



Passion for Fashion (103)

Mon, 20th Nov 2017 GMT/BST

Lot 169

Estimate: £5000 - £8000 + Fees

A rare and important Boué Soeurs Robe de Style 'Romance', Autumn-Winter 1925-26, unlabelled, of black Chantilly lace, adorned with swags of ribbon-work roses in shades of pink, silver lamé florets, yellow and green ribbon laburnum-like fronds, cut low to front, back and sides with crin-stiffened gathers to skirt sides; worn over a replacement slip with original curved silver lamé panel below the bust, bust approx 92cm, 36in

The Robe de Style gown was a fashion phenomenon occurring from the teens through to the 1920s - Boué Soeurs and Jeanne Lanvin being the main proponents, although most fashion houses included them in their repertoire.

The romantic, frivolous and highly impractical 18th century-inspired gown with hooped pannier hips, worn as evening wear, captured the imaginations of women emerging from the gloom and privations of the Great War. Examples are rare, especially in good condition such as this one, where the brightness of the silk flowers are as fresh as the day they were made.

Waleria Dorogova, scholar and leading authority on Boué Soeurs has researched this piece and writes:

Boué Sœurs, active from 1899 to 1957, were known for a francophile historicist style and the Robe de Style 'Romance' attests to their favoured aesthetic. Nearly identical versions of this design can be found at the MET, Palais Galliera and Holbæk Museum (Denmark). The fact that the same style was also executed in powder pink lace (Design Museum Copenhagen) suggests that it was very popular. A photograph in *Les Modes* documents that 'Romance' was worn by Isabel Rodriguez, a celebrated Spanish dancer of Madrid's Royal Theatre, who appeared in the now lost Rudolph Valentino motion picture 'L'Hacienda Rouge' (A Sainted Devil, 1925), dressed by Boué Sœurs. Indeed, the black lace of 'Romance' has a Spanish feel to it, as it is reminiscent of Francisco de Goya's portraits of Spanish aristocrats.

Black Chantilly lace over various coloured silks, a recurring combination at Maison Boué over many decades, can also be seen as a nod to the Second Empire, an epoch frequently remembered by the house. The rose festoons with their fine colour gradations and the band of lamé underneath the bust are the result of Sylvie Boué's artistic nature: Her appreciation of the Rococo style, which featured bands of

roses in painting and applied arts, such as Sèvres porcelain, as well as her interest in the effects of artificial light on metallised cloth, which she meticulously studied by using fabrics from Paris' theatre suppliers. In an article instalment written by Jeanne Boué for Arts and Decoration in 1922-23 she commented on the characteristic silk roses: 'When a creation is successful, realizes our ideals, we finish it with ribbon or lace adornments, giving the completed dress the same care and taste that an artist gives in the final strokes to his pastel painting. The finishing touch is usually made with our inimitable artificial flowers - the exceptional cachet of Boué Sœurs'.