



These pictures show creations of late French designer Yves Saint-Laurent displayed at the Louvre Museum as part of the exhibitions "Yves Saint-Laurent at the museums" in Paris. — AFP photos

Unique expo places **Saint Laurent** among Paris treasures

Tucked away like Easter eggs in the most prestigious Paris museums, a unique commemoration of designer Yves Saint Laurent cements his status among the greats of French cultural history. "I am utterly eclectic," the designer once said, and the point is proven by how easily his clothes fit into museums covering very different eras and artistic styles. In the Apollo Gallery of the Louvre, alongside the crowns and jewels of French kings and queens, the almost absurdly ornate "Versailles jacket" covered in gold leaves and rock crystals, looks perfectly at home.

The Louvre is one of six museums taking part in the unique collaboration to mark 60 years since the designer's first catwalk show, when he was 26. Head across town to the Centre Pompidou, France's mecca for modern art, and you find a very different Saint Laurent on display. Dresses in the abstract styles of Piet Mondrian, Sonia Delaunay and US pop artists hang alongside the portraits that inspired them.

Saint Laurent was often ahead of the game: his Mondrian collection came out to rave reviews in 1965, four years before the Dutch artist, who died in 1944, had his first career retrospective at the Orangerie

Museum. "It was precisely that moment when fashion changed and started to become an art in its own right," said Aurelie Samuel, of the Yves Saint Laurent Museum, which is displaying some of his drawings as part of the city-wide exhibition, which runs until May. His creations have also been snuck into the Orsay, Picasso and Contemporary Art museums.

'Something different'

It is not the first time that Saint Laurent, who died in 2008, has been granted the imprimatur of the art establishment. As early as 1983, barely two decades after

his first show, he became the first living designer to have his work presented in a major art institution-at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Petit Palais in Paris put on a career retrospective in 2010. "The house has already done so many anniversaries. I wanted to do something different," said Madison Cox, president of the Pierre Berge-Yves Saint Laurent Foundation.

Many of the influences were made explicit by Saint Laurent at the time-others have been chosen for how well they play off each other. They include the dresses he made for the "Proust Ball", one of the

most decadent social events of France in the last century, organized by the Rothschild family to mark the author's 100th birthday.

Those dresses are now on display alongside Belle Epoque masterpieces by Monet, Degas and Renoir on the top floor of the Orsay Museum. "It would have been boring to just find an empty space, throw up some scenery and fill it with his clothes," said Cox. "It was important to integrate them into permanent collections." — AFP



Elie Saab brings vibrant looks to Paris catwalk on return

Lebanese fashion designer Elie Saab returned to the Paris catwalk after nearly two years, turning the page on a troubled period marked by the Beirut port blast and COVID-19, with a collection of vibrant, red carpet-ready looks. Saab sensed a need for release, he told Reuters in an interview ahead of the show. "I felt my clients are looking for release, they want things that are flashy, with colors, lively things - I see that this period has affected a lot of people," he said.

Drawing on the influence of the Mediterranean region's colors and civilizations, the designer worked bright hues into his collection. Models wound around the room in tulle ball gowns and capes

covered in bright Bougainvillea flowers, which contrasted in texture and color with shimmering blue-toned dresses covered in embroidery. Saab's previous runway show in the French capital took place in February 2020, just before the novel coronavirus swept across the globe, halting travel and prompting lockdowns.

Weddings and awards ceremonies - key events that send clients to Saab - were cancelled for months. Then, in August, Beirut was rocked by the explosion that killed more than 200 people, wounded thousands and laid waste to entire neighborhoods. The offices of Saab's namesake label were badly damaged, as was his home, its arches and marbled columns covered with dust and

rubble. "Thank God, no one died - we were blessed," Saab said, noting they were able to quickly return to the offices in the weeks that followed. Work continued on his home, however.

"There's still my house - that was destroyed as well - we are still finishing the works," said the designer, who founded his label in 1982, at the height of the country's 1975-1990 civil war. "We, Lebanese, when we go through difficult times - each time we experience difficult times, we transform the challenge into something better. There's no other country that has had so many problems," he said. — Reuters



Models present creations by Elie Saab during the Spring-Summer 2022 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos