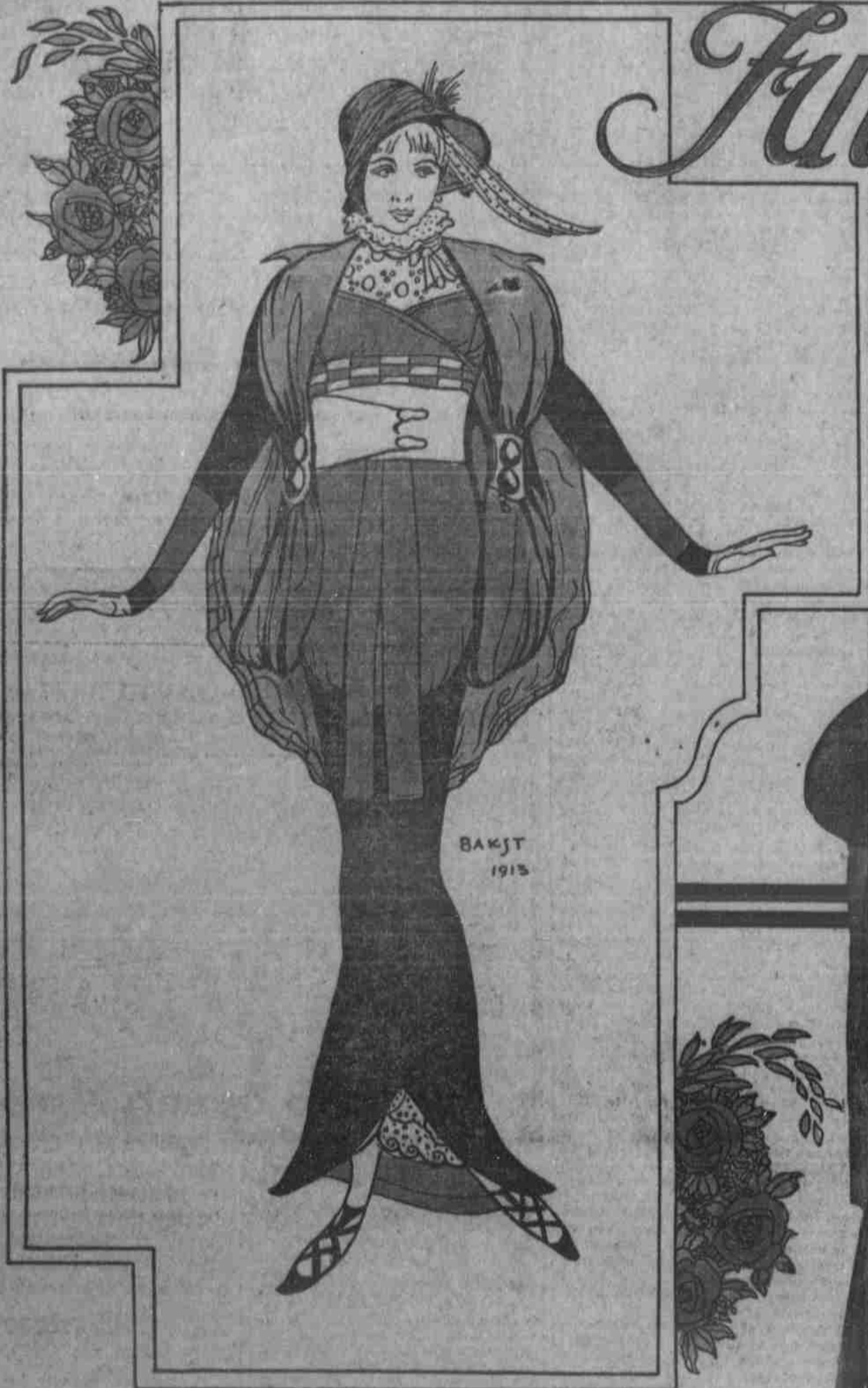


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## Futurist Fashions

Modern Tendencies in Art as Applied to Dress by Lady Duff-Gordon and Artist Bakst



"Isis," Leon Bakst's Conception of the Futurist Costume for the Ultra-Modern Woman, Designed to Give Freedom of Soul as Well as of Movement.

LADY DUFF-GORDON, the famous "Lucile" of London, and foremost creator of fashions in the world, writes each week the fashion article for this newspaper, presenting all that is newest and best in styles for well-dressed women.

Lady Duff-Gordon's Paris establishment brings her into close touch with that centre of fashion. Lady Duff-Gordon's American establishment is at Nos. 37 and 39 West Fifty-seventh street, New York.

By Lady Duff-Gordon ("Lucile").

LEON BAKST, the Russian painter and designer of the Russian ballet costumes has entered the world of fashion and has proven that after all to design a woman's costume is as artistically important as to paint a great Madonna. In the other days no artist, no painter of world-wide reputation would have dared "descend" to the designing of fashions, but to-day's standards are changed, and no painter feels that he is "descending" when he creates a costume that compels attention and admiration from all the world. I am delighted to be able to send you three pictures of designs just made by the painter. Each differs from the other, although each is perfect in its way. And at the same time I am sending you my own conceptions of the same ideas.

Naturally Bakst, above all others, understands his own importance in the art world, and he adopts a rather pleased patronage toward the very women for whom he is now creating. Just what development in our modern life is responsible for the present great importance of woman's wear I cannot decide quite to my satisfaction. Perhaps it is the tremendous increase in our wealth, but there were great fortunes in other days.

There must be some sensualism in every great painting, else it would not be great. By sensualism I do not mean the sensualism of the first paintings of Bakst, but the merest hint conveyed by color that gives richness and removes the austere. Bakst's theory is that certain shades of yellow and red convey the idea of passion, and therefore he uses these shades when he wishes to portray sensuality in his costumes. He

says that to convey this tendency in his design would be vulgar, but to convey it in color is art, and true art is never vulgar or suggestive.

In his paintings Bakst dyed his colors to match the soul of the character he portrayed, and in his ballet costumes he did the same. For instance, his Cleopatra was a wonderful, a gloriously daring conception of the great queen's character. Her voluptuousness, her passions, her uncertainties of temper are all shown in her clothes. One feels that they are alive.

With tremendous discrimination and the subtlest art this master is doing this same thing in his fashion designs. When he decided to enter this new field he became imbued with the idea that to create the perfect costume for woman he must build it on her most prominent characteristic. Long and many were his discussions on this theory with me in my atelier, and finally he evolved the theory that the chief characteristic of the modern woman was her "sportiveness," as we would say in England, but which you in America would call "interest in sports."

With "sportiveness" the characteristic of modern woman and her great inclination to advance, Bakst based his new costumes on woman's desire for freedom—freedom of soul, as well as of movement.

As he said one day to me over the teacups when this idea was filling his mind, "I think I can best explain my aims by saying that I wish to express the springtime of the earth sensorially. To me the springtime is the futurist season of the year. Nature at that season is striving after the best. Also I wish to show something frank and unconven-



"Lucile" Costume, Expressing the Extreme Modernity of the Day Even More Effectively Than Bakst.

tional. The modern woman, you know, has both these qualities to a marked degree."

And now, do you not agree with me that he has achieved that for which he strove?

In "Isis" he shows the ultra modernity of woman. A freakish costume, you say? Ah, not so. Every line, every bit of drapery has a meaning of its own to its creator. Every shading of color has its meaning.

My own conception of this same idea differs from that of Bakst, but after all, as you will see, the same thought is there. The same outline is suggested. I have made a greater concession perhaps to the feeling that in everyday life we cannot be too extreme, that our clothes must after all be made so that we can wear them on ordinary occasions.

But while I may make concessions as to form and design I never do as to color. I feel that my own color creations are superior to all others, and never do I allow any criticism. Do I not spend my days, the hours of the night as well as those of the day, in this ever fascinating search for color?

In this first design I have allowed for the freedom of movement that Bakst seems so important. The fabric used is a satin charmeuse, and the shade is a rare and glorious blue that I produced in my own workshop, spending long hours over the dye pot to achieve it.

The hat that I desire worn with this costume is plain, and has a wide brim. The only trimming is a sash of blue dyed to match the garment. Is there not beauty and grace as well as usefulness in this costume?

But to return to Bakst. "Philomela" is a costume that epitomizes the springtime of the earth and the reaching out into the future to its creator, who says that he was inspired by the period when the race was young, when civilization was at its best. There is more than a suggestion of the Egyptian in this costume, not only in color, but in form. And it does convey the idea of freedom of movement to a great degree, I think.

In "Iolante" there is a wonderful clarity of outline, and, oh, the wonder of the color! It is my one regret that while you are able to see



"Iolante," a Second Conception of Bakst, Symbolizing the Sporting Interests of the Modern Woman.

the design, it is of course impossible for you to have the real colors reproduced. While this third figure appears attenuated when compared with the others, it is not so in reality. It is the outcome of the restlessness of the modern woman. Woman, like the earth, is at her most restless period at this time. The second picture of my own is a conception of the same restlessness,

but again my conception differs from that of the artist. Perhaps because I am a woman first and an artist afterward, I firmly believe that it takes a woman to understand a woman. Men may have wonderful theories as to our thoughts and aspirations, wonderful reasons for our being what we are, but only a woman really knows the soul of woman.

Therefore I am sure that my conceptions of the modern woman will be more pleasing to woman than those of Monsieur Bakst, but who can deny the glory and beauty of his work?



"Philomela," a Bakst, Creation Interpreting Woman's Restiveness To-day.