

ANNA PIAGGI FASHION-[★]OLOGY

2 February – 23 April 2006



ANNA PIAGGI IS UNIQUE. SHE IS A FASHION REPORTER, EDITOR, DIVINER OF TRENDS, DESIGNERS' MUSE AND SELF-STYLED ICON.

* 'FASHION-ODOLOGY' REFERS TO HER IDIOSYNCRATIC WAY OF LOOKING AT CLOTHES. WITH HER OWN TAKE ON SCIENTIFIC PRECISION, AN ATTITUDE RATHER THAN A METHOD, SHE HAS FOR OVER 30 YEARS TOLD THE NEW STORIES ABOUT FASHION. PUTTING WORDS TO CLOTHES, TURNING PAGES INTO SHOWS, STYLING THE FUTURE: THIS HAS BEEN ANNA PIAGGI'S ART OF FASHION.

* TO SEE PIAGGI AT WORK IS TO GAIN A RARE GLIMPSE INTO HER FASCINATING CAREER. LONDON WAS A CATALYST, AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM HER PERSONAL ARCHIVE IN MILAN DETAIL HER EXTRAORDINARY TRAJECTORY ON THE WORLD FASHION STAGE.

FASHION-ODOLOGY JUDITH CLARK, EXHIBITION CURATOR

'Fashion-ology' is a translation of *moda-logia*, a word Anna Piaggi invented to rhyme, or work graphically with – one is never sure which takes priority – *mitologia* ('mythology'). *Mitologia* was a Double Page spread in Italian *Vogue* in 1994, one of Anna Piaggi's famous *Doppie Pagine* (D.P. or 'Double Pages') on the classical references in high fashion that season.

Visually *Mitologia* was not as spectacular as some of the pages Anna Piaggi created. But the spread did encompass a lot of what Piaggi is about. It conveys the reason that I have been a reader of those pages for almost twenty years. Myths are associated with the historical and the classical; they assert the gravity of their claims, but without the weight of absolute truth. Myths have a suggestive ancestry, a transcendent one. This ancestry preoccupies Anna Piaggi, for its genealogies – or animism, as she sometimes calls it – convince us that equivalent words such as 'provenance' or 'reference' in dress miss, in their supposed accuracy, the point. As Wilde said, we run the risk 'of falling into careless habits of accuracy'.

Piaggi's references are inspired, cultured and unpredictable. One detail goes with another because at some point in history, the history of her browsing through images, they were juxtaposed. We are invited to join in. If curating is about putting objects together, then a broader cultural account of how this might be done can only be useful.

Mitologia led me to Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, his famous series of screens to which he attached fragments from pagan art and antiquities to the Renaissance and beyond. On his screens a stamp could go with a classical relief. As in Piaggi's work the reproduced images are scaled up or down for effect. Warburg described it as art history without words.

In 1949, James Laver, keeper of prints and drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, published a book entitled *Style in Costume*. The book links images of dress with architectural details. In his introduction, he writes a methodological disclaimer:

The method adopted in the present booklet is strictly non-scientific, which is a different thing from unscientific. We shall proceed not logically but analogically. There will be no attempt to prove anything, but only to bring related shapes together in the hope of firing the imagination to a perception of the reality behind pattern. The whole work, text and pictures included, is what a hundred years ago would have been called a 'suggestive inquiry'. It is hardly even that.

Piaggi is also concerned with 'suggestive inquiry'. She is reluctant to spell out what she does and only very rarely shows her methodological hand. The *-ology* suffix which transforms the word fashion in the title is an attempt to capture her world of contradictions, her illogical logic as she calls it, as well as reveal systems of frivolity, patterns and angles in her work, her algebra of intuition.

Quotations are dotted throughout the exhibition, but the emphasis is on the visual, theming that is both consistent with Piaggi's free association and highlights a story of professional associations that span more than thirty years. An exhibition that would promise infinite variety is contained by the fact that it is the story of her own archive and the objects in the exhibition are drawn almost exclusively from her home in Milan where it is housed.

The exhibition is divided into thirteen statements, sometimes only the size of a text panel, sometimes a room full of objects. The logic of the layout is a series of intersecting As and upside down As which become Vs: Anna and *Vogue*, Anna and *Vanity*; Anna and her husband Alfa, and Vern, and the V&A. Bending the material to fit this system is in keeping with Anna Piaggi's loyalty to typographic design, each month bending words to fit Luca Stoppini's font in her Double Pages. The shape allows each section to open on to the next; her ideas are never contained or finished, but will be picked up at a later date. Chronology overlaps, punctuated by favourite themes, her love of Englishness, for example. The exhibition celebrates Piaggi's love of fashion illustration, the affectionate drawings by Karl Lagerfeld of her inimitable style, the dramatic spreads for *Vanity* magazine by Antonio Lopez, and a specially commissioned 3D tableau by Richard Gray, the British illustrator who for years contributed to her pages. Luca Stoppini, art director of Italian *Vogue* and the designer of her Double Page spreads, has with Piaggi created a dramatic work especially for the exhibition. The repeated presence of collaborators shows her loyalty and explains the thirteen 'favourite' outfits in the final section, created by the designers she promoted at the beginning of her career. They are displayed on a final A, painted in the bright red used by Ettore Sottsass for the 1969 Olivetti typewriter which Anna Piaggi uses daily – and of course the red of her lipstick.

Anna-list 2

265 shoes	1345 books
29 fans	6347 magazines
932 hats	56 dictionaries
2865 dresses	2 Union Jack notebooks
9756 slides	21 files
632 photographs	1 portrait of Sarah Bernhardt
45 look-books	17 dancing porcelain dolls
564 drawings	6 Christmas cards from Manolo Blahnik
5 tapestries	17 trunks
4 mirrors	1 magnifying glass
1 exercise bike	31 feather boas
4 tables	86 pairs of gloves
1 Olivetti typewriter	26 pantaloons
1 dictaphone	4 jodhpurs
45 lipsticks	3 umbrellas
6 riding sticks	45 rouges
85 bags	9 bandannas
746 shirts	24 aprons
399 jackets	39 pairs of slippers
289 necklaces	



D.P. showing crinoline frame and dome of the Exhibition of 1862
From James Laver, *Style in Costume*,
Oxford University Press, 1949

ANNA PIAGGI MANOLO BLAHNIK

REMEMBERING VERN LAMBERT GENE KRELL, EDITOR, VOGUE NIPPON

Anna Piaggi and I first met in London in the 1970s. It was a hugely creative time – a bit more ‘grown up’ than the 1960s, but still very exciting. London was a hotbed of talent, a nursery of energy and ideas. It was a fantastic place to be in.

Even amidst all the extraordinary people in the city, Anna was unique. From the very beginning she put an indelible stamp on me visually. I remember the first time I saw her – she was like a dream in a mix of Ossie Clark and other treasures, with the most amazing Grecian-inspired jewellery, and a tiara. I was wearing a Dior New Look coat in red flannel with velvet details which I had just bought. Our flamboyance must have caught each other’s attention.

Our thirty years of friendship developed in my shop on Old Church Street, where Anna lived then. I used to see her passing by, always wearing the most divine creations. She would drop in with Vern Lambert – the most knowledgeable fashion person of the time. When I moved my manufacturing to Milan, she became the architect of my career, helping and encouraging me, advising me on who I should work with and how to find them. Anna and her wonderful husband Alfa Castaldi became like an extended family to me and my friends Paloma and Tina. It was one of the most exciting periods of my life. The highlight of every month would be waiting for the newest edition of *Vanity* – which Anna produced with illustrator Antonio Lopez, who used live models for all his illustrations. What a wonderful collaboration that was!

Throughout the years, Anna has been the most constant inspiration in my work, and her advice is the one I respect most of all. Her book, *Fashion Algebra*, is always nearby. Her achievements keep surprising me. Her vision remains as youthful and excited as it was when I met her all those years ago. She remains as unique and special as she was then.

His name was Vern Lambert and he was a friend, mentor and partner in fashion anarchy. He was charming, witty, passionate – the Marquis de Sade and Charlie Chaplin in baggy pants. He was driven by a single and direct philosophy, that it was the esoteric that mattered, the seemingly insignificant, the trivial that ultimately made the difference to what would become relevant.

Some years ago, while living in New York, I recruited Vern to cover the men’s fashion season in Milan for a magazine I was working on. Vern agreed and I eagerly awaited what I knew would be an interesting observation. But when it arrived, I was taken aback. Enclosed were scores upon scores of close-up shots, things like buttons and trims, no clothes in sight, yet I knew what Vern was getting at: it was all in the details. My editor sadly did not see it in the same way. It was pure Vern, always a greater, more perceptive notion of what initiated fashion and more importantly style, the turn of a cuff or the shape of a button . . . these little unnoticed gems sought only by the trained eye.

I cannot remember exactly how or when we met, but I know it was in Vern’s tiny shop atop the Chelsea Antiques Market. This is where Vern held court, and visiting was as much an event as shopping. It was the total reflection of Vern’s fashion dynamic – his vision, if you will: mad, surreal and above all parodic. It was here that he came alive and thrived. One month it was all camp sailors in dyed pastel bellbottoms; the next month crinoline ball gowns with plastic flowers à la *Come Dancing* with Vern as the MC. His staff were equally mad: Louise Doktor in a greasy gigolo suit with a pencilled-in moustache and slicked-back hair, and Miss Heidi who would apply Elmer’s glue to the tip of her nose and then proceed to dip it in paper glitter. It was odd and refreshingly wonderful and somehow it all made perfect sense.

Vern’s own style can best be described as, well, eclectic: silk dressing gowns over riding pants, brightly checked suits with winklepicker shoes, the pure dedication to old and new, a juxtaposition he loved long before it became fashionable. He always held such insight. His knowledge was legendary. He could not only identify any designer or collection, but by looking at the stitching could often tell the seamstress. But he was serious about the unserious. For Vern, fashion was the pursuit of the yet undone, unseen, uncharted.

As our friendship grew he would often come down to my shop Granny’s at World’s End, and he was always great with ideas and advice. I was a newcomer, a kid from Brooklyn and not always welcome. It was never like that with Vern. He was attracted to my style and would often bring vintage clothes that would complement the velvet suits I would wear. And of course they were always gifts. He was generous to a fault. He was a pioneer in the age of pioneers, a dandy in the age of dandies. He made it all exciting and evoked this sense in us that we should lead with our imagination, our instincts . . . in short he encouraged you to make it all singular, to leave your mark, to leave your fingerprints, and nothing since has ever conveyed this with more nuance or panache . . . he made it all matter.

As time passed we without knowing became somewhat estranged, but continued to remain current as best we could, and years later we were to meet up in Milan where Vern was managing the shop of the designer Sam Rey. I met Vern on the street. Dressed in a long black frock, he looked like he was headed for the Vatican. We went back to Sam’s shop and I bought a bunch of stuff, a suit in fact for his former staff Louise Doktor. I would see him from time to time in Paris during the shows – I was working for Vivienne Westwood – and he, Anna and myself would have dinner and catch up. It was always fun, and as usual Vern, who was a gifted storyteller, would

make me laugh. Vern loved to laugh. A big never-ending laugh – that was my final memory of him, as he passed away a short time after our last meeting.

Certainly fashion was not as kind to him as it should have been. To me it is the greatest loss. When we put his life and career in perspective, we see just how innovative he was, but the people who mattered knew that. Vern inhabited a place where creation and style were the bywords, they were his credo.

To say he was a genius is not enough to say that he was a master is not enough to say what he has given me is not enough. I can only say that some forty years later he is still my inspiration and even that does not come close.

So I celebrate and dedicate this to my friend. ‘Imitated but never duplicated’ – that was Vern Lambert. I will do my best to keep his contribution, his gift, his memory alive. I owe him and fashion history that much.



Opposite page:
Anna Piaggi and Vern Lambert in London
Johnny Dewe-Matthews, 1973

Following spread (left to right):
Vanity title trials
Antonio Lopez, 1981
Anna Piaggi at the collections
Bardo Fabiani, October 2005
Anna Piaggi wears Australiana
Bardo Fabiani, September 2005

ANNA PIAGGI:
SIGNS OF FASHION
PATRIZIA CALEFATO
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
OF SOCIOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS,
BARI UNIVERSITY

There is a moment when fashion ceases to be itself and instead becomes a moment. There are bodies which distil the poetry and the sign, the occasion and the indecency of this moment. There are faces that love masks more than their own skin, and through that mask allow time's irony to live. Anna Piaggi is all this. She is beyond fashion, but she feels fashion profoundly. 'Being' fashion, it would be more accurate to say, and thus living in the air that fashion brings with it, breathing in its incessant, inconsistent, unfaithful breath of disguise. Anna Piaggi performs fashion's semiotic nature. To use a musical metaphor, the rhythm of her performance is like a jazz session, where each instrument tells the others a story in its solo voice while at the same time converging with the others in unpredictable chords. Her extravagance is often intimidating, as though her appearance is the scene of a ritual in which she is the 'officiate' and all others tacit spectators.

Fashion always implies a spectator. This is what turns it into a semiotic system, a system of signs. In this sense what Anna draws our attention to is fashion's practice of dressing up and of disguise, in which the 'dress' itself has no function, is not useful other than showing itself to be a creator of new and unexpected information which both for its spectators, and often itself, remains incomprehensible. It is carnivalesque, for the spirit of the masked event and of carnival consists in destabilising certainty and institutional systems, using risky combinations brought into being by rhetorical strategies and the poetics of emphasis, exaggeration, quotation and parody. Its strategies speak of the unpredictability of signs, and its motifs from a 'world upside down' are at the foundations of fashion. Fashion can forget

this, when its desire to be taken seriously loses the spirit of eternal carnival. But Anna Piaggi is there to remind us – at every catwalk show, with her fairytale hero hats, music-hall diva make-up and her blue curl of hair which challenge the surrealism of the everyday object.

Always different and each time the same, Anna Piaggi follows a precise rhythm in her fashion compositions. A few key elements, stable and distinctive, make her a recognisable and unique icon. Piaggi is an actress with a uniform – the uniform of A.P. – but we don't know what her costumes will be. She changes the clothes, the adornment, but in their styling and combination creates a consistent aesthetic that is identifiably her own. One would want to preserve this style, as in her precious vintage clothes, as one would have wanted to preserve ritual robes that belonged to kings and religious leaders. And yet her appearance reminds us that fashion is always new. She demonstrates a dynamic principle in which a world that is apparently static, where clothes become sacred relics, can reference the power of the past while being made afresh.

The lessons of Pop Art and postmodernism have shown us the sacred aspect to goods designed for consumption. Vintage clothing, for example, the second-hand, the already worn garment – these represent a bridge in time. It is a bridge which fashion implicitly erases and that Anna Piaggi knowingly displays. Her gestures are a renewed version of Werther's when he wears, even on his death bed, the same suit that he wore when he met Lotte. Dress allows him the luxury of becoming the other.

A female dandy, if this oxymoron is allowed, is the image A.P. presents. Her dandyism maintains two fundamental characteristics: the feminine *sprezzatura* and the visionary. *Sprezzatura* refers to a lightness of touch, a disdain for taking too much care over things, of trying too hard. It is a precise understanding that acknowledges the seriousness of pleasure, as in the touch of irony when Anna Piaggi wears on her head a hat shaped like a clock. The visionary is a prerequisite of living fashion as a predictor of trends. It is enough to look at the magazine *Vanity* which in the 1980s was the site of a virtuoso creative encounter between Anna Piaggi and Antonio Lopez. This visionary element is also the knowledge that the glamour that emanates from the contemporary image of the dandy cannot be excluded from current modes of visibility – the photograph, the catwalk show, the magazine.

The clothed body of Anna Piaggi is a 'grotesque body' in semiotic terminology, with her coverings of many colours and objects, her extreme styling and make-up. Her body appeals to a daily surrealism, exaggerated and unpredictable. Her make-up is as heavy as that of a transvestite; such an excessive mask worn by a woman denaturalises her and turns her into a transgendered icon, while not questioning her biological sex or sexual preference. Fashion allows this to occur, as a complex site of body, senses and signs. And beyond fashion and inside it is Anna Piaggi.



Chanteclaire



Wmple 1882

Anna's Home

22 Jan 77

HP

*Ce n'est point
Marguerite
"Sourcier"*



The early Sophia

Paul

THE GLAM ALCHEMIST OF
D.P. AND OTHER STORIES
GRAZIA D'ANNUNZIO
CONDÉ NAST SPECIAL
PROJECT EDITOR, NEW YORK

My first meeting with Anna Piaggi was through her pages in *Panorama*, a news, lifestyle and political magazine where she had a fashion column. I got to know her there, reading her thoughts, notes and reports during the mid-1960s, before I knew that I would later be working at Condé Nast, and that one day I would see her arrive at the offices of *Vogue* at Piazza Castello in Milan – taking her small geisha steps, clutching her cane, her face made up to resemble that of a porcelain doll.

I had been immediately taken and surprised by her writing style, so different and fresh, so deliciously unpredictable, with no intellectual baroque convolutions like those of many journalists, without the Pindaric flights, the rhetoric, the circumlocutions of all kinds. Her prose was closer to that of a reporter – a chronicler – it was clear, precise, objective, succinct, rich.

Short sentences, few, almost no subclauses, clear statements expressed with her essential lightness. And Anna was so joyous, exuberant, scintillating in her way of narrating – it was, after all, the late sixties – she was part of an experimental time, revolutionary, electrifying in its creativity. And she often used an exclamation mark, one of her stylistic gestures, I would learn, that she used to convey her own marvel and delight at her discoveries.

Then there are her press releases that for ages she has created for her old, dear friends, the Missonis, and that from the 1980s I have jealously collected and kept as keys or clues to the avant-garde, as a visionary attitude to presenting a collection. Anna Piaggi loves to repeat key words and indeed underline them, to stress a particular idea. When I read those pages in their ‘truly Piaggi’ language, where the Italian is punctuated with spots of English and a spray of French, and where the rhythm of the sentences reads like music, I am always struck by the apparent ease with which she writes, the fluidity of her expression and the conciseness of her thought.

‘But how long did it take you?’ is the question I always ask her.

And the answer that comes back is in some ways surprising, as she is after all. ‘It was a very laboured piece. I had to decant, purify, to skim. I love these writing exercises. They are great gymnastics for me, since I’m used to *Vogue*’s brief texts.’

This is what she calls them – exercises – as though she were still a student, and she used to call her columns for the *Espresso* (1987–9) and *Panorama* (1993–7) exercises as well. Anna doesn’t improvise, even if the final result might convey the idea of a playful sound sequence of Futurist *parole in libertà*. These words are studied, pondered and selected with an accurate denotation almost equal to that with which she decides what to wear.

I was able to have a closer look at how she works, reads fashion and writes about fashion from 1988–92, when Franca Sozzani took me to *Vogue* under her new editorship. The magazine was to be reinvented, it was a real experimental gym, and she gave Anna a space within it where she could express herself with the least possible editorial interference. She liked the idea, as did Alfa Castaldi, her unforgettable partner in life and work. She liked the idea as she was intolerant of rules or anything preordained, and she had already proved this with her great, courageous adventure with *Vanity*, the magazine which she invented using only illustration, and perfecting through it her writing, which became flashes: quick, onomatopoeic, surreal. In other words, new.

The double pages for Italian *Vogue* began during a summer’s morning in 1988. Anna would determine the visual material – with Alfa, who would be shooting in the Morimondo Studios or backstage during the shows, and Vern Lambert, who would turn up at the offices with piles of books, just in case any additional material was needed. And even though they were an

oasis of creative freedom, she always wanted to know ‘what the plan was’, what we were going to be printing in the rest of the magazine.

I used to call her after our *Vogue* editorial meetings, and often during our conversations it would come to her like lightning – she would decide what it was that inspired her, what struck her.

If, for example, I said that we were printing a story with red dresses and we were doing a feature on flamboyant dressers, she would suggest a ‘volcanic’ story with hats fit for the Wicked Witch of the West, under the title *Moda cosmica, colori sismici linea conic’A, Vesuvio!* (‘Cosmic fashion, seismic colours, conic’A lines, Vesuvius!’ – *Vogue Italia*, December 1988). If we had a piece on Italian elegance dedicated to great stars like Sophia Loren, Anna would suggest ‘Fashion Menu: Pasta’ (May 1991) where she would read in culinary terms the white details of the clothing signed that season by Casteljacob: thin fringes became *capelli d’angelo*, thicker ones *linguine*, frills were *reginelle* and the quilted lozenges of *matelasse* fabric could only remind us of *ravioli*. For that D.P. she contacted a famous pasta-maker to have the names of all the different types. This kind of precise, detailed quotation is her *leitmotif*.

Words are incredibly important for Anna, the voice that becomes words, first of all, even if in note form she interviews designers or their PRs in an attempt to establish an objective, concrete expression, a clue to a collection. As much as her imagery is fantastical, her words are grounded in an essential directness, with a copywriter’s twist, and very English word games and puns. Dictionaries always present on her desk – Il Devoto-Oli, Le Robert, the Oxford Advanced Dictionary – are her essential working tools. They are used to check whether the word she has thought of or likes the look of has its desired meaning.

Her inimitable, unmistakable prose is a technique which interacts with the graphics of the Double Page. She has always had a great complicity and intense relationship with the art directors. Fabien Baron, Juan Gatti and most of all Luca Stoppini know how important for her the layout is, the selection of a typographic font, how much space to leave for text. Her musicality might come from the fact that she writes in syllables, in total accordance with the layout. Only her titles are decided in advance of the design, and hers are always examples of effervescent linguistic games, of brilliant onomatopoeic effect and intensely personal analogies. *Broche Briosche* is one of my all-time favourites.

Anna doesn’t use a computer. She writes by hand in the morning and then types out the text on her flame-coloured Valentina. I miss her envelopes that would arrive with Swiss punctuality, her tidy pages complete with notes in the margins. These days as soon as Italian *Vogue* arrives at the Condé Nast offices in New York where I have worked now for the last eleven years, I immediately turn to her Double Pages, which today she produces with Bardo Fabiani, and I devour them with the same pleasure I always have.

Once I told her that she was a true Futurist, an authentic surrealist, that she belonged in the company of Marinetti and Breton.

‘No, no,’ she answered, ‘I am not like that. Alfa was the cultured one.’

It is true that Alfa, who for me was an irreplaceable frame of reference, both human and professional, could talk for hours on any subject, enchanting me. But Anna is no less inspiring. She always states: I am superficial, frivolous, with her brief laugh and nod. I just smile. After all these years, I’m not sure that I can believe her.

Previous spread (left to right):
Worth 1882, Anna à Rome
Karl Lagerfeld, 22 January 1977
The early eighties
Karl Lagerfeld, 1985

Opposite page:
Anna Piaggi *Fashion Algebra*
David Bailey, *Another Magazine*, 2004
Anna Piaggi wears a cape designed by
Angela and Giovanni Grimoldi over
the dress J-C de Castelbajac created for
the launch of her book *Fashion
Algebra* in 1998.



VINTAGE SOUVENIRS ANNA PIAGGI

My vintage dressing matured in lucky seasons of 'gathering' or harvest, in freezing barns in the English countryside where Frances, Phyllis and Zinnia, *mietitrici* of dress-treasures of secret provenance, stored their private collections, open to, amongst very few, Vern Lambert.

Vern, the wonderful pioneer of historical street style, would introduce me on returning from these *antelucane* expeditions, to a marvellous world populated with female figures who had originally owned these treasures. I would wait anxiously in London for Vern's return . . . I remember when, without betraying any emotion, without speaking, he took out two huge alligator travel bags, from Africa but found at the Portobello Market; his discoveries were very simply rolled up, and inside out. Vern always inspected the inside of garments, against the light, and could almost always, through looking at idiosyncratic details known only to him, establish the exact 'date of birth' of the dress, and any later domestic alterations.

One of the first ladies I met like this through Vern was Lady Mary Curzon – married to Lord Curzon, the former viceroy of India, in the drama of a Poiret gown with a fourreau of gold thread. I keep it in a trunk which belonged to the soprano Clara Petrella, bought with other trunks and opera costumes. The dress, with wide panels, is rather oversized. Lady Mary Curzon was according to contemporary accounts very tall and imposing, a fact that I could confirm through other items bought through Frances or from auction houses.

I lived vintage seasons in a trance, of full immersion into fashion that had had other lives and that was made richer through the many stories surrounding it, even those within the small span of a century.

These dress-treasures drew my attention to the complications of wearing certain kinds of dress and the laws of deportment. I remember the difficulty of wearing a fifties puffball skirt, tied at the knee with a tight bow – which I wore with very pointed gold macramé shoes. Or the *maîtriser* technique for flowing trains, or how to approach the cul de Paris with lightness, held up by a little padded saddle. Or how to live with a cage crinoline, or a tight bustier intended to improve one's décolleté.

Elinor Glyn had a very elegant sister, Lady Duff Gordon who in the 1920s used to dress aristocratic debutantes (and the Ziegfield Follies) under her label Lucile. I have an evening gown of hers embroidered with stylised roses that I haven't worn for some time, but every time I look at it I think of the incredible sisters.

My relationship with vintage garments has always been humanised, affectionate, 'lived', almost animistic. It is incredible to me how the lives of these garments anticipate what will happen in fashion. It is the case with my 'Fortuny Punk'! It is an exquisite *Delphos* dress in black silk, found by a friend of mine in Porta Portese market in Rome. It became almost a uniform for me, but the fragility of the fabric combined with its casual wear gave it a glorious fate. In reality (it was the end of the 1970s, during the Punk period) this distressed look made it resemble certain creations by Zandra Rhodes held together with safety pins. My Fortuny Punk was drawn by Karl Lagerfeld, who gave it its name.

Is it legitimate using vintage garments casually? I think that adapting them to one's gestures gives them another life. My Fortuny, rolled around my neck, *à torchon*, anticipated the volume of the future pashmina. It is always wonderful to wrap oneself in the radiant textures of the past, which become such becoming halos.

It is in this way that the threshold between past and present is turned into an accent. We can dress up in Lady Curzon's gown, in Schiaparelli, in Chanel, in Elinor Glyn with a contemporary spirit, with modern styling, and most of all with passionate frivolity, timeless frivolity.

FIRST DOUBLE PAGES FABIEN BARON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND DESIGNER

When I first met Anna, about eighteen years ago, I was struck – like most people who meet her for the first time – by her dramatic looks and her utterly original sense of style. There's no one else like her and no one who can replace her. She is that special. She is that unique.

This was during the time of Franca Sozzani's first issue at Italian *Vogue*, and she had just hired me as the art director. We had met briefly in New York, and she had decided to give me the job on the spot. I would be working from New York and flying to Milan for each issue. I was young, eager to succeed, and full of energy. I was looking forward to this amazing opportunity and my new international lifestyle. I arrived in Milan with Steven Meisel's first fashion story in my bag. I had also brought the cover for the first issue under Franca's new leadership. And that's how it all started.

Franca always knew what she wanted and where she wanted to go with the magazine. She was a strong leader with an acute vision. Early on she hired Anna Piaggi as a special fashion editor. By then, Anna was already a legend and an arbiter of taste and design, having founded the avant-garde magazine *Vanity*.

Anna was given her own section of the magazine called 'Doppie Pagine' or 'D.P.' These pages were entirely dedicated to her ideas and fantasies. A montage of words and images, they encapsulated the trends and styles of the moment. But instead of limiting the scope to fashion, Anna mixed in art, literature, music and architecture. She understood how everything was indirectly related and how fashion influenced other media. She would illustrate her points in the most brilliant and modern way by juxtaposing eclectic ideas. The result was always original, surprising and a feast for the eyes.

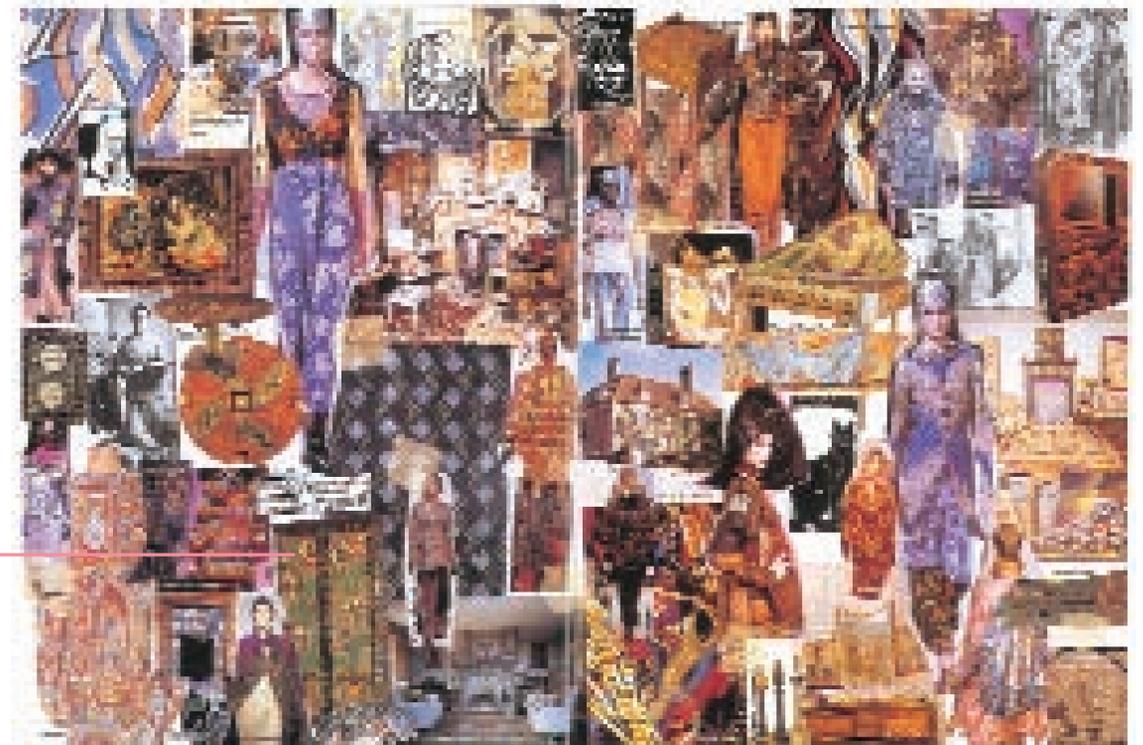
I was mesmerised by her vast understanding of not only fashion, but culture in general. She knew everything from then till now. The only other person I've ever met with such an impressive breadth of knowledge is Karl Lagerfeld. No wonder they are best friends. One can only imagine the incredible and rich discussions they have.

Anna's enthusiasm, her passion for creativity, her endless search for the new and her knowledge of the past have made her one of the most influential personalities in fashion today. I cherish the moments I worked next to her on her pages at Italian *Vogue*. It was such a special time, filled with joy and creativity . . . a new era of discovery where I learned so much without even realising it. Only today can I look back and fully understand just how strong a guiding light to my future Anna was.



Wardrobe
Omega workshops (probably decorated by Roger Fry), 1916.
V&A: CIRC.272.1-1975

Workshop All'Inglese
Anna Piaggi, *Vogue* Italia, December 1994



THIRTEEN THINGS I
THOUGHT YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT A.P.
JEFFERSON HACK,
CO-FOUNDER,
DAZED AND CONFUSED

1. A.P. CLAIMS THAT THE WORK SHE DOES FOR ITALIAN VOGUE IS 'PURELY DECORATIVE'. **2.** A.P. HAS AN OLIVETTI VALENTINA TYPEWRITER SHE BOUGHT IN THE 1980S. THERE IS A COPY OF IT IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK. IT HAS LOST ITS NUMBER 9. **3.** A.P. SEES MANY THINGS REPEATED IN FASHION, BUT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE CARBON COPY FROM A TYPEWRITER HAS A DIFFERENT LOOK AND FEEL FROM THE ORIGINAL. **4.** A.P. HAS WRITTEN OVER 7000 EDITORIAL PAGES IN HER CAREER. **5.** A.P. ARRIVES AT THE MILAN FASHION SHOWS BY TAXI. SHE USED TO HAVE A DRIVER, BUT HE SUFFERED FROM AMNESIA AND LOST HIS WAY. SHE DOESN'T SUFFER FROM AMNESIA, BUT CAN EASILY ADOPT THE LOOK OF AMNESIA IF PROMPTED. **6.** A.P. IS UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT'S SERIOUS AND WHAT'S FUNNY, AS SHE CAN BE SERIOUSLY FUNNY. **7.** A.P. WAS MARRIED FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS TO ALFA CASTALDI, WHO PASSED AWAY IN 1995. SHE BELIEVES THAT IN SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE TO 'ENJOY EACH OTHER'S NOISE'. **8.** A.P. A 'SILENT MOVIE STAR' IS HOW KARL LAGERFELD DESCRIBED HER. HE DREW OVER 250 SKETCHES OF ANNA WHILE SHE LIVED IN PARIS IN THE EARLY 1970S. THE FIRST SKETCH WAS DRAWN ON A PAPER NAPKIN IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT CALLED LA ROUTE MANDARINE. **9.** A.P. OFTEN USED TO RESEARCH LOCATIONS PRIOR TO ATTENDING AN OPENING OR EVENT. SHE REGARDED THIS PROCESS AS A FORM OF 'VISUAL PREPARATION' – ESSENTIAL PLANNING FOR HER OUTFIT. **10.** A.P.'S ANACHRONISTIC APPROACH TO FASHION IS MORE A 'KNACK' THAN AN ACT OF ANARCHISM. **11.** A.P.'S FIRST NAME IS A PALINDROME, BUT HER ANALYSIS OF CULTURE IS NOT TO LOOK BACKWARDS, ONLY FORWARDS TO THE NEWNESS OF NOW. **12.** A.P. SQUEEZES REVIEWS INTO A FEW WORDS: SYNTHESISING TRENDS AND FASHION IDEAS INTO NEW FORMS. NEW EXPRESSIONS. SHE IS A CROSSWORD WITHOUT CLUES. **13.** A.P. IS AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME INTO THE IDEA OF SUPERFICIAL ADVANCEMENT. BUT AS WE KNOW, THIS MOMENT HAS JUST PASSED. **ANNA PIAGGI'S FAVOURITE NUMBER IS 13.**

EVENTS

Friday Late – Collage Reportage

Friday 31 March 2006, 18.30–22.00

In celebration of *Anna Piaggi Fashion-ology*, a Friday Late will be devoted to fashion and its media. Ideas highlighted in the exhibition will be up for discussion: posing, wearing, editing, styling, theming, describing, narrating. These areas will be explored through interactive workshops, panel discussion and activities throughout the evening. Includes Anna Piaggi in conversation with Stephen Jones at 19.30.

Tickets £5. Booking opens February 27, call the Bookings Office on 020 7942 2211.

TALKING DESIGN: FASHION FICTION

This four-part series traces the representation of dress and fashion through fiction and poetry, personal memoirs and letters, biography, journalism and intellectual discourse. What makes dress and fashion such a fascinating subject for writers? How are fashion's mythologies constructed and disseminated?

Fashion and Biography

Wednesday 1 March 2006, 19.00–20.30

Claire Wilcox, Senior Curator of Modern Fashion at the V&A, looks at the importance of letters, biography and memoirs in recounting couture's stories.

Fashion and Fiction

Wednesday 8 March 2006, 19.00–20.30

Clair Hughes, author of *Dressed in Fiction* (Berg, 2006) explores references to dress in literature. Followed by a discussion chaired by Lesley Miller, Senior Curator of Textiles and Fashion at the V&A.

Fashion and Theory

Wednesday 22 March 2006, 19.00–20.30

Christopher Breward, Deputy Head of Research at the V&A and editor of the journal *Fashion Theory*, and renowned fashion historian Elizabeth Wilson discuss how theorising fashion can tell us more about the world.

Fashion and Journalism

Wednesday 29 March 2006, 19.00–20.30

Judith Clark, London College of Fashion/V&A Fellow in Contemporary Fashion and curator of *Anna Piaggi Fashion-ology*, and special guest discuss fashion journalism's ability to tell us stories.

Tickets for individual events £8.50. Senior citizens, V&A Members and Patrons £6.50. Students, disabled people and ES40 holders £5.50. Save £4 if you book for the full series. Call 020 7942 2211 to book

V&A and you?

Become a member and enjoy free entry with a guest to major exhibitions and a range of other benefits. Call 020 7942 2271

Keep in touch

To receive regular news from the V&A, visit www.vam.ac.uk and sign up for our e-newsletter featuring details of exhibitions, events and offers

Victoria and Albert Museum

Cromwell Road

London SW7 2RL

020 7942 2000

Open 10.00–17.45 daily

10.00–22.00 Wednesdays and last Friday of the month

www.vam.ac.uk

ISBN 978-0-9552335-0-0

With thanks to the University of the Arts, London

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS
LONDON LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION
CAMBERWELL COLLEGE OF ARTS CENTRAL
SAINT MARTIN'S COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
LONDON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

Acknowledgements

This exhibition is drawn almost exclusively from Anna Piaggi's personal archive, we wish to thank her tireless help and enthusiasm in bringing this exhibition to fruition. The museum would also like to express its sincerest thanks to the following individuals: Clair Battison, David Bailey, Fabien Baron, Manolo Blahnik, Valerie Blythe, Robin Brookes and team, Chloe Burrow, Patrizia Calefato, Judith Clark, Shaun Cole, Bill Cunningham, Grazia D'Annunzio, Johnny Dewe-Mathews, Flick Ansell at DHA lighting, Jane Drew, Bardo Fabiani, Moreno Fardin, Lara Flecker, Sam Forster Ltd, Joe Fountain, Richard Gray, Angela Grimoldi, Jefferson Hack, Stephen Jones, Mark Kilfoyle, Gene Krell, Barry Lategan, Jens Laugesen, Tim Lock at Gander and White, Andrew Logan, Roxanne Lowit, Marco Maccapani, Susan McCormack, Missoni, Stuart Newton, Helen Nodding, Guillaume Olive, Ligaya Salazar, Fendi, Louise Shannon, Charlie Smith, Luca Stoppini and Tom Weaver.

Guide design: Charlie Smith Design

Front cover:

Anna Piaggi Fashion-ology

Bardo Fabiani, September 2005

Back cover:

Morpho-illogical, artwork for section 12, gallery 63

Richard Gray, November 2005

SPONSORED BY

TOPSHOP

V&A

