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1874-1875: The Birth of a Fashion Heritage Consciousness in France

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Maude Bass-Krueger

- ¹ The first historical dress exhibition in France opened the doors to the public on August 10, 1874, in the Palais de l'Industrie in Paris, an exhibition hall originally built for the 1855 Universal Exhibition [Fig 1].¹ Called the “Musée historique du costume,” the exhibition was organized by the Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie² and was presented during the group's fourth applied arts exhibition.³ Admission for the public was 50 centimes on Sundays and 1 franc the rest of the week.⁴ More than a hundred private collectors and a handful of public institutions lent six thousand “costumes and pieces of costumes” and “works of art representing costumes”.⁵ Of all the exhibitions the Union centrale organized between 1864 and 1900, the “Musée historique du costume” of 1874 was the most popular and the most profitable: 41,764 people visited it, twice as many as the previous retrospective exhibition of Oriental Art in 1869.⁶

Figure 1



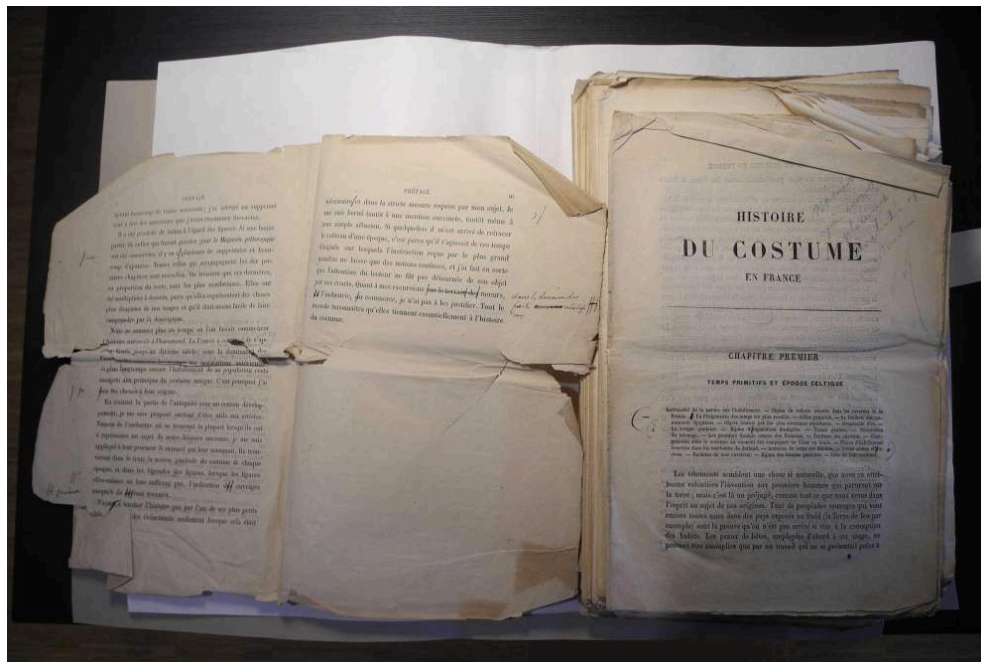
"Musée rétrospectif du Costume," third exhibition of the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, 1874. The big staircase. Paul Lorain, architect, in Henri Bouilhet, *L'Orfèvrerie française aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, vol. 1: 1700-1789, Paris, H. Laurens, 1909, p. 9.

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- 2 The exhibition was spread across twelve rooms and featured a variety of historic items such as garments, textiles, accessories, paintings, printed material, seals, tombstone etchings, and tapestries. The exhibition began with one room showcasing private collections of historic textiles, shoes, and gloves.⁷ The second and third rooms featured textiles and garments from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Medieval seals and grave rubbings, as well as the teaching material used by Léon Heuzey for his classes on Greek and Roman dress were on display in the fourth room.⁸ The remaining rooms were organized chronologically from the Byzantine period to the late 18th century.⁹ In addition to the exhibition rooms, there were also exterior galleries that displayed tapestries from the Gobelins manufactory. A library was also available with volumes on the history of sumptuary arts and the art of design. The catalogue provided information about the objects and their placement, including a list of collectors who had loaned their objects to the exhibition.¹⁰ It showcased a diverse collection of historical objects, with artful assemblages displayed in wall-mounted and freestanding glass cases, and tapestries and paintings hung on the walls.
- 3 In 1875, one year after the opening of the "Musée historique du costume," Jules Quicherat (1814-1882), a historian and archaeologist, published the first book on the history of French fashion that relied not only on textual and visual sources, but also on material ones. Quicherat's *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps reculés jusqu'à nos jours*, published by Hachette, compared historic garments with texts and images, placing them within a larger historical narrative about the significance of fashion to

French national identity and the endurance of France's fashion and textile industry over time [Fig. 2]. This work represented a radical departure from previous writing on French dress history, which had mainly consisted of collected engravings of dress destined for artists. Quicherat's methodology proposed an empirical approach by comparing objects, texts, and visual sources, as well as a theoretical framework based on the unwavering exceptionalism of the French fashion and textile industry – in other words, despite wars, regime changes, and economic turmoil, the preeminence of French fashion had remained a constant from the conception of France until the present day.¹¹ Quicherat placed French national identity and culture at the center of his story, a narrative lens that then became the dominant mode of writing French dress history. His book was so successful that it was reedited two years after its initial publication and remained a reference (among others) for fashion studies in France until 1989, when Daniel Roche argued that Quicherat's work – as well as that of other fashion historians such as Albert Racinet (1825-1893) and François Boucher (1885-1966) – had become outdated and that a new kind of (social) dress history was needed.¹²

Figure 2



The manuscript of *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, preserved at the Archives nationales (93/AJ/321), corrected by hand by Jules Quicherat.

Reproduction Maude Bass-Krueger.

- 4 The opening of the “Musée historique du costume” and the publication of the “Histoire du costume en France” occurred within a year of each other and marked the first popular attempts to exhibit and write about the material culture of dress history in France. Rather than providing a complete overview of both, this article will focus on the nascent interest in the material culture of fashion that these events revealed. A closer examination of the exhibition’s display of objects and the catalogue illuminates the first institutional framework for public interaction with historical fashion objects. Similarly, an analysis of Quicherat’s methodology for using objects as sources for

historical writing in the *Histoire du costume* demonstrates a first attempt at using the material culture of dress as a source for history writing.

- 5 The “Musée historique du costume” and the *Histoire du costume* took place at an interesting historical moment in France: museums, exhibitions, and popular history books were no longer new attractions in 1875. The museum boom had taken place between 1830 and 1870, fueled by a growing middle class in search of cultural capital, a powerful popular press that disseminated evocative images of cultural and artistic *nouveautés*, and a rapid democratization of knowledge of art and history driven by Romantic historians such as Jules Michelet (1798-1874), who offered an exciting new way of writing French history.¹³ Indeed, Quicherat’s own narrative approach was deeply inspired by Michelet, a close colleague, friend, and confidant.¹⁴ By the start of the Third Republic, the fashion industry had also undergone a massive shift from the dressmaker’s model to the industrialized and modernized couture house and department store model, pioneered in the 1850s by Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895) at the top end of the price scale, and department stores such as *Le Bon Marché* at the other.
- 6 During the second half of the 19th century, demand for cultural attractions such as museums and exhibitions, as well as luxury goods like textiles and fashionable clothing, increased significantly. However, from 1873 to the mid-1890s, the French economy experienced a period of stagnation, leaving it behind the British and Germans. The fashion and textile industry, one of France’s biggest economic drivers, could not afford to appear outdated or over-industrialized. To address this, and to appeal to the consumers’ desire for distinction, couturiers adapted past forms and styles to new design models to give their garments the appearance of pre-industrial craftsmanship while using modern dressmaking techniques.¹⁵ This historicist approach to fashion design acted as a smokescreen to give modern fashion an air of pre-industrialized craftsmanship. By the 1880s, dresses designed by the House of Worth featured outwardly historicist motifs, demonstrating an interest, first among the elite and then quickly down class lines, in looking to the past for fashion design inspiration for the present [Fig. 3]. But if the past was to inspire the (designed) present, then accurate knowledge of the past had to be acquired not only by the elite, but also by the middle class, whose consumption of mass culture, fashion and textiles, and the popular press helped drive the French economy. Exhibitions and books worked hand in hand to inform the public about the value – economic, aesthetic, and historical – of period clothing and accessories, in the hope that interest in the past would lead to a renewed appreciation of the present and future of French fashion.

Figure 3



Visiting dress for Tsarina Maria Feodorovna, designed by Charles Frederick Worth, c. 1880, silk, velvet, silk ribbons and lace, held at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (inv. ЭРТ-9441).

© Svetlana Suetova / State Hermitage Museum.

1874 – Exhibiting Fashion Objects

- 7 The Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'Industrie, formed in 1864, was a private association focused on advancing the decorative arts in France. Their fourfold program aimed to establish a museum of industrial arts, a working library, public lectures, and design competitions and exhibitions.¹⁶ Inspired by the South Kensington model (Victoria and Albert Museum), the Union centrale aimed to promote good design to avoid being “defeat[ed]” by the English.¹⁷ While waiting for a permanent museum space, they organized a series of short-term “Musées rétrospectifs” on various subjects.¹⁸ The Union’s first show in 1865 at the Palais de l’Industrie was a general exhibition of French industrial products and a “Musée rétrospectif” of “objets d’art et d’ameublement” from antiquity to present lent by private collectors.¹⁹ This formula of dedicating the bottom floor to manufacturers and organizing a “Musée rétrospectif” on the second was well received and used in future exhibitions.²⁰
- 8 The 1874 retrospective section dedicated to dress history was unprecedented. Before this exhibition, historic dress had been collected mainly for the value of its textiles, rather than the garments themselves. Although textiles had been integrated into the collections of new early 19th century industrial museums, historic garments had not yet found their place within a museum setting. The organizers of the “Musée historique du costume” sought to assemble “as complete a suite as possible of old documents borrowed from the sumptuary arts in order to give manufacturers numerous elements

of study and comparison.”²¹ The exhibition also featured a library and invited illustrators and manufacturers to come sketch the objects on display in the mornings.

- 9 The catalogue, which referred to the objects presented within the exhibition as “documents” whose historical value lay in providing “a precise memory (*souvenir*) of an era,” attempted to convey to the public the idea that historical fashion objects could evoke a sense of the past through their display:

We pushed away the idea of using dressed mannequins, because the idea of life within the costume, the bearing, the elegance, the majesty, in one word, the character, had a meaning that was much more true, more alive in the portraits and paintings of an era than in the cold, un-emphatic, dead disposition that a dressed wooden figure would have given. We made the decision to assemble the textiles, the costume items, and all the dress accessories in [glass] vitrines, and to surround them with materials that explain their usage, and we especially had in view the idea of enclosing within a striking ensemble the character of an era. This is why we divided the exhibition into period rooms, avoiding, as much as it was possible, confusion.²²

- 10 The display of historic dress and accessories from the 17th and 18th centuries is exemplified by a photograph showing wall-mounted and flat display cases filled with a mix of objects relating to men’s fashion history, including embroidered vests, shoes, canes, swords, miniatures, portraits, enamels, engravings, overcoats, and a bed-cover [Fig. 4]. The walls were adorned with tapestries from the Gobelins and large-format paintings from private collections.

Figure 4



A room from the 1874 “Musée historique du costume” exhibition at the palais de l’Industrie, photograph preserved in the MAD (musée des Arts décoratifs) library. This photograph was also used under the title “Histoire du Costume,” in Henri Bouilhet, *L’Orfèvrerie française aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, vol. 1, 1700-1789 (Paris: H. Laurens, 1909), p.11.

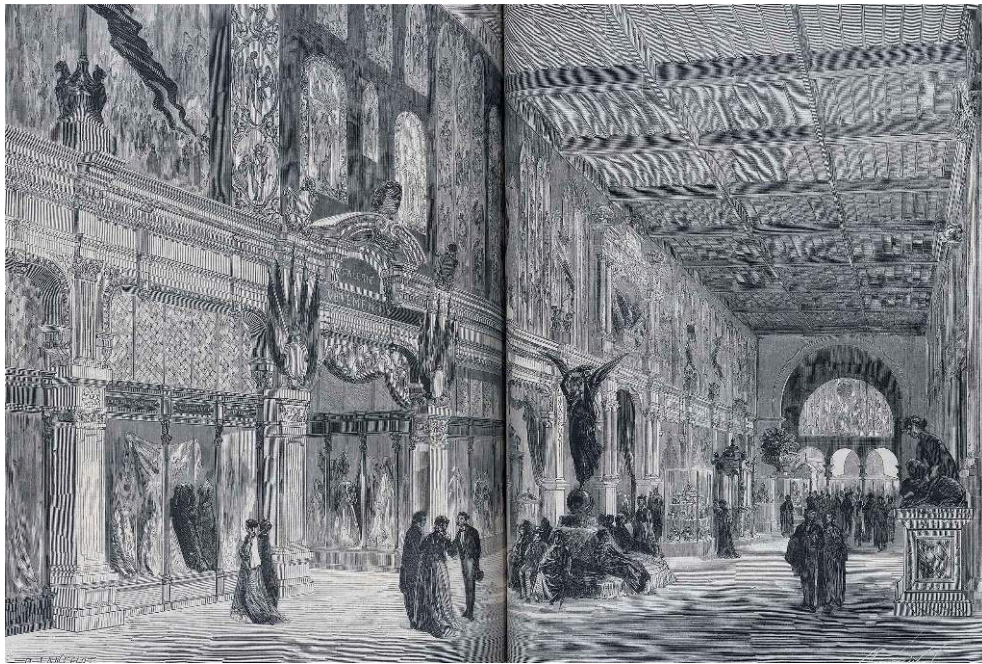
Reproduction musée des Arts décoratifs.

- 11 The photograph reveals a tension between the rationalized and compartmentalized enclosures (the rooms, the display cases) and the over-abundance of objects found within. The art historian Stephen Bann, writing about the “chaotic” juxtaposition of

objects in Alexandre Du Sommerard's (1779-1842) "musée d'antiquités nationales," defined this kind of spectacle as one of "envelopment," in which the experience of viewing a plethora of diverse objects helped create an illusion of the past.²³ The sense of material enclosure seems to convey a similar experience in the "Musée historique du costume": the juxtaposed objects, large and small, three-dimensional or flat, painted, woven, and manufactured, surrounded and stimulated the viewer, encouraging him or her to appreciate the groupings as a material testimony to a particular period or region.

- 12 Georges Lafenestre (1837-1919), secretary to the Beaux-Arts director at the *ministère de l'Instruction public et des Beaux-Arts* and the organizer of the "Musée historique du costume,"²⁴ emphasized the importance of this visual experience in two articles for *Le Monde Illustré*: the Renaissance room, Lafenestre wrote, was a "world unto itself, where the curious can spend useful hours looking at display cases filled with a thousand different objects, in which the perfection of the *main-d'œuvre* (handicraft) is almost always combined with the delicate charm of the foremost invention."²⁵ In a second article²⁶, Lafenestre cautioned the visitor not to dismiss the exhibition as merely a "bizarre display of rare and precious rags hung haphazardly behind banal display cases," but rather to recognize the exhibition's effort to "show in a brilliant way how much each branch of the history of labor is linked to the general history of humanity." For, as Lafenestre rhetorically asked, "Isn't doing the history of costume not also doing the history of the human spirit?"²⁷ To take in the full experience, it was important for the visitor to linger over the articles on display, to move slowly through the space, to question the materiality of the objects, to absorb the atmosphere, to allow the past to permeate the present.
- 13 The "Musée historique du costume" reveals several interesting choices made for this first attempt to display historical garments and accessories: first, the decision to dispense with mannequins was probably taken to give a more "scientific" character to the display of historical fashion objects [Fig. 5]. Mannequins were used by couture houses, department stores, and trade shows and may have given the exhibition an undesirable commercial aspect.²⁸ For this very first exhibition, the need to convey the non-mercantile value of the objects on display was paramount to the organizers. And while the objects were grouped thematically, geographically, or chronologically, no socio-historical context was given through labels or wall text for the objects or for the groupings. Nor does the catalog provide a historical overview of any of the objects; the descriptions focus instead on each object's material properties and collector. A typical entry, pulled from the second room "Far Orient, China and Japan," reads: "No. 19: Pale orange dress embroidered with dragon medallions; the sleeves and edges are of black silk richly embroidered --- M. Delaherche."²⁹ The object was at the center of the exhibition, its materiality the main concern.

Figure 5



Couture and designer dresses were displayed on mannequins in the "Clothing" gallery of the Palais Omnibus, at the 1867 Universal Exhibition. Engraving "Le grand Vestibule", by M. Lancelot, printed in *L'Exposition universelle de 1867: publication internationale autorisée par la Commission impériale*, François Ducuing (ed.), Paris, Imprimerie générale Lahure, 1867, p.344-345.

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- 14 The press considered the exhibition a success and praised its educational purpose, which was derived from being able to see the objects themselves and not from reading any (missing) historical contextualization. A journalist for *L'Univers* applauded the organizers for understanding that they should not make the exhibition look like a "branch of Mme. Tussaud's," but instead concentrate on "offering the objects themselves not only to be looked at, but [...] to be studied."³⁰ Anachronisms in dress, wrote a reviewer for *Le Magasin pittoresque*, would no longer be tolerated at a time when "we have so many means of obtaining accurate information on the study of the picturesque for all people and in all ages."³¹ For those unable to visit the exhibition, or simply to make it more widely known, engravings of some of the objects circulated in the popular press [Fig. 6,7, 8]: *Le Monde Illustré* reproduced images of "specimens from the 12th to the 16th century,"³² while *Le Magasin pittoresque* reproduced several of the bonnets and hats displayed in the "History of Hairstyles" room.³³ *La Vie Parisienne* focused on the shoe collection, providing both engravings and historical context.³⁴

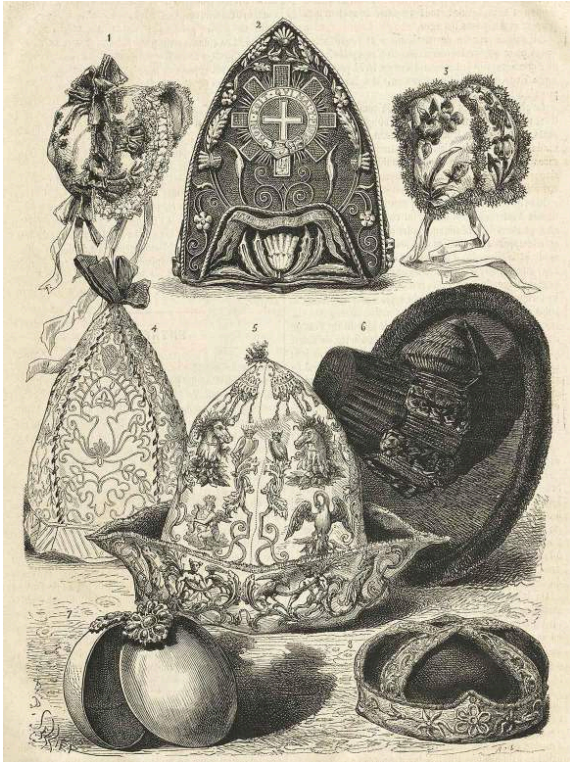
Figure 6



"Exposition de l'Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'Industrie, Histoire du costume, Spécimens du XII^e au XVI^e siècle", engraving by Paul Sellier published in *Le Monde illustré*, November 7, 1874, n° 917, p. 292.

Reproduction Bibliothèque nationale de France.

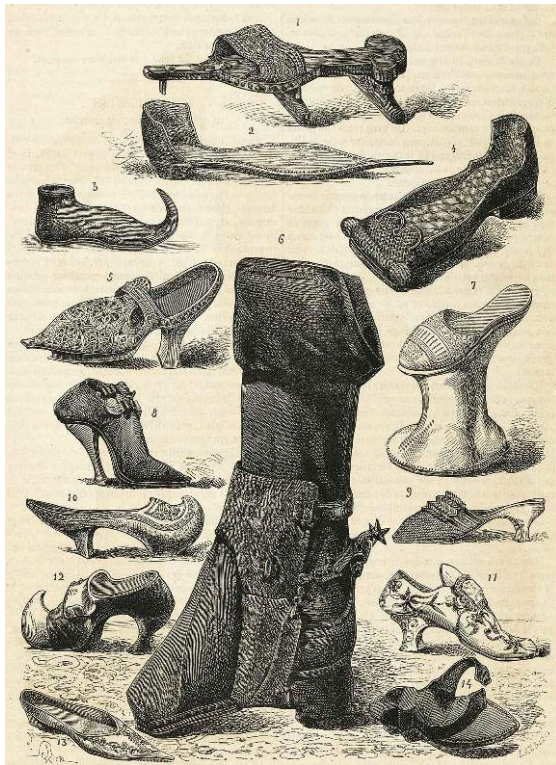
Figure 7



"Exposition historique du costume", engraving by Paul Sellier showing bonnets and hats from the 1874 exhibition, published in *Le Magasin pittoresque*, Edouard Charton (ed.), n° 43, 1875, p. 369.

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Figure 8



"Chaussures exposées au Musée historique du costume, en 1874", engraving by Paul Sellier published in *Le Magasin pittoresque*, Edouard Charton (ed.), n° 44, 1876, p. 196.

Reproduction Bibliothèque nationale de France.

- 15 But Lafenestre's plea for visitors to see more than a random display of old rags also reads like an admission of criticism. The organizers expected visitors to be able to appreciate historical fashion objects for their intrinsic value, but how could they do so without any prior knowledge of such objects? Without exhibition texts or a catalog to provide the necessary context, visitors were likely to be impressed or interested by the objects, but unable to fully understand their significance. For that, a popular book on the history of French fashion was needed.

1875 – Using Garments as Sources

- 16 In 1847, Jules Quicherat³⁵ was appointed as the head of the newly created department of medieval archaeology at the École des chartes, France's leading historical sciences school. To inaugurate the reorganization, he delivered a lecture on the "History of Costume in France in the Fourteenth Century." Quicherat began his talk by noting that the history of costume had yet to be written and that it would take some time to gather the necessary documents.³⁶
- 17 Over the next thirty years, Quicherat conducted extensive research, wrote bi-annual articles on dress history for *Le Magasin pittoresque*,³⁷ and lectured on fashion in his classes. In 1875, he finally published his book, *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*. The book covered the history of French fashion from prehistory to Bonaparte and included detailed descriptions of garments alongside a history of "events," "manners, industry, and commerce."³⁸ Quicherat wrote

in a relaxed, narrative prose without footnotes and included numerous in-text engravings. His book had two main narratives: one about how fashion had helped shape French identity over time and another about France's long and illustrious history of fashion and textile manufacturing. Quicherat believed that the continued endurance of the French fashion and textile industry, despite political changes, war, and economic cycles, helped define national character.

- 18 While his most fully realized work is the *Histoire du costume*, the theoretical and methodological foundations of this work were first presented in his 1847 lecture and later explored in his articles for *Le Magasin pittoresque*. Throughout all three works, Quicherat's interest in using historic garments as sources to discuss France's long industrial history is evident, as is his desire to use clothing as a unifying and driving force for national identity.
- 19 His use of sources becomes more varied and nuanced with each new publication: the *Histoire du costume* is the only work of the three to include engravings of actual garments alongside more familiar pictorial sources (sculptures, paintings, illustrations). His critical methodology of comparing objects and texts is also more explicitly stated in the book than it was in either the lecture or the articles, which predated the book. And by the very nature of its broad historical scope, the book is also inherently more revelatory of Quicherat's desire to use the study of clothing to write a Romantic chronicle of French identity as seen through dress, a type of work that he called a "philosophy of history" in the style of his close friend Jules Michelet.
- 20 Two boxes at the Archives Nationales show that Quicherat evaluated evidence drawn from a vast pool of textual, pictorial, and material sources [Fig. 9].³⁹ It is astonishing that he managed to read the multitude of sources cited on various scraps of paper, or clipped from bibliographies, in his lifetime, let alone condense them into a single-volume monograph. The notes and clippings show that Quicherat read a large majority of the French, German, English, and Italian books published from the 15th century onward, as well as fashion magazines from the *Mercure galant* (end 17th century) onward; he read lectures on historic and contemporary costume history and treatises on archaeological dress published by regional *Sociétés Académiques*. An abbreviated selection of some of the hundreds of primary and secondary textual sources that he cites in the *Histoire du costume* includes courtly love poems, conduct books, written works by historians and chroniclers from Strabo onward, sumptuary laws, manufacturer's receipts, guild regulations, royal account books, satirical poems, religious edicts and denunciations, and wardrobe inventories.

Figure 9



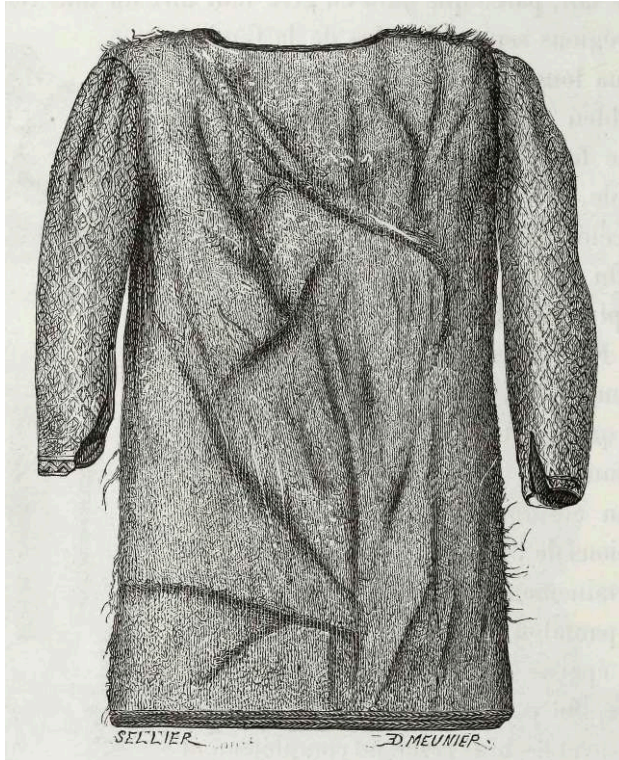
Drawings, sketches and tracings compiled by Jules Quicherat for the *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, held at the Archives nationales (93/AJ/321).

Reproduction Maude Bass-Krueger.

- 21 “One cannot interpret texts with one’s imagination,” Quicherat wrote in the *Histoire du costume* - a progressive conviction that he maintained and returned to frequently throughout the book.⁴⁰ Quicherat’s methodology was founded on the need to compare texts with objects to obtain “scientific” authenticity. Quicherat defined archaeology—a field he helped found in France—as the study of all objects related to “art and industry,” regardless of whether they belonged to the physical, textual, or visual world.⁴¹ The definition he taught his student at the École des chartes was: “the science of the various shapes given to manmade products of art and industry at different times.” Archaeology, Quicherat lectured, would open students’ minds to “a new point of view that, without excluding the study of texts, will ask you to combine this study with that of the material objects which remain from the past,” thus laying the foundations for the modern scientific methodology of the critical study of sources.⁴²
- 22 Clothing, then like architecture, art, and literature, was a valid object of study within the discipline of archeology as Quicherat defined it. Dress, a product of art and industry, was a material object to be studied in conjunction with liturgical furniture, funerary art, decoration, stained glass, sculpture, enamels, iconography, heraldry, seals, and coins.⁴³ This constant attention to comparing objects with other sources permeates his methodology in the *Histoire du costume*: in his discussion of the undergarment worn by the Gauls, for instance, Quicherat notes that the shirt was first mentioned by the Greek geographer Strabo and then that “the description this author gives is confirmed by several monuments, coins, and bas-reliefs of funerary steles

which date back to the end of the Roman Republic.”⁴⁴ Alongside this description, Quicherat includes an engraving of a Celtic tunic and pants recently excavated from the Thorsberg Moor and published by Conrad Helvig Engelhardt [Fig. 10].⁴⁵ This is a typical example of Quicherat’s three-levelled source comparison: the text, the monuments, and the reproduction of the object are used together to provide the most accurate garment description and dating.

Figure 10



A page from the *Histoire du costume* featuring a Celtic tunic. Jules Quicherat, *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 10.

Reproduction Getty Research Institute

- 23 The *Histoire du costume* includes illustrations of various objects, including tools, jewelry, garments, shoes, vases, statues, helmets, swords, coins, medals, cameos, bas-reliefs, sculptures, funerary effigies, and architectural elements like fireplaces, church doors, and cornices [Fig. 11]. The pictorial sources come from manuscripts, paintings, tapestries, and fashion plates. Most of the engravings had already been published, but Quicherat also included some objects he had seen during his travels and sketched by hand on-site or from museums. These illustrations were shown in archaeological detail, with broken pieces or missing bits left as is, and garments drawn carefully enough to give an indication of the quality of the fabric. Precisely illustrated garments and accessories were included alongside the more common illustrations of fashionable individuals—a new way of showing garments compared to anterior sources.

Figure 11



A page featuring illustrations of archeological objects and a statue from the the *Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* by Jules Quicherat, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. 87.

Reproduction Getty Research Institute.

- 24 Quicherat was transparent with his readers when sources were lacking. For instance, when discussing Gaulish women, he noted that the sources from “history and archaeology are hopelessly impoverished.”⁴⁶ Quicherat did not attempt to compensate by looking at later literary or pictorial sources.⁴⁷ He frequently warned his readers about using sculptures as sources: artists were not historians, they were more concerned with aesthetic than historical accuracy. As sculptures aged, he argued in a wholly modern approach, their details wore down or sections broke off, losses that could make identification of gender or social status unverifiable.⁴⁸
- 25 Quicherat also recognized the limitations of his textual sources: primary sources were not infallible. Descriptions that could not be cross-referenced were noted for the reader: “Vegetius’ account, in which the Roman soldier would have to protect his right leg with an *ocrea* or metal gaiter, is not justified by the monuments.”⁴⁹ The illustration of a barelegged Roman soldier that he provided alongside the text justified his skepticism. In moments when he had conflicting textual accounts, his method was to provide his readers with both accounts and explain which one he considered accurate. Quicherat strove to correct popular beliefs and opinions that had become ingrained over time, searching for the root of their myth while justifying the “scientific” authenticity of his highly Romanticized narrative through his comparative source analysis.
- 26 Quicherat was also committed to choosing the best visual sources to accurately illustrate his text. Quicherat’s archives reveal that he had an equally ravenous appetite

for pictorial sources as he did for textual sources. He compiled image folders for each of his chapters that included archaeological objects sketched by his own hand or sent in from local historians, engravings cut out from books, and photographs or drawings of objects and images. Only a fraction of what he drew or copied from life made it into his articles and book, but the richness of his archives attests to the importance he placed on pictorial sources to advance the knowledge of dress history. In many ways, Quicherat acknowledged his debt to the historians who came before him: he referred to his predecessors when summarizing their knowledge and certainly did not hesitate to include engravings previously published by the scholars and archaeologists Bernard de Montfaucon (Benedictine, 1655-1741) and Charles Louandre (1812-1882), as well as by the artist Nicolas Xavier Willemin (1763-1833), among others. But he was equally intent on providing new sources, especially clothing recently discovered from excavations and searches, and he made a point of illustrating the dress of all social classes and of both men and women from artisans to kings, queens, and nobles of French history.

- 27 While descriptions and definitions of garments based on textual and pictorial sources was the primary way in which dress history was written from the fifteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Quicherat innovated within this tradition: he was uninterested in showing the most complete set of sources available in the antiquarian style, preferring instead to choose the most “authentic” sources possible, based on comparison. Even more importantly, Quicherat was the first to use his sources to write what he privately called a “philosophy” of dress history – that is, a sustained theory of “how” and “why” clothing developed through French history.⁵⁰

Conclusion

- 28 Occurring nearly at the same time, the “Musée historique du costume” and the publication of the *Histoire du costume* both taught people specific ways of object-looking and object-thinking: the exhibition, through the abundant display of authentic objects, and the book, through its comparative methodology and ability to use objects as historical sources. Both the “Musée historique du costume” and Quicherat juxtaposed visual and material sources, one within cases and rooms, the other on paper. However, the organizers of the “Musée historique du costume” failed to provide the larger historical narrative that bound the objects together. The exhibition was a success in terms of visitor numbers, but what did the visitor glean of the objects on display? A boulevard play about the “Bibelots de Paris” contains a dialogue between two characters, one of whom tries to convince the other to attend the exhibition, arguing that “it is one of the trinkets of Paris” – a sentiment that reveals a superficial appreciation of the objects on display at best.⁵¹ Attempts by the popular press to provide historical framework for the objects on display seem to reveal an intellectual desire to historicize the objects, and the popularity of Quicherat’s book demonstrates the public’s desire as well. The *Histoire du costume* not only taught readers how to use objects to write history, but also framed them within grand national narratives about French identity and industry. Indeed, when a reviewer noted that Quicherat’s book “is like a résumé of the exhibition, and one would almost believe it was inspired by it were it not for the long years of research that it demanded of its author,” he was only half correct – Quicherat’s book was not a résumé of compiled objects but a fully-fleshed history based on material as well as textual sources.⁵²

- 29 Both the exhibition and the book propelled the public's interest in seeing and reading about historic fashion: more dress exhibitions were organized over the course of the century, eventually culminating in two large retrospective exhibitions at the 1900 Exposition Universelle. Quicherat's book was published at the start of a rich period for the writing of dress history: Augustin Challamel published his *Histoire de la mode en France. La toilette des femmes depuis l'époque gallo-romaine jusqu'à nos jours* the same year, as did Charles Blanc, with his *L'Art dans la parure et dans le vêtement*. Indeed, by 1900, a middle-class French woman could find articles about fashion history in nearly all the fashion magazines, which were also filled with notes about garments bearing historicizing features such as hats à la Louis XVI, dresses à la Pompadour, and jackets with collars à la Louis XIII. Historicizing dress was certainly not new to the late 19th century, but for the first time a wider span of female readers had access to both scientific knowledge about dress history and the ability to see authentic historic dress on display.
- ⁵³ Knowledge about dress history increased exponentially from 1874 onward as did public awareness of the value of historical garments. In this sense, the "Musée historique" and the *Histoire du costume* mark the start of French fashion historiography, the moment when objects became valued sources in the writing – and doing – of dress history.

NOTES

1. The exhibition closed on November 10, 1874.
2. The Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie was the precursor to the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs (UCAD), which is known today as the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD) in Paris.
3. *Catalogue des œuvres et des produits modernes exposés au Palais de l'Industrie, par l'Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie, quatrième exposition, 1874, Paris, A. Chaix et Cie, 1874, p. 35-36.*
4. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs (hereafter, AD), Box A1/54, "Règlements" in *Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'Industrie, Documents Concernant l'Exposition de 1876*, Paris, Bureaux Administration et Rédaction, 1875, p. 2.
5. Organizers labeled the first category "les costumes eux-mêmes et pièces de costumes" and the second, "les œuvres d'art reproduisant les costumes." AD, Box A1/52, LAFENESTRE M.G., *Exposition Rétrospective, Rapport, Commission Consultative*. All translations from French to English are the author's own.
6. Revenues totaled 219,824 francs (entry fees alone garnered 189,000 francs). AD, D1/24, "Statistique des Expositions de l'Union centrale depuis 1874". 21,088 people attended the retrospective exhibition in 1869 and 38,352 in 1865. AD, A1/52, *Bulletin de l'Union centrale: Revue mensuelle des beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie*, p. 33.
7. For a discussion on the collectors present in this exhibition, as well as an analysis of modes of display of fashion exhibitions until 1900, see BASS-KRUEGER Maude, "Fashion

Collections, Collectors, and Exhibitions in France, 1874–1900: Historical Imagination, the Spectacular Past, and the Practice of Restoration”, *Fashion Theory*, vol. 22, n° 4-5, 2018, p. 405-433.

8. Léon Heuzey (1831-1922) taught Greek and Roman dress history at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1863-1884. To teach his students, he draped fabric on live models during class. A book of his sources and research was published posthumously: HEUZEY Léon, *Histoire du costume antique*, Paris, Librairie Champion, 1922.

9. Room 7 featured sixteen mannequins representing the “Penitents of Limoges”; Room 12 was dedicated to theatre costumes that recreated historic fashion.

10. *Musée historique du costume - Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, Exposition*, Paris, A. Chaix, 1874, p. 1-3.

11. For a sustained analysis of Quicherat’s theory of fashion history, see Maude BASS-KRUEGER, “The power of (writing) history: Jules Quicherat, France’s first fashion historian”, *Dix-Neuf*, vol. 26, n°4, 2022, p. 263-281.

12. Daniel Roche devotes an entire chapter to moving beyond “the Quicherat effect” in his book *La Culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 1989, p. 13.

13. On the rise of museums in the 19th century, see GRIENER Pascal, *Pour une histoire du regard: L’expérience du musée au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Hazan, Louvre éditions, 2017 ; POMIAN Krzysztof, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale: tome II: L’ancrage européen, 1798-1850*, Paris, Gallimard, 2021. On the importance of Romantic historians, see CROSSLEY Ceri, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet*, London, New York, Routledge, 1993.

14. For more on how Michelet inspired Quicherat’s work on dress history, see BASS-KRUEGER Maude, “The Power of (Writing) History: Jules Quicherat, France’s First Fashion Historian”, *op. cit.*, p.263-281.

15. BOSCH Alexandra, “Costume Transformations as a Way of Legitimization for the French Bourgeoisie in the Second Part of the 19th Century”, paper presented at the international symposium *Costume Colloquium III: Past Dress – Future Fashion*, Florence (November 8-9, 2012).

16. The Union centrale’s statutes have been reprinted, in GUICHARD Edouard and others, “Statuts de l’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l’Industrie”, *Le Beau dans l’Utile. Histoire sommaire de l’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l’Industrie*, Paris, Union centrale, 1866, p. 21-29.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

18. The Musée des Arts Décoratifs was finally inaugurated in the Pavillon de Marsan wing of the Louvre in 1905.

19. Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l’Industrie. Exposition de 1865. Palais de l’industrie. Musée rétrospectif, Paris, J. Lemer, 1867, p. ix.

20. In 1869 the retrospective section was devoted to Oriental Art. *Catalogue du Musée Oriental, Exposition 1869*, Paris, Union centrale, 1869.

21. *Quatrième exposition 1874: Musée historique du costume*, Paris, A. Chaix et C^{ie}, 1874, p. VII. See also FROISSART-PEZONE Rossella, “Quand le palais Galliera s’ouvrait aux ‘ateliers des faubourgs’: le musée d’Art industriel de la Ville de Paris”, *Revue de l’Art*, n° 116, 2nd semestre 1997, p. 95-105.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

23. The museum was also called the “musée d’art français.” BANN Stephen, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 82.

24. Georges Lafenestre was a poet and art critic before becoming a museum administrator. He was hired in the “ministère de l’Instruction public et des Beaux-Arts” in 1870, first as the Director’s secretary and then, from 1880 onward, as an inspector. In 1886 he was hired as an associate curator of paintings and drawings at the musée du Louvre. CHARLE Christophe & TELKÈS Eva, “42. Lafenestre (Georges, Edouard)”, in CHARLE Christophe & TELKÈS Eva (eds.), *Les professeurs du Collège de France – Dictionnaire biographique 1901-1939*, Paris, Institut national de recherche pédagogique/Éditions du CNRS, 1988, p. 118-121.

25. See LAFENESTRE Georges, “Exposition de l’Union centrale, Musée historique du costume”, *Le Monde Illustré*, n° 920, 28 November 1874, p. 346.

26. See LAFENESTRE Georges, “Exposition de l’Union centrale des Beaux-arts. Exposition rétrospective du costume, I”, *Le Monde illustré*, n° 913, 10 October 1874, p. 235.

27. LAFENESTRE Georges, “Exposition de l’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts”, *Le Monde Illustré*, n° 913, 10 October 1874, p. 235.

28. See BASS-KRUEGER Maude, “Realistic Wax Mannequin,” in *Extinct: A Compendium of Obsolete Objects*, ed. Barbara Penner et al., London, Reaktion, 2021, p. 269 ; DE FLIGUÉ Erwan, *Stockman: Une histoire du mannequin de vitrine*, Paris, Flammarion, 2017; MUNRO Jane, *Mannequin d’artiste, mannequin fétiche*, Paris, Paris musées 2015.

29. Musée historique du costume, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

30. See “L’Union des Beaux-Arts et l’exposition rétrospective du costume: Deuxième article”, *L’Univers*, n° 2536, 30 November 1874, p. 1-2.

31. CHARTON Edouard (ed.), *Le Magasin pittoresque*, n° 43, 1875, p. 370.

32. See “Exposition de l’Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l’Industrie, Exposition rétrospective du costume”, *Le Monde Illustré*, n° 917, 7 November 1874, p. 292-294.

33. CHARTON Edouard (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 369.

34. MARQUIS DE VILLEMER, “L’Exposition de costumes aux Champs-Élysées”, *La vie parisienne*, n° 12, 26 September 1874, p. 546-549.

35. Julien (*dit* Jules) Étienne Joseph Quicherat was born on October 13, 1814, in Paris, France. Quicherat focused on classical studies at the Sainte-Barbe secondary school. After graduating, he spent several years studying mathematics, learning Arabic, and painting in the workshop of the history and genre painter and engraver Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet. However, Quicherat’s admiration for the historian Jules Michelet inspired him to pursue the study of the past. In 1835, he entered the École des chartes, where he earned his degree in paleographic archives two years later. GIRY Arthur, « Jules Quicherat, 1814-1882 », *Revue historique*, t. XIX, mai-août 1882, p. 241-264 ; LASTEYRIE Robert de, « Jules Quicherat, sa vie et ses travaux », *Bulletin du Comité des travaux historiques*, 1883, 1, p. 6.

36. QUICHERAT Jules, “Histoire du costume en France au XIV^e siècle. École royale des chartes, séance d’inauguration 5 mai 1847”, in *École royale des chartes : Séance d’inauguration (5 mai 1847)*, Paris, P. Dupont, 1847, p. 14.
37. Between 1845 and 1869 Quicherat published two articles a year on French costume history for *Le Magasin pittoresque*. The first article was on French fourteenth-century fashion and the last one on fashion in 1791.
38. QUICHERAT Jules, *Histoire du costume en France : depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu’à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1875, p. ii.
39. The Quicherat archives consulted at Archives nationales were found under the number 93AJ/313-324; 93AJ/321-322 relate specifically to the *Histoire du costume*.
40. QUICHERAT Jules, *Histoire du costume*, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
41. LENIAUD Jean-Michel, “Quicherat”, *Dictionnaire critique des historiens de l’art*, INHA [online], <https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/quicherat-jules.html> [link valid in March 2024].
42. Anonymous manuscript of Quicherat’s lectures, BnF, Box B31, lessons 1848-1840. “Leniaud Jean-Michel, “Projecteur sur une zone d’ombre dans l’histoire de l’histoire de l’art médiéval”, in RECHT Roland et al. (dir.), *Histoire de l’histoire de l’art en France au XIX^e siècle*, (actes de colloque : Paris, Institut national d’Histoire de l’art et Collège de France, 2004), Paris, La Documentation française, 2008, p. 58.
43. These were the titles of the classes given by Quicherat under the heading “Medieval Archaeology”. LENIAUD Jean-Michel, “Projecteur sur une zone d’ombre dans l’histoire de l’histoire de l’art médiéval”, *op. cit.*, p.58.
44. QUICHERAT Jules, *Histoire du costume*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
45. The Thorsberg Moor was excavated between 1858 and 1861 by Helvig Engelhardt, who subsequently published a book on the findings in 1863. ENGELHARDT Helvig Conrad, *Thorsbjerg Mosefund*, Copenhagen, Gad, 1863.
46. QUICHERAT, *Histoire du costume*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
50. Quicherat’s historical narrative is explored at length, in BASS-KRUEGER, “The Power of (Writing) History,” *op. cit.*
51. BUGUET Henry, *Les bibelots de Paris: revue en deux actes et quatre tableaux*, Paris, Tresse, 1875, p. 41.
52. DESPREZ Adrien, “Les trésors de la librairie française”, *Musée universel : revue illustrée hebdomadaire*, vol.3, n° 1, 1 October 1874, p. 177.
53. For the 19th century fashion for historicism, see BOSC Alexandra “Chérusques, manches gigot et cols Médicis : les modes néo-Renaissance dans la garde-robe féminine du XIX^e siècle”, in DION-TENENBAUM Anne and GAY-MAZUEL Audrey (dir.), *Revivals. L’historicisme dans les arts décoratifs français au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, musée des Arts décoratifs/Louvre éditions, 2020, p. 208-213.

ABSTRACTS

The first exhibition about the history of costume, the “Musée historique du costume” was inaugurated in France in 1874. One year later, the historian and archaeologist Jules Quicherat (1814-1882) published the first popular book about French dress history, *l'Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (Hachette, 1875). The exhibition and the book were immensely popular. This article seeks to understand the nascent interest in the material culture of fashion that they both revealed. A closer examination of how the organizers chose to display the objects in the “Musée historique du costume”, as well as the way they instructed the visitor to see what was in the exhibition, reveals the very first institutional framework for public interaction with historical fashion objects. The analysis of the *Histoire du costume*, and in particular a careful examination of the method used by Quicherat, shows how Quicherat succeeded in integrating fashion objects as sources into a larger historic narrative.

La première exposition sur l'histoire du costume, le « Musée historique du costume », fut inaugurée en France en 1874. Un an plus tard, l'historien et archéologue Jules Quicherat (1814-1882) publia le premier ouvrage de vulgarisation sur l'histoire du costume français, *l'Histoire du costume en France depuis les temps reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (Hachette, 1875). L'exposition et le livre ont connu un immense succès. Cet article cherche à comprendre l'intérêt naissant pour la culture matérielle de la mode qu'ils ont tous deux révélé. En examinant de plus près la manière dont les organisateurs choisirent de présenter les objets dans le « Musée historique du costume », ainsi que la manière dont ils incitèrent le visiteur à voir ce qui se trouvait dans l'exposition, on découvre le tout premier cadre institutionnel pour l'interaction du public avec les objets historiques de la mode. L'analyse de *l'Histoire du costume* et, en particulier, l'examen attentif de la méthode utilisée par Quicherat montrent comment ce dernier a réussi à intégrer les objets de mode en tant que sources dans un récit historique plus large.

INDEX

Mots-clés: mode, expositions, histoire de la mode, culture matérielle, Jules Quicherat, histoire du patrimoine de la mode

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