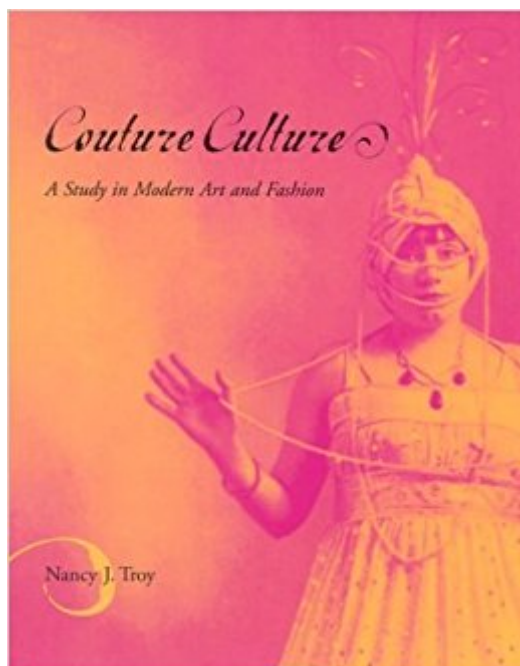


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# Couture Culture: A Study In Modern Art And Fashion



## Synopsis

In *Couture Culture*, Nancy Troy offers a new model of how art and fashion were linked in the early twentieth century. Focusing on a leader of the French fashion industry, Paul Poiret, Troy uncovers a logic of fashion based on the tension between originality and reproduction that bears directly on art historical issues of the period. This tension lies at the heart of haute couture, which, although designed for the wealthy, was also intended to be adapted for sale in department stores and other clothing outlets that catered to a broader consumer market. Troy examines the relationships between elite and popular culture, the professional theater and the fashion show, as well as the presumed polarity between Orientalist and classical sensibilities. She shows how Poiret and other designers patronized the arts and presented themselves as artists not only to sell their individual dresses to wealthy clients but also to promote the mass production of their designs. The contradictions she uncovers suggest surprising parallels with the readymades and fashion-related work of Marcel Duchamp, who explored the questions of originality and authenticity raised by couture culture during the 1910s and 1920s. In contrast to dominant accounts of early twentieth-century art that have dismissed fashion as superficial, fleeting, and feminized, Troy's more nuanced approach reveals conceptual structures and marketing strategies shared by modern art and fashion in these years.

## Book Information

Paperback: 450 pages

Publisher: The MIT Press (April 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0262701030

ISBN-13: 978-0262701037

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #687,406 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #245 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Fashion > Designers](#) #546 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Fashion > History](#) #1511 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Commercial > Fashion Design](#)

## Customer Reviews

Troy (chair, art history, Univ. of Southern California) here offers the first thoroughgoing examination of the relationship between modern art and high fashion. The book locates the origins of

contemporary haute couture in early 19th-century France, opening with the observation that what we now recognize as the international fashion industry evolved from work done by artisans in Parisian tailor shops. She traces the careers of a few savvy figures from Paris, who made the business decisions and original designs that helped to catapult the simple dressmaking trade into an art form. Particularly intriguing is the role couturiers played as art patrons and the way in which they utilized their artistic connections to amass wealth and build their house's cachet. Troy also considers the notion and import of authenticity in a trade demanding multiple copies of "original" designs-an industrial-era irony similarly confronting modern artists. With a wealth of period photographs, trade material, and serials, Troy's book documents the strong affinities between art and fashion and provides keen insight into the lives and social practices of the French upper classes. Recommended for all art, cultural studies, and social history collections. Savannah Schroll, Smithsonian Institution Lib., Washington, DC Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Troy's prose is clearly written and consistently intelligent." — John A. Walker, *The Art Book* "The first thoroughgoing examination of the relationship between modern art and high fashion." — Savannah Schroll, *Library Journal* "A fascinating study of the swirling crosscurrents linking the worlds of art and fashion early in the 20th century." — Aaron Gell, *W Magazine*

Bought as gift... they liked it.

An early breakthrough toward a new "way of knowing" or paradigm shift in the history of arts and culture. I suspect that Troy's early work in this vein will be understood, not just as a harbinger, but also as an essential building block for a foundation of the future--a yet-to-be articulated, academic approach, as well as an even broader way of understanding the world through a lens that we now imperfectly refer to as the humanities (because the fast pace of innovation in media, materials and design has already begun to spur an implosion of our traditional definitions of academic disciplines and modes of inquiry).

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