



*Paul Poiret
"Sorbet" evening wear
1912*

Silk chiffon and satin, embroidered with glass beads, and trimmed with fur

In 1911 the fashion designer Paul Poiret held one of his 'unforgettable' fancy-dress balls - 'The Thousand and Second Night'. He attired his wife in a 'lampshade' tunic over 'harem trousers', which subsequently inspired similar exotic creations, including 'Sorbet', comprising a skirt and tunic.

Paul Poiret (1879-1944) was born in Paris. He opened his own salon after serving an apprenticeship for DouËset and working for Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895), the English-born designer whose Paris salon dominated French couture. Poiret was one of the most creative fashion designers of the 20th century. He also revived fashion illustration, founded a school for the decorative arts and even diversified into perfume. He led the forefront of the artistic fashion movement away from the curvilinear silhouette of the early 1900s towards a longer, leaner line. His brilliantly coloured, looser clothes, often inspired by the 'orientalist' enthusiasm for Eastern fashions and traditions, were extremely popular.

The bodice is formed by large cross-over dolman-type sleeves, cut on the cross. The tunic's skirt is gathered and its hem is wired to hold it away from the body and keep the required shape. The tunic has a deep grosgrain waist foundation. Unfortunately the delicate silks are now in frail condition. It is probable that the embroidered design of bold, stylized flowers was drawn by one of Poiret's young employees in the School of Decorative Art, Martine (established 1911).