

# YVES SAINT LAURENT ES & FORMS

DECORS AND WORKS BY CLAUDIA WIESER EXHIBITION: JUNE 9, 2023-JANUARY 14, 2024

VOGUE The New York Times Beaux Arts

Télérama'

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PRESS RELEASE 3

# YVES SAINT LAURENT -SHAPES & FORMS

Decors and works by Claudia Wieser



and Yves Saint Laurent backstage at the SAINT LAURENT rive gauche autumn-winter 1988 fashion show © Yves Saint Laurent © Francois-Marie Banier

Gurmitt Kaur Campbell

the exhibition *Yves Saint Laurent – SHAPES & FORMS*, the couturier's modern and enduring vision is echoed once again. Through a fascinating spatial arrangement, the artist Claudia Wieser engenders a dialogue with textile pieces and graphic art from the museum's collections. The exhibition presents some forty models by Yves Saint Laurent–both haute couture and ready-to-wear garments–accessories and sketches, which resonate with decors and work by the German artist. This original approach securely places the couturier's genius in the context of our own times.

Throughout his career, the legendary grand couturier Yves Saint Laurent never ceased reinventing forms. Already in 1958, when he was artistic director at Christian Dior, he affirmed his modernist approach with his "Trapeze" collection. Its iconic geometric silhouette has gone down in the annals of fashion.

"I believe that young people are the driving element behind this fashion; above all their yearning for things that have been somewhat forgotten: simplicity, naturalness and openness to change."

Yves Saint Laurent interviewed by André Parinaud, 1959, INA

Beginning in the 1960s, his creations reflected as treamlined cut, well-defined lines and rich colors. His works were influenced by the artistic trends of the time–simple and geometric abstraction, constructivism and concrete art—whose many movements mirror the multi-faceted talent of Yves Saint Laurent.

A fashion revolutionary, the couturier designed minimalist dresses, often mono-chromatic compositions seemingly sprung from a single line: a bold, exacting gesture was the underpinning of his art.

A colorist, he imagined pure yet exuberant abstract compositions born from the juxtaposition of flat surfaces in vibrant hues. Transposing pictorial material into textile, he thus balanced color, form, surface and line.

An illusionist, he would juxtapose black and white to suggest movement in the garment through an optical illusion. By using flat, simple lines, shape prevailed over color.

Finally, the couturier delighted in playing with geometries, assembling endless colored and boldly partitioned fragments as if from a prism.

Whether with curves or right angles, spheres or broken lines—while paying particular attention to color and form—the German artist Claudia Wieser stages for us a rich array of forms. Influenced by the intuitive and spiritual work of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, the artist explores modernist-inspired geometric constructions. Recognized for her immersive and contemplative installations, Wieser offers us a totally immersive experience. For the *Yves Saint Laurent—SHAPES & FORMS* project, Claudia Wieser presents several of her own works, some of which have never been exhibited before.

### **PURE FORMS**





[1]

THROUGHOUT his career, Yves Saint Laurent imagined feminine beauty through lines, flattened areas and shapes. From his earliest days at the House of Christian Dior, he designed graceful garments, held in place at the shoulders rather than at the waist, which departed from the New Look silhouette. This streamlining approach reappears and intensifies throughout his career, as can be seen in numerous garments he designed. Yves Saint Laurent would sketch a vertical silhouette, in its elemental state and freed from all superfluity, in order to achieve a perfectly constructed garment. It is this precision that enabled his style to evolve. The style was, as he himself said, nourished by multiple influences: "I feel as if I'm always doing the same thing, but actually that's not at all the case. There is an evolution, which can come from a fabric, a trend, a new way of thinking, an artistic movement."

Clothes from the world of industry were one of his sources of inspiration. He adapted them to haute couture by offering feminized versions. He reinterpreted the codes of "permanent forms" of what he considered "real clothing." In this way, the jumpsuit, a garment worn by aviators and later by astronauts, was transformed into a monochromatic ensemble, whose elegance is accentuated by simple and straightforward lines.

At the end of the 1960s, the jumpsuit became a fixture of the Saint Laurent wardrobe, perfectly evoking his "casual chic" aesthetic. The couturier had a profound desire to dress a woman in such a way that the fabric would follow her movements and reflect her attitudes. Fashion, according to him, should not be rigid, but instead be in the service of women. He explained it as follows: "A dress is not 'architecture.' It is a house, not made to be contemplated, but to be inhabited. The woman who lives there should feel beautiful and comfortable inside it." That is the secret of an art that, when mastered, brings out the absolute refinement, grace and timelessness of a garment.

#### [1] DRESS

Worn by Bambi Spring-summer 2001 haute couture collection © Yves Saint Laurent © Guy Marineau

#### [2] "STOCKHOLM" DRESS

Christian Dior collection by Yves Saint Laurent Haute couture spring-summer 1959 © Yves Saint Laurent © Matthieu Lavanchy



DAYTIME ENSEMBLE Worn by Amalia Vairelli Autumn-winter 1984 Haute couture collection © Yves Saint Laurent © Guy Marineau

### SHAPES, FORMS AND COLORS





[1]

FOR Yves Saint Laurent, color is essential to the composition of forms. The couturier's first creations were short, straight dresses in vibrant colors, a reflection of an elegant and modern woman. His 1965 and 1966 collections revealed an avantgarde style, drawing their sources from the world of abstract painters. Combining a rigorous cut and an ingenious color palette, the dresses appeared as new constructions, born from the intersection of various planes in bright tones, which energized the whole. The nature and arrangement of their colored surfaces combined to engender a diverse array of forms.

At the House of Yves Saint Laurent, color was at the heart of the creative process; it was both material and a means of expression. The couturier favored assemblying flat areas of saturated colors, made from plain and smooth fabrics such as jersey. The wavy juxtapositions that had characterized a large part of his autumn-winter 1966 collection were replaced in the following decades by clearer, more defined interconnections between rectangles of different colors or materials and sharp lines. Colors were assembled in twos or threes and layered as if on a colorama. A dazzling hue always stood out more than the others, drawing the eye to a chosen part of the silhouette.

An unrivaled colorist, Saint Laurent introduced a radically new palette, borrowing for his garments the lively colors of geometric abstraction or the vibrant ones of Pop Art. Shape was thus defined by the contrast between colors. Jarring, sometimes even unpredictable, juxtapositions would clash on the same outfit with inventiveness and precision, and a tense back-and-forth would play out between form and color.

- [1] DRESS FROM A FORMAL ENSEMBLE

  Worn by Mariacarla Boscono, homage to pop art
  Autumn-winter 1966, haute couture collection
  Last fashion show, Centre Pompidou, Paris
  January 22, 2002

  © Yves Saint Laurent
  © All rights reserved



SUIT, HAT AND GLOVES
Autumn-winter 1966
Haute couture
collection
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Matthieu Lavanchy

### BLACK AND WHITE, DRAWING THE FORM





[2]

[1]

TIMELESS yet contemporary, black and white were an integral part of the creative universe of Yves Saint Laurent from the outset. For the couturier, all reflection on form begins by sketching his models with pencil lines on paper. "[...] I think a white sheet is very boring; strokes and lines only exist through black."

"That's why my women are often dressed in black: I like women to look like drawings, like sketches." Indeed, Yves Saint Laurent uses black lines as an expressive means consistent with his relentless search for simplicity and purity. Black, the couturier's favorite color—for day wear as well as evening wear—has always been in the collective unconscious, associated with mourning as opposed to white, a symbol of light. However, beginning in the fourteenth century, black gradually imposed itself in the realm of fashion, before entering the general wardrobe in the nineteenth century as the quintessence of simplicity, elegance and seduction.

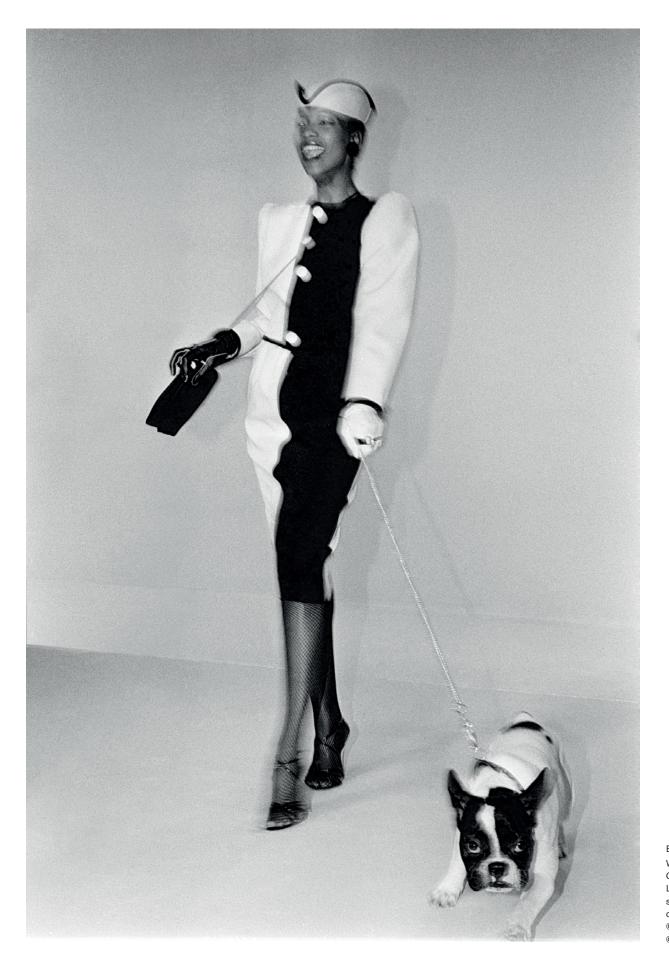
If, in 1926, black achieved a sort of apotheosis in the hands of the legendary couturier Coco Chanel (1883–1971) when she introduced her iconic "little black dress," Yves Saint Laurent ventured even further. "I love it because it's assertive. [...] But let's be careful: not the 'little black dress' worn with pearls and a mink stole. A modern black." If, beginning in 1910–1920, black was transformed into a manifesto of modernity, in binary opposition to white, by artists such as the Russian painter Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) and his famous painting Black Square (1915), it is pushed to its climax in the work of the couturier. Like the artists of the Minimalist and Op Art movements, Yves Saint Laurent created, through a subtle game of contrasts, symmetries and camouflage, a visual and formal repertoire that he would extend ad infinitum.

#### [1] DRESS

Worn by Shiraz Tal Autumn-winter 1998 haute couture collection © Yves Saint Laurent © Guy Marineau

#### [2] DRESS

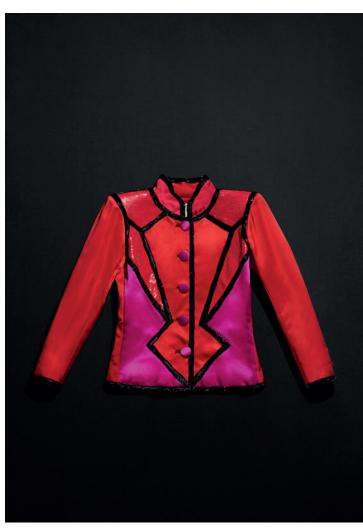
Worn by Courtney Herron Spring-summer 2000 haute couture collection © Yves Saint Laurent © Guy Marineau



ENSEMBLE
Worn by Mounia
Orosemane, SAINT
LAURENT rive gauche
spring-summer 1980
collection
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Jean-Luce Huré

### **GEOMETRIC FORMS**





[1]

SHAPE can be achieved in different ways, whether through cut, line or color. These three approaches were brought together to produce these ensembles. As evidenced by the many exploratory drawings for the autumn-winter 1988 SAINT LAURENT *rive gauche* collection, Yves Saint Laurent built his collection around colorful geometric shapes. In the manner of the cubist painters, and echoing his haute couture collections of this same year, he took full advantage of a theme by offering a range of garments fashioned from numerous combinations of lines, colors or fabrics. The use of pastels and fabric swatches helped him reflect on his drawing and advance his creative ideas. Like a master glassmaker creating a stained-glass window, he separated shapes with large black braids to reinforce the lines of the female body. The textiles chosen to make these jackets created an optical effect by alternating matte and shiny fabrics, smooth or ribbed surfaces and reliefs created by the braids and sequins. The accessories—colored gloves and hats—fashioned from superimposed cubes or cones, were further manifestations of the couturier's creative impulse.

- [1] FORMAL ENSEMBLE
  SAINT LAURENT rive gauche
  Fall-winter 1988 collection
  © Yves Saint Laurent
  © Xavier Raoux-All rights reserved
- [2] JACKET
  SAINT LAURENT rive gauche
  Autumn-winter 1988 collection
  © Yves Saint Laurent
  © Matthieu Lavanchy



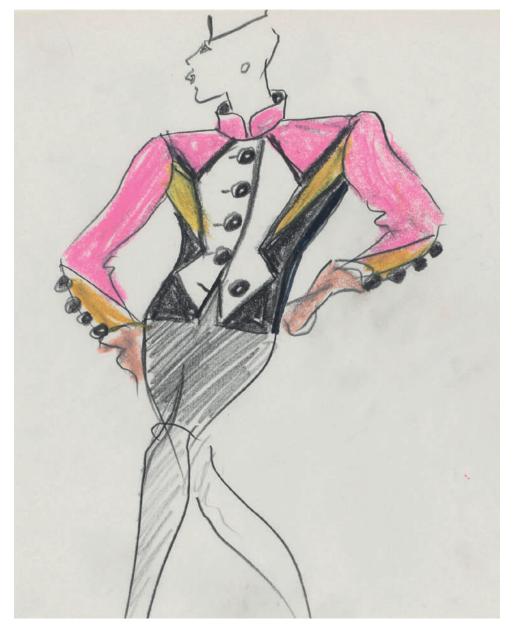
THIRTEEN jackets from the autumn-winter 1988 SAINT LAURENT rive gauche collection are cubist-inspired. They are fashioned from interlocking geometric shapes created with contrasting textiles and colors. This piece is composed from a patchwork of satin and leather, providing shine and rigidity, and in five vibrant, eye-catching colors: pink, white, black, fuchsia and yellow. At the runway show, Iman wore this jacket with a straight black leather satin skirt and accessories that accentuated the silhouette: a hat created from two fuchsia and black tangled cubes and earrings composed of triangles and circles.

JACKET AND HAT
SAINT LAURENT rive gauche
Autumn-winter 1988 collection
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Matthieu Lavanchy











RESEARCH SKETCH SAINT LAURENT rive gauche Autumn-winter 1988 collection © Yves Saint Laurent



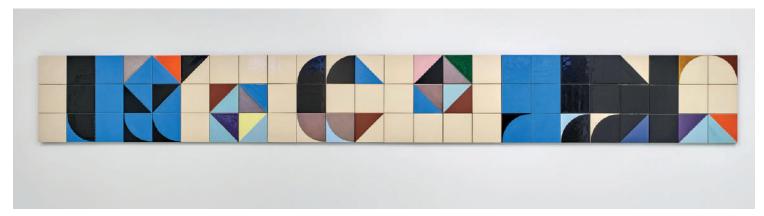
IN his spring-summer 1980 haute couture collection, Yves Saint Laurent returned to one of his previous successes and brought it up to date: his homage to Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) and the "De Stijl" movement, which was inspired by the 1956 book by Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian, Sa vie, son œuvre.* The couturier once again transformed the painter's creations into energetic, three-dimensional work. He resurrected the codes used to fashion the iconic dresses from his fall-winter 1965 haute couture collection, this time opting for a canvas and gabardine skirt suit that approached abstraction, whose cut was simple, straight and structured. The large flat areas of primary colors are framed by black lines, which give a geometric effect to the work.

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### WORKS AND DECORS BY CLAUDIA WIESER



[1]



[2]

AFTER training in ironwork and studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Claudia Wieser (born in 1973 in Germany) developed an artistic practice dominated by an attention to geometry and space. She mixes techniques and materials (ceramic, mirror, wood, photography) by creating graphic compositions as well as decorative volumes. Since 2002, her work has been exhibited internationally and she has participated in numerous residencies. In 2010, she reinterpreted *Le Poème de l'angle droit* (The Poem of the Right Angle) by Le Corbusier at the Drawing Center in New York. In 2021, invited by the Public Art Fund of New York, the artist designed her first public art project: five monumental sculptures highlighting the dynamism of the city and its inhabitants.

- SILK SATIN HATS
   SAINT LAURENT rive gauche
   Autumn-winter 1988 collection
   © Yves Saint Laurent / Decor by Claudia Wieser
   © Photograph by Thibaut Voisin
- [2] CLAUDIA WIESER
   Courtesy the artist; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;
   von Bartha, Basel/Copenhagen
   Achim Kukulies

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What was the first thing that came to mind when you were asked to work on the upcoming exhibition at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris?

When I was contacted by Elsa Janssen, the museum's director, to ask if we could possibly work together on an exhibition, my first reaction was a mixture of joy and excitement, but also curiosity at the idea of engaging with the work of Yves Saint Laurent and wondering how this collaboration would take shape.

How did this particular context fuel your creativity?

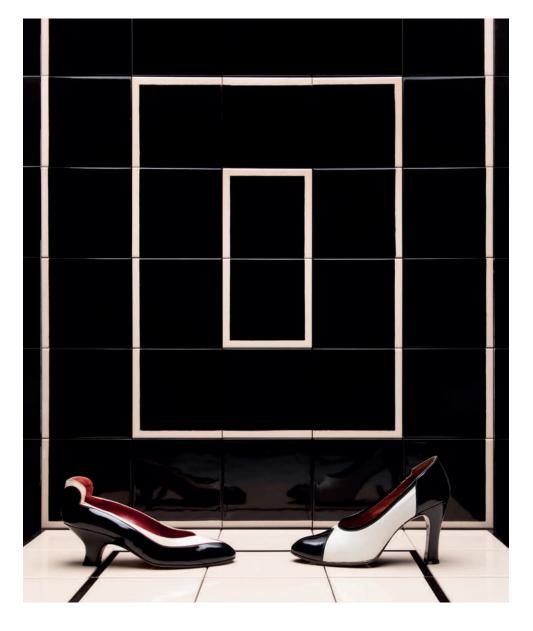
In my work, one of my primary concerns is to free myself from the classic bounda-

ries that exist between the fine arts and other disciplines such as fashion, craftsmanship, design or architecture. I don't like my works shown in isolation, in the most neutral spaces possible, but prefer that they dialogue with the venue and the context in which they are placed. This creates a framework, a space of possibilities which, to a certain extent, removes the viewer from his or her daily reality. My in-depth study of the work of Yves Saint Laurent has been immensely enriching and a tremendous source of inspiration.

I learned to appreciate how, while showing extreme creativity and developing a work of great diversity and depth, artists can remain true to themselves. From the start, I said to myself that accessing the creations of Yves Saint Laurent, as exhibited in the context of this exhibition, could engender a dialogue through a certain number of elements: the texture of the materials, their shapes and colors and the arrangement of contrasts.

With his radical and revolutionary approach, Yves Saint Laurent was a master in the art of sketching and creating forms. How does this relate to your work?

The precise reason why Elsa Janssen invited me to design this exhibition is that she perceives, in my work, formal aspects that can be linked to certain creations by Yves Saint Laurent. It is mainly, in my opinion, work



#### PATENT LEATHER SHOES

Left: Spring-summer 1979 haute couture collection Right: SAINT LAURENT *rive gauche* spring-summer 1983 collection

© Yves Saint Laurent / Decor by Claudia Wieser © Photograph by Thibaut Voisin GUEST ARTIST 16

involving the line, with a restricted vocabulary of geometric shapes and with arrangements and combinations of varying colors and textures. Architecture is for me a source of inspiration; it creates environments which jolt my creativity.

More generally, the study of volumes is also an important aspect of my work. The way the body fits into space also plays a role in my three-dimensional works, as I often create spatial installations that involve the viewer not only as the one who experiences them, but also as an integral part of the installation.

What are the optical effects produced by the creations of Yves Saint Laurent? How have you used them in your work?

If we consider the collections designed by Yves Saint Laurent over four decades, we notice that a large number of his creations use only black and white. Saint Laurent is not afraid of color, far from it. But his creations display his unique approach to black and white, his taste for elegance, timelessness and duality which results from the opposition of black and white, and for the marked contrasts that allow him to create striking line drawings while emphasizing volume. Yves Saint Laurent played on the effects of depth, the contrasts between volumes, round or square shapes, the opposition of loose and fitted forms, etc.

In my work, I often approach similar formal questions through these notions of contrast, balance or opposition.

From a formal and geometric point of view, what parallels can we draw between your sculptural work and Yves Saint Laurent's approach to the female silhouette? How do you perceive the body and volumes in the interpretations offered to us by Yves Saint Laurent? The impulse to produce hand-carved wooden sculptures was born from my desire to translate a two-dimensional abstract geometric design into three dimensions. During my first attempts, it quickly became clear that, in a certain sense, the sculptures represented individuals, each with their own character, as if emerging from a systemic family constellation. Another reference was certainly Oskar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet at the Bauhaus, in which the

dancers were dressed in outsized, brightly colored costumes, designed using basic geometric shapes. In my creations, the link with the human body is therefore present and even intentional.

The Yves Saint Laurent creations presented in this exhibition naturally emphasize certain specific elements of the female body such as the waist, hips, shoulders or breasts and thus reveal the suggestive power of his line drawings and his taste for graphic elements, for a game involving volumes, contrasts and well-defined silhouettes.

From this point of view, the making of a garment can also be considered as a form of artistic "modeling"—of fashioning something in three dimensions. In addition, anyone who has ever witnessed the fittings involved in the creation of a fashion collection, at such a level of professionalism, will realize that the couturier's work on the body, his or her sense of observation, the never ending adjustments and the changes, reactivity and "modeling" that this type of creation requires, correspond in many respects to the work of a sculptor, of a painter and of an artist in general.

In this exhibition, the natural ability of fashion to define the volumes of the body is further reinforced through the use of drawings and the shaping of clothing in three dimensions.

For me, one of the most remarkable qualities of Yves Saint Laurent was his ability to support and endorse the female body, and therefore the person wearing the garment, to enable the woman to express her inner strength and self-confidence.

This exhibition presents a series of powerful and iconic silhouettes spanning four decades of fashion history. They reflect different aspects of Yves Saint Laurent's oeuvre as well as his ability to capture and define the spirit of the times. What do you think he brought to fashion?

The more I take an interest in the work of Yves Saint Laurent, the more I have the feeling that the woman who wears his creations is never an object, but always a subject. She is an independent, self-confident woman. She is comfortable and always seems authentic, even in the most varied situations. In my opinion, the role that Yves

Saint Laurent played in the emancipation of women is one of the most important aspects of his work, in addition to the incredible diversity of his creative output, the multiple forms it undertook, its vast range and its ability to constantly reinvent itself.



## HAIR COMB AND BRACELETS Collection SAINT LAURENT rive gauche Spring-summer 1980 haute couture collection Spring-summer 1982 and autumn-winter 1984

© Thibaut Voisin

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE 17

#### FORM IN ART

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *SHAPES* & *FORMS*, the catalogue examines some of the most radical graphic work by Yves Saint Laurent: pencil strokes, colors and shapes are seen in an art historical and contemporary art context.

Never-before-seen works by Claudia Wieser, photographs by Thibaut Voisin; a photographic portfolio from the collection of Matthieu Lavanchy; set design by Valérie Weill.

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DOMITILLE ÉBLÉ

Curator, manager of the graphic art collection

JUDITH LAMAS

Curator, manager of the textiles and accessories collections

#### **GUEST ARTIST**

CLAUDIA WIESER

#### THE MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT PARIS

The Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris, chaired by Madison Cox, is the first museum dedicated to one of the greatest couturiers of the twentieth century to open in the capital of fashion. It opened its doors on October 3, 2017, fifteen years after the closing of the haute couture house and obtained the designation "Musée de France." It occupies the historic hôtel particulier at 5 Avenue Marceau where for nearly thirty years, from 1974 to 2002, Yves Saint Laurent's creative genius held sway. The museum's vast collection includes more than 100,000 graphic art pieces, including 55,000 fashion sketches by the couturier, 130,000 photographs and 20,000 garments and accessories. A press and audiovisual documentary archive with over 50,000 entries completes the collection, which is the result of pioneering archival work begun by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé.

#### AT THE MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT MARRAKECH

CY TWOMBLY: MOROCCO 1952/1953 From March 4 through July 2, 2023

It is a great honor for the Fondation Jardin Majorelle, in partnership with the Cy Twombly Foundation and the Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, to mount the extraordinary exhibition, *Cy Twombly, Morocco 1952/1953*. The influential American artist Cy Twombly, considered one of the greatest artists of the second half of the twentieth century, is known for his fascination with the world of classical antiquity. He was equally intrigued by the cultures of the Amazigh (Berber) tribes of Morocco. During an initial journey in the winter of 1952 and the spring of 1953, the young American artist traveled through the Kingdom of Morocco in the company of another young painter, Robert Rauschenberg. Together, they explored not only the country's most frequently visited cities, such as Tangier, Casablanca and Marrakech, but also the relatively unknown remnants of Berber culture in Tiznit and of classical antiquity in Volubilis, both of which lent their names to monumental works executed by Twombly following his stay in Morocco.

YVES SAINT LAURENT: LINE AND EXPRESSION From March 4, 2023 through January 28, 2024

As we delve into the vast repertoire of creative work left by Yves Saint Laurent, it seems essential to analyze the genesis of his collections in the light of his numerous preparatory drawings and sketches, now housed at the Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent in Paris. It is there, among the more than 55,000 sketches and drawings kept by the Foundation, that the great French couturier's unique creative vision can be understood in the most direct way possible through examining his simple yet highly evocative line illustrations. It is a great privilege for the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech to present the exhibition *Yves Saint Laurent: Line and Expression*, curated by Olivier Saillard and Gaël Mamine, which explores the rich body of preparatory work by the late couturier.

#### **PRESS**

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#### **LOCATION**

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#### **HOURS**

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday-Sunday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday: 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Monday: Closed

Groups are welcome from Tuesday to Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Group reservations are handled by Cultival. cultival.fr

#### **ADMISSION**

Ticket price 10 €

Reduced ticket price 7 €

Those 10-18 years of age, teachers and students (upon presentation of a valid card justifying the discount).

#### Free admission

Children under 10, art history students, students enrolled in fashion school, students in journalism, the unemployed and those earning the minimum wage, persons with disabilities and the persons accompanying them, refugees (upon presentation of an OFPRA proof), bearers of a professional journalist identity card, members of ICOM-ICOMOS, as well as professional and certified guides (upon presentation of a valid card).

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