



Brussels Touch

Musée Mode & Kant & Dentelle Museum

27.08.21—
15.05.22

 **FÉDÉRATION**
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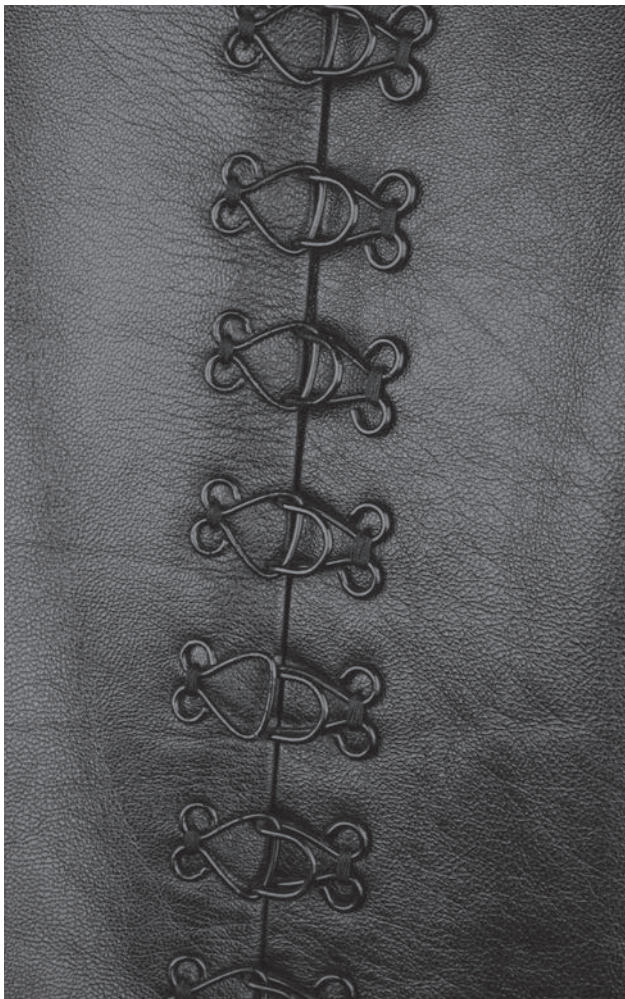
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Introduction

Needless to say that Brussels is considered one of the epicentres of fashion, both nationally and internationally. For the City of Brussels, support for creators is a priority, whether in terms of heritage enhancement with the Fashion & Lace Museum or of aid to innovation with MADBrussels.

The fashion sector has to set an example for sustainability and inclusiveness. A more ethical and responsible fashion, one that does not neglect human beings or the environment: this is the goal toward which this industry and our consumer practices have to work. It is our responsibility to offer the public – fashionistas or not – new ways of seeing fashion, beyond the yoke of fast fashion and a fetishistic and obsolete world that is no longer relevant in our century. This is also the concept behind 'Brussels Touch': a creativity and a know-how that respects every individual, the body, the fabric and the world around us at every stage in the life of a garment.



Bodice detail, lambskin
Olivier Theyskens, S/S 2000

Lydia Kamitsis is an art historian, author and independent curator specializing in fashion.

After having studied art history and contemporary archaeology at the Sorbonne, Lydia became a curator at the 'Union française des arts du costume' and later at the 'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs', today known as MAD. She serves as scientific advisor and curator of exhibitions including *Christian Dior: the magic of fashion* at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney in 1994 and *Vionnet, keizerin van de mode* at the Municipal Museum of The Hague in 1999.

Head of contemporary collections, programming and research at the Fashion and Textile Museum in Paris, she managed the project of restructuring and installing the Museum and its documentation centre in the Rohan wing of the Louvre palace.

She also contributes to many international cultural events, and she regularly works with the 'Institut Français de la Mode', the fashion school ESMOD, etc.

Since 2003, Lydia Kamitsis has been working as an independent curator. Her most recent projects include the solo exhibitions *Olivier Theyskens: she walks in beauty* at the MoMu in Antwerp and *Olivier*

Theyskens: in praesentia at the 'Cité de la dentelle et de la mode' (Museum for Lace and Fashion) in Calais.

She is the author of more than 75 articles and 20 books on fashion, whose monographs on Paco Rabanne, Madeleine Vionnet, Lesage, Michèle Rosier, and the International fashion dictionary, winner of the 'Grand prix du livre de mode' (a prize for fashion books) in 2006. Her latest publication, *L'Art de tisser le rêve: Dentelle de Calais-Caudry*, was published in 2021.

In October 2015, the Museum invited Lydia Kamitsis to give a 'Leçon de Mode' (Fashion Lesson) on the occasion of its exhibition *Crinolines & Cie*.

Her name had been mentioned a few months before by Olivier Zeegers, the ringmaster of our lectures. We had never met before, but there was an instant flash of mutual recognition.

Taking crinoline dresses as her starting point, Lydia brought us her vision of the history of fashion. She showed us how, despite its well-known impracticality, this astonishing type of dress still inspires creators today. The lecture was a great success and we promised to create a project together. We did not know when or what, but the desire was there! Each of us carried on with our own thing: she with her book projects or curatorships, us with a museum to develop towards 'planet fashion'.

Suddenly, THE project dropped in our laps! Just one question: what role does Brussels play in the world of fashion? Certainly through its schools, boutiques, customers. But there are also the many talented graduates of those schools. Many of them are now artistic directors at major fashion houses. Is there truly a 'Brussels spirit', a style not found anywhere else? Is it part of a broader fashion aesthetic? This was the subject that brought us together.

The project was launched. Lydia Kamitsis has combined her life experience and expertise to take on this unprecedented subject. She has known the actors on the Brussels fashion scene since the late 1980s. She appreciates them. She is curious about their work, casting her eye on the upcoming generation. Therefore, It was obvious she would be in charge of the scientific aspect of our new exhibition, 'Brussels Touch'.

Caroline Esgain
Curator at the Fashion & Lace Museum

The exhibition

'Brussels Touch', spirit of Brussels, are you there?

Belgian fashion has been among the major phenomena to appear on the international scene since the late 1980s. It has been the subject of many studies and exhibitions, both solo and thematic.

This new Belgian path seems to have been examined and identified in comparison with other national schools of style, such as the Japanese, the English and the Italian schools. However, it needs to be said that it is most often associated with its Flemish variant, coming out of the school of Antwerp with the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Brussels has not been associated with this aura, although it plays a significant role. If only thanks to the work done by the Fashion Department at La Cambre school of art and design, established in 1986. It trains numerous internationally renowned fashion creators!

While there is undoubtedly a certain 'Antwerp identity' in Belgian fashion, can the latter be reduced entirely to that city's role?

That is the question that the exhibition 'Brussels Touch' seeks to answer. In the negative, by positing the axiom that the two territories and their cities have their own identity. This *zeitgeist*, this pronounced and pervasive spirit, leaves its distinctive mark on each person who lives there. Whatever their origins and the period of time spent immersed in each of these cultures.

Brussels as a territory, real and imaginary, appears like a mosaic, an eclectic aggregate of cultures and references. A cosmopolitan place, fashioned and permeated by a certain strangeness and liberty that call for inclusiveness and make it particularly inviting.

The subject of 'fashion in/by Brussels' has been approached as part of this conceptualization of the city as an open space, but also one that produces bonds and emotions that breathe life into creation.

The designers represented in the exhibition are its first manifestation. They have proven link with Brussels, though they are not necessarily Belgian by birth or nationality. They may be natives of the city, have lived here for a considerable period and trained elsewhere, and now pursuing an international career. *From here but elsewhere.*



Cornet de frites shoes
Jean-Paul Lespagnard, Festival d'Hyères 2008



Dress with pleated flounces, cotton and silk taffeta. La Cambre runway show
Marine Serre, 2015

In search of Brussels Touch

They may be natives of a different region or country, have come to study at La Cambre or another school in Brussels, and then left again. *From elsewhere but here.*

Or they may have come from elsewhere but decided, after their training abroad, to settle in Brussels to pursue their creative activity. *From elsewhere but still here.*

All of them are then situated in a temporal context that brings together fashion, in its contemporary sense of artistic expression, and Brussels, as a terra incognita where experimentation goes on with various approaches and new practices in the field.

The period covered starts in the mid 1980s with the creation of the 'Atelier de Stylisme et Création de Mode' at La Cambre school, and of the STIJL boutique. Both are harbingers of a new state of mind, open to singular visions and expressions, beyond conventional, bourgeois ways.

Several generations of designers are presented here, some still active, others having disappeared like falling stars. Others are still developing their talents in various activities, while remaining one way or another within the ambit of fashion.

To discern 'the spirit of Brussels', this distinctive 'Brussels Touch' in fashion design, the decision was made to address the topic without any preconceived ideas.

The starting point for this original adventure is the research that has been conducted in recent years by the Fashion & Lace Museum. This research has led to the acquisition of items and archives by brands and designers connected to Brussels. A deliberate quest to preserve a heritage that is often neglected, a somewhat inchoate way of building collective memory.

This collection, still in progress, constitutes a fertile source that is duly analysed, screened by posing multiple questions, evaluated in the light of a creative territory whose traces sometimes fade over time.

It is important to start by renouncing any illusion of being exhaustive, and accepting with humility that any selection will inevitably be reductive in nature. And yet the collection is relevant by demonstrating the wealth and diversity of the

worlds brought to the surface by Brussels Touch. In the process, sometimes fumbling along, the project is fed by meetings with the main actors of the fashion scene. It proceeds by juxtaposing contradictory testimonies and opinions, studying and questioning distinctive creative practices. The project is determined to avoid overly categorical affirmations, cultivating a degree of doubt, intuitive meanderings. With the certainty of an unprecedented, fertile scientific exploration, the subject is deliberately approached in a heuristic manner, in the image, ultimately, of the best of what Brussels has to offer to designers: this spirit of liberty.

Brussels Touch, states of mind

The exhibition presents the work of 33 fashion designers or creative entities in the form of an unstructured visit. Punctuated by autonomous thematic and solo sequences, the exhibition offers multiple paths to address the creative spirit nurtured by Brussels. Here are the main sequences of the exhibition to be followed in accordance with the vision of Brussels Touch:

- A certain sense of humility. This does not mean self-effacement, but a reflection that is rooted in the real. It calls for an authenticity in the way of thinking about clothing as an element of daily life in every poetic component of its ordinariness.

The exhibition includes the essential and timeless silhouettes of Jean-Paul Knott, the discreet elegance of Sofie D'Hoore, the subtlety of materials of Annemie Verbeke, the art of cutting and the inspired associations of Beauduin-Masson.

- A sense of humour and of the proverbial absurdity, whose surrealistic spirit can be seen in more or less spectacular touches. At the same time, it does not make any compromises to the rigour of construction, or to the tastefulness of a fine work.

Trompe-l'œil, diversion, quirky motifs and details, audacious combinations. Every way of surpassing the real is explored, in unusual offerings by Jean-Paul Lespagnard, poet of the extraordinary, Christophe Coppens, the master illusionist juggling with allusions, and Lætitia Crahay, conjuror of surprising accessories that are shaking up the historic Maison Michel.



Dress, printed viscose crêpe
Cédric Charlier, F/W 2012-2013



Tunic-dress, striped synthetic crêpe
Gioia Seghers, F/W 2015-2016



Detail
Annie Verbeke, S/S 1999

- The love of the artisanal process is a constant among several of the designers, some of whom make it their signature style.

Artistically perforated materials by Olivia Hainaut, unique pleats by Gioia Seghers, cobweb knits by Sandrine Rombaux, exclusive coloured weavings by KRJST, printed stains by Cathy Pill, graphic stitching by Chevalier Masson, sculpted shoes by the Callatay brand, and pictorial silhouettes by Cédric Charlier.

- Generosity, inclusiveness, commitment: there is a state of mind that is particular to Brussels – a plural city, an aggregation of cultural, ethnic and social communities that are incarnated in as many individual styles in the most innovative visions of the designers it welcomes.

From Martin Margiela, the key figure in this art of thinking fashion differently, blending the processes of contemporary art with a fresh take on clothing, through Éric Beauduin, a craftsman and artist who transforms leather garments into unique bags with an added dose of soul, to Marine Serre, the energetic spokeswoman for ‘regeneration’, desirable upcycling, all share an acute conscience... A sense of the ethical, found in the concept of ‘one size fits all’ by Ester Manas, which overturns the codes and processes of fashion.

- They are poetic without grandiloquence, festive without falling into the spectacular, an acute sense of detail, audacity and distance. All of these are typical of the ‘Brussels Touch’, evident in the work of many designers with an international aura.

From Olivier Theyskens and José Enrique Oña Selfa to Anthony Vaccarello and Julien Dossena, all leading figures who have managed to imprint their style on several major luxury brands like Rochas, Nina Ricci, Azzaro, Løwe, Versace, Saint Laurent or Paco Rabanne. Others, now disappeared, like Xavier Delcour or Own, which, as veritable precursors, exert an enduring influence, notably in the redefinition of contemporary men’s wear. Elvis Pompilio, an inspired fashion designer, has for nearly four decades seen stars and hat lovers flock to his Brussels studio. While at the same time, he has been creating hats for the fashion shows of Belgian designers or the major Paris fashion houses.

An iconic presentation of a very Belgian collection. 'Les Humeurs de Brillant' honours the creativity and skill of Delvaux. Always fully handmade, the handbags are made by master artisans who work in Delvaux' Brussels workshop. This collection has 9 models. Each bag is displayed in the exhibition for one month. Then, time for the next one...

The Brillant

In 1958, when Brussels hosted the Universal Exhibition, everything seemed possible. Delvaux presented its Brillant. In the form of a goddess, a buckle like a jewel and the allure of a queen, it soon became the icon of the brand. 50 years later, it is a classic. To celebrate the bag, Delvaux has designed the 'Black Edition', a large-scale version of the original bag, illustrated by a series of drawings known as 'Les Humeurs de Brillant'. Modern and unconventional, this line reflects the values of Delvaux and the typically Belgian touch of irreverence.

The names in the exhibition

Annemie Verbeke, Anthony Vaccarello, Beauduin-Masson, Cathy Pill, Cédric Charlier, Chevalier Masson, Christophe Coppens, David Szeto, Delvaux, Elvis Pompilio, Emmanuel Laurent, Éric Beauduin, Ester Manas, Éts Callatay, Gioia Seghers, Girls from Omsk, Jean Paul Knott, Jean-Paul Lespagnard, José Enrique Oña Selfa, Julien Dossena, Lætitia Crahay, Léa Peckre, Marine Serre, Mosært, Olivia Hainaut, Olivier Theyskens, Own, Union pour le Vêtement, Sami Tillouche, Sandrina Fasoli, Sofie D'Hoore, Tony Delcampe and Sandrine Rombaux, Xavier Delcour

Around the exhibition

The first publication on the subject

Save the date

In the exhibition

While covering the themes of the exhibition, this publication extends the presentation but is not intended as a catalogue.

Richly illustrated, the book reflects the research conducted by the curator Lydia Kamitsis and brings together contributions of top-line actors about the position of Brussels on the national and international fashion scene.

Intended to endure beyond the period of the exhibition, it is conceived for international distribution.

Title: *Brussels Touch. Free Spirit of Fashion*
Format: 224 pages
(trilingual edition French / English / Dutch)
Publisher: Lannoo

05.09.21, 03.10.21, 07.11.21, 05.12.21
02.01.22, 06.02.22, 06.03.22, 03.04.22, 05.06.22,
The museum is closed on 01.05.21
First Sunday of the month
The museum is open free of charge.

09.12.21
Leçon de Mode (Fashion Lesson) No. 26
Brussels Touch. Free Spirit of Fashion
By Lydia Kamitsis
The 'Salle des Milices' of the City Hall at 7:30 pm
Depending on the public health measures in force, the Fashion Lesson may be held in the form of a webinar.
More information is available on our website.

Educational space
Discover the vision of Brussels fashion by Brussels residents. How does the city influence their clothing choices? Visitors listen to the creativity of each person.

For children (7+)
With our activity guide throughout the exhibition, children discover the Brussels features of the designers exhibited, and think about their own clothing habits.

Practical information

- Free
- Available at the museum's reception or can be downloaded from our website

Fashion & Lace Museum

Housed in a series of historic houses in the heart of Brussels, the Fashion & Lace Museum holds some 15,000 pieces of lace, clothing and accessories from the 16th century to the present day. Its collections are the largest in the world when it comes to Brussels design and confection, which it seeks to position in a Belgian and international context. For several years, the museum's team has been strengthening the dialogue between history and contemporary fashion.

For conservation purposes, the textiles cannot be on permanent display. The museum therefore presents its collections chiefly through temporary exhibitions.

Major exhibitions

The Fashion & Lace Museum holds its major exhibitions, for a period of 9 months, in its principal space over three floors. These exhibitions highlight the museum collections along with borrowed items. They address both the point of view of creation and of the production and social use of the garments.

The exhibitions may be:

- thematic: *Masculinities, Back Side - Fashion from behind, Just Married*;
- chronological: *Glamour 30's Fashion, Crinolines & Cie, The Seventies, Whatever You Like*;
- monographs: *Reflection by Jean-Paul Lespagnard, Beautiful Lace & Carine Gilson*;
- organized in collaboration with the schools: *LOL by La Cambre Mode[s]*.

Lace Room

The collections of the Fashion & Lace Museum hold exceptional works that illustrate the quality and beauty of Brussels lace. After wool cloth and tapestries, this third flower of the luxury textile industry adorns men's and women's outfits at the major European courts. Brussels lace has no longer been made since the First World War, but its aura has remained unchanged. The museum has devoted a specific space to it: the *Lace Room* tells visitors the history and production methods of this unparalleled textile.

Fashion Room

This space, without parallel in Belgium, gives an overview of the recent acquisitions of the Fashion & Lace Museum. In this exhibition room fitted with a modular scenography, temporary exhibits are mounted for periods of three to four months. Some twenty recent acquisitions of the museum's collections are displayed. Exceptional pieces may

also be exhibited on their own or accompanied by archival documents held in the museum's collections or in the City of Brussels Archives. The display of recently restored items provides an opportunity to reveal the hidden life of the museum.

The exhibitions in the Fashion Room are organized around themes, periods, designers or simply the pleasure of presenting recent acquisitions in all their diversity.

Via its Fashion Lessons, held three times a year, the museum offers a veritable decoding of 'planet fashion' from the perspective of fashion history. In conjunction with the exhibitions held by the museum or connected to current events, the museum has since 2012 been offering lectures intended to increase the knowledge of fashion of the general public as well as of professionals in the sector. With high quality speakers who take the time to meet the public, success is guaranteed!

The most recent Fashion Lessons can be listened to on: fashionandlacemuseum.brussels
> Exhibitions & Activities > Fashion Lessons

Leçon de Mode (Fashion Lesson)



Balaclava dress, assemblage of metallic pieces "eight", "mystical priestess" theme
Paco Rabanne by Julien Dossena, A/W 2020-2021

Practical information about the exhibition

Brussels Touch

Dates

From 27.08.2021
to 15.05.2022

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Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday
from 10 am to 5 pm
Closed on Mondays
and on 1 November,
11 November,
25 December,
1 January, 1 May

Admission fees

Admission: €8
Seniors: €6
Students: €4
- 18 years: free
Other discounts
are possible

The Team

Director General of the Culture, Youth and Sports Department of the City of Brussels

Anne Vandenbulcke

Director of Culture, Museums and Archives of the City of Brussels

Denis Laurent

Curator of the exhibition

Lydia Kamitsis

Head curator of the Fashion & Lace Museum

Caroline Esgain

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