FOR MY MOTHER, JULIA
Back cover
Hand-coated pigment print,
printed 2019, 63.2 x 50.8cm
Edition of 10, with 3 Artist Proofs
Courtesy of Nick Knight
‘FASHION IS A LITTLE LIKE RADIUM... OR LIKE ESSENCE OF ROSES, WHICH IF UNDILUTED WOULD ASPHYXIATE’

CHARLES JAMES, 1958
It has been a joy to collaborate with Amy de la Haye on Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion. Her book and exhibition exploring the rose in fashion make an original and important contribution to fashion studies, while also presenting a beautiful and dramatic story that is sure to appeal to readers and museum visitors. The rose is not only beautiful and fragrant, its symbolism is powerful and multifaceted. As a result, when designers are inspired by the rose, their work draws on powerful emotions and ideas about love, sex and death. Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion draws on a wealth of scholarship across the disciplines, but it wears its learning accessibly. Each chapter of the book is an invitation to make a voyage of discovery, beginning with Amy’s conversation with the brilliant image-maker, Nick Knight.

The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology seldom works with outside curators, but Amy’s depth of experience as a curator and as professor of fashion curation at the London College of Fashion puts her in a category of her own. Colleen Hill, Curator of Costume and Accessories at The Museum at FIT, has worked closely with Amy on co-curating the exhibition, and their multiple collaborations have strengthened the relationship between the London College of Fashion and The Museum at FIT.

Valerie Steele
Director and Chief Curator, The Museum at FIT, New York
INTRODUCTION

THE ROSE

FLOWERS THAT ARE LOOKED AT

AMY DE LA HAYE
The rose – the most ravishingly beautiful and fragrant of flowers – is inextricably entwined with fashion and dressed appearances (the latter embraces perfume, grooming, jewellery, body adornment and gesture.) Roses, like fashion, are a luxury and they are ephemeral. Both are ‘shown’ (on catwalks and at flower shows), their appeal is multisensory; they are avidly collected and excite passion and obsession (a scarlet-flowered floribunda, bred by Stanley George Marciel in 1990, has this very name). In her seminal book The Symbolic Rose (1954), Barbara Seward wrote, ‘Not only do its roots extend at least to the beginnings of recorded time, but its petals embrace the deepest positive values ever held by man. Although the flower is equated in age and profundity by such fundamental symbols as sea, sun, bird, star and cross, it would be difficult to prove that it has been surpassed by any.’ It is worth noting that responses are entirely personal and culturally determined; not everyone has approved of, or subscribed to, such interpretations.

Not surprisingly, the rose and its savage, deterrent thorns (technically, they are prickles) – a conjunction of opposites – have provided a fertile source of inspiration for designers, artists and writers, who have drawn out allusions to love, beauty, sexuality, sin, gendered identities, rites of passage, transgression, degradation and death. Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion demonstrates visually and evaluates critically how the rose has inspired the ways we look, dress, feel and fantasise. It foregrounds innovative, refined and challenging fashion design dating from c.1700 to the latest global collections, while recognising that almost everyone can wear, and feel transformed by wearing or holding, one or more fresh rose. As the author of the immensely popular nineteenth-century book Le Langage des Fleurs (1819, first translated into English 1820; see p.118) made explicit, while the rose is undoubtedly queen of flowers, it is also the ‘commonest’.4

My written and curated projects are usually ignited by the desire to interpret a single or group of dress items, or archival documents. Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion evolved from the combination of three different sources: Nick Knight’s sublime photographs of ‘Roses from my Garden’; my mother’s lovely, rose-filled walled garden; and the quote that opens this chapter by T. S. Eliot: ‘... for the roses had the look of flowers that are looked at...’ T.S. Eliot, ‘Burnt Norton’, 1936

The genus Rosa is believed to date back some 35-40 million years.4 It is resilient, promiscuous and unashamed, which accounts for its longevity, mutability and broad geographic territory. Roses flourish in China (where they were cultivated from at least 500 BCE), Korea, Japan, Siberia, northern and central Asia, India, the Caucasus, the Arabian Peninsula, Europe, North Africa, and North and Latin America. Roses, like fashion, are bound up with stories of travel, migration, international trade and cross-cultural influences.
2. Sandro Botticelli, Primavera (detail), c.1480. Tempera on panel, 5.3 x 4.1cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The English court of James I enjoyed lavish masked entertainments, often with allegorical and Classical subjects. Here, a fashionable woman is costumed as Flora, with roses in her hair.

Opposite right above
3. Isaac Oliver, Portrait of a Lady Masqued as Flora, c.1605. Miniature, pigment on vellum, 5.3 x 4.1cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Bordeaux

Roslin was a society portrait painter, noted for his fine depiction of fashionable dress and jewellery. His Rococo-style Flora wears a flower wreath armlet and holds a garland in which roses feature prominently.

Opposite right below
This gorgeous shoe might be interpreted within the contexts of Surrealism’s preoccupations: with the illusion of nature, displacement and improbability (a rose supports a person).

Bottom left
5. Jeff Bark, Comme des Garçons, ‘Blood and Roses’ collection, Dazed magazine, spring 2015. Stylist Robbie Spencer has placed petals in model Molly Blair’s open mouth, symbolising uncontrollable passion or sublime suffocation by roses.

Bottom right
6. Rosa ‘Christian Dior’, a double hybrid tea rose introduced by Meilland, 1958. Christian Dior was mid-twentieth-century fashion’s floriculturist. Although the haute couturier’s signature flower was lily of the valley, he adored and grew roses; this fragrant double hybrid tea rose was named after him following his premature death.

Bottom right

This rose-like hat is strewn with pink cotton petals and decorated with artificial wild roses with prominent black-tipped stamens, and daisies, violets and small yellow flowers.

Bottom right

Opposite right below
5. Alexander Robin, Flora of the Opera, c.1790. Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 72.5cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Bordeaux
Robin was a society portrait painter, noted for his fine depiction of fashionable dress and jewellery. His Rococo-style Flora wears a flower wreath armlet and holds a garland in which roses feature prominently.

Photographs

© Mairie de Bordeaux, Musée des beaux-arts

Previous spread

Instagram post with the caption: ‘Roses from my Garden... Remembrance Sunday. To all those who lost their lives in conflict. May we never forget.’

Courtesy of Nick Knight
Fresh roses have been worn since at least the times of the ancient Egyptians. Because flowers are seasonal, their absence is strongly felt when the earth no longer yielded natural blooms, these were supplanted by ‘permanent botanicals’, the name given to the first artificial flowers, which were crafted from stained horn. Roses were to become revered within cuisine and wine-craft, were used to beautify (the Egyptians used charred rose petals to colour their eyebrows) and as fragrance, while rose water and vitamin-rich rose hips were valued medicinally.

In ancient Greece, the poetess Sappho, who has become a cultural icon of female homosexuality, lyrically described the moon as ‘rose fingered’. She is reputed to have planted roses among the apple trees in the sanctuary of Aphrodite, goddess of love and human sexuality. But, as erudite cultural and botanical historian Jennifer Potter reveals, she did not, as is commonly believed, crown the rose the ‘queen of flowers’. It was the second-century Greek writer Achilles Tatius, in his prose romance Leucippe and Clitophon, who awarded the title.

Potter’s The Rose (2010) has provided a core contextual reference for this book.

In ancient Rome, the rose came to be so adored that a lavish annual festival – Rosalia, also known as roseTell, meaning ‘rose adornment’ – was staged in its honour, and rose festivals have been held by rose-growing nations ever since. Long before flowers were gendered feminine, rose wreaths or chaplets (circlets, worn on the head; fig.12) and garlands (longer, strung) played a vital role in economic, domestic, religious and ceremonial life. They were awarded to men for great acts and virtues, and on occasions, when Rome was warring, came to be subject to sumptuary legislation. And it was men who wore perfume made from roses (women preferred stronger oils such as myrrh and sweet marjoram).
The gynoecium – from the Greek gynaeceum, meaning ‘women’s apartments’ – lies in the centre of the rose and is a clumped mass of greenish-yellow organs called carpels, which include the ovary. Taxonomically, the rose is classified as hermaphrodite, rendering its ornamental application within twenty-first-century gender-neutral fashion all the more poignant.

Sexuality lies at the core of a flower’s existence. More than any other flower, the rose has been personified, with analogies drawn between the rose and the human body, sexuality and female fertility. The origin of the term ‘de-flower’ to describe sexual penetration followed from the seventeenth-century herbalist Nicholas Culpeper’s likening of the fleshy knobs around the hymen to a half-blown rose (this, in a directory for midwives).

From the eighteenth century, naturalists interpreted the stamen as male, the flower as womb-like and feminine, while the rosebud has become a near-universal metaphor for lips, nipples and clitoris. In the privately printed book Vocabula Amatoria of 1895 – listing words, phrases and allusions referenced by leading French writers – the entry for ‘Rose’ is indexed in relation to the female pudendum and ‘Rosée’ (dew) to semen.

The rose is also often named after people, including fashion designers Christian Dior (fig.7), Valentino (a dark-red ‘sweetheart’ rose, popular for cutting) and Vivienne Westwood (a light pink/apricot-coloured hybrid tea rose).
in relation to the cultural context of roses, artificial flower makers and flower culture more generally in the nineteenth century.

To twin roses with fashion requires contemplation of roses, as well as fashion. The first chapter of this book comprises a conversation ‘On Roses’ with internationally regarded image-maker Nick Knight, who has, since the 1980s, created visionary fashion images that convey the look and feeling of flowers. Here, he reveals the first time he really looked at roses; how he captures, portrays and communicates their likeness; and the technologies and craft practices he has harnessed to develop the ethereal, sensuous and sensually ‘roses from my garden’ iPhone photos that he posts on Instagram and from which he creates large-scale artworks. He stresses that, ‘I am interested in photographing all the stages in the life of the rose: the bud, the bloom, the rosae, the leaves and thorns – everything’ and places on the record his unwavering loyalty to the flower.

Jonathan Fairs, Professor of Fashion Thinking at Winchester School of Art, is author of ‘Ravishing: The Rose in Context’. He appoints Zola’s protagonist in La Fausse de l’Abbé Mouret (‘The Abbé Mouret’s Sin’, 1875) as one of his ‘literary gardeners’ and explores our emotional, cultural and political encounters with the rose. He draws upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s model of the rhizome to untangle meanings and forge relationships. Having taken us on a journey that looks at ‘flowers that are looked at,’ in Chapter III, ‘The Eighteenth Century: Perennial Reign’, Colleen Hill, Curator of Costume and Accessories at The Museum of FIT, New York, explores how innovations in textile production and advancements in botanical knowledge were deeply entwined in this century, resulting in increasingly naturalistic depictions of roses (and other flowers) on silk dress fabrics. A late-eighteenth-century dress silk, hand-painted with a meandering design of pink roses against blue stripes, provides the focus study. Hill highlights how women were some of the most significant contributors to fashion during this era: Maria Sibylla Merian’s detailed and scientifically accurate botanical drawings were used as designs for embroidery; Anna Maria Garthwaite was the most prolific and renowned designer of Spitalkiick silks; and the elaborately constructed pate hair styles popularised by Marie Antoinette at the court of Louis XVI sometimes employed fresh roses, combining nature and artefact in a way that helped to characterise the fashionable appearance of the eighteenth century.

It is important to recognise that luxury fashion garments are often designed in plain fabrics, which provide the perfect foil for magnificent jewellery. As many galleries do not have the security arrangements required to display intrinsically valuable jewellery, this critical component of fashionable appearance is all too often omitted from the discussion, as well as the exhibition. In Chapter IV, the jewellery specialist, television presenter and writer Geoffrey Munn has drawn upon his vast knowledge and undertaken exciting new research to reveal a trove of exquisitely armoring rose-themed jewellery, crafted from the most precious materials known to humanity. These include a funerary treasure from the tomb of Philip II of Macedon; a suite of jewellery made from the rarest coloured diamonds during the reign of the Russian Empress Anna, which features bees ‘humping around’ the open roses; and exquisite pieces by René Lalique and Cartier. The author explores fascinating biographical narratives and analyses jewellery design and symbolism, highlighting the emphasis placed upon love, its pleasures and pains, magic and power.

Artificial roses are invariably integrated with the garments and accessories they adorn, although they can be applied in the form of the corsage. ‘Permanent Botanicals: Fashioning Artificial Roses’ comprises a comparative study of the artificial flowers, making industries in Paris, London and New York, which flourished as vital ancillary trades to the emergent haute couture, elite and mass-production fashion industries in Paris, London and New York, which flourished as vital ancillary trades to the emergent haute couture, elite and mass-production fashion industries. The focus is upon the period c.1850–1914, during which time the industry was at its peak.

Fine dress fabrics are often likened to the flowers’ semi-sheer, silken petals; the term ‘petal’ itself derives from the Latin petalum, meaning metal plate or blade, which feeds into our concept of the ethereal, sensuous and unruly ‘roses from my garden’ and analyses jewellery design and symbolism, highlighting the emphasis placed upon love, its pleasures and pains, magic and power.

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Having established, in the context of the nineteenth century, many of the core sociocultural contexts within which roses are still interpreted, ‘The Twentieth Century: “A rose is a rose is a rose”’ takes heed of the Modernist poet and modern art collector Gertrude Stein, stripping the rose of its symbolism. Here, the work of a number of fashion designers for whom the rose had special meaning, became a hallmark or was incorporated into one significant design, is foregrounded. They include Lucile, Paul Poiret, Boué Soeurs, Madeleine Vionnet, Mainbocher, Christian Dior, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent, Ann Lowe, Claire McCordell, Harry Gordon, Halston, Stephen Jones, John Galliano, Lulu Guinness and Alexander McQueen. The focus study is a neo-romantic evening gown, designed by Charles James in 1937, with a décolletage bedecked with silk roses, as worn by an American debutante. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fashionable depictions of roses were mostly naturalistic; in this period they were also expressed in more stylised guise, expressive of broader movements in art and design such as Art Deco and Pop Art. Roses are also considered in the contexts of the ‘Bread and Roses’ textiles workers strike of 1912, the First World War, racial segregation and subcultural identities.

In the chapter ‘The Scent of Roses: “The inward fragrance of each other’s heart”’, Mairi MacKenzie considers the perfume of the rose. Drawing upon the many mythologies inspired by the scent of this exalted flower, she details aspects of its historical use in various cultures, as well as its representations in literature, painting, advertisements and magazines.
She looks at its ability to act as a carrier of sometimes contradictory social mores, and the more practical horticultural, biochemical, commercial and socio-economic shifts that have impacted upon and facilitated our engagement with – and perception of – rose perfume. In the final section, MacKenzie recounts a visit to the Osmothèque in Paris – a museum dedicated to the preservation of modern and historic scents – where a (small) selection of some of the most important rose-based perfumes in modern perfumery were sampled.

The concluding texts examines how and why the exquisite fragility, paradoxical beauty and allure, of the rose, with its potential to rupture and draw blood, has been harnessed by an unprecedentedly mobilised and politicised global fashion industry. A focus study is made of the extraordinary fleurs animées ensemble featured on this book’s cover, designed by Noir Kei Ninomiya for Autumn/Winter 2019, which is interpreted in the contexts of natural modernism and rose personification at its most militant. ‘The Twenty-First Century: Roses and Concrete’ explores roses and fashion within the critical contexts of racial equality, identity, sexuality, fair trade, the environment and sustainability, alongside the extraordinary innovation, imagination and craft skills of designers who draw upon the rose to flatter, adorn and otherwise provoke. It highlights the vogue for fresh roses on the catwalk and likens the cultivated-rose and fast-fashion industries.
CHAPTER I

ON ROSES

... AMY DE LA HAYE IN CONVERSATION WITH NICK KNIGHT
Amy de la Haye: There is a poignant phrase in a T. S. Eliot poem about the roses having the look of flowers that are used to being looked at. ‘When did you first really look at roses?’

Nick Knight: It was in 1993, when I was invited by the architect David Chipperfield to do a permanent exhibition at the Natural History Museum [Plant Power, which ran from 1994 to 2009]. It was about humanity’s relationship with flowers and plants: looking at cotton in relation to the American economy and slave trade; seaweed and its use in cosmetics; the use of the oak tree for building boats and churches. I split my team into three groups, to search for relevant materials: the perfect Meissen teapot to exhibit with the tea plant, an ancient church roof made of oak, etc. It took us nine months. I contacted my local rose nursery and asked if I could come and cut some blooms, for 50 quid or something. I took them back to my studio and started looking at them through the 8 x 10” camera, really scrutinising them; it’s a very considered process, you’ve only got 20 shots. I liked some of the things the roses evoked in me: they look like strokes from an artist’s brush, a couture dress or feathers, and they have a poetic tragedy. They announce, ‘Here I am, I’m so beautiful and I’m about to die, enjoy my glory now but I won’t last.’ Roses are very much to do with death.

Amy: They’ve also been the cause of death. I’m thinking of Roman excess – the banquets where a huge mass of rose petals would be showered on to guests and some became engulfed and suffocated [see pp.37-8, 40-1].

Nick: [Smiling] Did that happen a lot?

Amy: My mother’s middle name was Rose, Beryl Rose; the only tattoo I have is of a rose.

Nick: When did you have it done?

Amy: In 1978.

Nick: Yes, by miles.

Amy: So why the rose, then?

Nick: Fat Jock at the tattoo parlour in the Pentonville Road couldn’t draw a cat for some reason, but he said he could do a rose.

Amy: Well, that’s what happens when you ask a question and expect a profound answer!

Nick: Because we worked for the Natural History without being paid, they asked if they could do something to thank us. I said I’d like to see the works held in the Herbarium and they offered to pull some specimens. I said I wanted to look at everything. There was a curator there, an amazing woman called Sandra Knapp, and she agreed. The Herbarium houses millions of specimens: lots of grasses that are brown and dried, but other plants have retained their colour or the colour has changed over time. As my wife, Charlotte, and I looked, it became apparent that some scientists had an artist’s eye, from the way they had arranged the specimens on the paper for other scientists to look at. I photographed lots of them – the prints are on my wall.2
Amy: Did you see any wild roses?

Nick: All we saw were some very old, very tiny, dried roses, which I photographed. But I kept hoping I’d find more.

Amy: You carried on photographing roses after this project ended?

Nick: Photographers photograph flowers and one naturally looks to the people one respects: Irving Penn made albums of roses and [Edward] Steichen photographed roses. About 20 years ago I started photographing roses and sending them out as Christmas cards. Still do. It gave me a reason.

Amy: You photograph roses at home on weekends, working alone.

Nick: Yes. It’s very different being solitary and in total control. I enjoy working with other people – with art directors, models and designers: seeing Alexander McQueen through Alexander McQueen’s eyes, working with Kanye West... That is a main part of the interest for me. I enjoy the human interaction involved in creating images. When I first moved into the house where I presently live – a house my parents lived in in the 1950s – there were masses of the roses they had planted. The soil was good and somehow through neglect they’d survived; huge tea roses, I recall. I remember picking them and photographing them at night with lights.

Amy: Do you grow the roses you photograph now?

Nick: Yes, but they don’t take much... a lot of them came from a job; they stay in pots on my terrace. A lot of people comment to me on Instagram how much they’d love to see my garden; my garden’s quite nice, but it’s all ivy and silver birches – the roses stay in pots in a central courtyard. If one dies, it’s sad, but it dies.

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to the totally basic reasons why I got into photography in the first place: seeing something I liked and photographing it. Instagram is a shortcut, it goes straight to the audience and – unlike a magazine or exhibition, where the audience is mute – it allows the audience to talk back to me, and I like that.

To take the rose images from Instagram to the very large scale exhibited at Albion Barn took some consideration. We found an AI that would sharpen the images and put detail where it didn’t exist – [adding] about 30 per cent. If you give the AI a very high-resolution file with lots of information it doesn’t do so well, but if you give it a low-res image with gaps it makes them sharper, so we res-down our images before we start.

With the ‘drip’ rose images, you step from one medium – photography – into painting. The prints are 6 x 4 [feet] so you need someone to do it with you – it’s fun and it’s physical. I print the image on to a paper that doesn’t accept the ink, so the ink pools and runs, and we then carry it into a steam room so the paint gets heavier and runs faster. I work with a kettle or a steamer and move round the image to work on particular areas. The biggest challenge is then to get the paint to stop running, without adding granularity or changing its viscosity – maintaining clarity and colour; it is a process that took seven years to develop.

Amy: You exploit the latest technologies in your work. Do you have any feelings about genetically engineered roses? Like the blue rose?

Nick: No, I think human inventiveness is to be encouraged, so I don’t have an anti-intelligence stance.

Nick: Can I ask about the black rose photograph you have framed in the studio?

Nick: In real life the rose was bright orange, called tequila sunrise or something awful like that [Rosa ‘Tequila Sunrise’]. Some film is sensitive to certain lights so I processed a colour transparency film and put it through a negative developer, which meant the reds went black. It’s the same technique I used to make Kate Moss turn black [for VERTIGO magazine in 2016]; her skin looked black because of the printing process.

Amy: In the harsh light of day, could you fall in love with another flower?

Nick: No, I’m loyal and I’m monogamous.
Blush, briar, rambling, garden, wild, miniature, floribunda, cabbage, climbing, dog, moss, damask, grandiflora, hybrid, shrub, tea. The abundance of linguistic shading used to describe different forms of rose is matched only by the vibrant richness of the genus *Rosa*: a chromatic seduction ranging from virginal white to carnal crimson, encompassing startling orange, delicate peach, decadent yellow, faded mauve and fleshy pink, joined by fabled blooms of black, blue and silver.

The beauty of the rose seduces, its heady perfume intoxicates, its cruel thorns punish and its glorious petals all too swiftly fade. More than any other bloom it has fired the imaginations of poets, painters and composers and, for centuries, has been utilised as a political symbol and as a sign of female sexuality.

One day she brought him a bunch of roses, and he was so moved that tears streamed from his eyes. He kissed the flowers, lay them in bed beside him, hugged them to him. But when they faded, that hurt him so that he forbade Albine ever to gather him roses again.

Émile Zola, *The Abbé Mouret’s Sin*, 1875

Successful rose cultivation relies on expert horticultural knowledge and so, to guide us through the often dense and thorny thickets of the rose, this chapter will refer to expert literary gardeners for advice. These include Émile Zola, who has supplied the rose lover with an unparalleled literary bouquet in his 1875 novel *The Abbé Mouret’s Sin* (The Abbé Mouret’s St), which conveys magnificently our obsession with the rose as a symbol of desire. Georges Bataille’s considerably shorter, but no less pungent account of the rose in his 1929 essay ‘The Language of Flowers’ offers us an alternative understanding of the rose, as speaking a ‘language’ at once overtly sexual, fleeting and deathly – a language that is redolent of William Blake’s celebrated poem ‘The Sick Rose’ (1794; fig.31). Bataille’s text interrogates the earlier nineteenth-century publication *The Language of Flowers* (first published in English in 1820; see p.118), which has had a lasting influence on our perception of the symbolism of flowers in general, and the rose especially.

Lastly, to help us plan our rose garden, we will follow Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s model of the ‘rhizome’ in order to understand the rose’s complexity. While the rose itself is not strictly rhizomatic in form – like the iris or lily of the valley, for example – and most commonly has deep, vertical, rather than horizontal anchor roots with finer, radiating tap roots, the spread of these roots is surprising, and they often run far and wide. It is their capacity to spread considerable distances and, emblematically, touch and feed into an astonishing variety of philosophical and cultural landscapes that is understood rhizomatically. Like that structure, the rose can connect ‘any point to any other point’ and is ‘composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end.’

“Throughout this wood, natural paths had formed, some narrow, some broad, lovely covered rides, where one could walk in fragrant shade. There were couronnes in this rose world, broad clearings. One moved cradled among tiny red roses and one walked between walls covered with tiny yellow roses.”

Émile Zola, *The Abbé Mouret’s Sin*, 1875

In the medieval French poem *Le Roman de la Rose* (‘The Romance of the Rose’, c.1230-c.1275), written in sections by two separate authors, the rose is both the object of the narrator’s desire and a symbol for female sexuality (fig.32). The poem’s first, dreamlike part is set in a walled garden – an enclosed floral universe where the lovers and the roses growing there become one, in an ecstatic vision of rose love. It is a veritable paradise, which is fitting given that the modern derivation of the word ‘paradise’ comes from the ancient Iranian *pairidaeza*, meaning a walled park or floral enclosure – this sense is recognisable from both *Le Roman de la Rose* and Zola’s *Paradou Park*, the setting for his lovers’ floral ecstasy.

The medieval lovers of *Le Roman de la Rose*, published 1401–1500, and Zola’s *Paradou Park*, the setting for his lovers’ floral ecstasy.
that becomes the sign of desire.'

Pertaining to the corolla rather than the useful organs, desire: 'It is evident, in fact, that if one expresses love with the corolla, rather than the useful organs, desire has ensured its metaphorical ascendancy [in the sexual rose]. Its seductive petals belie an interior beauty; if one tears off all of the corolla’s petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft.'

The remarkable ability of the rose to signify blushing, young love and full-blown desire has ensured its metaphorical ascendancy. Its seductive petals belie an interior beauty; if one tears off all of the corolla’s petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft. The remarkable ability of the rose to signify blushing, young love and full-blown desire has ensured its metaphorical ascendancy. Its seductive petals belie an interior beauty; if one tears off all of the corolla’s petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft.
The all-consuming state of rosy ecstasy that Zola’s lovers experience in their secret walled garden demonstrates the rose’s remarkable capacity to create sensory spaces – spaces that engulf and territorialise, submerge and transform the body, in perfumed universes of seductive colour and beauty. From the most discreet of rose tattoos to Dante’s limitless white rose of paradise (fig.35) – a floral cosmos made for, and by, the faithful – the rose inscribes and engulfs the lover and the disciple alike. Our groundsmen Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari understand not only the spatial potential of root systems, but have explored other means of territorialisation, noting:

“How very important it is, when chaos threatens, to draw an inflatable, portable territory. If need be, I’ll put my territory on own body, I’ll territorialise my body: the house of the tortoise, the hermitage of the crab, but also tattoos that make the body a territory.”

The rose grows rampant on the tattooed body, from barely-there ankle bud to lush floral territorialisation, with buttocks, nipples and backs becoming both the canvas for, and the centres of, inky roses (fig.38). The illustrated rose honours lover and mother alike; colonises the bodies of sailors, soldiers and prisoners; and even grows in no man’s land: an early-twentieth-century tattoo design featured the head of a Red Cross nurse emerging from or surrounded by roses. The design originates from the First World War description, in popular song, of the nurses who risked their lives attending to soldiers in the trenches and who were dubbed ‘The Roses of No Man’s Land’.

For some minutes it rained roses in heavy downpour, blossoms splashing down like thunder showers of colour, and in the holes in the flooring the petals made brilliant puddles.

Émile Zola, The Abbé Mouret’s Sin, 1875*
that practised by the juvenile and hedonistic Roman emperor Heliogabalus and unforgettably imagined by the Victorian painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema (fig.41). The work itself—titled The Roses of Heliogabalus—is a product of unsensational rosy extravagance, given that Alma-Tadema painted it in the winter months of 1878 and, in order to recreate the scene in his studio, had roses delivered from the French Riviera every week until the work was completed. The incident depicted is derived from a, probably apocryphal, account featured in the collection of imperial Roman biographies known as the Augustan History, which relates the delight Heliogabalus took in suddenly releasing a torrent of flower petals on his unsuspecting guests from the retractable roof of his banqueting hall. Many of the drunken revellers were unable to crawl out from beneath this sudden deluge and died in floral suffocation. Whether historically factual or not, this fragrant slaughter has fuelled the imagination of successive writers and artists ever since—a perfumed reminder of the dangers of rosy excess.

Whether Heliogabalus’s murderous roses were part of his larger political machinations, or merely evidence of his ingeniously sadistic pleasures, remains unknown; the rose, however, has featured as the emblem for an astonishing range of political and ideological projects throughout history and continues to be utilised in this way today. Any account of the political rose must address what, it could be argued, is the appropriation of the flower in its most partisan guise, as the symbol of the opposing forces in the fifteenth-century English Wars of the Roses. At the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485—the conflict’s climax—Henry Tudor, leading the Lancastrian forces under the emblem of the red rose, defeated Richard III’s Yorkist forces marching under the white rose. This famous, floriated confrontation might equally be remembered for the opposing armies’ heraldic tinctures—Henry’s red dragon and Richard’s white boar—but, as in so much of the rose’s cultural formation, the contrast of military might with the delicate rose proved irresistible.

Irresistible also to William Shakespeare, who, recounting the events leading up to the Wars in Henry VI, Part 2 (1591), has a group of noblemen pick either red or white roses in the Temple Gardens to declare their allegiances (see fig.42). Shakespeare embellishes this scene with the suggestion of possible defection made real as illustrated by the threat from the rose’s thorns, and has the Lancastrian Somerset deliver the famous warning to the supporters of Richard Plantagenet:

…Prick not your finger as you pluck it off,
Lest, bleeding, you do paint the white rose red,
And fall on my side so against your will.

…

William Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part 2, 1591

It is tempting to see this poetic warning against floral turncoating reflected in that other famous scene of a royal house making nature conform to political ideology: the Red Queen instructs her knaves to paint white roses red, her favoured colour, in Lewis Carroll’s 1865 Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (see fig.43).
41. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, The Roses of Heliogabalus, 1888. Oil on canvas, 132.7 x 214.4 cm. Private collection.

This evocative painting captures perhaps the most celebrated instance of ‘death by roses’, the moment when the decadent Roman emperor Heliogabalus released a torrent of roses on his unsuspecting guests.


Henry Arthur Payne’s mural design captures in Edwardian splendour the scene from William Shakespeare’s Henry VI, Part 1 (1591) in which the rose serves as an expression of allegiance in the ensuing Wars of the Roses.

43. Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, Queen Elizabeth I (the ‘Pelican’ portrait), c. 1573–75. Oil on panel, 76.7 x 61 cm. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

For Elizabethan viewers, this portrait of Elizabeth, the ‘Virgin Queen’, with its abundance of rosy decoration, would have been read as an image of their ruler as an English ‘rose without thorns’: incorruptible and pure.


Lewis Carroll’s unforgettable image of living playing cards scrambling to paint white roses red to avoid the wrath of the Red Queen is brought to surreal life in Tenniel’s illustration. The half-painted roses convey at once the futility of the task, the destruction of natural beauty and the threat of impending violence.
Following his victory at Bosworth Field, Henry VII amalgamated the white and red roses to form his personal dynastic emblem, the Tudor rose – a remarkably early and highly successful public relations exercise that proved so effective it came to represent not only the Tudor dynasty, but England itself, in an instance of the rose as nation branding. The rose in England from this point onwards becomes increasingly politicised, in an iconography easily deciphered by emblematically literate Tudor viewers, who encountered it in architecture, applied arts and portraiture. The so-called ‘Pelican’ portrait of Elizabeth I, attributed to Nicholas Hilliard (fig.43), depicts the Virgin Queen, the ‘rose without thorns’, practically overgrown with roses. A prominent Tudor rose hovers against the dark ground on the queen’s right side, delicate blackwork roses adorn her undershirt, jewelled rose embellishments are placed symbolically at her abdomen, and even the large fan that appears at the bottom of the image takes the form of a rose composed of feathers. Contemporary with this portrait, the magnificent ‘Cumberland’ armour of 1586 (fig.45), made for the queen’s champion and favourite George Clifford, is emblazoned with Tudor roses and the cipher of Elizabeth – consisting of two Es back to back; it is an expression in gilded steel of allegiance, patriotism and prowess.

The rose continued to be cultivated in the British political landscape and, in the eighteenth century, the white rose was adopted as a political symbol by allies of the Jacobite cause. Seeking the restoration of the Catholic House of Stuart to the thrones of Scotland, England and Ireland, prominent Jacobite supporters, to show their allegiance to the cause, would be painted holding or wearing white roses. An extremely rare example of Jacobite fashion is a magnificent late-eighteenth-century tartan coat linked to the Ancient Caledonian Society (fig.46), which bears in each of its dazzling red squares a woven silk rose and two buds, symbolising James III of England and Ireland and VIII of Scotland (the ‘Old Pretender’) and his two sons Charles (‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’) and Henry Stuart. The jacket is an exceptional example of the rose incorporated into a sartorial expression of political ideology – a tacit, silken sign of dissent.

Today the rose has survived not only as the floral symbol of England – memorably joining the Scottish thistle, the Welsh leek and Irish shamrock, along with other flora of the Commonwealth, as part of the horticultural heraldry adorning Norman Hartnell’s coronation robes for the present queen – but, since the 1980s, as the emblem of the British Labour Party (fig.49), joining a spray of international socialist red roses. So symbolically potent is the rose that the causes it espouses are as varied as the forms the species itself takes: from the intellectual Nazi resistance group called the White Rose formed in Munich in 1942 (fig.50), to the modern-day deployment of a torn and bleeding rose in the fight against female genital mutilation (fig.47).


… For flowers do not age honestly like leaves, which lose nothing of their beauty, even after they have died; flowers wither like old and overly made-up dowagers, and die ridiculously on stems that seemed to carry them to the clouds.

But roses wilt, their petals drop and perfume fades, and their moment of perfection is short-lived. Such is the shock of vanished beauty, of abundant growth withered and dying, that the rose is often understood as a symbol of the passing of time, of transformation and decay. As Shakespeare observed in his Sonnet 35, ‘And loathsome canker lives in the sweetest bud’, so Blake declared ‘O Rose thou art sick’, and Orson Welles, as Citizen Kane in the 1941 film of the same name, gasped the word ‘Rosebud’ with his dying breath (fig.48).

This latter rosy death rattle ushers in a temporal revolution, as we are catapulted back through the dead tycoon’s life in search of the enigmatic rosebud, his personal symbol of lost love and happiness. Equally disruptive is another cinematic rose – a perfect specimen that, in the hands of ‘Conductor 71’ in Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s 1946 masterpiece A Matter of Life and Death, can both halt time and turn the world from black-and-white to colour (fig.52). The Conductor, a foppish aristocrat who has been guillotined in the French Revolution, travels through time and space connecting his black-and-white ‘other world’ to Technicolor wartime Britain in order to save crashed fighter pilot David Niven’s life. He demonstrates his ability to freeze time with the aid of his pale pink rose, declaring ‘After all, what is time? A mere tyranny.’

These time-defying roses are perhaps a response to the real rose’s all-too-fleeting existence; occasionally, however, even dead roses can live again. One of Vaslav Nijinsky’s most celebrated early roles was in Le Spectre de la Rose, the spirit of a fading rose –
a memento from a ball that a young girl lets slip from her fingers as she falls asleep (fig. 54). As she shimmers, the ghost of the dead rose appears and dances with the still-sleeping girl. The ballet ends with the spectre exiting with a dazzling leap through her window as she awakes and kisses the fallen bloom. Nijinsky’s spectacular final leap ensured the ballet’s immediate success and increased the dancer’s fame. His costume, designed by Léon Bakst, was covered with individual silk rose petals; Nijinsky had to be stitched in for each performance, and such was his fame that the petals he shed as he danced were collected by his servant and sold as souvenirs to adoring fans.

Transformation is also central to the rose: whether, as in the previous examples, the transformation of time and space ushered in by magical roses, whose floral power alters our perceptions, or the more fundamental transformation from beauty to decay, from life to death. At the heart of all fairy stories are transformative processes, and the rose features in one of the most blissful of all: La Belle et la Bête, originally written by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and published in 1740, and later transformed into a film version of the classic fairytale. An incidence in the Arabic One Thousand and One Nights inspired, in turn, the intentionally artificial plot, set in the eighteenth century – collapse of time, overlaying its inauthentic fabrication (they are usually dyed white roses), as in the Chinese legend, which tells the tale of an emperor’s daughter who demands a blue rose in exchange for her hand in marriage. Each of her prospective suitors attempts to deceive her by presenting her with ‘blue’ roses: one made from sapphire, a dyed specimen obtained from a florist, and even an illusion conjured up by a wizard that disappears once the empress tries to touch it. A reworking of this legend can be found in Rudyard Kipling’s poem ‘Blue Roses’, first published in 1887, in which a lover’s gifts of red and white roses are rejected, leading him to go on a fruitless search for a blue rose, only to return empty-handed to find his lover dead.

The impossible shades of the blue rose, whether dyed, or made from silk or other materials, have, until very recently, only been achieved artificially, and it is artifice, ironically, that resides at the heart of much of our cultural understanding of roses of all hues. Bataille, typically, takes this ‘deception’ enacted by the rose to its extreme conclusion:

“In fact, after a very short period of glory the marvellous cornua reverts indecently to the marne pâle – even though it seemed for a moment to have escaped it in a flight of angelic and lyrical purity – the flower seems to lapse abruptly into its original squalor; the most ideal is rapidly reduced to a wisp of aerial manure”.17

In Richard Strauss’s 1911 opera Der Rosenkavalier (The Rose Cavalier), an artificial silver – or in some productions, blue – rose is the central motif in a work that is at its heart a story about artifice, ageing, transformation and infidelity (fig. 51). The legend of the silver rose laced with oil of roses presented to an intended fiancée was a ritual made up by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, on whose libretto the opera is based. The plot revolves around four main characters: the ageing Marschallin; her young lover, Octavian (sung by a mezzo-soprano in male dress); her oafish, licentious cousin Baron Ochs; and the object of his amorous attentions, the nouveau riche Sophie. Octavian is persuaded by the Marschallin to act as the Baron’s ‘Rosenkavalier’ and offer Sophie the silver rose on his behalf. Inevitably the young couple fall for one another and the Marschallin gives in to the power of young love and relinquishes her hold on Octavian.

The intentionally artificial plot, set in the eighteenth century – the age of artificiality and the same artifice-loving era from which A Matter of Life and Death hails and during which La Belle et la Bête was first penned – collapses time, overlaying its inauthentic Rococo setting with themes of sexual and psychological instability reflecting the concerns of the period in which the opera was written.
An artificial rose is placed at the centre of a fictional operatic bouquet, consisting of women masquerading as men, aristocrats pretending to be servants, the twentieth century pretending to be the eighteenth, anachronistic waltz tunes of the nineteenth century not quite disguising modern atonality, and characters adopting different dialects according to their status and true feelings, all masked by ritual and formality.

The rose, especially the fashionable varieties, is capable of endless reinvention — manifestations in cloth, precious stones or fragrance, which in turn transform their wearers. The Alexander McQueen Autumn/Winter 2019 collection (fig.55) is a masterly example of this rosy transformation — a vestimentary bouquet made up from precisely cut, draped and tailored blooms, where roses bloom from shoulders as botanical leg-of-mutton sleeves, recalling Louis Aragon’s marvellous Surrealist poem in which he offers: ‘I’ll reinvent for you my rose as many roses/As there are diamonds in the waters of the seas.’

But it is not just in fairy tales, on stage, film or high fashion’s runways that roses have the power to transform; throughout history, the simple addition of a rose worn in a buttonhole, added to a corsage, or placed in a vase has transformed the wearers into princes and princesses, their homes to palaces. Roses elevate and sanctify, they signify simplicity and excess, beauty and decay, love, cruelty and perfection. They beautify our most sacred spaces and our most important rituals; our unions, our conflicts and our departures:

... There Albine lay, panting, exhausted by love, her hands clutched closer and closer to her heart, breathing her last. She parted her lips, seeking the kiss which should obliterate her, and then the hyacinths and tuberoses exhaled their incense, wrapping her in a final sigh, so profound that it drowned the chorus of roses, and in the culminating gasp of blossom, Albine was dead.

... Émile Zola, *The Abbe Mouret’s Sin*, 1875

Opposite
54. Vadim Nijinsky in the Ballets Russes production *Le Spectre de la Rose*, Théâtre de Monte-Carlo, Paris, 1911. Nijinsky’s seductive personification of the spirit of a rose, with its mixture of dazzling athleticism and delicate floral beauty, entranced audiences and remains one of the seminal moments in the history of the Ballets Russes. Historic Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Right
CHAPTER III

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FASHION

... PERENNIAL REIGN

COLLEEN HILL
The 1799 publication of The Laboratory; or, School of Arts, then in its sixth edition, included this metaphor: ‘The spring opens her bountiful treasure each year, and clothes and enamels the earth with endless charms of beauty; she invites us to imitate her as near as possible in all her splendour.’ Although elegantly written, The Laboratory was in fact a practical handbook for artisans, which boasted a range of trade secrets, experiments and techniques for the manufacture of artistic goods. This passage, taken from a section devoted to the design of botanical patterns for silks, embroidery and printing, offers a clear reference to the rich connections between nature and textile design that developed during the eighteenth century in Western Europe.

The discovery and collection of rare plants and flowers flourished in Renaissance Europe and continued into the Enlightenment. Foreign specimens from both near and far – the Netherlands, Eastern Europe and Asia – were especially prevalent. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholars and scientists often maintained plants in research gardens associated with universities and medical schools. Decorative, privately owned flower gardens also began to thrive during this time. These gardens were initially made for people of wealth and status. The renowned naturalist, gardener and curiosities collector John Tradescant the Elder, for example, travelled the world to collect plants, including roses, for the gardens of English noblemen. By the eighteenth century, the middle classes had begun planting seeds in their own decorative gardens. Rose bushes appeared even in New England, adding beauty to gardens otherwise devoted to hardy vegetables and medicinal herbs.

Designers of textiles in eighteenth-century western Europe incorporated imagery of new and exotic flora into their work, but the elegant rose remained a perpetual motif. This popularity was perhaps bolstered by the momentous arrival of the China rose (Rosa chinensis), introduced to Europe around mid-century. This flower quickly made a radical impact on rose breeding in Europe, and many modern breeds of roses are the result of its cultivation and hybridisation. ‘By the end of the eighteenth century,’ observes François Joyaux, a scholar and collector of old garden roses, ‘the rose was not only in minds and in gardens: it was everywhere, in home decor, the ornamentation of furniture, [and] the adornment of women.’ Joyaux’s statement must also be expanded to include men’s dress.

Representations of roses in eighteenth-century dress are seen regularly in silk – the fabric which, as an indicator of both status and taste during this era, will be the focus of this chapter. Roses were woven, embroidered, painted and shaped from fabric, and their appearances varied according to larger trends in textile design. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, textile designers rendered silks in ‘extreme and unnatural patterns’ that gave no hint of the interest in naturalism to come (fig.56). Yet a progression into more botanically correct flowers in textile design was indeed approaching: by the end of the 1720s, floral motifs had become larger and more lifelike. The tendency toward naturalism persisted well into the 1740s and was integral to the century’s renown for intricate and luxurious textile designs.

56. Sample of ‘Bizarre’ silk, France, 1685–90. Silk and gilt-metal yarn brocaded on silk damask ground, 121.6 x 51.8cm Los Angeles County Museum of Art Costume Council Fund, M.2000.204.8
and the horticulturist Robert Furber, to publish *Twelve Months of Flowers*. Conceptualised as a seed catalogue, this book doubled as a suitable reference for needlework, tapestry weaving, woodcarving and flower painting. Castells, Fletcher and Furber represented more than 400 species among the 12 plates, including numerous roses. The plate for June – the month in which many roses reach their peak bloom – features seven varieties of the flower (fig. 58).

The artist Mary Delany provides an example of how books of botanical illustrations might have been translated into designs for fabric. Delany is renowned today for her intricate and realistic representations of flowers in cut paper, which she began making at the age of 72. Working in this medium until her death at age 88, Delany produced 985 cut-paper flowers, including numerous roses (fig. 59).

While Delany's paper flowers are undoubtedly compelling, of particular note for our purposes is a design for an embroidered petticoat, completed many years before, in 1740 (fig. 60). Delany was skilled in needlework – a bed cover embroidered by her is in the collection of the Ulster Museum in Northern Ireland – but the petticoat seems to have been designed by Delany and executed by professional embroiderers. The surviving panel of this garment has lost none of its lustre. Black silk satin provides a dramatic background for densely embroidered flowers, rendered primarily in shades of ivory, red and pink. The design includes a pale pink rose, complete with delicate rosebuds and tiny thorns.
The intricate naturalism of these embroidered flowers, as well Delany’s decision to have them embroidered on a black background, strongly prefigures the aesthetic of the cut-paper designs that she would not begin for another three decades.

A 1776 painting of Philippe de Lasalle, likely a self-portrait (fig.61), depicts the esteemed Lyonnaise textile and embroidery designer sitting at a simple wooden desk adorned with flowers, including pale pink roses. He holds a small flower in one hand as he gazes at the viewer. A sculpture of Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and spring, stands on a plinth at the right edge of the painting, while sheets of paper and a drawing tool resting on the desk indicate that the designer is ready to begin his work. Lasalle was evidently – and justly – proud of his talent for drawing flowers. Lesley Ellis Miller explained the importance of the skill possessed by creators like Lasalle:

“The involvement of artists, designers or draughtsmen in the conception and execution of [luxury] textiles made them stand apart from some of the cheaper ranges of furnishing and dress textiles, which were devoid of designs or whose designs were simpler. Ambitious to imitate nature closely, these artists created cartoons or designs that were for exact reproduction either through weaving or printing.”

Lasalle’s self-portrait not only underscores the importance of his ability to draw, a talent for which Lyonnaise designers were particularly renowned, but it also deliberately highlights his ability to render flowers. The painting provides evidence of how important the study of nature was to eighteenth-century textile design. It also lays the foundation for the role of the rose motif in fashion during this era.
Although Lyon was not the only region in France where silk was made, it was undoubtedly the leader: roughly one third of its population worked in the silk industry during the eighteenth century.

Beauty and quality had established Lyon's dominance, as did innovations pertaining to naturalistic design. By the 1730s, the process of *points rentrés* (colour shading) – a relatively simple but highly effective technique for producing complex designs on silk cloth – had been achieved by interlocking threads in a different way on existing looms. Designs were able to produce florals that appeared more three-dimensional and thus more lifelike, as is exemplified by a silk brocade robe à la française from c.1735, on which pink roses mingle with other colourful flowers and topiaries (fig.62). Notably, the flowers are much larger in scale than the shrubbery. Although some threads have worn away, the shading of the flowers and leaves is unmistakable.

While this silk may not have been made in Lyon, its style bears a strong resemblance to a contemporaneous fabric that is certainly attributed to the silk-weaving centre (fig.63). The fabric is in the style of Jean Revel, frequently referred to as a silk designer but determined by Miller to be a businessman who worked in the silk industry. The style associated with Revel was one of bold naturalism and exemplary of the work executed in Lyon.

While Lyonnaise silks were highly prized in the eighteenth century, they were rivaled by those of another silk-weaving centre: that of Spitalfields, England, now part of the City of London. Spitalfields boasted several well-known male designers, including Christopher Badouin, Joseph Dandridge and James Leman. Yet the creator of Spitalfields' most enchanting floral designs was a woman: Anna Maria Garthwaite. Little is known about this prolific and important artisan, who appears to have begun her work in around 1726. As a designer, Garthwaite drew compositions – largely florals – in watercolor and pencil on grid paper, and weavers would translate these into patterns.

Success as a designer required an understanding of the machinations of fabric looms, for which Garthwaite appears to have had a keen eye. Her drawings frequently include technical notations, and there is often little discrepancy between the drawings and the finished silks. While the details surrounding the import and export of silks between France and England are too complex to mention here, the general perception on the part of was that French silks were superior in quality and design. Early in her career, Garthwaite was clearly interested in learning from her peers across the Channel. She was in possession of a number of French designs from the 1730s, which appear to have affected Garthwaite's own work from that time. The beauty and precision of her work can be seen in a number of drawings held in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. A drawing from 1739 (fig.64) is a rare example of a Garthwaite design that does not feature an assortment of blooms. Its plain ivory background is scattered only with roses – in shades of pale pink and lavender, and complete with buds and tiny thorns.
Anna Maria Garthwaite, Design for a woven silk, Spitalfields, England, 1719. Watercolour on paper, 61.3 x 50.5cm Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Nearly 900 of Anna Maria Garthwaite’s drawings for textiles survive and are preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The grid that Garthwaite used for accuracy is still visible in this example. Her interest in naturalism is evidenced by the tiny thorns on the rose’s stem.

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Opposite

Dress (and detail), England, c. 1840. Spitalfields multicoloured silk brocade dating from c. 1760

The Museum at FIT, New York

Eighteenth-century silks – especially brocades – were costly, and gowns were frequently remodelled to keep up with changes in silhouettes. While brocaded silk was not suited to the lightweight dresses of the early nineteenth century, it had resumed its place and value by the 1830s. (fig. 65).

The Museum at FIT, P87.20.7. Museum purchase

Although Garthwaite realistically rendered the roses here, the naturalism in her silk designs would not reach its peak until the early 1740s. Due to her skill and that of her peers at Spitalfields, some historians argue that English silks surpassed those of France in naturalism during the 1740s and into the following decade. Silks from Spitalfields often retained value well beyond their initial consumption. The Museum at FIT, New York, owns a dress made from silk attributed to Garthwaite, the fabric of which dates to c.1760 (fig. 65).

The silhouette of the dress, however, identifies it as being made c.1840. While the reuse of valuable silks was common, the number of extant gowns that were remade using Spitalfields silks is noteworthy. This silk design is more stylised than those of the 1740s, and features the intermingling of flowers and berries that is typical of Garthwaite’s style, yet its mauve roses stand out as the largest and best-articulated motif.
By the seventeenth century, imports from China, India and Turkey were prevalent in Western Europe. The development of an ‘exotic’ style appropriated from such goods came to be known as Orientalism. Adam Geczy has noted that patterns of trade ‘introduced cottons and silks in ever-rising quantity ... These fabrics were more desirable than jute, flax, wool and linen because they were lighter, suppler and – because of that least measurable of economic variables, perception – they were different.’\(^1\) Painted silks, originating in China for import to Europe, were a significant component of eighteenth-century trade. In an intriguing development, the chinoiserie patterns that became fashionable in Europe were sent to China to be copied, and the painted silks were then shipped back to England or France.\(^2\)

A length of fabric from the Museum at FIT’s collection dating to the late eighteenth century shows none of the earlier fashion for chinoiserie, but it is nonetheless a noteworthy example of painted silk (fig.66). The swathe is painted with a fashionable late-eighteenth-century design, mixing bold stripes with small sprigs of flowers and bouquets linked by curling strands of ribbon. Pink roses predominate in the bouquets, but the rose motif seems to be utilised again, in a highly stylised form, on the blue stripes. This charming, meandering design emphasises the freedom afforded by painting as opposed to weaving. By the late 1700s, painted silks could be either imported to or fully produced in Europe, and it is difficult to determine the origin of this example.

Although numerous extant gowns are made from painted silk, the demand for this material was less substantial than that for silk brocade. Entire dresses could be made from painted silks, but gowns with borders of painted fabric were also a la mode. Researching painted fabrics is challenging, as this material is not always acknowledged as such in fashion plates and can be difficult to discern from a printed textile. Fortunately, Galerie des modes et costumes français published descriptive captions that occasionally mentioned painted fabric. An example from 1778 (fig.67) describes hand-painted ‘country’ borders that include pink roses. Real or artificial roses also spring from the bosom in a jaunty nosegay and are used to decorate the figure’s bonnet.

**Notes**

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Madame de Pompadour, born Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson in Paris, was Louis XV’s official mistress from 1745 to 1751. She retained influence in the French court during that time and thereafter served as an important friend and advisor to the king until her death. Pompadour was not of the nobility, but she was from a well-connected bourgeois family. As Thomas E. Kaiser has written, ‘From the beginning, Jeanne-Antoinette’s career was associated with her artistic interests, talents, and connections.’ She received instruction in dance and music from the renowned teacher Guibaudet, and learned about literature from Montesquieu. Beautiful, charming and cunning, she became the king’s mistress by means unknown to modern scholarship, but it is evident that she was able to quickly and adroitly establish herself as a leader of fashion at the court of Versailles.

Madame de Pompadour’s appreciation for beauty – in the forms of fashion, decorative arts and gardens – is well documented. Several portraits indicate her predilection for roses, typically in the form of large nosegays woven into the fabric of fashionable gowns or worn as hair ornaments. François Boucher’s striking 1756 portrait (fig.68) is a superior example, showing Madame de Pompadour wearing roses. Her green silk taffeta gown is adorned with dozens of pink silk roses, forming a garland that traces the edges of the bodice and skirt; she also wears a small spray of flowers in her hair (either real or artificial) and a substantial nosegay made with fresh roses. Nosesays were, in part, a practical element of eighteenth-century life. The painter Elisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun wrote about the necessity for women of carrying bouquets of flowers, recalling that when the posies were ‘combined with the strongly scented powder with which each one perfumed her hair, [they] made the air we breathe seem almost embalmed.’ Men, too, wore nosegays or corsages.

Boucher’s painting was shown at the Salon of 1757 – begun in 1667, this was the official art exhibition of the Académie des beaux-arts in Paris – where the art critic Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, asserted that the dress was ‘overloaded with ornaments’ – a complaint that was partly prompted, in all likelihood, by the fact that the gown overwhelms the lower half of the painting. Yet Madame de Pompadour was unmistakably a fashion leader. Her large wardrobe was impressive even by the standards of the court, and it can be used as a measure of fashionableness. ‘With her rosy cheeks, curly tendrils and bows at the bosom, Madame de Pompadour was one of the earliest and most successful self-image makers’, Suzy Menkes wrote in a review of an exhibition dedicated to the king’s mistress at the National Gallery, London, in 2002.
The pretty woman who was Louis XV’s mistress became not just a household name in history, but a lasting icon of rococo frivolity.59

While Madame de Pompadour clearly enjoyed considerable influence on fashion, Marie Antoinette — who entered the court of Versailles in 1770, six years after Pompadour’s death, and became queen in 1774 when her husband Louis XVI ascended to the French throne — has become the preeminent fashion icon of the eighteenth century. A number of scholars, including Caroline Weber and Kimberly Christians-Campbell, have undertaken extensive research on Marie Antoinette’s wardrobe. The focus on roses in the queen’s wardrobe here will offer an interesting perspective to add to their findings.

Marie Antoinette is often associated with the rose as evident in its presence in portraits or the roses seen embroidered on Marie Antoinette’s gown — a style named for its resemblance to a commonly worn trimmed with a shiny blue ribbon and several large blue plumes. Despite all this, the rose stands out. It is a Rosa x centifolia, or ‘rose of one hundred petals’, also commonly known as the Provence or the cabbage rose. Although the exact origin of the centifolia is unknown, this impressive variety was likely developed in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century and may be a hybrid of numerous ancient rose types, including the Gallica (Rosa gallica), the Damask (Rosa damascena) and the Alba (Rosa x alba).57 The flower quickly became a favourite among painters.58

Although the queen favoured this informal style in her personal life, its representation in a portrait, especially when shown in a public setting — the Salon of 1783 — proved to be highly contentious. It was removed from the Salon and replaced by an 1803 publication by the travel writer John Carr, who alleged that the queen ‘like the Italian goddess … used to sleep in a suspended basket of roses’ in her bedroom at the Petit Trianon.59

Idalia is an epithet for Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and pleasure. Elisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun painted more than 30 portraits of Marie Antoinette, but none is perhaps more famous than the picture showing the queen in a white muslin chemise — a style named for its resemblance to a commonly worn underwear (fig.70). Even Marie Antoinette’s ‘simple’ chemise gown ensemble is opulent. A swath of sheer ochre fabric is tied in a voluminous bow at her back waist, and her wide straw hat is trimmed with a shiny blue ribbon and several large blue plumes. Despite all this, the rose stands out. It is a Rosa x centifolia, or ‘rose of one hundred petals’, also commonly known as the Provence or the cabbage rose. Although the exact origin of the centifolia is unknown, this impressive variety was likely developed in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century and may be a hybrid of numerous ancient rose types, including the Gallica (Rosa gallica), the Damask (Rosa damascena) and the Alba (Rosa x alba).57 The flower quickly became a favourite among painters.58

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It was not only Marie Antoinette’s dressed appearance that was consistently scrutinised by aristocrats and commoners alike, but also her physical characteristics — particularly her fine complexion. In her memoirs, Vigée Le Brun wrote that the queen’s skin ‘was so transparent that it bore noumber in the painting … I had no colours to paint such freshness, such delicate tints, which were hers alone, and which I had never seen in any other woman.’59 When any tint of her skin was mentioned, it was often compared to a rose. Weber has noted that an Alsatian noblewoman named Henriette-Louise de Waldner described Marie Antoinette’s skin as ‘literally blushing lilies and roses’ and explained that this particular comment held political weight.59

The rose was a well-known symbol of Marie Antoinette’s family, the Habsburgs, while lilies represented Louis XVI’s family, the Bourbon. The queen’s physical appearance, therefore, was interpreted as an alliance of the two.

Marie Antoinette was only 14 when she married. It appears that she was conscious of ageing in the public eye and what effect that might have on her wardrobe. Thory was considered middle aged during the eighteenth century, according to Aileen Ribeiro, and was the stage in life that many women ceased to wear the ‘frivolities’ of fashion that included pastel colours, feathers and flowers.59 This sentiment may have originated with Marie Antoinette herself. A 1785 passage from Mémoires secrets, written by the French nobleman Louis Petit de Bachaumont, stated that the queen began to eschew feathers and flowers just before turning 30.59 Yet she may have begun to doubt the wearing of flowers at an even earlier age. According to the memoirs of Henriette Campan, first lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette:

Before the Queen was five and twenty she began to apprehend that she might be induced to make too frequent use of flowers and of ornaments, which at that time were exclusively reserved for youth. [Milliner] Madame Bertin having brought a wreath for the head and neck, composed of roses, the Queen feared that the brightness of the flowers might be disadvantageous to her complexion.

Although any recollection underscores Marie Antoinette’s love for and connection to flowers, particularly roses, even if her wearing of them was short-lived.
The style is adorned with colourful feathers and garlands of flowers, including snips of roses in yellow, red and blue that fall off to one side. The impossibility of the blue rose in nature simply adds to the satirical commentary on fashion artifice. Poufs were in decline by the early 1780s, replaced by straw hats and bonnets ornamented with feathers, ribbons and flowers. Many fashion plates from this decade indicate that such hats were only marginally less extravagant than the pouf. A fashion plate from Galerie des modes et costumes français of 1780 (fig.73) shows a woman wearing a gown of pink, blue and ivory silk that is remarkably free of embellishment, but it is paired with an enormous hat with a strim brim and a tall crown of gathered fabric. Pink roses form a husband and extend energetically from the brim. Like those used to adorn poufs, these flowers could have been natural or artificial. Understandably, such hats were large, cumbersome and heavy, and they were not suited to every occasion. As Christian-Man Campbell discovered, a headdresses in Paris in the summer of 1787 resulted in many women abandoning such hats in favour of bandeaus and turbans. Some even sported a simple, elegant garland of roses.

Both fresh and artificial flowers were used to adorn poufs. Hairdressers used small vases of water that could be nestled under poufs and other hairstyles. They necessitated attention from and replacement by servants, home or forming part of a fashionable appearance, were a luxury. Hairdressers used small vases of water that could be nestled under poufs and other hairstyles. They necessitated attention from and replacement by servants, home or forming part of a fashionable appearance, were a luxury.
A French court suit from c.1785 (fig.78) demonstrates the use of embroidery on a matching set of coat, waistcoat and breeches. Made from dark green velvet striped with beige, the ensemble’s very colour indicates its value, as green was a colour difficult to achieve using contemporary dyes and thus expensive. Intricate embroidery further underscores the ensemble’s opulence, and its designer appears to have incorporated Saint-Aubin’s advice. Each rose is crafted from contrasting shades of pink, ivory, yellow and pale-blue. While the flowers may not be naturalistic, their depth and definition underscore the skill of the embroiderer.

Flowers, including many roses, were popular design motifs. The use of gold thread indicates that the waistcoat was worn at the French court. Intricate embroidery further underscores the ensemble’s opulence, and its designer appears to have incorporated Saint-Aubin’s advice. Each rose is crafted from contrasting shades of pink, ivory, yellow and pale-blue. While the flowers may not be naturalistic, their depth and definition underscore the skill of the embroiderer.
John Langhorne’s The Fables of Flora, first published in 1771, consists of stories of moral prose. While fables often anthropomorphise animals, Langhorne’s stories are told by flowers, foreshadowing the larger trend towards flower personification in nineteenth-century literature. Fable IV, ‘The Garden-Rose and the Wild-Rose’, is especially charming. In short, the wild rose feels overshadowed by her more cultivated rival, the garden rose. The story’s narrator, a poet, is surprised by her woes and responds:

... Though this courtly rose... Is gay, and beauteous to behold
Yet, lovely flower, I find in thee
Wild sweetness which no words express,
And charms in thy simplicity,
That dwell not in the pride of dress.

... John Langhorne, The Fables of Flora, 1804

Later editions of the book, dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, feature detailed engravings by Alexander Anderson (fig. 79). These illustrations are not only of the flowers, but of their personifications. The title page for ‘The Garden-Rose and the Wild-Rose’ portrays a group of four young women—presumably the wild roses—elegantly posed and encircled by thorny stems. Their simple, white muslin gowns underscore their humble nature and align with the fashion of the day. Lavish, floral brocaded silks had little place in French fashion during the waning years of the eighteenth century but, as demonstrated throughout in this book, rose motifs were never out of style for long.
CHAPTER IV

THE ROSE

THE UNFADING FLOWER OF JEWELLERY

GEOFFREY MUNN
In 1653, the physician and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper wrote in his Compleat Herbal, ‘What a pother have authors made with roses! What a racket they have made!

The same racket has echoed across the centuries, from classical antiquity to the present day, when the rose maintains its very special place in the human imagination. There is no synonym for the rose: this is further evidence of its supremacy, as the lion is absolute in the animal kingdom, so the rose has always been paramount in floriculture. This is probably because its unique beauty affects all five senses with equal intensity. Consequently, it was readily assimilated into the myths and legends of Classical antiquity. In the ancient world, the goddess Aphrodite and her Roman incarnation Venus were identified by a variety of attributes, including shells, pearls, doves, myrtle flowers and, tellingly, in jewellery design (fig.80).

Young Man Among Roses (see fig.36) to imply the agonising yearnings of first love. Beautiful from bud to bloom, the rose, in common with every flower, is by its very nature impermanent and, just as the scent grows faint and the petals drop, so even ideal love is inevitably superseded by grief. In 1633 Venetia Stanley, Lady Digby, died suddenly in her sleep and her grief-stricken husband asked Sir Anthony van Dyck to paint her fast-fading beauty on her deathbed. In this arresting image it seems that Venetia is simply sleeping. The only obvious clue to her mortality is the rose on the hem of her sheet. It is not only full-blown but some of the petals have fallen. Thus, we see the symbolic meaning of the rose expanded to encompass even love beyond the grave. It is in this gloomy capacity that it is used to great effect in memorial waltz paintings, funerary sculptures and, tellingly, in jewellery design (fig.63).

As it was in art, so too in literature; there again the rose reigned supreme, its amorous symbolism giving writers vivid inspiration for a variety of narratives. As early as 615 BCE the Greek poet Sappho is believed to have written the ‘Song of the Rose’ (see fig.31). Blake was one of dozens, probably hundreds, of writers to be inspired not just by the beauty of the rose, but by its time-honoured association with both pleasure and pain. John Keats, in his ‘Ode on Melancholy’ of 1819 (published in 1820), urged his reader to ‘glut thy sorrow on a morning rose’ and Algernon Swinburne’s ‘The Year of the Rose’ (1874) is, as the title suggests, an allegory of love. Oscar Wilde’s short story ‘The Nightingale and the Rose’ (1888), is a tragic account of devotion that is not only deluded but cruelly spurned. Imbued with such symbolic intensity, it is not surprising that the rose is widely found not just in painting and literature, but in every aspect of decorative art, including dress and jewellery. Here, in equal measure, we see roses decorating the surface of a variety of stuffs, including woven and printed silks, damasks and even cloth of gold where, on the imperial Mantle worn by the British sovereigns, it appears as an emblem of England.

In jewellery design specifically, we see that roses are not simply decorative but carry dozens of covert messages, the majority of which are amatory and most of which derive from The Language of Flowers. The charming but completely artificial system laid out here has its origins in antiquity but was greatly expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was then that dozens of small books were published, listing every possible meaning for each and almost every flower. In these little floral lexicons, we read once again that the rose is peerless and, in honour of its special importance, it carries no less than 40 meanings. One of the more lugubrious is that of the dried white rose, which stands for ‘death rather than loss of innocence’.

It is said that jewellery is the highest form of dress, and it is true that its function is almost far beyond the merely decorative. More often it is an emblem of love, magic or power, and occasionally all three. This was never more apparent than in the ancient world, where, among the many and varied forms of jewellery, head ornaments were literally the crowning glory of the goldsmith’s art. These remarkable objects, almost sculptural in their complexity, were wrought from ‘native’ gold (found and mined in its pure, unalloyed form) and the malleability of the precious metal allowed it to be worked into delicate leaves and flowers.

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In 1653, the physician and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper wrote in his Compleat Herbal, ‘What a pother have authors made with roses! What a racket they have made! The same racket has echoed across the centuries, from classical antiquity to the present day, when the rose maintains its very special place in the human imagination. There is no synonym for the rose: this is further evidence of its supremacy, as the lion is absolute in the animal kingdom, so the rose has always been paramount in floriculture. This is probably because its unique beauty affects all five senses with equal intensity. Consequently, it was readily assimilated into the myths and legends of Classical antiquity. In the ancient world, the goddess Aphrodite and her Roman incarnation Venus were identified by a variety of attributes, including shells, pearls, doves, myrtle flowers and, above all, the rose. Its message is always amorous but a harsh warning is implicit; hidden among the sensuous beauty of the leaves and petals lurk thorns and the danger of hurt. Thus, in almost every age and every culture, the rose is emblem of both beauty affects all five senses with equal intensity. Consequently, it was readily assimilated into the myths and legends of Classical antiquity. In the ancient world, the goddess Aphrodite and her Roman incarnation Venus were identified by a variety of attributes, including shells, pearls, doves, myrtle flowers and, above all, the rose. Its message is always amorous but a harsh warning is implicit; hidden among the sensuous beauty of the leaves and petals lurk thorns and the danger of hurt. Thus, in almost every age and every culture, the rose is emblem of both
Favourites for both men and women were wreaths of laurel, oak and olive, and preternatural garlands of roses were observed in their every detail and delicacy. In this way it seemed as if, by a wave of the alchemist’s wand, the fleeting beauty of the rose, being transmuted into gold, was finally rendered undying and perpetual. It is even possible that these fragile, paper-thin jewels were seen as representing the triumph of love over the grave itself, because they were worn by both the living and the dead.

One of the most lyrical examples of such a wreath was found in the funerary treasure of Philip II of Macedon (fig.81). This is a princely example of a type of naturalistic head ornament worked up from ‘native’ gold. Ephorate of Antiquities of Imathia, Greece

Opposite left

81. Wreath, Greece, 336 BCE
Gold
Collection

This wreath, with decorations of wild roses and myrtle, was found in the tomb of Philip II of Macedon, who died in 336 BCE. This is a perfectly example of a type of naturalistic head ornament worked up from ‘native’ gold.

Opposite right

82. A painting of Burgundian pendant, before 1504
Windsor Castle, 6.5 x 5.2cm
Historisches Museum, Basel

The miniature painting depicts a pendant in the form of a white rose, decorated with enamel and set with a large red stone – probably a ‘balas’ ruby or red spinel – of c. 450-500. © Historisches Museum, Basel

Gold, enamel and red spinel
All Souls College, University of Oxford
© The Trustees of the British Museum

84. Watercolour, 6.5 x 5.2cm
Historisches Museum, Basel

A painting of Burgundian pendant of 1400–1450 now in the Historisches Museum in Basel (fig.82). The endless threat to the survival of intrinsically valuable jewellery is fashion, and constant remodelling and resetting of precious stones has resulted in the loss of the vast majority of jewellery that has had any intrinsic value at all. Consequently, the historian relies heavily on external evidence, including painting, sculpture and wills. A rare surviving example is a fifteenth-century jewel of similar design to the Burgundian pendant, now preserved at All Souls College, Oxford (fig.83).

The cultivation of the rose probably began in China 5,000 years ago but it was in the modern (post-Classical) world that it became widespread throughout the northern hemisphere. It is a flower associated with warmer climes, however, and it was not until the thirteenth century that it became popular in Europe. Even then, its representation in art and jewellery design was frowned upon in early Christian asceticism, owing to its close association with the pagan world. Nonetheless, little by little, these prejudices faded away and the rose earned a new identity in the Christian world. The floor of the Chapter House at Westminster Abbey, London – laid down for Edward III in the mid-fourteenth century – is decorated with a Latin text that translates:

We know that the Romans were inordinately fond of roses and used them on all manner of festival occasions, including banquets both official and private; in homage to the pain of separation, they were often used in rites for the dead. *Surprisingly, they are not often found in Roman jewellery design. Instead there was a distinct preference for snakes, knots of Hercules, cameos, even the baleful head of Medusa; if there were roses, they were conventionalised into simple rosettes.

The rose became a favourite plant in the medieval garden, even an emblem of the Virgin Mary herself (see p.35). *As it was in cultivation, so it was at the jeweller’s bench, where the rose was as much an ornament as an heraldic device. In 1498, Anne, Lady Scrope, left her stepson a ‘White roose with a baleys’ (red spinel). *It must have borne a striking resemblance to the brooch in the form of a white rose that figures in the miniature painting of a Burgundian pendant of 1400–1450 now in the Historisches Museum in Basel (fig.82).
In the early Renaissance, jewellers who had previously focused their attention on Christian subjects were given a wider remit. Inspired as much by the ancient world as their own freedom of expression, the goldsmiths of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries embraced every aspect of floral design and, inevitably, flowered in the beauty of precious stones and the transient charm of leaves and flowers was never completely forgotten.

In the seventeenth century, exploration and colonisation brought such beauty to Europe in unprecedented variety and volume. In the seventeenth century, jewellers who had previously focused on Christian subjects were given a wider remit. Inspired as much by the ancient world as their own freedom of expression, the goldsmiths of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries embraced every aspect of floral design and, inevitably, flowered on the reverse of the newly discovered, gold enamelled Fettercairn Jewel (fig.84), probably made in Scotland in the mid-sixteenth century. Probably the most emphatic of all, however, is the Phoenix Jewel (fig.85), in which the image of Elizabeth I is framed by red and white roses of York and Lancaster entwined with her own leaves – none other than the eglantine (Rosa rubiginosa). In another pendant ornament, known as the Hengrave Jewel (fig.86), the image of the queen appears not once but twice: as a medal and in a painted miniature. The locket is backed by a gold panel on which a full-blown rose is framed by a wreath of its own leaves. Around it runs a Latin motto alluding to fast-fading beauty of precious stones and the transient charm of leaves and flowers was never completely forgotten.

Indeed, in some medieval wills the word ‘flower’ is a synonym for a jewel. In goldsmiths’ work, there could be no real competition between these brilliantly coloured gemstones and detailed subtle representation of the plant world and so, relegated to the back of jewellery, flowers were rendered in delicate painted enamels on the reverse of stomachers, necklaces, slides and all manner of jewellery. There, quite hidden from public view, bouquets and posies were reserved for the private delectation of the owner, though they were occasionally shown as cabinet pieces in their own right. In the Low Countries in the first half of the seventeenth century, it was not the rose that was at centre stage but the tulip, introduced from Turkey to the west by the sultan Suleiman I (known as ‘the Magnificent’) in the sixteenth century. However, this fresh challenge to the ancient heritage of the rose, known as ‘Tulipmania’, was particular to the Low Countries, and even there it was comparatively short-lived.9

A number of the greatest masters of the time had some expertise at the jeweller’s bench and these included Antonio Pollaiuolo, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein the younger and even Leonardo da Vinci himself. Needless to say, all of these artists and their contemporaries were conversant with the rich heritage of plants and flowers, and Leonardo, already fascinated by botany, made at least one detailed study of a single rose. Although there is no surviving evidence that these famous artists used the rose in their goldsmithing work, there is no reason to doubt it. Nonetheless, representations in Renaissance jewellery are tantalisingly rare. One, most touching in its modesty, is found on the reverse of the Birth of Venus (1482–5), for example, shows her born from the sea, propelled by a zephyr of pink roses.10

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imperial court under Empress Anna, he was free to create one of the greatest masterpieces of the jeweller’s art (fig.88). An array of coloured diamonds was brought together to make a garland of roses and matching earrings.

In the nineteenth century, it seems that decorative artists – in contrast with those operating amid the vital splendour of the Baroque and Rococo – had lost confidence, if not in their technical prowess then in their own artistic integrity. Consequently, the majority believed that the best way forward was to look back. This attitude, already apparent in the ‘Empire’ style of the 1820s, and nurtured by the teachings of a number of art critics including John Ruskin, dominated the aesthetics of the century. Jewellers and jewellery designers were quick and willing to follow suit.

Standing for Christian virtue and authority, the Gothic style was one of the first to be emulated in nineteenth-century Europe. It seemed that the plant world as a source of inspiration had been subsumed into medieval convention and so the rose in that particular revival is not easy to find; the decorative schemes that followed the Gothic Revival were equally conventionalised. However in parallel with the revival of Greek, Roman, Assyrian and Renaissance styles, there emerged a renewed enthusiasm for nature and the natural sciences. Once again, it was in gem-set jewellery that the rose bloomed anew.

The eighteenth century has been described by the antiquary and jewellery historian Joan Evans as the age of light and lightness, both in the decorative arts and in the mind. This was particularly true of both dress and jewellery. During décolleté dresses allowed for an extravagant display of necklaces, and fiercely boned corsets were the perfect platform for all manner of stomachers set with coloured stones and diamonds. The variety of available gemstones was even greater than in the seventeenth century and the invention of the brilliant cut diamond was everything its name suggests – brilliant. The finest jewellery was worn in the evening and the diamond’s natural affinity with candlelight meant that both men and women blazed in refracted light, from their jewelled buckles right up to their complicated wigs, even to their gem-set combs and tiaras. Immense bouquets were the order of the day and the rose was central to all sorts of completely impractical floral sprays. Often, gem-set flowers and buds were set on watch springs, and there they trembled and oscillated with the slightest movement of the wearer, accentuating a return of light quite beyond all previous imaginings. The fashion was so successful that it continued well into the nineteenth century (fig.87).

In diamond jewellery of this sort, the rose may have lost its colour but not entirely its meaning. In the lore of the lapidary, the diamond stands for constancy, and in conjunction with the rose it means eternal love. In one extremely rare example, the jeweller had access to the best of all worlds in both colour and form. Supported by the seemingly limitless budget of the Russian imperial court under Empress Anna, he was free to create one of the greatest masterpieces of the jeweller’s art (fig.89). An array of coloured diamonds was brought together to make a garland of roses and matching earrings.

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In Paris, at the benches of the jeweller Theodore Fester and his contemporary Frédéric Boucheron and Octave Lecourt, several of the finest flower pieces were made. It was Fester who made the magnificent corsage brooch in the form of a rose in bud and bloom owned by Princess Mathilde, the daughter of Jérôme Bonaparte; it became the centrepiece of her world-famous collection of jewellery. In around 1900, a similarly ambitious brooch was made by Fabergé in Russia, in homage to the Danish origins of the Empress Maria Fedorovna, whose family emblem was the yellow rose. It featured a delicate budding flower, set with coloured diamonds to witty and dazzling effect.

There is only one word for jewellery in the English language but, conveniently, the French have two: joaillerie for the kind of gem-set ornaments described in the previous paragraph, and bijouterie for those jewels that rely heavily on the value of technique and superlative craftsmanship. These bijoux are generally of a more intimate and sentimental nature, and this is where the imagery of the rose took firm root again. During the nineteenth century, the flower was used to convey its familiar message in all manner of gold pendants, lockets, brooches worked in coloured golds – sometimes incorporating stained ivory to naturalistic effect (see fig.89) – and, occasionally, fobs set with diamonds. After the hot red sealing wax had cooled on the tip of an envelope, the imprint of the rose, applied with a seal, was the first hint of a private love message within. However, to describe certain jewels as sets of adventurous materials that included ancient Egyptian faience and Chinese lacquer; despite all this richness, the rose was scarcely to be found (figs 90, 91). It seemed that for the moment it had been banished from jewellery to more decorative pieces, including card and vanity cases, where it was often represented using carved emeralds and rubies. One of the most bizarre examples was commissioned as a group of Christmas presents by James de Rothschild of Waddesdon Manor, England, in 1926. This was a series of roses, designed to predict the weather with a hidden hygrometer, each of which was mounted in a lacquer vase by Cartier.

America, too, was ready for this artistic revolution, and there it was Louis Comfort Tiffany who was the most important protagonist. It thrived internationally in various degrees of popularity, but in every aspect of Art Nouveau design there is a faint atmosphere of disquiet. Lalique’s restless, occasionally overblown, perished, gnawed by teeming insect life. The animals that roamed Lalique’s psyche have a strange and unnatural beauty – beauty from the beastly. On one occasion he designed an enamelled gold pendant in the form of vultures gorging on carrion. He even had the yellow rose. It featured a delicate budding flower, set with coloured diamonds to witty and dazzling effect.

Nevertheless, the rose worked its special magic on Lalique and we see it through his eyes and in an entirely new vision (fig.93). As always, art and effect were paramount and it mattered very little how they were achieved. Yes, Lalique used precious stones, but, if the composition required it, then ivory, humble glass and even worthless stones’ horn would do as well. Lalique died in 1945, by which time his work had fallen out of fashion and was only appreciated by a small contemporary elite that included his most important patron, the millionaire financier Calouste Gulbenkian. It is hard to identify a single characteristic of the Art Nouveau movement, but an organic curvilinear line defines most of the work. However, as a result of a fierce reaction to this decadent aesthetic, it was superseded in the early 1920s by the angular geometric style known as Art Deco. One might reasonably wonder how the organic form of the rose could survive an aesthetic shock of this magnitude and it hardly did. This time, Cartier, Boucheron, and Van Cleef & Arpels took up the mantle, supported by a cast of adventurous materials that included rock crystal, lapis lazuli and every imaginable hardstone – even ancient Egyptian faience and Chinese lacquer; despite all this richness, the rose was scarcely to be found (figs 90, 91). It seemed that for the moment it had been banished from jewellery to more decorative pieces, including card and vanity cases, where it was often represented using carved emeralds and rubies. One of the most bizarre examples was commissioned as a group of Christmas presents by James de Rothschild of Waddesdon Manor, England, in 1926. This was a series of roses, designed to predict the weather with a hidden hygrometer, each of which was mounted in a lacquer vase by Cartier.

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And yet, the future of the rose in contemporary jewellery houses seems uncertain. One notable exception to the general rule is the firm JAR, founded in the late 1970s by Joel Rosenthal and operating in the Place Vendôme in Paris. Here, in a flurry of exotic flowers, petals and butterflies wrought from coloured stones and diamonds, Rosenthal has taken a fresh look at the rose as a source of inspiration. Through the use of rare and exotic gemstones he has identified its very essence, evoking the rose's velvety softness with some of the hardest precious materials known to man. Pavé-set in delicate grades of colour, in heady combinations of red, pink and purple, JAR's jewels are not slavish copies of nature but adventurous interpretations (fig. 94), truly redolent of the scented rose.

Today it seems JAR stands almost alone in fascination with the rose. It is hard to find it blooming in any form in the over-lit window displays of New York, London and Paris, but, considering the famous beauty and charm, the very quintessence of the rose, perhaps this temporary die-back mirrors the endless cycle of nature. During the winter the rose is quite unseen, dormant in the icy darkness, waiting for the first warm rays of the sun before it burgeons again in all its unrivalled splendour. As it is in nature, so surely must it be in art. We will not have to wait too long before the rose reclaims its rightful supremacy at the goldsmith's bench, rising triumphant once again in the endlessly beguiling history of jewellery design.

Following the First and Second World Wars, society as it once was changed forever. The vast fortunes made in Europe and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were diminished and, as a result, the lavish entertainments and the wearing of elaborate jewellery were greatly reduced. Previously patrons of the decorative arts, including dress and jewellery, were willing to spend money literally for the sake of spending it, and they did so lavishly, with little or no regard for the future. Occasionally, an enormously expensive dress was made just for one night and, in the same way, a costly jewel was purchased not for investment but simply for pleasure. When those heady days were over, so too was the cultivated patronage that demanded the finest and the best of the jeweller's art. Regrettably, customers at the great jewellery houses of Europe and America began to buy an investment rather than to spend on innovative design and superlative craftsmanship; this change was to mark the beginning of a steep decline in jewellery as an art form. Where, once, precious stones were selected for the concept of a fine necklace or tiara, now all manner of jewels were made simply to flaunt costly gems in artless jewels.

Nonetheless, the rose survived as an emblem of love and a small number of jewellers managed to incorporate it into this new aesthetic and the most successful example is the brooch made by Cartier to accommodate the rare and valuable pink diamond given to Princess Elizabeth as a wedding present in 1947. It also continued to be represented in all manner of relatively semi-precious materials, giving colour and depth to the more abbreviated forms of the 1940s. These included coral, ivory and sometimes simply polished coloured gold, heightened with diamond sparks.

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CHAPTER V

PERMANENT BOTANICALS

... FASHIONING ARTIFICIAL ROSES

AMY DE LA HAYE
You must always have the rose before you or know it by heart.

Petal Dyer, Paris, 1910

'Permanent Botanicals' is the name given to the first artificial flowers based on natural blooms such as the rose (something 'artificial' is here defined as being made or produced by humans, rather than occurring naturally, and usually a copy of something natural; 'natural' refers to objects existing in or derived from nature, not made or caused by humans). This chapter explores the history, design, making and materiality of such artificial roses and examines the diverse kinds of training and the working lives of the people, mostly women and young girls, who made them. Following a brief historical context, artificial flower making in Paris, New York and London – the leading fashion cities when this trade flourished – is explored. The chapter touches upon the making of black flowers in Manchester, England, and the German artificial flower-making industry.

By the mid-nineteenth century, with the mass production of metal tools, textiles and dyestuffs, artificial flower making had become an ancillary trade to the elite fashion industries, serving haute couture houses, dress and hat makers, and the mass-production clothing industries. Most historical evidence about the industry dates from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, when artificial flower making was at its peak. Apart from slumps during both world wars, the business of artificial flower making generally thrived until the 1960s, when fashion became more informal, less substantial and modernistic, and hat wearing declined.

Published research on artificial flower making is scant within fashion studies and these products have not – with the exception of the Artisans d’élégances touring exhibition, initiated by Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, Paris (1993–4) – been foregrounded within exhibitions. However, there does exist a wealth of primary sources upon which to draw, within which the rose, as a most popular flower, and the rose maker – an elite member of the flowermaking workforce – are often prominent.

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Opposite
96. Attributed to the German Strasbourg workshop, 'Two Riddles of the Queen of Sheba', Germany?, c.1490–1500. Wool, linen and metal 80 x 101.6cm The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1971

Right

One of two clusters of cream-coloured silk roses, buds and green cotton leaves on stems, each cluster itself resembling a large rose bloom. The stamen-less roses – six in the right-hand cluster, and five in the left – are made in four different sizes. Roses and buds have long stiffened cotton sepals, shaded dark green on the face and a lighter green on the reverse. The Museum at FIT, 72.81.38. Gift of Doris Duke
Surviving artificial roses permit material culture analysis of flowers, buds, stems and leaves; thorns, which could snug material or skin, are omitted. Applied to garments and hats, they reveal how flowers interface with apparel and the fashionable body. Like lace and buttons (fig.57), flowers are sometimes removed from one item of apparel to accessorise another, or might be preserved in the form of a memento. However, unlike buttons and lace, which attract masses of collectors and can command high prices, artificial flowers are generally less revered; they can also be more fragile and awkward to store.

The making of permanent botanicals, originally crafted in times when the earth no longer yielded natural flowers, dates back to ancient Egypt, where flowers were made from shavings of stained horn; to China, where silk, porcelain, gold, paper and stained horn; to China, where silk, porcelain, gold, paper and various species of plants were employed. China and Rome were to achieve a fine degree of botanical accuracy, but it was in Paris, where the industry evolved slowly between the fourteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries, that artificial flower making was to find its most refined and creative expression in fashion. From the mid-eighteenth century, French Protestants fleeing religious persecution took flower-making skills to London, and by the early nineteenth century, those emigrating to New York had done likewise.

Even though artificial flowers can be made year-round, they are worn primarily when those they imitate are in bloom. Until the late twentieth century, when the shape of the fashion industry’s year came to be more fluid and less powerfully oriented around two yearly, seasonal presentations, this seasonality exerted a profound impact upon the structure and organisation of the industries and their workers. Some firms combined flower making with feather work, as feathers generally trim winter apparel, in order to ensure employment throughout the seasons. While the working environments required were similar, the two industries involved different supply chains (the most brilliantly industries involved different supply chains (the most brilliantly illustrated by Denis Diderot, French philosopher and art critic. It comprises eight plates, made from engravings by Bernard Fecit, the first of which depicts a spacious, light-filled workshop with 12 people – six women, two children and four men – working at wooden tables (fig.58). Subsequent plates depict tools for flower making and patterns for various petals and leaves, including roses.

In 1776 the Corporations des marchands de modes, plumassiers et fleuristes was formed to support this emergent trade. Artificial flower makers (bouquetières-décorateurs) and fresh flower workers (chapétiens en fleurs), whose work included making rose garlands and chaplets (circlets for the head), were regulated and protected by the guild system. By 1896, the number had more than doubled to 24,000 workers.

By 1865, there were some 10,000 artificial flower makers working in Paris, 80–85 per cent of whom were women and girls; they accounted for about 10 per cent of Paris’s female workforce. By 1896, the number had more than doubled to 24,000 workers. Artificial flower making in Paris was a respected and relatively well-paid occupation. Extensive training was provided: the trade was learned from family members engaged in the trade or by serving a parentally funded, three-year apprenticeship. An organisation called Assistance Partinelle was formed in 1866 to tutor children on Sunday mornings, from October to July, in the study of natural history and design as applied to making flower and feather decorations. In 1869, the Chambre syndicale des fleurs, plumes et modes established the Société pour l’assistance partenelle des fleurs et plumes et modes.

By the early eighteenth century, the artificial flower-making trade had become concentrated in rue Saint-Denis and the surrounding streets, supplying flowers for the fine art market as well as fashion. An early Paris firm, established in rue des Petits-Champs in 1727, was the predecessor of Maison Legeron, which continues to supply the elite fashion market today. One of the first visible records of the trade was published in Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (1751–72) by Denis Diderot, French philosopher and art critic. It comprises eight plates, made from engravings by Bernard Fecit, the first of which depicts a spacious, light-filled workshop with 12 people – six women, two children and four men – working at wooden tables (fig.58). Subsequent plates depict tools for flower making and patterns for various petals and leaves, including roses.

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While some Paris firms produced a variety of flowers, fruits, leaves and grasses, many specialised in making just one flower type, sometimes distinguishing between rose and buds. In 1876, the newly established American trade paper Millinery Trade Review reported that even when flower sales were down, roses always sold well. Furthermore, rose makers were the elite of the flower-making workforce. In her research on the industry in the late nineteenth century, Marjory J. Boron reports that, in 1876, makers of petit fleurs – including lily of the valley and roses – earned 4 or 5 francs. For a rose maker to learn ‘quickly on the job’; the trade was seasonal and required working eight hours, often extended significantly during busy times. Girls usually entered the trade aged ten, although some started as young as six – the latter (unpaid) brought in to assist female relatives. Delicacy of touch was important and children’s tiny fingers proved useful for intricate processes such as separating the cuts or layers of petals using pincers or pliers, which would often blister their thumbs and forefingers. Boys were not employed until they were aged 13 years. The standard working day was 12 hours, often extended significantly during busy times. By the 1860s, the industry had congregated in north-east and East London, where rents were lower. Mr Vernon, owner of a Manchester firm, who supplied flowers for Queen Victoria, was based at Rathbone Place. By 1851, the census identified 885 rose workers. However, records of the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Group (stumbled upon by this author when researching early flower-making firms) list their artificial flower-making workers. The first census of England, Wales and Scotland, which recorded the names of people, their type and place of occupation, was published in 1801. Surprisingly, this and those submitted across the ensuing four decades do not include artificial flower workers. However, records of the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Group (stumbled upon by this author when researching early flower-making firms) list their artificial flower-making workers. To give a sense of context, a Miss Matthews, employed in 1850 at the firm of Millinery Trade Review, reported that top-quality flowers were usually copied directly from nature. Madame A., who learned her craft from her mother and often spent four or five hours making a single rose emphasised that, ‘You must love flowers and love your trade: apprenticeship lasts all your life.’ They proceeded to tour the workrooms. Two men and a boy apprentice were undertaking the preliminary processes that involved preparing the cloth, and cutting and shaping the petals. The oldest man, aged between 45 and 50 years, had died pets since the age of seven; he advised that to make a truly beautiful product, ‘You must always have the rose before you or know it by heart.’ In the larger workshops, five females, including an apprentice, were completing an order of blue roses for a milliner. If petals required shading – painting the centre darker than the edges, for example – the women undertook this work. This gendered division of work was typical, although it was – at this time – unusual for women to occupy more skilful workplace roles. Apart from foliage, all parts of the flower, including the stamens, were made in-house. Once married, women generally left the workplace, although many continued to work at home by necessity. Madame A. employed 12 or so married homeworkers, including her sister, all of whom had served an apprenticeship with her. Exquisitely crafted and often naturalistic, artificial flowers were objects of French national pride and were displayed within international exhibitions from 1878, when Madame Roux Montgnac, who had hand-painted the petals of the flowers she made, was exhibiting them with dyes, exhibited in the painting salon. Thereafter they were shown in the contexts of horticulture (1884), clothing (1885), and fans and toys (1878). In 1925, at the Paris Exposition, they were shown in classe 22, a category dedicated to millinery, flowers and feathers.

In London, and also New York, speed of assembly and competitive pricing generally took precedence over craft and creativity. Artificial flower making was subdivided, permitting workers to learn quickly ‘on the job’; the trade was seasonal and required working eight hours, often extended significantly during busy times. Girls usually entered the trade aged ten, although some started as young as six – the latter (unpaid) brought in to assist female relatives. Delicacy of touch was important and children’s tiny fingers proved useful for intricate processes such as separating the cuts or layers of petals using pincers or pliers, which would often blister their thumbs and forefingers. Boys were not employed until they were aged 13 years. The standard working day was 12 hours, often extended significantly during busy times. By the 1860s, the industry had congregated in north-east and East London, where rents were lower. Mr Vernon, owner of a factory on City Road, told Lord that fashions were so variable they never made stock. He and other employers advised that the long hours and seasonality of artificial flower making had led many employers to migrate to more regular work: making caps or machine sewing.
The rose seems even to outdo the natural in their close resemblance and to flatter the roses of nature in their beauty. They appear in many varieties, interesting montures showing combinations of infant and half-blown buds, full-blown blossoms, and wind-torn blossoms bereft of petals and with only the stamens and pistols crowning the petiole.

Millinery Trade Review, 1889

Here follows an account of how an artificial rose was made from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth: processes that have changed little over time, although today the gendered division of labour is less rigidly defined. The making of an artificial rose can be divided into four core stages:

1. **Design** In Paris, flower makers often worked directly from nature, copying natural roses or buds. Botanical engravings were also used as source materials. The cheaper end of the trade copied flowers made by the exclusive firms.

2. **Cutting and dyeing** The fabric used to make the corolla (the petals of a flower) was stretched and starched prior to being cut, using heavy hammers (sometimes bound by hocks), or a stamping machine. Lightweight fabrics, like silk and muslin, were cut 16 layers at a time, while more dense fabrics like cotton or silk velvet (often used in winter) were cut in layers of four. The petal shapes were then tinted using dyes and spread out on porous paper to oven dry.

3. **Forming the flower** Each petal was goffered (curved into a cupped form) using a tool with a metal shaft ending in a ball form, heated by flame or gas jet. Sergeant observed, ‘The rosemakers, when the petals are ready, attach the inner ones to a wire stem, stick its end into their potato standard, and add petals, crimp the edges, and form the flower as it hangs head downwards before them.’ The petal edges were then crimped (curled) by hand or using tweezers. A dusting of potato flour was used to create the effect of ‘bloom’. Buds were made of wadding, finely covered with silk, over which individual petals and sometimes sepals were added.

4. **Composition** This, the final and most highly skilled stage, was known as ‘branching’. The stalk, formed from wire, was crowned with the seed vessel and stamens; glue was added to the base of these and the corolla threaded onto the stalk and pressed onto the seed vessel. The calyx or culot was fixed in the same manner. Any leaves were then wired to the stalk, before it was covered with silk thread, fabric and (or) paper, a process requiring a finely tuned rotary movement of the thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

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4. **Composition** This, the final and most highly skilled stage, was known as ‘branching’. The stalk, formed from wire, was crowned with the seed vessel and stamens; glue was added to the base of these and the corolla threaded onto the stalk and pressed onto the seed vessel. The calyx or culot was fixed in the same manner. Any leaves were then wired to the stalk, before it was covered with silk thread, fabric and (or) paper, a process requiring a finely tuned rotary movement of the thumb and forefinger of the left hand.
This movement, practiced extensively and perfected during apprenticeship, was also employed when making rosebuds. Sometimes flowers were fragranced. Among the specialist suppliers were Stafford Allen & Sons (est.1833) of London, ‘essential oil distillers and manufacturing chemists’, who made scents, including rose, for artificial flowers.

Leaves These were made using starched paper or fabric, cut and dyed in a manner similar to that used for petals and then wired using a two-part iron tool, the die of which represented, in relief, one of the faces of the leaf, and the counterpart, the matrix, securing the iron in place. In 1871, Harper’s Bazaar reported that a French chemist had developed an effective way of colouring artificial leaves that involved mixing water-soluble dyes with a mucilaginous gum; this gum was poured onto glass tablets that were hardened in an oven and was then ground to form a powder that achieved a fine degree of colour and transparency. He recommended using synthetic aniline dyes; tincture of curcuma (or turmeric tincture), combined with a solution of soda, provided a beautiful chestnut; a solution of alcohol and curcuma with fuschia, a striking scarlet red; and the same combined with aniline blue, a handsome greenish-yellow.2

To achieve a glossy surface, leaves were given a wash of gum. The dull, velvety, texture of the leaf reverse was created by sprinkling dyed cloth powder on to the fine gum coating. Leaves were not always made to appear perfect. In September 1876, Harper’s Bazaar reported the latest Paris trend for naturalistic, thickly set branches and thickets of artificial flowers featured autumnal-coloured leaves, ‘spotted as if by decay’.4

Stamens Unbleached silk was fixed onto brass thread and steeped in glue to create greater rigidity. Once dried, each end was garnished with paste and plunged into a bath of yellow dye.

Notes
2. Kleeck 1913, p.158.
3. ‘Coloring Artificial Flowers’ 1871.
The largest London factory Lord visited was Messrs Lockyer of Shaftesbury Street, New North Road, which, during the busy season, engaged 250 employees, 150 of whom worked on the premises. Lord noted:

"Much of the work is still given out to be done in small places, where a family works with two or three others to help them. This is particularly the case with making flowers, violets, and other simple and common goods. In such cases the workplaces are mere dwelling rooms, sometimes back kitchen or basement. These are often dirty and foul."

Mr R. Johnson of 120 Puckington Street, Islington, told Lord, 'It is a very dirty trade, though you would scarcely think so. It takes three persons here every Saturday from 1 or 6 till nearly 12pm to wash and clean the four rooms thoroughly.'

A training scheme was offered to differently aged women living in London. It was established by John Alfred Groom, a silver engraver in Clerkenwell, east London, who became so concerned about the plight of local flower and watercress sellers who were blind or amputees (often as a result of factory accidents) that in 1866 he founded the ‘Watercress and Flowers Girl’s Christian Mission’ to provide food and washing facilities (fig.111).

Ten years later, with private financial backing, he provided accommodation and schooling for 350 girls and training for young women to work with fresh, and make artificial, flowers. By 1894, the Mission had moved to larger premises, and subsequently opened another branch in nearby Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. When Queen Alexandra launched Alexandra Rose Day in June 1912, she commissioned Groom’s organisation to make thousands of pink artificial rose ‘buds’ and continued to place orders for what became an annual event (fig.112). In 1932, indeed, rents and a reduction in demand for artificial flowers saw the factory diversify into other areas.

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Booth reported that some low-skill/middle-class makers chose to work at home in preference to working ‘with a class of labourers whom they considered beneath them.’

The German industry, based in Sebnitz, focused on low-quality, ‘unnatural flowers’, i.e. *fleurs de fantasie* and *fleurs de spectacles*. Booth reported:

"The substance is the externals thrown away for the shadow. These girls do not sell themselves for bread; that they could easily earn. They sin for the externals which they have learnt to regard as essentials." He was referring to fashion. Similar criticisms were made of Parisian workers. In a fictionalised account of the trade in Émile Zola’s *L’Assommoir* (1877), the protagonist’s daughter Nana is about to start work in a flower factory and a discussion between family and friends ensues about the morality of the workers, to which the foremost woman Madame Lersat retorts: ‘But they have a sense of decorum, and when they go off the rails they exercise a certain taste in their choice … Yes that comes from the flowers … Now in my case what kept me pure.’

In 1893, Grace M. Oakeshott, Inspector of Women’s Technical Classes for London County Council, wrote an article called ‘Artificial Flower-Making: An Account of the Trade and a Plea for Municipal Training’ for the March issue of the *Economic Journal*. Arguing the case expressed in her title, she, too, stressed the superiority of the Parisian industry and bitterly criticised what she perceived to be lack of work ethic, commitment and creativity amongst London’s flower makers: ‘The majority of the girls do their work mechanically and unintelligently. They are without ambition, even without interest, in their trade.’ She stressed that as women were expected to stop working once married, their working life was too short for them to care what form it took.

A manufacturer she interviewed told her, ‘The Frenchwoman’s rose … was La France in perfection, with its beautiful curves – the Englishwoman’s something she would call a rose, though its shape is copied from the French models and can be done by anyone who is deft fingers, a good training and will be a faithful copyist.’ A manufacturer she interviewed told her, ‘The Frenchwoman’s rose … was La France in perfection, with its beautiful curves – the Englishwoman’s something she would call a rose, though its shape is copied from the French models and can be done by anyone who has deft fingers, a good training and will be a faithful copyist.’

Oakeshott highlighted the fact that, while many firms could not keep pace with fashion changes, poppies and black roses were made continuously, ‘as England leads in the matter of black flowers, and there is a steady demand for a small quantity of mourning flowers always.’

In summary, Oakeshott stressed that employers were aware how effective a two- or three-year apprenticeship was, but that the women would ‘not be bound’. She argued that the best place to train young women was in a school or college, which is precisely what happened with the foundation of the fashion trade schools in the early years of the twentieth century.
MAKING BLACK ROSES

Although there are no truly black flowers in nature (the pigment that flowers employ to colour their petals does not produce black), makers of mourning flowers were known as ‘black workers’, the flowers being crafted from silk and the same matte-black crêpe fabric that was used for women’s mourning dress (fig.17). Mourning flowers were less subject to changes in fashion and, while more complex flowers, such as roses, were made, surviving objects and evidence suggests that many were simpler, easy-to-assemble ‘abstract’ forms. (Platt Hall, part of Manchester Art Gallery, has two mourning bonnets: a ruched matte-black crêpe effect on the left, and a simpler, easy-to-assemble ‘abstract’ form on the right.)

Structured black flowers were made by threading black glass or jet beads onto wired threads to form aiguettes for bonnets. When W. H. Lord visited a Mrs Stowe of Penn Street, Hoxton, who had made mourning flowers for 12 years, told Lord they were made from black glass beads and that flowers employ to colour their petals does not produce one product that could be made during quiet times. The situation was similar in New York, where, in 1910, research for the Russell Sage investigation, discussed above, was initiated, as it was felt that flower making exemplified the core industrial problems of seasonal work – that is, child labour, and unskilled and homeworking. At this time, New York accounted for 75 per cent of all artificial flower production in North America and was the major importer of high-grade flowers from Paris. The findings of the investigation, published in 1913, were written up by Mary Van Kleeck, whose research involved 980 site visits, 590 of which were to workers in their homes and 390 to factories located in an area of Manhattan she described as a ‘congestion’ of flower shops – ‘a small and flowerless district south of Fourteenth St and west of Broadway’. It was in the midst of this dismal environment that author Edith Wharton located her novel Bunner Sisters (written 1891, published 1916 – ‘the tragic tale of sisters Eliza and Evalina, who barely eke out a living making artificial flowers for New York’s hat trade and for private clients, working from their tiny basement home that also serves as manufactory and shop.’

Van Kleeck stated that in 1880 there were just ten manufacturers who made artificial flower and feather decorations, of whom T. Chope, based at 24 Maiden Lane, who also imported flowers, was the largest. By 1847, the number had more than doubled to 24 and by 1880 had increased almost sixfold to 174 firms. The industry reached a peak in 1890, when there were 251 firms employing 4,343 employees and the vogue for artificial flowers was at its peak. By 1905, the industry had declined to 211 firms due to reduced demand, but five years later it had not only revived but expanded considerably, employing some 6,000 workers. Most New York firms made multiple flower types. Echoing London voices, Van Kleeck wrote, ‘the artificial flower manufacturer in New York accepts as an immutable fact the superiority of the Parisian flower maker.’

Huge quantities were imported. Even in 1905, a poor year for the trade, the value of imported flowers and feathers in the US was $2,369,015; domestic production was $5,246,822. In 1908, the value of imported flowers and feathers had risen to $3,747,021. As in fashion clothing and millinery, artificial flower companies aligned themselves with the international fashion capital, some even taking its name (see fig.116).
The importance of fashion meant that – as in the UK – many companies could not create stock, unless of black flowers and roses.\(^\text{116}\) One employer, however, advised he was compelled to cut the price of a dozen roses from 35 cents to 30 cents in the slack period, and a rose maker who earned $9 a week in the busy season was only employed for three days a week at half the daily rate.\(^\text{45}\)

The American trade was organised not by industry bodies, as in Paris, but by unions. In 1910, the Flower Makers Union (est. 1907) was replaced by the Educational League of Flower Makers (named thus because many young women were reluctant to join a union), but such organisations were powerless to support unregulated homeworkers. Kate Richards O’Hare, unionist and pacifist (a mother with four children, she was imprisoned for her political beliefs in 1917) exploited melodrama and the symbolism of roses to raise awareness about working conditions in her 1904 fictive account of a fellow artificial flower worker, 17-year old Italian Roselie Randazzo. In one scene from ‘He Counteth the Sparrow’s Fall’, Randazzo lets out a shrill scream while making red satin roses:

> “As I lifted her up the hot blood spurted from her lips, staining my hands and spattering the flowers as it fell … The blood-soaked roses were gathered up, the forelady grumbling because many were ruined, but I noticed that a tiny drop of Roselie’s heart’s blood and the picture of the rose was burned in my brain.”

The narrative of blood turning flowers, usually white ones, red – here, red on red – draws upon Greek mythology and biblical references, as well as the fictions highlighted in Chapter II. It was widely accepted that those engaged in workshops experienced better job security, work conditions and rates of pay than homeworkers. Of 114 factory owners interviewed by Van Kleeck, only 24 stated that all of their manufacturing was done in the homewares. Of 114 factory owners interviewed by Van Kleeck, better job security, work conditions and rates of pay than homeworkers. Kate Richards O’Hare, unionist and pacifist (a mother with four children, she was imprisoned for her political beliefs in 1917) exploited melodrama and the symbolism of roses to raise awareness about working conditions in her 1904 fictive account of a fellow artificial flower worker, 17-year old Italian Roselie Randazzo. In one scene from ‘He Counteth the Sparrow’s Fall’, Randazzo lets out a shrill scream while making red satin roses:

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Much of the evidence about artificial flower making, as stated above, relates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when demand for flowers was at its peak. However, faux roses continued to decorate fashion in the period 1900–39 and again during the 1950s. By the 1960s, the elite flower-making industries in New York had fallen into steep decline. Daily hat wearing fell out of fashion; the clientele for haute couture shrunk, as wealthy young women came to favour more directional, and instantly available, designer ready-to-wear fashions. Furthermore, as evening gowns became ‘skimper’, there was less space and ‘substance’ upon which to place roses. Hippy and pastoral trends favoured meadow flowers and by the 1960s minimalism, and in the 1990s déconstructive, generally negated the use of flowers: when used by directional designers – and notably Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and John Galliano – roses, when they appeared, were manipulated, self-fabric, suggestions of roses. The fashioning of artificial roses in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is further discussed within those chapters.

Documentary photographer Lewis Wickes Hine was commissioned to record a visual record for the Russell Sage report. In order to gain access to factories, he misrepresented himself as an insurance agent, fire inspector or salesman; once inside – and putting himself at considerable risk, both of personal injury and criminal action – he would quickly set up his 7 x 5” glass plate camera, take photos and obtain personal details (included in the captions to his photographs) from the people he portrayed. Hine’s work is stark, poignant and empathetic.
CHAPTER VI

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

... ‘I WOULD LIKE MY ROSES TO SEE YOU’

AMY DE LA HAYE
During the nineteenth century, affluent women were assumed to be fond of flowers – to wear flower-bedecked fashions; to grow and arrange flowers; read about flowers; dry, sketch and paint flowers (in watercolour); model them in wax, paper and shells; knit or embroider them. In addition, some were likened to idealised flowers, usually roses. Roses were incorporated into masculine fashionable dress in fresh flower form, or as patterning on the small or concealed textile surfaces worn in public spaces. More profuse was the rose ornamentation donned by a fashionable groom or worn for leisure at home. In a century when flowers came to be gendered feminine, male interest in the bloom was generally interpreted as scientific enquiry – partly to allay anxieties about non-heteronormative sexuality or gender non-conforming identities. Amid this century’s turbulent sociocultural, political, urban and industrial shifts, and with the onset of modernity, nature provided a refuge, the rose garden a haven: variously earthly, romantic, celestial or sublime. Throughout, fashion’s depiction of the rose remained fairly constant – mostly naturalistic, only occasionally abstracted. This chapter explores the nineteenth-century vogue for floriography and the cultivation, selling and wearing fresh roses. It looks at the rose as fashionable motif and applied decoration; rose personification and fancy dress; and the role of the rose in rites of passage.

NEOCLASSICAL ROSES

Until around 1820, the Neoclassical, empire-line cotton chemise remained fashionable for day and evening dress. As it was cheaper than silk, cotton was widely portrayed as egalitarian, although it was a product of colonial domination and slavery. By the 1810s, the mostly plain surfaces of 1800s fashions had given way to a flowering of ornamentation and, as in the Greco-Roman civilisations that were so influential in this century, the rose was pre-eminent. To attend a ball, a woman’s hair was dressed with fresh or artificial roses (fig.119); swags of faux roses decorated evening toilette, and individual or clusters of roses punctuated daytime dresses. The millinery trades flourished and hats became a dominant site for artificial roses.

Following the coronation of Napoléon Bonaparte in 1804, Empress Joséphine – working with Louis Hippolyte LeRoy, her feted marchand de mode (influential stylist, precursor of the haute couturier) – became a stylish fashion leader in France and beyond. Born in Martinique to a rich French Creole family, she was not – as she is often portrayed – a great rose collector. However, she did plant magnificent gardens at Château de Malmaison, near Paris, and in 1798 commissioned the Belgian artist Pierre-Joseph Redouté to paint portraits of her flowers. Joséphine endorsed the vogue for hand-woven, cashmere shawls as fashion objects of intense desire (fig.120); some of her own included rose patterning.

Won’t you come into my garden?
I would like my roses to see you.

Attributed to Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Shawls were beautiful, divinely soft and provided warmth and coverage over sheer dresses; they also symbolised wealth (they were vastly expensive) and colonial power and fed into prevailing perceptions of an exotic East. Redouté went on to become the foremost rose artist and dedicated the album of prints *Les Roses* (1817–21), his most acclaimed work, to Josephine’s memory (see fig.205). Myth became reality when rose gardens were planted posthumously at Malmaison and a variety of *Rosa gallica* – a loose, large, pink double rose – was named after her.

Throughout the century, the most eye-catching item of men’s outerwear was the vest, or waistcoat; coats were worn open to display silk, sometimes shiny satin-weave, surfaces decorated with woven or embroidered designs, some of which featured roses. At home, styles men often wore banyan, which were succeeded by smoking jackets; both were made using fabrics that incorporated rose patterning, as were embroidered smoking caps (see fig.121) and beaded tobacco pouches.

Opposite above
121. *Routzahn & Gilkey tailors*, Smoking cap, USA, 1870s. Silk velvet with hand embroidery
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
This cap, in the style of a Turkish cap with prominent tassel and design of pale-pink roses with gold coloured leaves and stems, would have been donned by a stylish and affluent man in the private spaces of his home. It was sold by a tailoring firm and was possibly imported.

Opposite below
The detail of embroidered silk roses with stems, leaves and thorns, in the center of the broad panel that encircles the lower skirt of the dress.
The Museum at FIT, 2020.2.1. Museum Purchase
In reaction to Classical diction, the Romantic movement, which blossomed in the early years of the century, gave primacy to the individual, his or her innermost emotions and relationship with nature. It is within this context that the trend, in art, literature and popular culture, for the conflation of (mostly) girls and women with flowers, as well as that for assigning flowers with emotions, flourished. Carl Linnaeus’s sextually explicit likening of plant reproduction to human sexuality, which had caused a scandal in the early eighteenth century, also fuelled these literary tropes. From 1819, the publication of one book – *Le Langage des Fleurs* (translated into English by Frederic Shoebert in 1820) – did much to determine the choice of bud, bloom, colour and combination of flowers as they were worn, gifted, depicted and displayed. Romantic and sentimental in tone, it was aimed predominantly at white, heterosexual, well-off women, many of whom became wellversed in its essentially positive messages. The rose, accorded more attention than any other flower, was personified as female and recognised for its democratic reach: “It might be said that the Queen of the Flowers sports with the air that fans her, adorns herself with the dew-drops that enameled her, and smilingly meets the sun rays that expand her bosom; it might well be said of this beautiful flower that nature has exhausted herself in striving to lavish on it the freshness of beauty, of form, perfume, brilliancy, and grace. The rose embellishes the whole surface of the earth. It is that the commonest of all flowers. On the days that its beauty is fully mature it perishes; but nothing restores it to the first graces of its former youth. The emblem of all ages, the interpreter of all sentiments, the rose constitutes an element of all our festivals.”

Not surprisingly, it is in this period that the name Rose, in multiple languages, became a favourite. The author of *Le Langage des Fleurs* also attributed meanings to the ways in which a flower was held or worn:

“When a flower is presented in its natural position, the sentiment is to be understood affirmatively, when received, negatively. For instance, a rose bud with its leaves and thorns indicates fear with hope, but, if reversed it must be construed as saying, ‘you may neither fear nor hope.’ Again, direct the same rose bud of its thorns, and it permits the most sanguine hope; deprive it of its petals, and retain the thorns, and the worst fears are to be apprehended. The expression of every flower may be thus varied by varying its state or position.”

In June 1882, Harper’s Bazaar reported a vogue for perfumery in the handles of fans: a rose-decorated fan might thus have also released rose fragrance.

By 1850, the fashionable female silhouette had fully transitioned from columnar to having a dropped shoulder line with immense gigot sleeves (fig.126); the waist resumed its ‘natural’ position and skirts became conical in shape. The increased sophistication of print technologies – notably engraved-roller printing techniques permitted textile designers to create meandering, naturalistic designs such as those featuring trailing roses. Handheld bags became an important fashion accessory, and beaded and embroidered reticules, purses and travel bags featured rose designs. A romantic portrait of the Russian count Vasily Alekseevich Perovsky, by Alexander Brullov (fig.128), depicts the imperial Russia’s national costume as the flower of a rose bouquet. Another non-linguistic ‘language’ has been attributed to the fashionable fan as a performative tool (fig.125); twirling one in the right hand, for example, announced ‘I Love Another.’ As Ariel Bejou suggests elsewhere (fig.130), a fan fan decorated with handpainted silk roses was a means for the wearer to communicate with others. The fashionable fan as a performative tool (fig.125); twirling one in the right hand, for example, announced ‘I Love Another.’ As Ariel Bejou suggests elsewhere (fig.130), a fan decorated with handpainted silk roses was a means for the wearer to communicate with others. The fashionable fan as a performative tool (fig.125); twirling one in the right hand, for example, announced ‘I Love Another.’ As Ariel Bejou suggests elsewhere (fig.130), a fan decorated with handpainted silk roses was a means for the wearer to communicate with others. The fashionable fan as a performative tool (fig.125); twirling one in the right hand, for example, announced ‘I Love Another.’ As Ariel Bejou suggests elsewhere (fig.130), a fan decorated with handpainted silk roses was a means for the wearer to communicate with others.
Russian general and statesman wearing detachable flower-embroidered suspenders, or braces (fig. 127).

Until 1820 – when the London-based Albert Thurston introduced ready-made, detachable suspenders – breeches, pantaloons and trousers were tightened by gusset ties on the rear waistband or held in place with integral suspenders. The fabric components of a set of detachable suspenders would be embroidered either professionally or in domestic spaces, by females, as personal gifts. In a man’s daily urban life, a rose-printed handkerchief (fig. 131) or cravat could provide a fillip to a dark-coloured tailored outfit, as indeed could a fresh rose boutonnière.

Below
126. Day dress (detail), USA, 1830–33. Printed cotton
The Museum at FIT, New York
This lightweight voluminous dress, with its immense gigot sleeves, is made from a sheer cotton with a printed design of rose clusters and a shadow trailing design of bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis).
The Museum at FIT, 94.92.1
Gift of Marcia Wallace

Opposite left
127. Brace, probably UK, c. 1860s. Embroidered silk satin and cutwork leather
Private collection
This single surviving brace (suspenders), made from a panel of dark-red silk satin, has been hand-embroidered with a trailing design of pink roses; the reverse is pale-pink satin. It was probably embroidered by a woman as a gift; the fastenings would have been made and attached by a professional leather worker.

Opposite right
128. Alexander Brullov
Portrait of Vasily Perovsky, 1824.
Watercolour and lacquer on paper, 29.7 x 19.4 cm
The State Russian Museum, St Petersburg
The Russian military general, described by the artist as ‘a wonderful man who loves a quiet life and the arts’ chose to be portrayed in a romantic light, strolling through an idyllic, sunlit landscape.
© State Russian Museum, St Petersburg
Flower girls contributed to family and national economies and appeared within occupational typographies, but they occupied an ambiguous role within nineteenth-century culture.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the French led not only international fashion, they had also created the vogue for breeding roses; both industries whetted desires with an ever-tempting array of new colours, textures and forms. Plant breeders crossed remontant (repeat-flowering) roses, brought from southern China and central Asia, with fragrant European roses. The first rose described as modern was introduced in 1867; it was a cross between a tea rose (tea roses are the forerunners of the modern ‘hybrid teas’, originating from a cross between a China rose and various Bourbon and noisette; they have a tea-like fragrance) and a hybrid perpetual (origins not known; these are hardy, vigorous roses with large, fragrant blooms). Named – and claimed with utmost national pride – ‘La France’, it was hardy, fragrant and, characterised by a single bloom per stem, was immediately adored by florists, gardeners and cut-flower consumers. Henceforth, roses were divided into ‘heirloom’ (including the gallicas, damasks, albas, centifolias and moss roses, known for their heady fragrance and large blooms; fig. 133) and ‘modern’ roses (including hybrid tea, grandiflora, floribunda, shrub, climbing and rambling roses) or ‘old’ and ‘new’ classes, in an echo of social classifications. By the 1870s, Britain had taken the lead in rose growing. In a reversal of fashion practices, when the French rose ‘Madame Ferdinand Jamin’ was imported into the US, it was renamed ‘American Beauty’ and stole the nation’s heart. However, hybridisation was not universally popular. Fashion dissent was unusual in the nineteenth century. In 1800, in Paris, it became illegal for a woman to cross dress, and the ruling extended to fancy dress in 1853. Yet, in France, writer and champion of women’s rights George Sand (born Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin), defied the rigidly defined sartorial gender distinctions and braved the law to don men’s tailored suits, with not a rose in sight. In ‘What the Flowers Say’ (1876, from Tales from a Grandmother), a short story written to inspire her grandchildren to imagine alternative worlds, Sand personifies the garden roses who don’t smell like roses and are not ‘true’ as spiteful and vain, while the ‘natural’ wild rose is shown to possess grace, gentleness and beauty.

Inspired by the ideas of John Ruskin, – anti-capitalist polymath and a visionary conservationist, who painted wild roses (fig. 134); an apricot-pink shrub rose is even named after him – the Pre-Raphaelites looked back to the medieval period for inspiration on ways to live and for aesthetic models. Ruskin and William Morris – the Arts and Crafts pioneer and social revolutionary, whose designs for wallpaper and textiles featured wild roses – were vehement critics of engineered flowers.
Frequently attached to a fan of straw. Often contain four dozen of large hybrids. Twenty-four roses are reported, ‘It has been no unusual thing at the dinners and at hand held, sometimes to dramatic effect. In 1884, Harper’s Bazaar of roses paired with ferns (see fig. 141). Fresh roses were also matching flowers and leaves in unnatural pairings such as that many of its closest rival, the wallflower.

Flowers and rooted shrubs sales provides substantive evidence that the rose was the most popular flower, selling more than twice as many as its closest rival, the wallflower. Fresh roses or buds were worn singly or clustered, usually applied in the uppermost buttonhole. Simply formed, these were often sold alongside bunched flowers by street sellers. In their study of marriage attire, dress historians Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas reported that, ‘By 1865 the “flower-hole” had gained the day and it sometimes had “a piece of broad ribbon put under the turn to hold a glass flower bottle” (West End Gazette, 1865).’

The wearing of ‘otic’ flowers such as orchids, or ‘unnaturally’ coloured flowers, such as the green carnation associated with Oscar Wilde, became indications of non-heteronormative masculinity. The Green Carnation was an 1894 novel by Robert Hichens, whose lead characters were based on Oscar Wilde and his lover Lord Alfred Douglas. Homosexuality being illegal in the UK, the book caused a scandal. Here the definition of the term ‘natural’ embraces culturally constructed, and often oppressive, perceptions.

In the 1880s, fashionable rose-themed garden parties were held at the break of day or in moonlight, when the flowers were at their most fleshy and fragrant. In winter 1884, the Vanderbuilt family – whose vast fortune was based on shipping and railways – ordered 50,000 cut roses (at $1 a stem) for their New York house-warming party for 1,000 guests. That same year, one fashion writer had observed sagely, ‘If only you have a great many flowers of a very expensive kind, you cannot go amiss in the distribution of them. Other times have loved flowers for their beauty: we value them for their muchness and their cost.’

Masculine floral adornment usually comprised a single rose or bud, as a boutonniere, also known as a favour or buttonhole, to an otherwise unremarkable outfit or tucked into the hair.

Photography revolutionised visual culture and mass communication. The first relatively cheap form of photographic portraiture was the carte de visite, introduced in 1854. Today, masses of orphan (single, without provenance) portraits survive, many of which reveal how roses interfaced with the body and comprised part of fashionable and everyday dressed appearances. They also show how, across continents, the flower was utilised as a handheld emblem, in poses often derived from painted portraiture (fig. 23). Occasionally, a photographer hand painted, in brilliant pink or red ink, a single rose (figs 20, 21) or a bunch to an otherwise ‘bowless’ portrait, or added rose blush to a woman’s cheeks. In the 1870s, larger scale, more costly cabinet cards became available, and these were succeeded by the picture postcard in around 1900.

Not dissimilarly, Pre-Raphaelite women including Christina Rossetti, June Morris and Fanny Cornforth (fig. 175) rejected the synthetic dye line invented by William Henry Perkins in 1856, which generated a vogue for unprecedentedly vibrant fashion textiles. Instead, they tended to wear anti-fashion, unstructured dresses made from fabrics dyed using natural (plant-, insect- and mineral-derived) sources, and were sometimes portrayed with wild roses in their hair.

By the 1850s, the international cut-flower trade was thriving and cultivated roses had become widely available. Whereas the sale of shrub roses was a male-dominated trade, the buying, arranging and selling of cut flowers was undertaken by women and girls described occupationally as flower girls, irrespective of their age. The most exclusive florists worked from elegant retail premises, many of which reveal how roses interfaced with the body and comprised part of fashionable and everyday dressed appearances. They also show how, across continents, the flower was utilised as a handheld emblem, in poses often derived from painted portraiture (fig. 23). Occasionally, a photographer hand painted, in brilliant pink or red ink, a single rose (figs 20, 21) or a bunch to an otherwise ‘bowless’ portrait, or added rose blush to a woman’s cheeks. In the 1870s, larger scale, more costly cabinet cards became available, and these were succeeded by the picture postcard in around 1900.

\* Henri Fantin-Latour was acclaimed for his sensitive and serious portrayal of roses. Fellow artist Jacques-Emile Blanche wrote, ‘The roses – so complicated in their design, composition and colour, in its rolls and curls, now futility like the decoration of a fashionable hat, round and smooth, now like a button or a woman’s breast – no one understood them better than Fantin (‘Fantin-Latour’). Revue de Paris, 5 May 1896, p. 87-8). A full-petalled, blush-pink, centifolia old rose was named Fantin-Latour in 1904. Art Heritage/Alamy Stock

\* Opposite: 172. Henri Fantin-Latour, Ross, 1886. Oil on canvas The French painter and lithographer Henri Fantin-Latour was acclaimed for his sensitive and serious portrayal of roses. Fellow artist Jacques-Emile Blanche wrote, ‘The roses – so complicated in their design, composition and colour, in its rolls and curls, now futility like the decoration of a fashionable hat, round and smooth, now like a button or a woman’s breast – no one understood them better than Fantin (‘Fantin-Latour’). Revue de Paris, 5 May 1896, p. 87-8). A full-petalled, blush-pink, centifolia old rose was named Fantin-Latour in 1904. Art Heritage/Alamy Stock

\* Above: 154. John Birdkin, Study of Wild Rose, 1871. Watercolour and lapis-lazuli over graphite on paper, 42.2 x 26.8cm Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

\* Rose canes, or the dog rose, may have come upon its name because it was used to treat dogs with rabies in the eighteenth century; the name may also simply be pejorative. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

\* As the most ephemeral of fashion items, fresh flower ornaments might be interpreted as the ultimate in luxury, yet the addition of a rose
Page 135

Dante Gabriel Rosetti,
Fair Rosamund, 1861.
Oil on canvas, 51.9 x 41.7cm
National Museum of Wales
The woman, portrayed as Fanny Cornworth, the artist’s lover and muse.
She wears an ‘anti-fashion’, loose, flowing dress decorated with a flower design that echoes the flower placed in her hair.
© National Museum of Wales

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Francis Grant,
Sir Daniel Gooch, 1st Bt, 1872.
Oil on canvas, 142.2 x 111.8cm
National Portrait Gallery, London
Gooch was a member of parliament and chairman of the Great Western Railway. The pink of his dog’s slathering mouth is echoed by the single delicate component of this otherwise robustly masculine portrait: a rose boutonnière, possibly worn as the national flower of England.
National Portrait Gallery, London

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The count dressed to suit his moods; his ensembles also included a pistachio suit teamed with a white waistcoat and a mauve shirt, worn with a cluster of pale violets at the throat in place of a necktie.
Hirarchivum Press/Alamy Stock Photo

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: ‘I WOULD LIKE MY ROSES TO SEE YOU’
Later, Wilde was satirised, often cruelly, for being openly homosexual at a time when it was illegal in England. In the media, Wilde was twinned with oversized or impossibly coloured ‘unnatural’ flowers. Here, he chose to be photographed wearing a rose.

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The sitter wears a large corsage of rose buds. The reverse is annotated ‘Aline B. E. Roussel, December 1885’.

Below left
141. A. B. Cornstock, woman with flower bouquets, New York, late nineteenth century. Studio-portrait cabinet card
Private collection
The sitter, probably a bride, wears a prominent rose corsage on the bodice of her lace-decorated dress and poses with multiple baskets of flowers (many of them roses) with greeting cards.

Below right
142. Seated man in studio setting, late nineteenth century. Studio-portrait cabinet card
Private collection
The sitter, probably a groom, wears a rose boutonnière and poses with a vase of flowers, baskets of flowers, books and a rolled document, possibly a certificate.

Above left
140. A. K. P. Trask, portrait of woman with corsage, Philadelphia, USA, 1885. Studio-portrait cabinet card
Private collection
The sitter wears a large corsage of rose buds. The reverse is annotated ‘Aline B. E. Roussel, December 1885’.

Below left
139. John Fergus, Largs, standing woman with rose, Scotland, mid-1880s. Studio-portrait cabinet card
Private collection
This elegant lady wears a fashionable bustled dress and clasps a rose as an emblem in her upright left hand.

Below right
138. Jabez Hughes & Mullins, Oscar Wilde, Isle of Wight, 1884. Studio-portrait cabinet card
Collection of Mary Viscountess Eccles
Later, Wilde was satirised, often cruelly, for being openly homosexual at a time when it was illegal in England. In the media, Wilde was twinned with oversized or impossibly coloured ‘unnatural’ flowers. Here, he chose to be photographed wearing a rose.
International womenswear trends were led by the Paris haute couture houses: notably Félix, Jacques Doucet, Worth, Pingat, Redfern, Lanvin and Callot Soeurs. London’s court dressmakers and tailoring firms catered for elite social life, which revolved around the court, and it was widely accepted that, on the whole, they followed Paris trends, as did New York’s dressmakers and tailors (figs 144–145). By this date the vogue for flower-decorated apparel was at its peak and the artificial flower trades in Paris, London and New York were flourishing. As the century progressed, and the means of fashion production became established, women became the focus of the new commodity culture as buyers, and sites of, fashionable dress and conspicuous consumption.  

Following the opening of Japan’s trade ports in 1854, the inter-arts, intercultural phenomenon called Japonisme created a vogue for new fashion flowers: notably, chrysanthemums, hydrangeas, irises, orchids and cherry blossom. But, as ever, the rose remained beloved. In 1876, the Millinery Trade Review reported that, ‘The object this year seems to be to use the most uncommon flowers – unless it is the rose, and it is always worn and always lovely. A coronet of thick, dark green rose leaves is very beautiful.’ 15

The following spring, Harper’s Bazaar noted the vogue for perfumed flowers in millinery and reported:

... Everywhere flowers are used: as the corsage, in front, or on the side, in the shape of a half wreath or an elongated tuft; at the belt, on the shoulders, in the hair – everywhere artificial flowers are seen. The simplest fichu, the most unassuming cravat, has at least a rose-bud encircled mignonette to finish the knot in which it is tied. ...  

Harper’s Bazaar, 1877 16

By 1860, 89 per cent of Paris-based milliners were women, who headed and managed their own businesses, each meanwhile working as premier (designer) and senior garnisseuse (responsible for applying flowers, ribbons, feathers etc.) (fig.143). Caroline Reboux, Maison Vivot Marguin Maurice, E. Gauthier, Madame Pouyanne and Maison Camille Marchais were revered internationally for hats decorated with, or seemingly composed entirely from, the most exquisite, naturalistic artificial buds, blooms and foliage. Artificial flowers are delicate and few nineteenth-century hats with artificial roses survive today (see, however, fig.143), while many museums house examples of haute couture evening gowns, with artificial flower decoration, which may only have been worn once or twice.
Charles Frederick Worth was instrumental in setting the template for today’s global fashion industry by establishing himself as an arbiter of fashion, who presented seasonal collections of his own, name-labelled designs, some of which he licensed. He conducted himself as artist and dictator of style, rather than a stylist or tradesperson who worked in conjunction with a client. His house was justly famous for, and its product distinguished by, the superlative fabrics that Worth commissioned from specialist silk weavers in Lyon, and by its profusion of exquisite trimmings, including naturalistic silk flowers. His use of roses was so lavish that Punch magazine commissioned a satirical cartoon, ‘Last Sweet Thing in Toilettes’ of a woman wearing a dress with huge applied rose leaves, a bud at each shoulder and an immense bloom as millinery (fig. 147).

Worth’s clientele included international monarchy, aristocracy, those with new industrial fortunes and the demi-monde, for whom his notoriously exorbitant prices rendered the product exclusive and all the more desirable.

Over the course of a day, a fashionable woman might wear déshabillé (a night and dressing gown set) a morning dress, an afternoon dress and a tea gown (an at-home garment that was less rigidly boned than outerwear), followed by an evening or ballgown. Evening gowns were divided into two categories, with demi toilette being slightly less formal than this gown, which was full toilette and would have been worn to attend an official dinner party, a reception, the opera or theatre, or to celebrate a rite of passage. There are several Worth afternoon, evening and ballgowns dating from the 1870s and ’80s, now housed in public collections, with designs depicting naturalistic roses with ‘thorny’ stems and leaves, and embroidered or silk rose decoration.

This arresting rose-themed evening gown, ordered from Paris, was worn by New Yorker Miss Caroline C. ‘Daisy’ Beard in 1888, when she was a débutante, and exemplifies the house métier. Many of Worth’s finest silks were ordered from Tassinari & Chatel, and it is possible that they made this remarkable brocaded silk. Each scattered rose petal is shaded in glistening copper-coloured and pale-pink threads, and the tips are slightly raised and naturalistically curled. A branch of pale-pink muslin roses with leaves trails across the waist and down the left side of the skirt. In 1890, Daisy married John H. Shults, uniting two immensely wealthy Brooklyn families (her father prospered in street and railway construction and his German-born father was proprietor of one of the largest bakeries in the world).

In 1889, one year after this dress was designed, a brilliant-pink, scented, hybrid rugosa rose was named ‘Madame Charles Frederick Worth’, after the couturier’s wife and muse, by French rose breeder Madame Veuve Schwartz.
ROSE PERSONIFICATION AND FANCY DRESS

From the 1840s, etiquette writers guided mostly women but also men, and notably those from families with ‘new’ industrial wealth, on the myriad nuanced social behaviours and appearances deemed correct by polite (‘old’, landed wealth) society. Within these, flowers – fragile, fragrant, decorative and appearances deemed correct by polite (‘old’, landed wealth) industrial wealth, on the myriad nuanced social behaviours but also men, and notably those from families with ‘new’

Industrial wealth, on the myriad nuanced social behaviours but also men, and notably those from families with ‘new’

From the 1840s, etiquette writers guided mostly women

‘The position of the neck is of importance … quite straight, it wants elegance. It is therefore generally inclined a little to one side, by a gentle and almost imperceptible movement, which gives it a softer character, and a more feminine expression.’

As the century progressed, women increasingly asserted their rights. As indeed did the flowers in Les Fleurs Animées (‘The Flower Personified’, 1847), by French caricaturist Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard, better known as J. J. Grandville. His protagonists (fig.150) pointed out that, while they provided fragrance and poetic metaphors for humankind, they were rewarded with the floriants’ knife and left to wilt on a warm breast.

Gendered female, Grandville’s flowers reclaimed the meanings bestowed upon them and were given human form, each costumed in its flower leaves, stems, bud, blooms and thorns. Unusually, in an era when the existence of lesbians was barely acknowledged, Grandville’s feminine flowers included female lovers ‘Tuberrose’ and ‘Jonquile’. Another radical social commentator, the socialist Arts and Crafts artist Walter Crane, politicised flower personification and illustrated men in flower form (fig.158). These two sources were exceptional amongst the mass of contemporaneous flower personification.

From around 1830 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, fancy dress parties and balls were immensely popular and enjoyed by children and adults in many sections of society. Costumes were made or ordered, and sometimes historical fashion was worn. Even more than fashion, fancy dress can convey – or betray – personal fantasies, aspirations, personality and social status, as well as expressing the broader culture of the time and space in which it is worn. Attending as ‘animated flowers’ was a non-controversial theme for cis-gendered women of contemporaneous flower personification.

Most desirable was a unique costume ordered from a Paris fashion house (florist costume was produced in multiples) and none more so than the creations of Worth, whose costumes reflected father and designer son Jean Philippe’s infinitely creative imaginations, vast knowledge of historical fashion and world clothing, and exceptional atelier resources. Charles dressed his most famous client, the Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III, as Marie Antoinette painted by Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun (see fig.15) – she would, of course, have held a pink rose in one hand. Fancy dress could afford men an opportunity to wear dresses that was significantly more elaborate than their daily wear and this was the one area in which the couture houses catered for men. For those with illustrious lineage, wearing ancestral dress was a solution both thrifty and status-driven. Many original eighteenth-century garments now housed in museum collections, some made from silks with rose designs, bear evidence of adaptation for fancy dress.

Opposite left
148. Museum Vuitton, Hat, France, nineteenth century. Plumed straw, silk, velvet with silk rose and leaves
The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
This hat has silk roses placed upon the crown and below the brim. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, gift of Jane Scribner. 49.102.25
Opposite right
149. Day dress, possibly USA, c.1848. Silk Satin
This rather modest daytime dress is of a style that might have befitted Charlotte Bonnivet’s fictional heroine ‘Jane Eyn’ (published 1847). It is made from a Jacquard woven silk with a subtle design of roses. The Museum of FIT, 95.971, Museum purchase
Below left
In Grandville’s narrative the eglantine disputes the universal admiration of the cultivated rose, who Grandville portrayed as the queen of flowers with a flower crown and rosebud sceptre. © NYP.
Below right
151. Miss Lillian Young, ‘Rose Garden’ illustration in Ardern Holt, Fancy Dresses Described or What to Wear to Fancy Balls, 1879. This costume illustration depicts a light-green silk-satin gown covered with green tulle and ribbons, over which roses were trailed, and rose-decorated accessories. Illustration by Miss Lillian Young.

RAVISHING – THE ROSE IN FASHION

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The directives extended to posture and movement with women ideally moving softly like flowers swaying in a gentle breeze. ‘Warning against the vulgarity of “jerkings” movements, the anonymous author of A Manual of Politeness (1842) opined, “The position of the neck is of importance ... quite straight, it wants elegance. It is therefore generally inclined a little to one side, by a gentle and almost imperceptible movement, which gives it a softer character, and a more feminine expression.”’

As the century progressed, women increasingly asserted their rights. As indeed did the flowers in Les Fleurs Animées (‘The Flower Personified’, 1847), by French caricaturist Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard, better known as J. J. Grandville. His protagonists (fig.150) pointed out that, while they provided fragrance and poetic metaphors for humankind, they were rewarded with the florist’s knife and left to wilt on a warm breast.

and bracelets formed of pink rosebuds. Alternatively, Holt suggested that ‘A fashionable evening dress trimmed with any flower and called after it, is the easiest kind of fancy costume.’

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ROSES AND RITES OF PASSAGE

During the nineteenth century, as in ancient Rome, roses were integral to the ceremonies that marked the ritualed rites of passage. Their flower and its buds decorated apparel worn by debutantes, brides and grooms (fig.142), and also the bereaved, who were laid out and photographed — Sleeping Beauty-like (fig.157) — strewn with, and sometimes holding, fresh roses. The symbolism of roses and female sexuality has been explored in the introduction to this book, and Chapter II. Here it is sufficient to recall the widely known associations between the rosebush and white fabrics and female chastity; the open flower and colour red, by contrast, connote passion and sexual consummation. In 1842, the etiquette writer cited above likened the cycle of a woman’s life to that of a rose, warning:

… She has a summer as well as a spring, an autumn and a winter. As the aspect of the earth alters with the changes of the year, so does the appearance of a woman adapt itself to the time which passes over her. Like the rose, she buds, she blooms, she fades, she dies!

… Anon, 1842

Some young girls’ first experience of a marriage ceremony involved serving as a flower girl, whose duty it was to strewn rose petals, considered symbolic of fertility and heterosexual romantic union, along the bridal path. Elite international society took part in the ceremonies that marked rites of passage. The flower women, most sentimentally by American artist Charles Courtney Curran (see fig.xx), whose depictions could not have been further from the tailcoated, bicycling Gibson Girl. Nor, indeed, from Algernon Swinburne’s erotic and masochistic ‘invert’ sexual activity and it was at this time that gay men came to be abusively referred to as ‘pansies’ or ‘blossoms’.

In the twilight of the nineteenth century, when women were occupying more active roles in public life and spaces, asserting their social and industrial rights, the divorce rate was rising and birth rates declining; there was a revival in the painting of flower women, most sentimentally by American artist Charles Courtney Curran (see fig.xx), whose depictions could not have been further from the tailcoated, bicycling Gibson Girl. Nor, indeed, from Algernon Swinburne’s erotic and masochistic ‘invert’ sexual activity and it was at this time that gay men came to be abusively referred to as ‘pansies’ or ‘blossoms’.

Where, previous analogies had been made, men and male children had been compared to vegetables and trees. By 1889, in Florence Foote’s A Mist of Flowers, however, Walter Crane illustrated four animals with bushy wild-rose male lovers (fig.158).

Swinburne’s poem comprised a prelude to the — shocking, to many — depiction of women as sexually predatory femmes fatale by the Symbolists and decadents, who argued that the purpose of art and literature was not to emulate nature, but to negate it. The decadent due Jean Floressas des Esseintes, the sole character in Joris-Karl Huysmans’ cult novel À Rebours (Against Nature, 1884), was modelled on comte Robert de Montesquieu-Ferenc (see fig.137) — a fashionable dandy aristocrat at the heart of Parisian Belle Epoque society, who grew ‘tired of artificial flowers donning a waistcoat embroidered with a design of flowers rich with symbolic meanings. One example, housed in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (musuem number T.562–1919) was worn by Mr Eeles for his wedding in 1848. It is made of white silk decorated with white silk-embroidered lilies of the valley and forget-me-nots — flowers associated with love and purity of heart. He subsequently packed it away as a souvenir and holder of deep personal memories. But not every photographic record was similarly considered to be the first Modernist poet, lamented in Les Fleurs de Mal (1855), ‘I could not find amongst such bloodless roses, A flower to match my crimson hued ideal’. Every culture has its own rituals and customs for mourning the dead, and these often incorporate roses. In ancient Greece and Rome, roses were profoundly significant to funerary rituals, often marking an untimely or premature death. The wearing of black mourning dress, which mostly impacted women, was promoted by Napoleon Bonaparte early in the century, partly to boost France’s textiles industries, and later by Queen Victoria following the death of her consort Prince Albert in 1861, whereupon it became a major industry. Styles followed fashion but fabrics were black, often matte crepe, and decoration was minimal, comprising selffabric trimmings, black artificial flowers and lace shawls (see fig.155). Jewellery was generally avoided for the first year of mourning; when it was worn it had a black matte surface. Theretofore, roses featured prominently on hair ornaments, necklaces, buttons, rings, brooches and bracelets, made from various black materials: ideally jet, but also black glass, bog oak, guada percha and vulcanite (fig.155).

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Opposite

105. Wallowers, Britain, 1860s. Embroidered silk with cotton back
Private collection
Decorated with rose flowers, meaning true love; rosebuds, signifying love in the early stages; and blue flowers (of the borage family), associated with infinite romantic longing. MRI inducting courage and making a man joyful, this vest lacks provenance but is almost certainly a ceremonial wedding garment.

Above

152. Fashion plate of a woman wearing fashionable bridal dress, in Rudolph Ackermann, Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashion and Politics, June 1816.
Engraving
This dress, the earliest British one, was made by Mrs Gill of Cork Street, in the heart of London’s elite fashion industry. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Engraving
The decadent due Jean Floressas des Esseintes, the sole character in Joris-Karl Huysmans’ cult novel À Rebours (Against Nature, 1884), was modelled on comte Robert de Montesquieu-Ferenc (see fig.137) — a fashionable dandy aristocrat at the heart of Parisian Belle Epoque society, who grew ‘tired of artificial flowers...
Thomas Ralph Spence draws together the vogue for fairy tales – such as the one titled "Little Briar Rose" – and the alchemizing of women’s long hair in popular culture.
Above left
155. Expanding mourning bangle, c. 1880. Vulcanite with moulded rose decoration. Vulcanite, made by combining and heating rubber sap with sulphur, was cheaper than jet but looked very similar. The prominent decorative rose is finely detailed. The Museum at FIT, 2019.62.1. Museum Purchase.

Below left

Above right
157. Post-mortem portrait, USA, c. 1844. Hand-colored Daguerreotype. Far from being considered macabre, photographs of the deceased at this time were considered to comprise vivid remembrances. The deceased young woman was clothed in a dress with a rose decoration, which the photographer has hand-tinted pink. © Stanley B. Burns, MD & The Burns Archive.

Opposite
158. Walter Crane, illustration for Flora’s Feast: A Masque of Flowers, 1899. Crane’s radical male wild rose lovers wear bodices of thorns, petal-like skirts and rose-hip-coloured mules, what was widely considered as fantastical has taken form in twenty-first-century social and fashion cultures.
CHAPTER VII

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

... ‘A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE’

AMY DE LA HAYE
This chapter comprises an anthology – borrowed from the Greek anthology, ‘to gather flowers’ – of work by selected international fashion designers for whom roses had special meaning, became their creative signature or were utilised in one significant design. Roses are a fashion mainstay, especially for summer, but, from 1900 to the late 1930s, during the 1950s, and from the 1980s to the ‘90s, with a few notable exceptions, rose-themed fashion expression was most bounteous, imaginative and occasionally challenging.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fashionable rose depictions were mostly naturalistic; by the twentieth century, the flower was also interpreted in more stylised guise, expressive of movements within art and design. The declaration ‘A rose is a rose is a rose’ comprises the first line of the Modernist writer and art collector Gertrude Stein’s poem ‘Sacred Emily’ (1913, published 1922, with the title an allusion to the poet Emily Dickinson). It can be interpreted as a demand to see things for what they are: the rose stripped of the mythology and symbolism with which it had become so heavily laden. Having established the narrative of roses within the contexts of rites of passage and fancy dress for the nineteenth century, relevant apparel is, here, integrated within the chronology.

Art Nouveau – an international movement within architecture, the fine and applied arts – was characterised stylistically by a ‘whiplash’ curve and the sinuous lines of plants and flowing hair. Within fashion, the style was expressed most eloquently within jewellery design (see Chapter IV): decorative metalwork, including belt buckles and buttons, some with enamelled designs, and hair combs carved from horn, all of which featured rose designs. It was within British Art Nouveau that the rose was foregrounded, expressed – unusually, within this movement – as a compact flower form by Glasgow-based Charles Rennie Mackintosh (after whom a lilac-pink English shrub rose was named in 1988), his wife Margaret Macdonald (fig.159), her sister Frances and her future husband Herbert MacNair, all talented artists and multimedia designers. The work of the ‘Glasgow Four’ was mostly focused upon buildings and interior design, but, from c.1910, their distinctive rose motif was appropriated, and further abstracted, within Art Deco design, and featured prominently within fashionable womenswear and illustration (fig.161).

Artificial roses and buds were used most profusely within early twentieth-century fashion: in the early 1900s, the Parisian haute couturier Paul Poiret (fig.164) recalled looking down in the theatre onto a sea of hats so densely floriated he likened the scene to a ‘flower garden’. From 1907, Poiret introduced a leaner, more modern fashion silhouette, which was counterbalanced by immensely wide hats, as popularised by the actress Lily Elsie, who appeared on the London stage as ‘The Merry Widow’ in an unprecedentedly wide-brimmed hat, designed by Lucile, which was much emulated (and greatly exaggerated and parodied). The new trend further increased the surface area for flower decoration.

Rose is a rose is a rose
Loveliness extreme.
Extra gaiters,
Loveliness extreme.
Sweetest ice-cream.

Gertrude Stein, ‘Sacred Emily’, 1922

This panel was hung in the ‘Rose Boudoir’ room, designed by Margaret and Charles Rennie Mackintosh for the Prima Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte Decorativa Moderna in Turin in 1902. Margaret depicted women with roses as isolated and somewhat androgynous in a vertical abstracted style.

© The Hunterian, University of Glasgow
Photographer Cecil Beaton, himself a keen gardener, recalled how his passion for fashion, photography and illustration was ignited by a pink tinted picture postcard of Lily Elsie, and later mused, ‘this goddess wrapped the whole of my adolescence in a haze of roses.’

Lucile est.1893) was the label of Lucy Christiana Sutherland, who started dressmaking from home as a divorced single mother; when she remarried in 1900 and became Lady Duff-Gordon, she continued to work from home. Tenacious, capricious and infinitely creative, by 1911 she had become the first woman to head fashion houses in London, Paris and New York (and another in Chicago). Tiny pale-pink silk rosebuds or rosebuds embroidered in fine ribbon work were her hallmark (fig.165). To present her Spring/Summer 1904 collection, Lucile filled her salon with 3,000 scented pink silk roses; at other summer shows, presented in the garden of her London house, guests were served tea seated amid planted roses. Lucile staged lavish fashion shows, presented her models as personalities (at a time when they were normally rendered anonymous) and named each of her ‘genius of emotion’, sometimes provocatively. ‘Climax’ was a blue silk-chiffon gown decorated with pink silk rosebuds for Autumn/Winter 2005; ‘Enrapture’ was a ball or opera gown of burnt-pink silk taffeta ornamented with pink-silver tissue roses. Each Maison Lucile had an incense-scented ‘Rose Room’ decorated in the French Neoclassical style, swathed in filmy fabrics and garlanded with silk roses, where clients could choose delicate, flower-sprigged and beribboned silk lingerie, tea gowns and negligees. In 1919 she launched her perfume, called La Rose.

Art Deco was an eclectic international style that can be dated c.1910–c.1925, and within which the rose was the defining flower. It was often depicted garlanded, in the style of the eighteenth century, or as evolved from the Mackintosh rose, now expressed in a near-rounded form with just a few delineated petals, sometimes surrounded by curved, partial leaf shapes.

Poiret led the fashion for ‘Orientalism’, which drew upon Persian and Turkish cultures within which the rose was foregrounded. His 1913 ensemble ‘Sorbet’ (fig.164) provides an example of his use of the Art Deco rose. Poiret’s own label featured a more naturalistic rose graphic, illustrated by Paul Iribe; it was depicted in black for his own models and in pink for authorised reproductions. Poiret founded an experimental art school called Ecole Martine (1911–23), which encouraged freedom of expression among creative working-class women and girls, who were taken to gardens and the zoo to fire their imaginations. Surviving fashion textiles designed by the students are vibrant and modern (fig.162), unhampered by historical art- and textiles-conventions. To advertise Poiret’s perfume La Rosine, presented in the garden of her London house, guests were served tea seated amid planted roses. Lucile staged lavish fashion shows, presented her models as personalities (at a time when they were normally rendered anonymous) and named each of her ‘genius of emotion’, sometimes provocatively. ‘Climax’ was a blue silk-chiffon gown decorated with pink silk rosebuds for Autumn/Winter 2005; ‘Enrapture’ was a ball or opera gown of burnt-pink silk taffeta ornamented with pink-silver tissue roses. Each Maison Lucile had an incense-scented ‘Rose Room’ decorated in the French Neoclassical style, swathed in filmy fabrics and garlanded with silk roses, where clients could choose delicate, flower-sprigged and beribboned silk lingerie, tea gowns and negligees. In 1919 she launched her perfume, called La Rose.

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Most women continued to purchase fabrics and trimmings that they made into clothes for themselves or took to a local dressmaker; styles were disseminated and adapted from those presented by the Paris fashion houses. Some women also made their own artificial flowers, working from magazine instructions and manuals. In 1912, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, there was a major strike at the American Woolen Company mills, most of whose 40,000 employees were non-unionised women and child immigrant workers. Among some 25,000 protestors were women bearing placards that read ‘We want Bread, but Roses Too!’, probably inspired by the final three lines of James Oppenheim’s political poem:

…

Bread and roses! Bread and roses!
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes; Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses.

James Oppenheim, ‘Bread and Roses’, 1911”

The international cut-flower trade continued to expand into the twentieth century and female street vendors remained the dominant point of sale. In his political satire Pygmalion (1912, adapted for the stage 1913; it was based on Paganini and Galatia by W. S. Gilbert [1871]), socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw told the story of the beautiful young cockney street ‘flower girl’, Eliza Doolittle, who, keen to train in the more prestigious environment of a flower shop, agreed to be trained to pass as a lady in fashionable society (Later adaptations of the play include the 1965 film musical My Fair Lady.)

For men, during the first half of the century, it was the boutonniere that comprised the core form of sartorial rose expression. In Marcel Prost’s À la recherche du temps perdu (‘In Search of Lost Time’, 1913–27), the aristocratic homosexual aesthete Palamède, Baron de Charlus – based on Proust’s patron, comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fézenac (see fig.137) seductively introduced additional elements. By 1922, flowers (lilac) that grew out of the ‘dead land’ – in an otherwise flowerless landscape – were evoked by T. S Eliot in his seminal Modernist poem The Waste Land (1922), in which he reflected on the harrowed psychological state of postwar society. From 1918, the fashionable silhouette evolved in two core directions: most practical and popular for day and evening was the short, linear geometric style, which reached its peak in 1926 and continued with little change until 1929; the longer, wide-skirted, historical-revival robe de style, by contrast, had petered out by c.1926. The Art Deco rose was depicted on geometric style dresses in dressing gowns, trailing over the right shoulder of a evening dress of 1926, for example (fig.163). Boet Scourie, the Paris couture house headed by Madame Sylvie Montegut and Baronne Jeanne D’Etreillié, was famous for the use of delicate fabrics including flowered laces and rose decoration. Agnes also incorporated rose designs (fig.168), as did Lanvin. In 1923, the British-born socialite Baroness de Meyer commissioned haute couturière Alice Bernard to design a golden rose costume in which she might attend one of comte Etienne de Beaumont’s lavish costume balls (fig.171).

Elite fashion in the 1930s revealed influences from multiple sources, including those that indicate a yearning for fantasy and escapism at a time of worldwide economic and political crises. In a bid to moderate their prices, couture houses made extensive use of printed textiles – the cheapest form of ornamentation – and flower designs became the height of chic. Stylistically, fashion was influenced by Modernism (which overlapped with and succeeded Art Deco), Neoclassicism, Surrealism and the Neo-Romantic vogue for mid-to-late nineteenth-century revival styles, also described as neo-Victorian, within which roses were manifest.

Betty Kirke, who studied the context and complexity of the Paris couturière Madeleine Vionnet’s innovative designs, has highlighted the significance of the rose within her work and noted that, on a trip to the United States in 1924, the designer had admired and made her exemplar the ‘American Beauty’ rose (see p.167). Vionnet was a romantic Modernist, who rationalised the use of decorative effects in adherence to the ‘truth to materials’ mantra by applying delicate appliqué roses crafted from strips of bias-cut fabric that matched each dress, rather than introducing additional elements.

More reducive, still, were the delicate pin-tucked designs of roses that decorated a 1930 evening dress (fig.168), positioned to accentuate the contours of the feminine body.

A single, prominent and finely crafted, yellow silk rose with ‘woody’ stem and leaves complements the printed rose garlands interspersed with a graphic design of classical urns on an unlabelled silk crêpe evening dress dating from c.1935 (fig.169). The placement of the rose, at the tip of the skirt godet, is unusual, as is the application of such a robust flower on silk (fig.104). The dress was possibly designed by the Paris-and London-based couturier Edward Molyneux, who designed similarly whimsical textiles and was noted for his predilection for large fashion flowers: a critic for a provincial English newspaper remarked, with reference to his Autumn/Winter 1938 collection, ‘I can’t quite agree that chrysanthemums and roses of a size to create a sensation in a horticultural show are the best things to decorate an evening dress.’ In 1935, the American paper-pattern-making company McCall offered women an opportunity to make their own flower-printed dinner gowns designed by Molyneux.

As author Jennifer Potter points out, the rose – ‘virtually synonymous with bourgeois respectability’ – was a ‘natural target’ for the Surrealists, who were fascinated by dreams and sexuality. It is perhaps surprising that psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud did not make a single reference to roses in his writings.¹⁰

167. Wedding dress, USA, 1926. Silk with a trapunto design of roses. The Museum at FIT, New York. This dress was worn by American woman Fan Wold for her marriage to Dr. Harry J. Lowen in December 1926. This interesting, hybrid style comprises a shortened robe de style silhouette with modern, integral rose decoration. The Museum at FIT, 91.23.1. Gift of George and Ann Lowen.


In a direct affront to romantic flower symbolism, French intellectual Georges Bataille pronounced many flowers were ‘unpleasant, if not hideous’ and that even the most beautiful blooms were spoiled in their centres by hairy sexual organs.

He continued:

“Thus the interior of a rose does not at all correspond to its exterior beauty; if one tears off all the corolla’s petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft … But even more than the filth of its organs, the flower is betrayed by the fragility of its corolla: thus, far from answering the demands of human ideas, it is the sign of their failure.”

Salvador Dalí’s painting *Woman with a Head of Roses* (1935) was exhibited at The International Surrealist Exhibition at Burlington Galleries, London, in 1936 to mark the launch, performance artist Sheila Legge brought Dalí’s canvas ‘to life’ by posing in Trafalgar Square wearing a shredded white dress and a hood of pink roses commissioned from a Mayfair florist. In one hand she held a prosthetic leg, in the other a lamb chop. These inspired the styling of Paris-based haute couturière Elsa Schiaparelli’s ‘Tear Dress’ (1937) and ‘Lamb Cutlet’ hat (1937). A photograph of Legge appeared on the cover of the Surrealist journal *Bulletin* in September 1936 and was reworked by Dalí for a cover for *Vogue* (fig.172). Schiaparelli (who designed her own single rose head in the ‘50s, see fig.174) also collaborated directly with Dalí and Jean Cocteau; the latter designed ‘Les Deux Visage’ – an illusory decorative graphic showing two face profiles with rosebud lips, which combined to create the silhouette of a roses-topped vase – embroidered onto the back of an evening coat for Autumn/Winter 1937 (fig.173).

In 1937, Cecil Beaton hosted a fête champêtre at the Georgian manor house Axcombe in Wiltshire. A talented costume designer, he donned a surreal rabbit mask and a cream-coloured corduroy jacket decorated with pink muslin roses, clumps of green wool and fake broken egg shells, some with plastic egg content (fig.175).

When the Nazis occupied Paris in June 1940, communications from the fashion French capital were halted; some of the haute couture houses closed, but many remained open to serve the wives and girlfriends of the invading forces, collaborators and wartime profiteers. Designers in London and New York continued to conduct business without Parisian design direction and working within wartime materials restrictions, from which hats were exempt (see fig.180). Mainbocher (Main Rousseau Bocher) started his career in Paris before moving to New York, where, in 1943, he designed a black silk cocktail apron with artificial pink rose decoration and, the following year, a detachable black lace peplum with a posy of pink silk roses and marguerite daisies, with glamour belt in silk satin with beaded and artificial flower decoration (fig.178); such a concentrated decorative could ‘lift’ an existing or otherwise plain dress.
Christian Dior was fashion’s floriculturist of the mid-twentieth century. The history of his inaugural 1947 ‘Corolla’ collection – described by the press as the ‘New Look’, though the name technically refers to the whorling head of flower petals – with its narrow torso, nipped-in waist and immense, flower-like skirts, has been extensively documented, as has the designer’s statement that he designed for ‘flower-like’ women. Dior was born in Normandy, the son of a wealthy fertiliser manufacturer, and from childhood developed a love of flowers and gardening. Describing the development of a Spring collection he wrote, ‘pieces of material are like young shoots which ripen into a thousand flowery patterns.’

While lily of the valley was Dior’s lucky flower, he designed multiple hats with silk roses (see figs. xx, xx) and decorated daytime, cocktail and evening dresses (see fig. 183) with rose designs and flowers. During his brief tenure at the house of Dior, between 1958 and 1960, the young Yves Saint Laurent, who later also became a passionate gardener, designed a silk taffeta jeune fille (young woman’s) evening dress with a bubble skirt and single self-fabric rose-and-leaf ornament (fig. 179); it is a similar shade of pink to the ‘Paris d’Yves Saint Laurent’ rose introduced by Alain Meilland in 1994.

Certainly until the mid-1950s, Paris continued to lead international trends, and high-status designers were mostly Caucasian. Ann Cole Lowe was the first African American to become a top-level fashion designer. She came from a family of dressmakers; as a child she made fabric flowers from scraps of leftover fabric. She studied at the S. T. Taylor Design School, New York, where, due to racial segregation, she had to work in a room alone. In 1950, she opened Ann Lowe’s Gowns in Harlem, specialising in making formal eveningwear and ceremonial gowns for American socialites; she was noted for her modern, elegant debutante gowns (fig. 185) and her most famous commission was to design Jacqueline ‘Jackie’ Bouvier’s dress for her 1963 wedding to Senator J. F. Kennedy.
The mid- to late-1930s vogue for romantic, neo-Victorian revival styles is epitomised by this evening gown, designed by the Anglo-American couturier Charles James in the year he opened his Paris salon. The neo-Victorian trend was fuelled by the 1937 coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth in Britain; by the stage play "Victoria Regina", which was performed to full houses in London, Paris and New York; and by lavishly costumed Hollywood films set in the period. The sculptural silhouettes of many of James’s evening gowns have been likened to flowers, his unusual colour juxtapositions to an orchid-like palette. However, the styling and use of artificial roses on this gown is exceptional within his creative oeuvre.

Variously called ‘La Corselette’ and ‘La Sylphide’ – the latter a tribute to the 1932 ballet that ushered in a new era of Romantic dance – this 1937 design comprises a full-length, silk satin gown with an organza off-the-shoulder bodice with twisted shoestring halter-neck. A profusion of artificial roses in pink- and cream-coloured silk sit at the neckline, above a back-laced, boned and quilted, silk satin corselette that is based upon an 1860s design. This dress was ordered and worn by Miss Esme O’Brien for the season she came out as a debutante (fig.177). In March 1942 she married media mogul Robert William Sarnoff; they were divorced in 1947 and two years later she married John Hammond, a Vanderbilt descendant.

Roses were not a James signature. It is interesting that in 1984, American photographer Bruce Weber took the photograph Charles James Dress & Roses, Kent, England, showing a lustrous off-white silk satin gown, without flower decoration, with the bodice filled with multi-coloured fresh roses.

VARIOUSLY CALLED ‘LA CORSELETTE’ AND ‘LA SYLPHIDE’ – THE LATTER A TRIBUTE TO THE 1932 BALLET THAT USHERED IN A NEW ERA OF ROMANTIC DANCE – THIS 1937 DESIGN COMPRISSES A FULL-LENGTH, SILK SATIN GOWN WITH AN ORGANZA OFF-THE-SHOULDER BODICE WITH TWISTED SHOESTRING HALTER-NECK. A PROFUSION OF ARTIFICIAL ROSES IN PINK- AND CREAM-COLOURED SILK SIT AT THE NECKLINE, ABOVE A BACK-LACED, BONED AND QUILTED, SILK SATIN CORSELETTE THAT IS BASED UPON AN 1860S DESIGN. THIS DRESS WAS ORDERED AND WORN BY MISS ESME O’BRIEN FOR THE SEASON SHE CAME OUT AS A DEBUTANTE (FIG.177). IN MARCH 1942 SHE MARRIED MEDIA MOGUL ROBERT WILLIAM SARNOFF; THEY WERE DIVORCED IN 1947 AND TWO YEARS LATER SHE MARRIED JOHN HAMMOND, A VANDERBILT DESCENDANT.

‘La Corselette’ was offered in at least three other colourways. James’s friend, the society beauty and campaigner for the conservation of Georgian and Victorian buildings, Anne Parsons, Countess of Rosse, ordered it in white (now perished, private collection). The Victoria and Albert Museum in London houses a model in canary yellow with matching yellow and flesh-pink silk roses (wearer not known). And the New York department store Best & Co offered a version in pale mauve organza with fewer roses clustered on the right-side bodice. It was the latter that Cecil Beaton, whose romantic aesthetic was so ideally suited to this fashion mood, photographed for American Vogue (1 June 1937, p.49), as worn by a model posed holding a bunch of long-stemmed roses amid a shower of rose leaves.

CHARLES JAMES


Silk satin with silk roses

The Museum at FIT, New York

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New York milliners Lilly Daché (fig.187) and Sally Victor decorated hats with glorious artificial roses and created others formed like the flower, while New York designers James Galanos, Nettie Rosenstein, Pauline Trigère, Norman Norell, Geoffrey Beene and Hattie Carnegie also incorporated the rose into their collections; the latter regularly produced costume jewellery pieces in the form of roses. Los Angeles also became a hub for sportswear and relaxed elegant fashion; occasionally, Hollywood costume designers – including Adrian and Irene, both of whom included roses in their designs – turned their attention to fashion (see fig.181).

If the rose is the queen of flowers, Cristóbal Balenciaga is widely considered the fashion designer’s designer. Drawing on his Spanish heritage, the Paris-based haute couturier made extensive use of black lace, which had been worn as an emblem of Spanish national identity by the clergy and monarchy since the late eighteenth century; a cocktail ensemble from c.1963 was made using black Chantilly lace with a design of roses (fig.191). Balenciaga ordered silk roses from the Paris firm Judith Bieber and – unusually, and flatteringly – placed a single rose at the front and back armhole of sleeveless evening dresses. His dramatic and sculptural designs, including ‘Black Rose’ (1967), were immortalised by, among others, the visionary photographer Irving Penn.

The last season in which (1,400) debutantes were presented to the queen in the UK was March 1958; this was a tradition that had spanned some 200 years and was copied across much of the English-speaking world. London’s coterie of couture designers, including Victor Stiebel, Worth, Dughy Morton, Rhasin, Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies, catered for this market, but by the 1950s their industry faced pressure from the reassertion of Paris fashion leadership and a decline in clientele. This decline was partly due to competition from the cheaper model house designers, such as Susan Small (fig.184), but also reflected the tastes of the new generation of young women, who no longer wanted to dress formally or like their mothers.

**Left**

178. Mainbocher, Glamour belt decorated with artificial flowers including roses, worn with evening dress, New York, 1944. Silk satin with embroidered and artificial flower decoration. Museum of the City of New York. Gift of Mr. Robert Winthrop, 1986. 86.60.43A-C.

**Above left**


**Above right**


**Right**

Below left
The American magazine Flair became famous for its distinctive die-cut covers and inspirational graphic design. Artist Sylvia Braverman was invited to design this rose personification cover: the cut-out lifts to reveal a painted portrait of a young woman with pink roses in her hair. Balmain and Charles James designed dresses for the special issue. Flair, May 1950. Cover art by Sylvia Braverman.

Below right

Above
184. Norman Parkinson, Susan Small Evening gown British Vogue, August 1956. Anne Gunning models this evening gown with artificial rose decoration for British Vogue.

Left

Above
164. Norman Parkinson, Susan Small Evening gown British Vogue, August 1956. Anne Gunning models this evening gown with artificial rose decoration for British Vogue.
By the 1950s, New York led the trend for modern sportswear: informal, functional and comfortable separates in practical materials for a young market. Designs by Claire McCardell were instrumental for women’s wear, offering stylish wrap-and-tie, buckle- and popper-fastened garments in calico, denim, stretch jerseys and printed cottons. Designing under her own name for the Townley label from 1940, the cotton shirtwaist dress was a mainstay of her collections: an example from 1950 was made using a rose-patterned print (fig.189). Photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe photographed McCardell’s designs on young models in relaxed settings (such as at a diner or the beach). She worked primarily with Diana Vreeland, fashion editor at Harper’s Bazaar.

In 1979, Vreeland ordered a rose-print silk plush top-and-trousers suit by Valentino couture, which could be situated within a trajectory of modern luxury homewear and street style (fig.192). Roses also fed into subcultural dress – notably in ‘western’ styling, as exemplified by the fantastical designs of Russian-Jewish émigré Nudie Cohn, founder of ‘Nudie’s Rodeo Tailors, North Hollywood, California’ (est.1947; see fig.190). Nudie costumed leading country musicians including Tex Williams, Gram Parsons and Hank Williams for the stage and provided upmarket, ‘everyday’, western-styled apparel. The ‘Texas rose’ featured prominently, embroidered onto western-style suits, cowboy hats and boots. In 1957, Nudie created what was to become known as the ‘rhinestone cowboy’ look, when he was commissioned to tailor a suit for Elvis Presley; it was made from 14-carat gold lamé and tens of thousands of hand-set rhinestones. Meanwhile, loud, wide-cut, hand-painted American ties, some with a design of roses, were being donned by stylish young men, many Afro-Caribbean and Hispanic Americans, who formed part of the jazz and swing music scenes, teamed with ‘sharp’ loose-cut, tailored suits.
As a teenager, Hiram Maristany started to record everyday life in his Puerto Rican neighborhood in East Harlem, New York. An exhibition caption for his portrait Young Man with Roses (1971, fig. 193) read:

... Who are the flowers for? There are two stories. For his girlfriend, or for his mother. In East Harlem you do not walk around with roses in your hand. If you do, you are a badass. This is no joke of a man. He’s a gentle giant who wouldn’t harm a fly. I think they were for his girlfriend, but it was easier for him to say they were for his mother.

... Hiram Maristany, 2017

In spite of strides made by the civil rights movement, racism continued to be rife in mid-century America. In her ‘Letter to the Local Police’ (published 1980), June Jordan, Jamaican-American bisexual civil rights activist and teacher, used satire and the metaphor of rambling roses to highlight exclusion within communities and the politics of power. Her poem starts ‘Dear Sir’, and verses 5–6 read as follows:

“I have encountered a regular profusion of certain, Unidentified roses, growing to no discernible purpose, and according to no perceptible control, approximately one quarter mile west of the Northway, on the southern side.

To be specific, there are practically thousands of the aforementioned abiding in perpetual near riot, of wild behavior, indiscriminate coloring, and only, the Good Lord Himself can say what diverse soliciting, of promiscuous cross-fertilization.”
The new youth market in the western world could shop at new boutiques, many of which were opened by art school-trained fashion designers and offered relatively cheap, fun fashion. Disposability became a buzzword in this era, and between 1966 and 1968 there was a trend, particularly in North America, for ‘paper’ dresses (which were, in fact, made from various bonded fibres) that could be worn just two or three times. Many were brightly coloured and featured abstracted floral, striped, spotted and psychedelic designs, similar to those produced for fashion textiles. American graphic artist Harry Gordon exploited the flat surface planes (the dresses were, necessarily, simple A-line mini shift styles) and paper-like material to design a series of five ‘walking-art’ poster dresses in 1968. His black-and-white screen-printed designs, taken from blown-up photographs, included the ‘Mystic Eye’, ‘Giant Rocket’, ‘Pussy Cat’, ‘Hand’ and ‘Rose’ (fig.194).

From the 1960s, the artificial flower industries fell into steep decline: faux roses did not feed into space-age trends, hippy styles (which favoured wild flowers as an anti-war expression, not garden roses), unisex, punk, 1980s minimalism or ‘90s deconstructivism. However, there remained a small but continuous demand from milliners, even though far fewer women wore hats, and for luxurious eveningwear, bridal dress, corsages and boutonnieres. Paris designers who made lavish use of silk roses included Christian Dior, Guy Laroche, Hubert de Givenchy, Pierre Balmain, Jacques Fath, Emanuel Ungaro, Thierry Mugler (fig.204), Valentino, Nina Ricci and Christian Lacroix. Yves Saint Laurent’s scanty bridal outfit, presented at the finale of his Spring/Summer 1999 ready-to-wear show, comprised two garlands of pink silk roses with leaves, made by Paris firm Maison Lemarié (est.1880, see fig.198). Lemarié worked with feathers until 1946, when André Lemarié joined the company and introduced flowers. In 1996, the firm became a Chanel Métier d’Art, one of a group of haute couture artisanal workshops safeguarded by the house in order to preserve specialist skills.

From the 1980s, handbags became major fashion news. Lulu Guinness introduced a range of stylish flower bucket bags, including the ‘Rose Bucket’ (1993, fig.199). The designer states, ‘This design came about as I always wished I could carry my vase of roses around with me and smell the sublime scent they gave off!’ She purchased the roses from Dilkens & Derrick (est 1941, New York) and also ordered flowers from Steyer-Kunstblumen (est.1989, Germany).

London-based milliner Stephen Jones, who established his label in 1980, introduced a new attitude to hat-wearing with his stylish, sometimes radical, and supremely well-crafted headwear, which captured the attention of a new, young and edgy fashion and subcultural clientele, both male and female. He stated that, ‘For me flowers are dangerous, because they are such an obvious but trim, so I tend to use them very sparingly. I love this “Rose Royce”’ (fig.196) because it creates a rose in an abstract way. Having said all that, I do want some of my ashes to be sprayed in Queen Mary’s rose garden in Regent’s Park, because it’s one of my favourite places.’ When Jones does utilise silk roses, they are made within his atelier. Jones has collaborated with Raf Simons, Lanvin (est. xxxx) and Balenciaga (est.1919 Spain; Paris haute couture house 1937) and has designed millinery for Dior since 1996.
Popstar George O’Dowd – ‘Boy George’, lead singer of Culture Club – who was among Stephen Jones’s clients, has worn screen-printed, rose-patterned apparel designed by Sue Clowes, who juxtaposed large red roses with aeroplanes or religious imagery. Multi-patterned fabrics with roses were also a signature of brand Kenzo (est.1970), designed by Kenzo Takada. In London, flower-printed cottons were introduced for men by cutting-edge designers Paul Smith, who also made flower printed boxer shorts and swimwear, and Scott Crolla. London department store Liberty’s (est.1875) produce fine, flower-printed cottons called ‘Tana Lawn’ (introduced from c.1918); these, along with their lustrous silks (fig.47), have remained world-famous bestsellers, purchased by designers and home dressmakers.

By the 1980s, roses featured prominently in scores of international collections for men and women. In New York, designers of these collections included Halston (fig.48) and Betsey Johnson. Vivienne Westwood does not often incorporate roses into her designs, but her Spring/Summer 1991 London collection, which referenced eighteenth-century tailored menswear, featured the flower (fig.47).

In Paris, Jean Paul Gaultier designed sheer, tattoo-effect tops that included rose patterns, and sent male models for his Autumn/Winter 1998 collection down the catwalk, each with a long-stemmed fresh red rose clenched between his teeth. By the late 1980s, the mantle of fashion’s floriculturist could fairly be said to have passed to Dries Van Noten; one of the radical ‘Antwerp Six’ designers, his collections brim with flower-decorated textiles and fabric treatments. He has shown in Paris since 1993; for his Spring/Summer 1993 show he attached multiple and multicoloured long-stemmed fresh roses to cream-coloured jackets and sweaters modelled by men and women. Ann Demeulemeester, another of the Antwerp Six, often utilises a black rose graphic.

Roses were expressed at their most visionary by Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons (est.1973) and John Galliano, who variously suggested the flower by twisting, knotting and otherwise manipulating tailoring and dressmaking materials into rose-like forms; these are techniques the designers have continued to exploit into the twenty-first century. The title of Fashion’s Rosarian, however, I hand to Alexander McQueen, whose extraordinary creativity was fuelled primarily by the rose’s visceral associations and historical contexts: with blood and battle, dark romance, death and decay (figs 51, 52). His work is explored further in ‘The Twenty-First Century: Roses and Cement’.

Above:

Above left:


Opposite


Above left

Above right

Opposite
CHAPTER VIII

SCENT

... THE INWARD FRAGRANCE OF EACH OTHER’S HEARTS

COLLEEN HILL
One does not need to be a perfume connoisseur to recognise the scent of a rose. Its liberal use in modern perfumery, cosmetics, toiletries and the household goods of everyday life has familiarised us with its characteristics, and made the rose a part of our olfactory language. This ubiquity belies, however, the exalted status of the rose and its perfume across many cultures. Throughout history, rose perfumes have been variously used to anoint royalty, cleanse heretics, symbolise God, express virginity, cure ailments and flavour celebratory food; but this correlation between the scent, beauty and divinity is not fixed. Rose perfumes have also signified immortality, subversion and death. However, even the myths, uses and connotations associated with the rose are varied, shifting and at times contradictory, they demonstrate the tension that exists between the phenomenological and the culturally constructed in our olfactory preferences, as well as in our persistent, if volatile, correlation between the scent, beauty and divinity is not fixed.

For the ancient Greeks, roses were bound up with deities and fertility, was said to smell sweetly of rose, as was Eros. In Homer’s Iliad (9th century BCE), Aphrodite anoints Hector’s body with ‘sweet, ambrosial’ rose balm, so as to protect him from Achille’s dog. Greek botanist Theophrastus documented in Christian rituals. The beads of the rosary were, it has been claimed, originally made of 165 rolled and blackened rose leaves; the symbol of the Virgin Mary was the white rose; rose garlands were worn by priests on feast days; and, in the fight against heresy, forced fumigation was sometimes undertaken with rose and rosemary (as well as the more usual brimstone and sulphur). The ‘odour of sanctity’, a sweet perfume exhaled by saints upon their death, came to be symbolic of purity and sanctity in the Catholic Church: claims were made in the nineteenth century that St Thérèse of Lisieux gave off a strong scent of roses as she passed. Similarly, Padre Pio has been linked with the smell of roses since his stigmata of 1918 (see also pp.xx-xx).

The links between the white rose, the Virgin Mary, and the odour of sanctity persist and have been used as a device in literature to symbolise the struggle between purity and the forbidden, in particular, as identified by Laura Frost, in the work of modernist author James Joyce. The protagonist in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Stephen Dedalus, attempts to discipline and mortify his senses—in particular, his sense of smell—to bring his ‘unruly bodily in line’ with the will of the Catholic church. The white rose and its scent become emblematic of this struggle for sanctity. However, his sense of smell consistently betrays his endeavours, drawn as he is to the partner, and the bodily. Following a dramatic confession, Stephen kneels in the corner of the nave, where ‘his prayers ascended to heaven from his purified heart like perfume streaming upwards from a heart of white rose’. However, Stephen still cannot deny himself the smells of the carnal and the animal, and ‘reconciles himself to finding pleasure in, what the church would consider an unholy stench, emanating from human bodies, their excreta. In rejecting the pure smell of the white rose, Joyce inverts the sanctity of the flower, and performs an “olfactory revolt” via Stephen—against Catholic indiscrimination.’

In Islam, olfactory codes were also used to separate the sacred from the profane, with bodies of martyrs linked to sweet smells, and those of infidels to a foul stench. However, unlike the puritanical Christian attitude to perfume, genuine pleasure was taken in sweet smells, in particular that of the rose. In turn, it was said by the thirteenth-century Turkish poet and Sufi mystic Yunus Emre that the rose would sigh ‘Allah, Allah!’ upon being smelled. The Persian Empire, as noted by many ‘dazzled’ visitors, was resplendent with roses, the quality of which was far in excess of their European or Indian counterparts. Their rose water was prized around the world. They had an active perfume industry from the ninth century, which was still thriving at the end of the 1600s, when visiting German traveller and physician Engelbert Kaempfer noted, ‘even the roses in Persia are produced in greater abundance and with finer perfume than those in any other country, so also do those of this particular district in the vicinity of Shiraz, excel in profusion and in fragrance.’

205. Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Rose centifolia: Rosier à cent feuilles

206. Rose centifolia: Rosier à cent feuilles

Watercolour only two species of rose are regularly cultivated in modern perfumery—the Rose x damascena (pictured here) and Rose x damascena (particularly the damask rose (Rosa x damascena) named ‘Harran’).
And, far removed from its origins as an exotic aromatic beyond the ken of English chemists, ‘by the end of the sixteenth century ... rosewater, was retroactively imagined as a fully English commodity.’

This love of rose water and rose essence, particularly in the courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I of England, is detailed in Holly Dugan’s *The Ephemeral History of Perfume* (2011).

Perfume is not simply a means of enhancing, or masking, our bodily odours; it also operates as a carrier of social mores, particularly in relation to the moral standing of women. The shortcomings of women who wear strong scents has been a recurring theme in medical discourse, particularly throughout the nineteenth century, when the public were warned that, ‘The charm of perfumes, the search for “base sensations”, symptoms of a “soft, lax” education, increased nervous irritability, led to “feminism”, and encouraged debauchery.’

While previous cultures had developed codes that held certain smells to be undesirable or improper, the Victorians made the most explicit attempt to codify and inhibit our unruly sense of smell, in what Alison Booth calls ‘civilization, as narrated from the habitus of the nineteenth century bourgeois.’

Fittingly, one of the most celebrated works of Persian literature is a poem named Gulistan (‘The Rose Garden’), an ode to the rose by the poet Saadi.16

The advances in distillation made by Persian scholar Ibn Sīnā (fig.206), although beneficial to the perfume industry, were actually prompted by the medical and therapeutic benefits of the rose – theories regarding which had been in circulation since ancient Rome and Greece and on which he sought to build. Theophrastus considered ‘rose-perfume to be excellent for the ears’, and Pliny the Elder detailed 32 ailments that the rose could salve, including stomach aches, womb disorders, bowel conditions and insomnia. Amongst the ancient Greeks, Pedanius Dioscorides was hugely important as a pioneer of medical botany, with the rose essential to the remedies detailed in his *De Materia Medica*, said to be the most influential book on herbal pharmacology ever written.17

In medieval Europe, rose water was adopted in the fight against the recurring plagues that struck every few years until the end of the seventeenth century. Treated like a hand cleanser, rose water was used, in vain, alongside pomanders, vinegars and other aromatics, to prevent the spread of disease.18 Elsewhere, rose water was breaking away from its therapeutic uses to become an aesthetic indulgence, used to rinse one’s mouth in the French courts or, as detailed in the eighteenth-century novels of Nicolas-Edme Restif (Restif De La Bretonne), to ‘ceaselessly [refresh] ... feet and private parts’.19

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\[image\]

Below left

207. M. V. Dharumkar, A Moghal Style Rose Flower Sprinkler, 1909.

Welcome Collection, London

Rose water sprinklers, or gulab pash, have been in use in the Indian subcontinent since the Moghal period (1526–1857). The first of the Moghal rulers, Babur, is credited with the development of beautiful flower gardens across his empire, but the rose was his particular passion. Rose sprinklers were used to welcome guests, and also during religious and courtly rituals.

Below right

208. Women taking roses to make rose water with its petals (folio 93r), *Tacuinum Sanitatis*, fourteenth century.

The *Tacuinum Sanitatis* were health handbooks, popular in Europe from the fourteenth century. They were based upon the eleventh-century treatise on wellbeing by Ibn Butlân of Baghdad, which recommended a life in balance with nature.

\[image\]

Below left

206. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), ninth to tenth century.

Ibn Sīnā (c. 980–1037) – known in Europe by his Latinised name, Avicenna – was a Persian polymath and one of the most important philosophers and physicians of the pre-modern period. Ibn Sīnā is often credited with pioneering the art of steam distillation to extract the aromatic properties of plants and flowers, in particular the rose, from which it was claimed that he produced the first attar (although there is now evidence that this was done much earlier by another Persian physician, al-Rizi, of c. 854–925.) (Dugan 2011, p. 48; Potter 2011, p. 345)

\[image\]

Below right

207. Women taking roses to make rose water with its petals (folio 93r), *Tacuinum Sanitatis*, fourteenth century.

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PHAS/Contributor/Getty Images
Simple floral perfumes became the new feminine ideal and the perfumers of the nineteenth century attended to these strictures. Rose – along with jasmine, orange blossom, acacia, violet and tuberose – was, according to the London-based perfumer Eugene Rimmel, acceptable. Meanwhile, the Parisian perfumers Debay declared that they had ‘banished strong and intoxicating odors that are harmful to the nerves ... and offer only innocent perfumes.’

Twentieth-century articles on perfume in women’s magazines often resort to didactic typology, asking their readers what kind of woman they are and, in turn, what kind of perfume would she wear? In these articles, that was founded in mythology and calcified in nineteenth-century stereotypes is peddled as a guide to finding one’s signature scent. In a 1925 issue of Vogue, for example, the readers are asked, ‘What type of women wears rose?,’ to which the answer comes, ‘the woman who draws people to her because of the wholesomeness she radiates.’

By extension, we understand from a young age the relationship between certain types of roses, wholesomeness and appealing beauty. To this end, Mary Pickford, the Hollywood actress, took what seemed like a logical step when, as a child, she ate a rose, hoping that ‘the beauty, and the colour and the perfume would somehow get inside me.’ I, as a teenage perfume salesgirl in small-town Scotland, was so familiar with these connotations that, by the age of 15, I felt able to identify a person’s ideal scent by using my own rudimentary questionnaire.

Modern rose-based perfumes are almost always marketed as being feminine. However, men have always used and enjoyed rose scents. Theophrastus noted that rose perfume was best suited to men. During the reign of Henry VIII in England, the Tudor king capitalised on ‘a profound agricultural and technological happenstance’: the domestication of the damask rose (Rosa x damascena) and the arrival of methods to extract its powerful essence. This ‘olfactory breakthrough’, and the king’s wearing of the strong rose scent, argues Holly Dugan, ‘greatly amplified his regal presence at court, just as incense defined the invisible power of transubstantiation in the Catholic Mass.’

Napoléon Bonaparte was also well known for his love of scent, and even as he entered his most arduous campaigns, ‘he took time his time to choose rose- or violet-scented lotions gloves, and other finery.’

The periods in which men were viewed as most foolish for wearing scent have coincided with periods when scent was viewed more generally as an extravagance.

Above right 209. Helen Keller smelling a rose, 1900. At 19-months old, Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing due to illness, and for the rest of life became attuned to the power of and interplay between the senses. Keller considered her sense of smell especially important, describing it as ‘a potent wizard that transports us across a thousand miles and all the years we have lived’ but noted that ‘for some inexplicable reason the sense of smell does not hold the high position it deserves among its sisters. There is something of the fallen angel about it.’

Below right 210. Pomander in the form of a rose, Mid-nineteenth century.

Wellcome Collection, London

Pomanders are small containers filled with scented substances, popular from the late Middle Ages, which were worn to counteract bad smells and to serve as a prophylactic against disease. In keeping with the Victorian love of simple florals, this example takes the form of a stylised rose.
However, even in these moments, the perfume of rose has found a way into the masculine aesthetic. In Victorian Britain, this could be via a buttonhole, or in their snuff — sometimes scented with rose oil. The prime minister Benjamin Disraeli (in office 1868–1874–80) was known to be ‘passionately fond of flowers’ and noted in his diary that a gift of roses had ‘a perfume so exquisite [without whose] latter charm the rarest and the fairest flowers have little spell for me.’

Vogue, a magazine in an article from August 1907, ‘The Well Dressed Man’, advised on a recipe for ‘— delicious perfume and tonic after the bath’: ‘cover a pint of rose petals with a quart of alcohol, add two grains of musk and bottle. Use for a rub after the bath.’

A beautiful illustration of the tension between the feminine and the masculine rose is expressed in the poetry of Michael Field (a pseudonym used by Katharine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper). In The Grand Mogul (1894), the death of a rose is described in triumphant and masculine terms, linking the flower with notes that no one would have thought to find in a poem by a Victorian woman. Catherine Maxwell’s analysis of this verse states that The Grand Mogul ‘forges an identity of masculine command and authority fused with an underlying feminine desire, pleasure, and imaginative inspiration, this is echoed in a ghastly smell-surname, an emancipated fragrance of rose with masculine notes of tobacco, leather, brass ... that is left lingering at the poem’s close.

The smell of roses is not to everyone’s taste. In spite of, or perhaps because of, its ubiquity, there are those who find rose perfumes repellent, as is neatly summed up by E. B. White: ...

Madam reeking of the rose, Red of hair and pearl of earring, I came not to try my nose, I was there to try my hearing, Lost on me the whole daze concert. ...

E. B. White, ‘To a Perfumed Lady at the Concert’, 1932

Sometimes the reactions to rose perfume are more visceral than fickle, the blame being placed at the door of the devil. At the 1630s demon possession trials in Loudun, a small town in France, it was claimed that ‘the odour of musk roses brought on hysterical attacks among the victims and their exorcists to the vast delights of assembled spectators.’

In a more modern tale, 2001 saw a Detroit radio DJ successfully sue her employer, Infinity Broadcasting, after exposure in the workplace to the rose-heavy perfume, Trésor, caused her to ‘lose her voice, to miss work, to depend heavily on medication and ... her doctor warned that extended exposure to the fragrance could end in her death.’

Aversion to the rose’s sweet scent can also be prompted by persuasion or rebellion. Reacting against ‘the nineteenth century repression of smell’, which relegated the sense of smell to the concern of the ‘savage, ‘the acknowledgment of smell and its complex, dark and sensual effect’ can be seen in the work of Charles Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde and Joris-Karl Huysmans (see also chapters x and x).

Huysmans’ novel À Rebours (Against Nature), first published in 1884 articulates this revolution for the scent of roses and other ‘bourgeois blooms’ via the protagonist, the duc Jean Fleurant des Essentiens — a man whose ‘love of flowers’ and ‘self love of residuum, its lies had been clarified, so to speak, and purified.’ Unsurprisingly, the rose comes in for harsh criticism, singled out as one of the ‘pretentious, conventional, stupid flowers’, the type ‘whose proper place is in pots concealed inside porcelain vases painted by nice young ladies.’

While many uses of the rose and its perfume detailed in this chapter are now a distant memory, their semiotic imprint has persisted. The rose as a cultural text is a complex matter, and modernity — with its related development of perfume as industry, economy and culture — has not been able to drive out the myths that surround the rose and perfumes more generally. Instead, contemporary rose-based perfumes, and the ways in which they are advertised, are just as contradictory and fanciful as their predecessors, painting the wearers as either temptresses which they are advertised, are just as contradictory and fanciful or ingénues. The 1761 treatise on perfume

...Unsurprisingly, the rose comes in for harsh criticism, singled out as one of the ‘pretentious, conventional, stupid flowers’, the type ‘whose proper place is in pots concealed inside porcelain vases painted by nice young ladies.’
Above left
213. Jacques Boyer, Workshop where roses are sorted out for the perfume industry, Grasse, France, c. 1900.
Photograph
Originally a centre for leather tanning and, later, perfumed gloves, Grasse is now a source of the flowers, aromatics and raw materials required to sustain and develop the perfume industry in France. By the end of the nineteenth century, an estimated six tons of flowers, including roses, were being processed through the town annually (Stamelman 2006, p. 96).

Below left
Photograph
The village of El Kelaa M’Gouna, in Morocco’s ‘Valley of Roses’, marks its harvest of Rosa damascena with an annual rose festival. This is a three-day event that celebrates all aspects of the rose, from its cultivation through to its use in cosmetics, toiletries and food. Festivities culminate in the crowning of a Rose Queen, who reigns over the year’s scented crop.

Below left
Founded by the couturier Paul Poiret in 1911, Les Parfums de Rosine was a stand-alone perfume, toiletry and cosmetics company – the first established by a fashion designer. Although not all fragrances produced under this house were based on the rose, the flower was an important ingredient in many of their scents and also a recurring visual motif.
Image courtesy of Fashion Institute of Technology (SUNY) FIT Library Unit of Special Collections and College Archives.

Below right
The cover and opening pages of this in-house marketing pamphlet are dedicated to the launch of Avon’s latest perfume. It reads, ‘Roses, Roses is romance... the rush of a blush to the cheek of a woman who thinks one rose is the most romantic gesture a man can make... the caress of dew-touched petals in the bath of Cleopatra, a young Egyptian Queen.’
Courtesy of New Avon and Hagley Museum and Library.

Above left
213. Jacques Boyer, Workshop where roses are sorted out for the perfume industry, Grasse, France, c. 1900.
Photograph

Below left
Photograph

Below left

Below right

SCENT, ‘THE INWARD FRAGRANCE OF EACH OTHER’S HEART’
Une Rose is an exemplary modern rose perfume. It is a vivid, earthy and 'complete' rose, taking in the petals, the stem and the earth. The scent pairs a new Turkish rose absolute, extracted by molecular distillation by the laboratories of Mane, and wine drops (a pairing redolent of Roman banquets and the poetry of Edmund Gosse), with a base note of truffle accord (a blend of two or more fragrances, creating a new and unique odour).

Monsieur Malle explains:

Perfumer Edouard Fléchier received a challenge from a cooking magazine called La Truffe to reproduce the odor of a Perigord truffle ‘by nose’ while stripping away its garlicky smell. He did that by jotting down raw materials on paper, like an artist making a sketch. He suggested that it could be an interesting base note. This dark, woody, animal-like mix was best suited to masculine fragrances, but a paradoxical idea arose of pairing it with the most feminine of notes: the rose.

Une Rose is one of three rose-dominant perfumes produced by Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle (EDPFM), the others being Portrait of a Lady and Lipstick Rose. When asked how he would characterise the rose contained in each perfume and how – if at all – they relate to one another, M. Malle responded:

The rose plays significant roles in each perfume, but to different ends. Portrait of a Lady is a rose Oriental. The base notes are the key elements, they generate the character: patchouli, frankincense, musk, sandalwood. Damascena roses produce Turkish rose absolute and essence. It’s sourced from JFF-LMR in Isparta Turkey. The absolute smells sweet, sensual, almost honeyed, and the essence smells fresher and petal-like. Dominique Ropion [the perfumer] adds blackcurrant and clove to rose – these facets are native to some roses and contribute to the rosy effect. Its character is voluptuous and deep.

For Lipstick Rose, rose is in an accord that is reminiscent of the smell of lipstick (rose, iris, raspberry and sandal). It’s set against violet and aldehydes for a soft, vintage Hollywood glamour. The rose effect is tender, soft and powdery.

Notes
1. Maxwell 2017 discusses the ‘olfactory language of Romanticism’ and the relationship between wine and roses in ‘Perfume’ by Edmund Gosse, as well as the links of that to the work of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. She explains, 'scent that provokes dreams and wine that inspires poetry or reverie are thus Romantic precursors for the poet’s “thoughts and fancies mingled with perfume.”’ (p.58); Mane, founded in 1946 by Victor Mane, is a flavour and perfume laboratory based in Le Bar-sur-Loup, just outside Grasse, in southeastern France.

2. Edouard Fléchier is one of the most successful perfumers of his generation, responsible for some outstanding scents. These include Davidoff (Davidoff, 1984); Poison (Dior, 1985); Parfum de Peau (Montana, 1986); C’est la Vie (Christian Lacroix, 1990); Acqua di Gio (Giorgio Armani, 1993); and Michael Kors (Michael Kors, 2000). Une Rose is his very first rose.

3. From correspondence with M. Frédéric Malle, 20 November 2019. Note that the naturally occurring aroma chemicals found in rose are also found in rose geranium, which was the catalyst for Portrait of a Lady, inspired as it was by the rosy part of Geranium pour Monsieur, another EDPFM perfume.
The Osmothèque (from the Greek noun, meaning smell or scent) is the world’s largest repository of perfumes. Founded in 1990 by Jean Kerléo, it is based in Versailles and is responsible for the authentication, documentation, preservation and reproduction of more than 4,000 perfumes, 400 of which are no longer in production. It is also entitled to hold the formula of every new perfume marketed in France. Their charter prevents them from ever using any of these formulas for commercial use.

These scents demonstrate the myriad possibilities available to the perfumer when formulating scents with rose as a central ingredient. Rose perfume, in the commercial sector, is rarely made solely of rose, and blended perfumes, which are often referred to in symphonic or linguistic terms, can be harmonious or discordant, depending on the marriage of notes. All perfumes detailed here are blends, drawing upon a range of notes in their composition.

Le Parfum Idéal, Houbigant, founded in 1775, launched this perfume at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. As it is a composition of many floral notes – including rose and ylang-ylang – and some recently discovered synthetic ingredients, it was therefore difficult to pinpoint exactly which flower it smelled of. This, however, was the point, the aim being to create the perfect flower, though not one that was recognisable in nature.

La Rose Jacqueminoest, François Coty for Coty, 1906

It is said that Coty dropped a bottle of this on the counter of the Grand Magasin de Louvre, a Parisian department store, and created a furor when women wishing to buy it ran towards him (it is most likely that those women were his wife’s friends). He was promptly asked to leave the premises. By that evening, however, he had an order for 12 bottles. Named after a breed of geranium but develops into a slightly honeyed rose, with spice.

La Rose France, Paul Parquet for Houbigant, 1911

Another rose perfume based around synthetic notes. The posters for this fragrance were designed by Alphonse Mucha and the original bottle was made by crystal manufacturer Baccarat.

Rose Brumaire, René Duval for Volnay, 1922

Presented in a bottle designed by André Foltz and made by René Lalique et Cie, this perfume features Bulgarian rose and jasmine with powdery and woody notes.

Joy, Henri Alméras for Jean Patou, 1930

Renowned for being one of the most expensive perfumes in the world – it is said that 28 dozen roses and 10,600 jasmine flowers go into every ounce of extract – launching Joy one year after the Wall Street Crash and the onset of the Great Depression was a bold move. The Rose de Mai (centifolia) does not take centre stage but provides a robust core, supporting the jasmine and ylangylang alongside aldehydes, which dominate the opening.

Nahema, Jean-Paul Guerlain for Guerlain, 1979

Described as an homage to the rose, this is not a quiet expression of the flower. As the name suggests and the advertisement (fig 219) underlines, Nahema is named for the story of Scheherazade! In One Thousand and One Nights. The scent is sweet, full and lascivious, with notes of ripe peaches (which add a honeyed quality to the composition), lycacinth, ylangylang, jasmine, sandalwood, balsamic and green notes. Nahema was not a success when launched but is today considered an exemplar of rose Oriental perfumes. This fragrance is also noteworthy because it was the first time that a large amount of α-damascone (an element derived from Rosa x damascena) was used in a commercial perfume.²

Paris, Sophia Grojsman for Yves Saint Laurent, 1983

Created by Sophia Grojsman, a perfumer renowned for her rose-based creations, Paris is a bright, vibrant and youthful iteration of the flower. It contains Rose de Mai (centifolia) and Rosa x damascena, alongside violet, mimosa and bergamot, with a base of sandalwood.

Trésor, Sophia Grojsman for Lancôme, 1990

Another Rose perfume created by Sophia Grojsman, meaning treasure, is a big perfume, with notes of peaches and apricots alongside the rose, giving it a powdery, full character. Amber and sandalwood notes in the base give it a balsamic, sweet quality. This is one of the biggest-selling perfumes of all time.

Sa Majori la Rose, Christopher Sheldrake for Serge Lutens, 2000

Opens with green, fresh notes, bright fresh Moroccan rose and resinous oakmoss notes.

Till, Till, by Yves de la Minière, 2006

Till, Till, by Yves de la Minière, 2006

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Sa Majori la Rose, Christopher Sheldrake for Serge Lutens, 2000

Opens with green, fresh notes, bright fresh Moroccan rose and geranium but develops into a slightly honeyed rose, with spice.
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

ROSES AND CONCRETE

AMY DE LA HAYE
In the twenty-first century, the exquisite fragility and paradoxical beauty of the rose, with its potential to rupture and draw blood, has been harnessed by an unprecedentedly politicised global fashion industry. Fashion has a broad reach and the people working within its creative industries, their social media followers and consumers have contributed actively to the growing awareness about racism; sexism; LGBTQI rights; body, skin (colour and pigmentation) and age diversity; mental health issues; labour rights; and global sustainability. The rose remains an immensely popular tattoo design in the 2010s, a number of women who have had mastectomies have had roses inked where their breasts once were. This chapter examines fashionable rose expression within these critical contexts and explores the extraordinary innovation, imagination and craft skills of designers who have drawn upon the rose to flatter, adorn and provoke. The vogue for fresh roses on the catwalk is referenced and parallels are drawn between farmed roses and fast fashion.

A handful of artisanal flower makers continue to serve the demand for roses and rosebud decoration on hats, luxury eveningwear and wedding gowns, and their work is touched upon. In the new millennium, multiple trends continue to coexist and are available at all market levels within an industry that has become ever more global in its reach and representation and which produces collections with rose-inspired designs yearround.

Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature’s law is wrong it learned to walk with out having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.

Tupac Shakur, The Rose That Grew From Concrete, published by Pocket Books, 1991
ALEXANDER MCQUEEN: FASHION’S ROSARIO

Lee Alexander McQueen continued to interpret roses in the contexts of deathliness and decay in the new century, but he also found joy and respite in nature, especially in his own Sussex garden (see also figs 202, 203). For the ‘Sarabande’ collection of Spring/Summer 2007 (fig.222) – his most floriate collection – masses of dusty mauve tea roses, lilacs and hydrangeas, rendered in silk within McQueen’s atelier, sprung from décolletages and the fluted cuffs of hourglass silhouettes with padded hips. His ‘Flower dress’ was seemingly composed entirely of rose petals, each one individually ombré-dyed in various tea-rose, calico, powder-pink, nude and burgundy tints. For the show finale, the designer crafted a skeletal dress structure which, one hour before the show, was packed with fresh roses and hydrangeas supplied by florists Phyllida Holbeach and Heinz-Josef Brüls; subsequently, it was meticulously reassembled, flower by flower, and rendered in silk by the German firm Blumen. The models wore striking faux-rose headdresses designed by Philip Treacy: these were executed in nature’s mixed colours, on long stems, and in solid black, trailing round the neck and on to the bra-top bodices (fig.223).

In an infinitely romantic gesture, when his close friend and patron Isabella Blow took her own life, McQueen entwined their names forever by selecting a pink floribunda rose and naming it ‘Alexander’s Issie’ (introduced by Dickson Nurseries Ltd in 2009). Tragically, in 2010, he followed in her wake; his signature twinning of the skull and rose, which symbolised the fragility of life in vanitas paintings, was all too prescient. Sarah Burton, for whom the rose also holds special meaning, and a core team member, took the creative helm after the designer’s death. She recalls:...

...The rose represented something in my childhood in the North, as well. I remembered the Rose Queen ceremony from being very young, the summer street procession through villages. Young children were chosen to be the rosebud, and an older girl became the rose queen every year. The rosebud would wear white and the rose queen would wear pink or red, so there was a symbolism of colour.1...

...
Variations of dresses that resemble rose formations run through the collections. With reference to the red rose dress for Autumn/Winter 2019 (fig. 227), Burton describes how she wanted it ‘to grow from the body ... almost as if the pleats and the fabric embrace the female form on the bust and around the waist, to halo the face ... I wanted her to be a rose, but not a rose that dominated her.’ From the same collection, tailored trouser suits decorated with clusters of petals on the sleeves and peplums were described as ‘Hybrid Roses’.

Right and detail opposite
[Image 308x44 to 568x698]
Above left
225. Alexander McQueen,
Silk rose bolero and ballerina dress
embroidered with ruby-red stones,
‘Girl Who Lived in a Tree’, Paris,
Autumn/Winter 2008. This bolero is one of the most
structurally complex rose-themed garments McQueen envisaged and
has inspired many subsequent designs by the house.
FirstView

Above right
226. Alexander McQueen,
designed by Sarah Burton, ‘Roses’
knuckleduster hard-shell evening
bag, 2017. Silk satin with lace overlay and
lacquered metal knuckleduster
handle
The Museum at FIT, New York
The Museum at FIT, 2019.20.1.
Museum purchase

Opposite
227. Alexander McQueen, designed
by Sarah Burton, ‘Red Rose’ dress,
Paris, Autumn/Winter 2019. Silk taffeta
The fashion house refers to this colour
as ‘lust red’. The dress, modelled by
Anok Yai, was created by working
directly onto the body, skilfully pin-
tucking and gathering shreds of fabric
to create volume.
Credit: FirstView
ROSES AND IDENTITY

As growing numbers of people refuse to identify according to the binary male/female, and a broader spectrum of identities are recognised, there has come to be a demand for all types of fashion apparel to be offered in sizes to accommodate all bodies. Genderneutral fashion is becoming a significant growth area. Larp Achak, designer Adut Akech Oloko-Lual, working as Orange Culture, challenges traditional visions of manhood in Nigeria, a country where same-sex relationships are still criminalised. Using local textiles, he combines elements of African and Western clothing styles prescribed male or female. Today, Nigeria and Kenya are among the world’s largest exporters of roses although, as Jack Cosdy explores in his study The Culture of Flowers (1993), historically there was a general absence of flowers within African culture. Roses do not appear in Orange Culture’s designs, but fresh roses were used strategically to style ‘The Feeling’ collection (Autumn/Winter 2013; fig.229). Oloko-Lual advised, ‘The roses on the head are crowns of vulnerability! It is about exploring the idea that men need to be more in touch with their emotional side and the beauty that comes with that.’ For Spring/Summer 2019, Lagos Fashion Design Week presented collections that engage with African fashion and style.

Nihl (est.2018) is the New York label of Neil Grotzinger, whose genderneutral collections convey the designer’s preoccupations with masculinity, queerness, power and sensuality. Having worked as a womenswear embroidery designer for Marc Jacobs, Prabal Gurung and Diane von Furstenberg, Grotzinger formed his own label to combine conventionally feminine fabrics and treatments with American hypermasculine clothing tropes. He creates gender-fluid collections that combine Indian fabrics and ornamentation with western clothing silhouettes. The designer’s ‘Bollywood Bloodbath’ collection (Spring/Summer 2017) celebrated Indian culture in the UK and included sheer silk shirts embroidered with red roses and sportswear-style sequined trousers in azure blue with a design of red roses (fig.223). To protect the British exit from the EU, Galeta took his catwalk bow wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the word ‘IMMIGRANT’.

Charles Jeffrey’s LOVERBOY brand encompasses a fashion label (est.2017) and cult club night; his runway shows have revived the performativity of London’s 1980s queer club scene. The ‘Rose scribble’ print (fig.234) is characteristic of his use of bold colour and graphic designs, but the rose is not a signature. A member of his press team stated, ‘I have to say I don’t believe the rose holds a special symbolism for Charles – the design is purely an aesthetic choice in this case, an illustration of his which turned out beautifully and became a print.’

In the twenty-first century, and most notably since the 2010s, trans activists have drawn attention to the lives and rights of trans people. Writer Trace Peterson drew upon the symbolism of roses and violets (the latter associated with everlasting affection, death and rebirth) in ‘Exclusively on Venus’ (2016), a trans woman’s love poem to a cis woman: ‘Roses are born this way/ violets have a lesbian streak ... Roses are trochaic/violets have an iambic metre/ Roses are born this way/ violets have a lesbian streak;’

Prabal Gurung studied and started his fashion career working in Delhi, where he moved to New York based and worked with Donna Karan, Cynthia Rowley and Bill Blass. He presented his own label collection in New York in February 2009. His references are truly wide-ranging, drawing upon his childhood in Nepal, cross-cultural clothing traditions and migration, modern sportswear and haute couture glamour. He is preoccupied with feminism and powerful women. He regularly includes designs featuring roses in his collections (fig.230), and for the finale of his Autumn/Winter 2018 show, the models walked in silence, each carrying the white rose that has become the symbol of the #MeToo movement.

Simone Rocha, whose label was established in 2010, finds the term ‘feminist’ divisive (fig.230). As a woman designing for women, she creates ethereal feminine clothing, sometimes with a dark undertone. She often uses rose designs and sheer fabrics, which she presents in the context of female empowerment. For Autumn/Winter 2019, 1950s-style bra tops and glimpses of silk bloomers were teamed with rose-design chintz (fig.230).

Asish Gupta (Ashish, est.2005) highlights issues surrounding multiculturalism and inclusivity (he has made his work accessible by designing 10 collections for the high-street chain Topshop).

Ashish’s gender-fluid collections that combine Indian fabrics and ornamentation with western clothing silhouettes. The designer’s ‘Bollywood Bloodbath’ collection (Spring/Summer 2017) celebrated Indian culture in the UK and included sheer silk shirts embroidered with red roses and sportswear-style sequined trousers in azure blue with a design of red roses (fig.223). To protect the British exit from the EU, Gupta took his catwalk bow wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the word ‘IMMIGRANT’.
Opposite left

Opposite right
231. Nihl, lace and embroidered outfit, New York, Autumn/Winter 2019. Five different Chantilly laces are patchworked together to create the shape of a raglan-sleeved racer’s top; the trousers are made from embroidered guipure lace. The rose appliqués were cut from the lace itself and spray-painted in shades of black, bronze and silver. FirstView

Right
232. Jourdan Dunn dressed as a rose at the Met Gala to mark the opening of the exhibition Camp, New York, 2019. This costume was designed by Zac Posen, an avid gardener. It comprises 21 unique, overlapping, glossy plastic petals (each weighing 400 grams) that were 3D printed using a precision stereolithographic process (SLA) by Protolabs. The dress frame, fitted to Dunn’s body, was 3D printed in titanium using electric beam melting (EBM) technology at GE Additive. It took 730 hours of print time and 403 hours to construct. Kevin Tachman/MG19/Contributor/Getty Images
RADICAL ROSES

Textiles and fashion designer Richard Quinn encases the body — head, face, arms, legs and feet — in fabrics digitally printed with rose designs, in muted and livid colourways (fig.236). Roses supplant black rubber and leather in fetish-style face masks to create a modern rendition of the tradition of engulfment by roses (see fig.41). The juxtaposition is provocative, even surreal, yet the designer’s perspective on the rose is near universal: ‘The rose is the most traditional and timeless icon of the floral themes in fashion and the arts, as well as being an inherently British symbol. I have used it in all of my collections — it is as romantic as it is dark and mysterious.’ Quinn works in partnership with cutting-edge textiles printing firm Epson; he can customise his orders and — exceptionally — open his studio to other designers. For Spring/Summer 2020, Quinn designed a black, short-sleeved shirt with a brilliant blue-rose print. In spite of the real-world introduction of genetically engineered blue roses, the flower retains its otherworldly and decadent allure.

Jun Takahashi started his Undercover label (est.1991) selling deconstructed leather jackets and denim jeans. While retaining his edgy, street-style savvy clientele, and with the invaluable mentorship of Rei Kawakubo, he staged Undercover’s first Paris show in October 2002. Takahashi’s garments, and the way they are styled, can be simultaneously macabre and sublimely beautiful; sometimes pagan or humorous, having the ambiguity and richness of the rose. For Spring/Summer 2005, his ‘But Beautiful II’ collection of surreal, doll-like ensembles, with models walking in deconstructed tailoring and lace slip dresses, with silk-flower head dresses made by Katsuya Kamo, was redolent of Salvador Dalí’s painting ‘Woman with a Head of Roses’ (1935, see fig.172).
Roses are not a Raf Simons signature but, like Takahashi, the designer has featured them on garments including T-shirts with printed rose designs. For Spring/Summer 2014, his menswear jackets were styled with safety-pinned, fresh red rose corsages, and he has offered blue ceramic rose pendants and brooches. In 2003, he started a collaboration with art director and graphic designer Peter Saville, co-founder of Factory Records (est. 1982), reproducing his record cover graphics on apparel that has become as iconic in its own right as the original graphics. Most unusual and memorable is the record sleeve design for New Order’s Power, Corruption & Lies (1983), for which Saville reproduced Henri Fantin-Latour’s painting A Basket of Roses (1890; see fig. 133), housed in London’s National Gallery. It was a chance encounter that sparked the design decision, as Saville’s girlfriend had bought the postcard and joked about him using it in his work. In their first collaboration, Simons applied the rose design to garments including fin-tailed parkas (fig. 237), hooded sweatshirts and T-shirts.

Supreme, established by James Jebbia in 1994 in Soho, New York, quickly gained a cult following among skaters and those interested in streetwear. The brand became known for appropriating imagery from popular culture and incorporating it into designs, accompanied by the globally recognisable ‘Supreme’ box logo. For Autumn/Winter 2012, Supreme produced a range of sweaters knitted with a repeat rose pattern, and, in Autumn/Winter 2016, made thick fleece sweatshirts and Sherpa-style hats with a pattern of roses (fig. 238). Supreme produce limited-quantity ranges that, when dropped (released), generate consumer frenzy, with items resold for many times the retail price.

In London, a brand called Aries (est. 2012 by Sofia Prantera) started, like Supreme, as a skate shop. Prantera works closely with graphic designer Fergus Percell, who designed the cult Palace skateboard logo. For Spring/Summer 2019, Aries produced unisex Harrington jackets, bowling shirts (green printed on black, and black on pink), chinos (red on ecru ground), and skirts and shorts in cotton twill with an all-over ‘techno pagan rose’ print. Some of the Paris haute couture houses have also introduced sportswear: for Spring/Summer 2014, Givenchy’s rose-camouflage print was used on sweatshirts, T-shirts and backpacks, and the Valentino x Undercover collaboration for Autumn/Winter 2019 saw a design of chained red roses on trainers, T-shirts and metal-studded, high-heeled sandals.

**ROSES AND STREET STYLE**

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COMME DES GARÇONS: ‘ROSES AND BLOOD’

In November 2014 – on the centenary of the start of the First World War, and during the month in which peace was declared, four devastating years later – Comme des Garçons presented the ‘Roses and Blood’ collection for Spring/Summer 2015 (fig.240); it was one of Rei Kawakubo’s most hauntingly beautiful and disturbing to date. While the designer asserts that she does not want to overtly convey ideas and frustrations about socio-political issues within her work, her profound designs are widely interpreted within political contexts, and for this collection she uncharacteristically acknowledged references to political and religious conflicts, war and blood.

With the exception of a few black-and-white painterly splashes, fabrics and shiny resins were uniformly poppy/blood red. Garment forms were inflated and sculptural – some padded and almost intestinal in appearance – and ratteried in places, with a profusion of the designer’s signature self-fabric rose and rosette decorations, some cascading down trailing ribbons. In a very different vein, for Autumn/Winter 2016, Kawakubo imagined how punks might have looked had they lived in the eighteenth century – another period of tumultuous change – and sourced the finest silks woven with patterns of roses from Lyon to create disrupted, armour-like silhouettes and hugely inflated flower-like shapes in pink vinyl.
NOIR KEI NINOMIYA

Futuristic and fantastical, wild yet cultivated, Noir Kei Ninomiya’s *fleurs animées* march in fashion’s vanguard, expressing a new organic modernism. The formation of the fantastical garment shown here can be likened to a head-on view of an old garden rose (fig. 243), with its irregularly clustered mass of petals, or even a single petal, which contains individual cells so loosely packed that air pockets form between them. However, the designer rebuffs any notion of fragility – floral or feminine. Ninomiya’s fashion rose is subversive and armoured, in the manner of the somewhat surreal ‘Habit de Bouquetière’ (‘Attire of the flower seller’), from Nicolas Il de Larmessin’s seventeenth-century engraving series of Costumes of the Trades (Les costumes grotesques et les métiers; fig. 241). This outfit, in particular, comprises a dress-like form in two pieces made from polyester organze, padding and a sleeve with integral gloves made from a stretched satin woven from 68 per cent rayon, 30 per cent wool and 2 per cent polyurethane. Entirely conspicuous, yet masked for anonymity, the model dons insectile short black gloves that are integral to the sleeves, ankle socks and sturdy leather oxfords in order to stride through this world. This is candy floss-coloured fashionable flower personification at its most militant.

Ninomiya studied French literature at Aoyama University in Tokyo before enrolling to study fashion at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, but left once he had secured a job as pattern cutter for Comme des Garçons. In 2012, Rei Kawakubo proposed he create his own label under the Comme des Garçons umbrella. He made his Paris catwalk debut to present the Autumn/Winter 2018 collection, which, along with Spring/Summer 2019, was dedicated to floral themes. The Autumn/Winter 2019 collection, in particular, paid homage to a single flower – the rose. At this show, the scent from hundreds of fresh red roses – made into headdresses by Taka Nukui, working with flower artist and botanical sculptor Azuma Makoto – wafted through the space and the rose experience extended to the olfactory.

Ninomiya’s garments are constructed from PVC, leather, organza and polyester, and they are laser-cut, pleated, manipulated, riveted, layered, linked and inter-linked, like molecules, on to a pappeder faux-leather foundation. Structurally, their closest fashion precedent might be Paco Rabanne’s late-1960s chain-mail dresses, although it is cult designers Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler who are muses to Ninomiya. As the designer’s trade name – ‘Noir’ – makes explicit, black is the mainstay of his collections. Shown alongside this model were biker styles and dress forms constructed from black PVC rosettes, joined by outward-facing shards of corset boning – protective prickles for the modern woman.

It is indeed rare that fashion takes new forms, and here the rose has inspired this extraordinary manifestation.
Over 500 years ago, with characteristic wisdom, William Shakespeare wrote:

... At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May’s new-fangled shoes,
But like of each thing that in season grows.

William Shakespeare, Love’s Labour’s Lost, 1590.

Today, cut roses can be enjoyed by the world’s wealthiest communities 365 days a year, supplied by some of the world’s poorest people working on plantations in Ecuador, Colombia, Kenya, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Like fast fashion (cheap apparel that is worn barely a handful of times), the rose has fallen victim to standardisation, suffering from the huge demand for bunched buds with straight stems at the expense of diversity. Some sectors of the industry exploit human labour, including child workers, and use hazardous chemicals. In 2003, the International Labor Rights Forum launched its ‘Fairness in Flowers’ campaign to improve working conditions and provide labelling to identify fair-traded roses. Since the late twentieth century, it is women who have become the major consumers of cut flowers, often buying them for themselves and as gifts for other women. As we have seen, the aesthetic and spirit of the rose has long fed fashion; in the late 2010s, the rose has literally been incorporated into fashion production, as discarded branches and stems are processed to create a silky, natural (100 per cent rose-fibre) yarn. (Each autumn, bushes are cut down to make way for new growths but are not composted on the same farms to avoid the possible spread of disease.) Global sustainability and environmental damage have become a major preoccupation, especially among young people and students, who are striving to create innovative and responsible future strategies. At the time of writing, Ashleigh Chambers, a London College of Fashion student, has developed the concept for a biodegradable yarn that is fully sustainable by ensuring a local supply chain from British rose farm to spun yarn (fig.245).

Flowers are inherently ephemeral, but the central principle for sustainable fashion is to create products that consumers value and don’t want to throw away. Alabama Chanin (est.2000) is a company that subscribes to the ‘slow fashion’ movement, creating intricately worked apparel that is made in fair-trade environments with minimal environmental impact (fig.244). Stella McCartney, who established her brand in 2001, has consistently refused to use leather or fur and also campaigns for more sustainable fashion solutions. The rose-printed stretch textiles she uses for her “Adidas by Stella McCartney” sportswear collaboration are almost 70 per cent recycled.
ROSES ON THE CATWALK

For Autumn/Winter 2013, New York-based designer Thom Browne presented a sensational rose-themed tailored collection. The surreal mise en scène for the presentation, choreographed by the designer, comprised a dead forest setting within which Thom Browne-clad male models wearing crowns of thorns (associated with mockery) were tied with red-ribbon straps to metal, hospital-style beds. Models with towering beehives and painted rosebud-red lips wandered dreamily through this setting. They wore grey and monochrome tailored suits, dresses and coats in classic menswear wools; the silhouettes merged Dior's 'New Look' with American football uniforms. These were adorned with laser-cut, rose-design lace appliqué cellophane and faux roses with stand-away, trailing green stems. Thom Browne – along with Marc Jacobs, Oscar de la Renta and Ralph Lauren – is among the American fashion designer clients of fourth-generation, New York-based artificial flower-making firm M. & S. Schmalberg, established in 1916.

Erdem Moralioglu is known for his vibrant flower prints and embroideries. From the beginning, his collections have featured roses: from 2007’s rose-patterned black lace and the rose-strewn silks and velvets of 2018, to the extravagant, overblown rose prints and embroidered appliqué roses of the 2020 Spring/Summer collections. The rose is not a signature theme of Prada but, perhaps not surprisingly, the flower took centre stage in the collection 'Anatomy of Romance' for Autumn/Winter 2019 (fig.251). Miuccia Prada explored the oppositional forces – of beauty and danger, and the pain and joy of romance – for which the rose has, for so long, triumphantly stood. Silk satin and Pop Art-style painted roses and drooping silk artificial roses, in unnatural colours and black, decorated dresses, coats and separates, which were accessorised with leather combat boots. The show notes described 'The interplay between different dichotomies, between dualities of materials and approaches, natural and manmade, beholds here conveys a suggestion of two lovers meeting, two halves to one whole.' Large roses in neon pink with brilliant blue lightning flashes adorned black knits; a huge bouquet of brilliant yellow, printed roses, supplemented with yellow silk roses, decorated an otherwise understated white coat; and sheer skirts and capes were made in black lace with a rose motif.

Azuma Makoto, Tokyo-based floral artist and botanical sculptor, transformed fashion presentation with his floral ice sculptures – huge blocks of ice encasing flowers – for Dries Van Noten’s Spring/Summer 2017 show in Paris, a collection in which the designer foregrounded ‘exotic and erotic’ blooms. Over the course of his career, van Noten has increasingly used roses in prints and embroidery. With reference to his Autumn/Winter 2019 collection, ‘A rose is a rose is a rose’ (fig.248), he stated that ‘The roses were literally from the garden. We made a small video to look at, but it was really the idea of having the right feel of strangeness … Flowers can be sweet and romantic, but it had to be a vision of roses from now, not from the past.’ On the juxtaposition of brilliant, colour-saturated rose prints and grey tailoring he added, ‘For me, you have the masculine side and the extremely feminine side with the roses. The grey outfits were a balance between men and women.’ Roses shimmered on sheer, silver-grey raincoats and were printed on to dresses in inflated, life-like graphics executed in unnatural colours.

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Opposite


Below


This collection was a tribute to the film My Fair Lady (1964) about a flower seller, played by Audrey Hepburn. The trim was based on the buttonhole worn by Professor Higgins, played by Rex Harrison. The Museum at FIT, 2020.3.1. Museum purchase
In 2001, Marc Jacobs (artistic director at Louis Vuitton from 1997 to 2014) invited designer and artist Stephen Sprouse to design a graffiti graphic for ‘LV’; the neon rose, Pop Art-cum-punk-aesthetic design was created at this time but was not put into production until 2009, in a collection that paid posthumous tribute to Sprouse (fig.253). The Yoon Ahn Ambush jewellery label (est.2002), also interpreted roses through the lens of a punk aesthetic: in 2017 the range included a safety pin with rose charm and long-stemmed rose earrings in silver and gold, photographed on men and women. These were marketed as combining ‘a repurposing and representation of two key symbols of classic American punk culture’. Ahn was appointed head of Dior Homme’s jewellery and made her debut at the Spring/Summer 2019 show, which was staged against a backdrop of a huge bank of fresh pink roses.

The most exquisite artificial roses continue to be crafted by Maison Legeron (est.1727) and Lemarié (est.1880), who supply the haute couture houses and luxury brands. In the early 1970s, Bruno Légeron took over the firm his great-grandfather had acquired in 1880, when it was called Guth. In 2019, Légeron employed eight skilled flower makers. The firm makes silk roses and also works with fresh flowers. (When this author visited in May 2019, they were working on a huge order of fresh roses for Louis Vuitton.) Most of their orders are for roses, including black ones for funeral wear, and for camellias (for Chanel). Alexander McQueen both order and make roses in their own atelier and so does Stephen Jones, on the occasions he uses them, as for his ‘Limo’ hat (fig.252), which formed part of the ‘Covent Garden’ collection inspired by the film My Fair Lady (1965).

The Parisian haute couture industries remain the pinnacle of elite fashion luxury and serve a small, immensely wealthy global clientele of around 4,000 women. The coterie of houses includes Giorgio Armani Privé, Chanel, Dior, Jean Paul Gaultier, Givenchy, Iris Van Herpen, Georges Hobeika, Ziad Nakad, Elie Saab, Saint Laurent, Giambattista Valli, Valentino, Atelier Versace, Ralph & Russo, Vetements and revived houses Schiaparelli, Vivienne and Poiret. Roses remain perennially popular and are especially evident in collections by Dior, Givenchy, Valentino, Elie Saab and Giambattista Valli. Valli’s lavish, romantic gowns are decorated with rose prints, pale pink on white. Silk roses decorate one shoulder on white ruffled and frilled gowns; and gauzy tulle headdresses in palest pink are topped with bright pink silk roses.

As creative director at Dior (1996–2011), John Galliano drew on fashion-historical, as well as the house’s own archival, references. His Autumn/Winter 2007 ‘Le Bal des Artistes’ collection made reference to the lavish costume balls of the 1930s and the neo-romantic movement whose work he reveres; ensembles were inspired by and dedicated to fine artists, photographers and illustrators. A silk cocktail dress with an immense pink rose in a painted fabric clustered on one hip was dedicated to René Gruau, whose elegant, spare lines exemplified Dior’s style (fig.255). ‘Ligne Floral’ for Autumn/Winter 2010 paid homage to Dior’s love of flowers and included romantic, corseted evening gowns based on individual flowers, including a rose; the models wore tinted cellophane headdresses and had raffia-tied waists. In the show notes Galliano stated, ‘I wanted to bring a bold new bloom into the salon and let the colour, texture and structure of flowers inspire a new beauty.’ Galliano took his catwalk bow costumed as a dandy beekeeper.

The twenty-first century: blood and roses
Pierpaolo Piccioli, creative director at Valentino, has upheld the founder’s signature rose within his collections. Stating that, as a designer, it was his responsibility to reflect the times we live in, for the Spring/Summer 2019 haute couture collection, the designer reimagined Cecil Beaton’s seminal 1948 photograph of a group of models wearing Charles James’s elegant, sculptural evening gowns, recreating the image using models of colour. He also paid homage to the pioneering magazines Ebony and Jet. In a collection almost exclusively comprising evening gowns dedicated to a floral theme, Adut Akech, the face of Valentino, modelled a dramatic pink silk-satin rose ensemble comprising a hooded cape with matching long skirt (fig. 256). While uncompromisingly modern, it also evoked nineteenth-century flower personifications and Balenciaga’s black rose dress, as photographed by Irving Penn in 1967.

Over the centuries, the rose – the most ravishingly beautiful and fragrant of flowers – has become entwined variously with myths and religions, stories of travel and migration, collecting, cross-cultural influences, gardening and interior decoration, politics and shifting perceptions of identity, status, beauty and transgression. During the twenty-first century, more than ever before, fashion creatives inspired by the flower and its associated narratives have utilised the rose – fresh, faux, and in manipulated fabric form – to adorn, provoke and protest. One of the world’s oldest and most beloved of flowers has captured the zeitgeist.
‘IT WILL NEVER RAIN ROSES:

WHEN WE WANT TO HAVE MORE ROSES WE MUST PLANT MORE TREES’

GEORGE ELIOT, THE SPANISH GYPSY, 1868
Chapter II

10. Booth 1907; the festival in Tyler, Texas, has run since 1933. The Portland (Oregon) rose festival has been staged since 1907; the festival in Tyler, Texas, has run since 1933.

Chapter III

2. Smith 1997 [1787], p. 45.
5. The child garden roses, also referred to as infanta roses, are still cultivated today.
7. Ibid., p. 20.
8. Ibid., p. 144.
9. Ibid., p. 144.
11. Ibid., p. 119.

Chapter IV

7. Ibid., p. 28.

Chapter V

7. Matthews David 2010, p. 88 (quoting from Death from the Sidewalk by William Henry Heron). This is a subject of the Cuban author, Edmond Kleeck.
9. Ibid., p. 36.

Chapter VI

2. ‘[Retracted]’ to Constantin 2015, 1902, pp. 50–53.
3. Beverly Bacon’s extensive research on semiotics and the language of flowers has revealed this, and the author challenges the widespread belief that this poem was written by Louis Cottimont.”
6. For further reading on the Roman relationship with roses, and sources for the above, see Ackerman 1991, p. 56; Classen 1993, p. 175; Classen, Howes and Synnott 1994, p. 17; Classen, Howes and Synnott 1994, p. 17.
9. Ibid., p. 77.
11. Mayhew 1876, p. 194.
26. Theophrastus 1926.
27. Theophrastus 1926.
29. Cognac 1905.
32. Cognac 1905.
33. Cognac 1905.
34. This new-found discernment reflects a similar drift in Essex’s ‘Essays on art and artistic preferences, toward the work of only subtly and transformed minds.’
35. From Treatment on perfumes, Le Parfum royal de la compagnie de France 1995, p. 76.

Chapter IX

2. Ibid.
3. Aldebaran Dilek, email correspondence with author, 31 October 2019.
10. Dior 1957, p. 64.
11. Ibid.
Acknowledgements

Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion accompanies an exhibition of the same title at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York (MFIT), which is inspirationally directed by Dr Valerie Sturla; the exhibits and accessories featured are drawn from the museum’s superlative collection, of which Colleen Hill, with whom I have enjoyed working closely, is Curator of Costume and Accessories. Emma McClendon, Associate Curator of Costume, coordinated the considerable task of picture clearances for this book and liaised with the publisher. The stunning images of objects from MFIT are the results of the skills and creative eyes of Fried Dennis, Senior Curator, and Dr Anouskaphoto, with whom I have enjoyed working closely, is Associate Conservator Marjorie Jonas. Michelle McVicker, Education and Collections Assistant, helped to organise objects for research appointments and highlighted works by global designers; Tanya Melendez-Escalante, Senior Curator of Education and Public Programs, also advised on the latter and introduced me to curatorial colleagues regarding photography. Sonia Dingilson, Senior Registrar, and Jill Heminway, Associate Registrar, were instrumental in coordinating new acquisitions and objects for loan. April Calahan, Special Collections Associate at The Gladys Marcus Library at FIT, provided access and valuable direction to fashion plates and journals. I also thank Patricia Means and Elizabeth Way. It has been a privilege and a lot of fun working with this team of highly talented professionals. I thank them all for their vital contributions and for making me feel so welcome.

My own team at London College of Fashion (LCF), University of the Arts London, is based at the research centre for Fashion Curation, of which I am co-director with Professor Judith Clark. They have been variously instrumental in the successful conception of this book, I would like to acknowledge Gizely-Rose Proctor and Laura Thorndyke, who provided research and administrative support; (as ever) my friend and respected colleague Judith Clark; Dr Ben Whyman, Dr Jeffrey Hosley and Dr Marie Oliver, Senior Lecturers in Fashion, as well as the LCF Librarians, Cassandra Casaro were very generous with their knowledge and expertise. Without the support of Professor Frances Corner, former Vice Chancellor of UAL and Head of LCF, this – for me, dream project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Professor Felicity Colman, recently appointed Associate Dean of Research at LCF.

I am immensely grateful to Charlotte and Nick Knight for agreeing to my request to capture in print a conversation on roses, a shared love of which Nick and I have discussed over the years, and for providing the staggeringly beautiful images that have so greatly enhanced this book. I also offer my gratitude and respect to my esteemed co-authors for their fascinating special contributions: Professor Jonathan Fairley, Colleen Hill, Mairi MacKenzie and Geoffrey Munn. Dr Philip Sykas generously directed me to sources for nineteenth-century menswear with rose decoration that I would not have found independently.

My former MA Fashion Curation students Wen Bi and Hayley Edwars-Dujardin, respectively, undertook detailed research on roses in fashion in the 1980s and 90s and the artificial flower industry in Paris, and Susanna Shubin provided several references. Miriam Veil-Fowley worked with me on placement and undertook wide-ranging and self-directed research that was an immense help, as were the literary references provided by Caroline Nunning. Valerie D. and Peter Meredith provided specialist advice. Helen Tyas helped me with the final twenty-first-century section in which I am advised by Dr Martin Del advised on twentieth-century menswear and my son Felix Retin de la Haye provided me with research and insights into contemporary fashion.

I also thank those without whom the more contemporary component of this book would simply not have been possible: the many designers and their representatives and the many archivists and picture librarians. Many other people have also provided references, furnished introductions, shared their collections knowledge and provided support. I thank the following: Alex Antony, Charles Bondini, Ellie Brown, Elizabeth Burits, Anna Burns, Helen Canavan, Antonia Daikos, William DiGregorio, Phyllis Magidson, Jacob-Moss Marie Olivier, Adam Phillips, Riccardo Pilon, Scott Schiavone, June Swan, Kerry Taylor, Neil Taylor, Susanna Temkin, Heather Toomer, Igor Uria, Harriet Welty Rochefort and Dhilli Williams.

Finally, I have once again thoroughly enjoyed working with Yale University Press: Editorial Director of Art & Architecture Mark Eastman, who has consistently championed my various projects; Angus Bulley, assuring project manager and Managing Editor, and Marina Aserin, Production Manager. Faye Robson remains my editor of choice: she subtly but vitally enhances the writing and book content. Charlie Smith and Ben White at Charlie Smith Design have created a graphic concept that conveys so eloquently and with such elegance the juxtaposition of fashion and the rose, the beauty, and the pain.