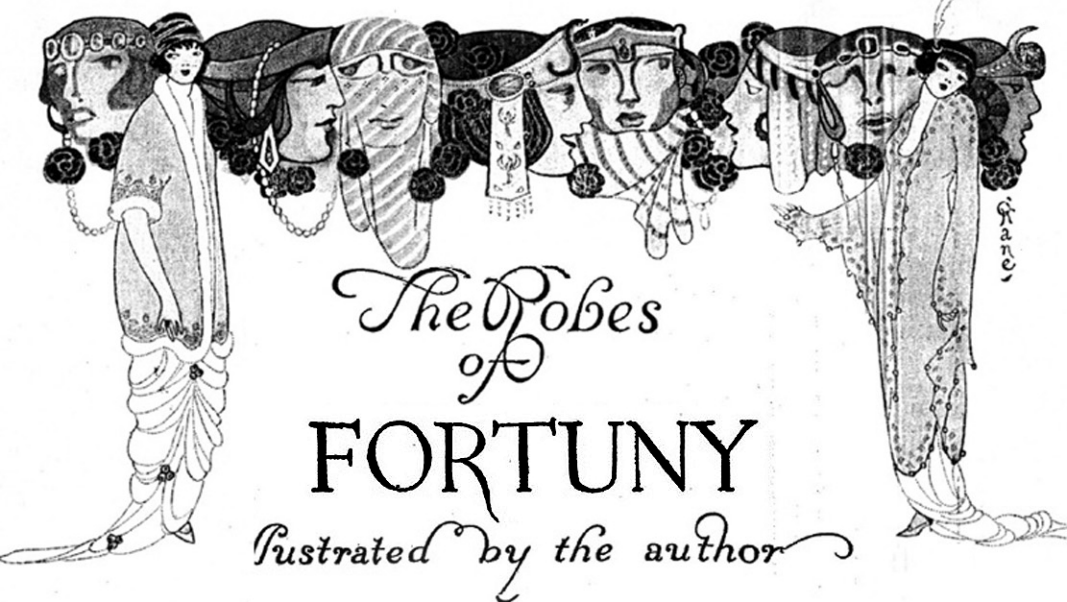




TO be an artist of distinction in the world of dress and yet to be unknown and unexploited in America, where there is an eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt be well dressed," is almost an achievement. This, whether with malice aforethought or merely from the natural shyness of genius, Fortuny has accomplished. The name, though not the man, is well known to us. It is that of the famous Spanish painter of miniature genre subjects, the father of the present bearer of the name. The genius of that master of detail, that painter of minutely patterned fabrics, transmitted from father to son, finds expression in the wonderful robes M. Fortuny is creating.

AN ARTIST WHO PAINTS FABRICS

M. Fortuny is not a couturier. He is primarily, in the dressmaking world, a creator of fabrics. He takes a piece of unfigured cloth—chiffon, lawn, crêpe, what you will—and paints or stencils upon it a design of such rare beauty that it would be sacrilege to consider further decoration. Great squares so patterned—plateaux they are called—lined with a dull-toned silk, are sold to couturiers and décorateurs and by them developed into gowns, coats, table-covers, or whatever else their fertility suggests.

Besides these, M. Fortuny makes little unfinished tunics, robes, and kimonos which are stenciled with a border or other design, and which, with the aid of beads also of his designing, a bit of odd lace, or a band of fur, the dressmakers develop into gowns and coats very much à la mode.

AMERICA DISCOVERS M. FORTUNY

The beautiful robes of M. Fortuny, although well known in Paris, London, and Berlin, have only recently been imported into this country, so they are known to only the favored few. Miss Helen Sheppard, in whose delightful little shop some of them are to be seen, secured them through the influence of a famous American artist, long a resident of Paris. Enthusiasm for them is easily understood. So personal is their character that imitation would be well-nigh impossible. Therefore they appeal strongly to individualists in gowning.

The materials used are of a curious eastern texture which is woven to the order of the artist. These extraordinary stuffs, inwrought with gold that appears dim with age, and deft patterns in strange tones of grays, browns, blues, and greens, seem indeed relics of primitive magnificence.



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The gowns depend for beauty, other than that of the fabric itself, entirely upon long, clinging lines. The cut is always simple, and the use of fantastic beads and cordings is the only ornamentation as they come from the hands of the artist. The transparent, loose robes are used unlined as house frocks. The dressmaker usually sells with them a sheath-like slip that is either slashed, draped, or plaited. When such a robe is backed by a color that throws the design into relief, a charming dinner gown is the result, and when fur is added, the effect has a richness like that of some antique Venetian costume.

The large, square plateaux are stenciled and lined ready to drape into evening coats. When furs are added these are most luxurious. One of these squares is converted into a dinner gown by simply wrapping it about the figure with one end trailing on the ground. The other end of the material forms a low corsage. One shoulder is banded with sapphire tulle and the other with jewels. Such an arrangement is shown on this page.

PARTIALLY MADE ROBES

Perhaps the most beautiful robe in the collection shown in this country is one of an indescribable gray-brown, mummy tone. The lines on which it has been developed are indicated to the right of the decoration at the top of the page. A gold-worked design follows the edges of the wing-like sleeves, which are in one piece with the robe. The delicate material, weighted with the Fortuny beads, falls in wonderfully graceful lines.

An amusingly artless frock shows a stenciled design running in bands on a dead white background. This hangs straight from shoulder to hem, and is confined at the waist by a queer kind of string which reminds one of book-binding and William Morris. This cord is run through ornate beads and knotted at the front. Such frocks are artistic without being studio effects—in itself an achievement—and sensationalism, which manywheres runs riot, is quite lacking.

SHORT ROBES AND LONG

One of the heavily stenciled coats is in the Russian style, the effect of which is heightened by the furs. This coat, unlike most Fortuny models, has a distinct waist-line, and an inverted plait gives to the scant skirt a slight fullness. A gold design covers the black ground material, which is edged by another line of gold stenciling upon green.

A wonderful tea-gown of voluminous gray-green drapery is stenciled in terra-cotta in a delightful design of fruit and flowers. Red cornelian beads deepen the color on sleeves and train, and a large stone lifts one side slightly at the corsage. The folds of this robe are much like those pictured in the lovely figures on Roman vases.

Most unique effects may be obtained with the short tunics. One simple model, such as is sketched to the left of the top decoration, is often developed, as here illustrated, into an evening wrap. Stenciling borders sleeve and coat bottom, and a band of fur following this decoration is all that is needed to convert it into a formal and fashionable, though far from ultra, wrap.

MARGUERITE O'KANE.



Here there is no cutting, but, like primitive dress, the material is simply swathed about the figure