

CONCEPT 1

“The Love Letter”/Rococo/Marie Antoinette/ Jean Honore Fragonard/Cicada/Insouciance

Rococo Era characterized by hedonistic freedom, aesthetically pleasing things, and meaningless ornamentation. The dress and overall lifestyle of this period was extremely elaborate.

Jean Honore Fragonard- Master of the domestic scene, pastoral landscape, tongue in cheek eroticism of the boudoir painting, and capturing *fleeting moments of beauty*.

→ Defining characteristics: erotic/romantic, fluid brushwork, candy coated colors, pastoral lighting
Fluid brushwork was a response to the *constant changing of the political and social climate* as well as superficial fads and fashions.

→ Artworks:

“The Love Letter” – Woman is reading her love letter and looks back over her shoulder. The woman seems to have been interrupted in her intimate moment. The dog in the painting may represent her loyalty to her lover as dogs often serve as symbols for loyalty in art. (Reference Arnolfini 1435 wedding painting)

“The Swing” – The woman is being swung on the swing by whom we suppose is her husband. The erotic aspect of this painting plays in the fact that her lover is in the bushes under the swing able to glimpse up her skirt. The cupid holding a finger to his lips implies the secret affair. The woman depicted is very fickle and playful, common for this period’s *insouciant* attitude.

“The Stolen Kiss”- Captures a secretive romance in a fleeting moment. Two lovers are caught by a spectator in the act of stealing a furtive kiss while no one is looking..Birth of Neoclassicism.

“The Progress of Love “ Series – Follows a chronological order of the stages of love and relationships.

→ “The Pursuit”- Depicts the initial courtship. The rose serves as the symbol for courtship, the fountain is the female sex, and the flowing water is for seminal fluid. The symbolism predicts sexual consumption for the couples future. The dolphin statue is also a symbol of expectant love, “Love is in the air, but not yet here.

→ “The Meeting”- Depicts a planned tryst in a garden with a letter sent to make the arrangement or meeting. The statue of Venus and young cupid symbolize that love is not quite ready to take place and the white and red are for purity and passion.

→ “The Lover Crowned” The floral wreath show that sexual consummation and commitment have been made. The painting displays the most vibrant hues of the series and the flowers are in full bloom, love is giving its full expression. The sleeping cupid is representative of finished job.

→ “Love Letters” The final painting in the series shows the couple reminiscing about their love and courtship. Letters allow people to profess their love and preserve an affair as they wish to remember it. Dog shows loyalty and fidelity. The statue of woman holding heart and plato asking for it represents once the heart was given once it was given for always. The series ends with this depiction of friendship in love because passionate love ends in long lasting friendship.

Marie Antoinette was ripped from her home country to submit friendship between Austria and France through marriage. Her lavish lifestyle and careless regard for the French people led to the eventual turmoil of the country. “Let them eat cake”

Insouciant attitude of the era → Insouciance is the French word for carelessness → Linked to Cicada bugs

Popular silhouettes/fashion

18th century fashion is characterized by exaggerating women's hips and accentuating small waists and large breasts.

Robe a la Volante – Sack style dress

Robe a la Francaise- loose pleated back , “Watteau pleats”

Robe a la Polonaise –drawn up skirts, often from pockets (It was said that the fashion arose when maids picked up the sides of their Pannier skirts and pushed them into the pocket slit openings to enable them do their work more easily.)

Robe a la Anglaise – tight fitted back, softer replacement for robe a la francaise

Robe a la Reine – Loose white gown, often with colorful sash, shocking because no corset was worn (symbol of increased freedom for women) Popularized by Marie Antoinette

Ostrich Feathers- Commonly worn in hair and headdresses of women. Popularized by Marie Antoinette

Pagoda Sleeves- Tight from should to elbow and ended with large flare(s)

Pannier- “cage” wide hoop frames for hips

Stomachers- Heavily decorated and pointed/“V” shape. Decoration often decreased size down “V” shape

Corset/Stays- Laced stays were made up of up to 40 pieces of whalebone. Supported and raised breasts brought to a narrow pointed waist. Kept a straight upright posture.

Sources:

18th Century Robes/Silhouettes Explained:

<http://americanduchess.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-many-types-of-late-18th-century.html>

Robe a la Polonaise

<http://tempsdelegance.com/2013/02/polonaise-making-of.html>

Rococo History of Costume

<https://historyofeuropeanfashion.wordpress.com/category/baroquerococo-1650-1800/>

<https://historyofeuropeanfashion.wordpress.com/tag/rococo/>

<http://www.fashion-era.com/paniers.htm>

Jean Honore Fragonard

http://www.artble.com/artists/jean-honore_fragonard

Progress of love at The Frick <http://www.frick.org/search/google/fragonard%20the%20frick>

Stolen kiss painting http://www.artble.com/artists/jean-honore_fragonard/paintings/the_stolen_kiss

CONCEPT 2

“Between the Shadow and the Soul”/Phantom limb/Mourning Jewelry/Victorian Era

Poem;

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Pablo Neruda

Based on idea that love combines two souls (Twin Souls/Twin Flames theory). “Your hand is my hand, you heart is my heart” idea. Leading to the idea that losing a loved one is similar to phantom limb sensation. (Sensation after losing a limb that the limb is still attached and causes much pain)

Throughout history mourning jewelry and traditions have served as a touchstone for those who have lost a loved one and want to carry something to remember them by. Especially important in days before photography.

“Love After Death”

Tear Bottles in Roman Times

→Mourners filled small glass bottles or cups with tears and placed them in burial tombs as symbol of respect.

→The more anguish and tears produced the more important and valued the deceased person was perceived to be.

Tear Bottles reappeared in Victorian Period

→Mourners would collect their tears in bottles with special stoppers that allowed the tears to evaporate. When the tears had evaporated the mourning period would end.

Tear Bottles in American Civil War

→Women were said to have cried to into tear bottles and saved them until their husbands returned from battle. The tears showed the men how much they were adored and missed.

Victorian Era is known for its fascination with death and elaborate rituals. It was during this time that Mourning Dressing was possibly most popular and regulated. Black was obviously the primary mourning color, but other colors were introduced as the grieving process went on (Blue, Grey, Purple). The black dyes during this time were very unstable and often bled onto undergarments. Faded and bad blacks were commonly seen because the jet black was so expensive. If any white was worn the stitching was still black. As the stages of mourning progressed more colors and decoration were introduced in the wardrobe. Under Queen Victoria we see strong attitudes of prudery and strict outwardly moral code.

Mourning Jewelry

→ There are many different kinds of mourning jewelry such as rings and locket

→ Different mourning jewelry would feature all kinds of elements such as hair, symbolic imagery or materials.

→ Black enamel, White Enamel (Deceased was a woman who died unmarried and virgin), Pearls (Loss of a child)

→ Crown above skeleton – “Death is the master of all”

→ Ship – Represents journey in the after life and the beached anchor is hope for those left behind

→ Most common imagery used were Weeping Willows (crying trees), Lilies of the Valley (Tears of Virgin Mary), and Urns

→ Common inscription “Not Lost, but gone before”

→ Lovers Eyes – Eye miniatures, small eye paintings “The look of love” Idea that only someone really intimate would recognize an individual's eye.

→ Story: Prince of Wales (later became George IV) fell in love with a twice widowed catholic, Maria Fitzherbert. He courted Maria unsuccessfully several times. He kept trying to win her over and she denied him. Finally he sent her a painting of his own eye set into a locket with a letter “ If have not totally forgotten the whole occurrence, I think the likeness will strike you.” The gift changed her mind and she married him. After this the Lover's eye became a popular token of a lover for both living and deceased as an intimate touchstone.

Popular Silhouettes/Fashion

Corset-After 1840 the corset was of a new style made from seven to thirteen individual pieces. The gusseted reinforced stitched corsets of strong white twill cotton, used vertical rows of whalebone shaped to the natural body shape. They were still laced at the back. Evening dresses had such low décolletage showing exposed shoulders, that the corset had to lose its shoulder straps and become free standing. Because the dress bodices were lengthening the actual dress bodices were boned in sections and this gave not only extra contour, but also helped stop creasing across the body fabric.

Sleeves- Big balloon sleeves, Leg o' mutton sleeves, Gigot Sleeves, a large variety of sleeves were available during this time. Especially thanks to Charles Worth.

Fabrics- Crepe, poplin, satin, velvet, bombazine, taffeta, chiffon, lace, wool, cashmere

Crape was dull looking silk gauze like a crimped and stiff textured material and mostly dyed the deepest of blacks, although white crape was used for the widow's cap.

Lace Bertha Neckline

Crinoline Cage – artificial crinoline made a cage for fullness instead of so many layers of fabric

Bustle- small crinoline with an additional steel frame which was attached to the back at the waist.

Sources:

Victorian Fashion

<http://trulyvictorian.net/history.html>

http://www.fashion-era.com/mourning_fashion.htm

http://www.fashion-era.com/early_victorian_fashion.htm

Crinolines

<http://www.fashion-era.com/crinolines.htm>

Bustles

<http://www.fashion-era.com/bustles.htm>

Mourning Dress

<http://www.katetattersall.com/mourning-dress-victorian/>

Mourning Jewelry

<http://io9.gizmodo.com/love-after-death-the-beautiful-macabre-world-of-mourn-1498829544>

Lover's Eyes

http://university.langantiques.com/index.php/Lover's_Eye_Minature

http://www.salon.com/2012/01/21/the_secret_history_of_lovers_eyes/

Tear Bottles

<http://www.lachrymatory.com/History.htm>