

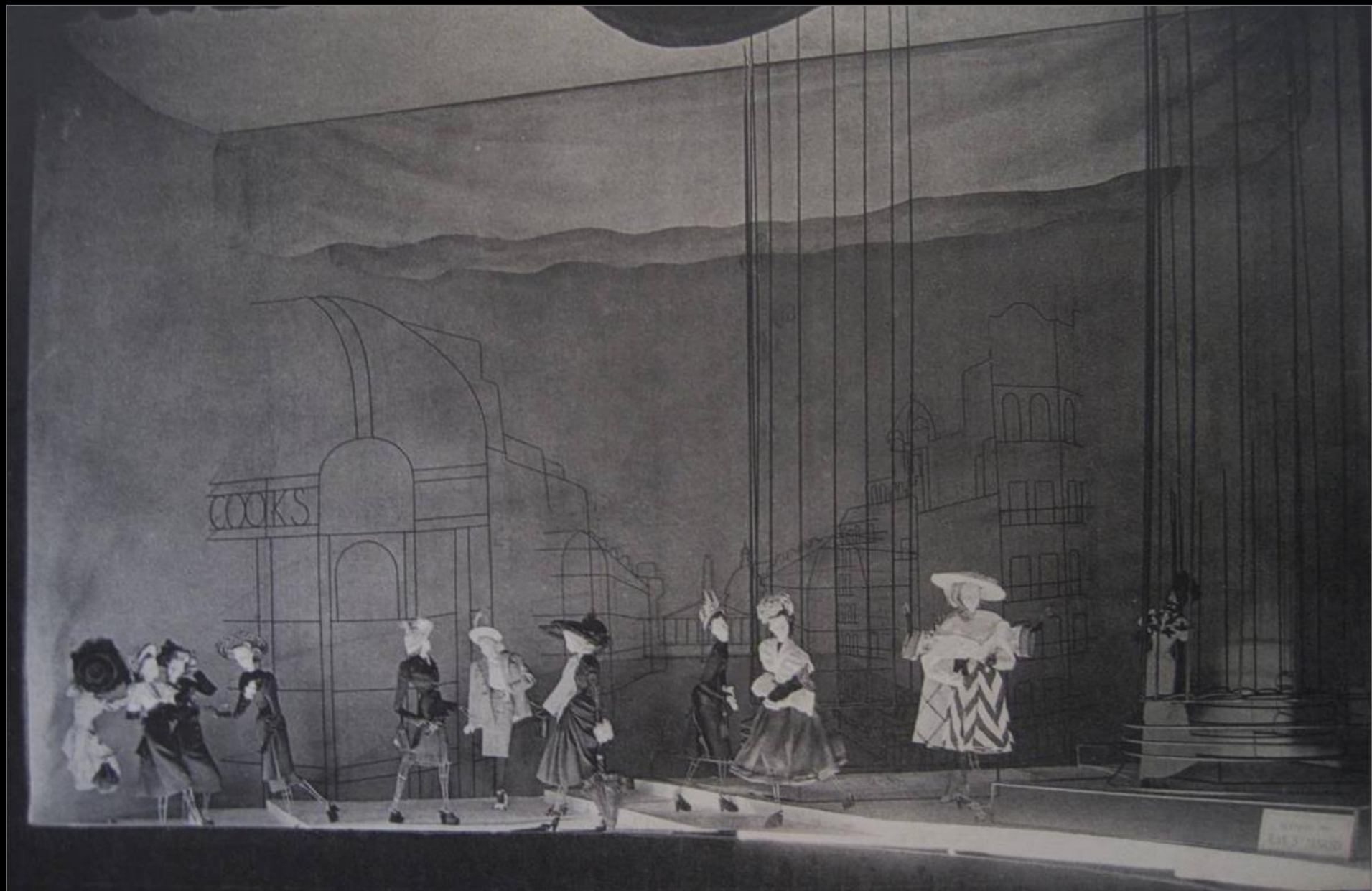
A second gallery, also dedicated to Paris, is found a little further on. Its three scenes invoke epochs in monumental, classical style. It was only necessary for Saint-Martin, like a designer with a few strokes of his pencil, cleverly twisting and joining a little wire, to make the peristyle of the Madeleine Church with a perspective of the rue Royale and the dome of the Invalides in the distance. In the iris mist of a lovely spring morning, Douking has depicted a view of the Cité ... the island out of which Paris was born and which is now its heart. Further on we see Notre-Dame, the Palais of Justice, and the Pont-Neuf, noble buildings redolent with history and yet so familiar. Wakhévitch, using solid wood in its natural state, has constructed scenery recalling the Place des Vosges which, at the beginning of the 17th century, was the center of the social life in Paris and which has always conserved its aristocratic appearance. Thus, in three scenes, the old Paris is recreated before our eyes.



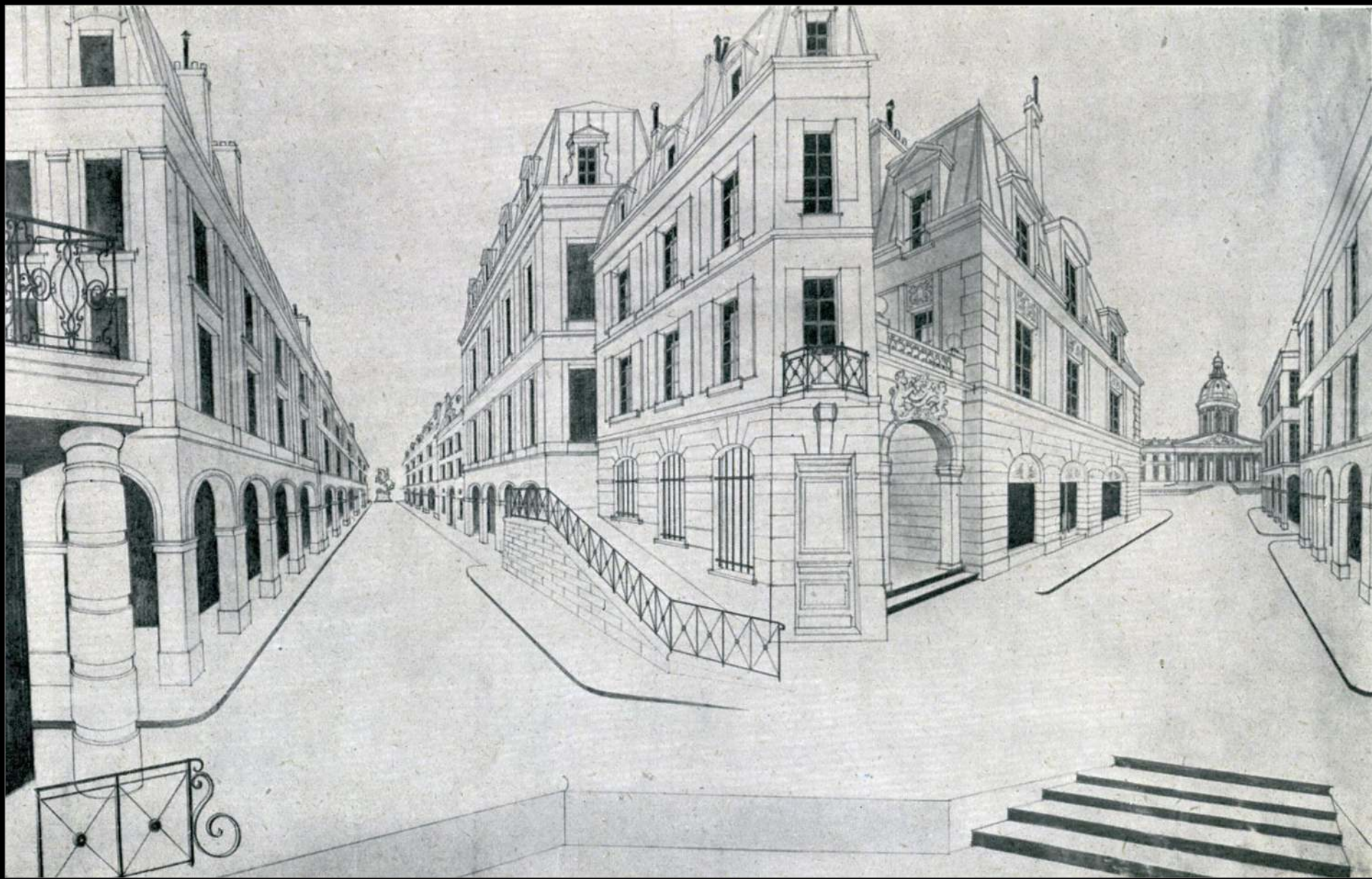
L'Île de la Cité, 1946 fashions and mannequins in a décor by Georges Douking. This set was one of three referencing essential Paris locations that were shown together in New York and San Francisco. It is a modified version of Douking's décor of the same name that appeared in 1945.



Jean Saint-Martin's sketch for the *Croquis de Paris* (Paris Sketch) décor as it appeared in North America in 1946. Although his 1945 décor had the same title, the two works were markedly different. When creating this 1946 version, Saint Martin chose a different vista and foreground buildings. The rounded columns that appear prominently at right replaced two square columns that were originally located on the left-hand side of the set.



Croquis de Paris (Paris Sketch), 1946 fashions and mannequins in a décor by Jean Saint-Martin. This set was one of three referencing essential Paris locations that were shown together in New York and San Francisco. It is a modified version of Saint-Martin's décor of the same name that appeared in 1945.



Artist's sketch for the *Place des Vosges* décor by Georges Wakhévitch, from the 1946 New York exhibition catalogue. As installed in North America, this décor was three-dimensional.



Place des Vosges, 1946 fashions and mannequins in a décor by Georges Wakhévitch . This set was one of three referencing essential Paris locations that were shown together in New York and San Francisco. A two-dimensional version of this scenery was created in 1988–1990.



Place des Vosges, original 1946 fashions and mannequins in a 1946 décor by Georges Wakhévitch (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art.

“Wakhévitch, using solid wood in its natural state, has constructed scenery recalling the *Place des Vosges* which, at the beginning of the 17th century, was the centre of the social life of Paris and which has always conserved its aristocratic experience.” (Chéronnet, 1946)

Emilio Terry

“Temple of Love” décor

Emilio Terry (French, 1890–1969) was born in Paris and was part of a wealthy Cuban family. He gained notoriety as an architect, interior decorator, landscape designer, and artist. In 1891, his family had purchased a well-known chateau in the Loire Valley. It partially influenced his designs for furniture, tapestries, and other interior items. Terry’s furnishings and architectural designs were created in what he called the “Louis XVII style”—an imaginary style that was inspired by historic classical, baroque, and rococo expressions.

Terry did not participate in the 1945 edition of *Théâtre de la Mode*. In the 1946 New York catalogue, Louis Chéronnet says this about him and his North American “Night Scene” décor:

Emilio Terry's work is rarely seen. He is as erudite and refined as a Renaissance scholar, although the public knows little of this curious architect's work. His fanciful architecture is an original interpretation of baroque styles. He mixes classical and rococo themes with daring and skill ... The house he has built himself at Boulogne-sur-Seine and the Countess of Noaille's memorial (in the form of a Greek temple) prove his partiality for this type of work. Terry is a born decorator. He is as much interested in garden as in interior decoration. Recently he has been designing beds. Inspired by the elaborate style of the latter half of the 18th century, he has given them a modern outline—often very American in appearance. This method of working should inspire contemporary designers....

Emilio Terry has designed a bosky in the form of a temple of love perched on a rock standing out like a prow and flanked on either side with two, gem-covered brick porticos, half in ruins, let into the rock.



Artist's sketch for Emilio Terry's décor ("... a temple of love ...") as it appeared in the 1946 New York and San Francisco exhibitions, from the 1946 New York exhibition catalogue. Terry did not contribute a décor to the 1945 *Théâtre de la Mode* presentations. This stage set was only shown in North America in 1946.



Emilio Terry's décor ("... a temple of love ...") as it appeared in North America in 1946. The set was one of three identified in New York and San Francisco as a "Night Scene."

"... a bosky in the form of a temple of love perched on a rock standing out like a prow and flanked on either side with two, gem-covered porticos, half in ruins, let into the rock." (Chéronnet, 1946)

Jean-Denis Malclès
“Scenery for a Comedy-Ballet” décor

Jean-Denis Malclès created *Le Jardin Incomparable* (The Matchless Garden) décor for the Paris and London editions of the *Théâtre de la Mode*. The 1946 North American tour featured an unnamed décor by him that was numbered among the three “Night Scenes.” Louis Chéronnet simply says:

Jean-Denis Malclès shows us the scenery for a Comedy-Ballet, a marvelous garden where the lights of the salons shine on the green of the leaves, and the trees are cut in arches. Here, by man’s will, nature is full of fantasy, friendly light and joie de vivre.

André Beaurepaire
“An Enchanted Palace” décor

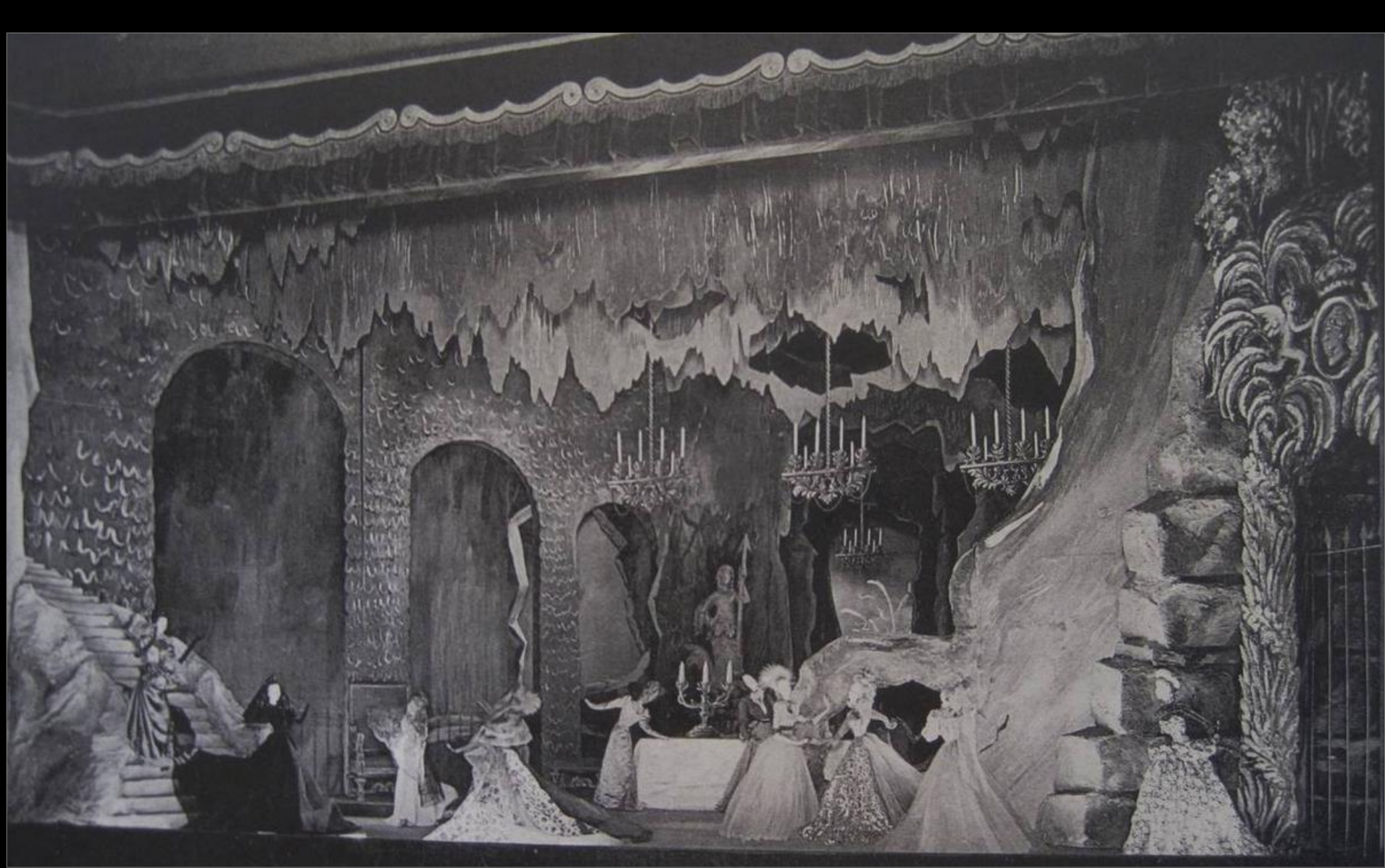
André Beaurepaire’s 1946 décor was also counted as a “Night Scene.” It bears many stylistic similarities to his 1945 *La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto) décor. Louis Chéronnet’s description in the New York catalogue is again brief. He notes that the three “Night Scene” designers “vie with one another in inventing fabulous scenes,” then says:

Beaurepaire, who is a juggler with architecture, shows us an enchanted palace made of gigantic columns, proud pediments, pieces of wall as strong and massive as those of Pyrrhus, trophies like sumptuous feathers, drapery arranged in stormy movements, falling valences, secret passages for hasty flight, mysterious stairs coming from everywhere, leading nowhere, all in weird gray stone.



Artist's sketch for Jean-Denis Malclès' 1946 décor ("... scenery for a Comedy-Ballet ..."), from the New York catalogue.

"Jean-Denis Malclès shows us the scenery for a Comedy-Ballet, a marvelous garden where the lights of the salons shine on the green of the leaves, and the trees are cut in arches. Here, by man's will, nature is full of fantasy, friendly light and *joie de vivre*." (Chéronnet, 1946)



Jean-Denis Malclès' décor ("... scenery for a Comedy-Ballet ...") as it appeared in New York. The set was one of three identified in North America as "Night Scenes." In 1945, Malclès' Paris and London décor was *Le Jardin Incomparable* (The Matchless Garden).



Sketch for André Beaupaire's 1946 décor: "... an enchanted palace made of gigantic columns, proud pediments, pieces of wall as strong and massive as those of Pyrrhus, trophies like sumptuous feathers, drapery arranged in stormy movements ... mysterious stairs coming from everywhere." (Chéronnet, 1946)



This is Andre Béaurepaire's three-dimensional mock-up for the décor that was featured in the 1946 North American installations of *Théâtre de la Mode*. It was shown in the 1990 Paris *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition, where it was on loan from the artist.



André Beaupaire's décor ("... an enchanted palace ...") as it appeared in the New York and San Francisco exhibitions. The set was one of three identified in North America as a "Night Scene."

Jean Cocteau

Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Sorcière (My Wife is a Witch) décor

In the New York catalogue, Louis Chéronnet says this about Jean Cocteau's homage to René Clair:

We must linger a moment longer on the last [scene] because it is the strangest and perhaps the most fertile in meaning. It is so rich in the thought of poets that it satisfies the most diverse minds. How many interpretations ... is there in a poet's idea? Here Jean Cocteau wished to pay homage to René Clair, the author of "I Married a Witch." He wanted to evoke the fantasy of this exquisite film. He succeeded immediately with his own peculiar instinct and ease.... Carried away by his idea, Jean Cocteau has exceeded his intention. Another interpretation has grafted itself onto the principal theme—an interpretation impossible to avoid since it naturally imposed itself on his poet's sensibility. That a bridal chamber burns and the bride uses the occasion to fly off astride the broom which is the true and distinctive sign of her innermost nature and supernatural power is comedy ... but five years of war and nights of which nobody has yet lost the memory may give another meaning to the scene. The imagined and the impossible have become a banal daily occurrence. With a sprightly view of Paris appearing above the gaping holes, it is no longer a question of inner feeling, but of drama seen from within and without, and the room seems to have a terrible rendezvous with destiny.... This derivation which rises above the homage combined to a definitive work, is homage much more precious and profound to a town which, despite its suffering, pain, and danger, continued to create and maintain, without ostentation, its reputation for good taste.

This picture of a devastated room where elegant figures still continue to move in style can be regarded as a symbol... even the reason for this Exhibition.



Hommage à René Clair: Ma Femme est une Sorcière (My Wife is a Witch), 1946 fashions and mannequins from a 1945–1946 décor by Jean Cocteau (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art.

“Carried away by his idea, Jean Cocteau has exceeded his intention. Another interpretation has grafted itself onto the principal theme.... Five years of war and nights of which nobody has yet lost the memory may give another meaning to the scene. The imagined and the impossible have become a banal daily occurrence.” (Chéronnet, 1946)

Christian Bérard

Le Théâtre

Louis Chéronnet's 1946 descriptions of Christian Bérard and his *Le Théâtre décor*:

Bérard was born with natural elegance—the quick and easy elegance of the mind, the delicate (touched with a point of surrealism) elegance of the poet and the chic and tasteful elegance of the craftsman.... Bérard feels that his art must be freed from the dictates of fashion and an early exhibition will show how necessary it is for him to devote himself entirely to painting, in which domain he still has so much to say....

Christian Bérard, who has an innate sense of the theatre, has done nothing less than create a theatre in which the most wonderful evening dresses are shown to us. He has succeeded in the difficult task of showing us, at a single glance, a complete theatre with its exits and entrances, the boxes and the complete stage. This is the quintessence of the theatre, its magic such as we have always imagined it since our childhood and which comes to mind when we remember our first visits to one of these marvelous places. Where does reality end? Where does the dream begin? In their cavern of light, the actors are disincarnated before our eyes, filling us with a desire to take on another personality. And during the intervals, when we leave the friendly obscurity of the auditorium, we are grateful to the theatre for not being like other places but to resemble a palace where the walls and ceiling are enriched with marvelous decoration, majestic drapery, intricate statuary, delicate painting, scintillating light and perspectives of columns reflected to infinity in mirrors. And everywhere here women open like flowers on the edge of urns or in rows in a garden. They are perfumed like flowers. Christian Bérard has reincarnated the apotheosis of evenings in the most beautiful Paris theatres ... which are numerous.



Le Théâtre, 1946 fashions and mannequins from a 1945–1946 décor by Christian Bérard (recreated by Anne Surgers); Gift of Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and Paul Verdier, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art.



Théâtre de la Mode sets *in situ* at Maryhill Museum of Art, 2021. Both décors were recreated in 1988–1990 by Anne Surgers, using period documentation. The set at left reproduces Jean-Denis Malclès' 1945 *Le Jardin Incomparable* (The Matchless Garden). The right-hand set reproduces Andre Beaurepaire's 1945 *La Grotte Enchantée* (The Enchanted Grotto). The mannequins are all attired in spring/summer 1946 fashions.

FINIS