

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Balenciaga's architectural approach stars in Paris retrospective

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By STAFF REPORTS

Kering-owned fashion label Balenciaga is putting the focus on some of its iconic shapes with a study in black.

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Taking inspiration from couturier Cristobal Balenciaga's sculptural designs, the Palais Galliera in Paris is hosting an exhibit at the Muse Bourdelle, the studio of late sculptor Antoine Bourdelle that has been turned into an art museum. "Balenciaga, l'oeuvre au noir," which translates to "Balenciaga, the work in black," showcases archival pieces in one of Mr. Balenciaga's favorite hues.

Back in black

Creating a link between sculptor and designer, Balenciaga's fashions are displayed alongside plaster casts in the Great Hall of the museum, amid the work in Bourdelle's studio and in the museum's Portzamparc contemporary wing.

Balenciaga was known for the shapes he created, from the barrel line in 1947 to the roomy sack dress in 1957. Another contribution to fashion's trajectory was the balloon, which manifested in a circular jacket and a voluminous skirt with poofs.

While others might look at black as a lack of color, Mr. Balenciaga relished in the shade's ability to morph when appearing in different textiles and textures such as lace or velvet.



Balenciaga hat next to Bourdelle sculpture; image copyright Palais Galliera

The exhibit is split into three parts: "Silhouette and Volumes," "Black and Light" and "Blacks and Colors."

This retrospective, which opened March 8, is the first exhibit in the Palais Galliera's Spanish season, which will also include a look at Spanish costumes and an exhibit on fashion designer Mariano Fortuny. Palais Galliera's Balenciaga exhibit will run through July 16.

Now in its 100th year, Balenciaga is getting the exhibit treatment in a number of fashion capitals.

London's Victoria & Albert Museum is marking the 100th anniversary since the opening of Balenciaga's first fashion house with an exhibit about the label's eponymous founder.

"Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion" will offer a look at Cristbal Balenciaga's construction, looking at how his craftsmanship and innovations influenced future fashions. The V&A has an audience with a proven interest in fashion, making this first Balenciaga exhibit staged in the country likely to draw crowds ([see story](#)).

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