



Inaugurated in 2011, the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museum is located in Getaria, the birthplace of the couturier and the setting where he learnt his craft and spent the early years of his professional career.

The mission of the museum is to showcase the life and work of Balenciaga, underline its importance in the history of fashion and design, and highlight the contemporaneity of his legacy.

To this end, the museum houses a collection of documents and garments whose scope, in terms of variety and chronology, is unique. It also conducts ongoing research into the work and world of Cristóbal Balenciaga, and seeks to share his technical expertise and creative vision through a range of educational training programmes.

Cover image

1935

Evening coat in black
silk taffeta
BM 2006.85

© Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa / Manuel Outumuro



1967

Evening dress in ivory ziberline
CBM 2011.17

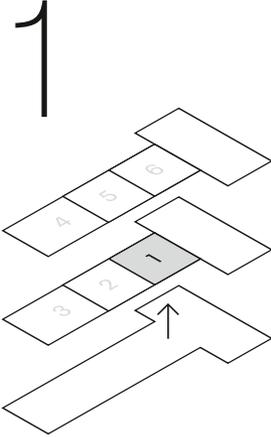
Biography

Cristóbal Balenciaga's (1895-1972) biography starts and ends in Getaria, following a timeline that extends beyond his natural lifetime up to the inauguration of the museum.

A series of milestones mark the journey of a young boy from a small fishing village to his rise as the Master of Parisian Haute Couture who ruled the fashion world for almost three decades.

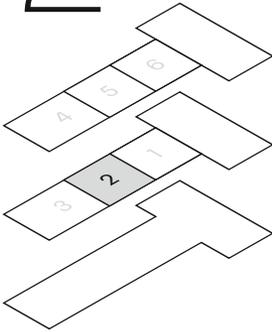
Regarded in his time as "invisible", "enigmatic", or "the man behind the curtain", Balenciaga always kept his personal life discreetly in the background.

By gathering in one place the few existing portraits, photos and scenes of his early life, work and personal possessions — including items of clothing, glimpses emerge of Cristóbal, the person hidden behind the fame of the Balenciaga name.



The House

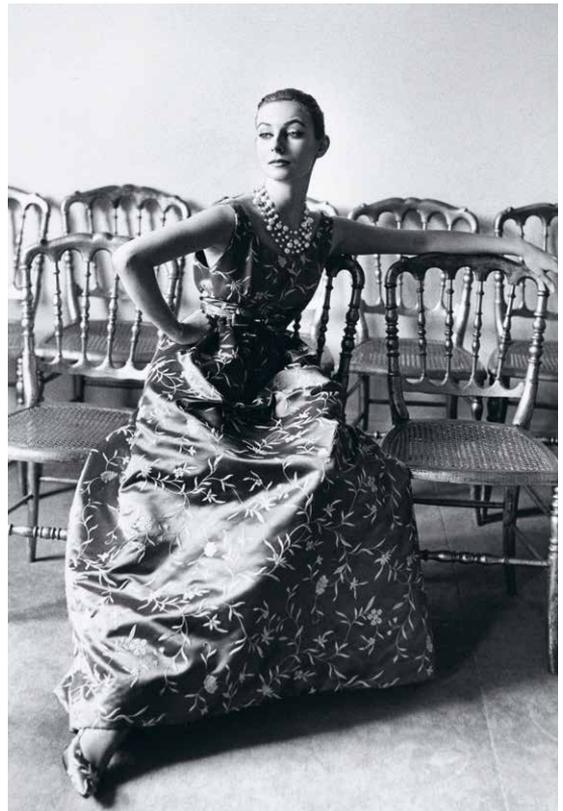
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Cristóbal Balenciaga carved out his professional career as a fashion designer within the haute couture system, a highly competitive environment that reached its zenith in Paris during the decades of the mid-20th century which was characterized by the protected authorship of the designs, the supreme quality of the fabrics, the impeccable craftsmanship of the made-to-measure garments and the exclusiveness of the clientele.

Every season, the presentation of the collection in the salon at 10, Avenue George V, marked the turning point between the creative cycle and the commercial and production cycle at the House of Balenciaga.

Through a selection of creations from the 1958-1962 collections, the aim of this space is to immerse the visitor in the moment, place and society where Balenciaga dictated the pulse of fashion for over 30 years.



© Tom Kublin

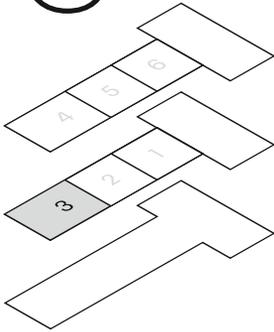
1958

Evening gown in fuchsia satin with ivory-coloured floral embroidery

CBM 2000.125

Technique

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Balenciaga was a master of technique. The first stage in his process was moulage, the moulding of fabric onto the body to define the shape.

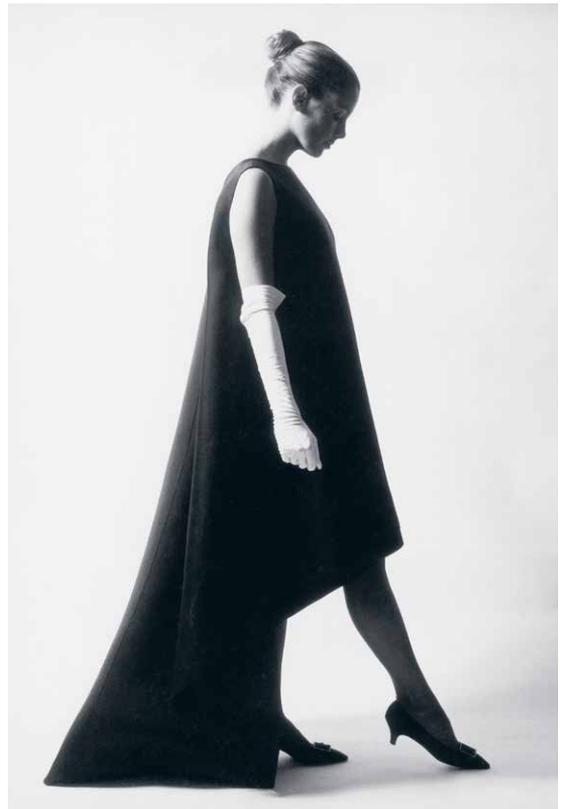
The works selected in this exhibition room bear witness to this mastery, although not always in an obvious way. Enveloping swirls that wrap around the body, cut on the bias so as to lend the fabric fluidity, or garments designed with only one seam, embody the essence of structural minimalism and showcase his secrets.

However, although conceived by Balenciaga, these custom-made garments were expertly sewn in the ateliers by seamstresses. Every stitch that holds together the garments displayed in this museum was sewn by these invaluable collaborators, whose work this room seeks to honour.

1967

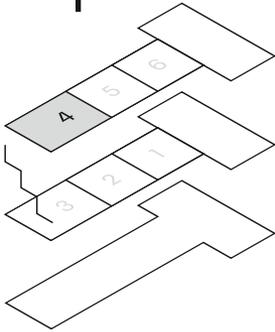
Evening gown, with asymmetric hem and neck tie

© Conde Nast / Cecil Beaton



Material

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Haute couture is a showcase for the high-quality fabrics produced by European textile manufacturers.

The close collaboration that existed between the textile suppliers and the fashion designers was undoubtedly instrumental in producing the vast range of sublime textures, colours, prints and embroidered fabrics the Parisian fashion houses used to captivate their clientele season after season.

Balenciaga was recognised among his professional peers for his in-depth knowledge of fabrics. This exhibition hall is designed to reflect Balenciaga's ability to take the potential of different types of textiles to the limit.

1965

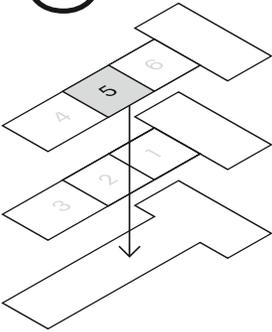
Evening ensemble in black and white silk *broderie anglaise* gazar by Abraham, with pink silk bow
Balenciaga. Paris
© CBM 2003.24ac

© Cristóbal Balenciaga Museo / Manuel Outumuro



Shape

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Cristóbal Balenciaga left an enduring mark on the history of fashion by introducing new silhouettes that redefined aesthetic ideals for women.

From his early collections — where the influences of designers such as Lanvin and Vionnet can be traced — to the structured, more architectural forms of later years, Balenciaga's trajectory was slow and deliberate. It was an evolution driven by thoughtful analysis and the desire to present new shapes and outlines which were constantly refined through a process of ongoing experimentation and adaptation.

The exhibits in this room have been selected to feature some of Balenciaga's milestone creations. Arranged in sequence to include earlier and later variations of the design, they highlight the progressive abstraction of the dress from the body and the importance of a third element: air.



© Archives Balenciaga, Paris

1958
Baby-doll dress in silk ikat taffeta
with floral print
CBM 06.1999

Aldamar Parkea 6
20808 Getaria
T +34 943 008 840
info@crislobalbalenciagamuseoa.com
www.crislobalbalenciagamuseoa.com



CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA MUSEOA

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