



Chanel (Metropolitan Museum of Art Publications)

Harold Koda, Andrew Bolton

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This splendid book examines the legacy of Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel, one of the twentieth century's great icons of style. While Chanel mythologized her glamorous life through relentless self-invention, the bare facts of her biography are no less worthy than her legend: born of a poor family in the provinces and raised in a convent, she was an entertainer and the mistress of men of impeccable social standing, and she began her career not as a dressmaker but as a milliner.

Chanel's enduring influence is necessarily based on the long shadow cast over fashion by her maison couture. Chanel examines the history of the House of Chanel both thematically and chronologically, introducing ideas and elements of biography as they were expressed in her collections. Period examples are juxtaposed with the work of Karl Lagerfeld, who, beginning in 1983, just over ten years after Chanel's death, reinvented and revolutionized the House's identity. It is in Lagerfeld's masterful and often irreverent interpretations of Chanel's work, as well as his mixing of influences from high and low culture, that the historic importance of Chanel and the resonance of her image as the independent, elegant modern woman are both defined and reasserted for the contemporary world.

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