



November 1927

Hand-knitted wool

Center Back Length: 22 1/2 inches (57 cm)
Circumference (Bust): 36 inches (91.4 cm)

ELSA SCHIAPARELLI

French (born Italy)

Gift of Mme Elsa Schiaparelli, 1969,
1969-232-54

LET'S LOOK

How has Schiaparelli decorated this sweater?

Why do you think Schiaparelli decided to knit a bow right into the sweater instead of making a scarf to go with it?

This sweater was unique at the time. How do you think people reacted to it? Would you have bought one? Why or why not?

WOMAN'S SWEATER

In the 1920's, the sweater was an important piece of clothing for a new type of "modern" woman who would rather play a game of tennis than sit still in a parlor. But, sweaters of the time tended to lose their shape quickly—which resulted in a sloppy appearance.

In the spring of 1927, however, Elsa Schiaparelli noticed a woman in Paris wearing a plain but unusually woven sweater, which didn't seem to stretch and had what Schiaparelli later described as a "steady look." Schiaparelli discovered that the sweater had been knitted by an Armenian woman using a special double layered stitch. Elsa soon recruited the young woman to knit several prototypes for her. She drew a white bow to look like a scarf tied around the neck of a sweater on a black background and had the design knitted into the sweaters. The sweater had its public debut when Elsa wore it to a luncheon that included several leaders of the fashion world, and it caused a sensation. In fact, a buyer from Lord and Taylor ordered forty copies on the spot! Although her first collection had been well-received when it launched the previous year, it was the bow-knot sweater that secured her fame.