

WWD

Claudia Wieser: "At Yves Saint Laurent Museum, an Artist Dialogues With the Archives"

By Joelle Diderich

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Formal ensemble worn by Iman, Saint Laurent Rive Gauche autumn-winter 1988 collection.

© Yves Saint Laurent © Guy Marineau COURTESY OF MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT PARIS

PARIS — [Yves Saint Laurent](#)'s dialogue with [art](#) continues with a new exhibition that juxtaposes creations from the late designer's archives with specially commissioned works by contemporary artist Claudia Wieser.

"[Yves Saint Laurent](#) — Shapes & Forms," which opens at the Yves Saint Laurent Museum in Paris on Friday, reflects the institution's renewed focus on creating bridges with the art world, following the arrival last year of [its new director Elsa Janssen](#), whose background includes a 10-year stint as director of cultural events at [Galeries Lafayette](#).

The exhibition showcases the couturier's obsession with line and color through four sections, including a podium bursting with bright creations such as a color-blocked Pop Art dress from 1966, and a room devoted to his black-and-white designs, set off by a wall of ceramic tiles with graphic motifs designed by Wieser in response to the selection.

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"We wanted to show his most radical, modern and graphic work," Janssen said during a preview.

She and Serena Bucalo-Mussely, the museum's curator and head of collections, filtered Saint Laurent's work through the prism of major 20th century abstract [art](#) movements. They found connections with Op Art and Bauhaus, and artists such as Victor Vasarely, Max Bill and Ellsworth Kelly, among others.

"The idea, ultimately, was to perpetuate this history of dialogue between different disciplines and the arts that he always embraced," Janssen explained.



Dress, Saint Laurent Rive Gauche fall 1997 collection.

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The show features some 40 looks spanning haute couture and ready-to-wear, in addition to accessories and sketches, all set off by Wieser's installations ranging from wall friezes to wooden sculptures, and colorful display cases lined with wallpaper made using archival images. "Little by little, the exhibition was conceived as a duo show," Janssen said.

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Wieser is not a total newcomer to [fashion](#), having designed the set for the [Hermès spring 2021 show](#) in Paris. She thrives on working outside the box. "In my work, one of my primary concerns is to free myself from the classic boundaries that exist between the fine arts and other disciplines such as [fashion](#), craftsmanship, design or architecture," she said in a statement.

"I don't like my works shown in isolation, in the most neutral spaces possible, but prefer that they dialogue with the venue and the context in which they are placed," added the German artist, who is known for her Modernist-inspired geometric constructions.

The exhibition begins and ends with designs from Saint Laurent's early days as artistic director of Christian Dior, where he ushered in an era of minimalism with his Trapeze collection in 1958, breaking with founder Christian Dior's hourglass New Look silhouette. "That's why my women are often dressed in black: I like women to look like drawings, like sketches," he once said.

Optical illusions and geometrical shapes, like a pillbox hat made of two stacked cubes, illustrate his skill in transposing abstract compositions into living, breathing garments.



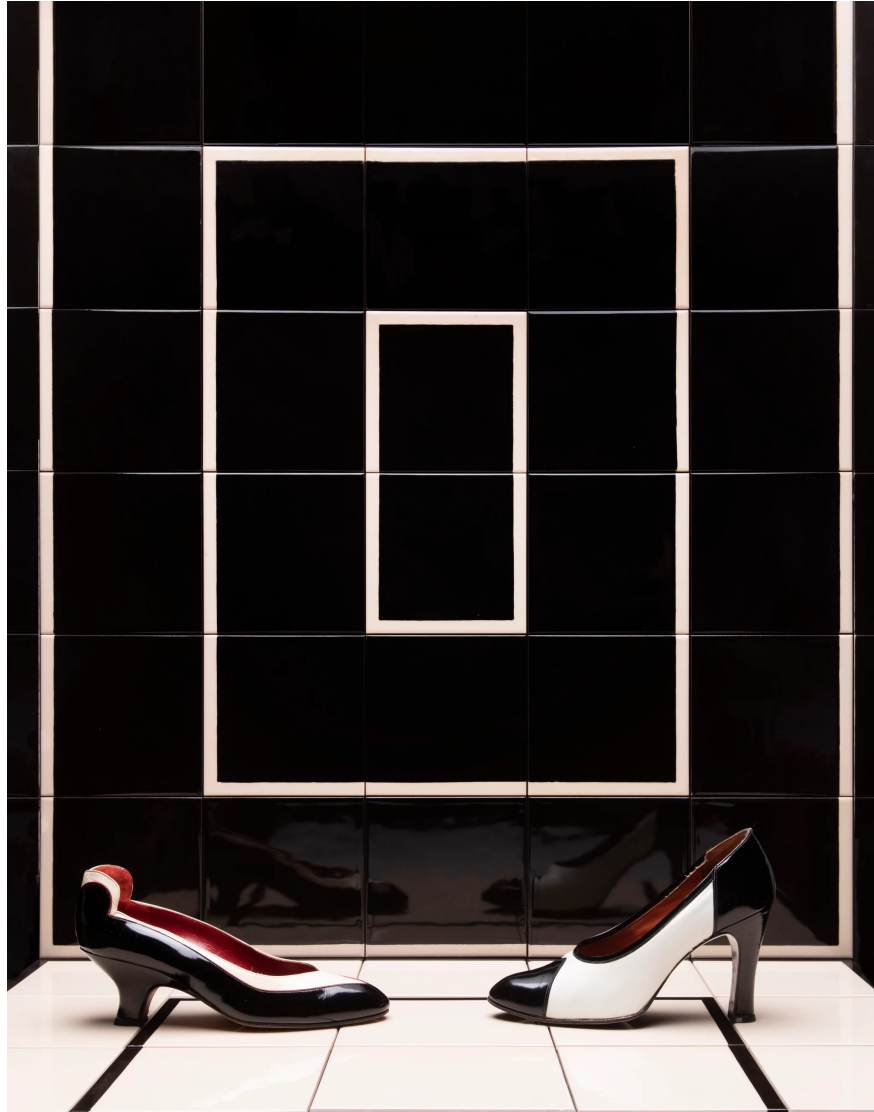
Sketch of a costume for the "Night and Day" act from the music-hall show "Zizi Je t'aime!," directed by Roland Petit at the Casino de Paris, 1972. © Fondation Pierre Bergé — Yves Saint Laurent COURTESY OF MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT PARIS

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"Anyone who has ever witnessed the fittings involved in the creation of a fashion collection, at such a level of professionalism, will realize that the couturier's work on the body, his or her sense of observation, the never-ending adjustments and the changes, reactivity and 'modeling' that this type of creation requires, correspond in many respects to the work of a sculptor, of a painter and of an artist in general," Wieser opined.

An unrivaled colorist, the designer was not afraid to use jarring hues. "Saint Laurent's use of color is quite mind-blowing because he makes pairings that are almost considered counter-nature in haute couture, by combining colors like fuchsia and red, or violet and green," said Bucalo-Mussely.



Patent leather shoes. Spring 1979 haute couture collection. Saint Laurent Rive Gauche spring 1983 collection.
© Yves Saint Laurent. Decor by Claudia Wieser © Photograph by Thibaut Voisin THIBAUT VOISIN/COURTESY OF MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT PARIS

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Among the sketches on show are Saint Laurent's costume designs for choreographer Roland Petit's 1967 production of "Notre-Dame de Paris" for the Paris Opera Ballet. His fashion sketches use techniques ranging from ink to pastel, illustrating his passion for drawing.

The show includes a number of rarely seen pieces, such as the jacket from his Cubist-inspired fall 1988 Rive Gauche ready to wear collection that is featured on the exhibition poster. Worn by Iman on the runway, it's composed from a patchwork of satin and leather in a combination of pink, white, black, fuchsia and yellow.

Janssen said that just as Saint Laurent's creations popularized the work of artists such as Piet Mondrian in the '60s, this exhibition aims to provide a platform for Wieser's art.

"As a discipline that has a broader following than art, fashion is a great way to foster conversation and to introduce people to art in the broader sense," she said.

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