



1937

Printed silk organza,
synthetic horsehair

Center Front Length: 52 inches (132.1 cm)
Waist: 22 inches (55.9 cm)

ELSA SCHIAPARELLI
French (born Italy)

Gift of Mme Elsa Schiaparelli,
1969, 1969-232-52

WOMAN'S DINNER DRESS

The oversized lobster on this dress is strangely out of place on such a romantic and feminine gown, but the odd juxtaposition between evening gown and sea creature was certainly not an accident. Many of Schiaparelli's designs were both shocking and humorous.

The lobster motif was a result of a collaboration with Salvador Dalí, who had been employing lobsters in his artwork for years, as in his famous *Lobster Telephone* from 1936. In spring 1937, Schiaparelli asked Dalí to design a lobster as a decoration for a white organdy evening gown. The dress was made famous when it appeared in *Vogue* magazine, modeled by Wallis Simpson. As an American divorcee, Simpson gained notoriety when the Duke of Windsor chose to marry her rather than become King of England.

LET'S LOOK

Schiaparelli's designs were often shocking. What might people have found shocking about this dress? Why?

Schiaparelli is playing with contradictions and opposites in her designs by choosing unusual combinations of color, decoration and texture. In what ways does this design play with contradictions?