

## EXHIBIT OF ICONIC DRESSES BY AZZEDINE ALAÏA IN PARIS



Photo : © Lord Snowdon, 1990

Among the many incredible designs showcased during the Paris Couture Week Spring Summer 2018, the opening exhibition: Azzedine Alaïa: "Je suis couturier" was definitely one of the must-go event jam-packed with the fashion world. Running until June 10, at the Association Azzedine in Paris, the homage paid to the very special now-late couturier revolves around an exhibition organized by the couturier's lifetime partner Christoph Von Weyhe, the owner of the 10 Corso Como boutique and one of Alaïa's close friend Carla Sozzani and the Association Azzedine Alaïa. 41 of his iconic pieces have been chosen by Olivier Saillard, who had worked with the couturier in 2013 on the first exhibit of Alaïa's work in Paris at the Palais Galliera. Eye-popping dresses with razor-sharp cutting illustrate Alaïa's famous quote: "I am not a designer, I am a couturier" that inspired the title of the exhibition. The good news is that the Association which will become the Foundation Azzedine Alaïa that the couturier had envisioned will now preserve his extensive collections and present exhibitions of his work. The upcoming site will schedule regular exhibitions of the history of fashion and design, a library of fashion and cultural history for research and development, as well as funding of scholarships for promising visionaries in fashion. Not only will Maison Alaïa survive, but also the couturier's commitment for creative and cultural disciplines.

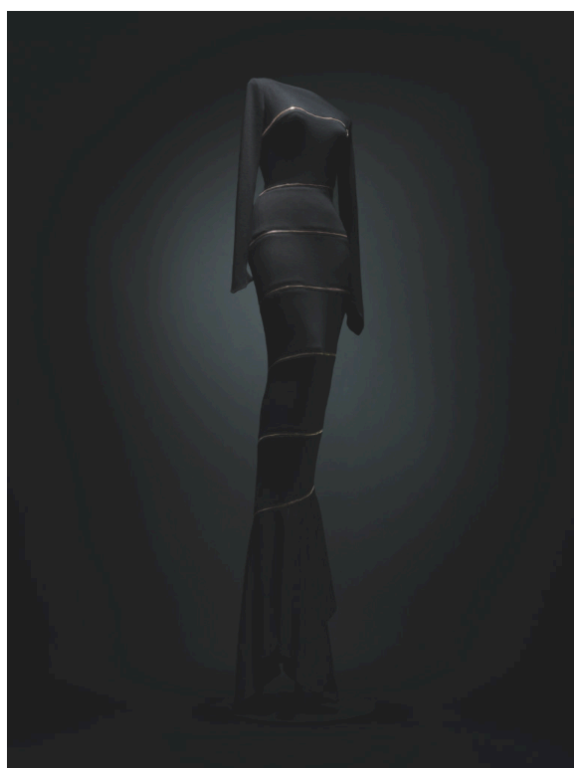
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## Inside “Je Suis Couturier,” a 41 Dress Azzedine Alaïa Exhibition at His Marais Headquarters



“Azzedine loved life and the future, he always projected forward,” Carla Sozzani said over a din of hammers and drills at the Azzedine Alaïa headquarters on Saturday morning. “This is the future he wanted. What better way to honor him than to open his house and show his work?”

Alaïa, who passed away last November, never wanted a memorial. That said, for the fashion crowd, Sunday’s opening of “Je Suis Couturier,” an exhibition of 41 dresses by Alaïa, will be a chance to pay their respects, as well as catch a glimpse of how the Association Azzedine Alaïa is taking shape.

When Alaïa, Sozzani, and his partner Christoph van Weyhe founded the association, in 2007, Alaïa already knew he'd like to open his Marais headquarters to the public and younger generations, to include books and scholarship, Sozzani added. What was also clear, noted Olivier Saillard, the show's curator, was that nothing was going to happen at the association in Alaïa's lifetime. "He has this collectors' irrational side, which was that he was happy to own the pieces, but it was going to be up to others to take care of them," said Saillard. "He was mysterious that way."

During a walkthrough of the exhibition in progress, Saillard said, "he never said as much, but I think Azzedine was sensitive to the idea of posterity."

"Immortality!" interjected Sozzani.

The title of the exhibition is an Alaïa quote that underscores his refusal of the term designer. "You could spend hours with him, with his ruler, pins, and patterns," said Sozzani. Elaborated Saillard, "Azzedine was the last of them. In 10 years, there will be a new one, but in the meantime he or she might as well start learning here. That would be a fine start."

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Sozzani reminisced about certain pieces, such as a white dress studded with metal eyelets from the early '80s, when she first met the couturier. Or a black column dress with a deep décolleté that got her fired when she put it on the cover of Italian Elle in 1987.

“Azzedine called it the ‘Carla’ dress. If there was ever a dress that has nothing to do with me, that’s it, but Azzedine was so proud that I got fired because of him,” she laughed.

Elsewhere in the lineup are a dress inspired by the Matisse room at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, which Alaïa created for his retrospective in 2013, and the one worn by Naomi Campbell at Alaïa’s final couture show, last July. Pieces are almost exclusively in black and white.

This exhibition is only the tip of the tip of the iceberg. It falls to Saillard and his team to sift through Alaïa’s own archives—60 years of patterns that his studio team will mine for upcoming collections. That’s not counting all the client donations Sozzani has been fielding since Alaïa passed away. And then there are the countless other pieces by Vionnet, Grès, Balenciaga, and others, that Alaïa collected throughout his lifetime.

“As a historian, I can say that Azzedine’s oeuvre is major. That he was one of the only couturiers to collect fashion, as well as the most important private collector, makes his collections among the greatest fashion museums in France.”

“Je Suis Couturier” runs through June 10, but it is likely to see some alterations during its run. Notably, in keeping with the late couturier’s wishes, the Association will be adding a bookshop in the courtyard in April.

*“Je Suis Couturier” is open from 11am to 7pm every day at the Association Azzedine Alaïa, 18 rue de la Verriere, Paris 4th.*

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