

VIEW

However, this new type of device, the strapontin was not only somewhat less cumbersome, but also articulated, allowing it to collapse to accommodate more comfortable sitting! In significant contrast is the incredible *Delphos* dress by Mariano Fortuny c.1910. This pearl grey pleated silk satin gown is a veneration of the female form, inspired by archaic Greek kore sculpture. Fortuny's designs were based on an innovative technique for pleating silk fabric which he developed: this style became very popular especially amongst artists and theatrical celebrities of the day.

The finale of this spectacular exhibition is a true celebration of fashion, design, shape, colour, and fabric. As we enter the huge 'nave' there are several garments mounted and grouped on staging that is reminiscent of Coco Chanel's famous staircase. There are iconic pieces such as Christian Dior's Bar Suit, daring pieces like Paco Rabanne's metallic plate dress, controversial pieces like Issey Miyake's moulded resin bustier and classically beautiful pieces like Charles James' evening gown 'Cygne', made from silk crepe in delicate ochre, draped over nylon tulle. This gown illustrates the cyclical nature of fashion with its very full skirt, cinched in waist, falling draped folds, and pleated tight fitting bodice. It is the quintessential mid-fifties ball gown. In a sense it holds a mirror to the past and to the future: there can be no *Fashion Forward* without looking back. ••• **Gay Appleby**

Left: Robe de cour, circa 1778, Shaped Beijing silk, silk taffeta and satin

Right: Robe, 1795-1800, Cotton Muslin

Far Right: Visite, 1870-1890, Cashmere and silk fringe, braid and tassels

