



EXHIBITION DE ROBERT PIGUET

IN YVERDON-LES-BAINS, SWITZERLAND: HIS COUTURE, HIS LIFE

The Suisse Musée de la Mode recently had the immense privilege of receiving 3,000 original sketches made by several trainees of renowned Designer Robert Piguet—who each went on to establish their own couture houses and gain recognition in their own right—accompanied by numerous files from the house of Robert Piguet. Inherited by George Marny, a friend of Robert Piguet, and transmitted to Marie-Andree Jouve upon his death, the importance of Mr. Piguet’s legacy was immediately recognized by the Suisse Musée de la Mode, which wished to share it by compiling a comprehensive retrospective devoted to the life and career of this revolutionary talent.

The exhibit, titled *Exposition Robert Piguet: Grand Couturier Suisse De L’Elegance Parisienne (1933 to 1951)*, was on view at the Hotel de Ville, located next to a beautiful 12th century castle in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland, the town where Robert Piguet was born. Under the direction of Suisse Musée de la Mode President Madeleine Duvoisin and the museum’s committee in collaboration with the Piguet family, the exhibition concentrated on the drawings of five of Mr. Piguet’s most exceptional apprentices: Christian Dior, Antonio del Castillo, Marc Bohan, Hubert de Givenchy and Serge Guerin. Photographs, articles and magazines of that time displayed throughout testify to the fame and talent of Piguet, and the great stylistic nature of these drawings illustrates the evolution of the mode as well as defines the characteristics of his famed fashion house, whose doors at 3 Rond-Point des Champs Elysées Mr. Piguet closed on July 15, 1951 for health reasons.



Robert Piguet

Visitors gathered in front of the Hotel de Ville for the Robert Piguet exhibition’s grand opening and the opportunity to view the Designer’s works.



The exhibition traces Mr. Piguet’s career, from his beginnings with the famous dressmaker Paul Poiret (1922-1924), through whom he discovered a penchant for eccentricity and ostentation, to his role as principal Designer for Redfern (1924-1932), where he developed a sober elegance. In 1933, an extremely confident Mr. Piguet finally carried out his dream and opened his own couture house in Paris on rue de Cirque, attracting famous artist clients such as Edwige Feuillère, Michele Morgan and Edith Piaf, as well as members of the aristocratic Court of Egypt with designs that are still admired today.

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Madeleine Duvoisin, President of the Suisse Musée de la Mode, greets the visitors at the grand opening of the exhibit.



Students of the School of Fashion presented a fashion show with dresses made by them from original sketches from the house of Piguet.



Exhibition Coordinator Anna Corda introduces the displays and the student contributions.



Original sketches were on display next to photos of the fashions.



Guests view the original couture, paintings and illustrations.

A collection of vintage fragrances and accessories

At the grand opening of the exhibition, students of the School of Fashion in Lausanne presented a fashion show featuring a dress collection that they made from original sketches and fabrics similar to those used originally, bringing Mr. Piguet's brilliant designs back to life. Working from sketches with relatively little detail on the completions, the backs of the dresses or the finishes, the reproductions were created thanks to the expertise of the Professors who helped the students to imagine that missing third dimension. Thanks are also due to the generosity of Jakob Schlaepfer and Forster Rohner AG, Embroiderers with St-Gall. Because of their generosity, the dresses were able to be created with haute couture fabrics.



Bernard Piguet, Claude Luchsinger, Jean Guisan, Anna Corda and Nicholas Luchsinger



Original Piguet dresses from private collectors

Besides the contributions of the students and works of some of Piguet's legendary apprentices, the exhibition also featured a private collection of one-of-a-kind couture on display amongst memorabilia from Mr. Piguet's childhood. Of note are early sketch designs from Mr. Piguet's teenage years that he sent out to various fashion houses despite his parents' desire for him to carry on family tradition at Banque Piguet, at the time owned by his family. Complementing the student recreations is a computer-animated fashion show developed by MIRALab at the University of Geneva using animated robotics, another example of the genius of sketches from the house of Piguet brought to life.

Paintings and illustrations of Robert Piguet by Jean Cocteau are on display along with other artists' works and letters to him from celebrities as well as famous clientele. His accessories and a collection of vintage fragrances, Bandit—his first, Fracas—his most memorable and Baghari—his last, were among others that were displayed at the exhibition. (Givaudan has maintained the original formula for Fracas and Bandit.) Evoking nostalgia for the romance of the era of Mr. Piguet was a video interview with Hubert de Givenchy discussing his training with Mr. Piguet, in an industry at the time dominated by men.

To commemorate the exhibit, Susan Piguet has published Mr. Piguet's journal, by which his life and works can be remembered. Unfortunately, now that the exhibit has closed its doors, the journal may be one of the few pieces of Mr. Piguet's legacy available to remember it by. Because of the nature of the Suisse Musée de la Mode, a small organization of volunteers funded by local contributions and dedicated to presenting historical couture, it is unclear when such personal articles from Mr. Piguet's life and career will be available to the viewing public again.

Many took advantage of this perhaps once-in-a-lifetime viewing opportunity. The exhibition ran from June 12 to September 4, and was a success not only because of the extraordinary efforts of the Musée de la Mode, but due to the large number of visitors that came to discover the mystique of the life and works of this incredible Designer. *BF*



The beautiful Swiss town of Yverdon-les-Bains was the birthplace of Robert Piguet. His former home (c.) is pictured here.

Madame Susan Piguet hosted a tea on Saturday, June 11th at her home, Robert Piguet's birthplace on rue de la Plaine in Yverdon-les-Bains. It was attended by members of the Piguet family, ambassadors, diplomats, celebrities and guests that were close to Mr. Piguet and his works. The event was a celebration of the opening of the retrospective exhibition, as well as the release of Mr. Piguet's journal.



Susan Piguet; Joe Garces, President, Fashion Fragrances & Cosmetics, and Jerome Piguet



Dr. Claude (r.) and Mrs. Piguet sit with grandson Louis, surrounded by their children and members of their family. Dr. Piguet, Robert Piguet's cousin, was with him in Lausanne, Switzerland when he passed away.



Bernard and Laurent Piguet, with Christie's Nicholas Luchsinger (r.), discuss their heritage and the genius of their great uncle Robert Piguet with Mr. Garces.