Contemporary Japanese Fashion the Gene Sherman Collection

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Foreword

Dr Dawn Casey PSM FAHA

Director

Powerhouse Museum

Foreword

<u>Debbie Abraham</u>

Gallery Director

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery

In 2009 the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney received an outstanding collection of contemporary Japanese fashion from Dr Gene Sherman, Chairman and Executive Director of the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, and a former trustee of the Museum. Gene's keen eye for avant-garde Japanese fashion led to a generous donation of over sixty garments and accessories by leading contemporary Japanese designers Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and Sydney's Akira Isogawa. This welcome and important gift came with a unique provenance.

Gene's passion for art, sculpture and design motivates her choice of ingenious and stylish garments for her wardrobe. Museum curators Claire Roberts and Min-Jung Kim have recorded Gene's observations on individual garments and on the work of Japanese designers and the high-tech fabrics that they have engineered for low-maintenance women. She describes her unique and speedy approach to shopping and how comfort and practicality are vital for the frequent traveller. The garments are accompanied by many stories, such as the challenge posed by squeezing her Yohji Yamamoto hooped skirt into a seat at the Sydney Opera House!

Gene maintains a wearing wardrobe of about twenty designer garments. As she acquires a new piece she retires older ones. This discipline has informed her collecting and wearing of clothes for many years. The retired collection has been stored in archival boxes in her attic. When she and her husband, Brian recently moved house, rather than transport the boxes to their new home she chose instead to donate them to the Powerhouse Museum earlier than planned.

I am thrilled that this stunning exhibition of garments from Gene's collection has travelled from the Powerhouse Museum to the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery and that we have had the opportunity to collaborate on a beautiful publication about the collection.

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery is proud to present *Contemporary Japanese fashion: the Gene Sherman collection* as a part of our 2010 program. Not only does the exhibition support growing national recognition of the significance of design within the visual arts sector, but it also announces the importance of our strengthening relationship, as a regional gallery, with both the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and the Powerhouse Museum.

Curator Dr Claire Roberts' selection of work from the gift of sixty-two pieces by Dr Gene Sherman to the Powerhouse Museum illustrates the impact Japanese designers have had on the international fashion design sector in terms of aesthetics and innovative textile technology. The collection in its entirety is a great tribute to Dr Sherman's discerning eye, and, in turn, the Powerhouse Museum's astute collection strategies.

Contemporary Japanese fashion: the Gene Sherman collection was selected for our program as the third of a three-part story about the place fashion plays in our lives, locally and internationally, with elegance and a good dose of inventiveness. The other two exhibitions, Powerhouse Museum's Fruits: Tokyo Street Style – photographs by Shoiki Aoki and Timeframe by Hunter-based designers High Tea with Mrs Woo, shape the tale. Visitors can only be inspired and delighted with this experience.









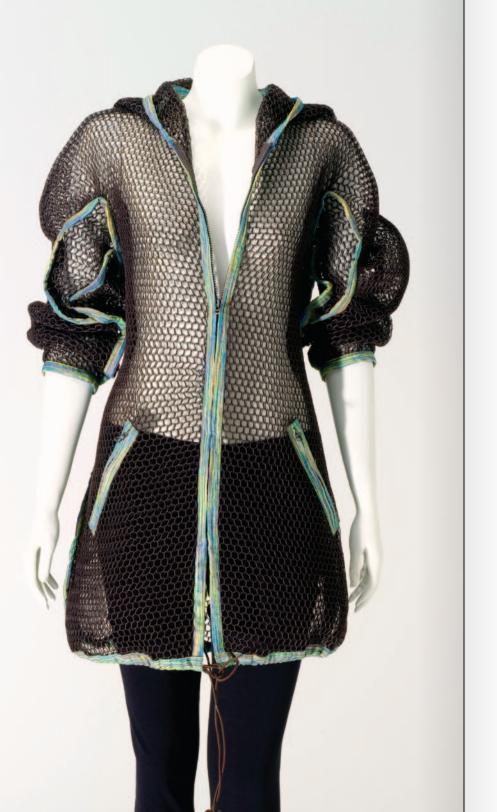




Black spherical and layered skirt, polyester/nylon, designed and made by <u>COMME des GARÇONS</u>, Japan (Spring/Summer collection 1997)

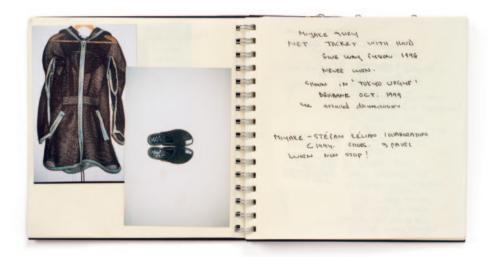






Mesh jacket with zipper and hood, nylon/polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan (Spring/Summer collection 1997)





Gene Sherman's collection notebook, Sydney, Australia, 1999

The notebook contains photographs and Gene's handwritten notes about fashion items in her collection.





A set of tote bags, felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by <u>Akira Isogawa</u>, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, Australia



Pleated dress, polyester, PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE, Guest Artist Series No. 1 Yasumasa Morimura, 1996, designed and made by <u>PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE</u>, Japan (Autumn/Winter collection 1996)



Geta-style platform sandals, synthetic suede/synthetic rubber/polyester based polyurethane, designed by Yohji Yamamoto for <u>ADIDAS</u>, made in China 2004 Black asymmetrical skirt, wool, designed and made by <u>Yohji Yamamoto</u>, Japan (Spring/Summer collection 1993)





Black coat with kimono-style cut, nylon/polyester, designed and made by <u>Yohji Yamamoto</u>, Japan (Autumn/Winter collection 1994-95)



Living in the Shadows of the Future Amelia Groom

Amelia Groom is a Sydney-based writer and editor who is researching notions of disguise and illusion in Japanese aesthetics.

We find beauty not in the thing itself but in the pattern of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates.

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, In Praise of Shadows Japan has always been poised to show the rest of the world the allure of shadows and blackness; to remind us that as stars cannot be seen in the day, it is darkness that gives form to light. Just as the excessively golden and ornate age of Rococo gave way to the European infatuation with the understated blackness of Japanese *shikki* (lacquerware), the bright colours and showy glamour of fashion in the West in the mid 1980s was shaken up by the sombre, achromatic palette for which Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto first became famous.

They proposed a radically new (but also, as I will suggest here, age-old) aesthetic that emphasised form, line, texture and tactility over colour; the focus being on sculptural shapes that alter the natural silhouette of the body. It is this quality that first drew Gene Sherman to their designs, and besides a handful of isolated examples, the sixty-two-piece collection that was recently donated to the Powerhouse Museum is predominantly black, with some scatterings of dark navies and charcoals.

In Japan, *kuro* (black) has long symbolised nobility and experience, as in the karate black belt. Of course, it is a mistake to think there is only one black: as *sumi-e* (Japanese ink painting) shows us, there are endless possibilities of tones and textures within blackness. Kawakubo is often quoted as saying, 'I work in three shades of black', and while she introduced bright colours and prints in later collections she has – like her early partner Yamamoto and their predecessor of several years, Mikaye – continued to explore the mystery, melancholy, inconspicuousness and ambiguity of blackness.

Written in the early 1930s, Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's essay *In Praise of Shadows* suggested that while westerners have worshipped light in the name of progress and clarity, the Japanese have preferred the uncertainty and mysterious allure of shadows. Blackness holds possibility within it and is related to the more general austerity of Japanese beauty continued by these designers through their pure geometric forms and minimal embellishment. Related to this is the elusive ideal of *wabi sabi*, probably the most characteristic feature of what we think of as traditional Japanese aesthetics. An appreciation of imperfection, irregularity, impermanence and incompletion, this *wabi sabi* is found in the blackness, modesty, asymmetry, simplicity of line and raw finishings of Kawakubo's, Miyake's and Yamamoto's clothes.

So while often talked about as groundbreaking, these three designers have great reverence for Japan's cultural heritage and artistic traditions. At different times and to varying degrees, each of them has reverted to elements of their country's national dress, the kimono – sometimes as a direct reference, as in the Yohji Yamamoto black evening coat with kimono sleeves that is in the collection. The basic adult kimono (*ki mono* meaning 'a thing to wear') comes in two sizes – man and woman – and has never deviated from its basic, untailored T shape. Rather than emphasising the human form and striving for the ideal figure, as western dress has done, the kimono has its own shape and structure that is largely independent of the individual wearer. It retains its basic geometric form with little regard for the body's biological contours and, as we have seen, contemporary Japanese fashion retains this principal.

Accumulated by Dr Sherman over two decades, this extensive archive reminds us that while Japan's national dress has largely been replaced with modern 'western' styles, contemporary Japanese fashion remains bound up with highly refined traditional values and techniques. Remarkably, none of the collection – which goes back as early as 1989 – has dated in the least. Disregarding seasonal trends in favour of a more singular vision that continues ancestral thinking, the designers have defied the fashion industry's emphasis on being *in fashion* while remaining very much at the cutting edge of ideas. In this way, the design houses of Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, along with those of their peers and successors, are continuing to lead fashion into the future while borrowing from the shadows of their culture's past.

Gene Sherman
on her sense of style

Interview by Margaret Merten

This is an edited excerpt of an interview by award-winning writer and editor Margaret Merten on the ideas underpinning Dr Gene Sherman's Japanese fashion collection.

Margaret Merten: How would you describe your sense of style?

Gene Sherman: Structural with an emphasis on form, shape and line as opposed to an emphasis on colour. Monochromatic: black, sometimes grey, and very occasionally olive green. I have a very specific take on that aesthetic because for over twenty years I've collected the work of three Japanese designers – Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Comme de Garcons.

MM Where did your sense of style develop? You obviously have a very singular vision. I wonder where that came from?

GS I've always had an interest in aesthetics. With Sherman Galleries there were three levels of responses operating when I agreed to show the work of a particular artist or when we acquired work for our personal collection – aesthetic, intellectual and emotional. When it came to fashion, the response was aesthetic primarily and also intellectual. The look had to be right. However, I'm interested in the ideas behind fashion, in the social periods, in the reasons why certain fashions are taken up – in the difference, say, between early twentieth-century fashion, the flapper era, and the late nineteenth century, and the socio-economic reasons that led to those developments. And then finally the emotional response – does one feel good in it? So, it is not very different from my response to art, to showing art in the gallery and to collecting art. I had a wearing wardrobe – I still do – of twenty things, roughly, and an archived wardrobe of work that I photographed, documented and stored. The collection was twenty-two years old when I donated it to the Powerhouse Museum.

MM Was it hard to part with?

as I don't think so, because there was an end-of-an-era feel about my life (the end of one era and the beginning of another) and the gift to the Powerhouse Museum echoed these transformations. The gallery as a commercial entity closed at the end of 2007. We moved house from Paddington to Woollahra, not a huge move but nevertheless we had been in Paddington for fifteen years. I had, in a way, anticipated Asia becoming a major force aesthetically in terms of the art world. I've been on forty trips to Japan in the last twenty-one years, taking shows there and bringing exhibitions to Australia. I've been to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea many times. All this seemed part of an era that had come to an end so it felt like a very good moment to donate the pieces. Instead of moving the archived garments to the new house I moved more than sixty boxed pieces to the Powerhouse. It just seemed a logical trajectory and something I'd always intended to do.

MM Are there any major influences that have affected your sense of style?

as What attracted me to these designers was the de-glamorised, de-sexualised attitude to fashion, instead of that pretty-pretty look or the defiant Vivienne Westwood 'to hell with the world' look, or the glamorised, film star 'look at me' look. I didn't know who these designers were when I stumbled across them initially – my response was based not on their fame but on how the work communicated itself to me, how the fashion communicated. It felt very much cutting edge. It felt pioneering. I've always been deeply interested in textiles and they were revolutionary textile creators. Miyake particularly created a world of textiles that didn't exist before. He was an absolute innovator and there have been many disciples from the PLEATS PLEASE experimentations to the weaving in of metallic fibres, to the non-crushable, practical side to his fabrics. This fashion meshed with the working woman of the modern world, as opposed to the high maintenance woman who was an expensive adornment to a high profile man. So consciously and subconsciously that whole notion appealed to me.

- **MM** It sounds to me that the thing that appealed to you was the intellectual approach of those designers.
- **cs** Yes. It always does. But it's the aesthetic as well. I started the gallery as a sculpture gallery, so the three-dimensional emphasis on form on the body in this case drew me to these clothes.
- MM Do you have a favourite piece of clothing?
- **GS** Yes, I have had a number over the years, but there's one that I've still got that I rarely wear because it isn't hugely practical. It's a Yohji Yamamoto hoop skirt. I own a number of hoop skirts and I've actually shown a series of them in an exhibition at Object Galleries when the gallery was still in Customs House. About eight of us were allocated a small room to curate. I selected fashion, although I did include one or two works on the wall. The other participants were architects or furniture designers and each group or individual created their own space. It was a wonderful exhibition I had these huge bright red standing cones made for the show, over which the hoops hung. I have one of the cones that I keep in our bedroom at home, with about four or five hoop skirts hanging over it. My favourite is the Yohji hoop skirt that sits round the bottom of the cone. I actually saw a version of it in dress form at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, quite a while after I bought it.
- MM I love the fact that your most favourite piece is the most impractical. Isn't that a lovely balance to have?
- **gs** Yes, but I still wear it and everything that I've bought, I bought to wear. Some people collect fashion to have rather than wear.
- MM Do you have a favourite piece of jewellery?
- **GS** The jewellery doesn't fit into the kind of framework described here because my selected designer-artists didn't make jewellery. But I have a wonderful collection of contemporary jewellery, mostly Australian, which I bought over the same period of time. Probably my favourite one at the moment is a piece by a young Australian called Sean O'Connell and I have two versions of the same piece, which happened accidentally. He made the first version out of stainless steel and silver with ordinary ball bearings that were supposed to travel in circular channels. The channels were fractionally too big and the ball bearings kept falling out. Wherever I went I heard clunk, I was like Hansel and Gretel in the forest with a little stream of ball bearings behind me. I called him and he said he would make me another with narrower channels and a spiral greater in scale. I paid for both and I kept the other one. So those are my favourite pieces. I wear the smaller one daily and the other one for more special occasions. But I don't really distinguish between day and night wear. There's no need to with these clothes.
- MM What's the most outrageous or expensive item that you've ever bought in terms of fashion, that you have to breathe into a paper bag because it's so expensive?
- **GS** These clothes at the beginning were not expensive because they were clothes made in Japan by up-and-coming designers. I suppose they were expensive in relation to absolutely run-of-the-mill clothes, but in relation to European designers they weren't expensive. They have become more expensive now because these designers have long been famous and they have stores in London, Paris and New York, with serious overheads. In the late 1980s I bought a beautiful contemporary kimono made out of silk, reversible, three-quarter length, which I have worn for eighteen years. I've worn it every winter and I still wear it. I can wear it during the day and at night. It looks good at the opera.

- MM Is it coloured?
- **as** No, it's black. It cost about US\$4000, which was very expensive in the late eighties and clearly is still today.
- MM But once you do the cost per wear ratio ...
- **as** Yes. Well honestly, I haven't taken it off. When I came to consider if there was anything in the wearing wardrobe that I could add to the donated archival wardrobe, I didn't consider this, because I wear it all the time. So it's not about to disappear soon. My policy was if I acquired something, I retired something.
- MM You are very disciplined.
- **as** Well, it just made sense, because otherwise I couldn't have kept the wearing wardrobe to twenty.
- **MM** What advice would you give to women who are seeking their own sense of style in a world that has become perhaps very homogenised.
- **as** You need to have a good sense of yourself, to come to terms with who you are both in terms of your body shape, your personality and your interests and that will automatically lead you to the clothes that suit you. You should never ever buy anything that doesn't feel one hundred per cent right in the store. Don't be advised or guided by a shop assistant, generally, unless you find someone you really trust, because they have vested interests in selling you something. You need to be firm in your convictions. Red, for example, doesn't suit me. I occasionally wear colours, but red shouts at me. Even if I find the most divine garment in the right shape by the right designer that fits me like a glove, a real bargain and it's red I won't do it, because I know that it's not me and that ultimately I won't wear it.
- MM So it's about making a realistic appraisal of body and shape and the colours that suit.

 GS Yes, if you can, just be realistic about yourself. I put the Japanese clothes on and they never have to be altered. Be true to yourself and don't deviate, unless you want a
- wardrobe that's very cluttered. You go to it and you think 'what will I wear' and you have a choice of a hundred things, many of which aren't right, and you end up totally confused. It takes you too long to get dressed and you dither. Less is more, really. Never walk out of a shop with a purchase if you don't feel right, just because you feel a sense of obligation, because you have been there for ages and the salesperson has a sense of entitlement
- 'I've spent a long time with you and I hope you are not going to leave here without making it worth my while' attitude. You have to be careful. There's an interaction there, with expectations on either side and you have to remember that you are the customer. It's your money. They don't have to live with the choices you make. Sometimes people might say 'Well, if you just lose a little weight, it's only a little too tight for you.' Don't buy in anticipation of future pleasure. It's got to be right there and then. Avoid going home hoping it will fit you at some later date.
- MM I could talk to you a lot longer about this, it's really very thoughtful and interesting GS I don't see fashion as a kind of 'shop 'til you drop' exercise. It can be a serious focus on aesthetics linked with the times in which we live and if you consider it like that, it's stimulating like architecture, which defines your own exterior space. Fashion defines your
- body, it defines to an extent the way you are perceived by others and the way you interact with others. It has a whole set of resonances that go beyond spending your money for something sexy or pretty.
- **MM** Thank you so much.

Gene Sherman
on Japanese fashion

Interview by Claire Roberts

This is an edited excerpt of a public interview conducted at the Powerhouse Museum on 15 December 2008. Dr Gene Sherman talks here to Powerhouse Museum Senior Curator Dr Claire Roberts about her love of Japanese fashion, why it appeals to her, and the formation of her collection.



Contemporary Japanese fashion: the Gene Sherman collection, installation view, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney **Claire Roberts**: Gene, welcome to the Powerhouse Museum. In discussing some of the pieces you have 'retired' from your wearing wardrobe we would like to hear what attracted you to Japanese fashion in the first place, your experience of buying individual items and of wearing them.

Gene Sherman: Thanks so much Claire, it's lovely to be here and to discuss one of my favourite topics. Sculpture, form and objects in space interest me ... and my sense of style is part of this aesthetic. Form, shape and line rather than colour guide my fashion choices and there is an intellectual and usually an emotional response as well. For over twenty years I've been collecting the work of three Japanese designers – Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, who created Comme des Garçons. My fashion collection developed more or less in parallel with the development of Sherman Galleries.

I bought this Comme des Garçons bubble skirt in 1998 in their Tokyo store. They gave me a traditional safety pin, a large one, to wear with it because it has no fastener. I hoped it would become a staple of my wearing wardrobe and had a more interesting pin made at Makers Mark that I felt served it better. But then I found the most wonderful Yohji Yamamoto skirt that is still in my wearing wardrobe. It wraps around the body and fastens at the waist. The hoop is so wide that you can't sit down in a normal seat. I can only wear it to cocktail functions — once I tried to wear it to the opera and found I couldn't fit into the seat, so had to undo the waist fastening and cover my lap with my bag. Large spaces are needed for these hoop skirts so I decided to archive it and keep the Yohji Yamamoto.

Whenever I go into a store, I specifically ask the shop assistant not to help me. I don't like to be guided and always go through the racks very quickly. I visit the Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto or Comme stores in rapid succession and no matter whether in Tokyo, London, Paris or New York I have gone through a collection and paid within a very short time. I pull out the three or so garments that interest me and try them on. I don't give anybody the opportunity to say 'you look wonderful' (or otherwise) and choose quickly myself. If I feel something is right I buy it, and I am out of the store in fifteen minutes. Sometimes I have made several purchases in five.

I'm claustrophobic and don't like wearing anything tight or intrusive around my neck. I tend to go for dramatic skirts and simple, figure hugging tops that I either buy or have duplicated. I have about five tops with shaped necks, both short and long-sleeved. I'd class the bubble skirt as fairly dramatic and suitable to be worn on interesting occasions. I found it a little overdone, which is another reason why I archived it quickly. Funnily enough, the Yohji skirt is more overdone in terms of scale and spread, but it's far simpler in terms of line.

An all-time favourite is the gold wave-skirt, which is probably the most outlandish garment that I've ever bought and had in my wardrobe. I wore it often for various functions. The gold dominates in a way that doesn't usually appeal to me because I prefer shape and form to be the structural or design element that communicates to the outside world. I think Miyake, Yohji and Comme probably felt the same, because so many of their clothes are monochromatic and often black ... This gold is quite striking, an old gold. The skirt is soft, easy-to-wear, hugely comfortable and not dramatic in terms of its manageability. You could almost lounge around in it. I bought it at the Miyake store in New York.

CR How did you feel wearing the skirt?

as It surprised me that I was able to wear it. At first I felt a little self-conscious because the gold dominated visually but it was so comfortable that I soon felt at ease. I wore it with flat

shoes (which I still prefer) because I did so much standing during the twenty-one years of Sherman Galleries. In those days flat evening shoes were hard to find. The shoes and the belt I wore with this skirt were quite work-a-day and the top was always simple. Many of these skirts were created with more elaborate tops in mind; tops that sat over the waist. Often there were no waistbands. So if they had been worn with the intended tops there would have been no need for a belt. In my case, I was minimising the top, and it was always tucked in. It needed a finish and that's why I added appropriate belts.

- **CR** Perhaps you could talk about the black Yohji Yamamoto evening coat.
- **cs** It's a black evening coat with kimono sleeves and is made from polyester with a satiny finish. I bought it in Tokyo in the early 1990s. I have another jacket that is three-quarter length, also with kimono sleeves, bought in Tokyo within the same time frame. It is padded and quilted and remains in my wearing wardrobe. I wear it every winter, perhaps not as much as I used to, but I certainly still wear it. The evening coat was probably too long and not as versatile as the three-quarter jacket.

Another mid-length jacket in this exhibition has rainbow coloured binding under the arms and around the pockets. It's completely see-through. There is a hood and it has a semi-transparent fishnet effect.

- CR The fabric is like a honeycomb, it's three-dimensional.
- **gs** I don't know how this effect was achieved. It's quite scratchy and is the one garment on display that I never wore. I've made a few mistakes and this was one of them.

However, I often wore this wonderful pair of sleeves! I think they are by Comme. I just slipped my arms into them, with the cuffs at the wrists and then tied them across the back. They weren't brilliantly comfortable in the sense that they didn't always sit as snugly as perhaps they should have. I had a little trouble keeping them in place. This is one of the fashion acquisitions I decided to suffer for in terms of style ... they were a little apt to move because the tie loosens over the course of the wearing time. I had them for years. I wore them with a very thin, long-sleeved top and then one or other of the black skirts. The sleeves are quite casual, but I would have worn them for evening as well ...

cr And the grey colour?

cs I did branch out occasionally, as I did with the gold skirt. My wardrobe still isn't all black. If I've ever bought anything that has creased, that's been a mistake. I always do a crease test in the store but sometimes crushing a garment momentarily with your hands doesn't give you enough of an impression as to how the garment is going to sit on the body and to what level it might or might not crease.

Miyake once said that he is not interested in designing for high maintenance women. I definitely don't want to be high maintenance ... He created revolutionary new textiles and most of his pieces can be folded, rolled, tied or scrunched into a suitcase and they spring back into place when you unpack them. I don't want to get to a hotel and start looking for someone to press my unpacked clothes. There are usually irons in the closets but invariably time is limited. So definitely 'easily packable' and 'non-crease' are essential components of the garments I purchase.

- **CR** Do you remember this silver-grey pleated Miyake jacket?
- **cs** Yes, I wore it often. You could wear it like a shrug but I liked to wear it as a stole because I don't like things around my neck ... It's very practical.
- **CR** What did you wear with it?

very thick shoelaces, at the bottom. I would never have worn it with a hoop skirt, always something straight. Compositionally – and I do think of these as compositions when they are on – I would wear a slim top, one of the classical, figure-hugging tops, and then a hooped skirt and a short jacket. Or I'd wear something long and slim at the bottom and then a long jacket. I wouldn't mix the bouffant feel in the skirt and jacket. It was always about the lines ... I like dressing up. It transports my mind into another zone. When I'm reading quietly at home, which is my other long-standing focused activity, I'm in another space too. I dress in these clothes at all times but the very comfortable ones are for casual wear. I've never owned a pair of jeans, for example, and I can't imagine how anyone would be comfortable in jeans. They look so inflexible and unyielding to me ... and yet that's what people wear for comfort, mostly ... whereas these clothes feel like the epitome of comfort to me.

To me comfort means not feeling restricted, feeling as though I can move freely and not having to worry about clothes creasing. I don't want to think about what I'm wearing.

- **CR** And yet some of these garments have quite strong personalities.
- **as** They are quite elaborate, but they're not uncomfortable. The garments that were longstanding, like the gold skirt, were definitely high comfort. And the ones that I abandoned, like the woven jacket, were low comfort and therefore archived.
- **CR** Could you talk about this silver Miyake skirt.
- **as** It is the piece I remember least. I am absolutely in love with it and I'm amazed I gave it up. I might want it back [laughter]. Let me hold it against myself. It really is good. It's one of the things I bought that had a metallic feel. I vaguely recollect the shape, but I don't recollect the silver. It's fishlike, with 'fins'. I'm starting to remember the form but not the colour. The shape feels familiar.

It is important to say that these clothes fit me off the rack ... I don't alter them at all; even the skirt lengths don't need adjusting. When I do have to change or adapt the size or shape even minimally, invariably the whole outfit or garment doesn't work for me.

- cr The skirt is quite heavy.
- **as** Maybe the heaviness troubled me. It is beautiful. Look at the way it's constructed. It is fascinating. The fact that sometimes you can wear these garments inside out or upside down, that they fall in different ways as you move ... they really are like kinetic sculptural works, and that's how I have always seen them.
- **CR** Is that what attracted you to these garments?
- **as** I think so. I think it was subconscious initially. I became conscious of it as time went on because I kept choosing the same kind of thing. Initially I was intuitively drawn to such garments. The attraction was immediate and un-ambivalent.
- CR Do you have other comments about the group of garments we've selected for the show?
- **as** No, I think that there is quite a range. I'm surprised at how varied your selection has been even though the collection is by nature idiosyncratic and obviously not a full range of pieces by the three designers.

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The Gene Sherman Collection

Apron, women's, pleated, linen, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/1]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, early 1990s [2009/16/2]

Trousers, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/3]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/4]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by Pleats Please Issey Miyake, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/5]

Handbag, women's, polyester/metal, designed and made by Pleats Please Issey Miyake, Japan, early 1990s [2009/16/6]

• Jacket with hood, women's, nylon/polyester, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1996 (Spring/Summer collection 1997) [2009/16/7]

Skirt, women's, synthetic fabric/polar fleece, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1999 [2009/16/8]

Dress, women's, cotton/rayon/cashmere, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/9]

Coat, 'Fete' and Joyce', women's, kimono style, wool, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1999 [2009/16/10]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/11]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/12]

 Jacket, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Pleats Please Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, 1999 (Autumn/Winter collection 1999) [2009/16/13]

Jacket, women's, deerskin leather, designed by Issey Miyake, Japan (Autumn/Winter collection 1989), made in Hong Kong, 1989 [2009/16/14]

Coat, women's, wool/rayon, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, early 1990s [2009/16/15]

Jacket, women's, pleated polyester/cotton, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, late 1980s [2009/16/16]

Coat, women's, rayon/polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/17]

- Pleated dress, women's, polyester, Pleats Please Issey Miyake, Guest Artist series No. 1 Yasumasa Morimura, 1996, designed and made by Pleats Please Issey Miyake, Japan, 1996 (Autumn/Winter collection 1996) [2009/16/18]
- Skirt, women's, Wave Pleats, polyester, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1993 (Autumn/Winter collection 1993) [2009/16/19]
- Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, 2000 (Autumn/Winter collection 2000) [2009/16/20]

Coat, women's, polyester/nylon, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/21]

Skirt, women's, pleated polyester, designed and made by <u>Issey Miyake</u>, Japan, 2001–2002 [2009/16/22]

Coat, women's, silk/polyester, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1998 [2009/16/23]

Skirt, women's, silk/polyester, designed and made by Issey Miyake, Japan, 1998 [2009/16/24]

Skirt with trousers, women's, rayon/polyester, designed and made by Comme des Garcons, Italy, 1999–2000 [2009/16/25]

 Skirt, women's, wool/cotton, designed and made by Comme des Garçons, Japan, 2004 [2009/16/26]

Dress, women's, rayon/polyester/polyurethane, designed and made by Comme des Garçons, Japan, late 1980s [2009/16/27]

Skirt, women's, rayon/copra/acrylic/nylon, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/28]

 Skirt, women's, polyester/nylon, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, 1997 (Spring/Summer collection 'Body meets dress-dress meets body' 1997) [2009/16/29]

Skirt, women's, cotton/polyester, designed by Junya Watanabe, made by Comme des Garçons, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/30]

Skirt, women's, polyester, designed and made by Comme des Garçons, Japan, 2003 [2009/16/31]

Trousers, women's, wool, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/32]

Skirt, women's, 'robe de chambre', wool/rayon, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/33]

Skirt, women's, cotton, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/34]

Skirt, women's, pleated, leather/acetate, designed by <u>Alaia</u>, France, mid 1990s [2009/16/35]

Skirt (two pieces), women's, wool, designed and made by Comme des Garcons, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/36]

Skirt, women's, denim patchwork, cotton, designed and made by Junya Watanbe for Comme des Garçons, Japan, 2001 [2009/16/37]

Undergarment, bamboo/cotton/metal, maker unknown (probably Southern China), 1870–1950 [2009/16/38]

Blouse, women's, silk, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/39]

Skirt, women's, 'Heart Sutra', silk/rayon/polyurethane, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, 2002 [2009/16/40]

 Sleeves (pair), women's, wool/polyester, designed and made by <u>Comme des Garçons</u>, Japan, 1994 (Spring/Summer collection 'Eccentric' 1994) [2009/16/41]

Dress, women's, cotton, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, early 1990s [2009/16/42]

Skirt, women's, silk/nylon, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/43]

Skirt, women's, satin/cotton, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/44]

Dress, women's, rayon/linen, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, mid 1990s [2009/16/45]

Skirt, women's, rayon, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, 2004 [2009/16/46]

Coat, women's, silk, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/47]

Jacket, women's, wool/silk/nylon/cotton, designed and made by Yohii Yamamoto, Japan, late 1990s [2009/16/48]

Skirt, women's, cotton, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, early 1990s [2009/16/49]

Skirt, women's, rayon, designed and made by Yohjii Yamamoto, Japan, 2004 [2009/16/50]

- Skirt, women's, wool, designed and made by Yohji Yamamoto, Japan, 1993 (Spring/Summer collection 1993) [2009/16/51]
- Coat, women's, nylon/polyester, designed by Yohji Yamamoto,
 Japan, 1994 (Autumn/Winter collection 1994–1995) [2009/16/52]

Scissor-shaped artwork, silk satin/rayon/metal/plastic, made by Ahn Pil Yun, Korea, 1996 [2009/16/53]

- Tote bag, olive green, part of the full set 'Origami', felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by <u>Akira Isogawa</u>, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia [2009/16/54]
- Tote bag, red, part of the full set 'Origami', felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by <u>Akira Isogawa</u>, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia [2009/16/55]

- Tote bag, blue, part of the full set 'Origami', felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by Akira Isogawa, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia [2009/16/56]
- Tote bag, purple, part of the full set 'Origami', felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by <u>Akira Isogawa</u>, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia [2009/16/57]
- Tote bag, black, part of the full set 'Origami', felted wool nylon blend, designed and made by <u>Akira Isogawa</u>, Australia, 2002, commissioned by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia [2009/16/58]
- Sandals (pair), women's, synthetic rubber/polyester based polyurethane/synthetic suede/leather/methacrylates copolymer, designed by Yohji Yamamoto for Adidas, China, 2004 [2009/16/59]
- Sandals (pair), women's, leather/rubber, designed and made by Issey Miyake and Stephane Kélian, Japan, 1993 [2009/16/60]

Shoes (pair), women's, leather/rubber, designed and made by Stephane Kélian, France, early 1990s [2009/16/61]

- Notebook, paper/metal, notebook made by Pinetti, Italy, used by Gene Sherman, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1999 [2009/16/62]
- · Items included in the exhibition

All garments and objects listed were collected by Gene Sherman, Sydney, Australia, between 1989 and 2007. The initial gift was offered in 2007, moved to the Powerhouse Museum in March 2008, was formalised through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program and accessioned in early 2009.

Research of this collection is ongoing and when complete can be accessed through the Powerhouse Museum's website by using the accession numbers provided in this list.

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Biographies



<u>Dr Gene Sherman</u> is Chairman and Executive Director of Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation. She has a specialised knowledge of art, literary theory and French and English literature and spent seventeen years teaching, researching and lecturing at secondary and tertiary levels. As Director of Sherman Galleries (1986–2007), she initiated, negotiated and organised twelve to seventeen exhibitions annually, as well as regional and national touring exhibitions within Australia, and international touring exhibitions through the Asia-Pacific region. Dr Sherman undertakes a full programme of mentoring, presentations to museums, universities and collectors, art writing, art prizes judging and radio talks. She is on the Board of the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, the Venice Biennale Commissioner's Council, the *Art & Australia* Advisory Board and the Australia-Israel Cultural Exchange. Previous Board appointments have included the Bundanon Trust (1995–2002), the Powerhouse Museum (1995–2001); the Power Institute Council at The University of Sydney (1996–2006) and the National Gallery of Australia Foundation (2000–2009). In 2003, the French Government honoured Dr Sherman with the award of *Chevolier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* for her contribution to culture. In 2008 she received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from The University of Sydney.



Issey Miyake was born in Hiroshima, Japan in 1938. He established the Miyake Design Studio in 1970 and began showing his line at the Paris Collections in 1973. Miyake's basic tenet for making clothes is the idea of creating a garment from 'one piece of cloth', and the exploration of the space between the human body and the cloth that covers it. His approach to design is to strike a consistent balance between tradition and innovation, handcrafts and new technology. PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE, established in1993, is a radical but eminently practical and universal form of contemporary clothing that combines technology, functionality and beauty. In 1998, Miyake embarked upon a new project called A-POC (A Piece Of Cloth) with Dai Fujiwara and a team of young designers. He is challenging the way in which clothing is made using a new process that harnesses computer technology to industrial knitting or weaving machines to create clothing beginning with a single piece of thread. Miyake established the Miyake Issey Foundation, with the authorisation of the Ministry of Education and Science, in February 2004. http://www.informat.com/whoswho/isseymiyake.html





Yohji Yamamoto was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1943. After graduating in law from Keio University in 1966, he attended the Bunkafukuso Gakuin fashion school and established his own fashion company in 1972. Yamamoto presented his first Y's for women collection in Tokyo in 1977. His second collection, simply named Yohji Yamamoto, was presented in Paris (1981) and New York (1982), followed three years later by the presentation of his first menswear collection in Paris. In 1989, a film portrait of Yamamoto by Wim Wenders was shown at the Centre Pompidou. Yamamoto has attained numerous international awards, including the French Government's Chevolier de L'Ordre Des Arts et Des Lettres (1994), the Japanese Order of Culture (2004) and an honorary doctorate from the University of the Arts London (2008). His work has been shown at La Maison Européene de la Photographie, Paris (2002); the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2003); the Palazzo Pitti Gallery of Modern Art, Florence and the Musée de la Mode et du Textile, Paris (both 2005); and the MoMu, Mode Museum, Antwerp (2006). A new exhibition is planned for Spring 2011 at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



Akira Isogawa was born in Kyoto, Japan and moved to Australia in 1986 where he studied fashion design at the Sydney Institute of Technology. He has achieved international recognition for his exquisite contemporary designs and since 1998 has shown his Spring/Summer and Autumn/ Winter collections to international buyers in Paris each year. Akira continues to maintain a strong presence in Sydney, where he has shown collections at the annual Mercedes Australian Fashion Week since 1996. In 1999, Akira was named Designer of the Year and Womenswear Designer of the Year at the Australian Fashion Industry Awards. In 2005 he was honoured by Australia Post with a commemorative postage stamp and named an Australian Legend. Also in 2005, he was awarded *Prix De Marie Claire Best Australian Designer*. In 2006 Akira received the Award for Fashion Excellence at the National Retail Association Fashion Design Awards and was the inaugural Australian Fashion Laureate in 2007. Akira's work has been shown in prestigious solo exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria (2004–05), Object Gallery (2003) and in major group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Dr Sherman commissioned accessories by Akira for her *Dressing and Dreaming* exhibition at Sherman Galleries (Hargrave Street) in 2002.



Contemporary Japanese fashion: the Gene Sherman collection an exhibition developed by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney from a donation to the museum by Dr Gene Sherman through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009.

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Finally, Dr Dawn Casey and Debbie Abraham wish to acknowledge Dr Gene Sherman's inspired sense of style and generosity in collecting and documenting a unique wearing wardrobe that has resulted in this important collection entering the public realm.











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