

Cocktail dress
(untitled)

Cristóbal Balenciaga
1968



Cocktailkleid, 1968
Entwurf: Cristóbal Balenciaga
Herstellung: Balenciaga, Paris, FR; Abraham AG,
Zürich, CH (Stoff)
Material/Technik: Seidengazar, bedruckt, maschinen-
und handgenäht
98 x 102 cm
Donation: Cristóbal Balenciaga
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

The cocktail dress by the Spanish couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895–1972) has an appealingly playful look combined with uncompromising lines. Tailored from stiff organza, it can be seen as a sculptural testimony to 1960s party culture.

Made of organza supplied by the Swiss silk maker Abraham, the dress was presented in the February 1968 Balenciaga fashion show on Avenue George V in Paris. The invited guests sat on gilded chairs as they appraised the refined haute couture pieces. Cristóbal Balenciaga's cocktail dress with its large floral pattern features a round, collarless neckline, narrow shoulders, and a close-fitting waist that widens at the hips into a flouncy circle skirt. The tight set-in sleeves turn into a bell shape at the elbow. Seeming at first glance like a bow to pop culture, the dress actually alludes to Balenciaga's prime source of inspiration: as a devout Catholic, he was fascinated early on by clerical vestments with their rustling fabrics, bold colors, and fine materials, but also a certain bulkiness that sets them apart from everyday wear and signals their ceremonial stature.

Balenciaga made a name for himself on the Paris fashion scene

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as a provocateur against fixed notions of beauty. For example, one searches in vain among his designs for an excessive emphasis on the wasp waist, because he saw a woman's rounded belly as her most alluring curve. He also flouted the common model measurements, choosing more full-bodied women as his models, as well as those with different skin colors. The reduced formal language and bold colors of his designs still have an impact on contemporary designers today. The Museum Bellerive in Zurich put on the first museum exhibition to be devoted to Balenciaga's fashions. (Sabine Flaschberger)

<https://www.eguide.ch/en/objekt/cocktailkleid/>

museum-gestaltung.ch
eGuide.ch
eMuseum.ch