CHRISTIE'S

"11 artists with underrated personal style, from Leonor Fini to Judy Chicago""

By Stephanie Sporn
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Left: Leonore Fini. Photo by AFP via Getty Images. Right: Judy Chicago at the exhibition *Judy Chicago: Revelations* at Serpentine North, London, UK, 2024. © Chicago Woodman LLC, Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Photo © Chicago Woodman LLC, Donald Woodman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Leonor Fini's sartorial surrealism

A flair for eccentric flamboyance defined Leonor Fini's personal style, oeuvre and myriad collaborations. With her theatrical self-fashioning, as immortalised in photographs by Man Ray, Henri Cartier-Bresson and more, the Argentine-Italian Surrealist was the embodiment of the enigmatic women she painted. Fini's preoccupation with sartorial transformation began as a young girl. After her abusive father attempted to kidnap her, she dressed as a boy for several

years to remain undetectable in public. Throughout her life, she'd experiment with gender-bending fashion, as well as masks and ensembles that reflected her interest in hybrid creatures with human and animal features. Fini additionally designed extravagant sets and costumes for dozens of plays, ballets, operas and films; however, her most famous design is undoubtedly Schiaparelli's 1937 'Shocking' perfume bottle, inspired by Mae West's torso.



Leonor Fini at a masked costume ball at the Palazzo Labia, Venice, 3 September 1951. 'Le Bal Oriental' was described in the press as 'the party of the century.' Photo by Archivio Cameraphoto Epoche/Getty Images

Sonia Delaunay and the style of Simultanism

No medium was off-limits for Sonia Delaunay to apply the visual principles of Simultanism, the movement that she and husband Robert Delaunay helped establish in the early 20th century. In addition to her fine art practice, the Ukrainian-born talent designed clothing, textiles, accessories and costumes throughout her career. Delaunay's earliest garments included the 1913 patchwork *Simultaneous Dress* and *Simultaneous Vest*, made for herself and Robert, respectively. The artist would wear the former at events to promote her work, which prized colour and rhythmic movement and compositions. During the 1920s she established a design studio in her Parisian living room, where seamstresses and artisans helped construct her fashions on a bespoke basis. Her garments' flat construction formed a perfect backdrop for her abstracted artwork.



Sonia Delaunay in her studio, 1920. Repeated patterns across the works on her desk, the fabrics in her studio, and the detailing on her skirt demonstrate a cohesive multi-medium practice. Photo: New York Public Library

Joseph Beuys, 'the man with the hat'

Joseph Beuys' felt trilby from Lock & Co. London was so synonymous with the German artist that even his autograph included an outline of his hat. The accessory's origin stemmed from Beuys' time in the German Air Force, when after injuring his head in a plane crash in 1944, a metal plate was inserted in his skull. The hat became a vital means of insulation and protection. Practicality guided Beuys' uniform of heavy coats and felt suiting, as well as cotton shirts, denim and fishing jackets. The Fluxus artist incorporated similar fabrics and silhouettes into his sculptural practice and performances, with the most literal example being *Felt Suit* (1970), an edition of 100 replicas of his own suits.





(Left) Joseph Beuys, Vienna, Austria, 1968. Photo: Imagno/Getty Images
(Right) Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), *Filzanzug (S. 26)*, 1970. Felt and coat hanger. Dimensions variable; height according to hanging, c. 100 cm. Sold for €63,900 on 5 November 2014 at Christie's in Amsterdam

Tamara de Lempicka, Art Deco icon

While many of the artists on this list took an unconventional approach to self-fashioning, Tamara de Lempicka came to personify Art Deco glamour in both her artwork and personal style. A refugee of the Russian Revolution and later World War II, the Polish artist carefully cultivated her elegant image to attract a wealthy clientele. Her decidedly of-the-moment, soft Cubist portraits

centred sultry socialites, including herself, clad in the latest fashions by Jean Patou and Madeleine Vionnet. She was known to love hats, especially by milliner Rose Descat, as well as garments by couturier Marcel Rochas, while also dabbling in more androgynous, tailored attire. Her work garnered the attention of fashion magazines, such as the German *Die Dame,* which in 1929, featured her renowned *Autoportrait (Tamara in a Green Bugatti)* on its cover.





(Left) Tamara de Lempicka, 1940. Photo: Bettmann via Getty Images
(Right) Tamara de Lempicka, Polish painter with a hat designed by Rose Descat, Paris. Photography Madame d'Ora (Dora Kalmus). Photo: Bettman via Getty Images

Louise Bourgeois and the psychology of clothes

Born in Paris in 1911, Louise Bourgeois was exposed to designer garb from a young age; her parents, who restored antique tapestries, loved dressing her up in clothes by the likes of Chanel and Poiret. Laden with psychological significance as a receptacle for memory and identity, clothing and textiles would become important elements in her sculptures and installations. 'You can retell your life and remember your life by the shape, weight, color and smell of those clothes in your closet,' Bourgeois once said. She was also not afraid to harness the provocative potential of clothing, as illustrated by the wearable sculptures she designed during the 1970s. Certain creations featured bulbous protrusions, paving the way for Rei Kawakubo's legendary 1997 'Lumps and Bumps' collection for Comme des Garçons. During the late 1990s, Bourgeois became friends with Austrian fashion designer Helmut Lang whose clothing (most notably an oversized sheepskin coat) she would proudly wear the rest of her life.





(Left) Louise Bourgeois, pictured 1975, wearing her latex sculpture *Avenza* (1968-69), which became part of *Confrontation* (1978). Photograph: The Easton Foundation / VEGAP, Madrid
(Right) Louise Bourgeois photographed in her studio in the Chelsea, Manhattan, 1982. Photo: Jack Mitchell/Getty Images

Barkley L. Hendricks, slick and self-assured

Barkley L. Hendricks has produced some of art history's most stylish portraits — yet the artist himself also exuded undeniable swagger. 'He was a living, breathing manifestation of the figures in his paintings,' described artist Awol Erizku in the catalogue for the 2023-24 exhibition *Barkley L. Hendricks: Portraits at the Frick*. The Philadelphia-born artist typically snapped photos of fashionable figures he encountered, which he would then paint, often altering certain colours or patterns for maximum impact. On occasion Hendricks immortalised his own likeness, most famously in the nude portrait, *Brilliantly Endowed* (1977), and *Slick* (1977), where a white V-neck suit is accessorised with glasses (Hendricks loved to include eyewear in his portraits), a leg-pendant necklace, an African cap and a toothpick. Of course, Hendricks' most essential accessory was his camera — his 'mechanical sketchbook' — that he always donned around his neck.
Open image in gallery



Barkley L. Hendricks, *Self-Portrait with Black Hat*, 1980/ 2013, digital C-print, 27 3/4 x 18 3/4". Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Louise Nevelson, layered and legendary

For Louise Nevelson, art and fashion were inseparable parts of life. However, it was only during her 30s, after splitting from her conservative husband, that the Ukrainian-born artist felt the

freedom to experiment with dress. While Nevelson would dream up fashions with Arnold Scassi, she would also wear more idiosyncratic ensembles, including peasant blouses, Mexican skirts and voluminous fur coats, always accented by bandanas or hats (and, later in life, layers of false eyelashes). She often wore ethnic jewellery or pieces of her own design, incorporating found objects, from piano keys to crushed soda cans, much like in her monumental sculptures. 'My whole life is one big collage. Every time I put on clothes, I am creating a picture, a living picture, for myself,' Nevelson said in *Dawns and Dusks: Taped Conversations With Diana MacKown,* published in 1976. One year later, Nevelson earned a spot on fashion publicist Eleanor Lambert's famous International Best-Dressed List.





(Left) American artist Louise Nevelson in her SoHo studio, New York, New York, 1979. Photo: Brownie Harris/Corbis via Getty Images
(Right) Louise Nevelson, 1973. Photo: Bettman via Getty Images

Judy Chicago, rebel at heart

As Judy Chicago rose to prominence during the 1960s, she sought to dismantle the male-dominated art world, even enrolling in auto-body school to master spray painting techniques. During the 1980s, her self-expression became more glitzy, as her art, too, embraced the power of purples, pinks and a full spectrum of colour. Today her signature curled coiffure, tinted frames and graphic clothing often mirror the hues of her preferred palette, making her an icon of not only feminism but also style. Sharing a strong feminist vision with former Dior creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri, Chicago began working with the maison in 2019, producing some of its most memorable and sculptural runway shows. 'For most of my life, I had the standard feminist view of fashion, beauty and makeup. I thought that it was oppressive to women. But my entire thinking changed quite dramatically as a result of my collaboration with Dior,' Chicago told *Vogue* in 2023.



Judy Chicago at the exhibition *Judy Chicago: Revelations* at Serpentine North, London, UK, 2024. © Chicago Woodman LLC, Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Photo © Chicago Woodman LLC, Donald Woodman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Marta Minujín's outrageous overalls

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The pioneering conceptual, installation and performance artist Marta Minujín is known as the 'Warhol of Argentina' and, while the two were friends, Minujín's maximalist fashion sense is all her own. During the early 1960s, Minujín began experimenting with mattress-based sculptures whose painted fluorescent stripes have become her artistic and sartorial signature (along with aviators and her platinum-blonde bangs). The artist's favoured silhouette is the overall — her love affair with the style began in 1966 after she asked her grandfather's tailor to produce a gold satin version. Today she collaborates with the Latin American brand La Sudestada on a line of silk overalls and scarves in psychedelic patterns. 'As I always say, people should live in art,' Minujín writes on the La Sudestada website. 'When I became pop, I created a multicolored world in which I am happy and I want everyone to experience that.'



Photo: Lucas Ricci, *Vogue México*, September 2024

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Jeffrey Gibson's Indigenous remix

As a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent, who grew up between Korea, Germany, England and other countries, Jeffrey Gibson is a true citizen of the globe. With its polychromatic geometries, his work is as informed by powwows and Indigenous iconography as queer club and rave culture. Gibson often incorporates glass beads, metal jingles and fringe into his work, whether it's hanging tunics that recall 19th-century ceremonial Ghost Dance shirts, believed to protect its wearers from bullets, or punching bags reborn as decadent anthropomorphic sculptures. Pattern and adornment, enriched with pride for his heritage, frequently feature in Gibson's own wardrobe. In 2025, the artist created special-edition necklaces, using precious metals and found pieces, in collaboration with fine jeweller Sidney Garber. The artist told *Vogue* he'd been collecting vintage jewellery since he was a teenager. 'Charms are a form of memory,' said Gibson, always honouring his own and his ancestors'.



Installation view, Jeffrey Gibson, *boshullichi / inlʊchi – we will continue to change*, Kunsthaus Zürich, 2025. Photo: Franca Candrian, Kunsthaus Zürich

Precious Okoyomon's whimsical juxtapositions

As one of today's most in-demand multi-hyphenates, Precious Okoyomon is celebrated for their wide-ranging practice, encompassing poetry, art, cuisine and plants. In their sculptural and installation work, the Nigerian-American artist creates dreamlike worlds that are at once

personal and universal. Lightness meets darkness. Cuteness meets grotesque. Play meets violence. These juxtapositions are echoed in Okoyomon's romantic, yet avant-garde aesthetic, combining flouncy frocks, tutus and oversized bows with platform sneakers, corsets and bold silhouettes. While Okoyomon supports many independent designers, Simone Rocha is a resounding favourite — the artist wrote in the Irish designer's 2024 monograph: 'wearing Simone Rocha gives me an amour, I have all of these soft, poofy layers, but there's an element of darkness in there, too — I feel like a militant angel of joy.'



Precious Okoyomon in Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2025. Photo by Miro Kuzmanovic © Kunsthaus Bregenz