



An investigative study to style reading: The style of Cristobal Balenciaga interpreted by contemporary fashion designers

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Abstract

Aim: There is a constant recycling of old looks into the current fashion scene. The action never stops. Many working fashion designers today mine haute couture and the works of other high-end designers for inspiration. Fashion designer Cristobal Balenciaga (1895-1972), often called the "king of haute couture," is credited with several groundbreaking looks. Many extraordinary innovations in the world of fashion were gifts from his combination of technical brilliance and aesthetic taste. His contributions are timeless, and they continue to impact fashion designers everywhere. This research aims to analyze contemporary fashion designers Greth Pugh (1981) and Demna Gvasalia (1981) to determine what elements of Balenciaga's designs have been adopted by them.

Methodology: This study takes a qualitative approach. To better understand the work of modern designers, this study examines a wide range of resources, including historical masterpieces, scholarly works, photographs, fashion, museum websites, web articles, books, video documentaries, and informative videos from YouTube channels like the Met and V&A. Through systematic data collection, analysis, and observation, we can isolate the information we need for our study.

Findings: Cristobal Balenciaga's ideology has influenced contemporary designers, as evidenced by comparing their work to that of the Masters of the 1950s. All of the chosen designers have clearly absorbed Balenciaga's masterful inspiration. These two contemporary designers have taken inspiration from the conceptualization of Cristobal Balenciaga's masterpieces and have updated these ideologies to reflect the current era by fusing new technologies and concepts. Balenciaga's superiority, however, has stayed the same.

Implications/Novel Contribution: This study compares and contrasts Cristobal Balenciaga's work with modern designers to draw conclusions about how one style can be interpreted in various ways over time.

Keywords: Cristobal Balenciaga (1895-1972), Gareth pugh (1981), Demna Gvasalia (1981), Inspiration, Style reading

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INTRODUCTION

Authenticity is essential in fashion, as referenced by [Cobb, Orzada, and López-Gydosh \(2020\)](#). New concepts are always welcome in the fashion industry. Therefore, Western and non-Western fashion designers borrow from other cultures' dresses when creating their own ([Rovine, 2009](#)). During "cultural authentication," the original form undergoes a transformation. While many designers look to the past for inspiration, others are forging a new course in the fashion industry. The styles are being reinterpreted in this way.

The fashion industry can use historical clothing as proof of authenticity and a means to elevate consumers' appreciation of beauty ([Dobers & Strannegård, 2005](#)). The authors of this study recommend using credible historical and cultural data when verifying a style's legitimacy. To begin conveying this intention, we looked into Cristóbal Balenciaga, a very successful fashion designer (1895-1972). Two modern designers whose inspiration owes something to Cristóbal Balenciaga's aesthetic have been chosen for in-depth analysis. Demna Gvasalia (1981) and Gareth Pugh (1996) are the designers chosen (1981). It was discovered that there is a causal relationship between the historical dress influences of a few selected designers and the genuineness of the style they create. According to the findings, a fusion of traditional wisdom and contemporary science and technology was used. An intriguing style dynamic, "Trendy vs. Classic," has been uncovered, and it can be hypothesized now that this is the result of a mashup of classes that will become popular ([Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010](#)). In fact, this is now widely acknowledged as a significant influence on contemporary fashion.

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According to the literature, fashion designers draw upon four primary sources of inspiration: the past, the present, the future, and the marketplace (Omwami, Lahti, & Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2020). According to the Au, Taylor, and Newton (2000), "Designers who make it must be willing to adapt to new trends. They must put themselves in their client's shoes to fully grasp their interests, attitudes, and values regarding appearance, lifestyle, and profession. When it comes to fashion, consumers always go with the flow and buy into the status quo ". To a large extent, fashion is driven by feedback from customers. This is what the authors of Au et al. (2000) say: "Buying habits can be interpreted as consumers looking for a means of self-realization and artistic expression. Clothing, headwear, footwear, and other apparel and accessories are referred to in the Pozzo (2020) as "fashion." "Expressions have a volatile, fleeting quality to them. However, they may also represent the "culture's "sense of self" or "cultural identity."

Balenciaga, Cristóbal, 1895–1972. Paris, France. 20th century. Fashion designer. His insight allowed luxury fashion to enter a new era. He reimagined the grace and beauty of women's fashion by combining his mastery of tailoring techniques with artistic expressions. It was reported by Blumer (1969) that "function of fashion's underlying mechanisms and the nature of style. Styles are thought to have originated to mark out social classes. Balenciaga's vision and expertise allowed him to create designs of undeniable quality. Everything from his material choices to his lining styles to his tailoring methods to his color schemes to the formation of his silhouettes is a work of art. Insight into Cristóbal Balenciaga's meteoric rise to fame as a designer can be gained by dissecting these traits. The study is crucial for those involved in the fashion industry. The authors of Cobb et al. (2020) highlight the value of history as a source for learning from the past and gaining insight.

And they say that even though the artifacts are the end result of practice, they inspire more revision. Pinterest and Instagram users "show little evident understanding of the sensory attributes of design" (Pizarro, 2009). As fashion archiving becomes more commonplace, it is essential to develop expertise in textiles and clothing through internships or volunteer work in areas such as inventorying, acquiring, and displaying.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of historical fashion has received much attention in recent years by specialist literature. Designers study history as a research source that inspires their designs. Mearns (2020) identifies several advantages of history as a research source. The benefits are to improve the aesthetic appreciation of the concurrent people. Mearns (2020) explores that "Many respective institutions where historical dresses, collections, textiles, materials are conserved promoting them as authentic examples of historical clothing. Wang, Zhao, and Liu (2013) say that "Drawing on work that examines the role of culture as the stimulus for design," Vivienne Tam's One Belt, One Road-inspired work reflects how a Chinese-inspired culture-led fashion approach can draw upon distinctive aspects of national cultural memory in the service of fashion design practice.

History provides designers with better possibilities that can extend to fulfill customers' needs. Cobb et al. (2020) recognized history as a treasure trove of opportunity for the practice. In Moalosi, Popovic, and Hickling-Hudson (2007) view of integrating culture within product design, a central aspect of the process is that designers should strive to embody culture within the products they design. Further, they say that "distinctive aspects of craft production can influence contemporary design techniques and products in a global context and market-reach." History is often explained as the study of the past to understand the present and pave the way to the future (Cobb et al., 2020) and (Welters & Lillethun, 2020). "include any textile and or fashion topic that broadly falls under the umbrella of history." Design sourcing, inspiration, and forecasting benefit from history. Behavioral aspects of the field seek to understand human life and how change affects it. The business components are informed by a historical perspective as well. These facts are the future benefits of studying historical dresses. Cobb et al. (2020) say that historical dress research in the collection provides practice-based opportunities for the students in fashion or textile and provides service opportunities for the public. Pozzo (2020) expresses that "Fashion is considered an element of "cultural identity." At the same time, it has always been a dynamic phenomenon in which different styles, designs, and models converged, acting both as a source of attraction for designers and a source of inspiration to draw and depart from in an attempt at innovation. Influences were reciprocal, and scholars consider historic costume's potential as an interpretative medium (Twining-Ward, Malcolm-Davies, Chua, & Connelly, 2004).

People's dress demonstrates the knowledge they have developed about the world in which they live (cultural standards, technological resources available, etc.) (Cobb et al., 2020). Limited designers have studied historical data (Oberg, 2021). Poor understanding of the research resource or the inspirational source representing socio-cultural aspects of the history will affect the reliability. Historical dress inspiration on designing is limited in fashion academia. The Victorian-era inspired dress of Alexander, McQueen, and Vivienne Westwood provides an overview of how an inspiration source behaves in interpreting new meanings through new technology and materials (Breward, 2008; Choi, 2005; Craik & Peoples, 2006; Quinn, 2008; Steele, 2013). Historical clothes give collective memories. Some are offered to fashion lovers to engage with the past through developing 'dress-ups.' Dress-ups are typically constructed using modern materials and methods. Many scholars have identified that the ability of the dress-up to represent clothing from the past is poorly understood". Therefore a proper study of historical dress is suggested through the literature review. This fact is considered as a research gap in this research. Research on historical dresses and their details is limited (Oberg, 2021). Original inspirational source and the interpretations by contemporary designers, both parts should be thoroughly observed to identify how an original design aspect has extended its possibilities enough. This is poorly fulfilled in the current fashion academia, which is intended to bridge the gap from this research.

Research in historical dress and textile aims to create accounts of people, developments, and events to create a future knowledge foundation. Scholars locate evidence in the form of primary sources, evaluate the authenticity and credibility of each source, synthesize the information collected, and create an interpretation of the data that explains some aspect of past human experience. This process includes objectivity and imagination and often concludes with developing arguments formulated as "theses" (Reeves-DeArmond, Ogle, & Tremblay Jr, 2011). Balkwell and Ho (1992) suggest detailed measurements are needed to understand the concurrent socio-cultural effects on the dress. Prown (1982) suggests that "artifacts of beliefs" are embedded with morals, concepts, customs, and social norms. Through inquiry into the object, we better understand a culture or society during a specific historical point. Drawing on Jules Prown's material culture method of object analysis to investigate sensory engagement with the everyday dress. Technical drawings that allow us to research practice are initiated based on a problem or question derived from practice (Cobb et al., 2020).

CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA'S DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

The literature review aims to scrutinize Cristóbal Balenciaga's design characteristics and discusses Cristóbal Balenciaga's aesthetic value, artistic inspiration, types of collections, special shapes and innovative components, construction methods & techniques, colors, and materials selected for dresses.

Aesthetic Value

Balenciaga can identify as an avant-garde designer compared to his contemporary designers. He always produced structural-shaped garments with simple and harmonious lines (Pennington, 1995). Gilligan (2017) says that "Balenciaga used the lines, forms, and movements to create shape around the body with these he was able to shift the attention to the form and volume of a garment; "with this philosophy, he was able to produce unique designs with an architectural and sculptural approach which is opposite to his contemporaries such as Christine Dior." He changed the general attention from the bust, waist, and hips and achieved voluminousness by combining simple, harmonious lines and forms (Pennington, 1995). Balenciaga has beautifully played with geometrical and structural shapes to show the beauty of voluminous, sculptural forms, as shown in Figures 1 & 2.



Figure 1. Cocoon jacket, Cristóbal Balenciaga (1957)



Figure 2. New look, Christine Dior (1947)

Artistic Inspiration

Cristobal Balenciaga exerted considerable inspiration from culture and tradition. He was directly influenced by the many Spanish old master's works, which were drawn between 1500-1900 AD. The way he illustrated the fabrics, shapes, colors, and paintings' details led him to produce excellent masterpieces (Gerakiti, 2019). His artistic inspirations can be divided into portraits and religious paintings, and paintings of cultural events.

PORTRAITS AND RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS

The master painters such as El Greco (1541-1614), Francisco Goya (1746-1828), Diego Velazquez (1599-1660), Francisco de Zurbaran (1598-1664) achieved Balenciaga's attention. Vivid colors, textiles illustrations, and silhouettes shapes in paintings have hugely impacted Balenciaga's design. Comparison of Figures 3 and 4 is one of the examples to prove this.



Figure 3. Francisco de Goya, El cardenal don Luis María de Borbón y Vallabriga, c. 1800, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain



Figure 4. Balenciaga, Dress and jacket outfit, 1960, satin dress, satin jacket with metallic thread, sequins, and ceramic beads, 1960, Museo del Traje, Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, Spain

Paintings of cultural events

Spain has a vivid rich culture with various events. Paintings of these events have influenced Balenciaga in his design career. Flamenco dancers and bullfighting paintings have given him unique ideas, as shown in Figures 5

and 6.



Figure 5. Cocktail dress, 1955, taffeta and embroidered cotton trim, Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa, Getaria, Spain



Figure 6. Antonio María Esquivel, The Dancer Josefa Vargas 1850, Colección Duques de Alba, Palacio de las Dueñas, Sevilla, Spain

Still life paintings

Balenciaga used still-life paintings such as a bloomed flower in court paintings to add value to his designs. He used them as embroidery designs, prints, and surface decorations. It is shown that "every part of Spanish paintings have become a great inspiration to Balenciaga" (Gilligan, 2017) (Figure 7 & 8).



Figure 7. Balenciaga, Evening gown, c. 1958, silk Ikat, Colección de Inés Carvajal



Figure 8. Gabriel de la Corte, flowers in a glass vase, second half of the 17th century, Colección Gerstenmaier

Types of collections

Balenciaga had an uncommon way of presenting. One example was that he did not name his collections (Nicklas, 2013). He avoided the press and presented a limited number of designs to the most loyal customers (Pennington, 1995). His dresses can be divided into four main categories. Every collection of Balenciaga had a combination of the above categories.

Day ensembles

This category mainly includes coats, jackets, and many dresses that emphasize the tailoring skills of Balenciaga. Comfortability and beauty are achieved with tailoring (Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 9).

Cocktail dresses

The most interesting part of these dresses is the fabrics. Balenciaga used a wide range of fabrics compared to the day ensembles. Another specialty in this dress is that waist and bodice are fitted compared to the day ensembles (Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 10).

Evening dresses

This category includes the most substantial dresses of Balenciaga's designs. These dresses emphasize his cultural and historical influences (Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 11).

Wedding dresses

Most of Balenciaga's wedding dresses had a very traditional look which adds elegance with simplicity. His greatest concern was the fit of the garment (Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 12).



Figure 9. Day dress by Balenciaga 1968



Figure 10. Cocktail Dress by Balenciaga 1955



Figure 11. Evening Dress By Balenciaga 1962



Figure 12. Wedding dress By Balenciaga

Special Shapes and Innovative Components

Balenciaga did radical innovation with his excellent tailoring skills and artistic expressions. Also, he focused on the form and volume of the dress rather than the contour lines of the female body. Within his career, he introduced many innovative dresses and dress components that are unique to himself. This section can be divided

into the draped dress and tailored dress. He introduced many voluminous products through tailoring and drapery between 1950-1960. Below dress are some of the greatest innovations of Balenciaga.

Balloon dress:

is the first dress that Balenciaga innovates with the voluminous. It gives the feeling of lightness, and the whole design has two big fabric bubbles and a bow at the front neck drop. Later, this dress has come up with many versions, such as a balloon jacket and cocoon coat (Cambe, 2020) (Figure 13).

The sack dress:

this dress was introduced in 1957. It is a chemise dress that gives more freedom to its wearer. This dress has made a benchmark on women's fashion due to its freedom and fluid look (Cambe, 2020) (Figure 14).

The cocoon coat:

this dress has another name called barrel line dress. This dress's soft and curvy lines have given the freedom from the tight-fitted look and a new interpretation of a feminine dress (Cambe, 2020; Gilligan, 2017), (Figure 15).

The baby doll dress:

was a very revolutionary dress from Balenciaga. It does not include any corset or boning hanging on the shoulders to make a triangular form. This dress was introduced in 1958, and this dress can be mentioned as a forecast of the change of direction of fashion that occurred in 1960 (Cambe, 2020) (Figure 16).

Bracelet sleeves:

Balenciaga was mostly fascinated by the bold bracelet sleeves. He used them to give more beauty to the client by allowing them to show the jewelry (Zhu, 2015), (Figure 17).

Collar types:

same as the sleeve Balenciaga had designed the collars by concerning the showcasing jewelry of its wearer. He always tried to free or place away from the collar bone through his designs to achieve the above target (Charleston, 2004; Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 18).



Figure 13. Baloon Dress by Balenciaga



Figure 14. Sack dress by Balenciaga



Figure 15. Cocoon coat by Balenciaga



Figure 16. Baby doll Dress by Balenciaga



Figure 17. Bracelet Sleeves by Balenciaga



Figure 18. Womens evening dress with jacket by Balenciaga

Construction Methods & Techniques

Balenciaga was very loyal and devoted to his customers. His priority was to give the comfortability and the wearability of its user. He chose the fabric and made the design either tailoring or draped. Most of his dress was made underpinning a corset and boning or ties with the stripes. These underpinnings have two major intentions

(Mille, n.d.). To keep the desired shape of the garment he used tied knots as the underpinnings to achieve the expected form of the designs. This shows the technical brilliance of Balenciaga. Figure 19 consists of many images that explain his technical excellence.

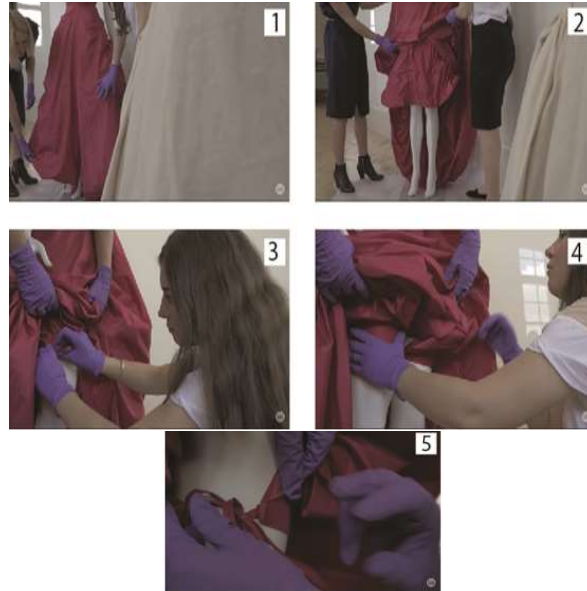


Figure 19. Learning from 'The Master': Balenciaga deconstructed

Moreover, He gave more comfortability and achieved the perfect fit. Even though Balenciaga's dresses look simple and superficial, they include a complex structure that supports achieving perfect fit and comfortability. These types of underpinnings can include corsets, boning, or both methods (Fabrickated, 2017; Nicklas, 2013) (Figure 20).



Figure 20. Silk taffeta evening dress, Cristóbal Balenciaga, 1955, and X ray of the dress

Colors and Materials

Colors and materials play a very important part in the design. One of the biggest secrets of Balenciaga is the balance between these two parameters. Balenciaga's color choices show an exotic taste that he mostly used earthy colors, shades of Gray, purple (Mille, n.d.). The most prominent color of his designs is black. He tried to use one or two colors in a garment. With this theory, he was able to get attention to the silhouette of the design rather than the textiles shown in bubble dresses and cocoon coats. Spanish paintings have greatly influenced the color usage of Balenciaga's works. Sometimes he has used the color of a painting directly into the garment (Gerakiti, 2019) (Figure 21 & 22). Balenciaga used heavy and bold fabrics; silk gazer is one of his greatest fabric inventions (Charleston, 2004). He had an amazing ability to understand the fabric properties and innovatively use them; this

skill of Balenciaga is second only to his tailoring knowledge. Balenciaga preferred to work more with stiff fabrics because it was very helpful to achieve a sculptural look.



Figure 21. El Greco, The annunciation, c. 1576, oil on canvas, © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain



Figure 22. Balenciaga, evening gown, 1968, silk organza, Colección de Dominique Sirop, Paris

Balenciaga's masterpieces have a great technical and aesthetic foundation, and the specialty of Balenciaga's designs can be suggested into the points as below,

1. Change the normal order of the beauty (ignoring hip, waist, or bust) and give an abstract look.
2. Taking inspiration from history (rich intensive resource)
3. Excellent tailoring skills (the backbone of Fashion designing)
4. Master in material handling.
5. Own color language.

Because of the above characteristics, Balenciaga's dresses were vogue among contemporary designers who played a huge role in changing the fashion world's direction. The silhouette and shapes have become the basic inspiration for them, and they have used different techniques and materials with more stylish features to convert the "Balenciaga's look" into their vision and taste.

METHODOLOGY

The research is a qualitative approach. This research investigates how the style of Cristóbal Balenciaga's style exerted inspiration over contemporary fashion designers. Cristóbal Balenciaga's fashion characteristics were compared with selected contemporary two designers' works. The qualitative approach is an effort to understand the situation in its uniqueness as part of a particular context and interactions. This research is carried out by investigating masterpieces of the designers, the scholar's works, photographs, fashion, museum websites and web articles, books, video documentaries as well as informative videos from the YouTube channels such as Met and V&A and a few runway shows have watched (Balenciaga Fall winter 16, Gareth Pugh A/W 17) to get more understanding about the contemporary designers' work. Also, Google Arts and Culture were referred to gather more data about selected dresses. Qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive (words and pictures convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon (Merriam et al., 2002). All the gathered information is from secondary sources. Relevant information is gathered and analyzed systematically and observed to filter the relevant data for the research.

Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that the research has chosen to investigate the different components of the study coherently and logically, ensuring that the research will effectively address the research objective. Research design is directed to explore the steps of the research as well.

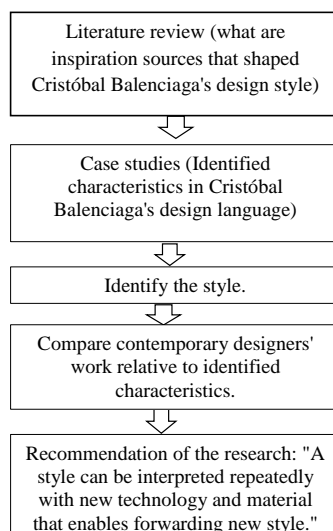


Figure 23. Research design

The literature review explored inspiration sources that shaped Cristóbal Balenciaga's style. The literature review cleared that resource-intensive of the selected inspiration source is key in scrutinizing an innovation. The literature review showed that Cristóbal Balenciaga studied the selected inspiration source's design elements (color/shape/line/silhouette/texture). The literature review summarized the characteristics of his style or concept. Then, observe some selected masterpieces to analyze identified characteristics over his original designs. This is a comparative analysis to realize the reliability of data found through case studies. Selected dresses were categorized according to the following points.

- Avant grade silhouettes ideas
- New style lines that ignore traditional style lining
- Dresses that showcase color principles.
- Materials that explore textures particular to the style.
- Styles show master pattern cutting and construction techniques.

Materials, colors, construction method, and design features were explored, and found data were cross-checked

with visual data such as images and videos to understand the selected dresses better. Scholar's research articles, books, and reviews gave insight into the subject. Found data gave a thorough understanding of different versions of the selected dress. Five characteristics were identified after analysis. The last step was about exploring the contemporary designer's works. Two designers were selected for the research. Those designers are Demna Gvasalia (1981- present), Gareth Pugh(1981-present). Demna Gvasalia the current creative director of Balenciaga Brand. Fashion scholar [Pistilli \(2018\)](#) identified him as a person who has reinterpreted the Balenciaga Brand and kept the house heritage. Gareth Pugh is a designer who takes a sculptural approach to his avant-garde designs. He has been mentioned in many articles and scholarly works with the name of Balenciaga as a designer who takes direct influences from Cristóbal Balenciaga.

Data were collected through observations and document analysis. These data were indicatively analyzed to identify the recurring patterns or common themes that cut across the idea. A rich descriptive account of the findings was presented and discussed, using references to the literature that formed the study in the first place ([Merriam et al., 2002](#)). First, Information about Balenciaga was gathered. The types of collections, special shapes, innovative components, construction methods & techniques, colors, and materials were observed and recorded. According to scrutinized characteristics, dresses were selected to study further. After researching through scholars' works, journals, and magazines about the contemporary usage of Balenciaga's ideology, two designers who directly took inspiration from Balenciaga were selected. Contemporary case studies were mainly based on photographs, videos, documentaries, web articles, and scholarly works. More focus is given to the visual data. Different views of the dresses are observed to get more reliable information. Data analysis is essentially an inductive strategy where one begins with a unit of data (any meaningful word, phrase, narrative) and compares it to another unit of data while looking for a common pattern across the data. These patterns are given names (codes) and are refined and adjusted as the analysis proceeds ([Merriam et al., 2002](#)). Data were coded for descriptive labels and categorized according to found characteristics.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Cristobal Balenciaga's Balloon Dress

Balloon dress is the first dress that Balenciaga played with voluminous. It is an evening dress that has a midway cape (Persson, 2020). This dress was presented to the public in 1950. It is said that this gown was light weighted and gave the impression of two clouds. This dress was opposite to Christine Dior's new look by avoiding body contour lines ([Cambe, 2020](#)), which has taken the crowd's attention due to its unique aesthetic (Figure 13).

The total look of this dress can be divided into three main parts.

1. The bow is attached to the front neck drop.
2. Upper sphere (mid-way cape)
3. Lower sphere (dress to ankle) ([Pennington, 1995](#))

The most interesting part is the two spheres of the dress; it is made by giving more fabric to get more voluminous. The bow has been used as a decorative element. This dress was made by the thin taffeta fabric, which is light in weight ([Cambe, 2020](#); [Museum, 2017](#)). This quality of the fabric has improved the voluminous filled look of the dress, and the lightness of the fabric has improved the comfortability of the dress and also its construction. Because heavyweight fabrics will increase the weight, it may give discomfort to its wearer. The quality of fabric helps to reduce the bulkiness that can occur when constructing the two spheres of the dress.

Colour has played a very important role in this dress. Balenciaga has used a black taffeta to construct this dress ([Cambe, 2020](#)). By using this one simple color, he drew attention to the form of the dress, to the spheres. The beauty of the natural lines of spheres that occurred with gravity and construction can be examined without any distraction because of the color black, and at the same time, it gives a glamorous look to the dress, which is unique to itself also usage of color black can be identified as influence from Spanish culture. According to fashion scholar, [Gerakiti \(2019\)](#) Balenciaga had a great influence from 16th & 17th Century Spanish court paintings, which depict deep black dressed women ([Gerakiti, 2019](#)). Therefore, this influence can be one reason to use black color to the dress. He used black to get the same holy look of court paintings that fascinated Balenciaga's mind. The basic concept of the dress is a bubble or balloon look. The primary idea of this dress has avoided the women's figure. This dress is called a wearable sculpture. Interestingly, the wearer's body type has been ignored, and beauty has

been found outside the body contour lines. The wearer of the dress will have a separate exotic beauty with the body movements.

Balloon Jacket

The balloon jacket was introduced in 1953. This jacket has the same concept of a bubbled look. This jacket can be mentioned as an extended version of a balloon dress (Cambe, 2020). This jacket has been introduced with a black wool dress that is semi-fitted to the body (Persson, 2020). The dress has helped emphasize the jacket through its color, and the body hugs nature. This sleeveless jacket is made with black dotted white cotton. It fits the body in a hip bone with a band, and the jacket's top is loose. The collar is a stand collar, and it has no fastening. There are three button fastening points in the center front one. Jacket and all of them are buttons (Persson, 2020). The jacket gathered along the shoulder has helped to achieve the expected volume. The bottom of the jacket is fitted to the body with hipbone, and the upper panel has attached to the hipbone band with fewer gathers compared to the shoulder, which gives a baggy look that helps to keep the sphere or the balloon look of the basic idea that Balenciaga generated in balloon dress as shown in Figure 24.

Fashion scholar Cambe (2020) says that a balloon jacket can be identified as a "prototype of today's puffer jacket". The balloon jacket and the wool dress are separated clearly at the hipbone with a band in this garment. According to fashion scholar Gerakiti (2019), "Balenciaga's inclination for separating a flowing shape with a strong line" can be identified as influenced by Francisco Goya's painting. This Garment also witnesses the strong influence of Spanish art on Balenciaga's mind. According to the above data, the dress's fundamental characteristics can be listed below.

1. Abstract and sculptural look (bubble look).
2. Excluding common body contour lines of a woman's figure.
3. Minimal usage of color to emphasize the form of the garment.

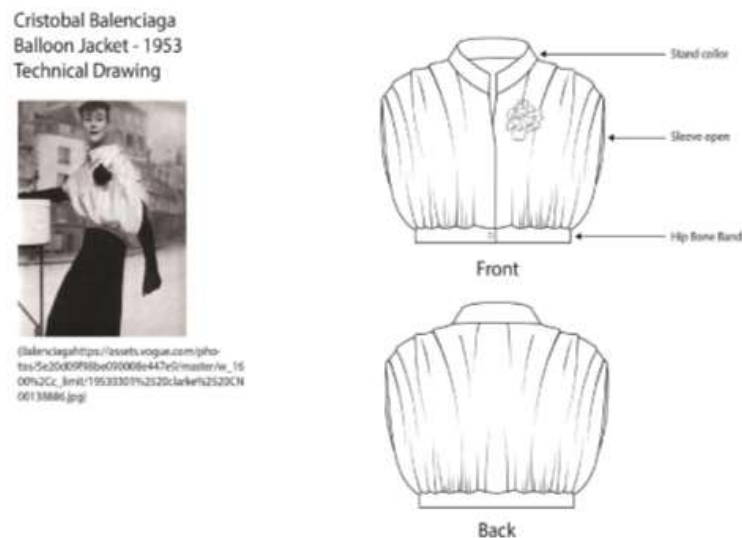


Figure 24. Technical Drawing (Balloon jacket) The technical drawing was drawn by the author K.M.S.V Wijesundara

Baby Doll Dress

Balenciaga introduced the baby doll dress to his clients in 1958. This dress was a huge change of Balenciaga style due to its simple construction. This dress reflects the abstract manner of Balenciaga's artistic taste. Also, this dress is opposite to the dresses of his contemporary designers and himself (Icon, 2013) (Figure 25). The eye-catching element of this dress was its triangular shape. It has no fitted waist, and the dress was hung on the shoulders. The hem of the dress is at the knee level. The dress was sleeveless and round neck in the front, back, and further, it is collarless. This dress has no corset or any inner fastening like usual Balenciaga garments, and the garment has three main parts: upper bodice panels (shoulder to hip), gathered panel (hip to knee level), and decorative bow. These upper bodice panels have been constructed straight to the body, and the gathered panel has

attached in the hip with more volume and made flounce with the same fabric. This flounce has exaggerated the circumference of the hem, as shown in Figure 25. The dress is made with ivory silk decorated with Chantilly lace and with nylon ribbon (Cambe, 2020; Icon, 2013). This dress shows a strong Spanish art influence; according to Erica Gerakiti, Francisco Goya's textile details have led Balenciaga to use many transparent fabrics with many trimmings (Gerakiti, 2019). These fabric selections prove that Balenciaga took a more abstract approach to designing garments even in his later designs, and his Strong Spanish art and cultural influence remain unchanged.

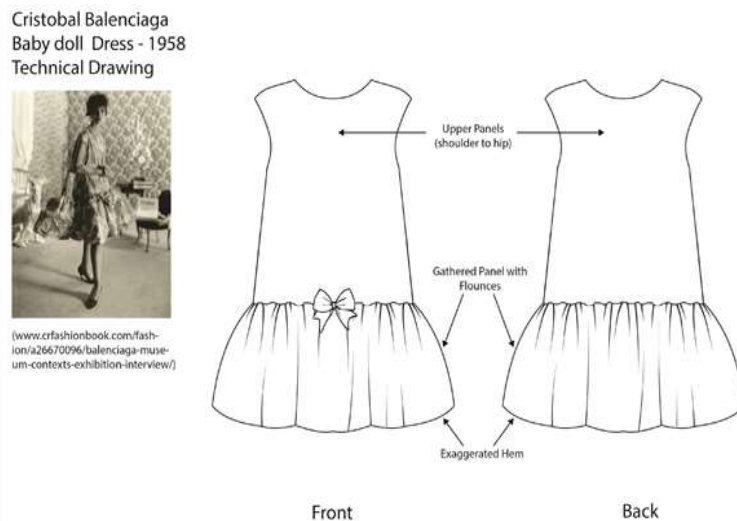


Figure 25. Technical drawing – Babydoll dress the technical drawing was drawn by the author K.M.S.V Wijesundara

Baby Doll Cocktail Dress

Balenciaga used the basic idea of the baby doll dress to make new silhouettes. He used different fabrics, trims, and fewer chances to make different versions of this dress, but the basic idea of constructing this garment was unchanged due to its uniqueness (Figure 26). Balenciaga presented this dress in 1958 as a cocktail dress. This was a very interesting version of the baby doll dress, inspiring many contemporary designers.

This dress consists of two different dresses.

1. The inner dress is made with black crepe de chine fabric. It is a sleeveless body hugged garment (Museum, 2017).

2. Outer dress. This part is made with the black semi-transparent lace fabric and is constructed according to the basic idea of a baby doll dress. There are two flounce layers with two different lengths (Museum, 2017).

There are two decorative bows made with satin fabrics attached in the front neck drop and hip line in the center front (Museum, 2017). The inner dress and the outer- dress are attached to the neckline. There are no top stitches on the neckline. Balenciaga used semi-transparent fabric for the outer dress, and this has added a sensual look to the dress, which is much needed for this type of dress. Fashion scholar Gerakiti (2019) has mentioned that Balenciaga took the idea of transparent fabrics such as lace by inspiring the old Spanish master Francisco Goya's paintings (Figure 3). The cocktail dress gives a sophisticated, elegant look due to the usage of black. The basic idea is a loose silhouette that can be hung over the body with fewer inner fastenings. It has achieved huge success because it liberated the female body from tightly fitted garments essential to show the beauty in those times. Balenciaga has always tried to produce structural-shaped garments by neglecting the feminine body shape. With this idea, he freed the women from tightness, not even from the body but also from the traditional mindset that they got stuck in that era.

Identified characteristics of the baby doll dress are as follows,

1. loosely hanging structural (triangular) shape.
2. avoid fitted garments by less inner fastening.
3. usages of transparent fabrics.



Figure 26. Technical drawing - Cocktail dress. The technical drawing was drawn by the author K.M.S.V Wijesundara

Contemporary fashion designers exerted inspiration from Cristobal Balenciaga

Case studies:

explore five characteristics unique to Cristóbal Balenciaga's designs. Two contemporary designers have been selected to study who have taken inspiration from Cristóbal Balenciaga's design language. The selected designers are Demna Gvasalia (1981), Gareth Pugh (1981).

Demna Gvasalia:

(Georgia) has been working as creative director of Brand Balenciaga since 2015. He is skilled at classic tailoring methods and cut and sawing rather than draping methods. He mostly comes out with outerwear that has a unique aesthetic taste. Within the design process at Balenciaga, he has influenced the tailoring methods, techniques, and ideation of Cristóbal Balenciaga; with this, Demna was able to produce many interesting designs (Horyn, 2016).

Gareth pugh:

is a London-based designer who uses unusual materials for his dresses. His passion is to experiment with volume. Gareth maintains a three-dimensional look with an architectural approach by using unusual material. Swindells and Almond (2016) have mentioned Gareth Pugh's works as "wearable sculptures which change human fame." He has been influenced by Balenciaga's idea of creating volume to create more simple designs that have the quality of abstraction.

Abstract and sculptural look

Balenciaga always tried to take a sculptural approach to his dresses through his technical knowledge. The balloon and baby doll dresses also have unique abstract forms and exaggerated expressions of shapes and silhouettes. The bubble look and the triangular shapes were Balenciaga's unique inventions, inspiring contemporary designers. Demna Gvasalia has followed the idea of Bubble to designs in many forms. In the "Balenciaga fall winter 16" collection, he introduced two puffer jackets (Figure 27) which can identify as exaggerated versions of balloon jackets (Cambe, 2020; Pistilli, 2018). Compared to the balloon or the sphere look, Denma has taken the idea of voluminous to his puffer jackets by covering the garment and quilting. One has a wide neckline that falls over the shoulders, giving a more volumized look and the other jacket has a detachable quilted scarf that gives more voluminous to garments.



Figure 27. Balenciaga fall winter 16 Look 14 by Demna Gvasalia



Figure 28. Balenciaga fall winter 16 Look 13 by Demna Gvasalia

Demna Gvasalia's puffer jacket has a curvy look in the back which gives an abstract sphere look, and with quilting, he emphasizes the form. Here Gvasalia has increased the width of the mid-wadding layer to get a more puffed look to the jacket, and he has increased the width of the hem to make the jacket oversized. By combining the oversized look and more volumized quilts, Gvasalia interpreted Balenciaga's idea of creating a bubble shape (Figure 28). Demna Gvasalia has achieved the abstract sphere look by using many ensembles in one garment or changing the proportions. Also, quilting techniques have played a huge role in achieving the expected voluminous look. The principle of quilting is overlapping two fabric layers by keeping a wadding layer in between then sawing the layers together. This has made tension in the space between the sewn lines, and it puffs up (Figure 29). It makes a different kind of volume which is unique. This uniqueness can be identified as the difference between couture and streetwear.



Figure 29. Balenciaga fall winter 16 Look 13 - Oversized and puffed to give more volume by Demna Gvasalia

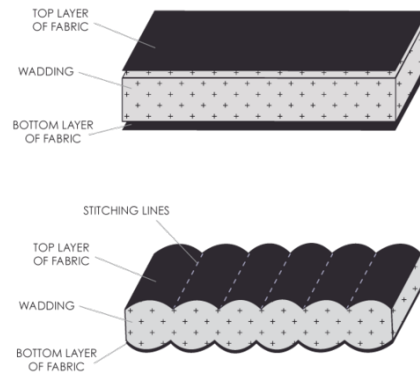


Figure 30. Gareth Pugh's quilting

Demna Gvasalia's method of combining the quilting and oversizing Garments has helped make the streetwear version of bubble look. This can be identified as a way of reinterpreting the Balenciaga style by changing the techniques according to the contemporary context.

Gareth Pugh (1981) has used the idea of a bubble look in polyurethane-coated nylon coats and dresses in A/W 17. Five garments can be identified with this bubble look concept (Figure 31). The basic idea of creating volume uses a unique method that is a rule-breaking point in modern fashion. Gareth Pugh has used the air pumping technique combined with creative pattern making. With this new technique, Pugh succeeded in achieving a sculptural look by maintaining the idea of creating a balloon look in a modern way that Balenciaga used in his dress.



Figure 31. Gareth Pugh A/W 17 Look - 18,25,28,30,41

Balenciaga has used Innovative tailoring and fastening methods to create the bulbous volume of dresses. He has used a unique construction of Bubble hem to create the volume of the dress. According to the V&A Museum, Balenciaga has created the Bubble hem by tying a knot above the knee, lifting, and ballooning the hem (Figure 32).

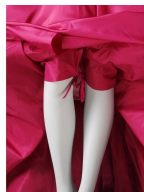


Figure 32. Balenciaga's method of creating bubble hem by tying a knot above the knee

Instead of using the classic sawing methods of Balenciaga, Gareth Pugh has tested a new method to construct the garment that matches the context. Gareth Pugh used a double-needle stitch to attach the panels and double-layered panels (Figure 33). As a result, he could reinterpret the Balenciaga style in a modern way.



Figure 33. Gareth pugh A/W 17 Pvc Nylon coat seams

Gareth Pugh has made Garments by combining air-filled bags with wearable garments compared to Balenciaga. Air-filled parts of the Gareth Pugh AW17 collection are double-layered; there were no hems (Figure 34). It has uplifted the impression of a bubble look.



Figure 34. Gareth Pugh A/W 17 - look 18- (Gareth Pugh: inspired by Balenciaga)

Gareth Pugh has used a fold line to the hemline like Balenciaga's bubble hem, but rather than tying at knees, Gareth has created a double-layered pattern by mirroring them (Figure 35).

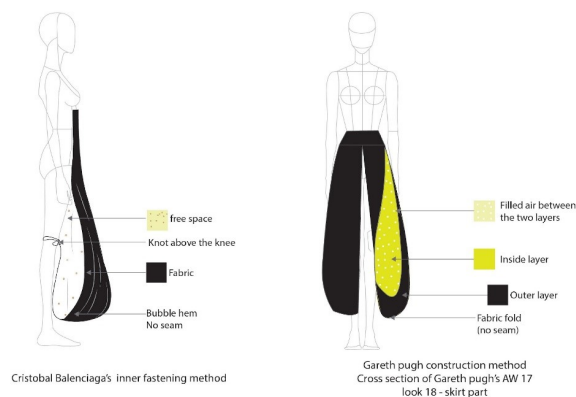


Figure 35. Balenciaga and Gareth pugh Construction methods. The technical drawing was drawn by the author K.M.S.V Wijesundara

Excluding common body contour lines of women's figures and lesser inner fastening

Cristobal Balenciaga used his excellent tailoring skills, discarded the common dressmaking approach, and introduced dresses that do not cling to the body. His main intention was to get attention to the form of the dress rather than the body type of the wearer—both the balloon dress and the baby doll dress exhibit such characteristics. In the baby doll dress, which was introduced after the balloon dress, he removed the corset and inner fastening to give more freedom to the body (Figure 36).

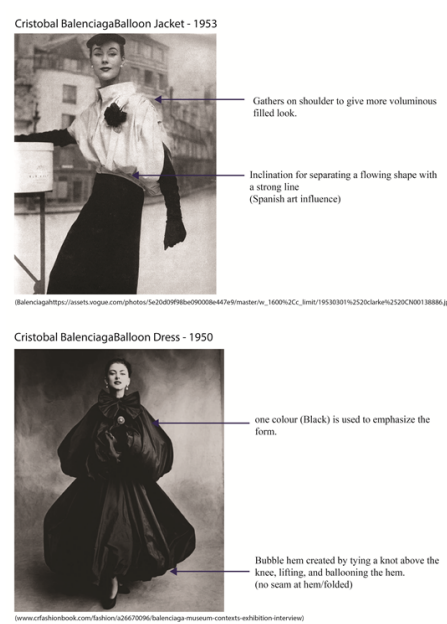


Figure 36. Characteristics of Balenciaga's balloon dress and balloon jacket

Demna Gvasalia's collections were mainly focused on streetwear. He has used fastening for outer functional purposes and did not include any fastening to get inner body shape. He has followed Balenciaga's rule of discarding body contour lines. He has focused mostly on oversized and given more attention to the details of garments. Also, Gvasalia has used any outer fastening methods such as zippers and buttons to the garment. Gareth Pugh's A/W 17 had a great influence from Balenciaga. He was able to get attention to the outer form of the garment instead of the wearer's body as Balenciaga did in his dresses. Air-filled balloon-type garments are made of giving attention to their wearability. Gareth has played with the airy volume without any inner fastening by using gravity as an advantage. Gareth Pugh has avoided the basic techniques of creating Balenciaga's sphere look but has used the visionary part of his dresses (Figure 37).

Minimal usage of color and select materials that emphasize the form of the garment

Balenciaga mostly used one simple color that intended to emphasize the dress's structure. The most noticeable is the material selection. He always constructed the form of the dress according to the properties of the fabric. Demna Gvasalia has used Balenciaga's color theory differently rather than focusing on the form he has used. He matched unusual contrast colors to get the attention separately to each garment. He was able to pay attention to the details of the garments easily. Cristobal used this theory in the Balloon jacket by using white for the Jacket and black for the dress. But in Gvasalia's point of view, he has taken far more advantage by adding embellishments or separate detailing by mixing a raw, bright color and a contrast color. When Gareth Pugh compared with Balenciaga, the idea of using single color has become very common in both, but the selection of materials has taken a very different approach. Most of the time, Balenciaga used the materials common in fashion (fabrics), but he used them in the best context to maximize its properties. Gareth Pugh has used many materials such as PVC, rubber (Swindells & Almond, 2016) rather than common textiles. He has used these materials with many other techniques to define Balenciaga's basic idea of creating volume.

By using PVC sheets, Gareth Pugh was able to give the impression of a rubber balloon; also, the 3D look of the dress has enhanced with the shiny and smooth texture of the material. Gareth Pugh shifted attention to the natural lines and uneven forms of dress created by filling the air inside (Figure 37). Elasticity and thinness of PVC rubber material have helped increase the ballooning effect's quality, and Gareth Pugh has made some gathers in seams which added more lines and texture to the form of the dress after the air is filled inside. Balenciaga's balloon dress can easily identify this type of natural line. Gareth Pugh gave a whimsical playfulness to the movement with these construction methods. Even though the contemporary designers used many new technologies and techniques

to show their ideas, Master Balenciaga's ideology gradually popped up in their designs. Even if there is a novelty in contemporary designs unknowingly or with intention, these designers have used the pattern making, tailoring, and aesthetic ideologies of Balenciaga to make their designs.

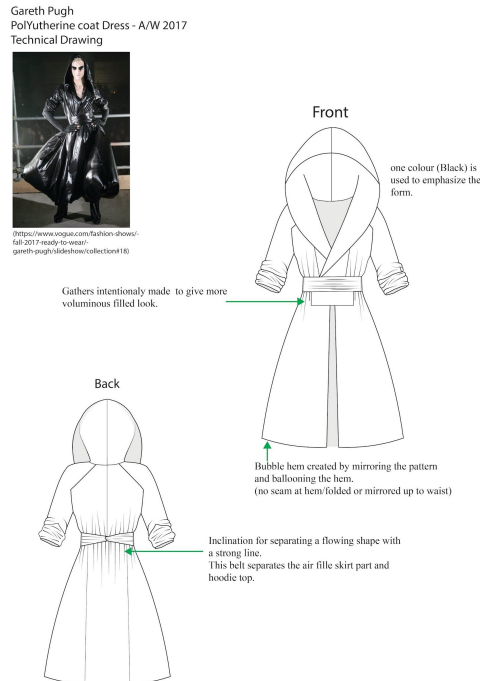


Figure 37. Characteristics of Gareth Pugh A/W 2017 Coat Dress. The technical drawing was drawn by the author K.M.S.V Wijesundara

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be suggested that contemporary designers have always kept the foundation values of Balenciaga as a core to their designs, and then they have interpreted it with their creativity and design style. They made their original piece of art from a powerful source of inspiration. It is seen that the ideology of Balenciaga's dresses has affected every level in fashion. Whether Avant-grade or street style Balenciaga ideology has become the foundation to all and designers were able to build their concepts by merging with the rules of current fashion frameworks. They have changed the basic silhouette's material and collated new technology and new materials in interpreting Balenciaga. More importantly, new socio-cultural groups such as street fashions presented the newly invented ideas. It is a novel by Balenciaga. It is visible that even the contemporary designers used the new technologies or took new approaches according to the context the techniques of Balenciaga have used for their garments directly with minor changes. With this research, it is possible to conclude that even if the styles are reinterpreted over time and context, the core philosophy of styles remains either with minor changes or Hidden among the contemporary methods and techniques. It can be suggested that contemporary designers merge historical characteristics with new technology and materials.

Moreover, it is seen that contemporary designers try to address their inventions in different socio-cultural lifestyles that suit new consumer needs. Applying new technology and materials and addressing fashions in new cultural contexts are forwarded as their new interpretation of Balenciaga's designs. This new reading forwards a new face of style. Some limitations have been recognized in the research. The research was limited to digital collections. The study was driven through the observational study of the digital museum collection. Lack of actual live experience is recognized as a limitation in this research.

The research recommendation is "A style can be interpreted repeatedly with new technology and new material which enables forwarding new style." The research suggests design interpretations by using the same interpretive methodologies used by selected research designers.

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