



Tamy Tazi
Fernando Sanchez
Yves Saint Laurent

Introduction

This exhibition explores the friendship and mutual inspiration shared by three fashion designers: Tamy Tazi, Fernando Sanchez and Yves Saint Laurent.

Friends and kindred spirits, they shared the same fascination for the decorative arts of Morocco and were passionate about “*the forceful harmonies, the brazen fusions and feverish creativity*” of the country. They were also profoundly in sync with “*the mysterious streets of Marrakech,*” its medina and its heritage. Their shared passion for this “*wonderfully unknown*” city opened their eyes to color and brought them together regularly.

Certain aspects of Yves Saint Laurent’s fashion work highlight this Moroccan friendship which, over forty years, forged strong bonds between the

couturier and the Kingdom, as well as with his friends Tamy Tazi and Fernando Sanchez (1935-2006). Several Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008) creations seem engaged in dialogue with those of Fernando Sanchez, but also and more especially with those of Tamy Tazi, who reinvented the caftan by adopting a more slender and more fitted silhouette.

The exhibition shows how these three couturiers roamed a common visual landscape while recomposing it, each in his or her unique manner. A deep aesthetic association united them throughout their careers. The creative work of the three artists should be seen in the light of their reciprocal friendship and ongoing interplay of evolving reinterpretation and creative regeneration.

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1. A family album

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In February 1966, Yves Saint Laurent arrived in Marrakech for the first time. It was love at first sight. From then on, until the end of his career, he would travel to Morocco several times a year for rest and relaxation, and to design his collections. A year earlier, in 1965, Tamy Tazi appeared in the pages of *Vogue* as a symbol of Moroccan elegance and modernity. Tamy Tazi became one of Yves Saint Laurent's first friends in Morocco.

Yves Saint Laurent and Fernando Sanchez met as young men at the École de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and remained close friends all their lives. In 1974, Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent sold Dar el Hanch, their first house in Marrakech, to Fernando Sanchez, and acquired Dar es Saada, a house adjacent to the Majorelle Garden. While living in Casablanca, New York and Paris respectively, Tamy Tazi, Fernando Sanchez and Yves Saint Laurent would regularly meet up in Marrakech.

1.1

In 1965, Tamy Tazi moved with her husband, Jalil Tazi, to Casablanca, where she led a cosmopolitan 1960s life. She chaired an equestrian club, read a lot—in several languages—and raised her three children. She forged her own style by drawing on Moroccan tradition without ignoring either the age she lived in or the future. Exuding at once confidence and sensitivity, her natural beauty and aesthetic sophistication prompted the magazine *Vogue*—edited at the time in the United States by Diana Vreeland and in France by Edmonde Charles-Roux—to devote several pages to her, where she was presented as one of the most elegant women of her generation.

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1.2

“Jalil and Tamy Tazi were our first Moroccan friends. Tamy is also a talented designer who is inspired by traditional culture without forgetting the times in which we live.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.3

“Dar el Hanch was a small house which we decorated modestly with tables and chairs found in the souks. The house bordered a vacant parcel of land, behind which an alleyway led to the Bab Doukkala mosque. We spent many happy moments there. Yves very quickly found a source of inspiration in Morocco.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.4

“All his life, but only while at home, Yves loved wearing Moroccan cotton clothes made by Boujemaa, an artisan who also raised parrots.”

— Pierre Bergé

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“Our first house was called Dar el Hanch. In Arabic, *hanch* means snake. Could this be why Yves always drew so many? Snakes are found nearly everywhere in his work.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.6

“Yves’ longest friendship was with Fernando Sanchez. The two young men had met in Paris at the École de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture, where they were studying fashion. Theirs was a strong and enduring friendship. Fernando was pursuing his career in New York, but would see us often in Marrakech and ended up buying our first home, Dar el Hanch.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.7

“When he was younger, Yves liked going to the souks and walking in the famous Djemaa el Fna square. The acrobats, snake charmers, and *gnawa* dancers fascinated him.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.8

In 1970, Yves Saint Laurent designed the first of a series of LOVE year-end greeting cards in poster format that he would send until 2007 to his family, friends, collaborators and clients. Every year, Yves Saint Laurent would come up with a new chromatic palette using collages, drawings or gouaches. Common to all his cards is the use of the word LOVE. Many of them were inspired by Morocco. The snake motif is seen in many.

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1.9

“Yves would come to Marrakech every year on December 1 and June 1, to design his haute couture collections. He would work tirelessly for two weeks and return to Paris with an impressive dossier of drawings. It was in Marrakech that Yves discovered color. The rainbow of colors found in Morocco had a lifelong influence on him.”

— Pierre Bergé

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1.10

The rich American heir, John Paul Getty Jr., and his wife Talitha, were leading figures of Marrakech high-society in the early 1970s. Yves Saint Laurent considered Talitha an embodiment of bohemian luxury, as if she were a modern heroine from the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald. It is in this same context that Andy Warhol came twice to Marrakech to visit his friends Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé.

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1.11

In 1974, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé acquired the “house of happiness and serenity,” Dar es Saada, in Marrakech. Their American friend Bill Willis, who had settled in Marrakech, was commissioned to renovate and decorate the house. The property borders the Majorelle Garden, which the couple would frequently visit.

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1.12

In 1980, Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent acquired the nearby garden and the villa which had belonged to the painter Jacques Majorelle. Together, they restored the garden and established a museum of Islamic art in the artist's former studio. Its design was entrusted to the decorator Bill Willis. Among the objects exhibited, one could see their collection of caftans and antique Moroccan embroidery. The museum was transformed in 2011, when it was rededicated entirely to Berber arts. In 2020, it was renamed the Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Arts.

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2. The atelier

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Tamy Tazi has always had a keen knowledge of Moroccan craftsmanship, and textiles in particular. She built one of the Kingdom's first important collections of indigenous embroidery and weaving, and she introduced Fernando Sanchez and Yves Saint Laurent to this artisanal universe and to the specific characteristics of embroidery from Azemmour, Chaouen, Fès, Meknes, Salé, Rabat and Tétouan. Embroidery, too often neglected, was far from a minor art in their eyes, as can be seen in their aesthetic research and their exploratory creations. They transcended this ancestral vocabulary by seeking new chromatic harmonies, each according to his or her inspiration, and by exploring new materials. Tamy Tazi used the art of embroidery as it relates to the caftan, and Yves Saint Laurent adopted it in his haute couture collections by freely interpreting the repertoire of embroidery and passementerie. Saint Laurent was also fascinated by Moroccan *zellige* tiles, carved plaster and sculpted woodwork, whose patterns he used to create original printed fabrics.

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These prints of patterned fabrics are important elements used in the textile industry. They show the pattern printed on paper before being printed on textile. Made by the Swiss fabric manufacturer Abraham*, the prints allowed Yves Saint Laurent to control the quality of the design and the color tones. They reflect the vibrant and daring colors, as well as the patterns, found on *zelliges*, *moucharabieh*, etc., which comprise the Moroccan architectural vocabulary that so inspired Yves Saint Laurent.

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By skilfully combining her passion with a rigorous approach to her work, Tamy Tazi helped broaden the range of embroideries used for caftans. She drew her inspiration from domestic ornamentation and from patterns previously reserved for men. She unearthed forgotten techniques such as *chbika*, a fine needle lace that enhances the collars of long shirts used by men (*kmiss*) or that adorned household linen. Tamy Tazi not only played with dress codes, she transformed *chbika* into marvelous filigree-style work with very sophisticated designs.

2.3

Stars, trees of life, squares, polygons, broken lines, herringbone or interlacing patterns and floral themes: This set of patterns shows us the ongoing dialogue between Tamy Tazi and Yves Saint Laurent. These samples reveal the kinds of questions they were asking themselves, which sometimes would respond to one another and sometimes would stand out on their own, and they show their mutual interest for the embroidery of Tetouan, Fez, Rabat and Chaouen. The samples also underscore their attachment to ornaments which, in their opinion, were far more than simple means of embellishing fabrics or clothing.

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Upon returning to France, Yves Saint Laurent applied the wide repertoire of shapes and colors he discovered in Morocco to his work, collaborating with renowned Parisian embroiderers such as the House of Lesage. By applying a new frame of reference, he explored this decorative richness by sometimes making it more complex, sometimes paring it down. In addition, he used new materials such as leather, felt, crushed velvet, brocade and muslin. His embroideries and trimmings reflect his reevaluation of color codes by sometimes adopting muted tones atypical of the traditional Moroccan palette.

3. Masculine–Feminine

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Yves Saint Laurent and Fernando Sanchez always acknowledged the influence of Morocco on their creative work. Fernando Sanchez would regularly collaborate with Boujemaa, a tailor in the medina of Marrakech, to fashion clothing for his personal use as well as for his New York-based line. As for Yves Saint Laurent, he would not only take advantage of the country's rich clothing heritage but also play on its codes and traditions. He said, "*This culture has become mine, but I didn't just import it, I latched onto it, transformed and adapted it.*" The preparatory designs for his fall-winter 1976 haute couture collection are proof of this. In them, we see that Yves Saint Laurent reinterpreted the Moroccan man's wardrobe—the *jabador*, *burnous*, *saroual* and *tarboosh*—to create emblematic feminine silhouettes. He came to adopt a style that was at the crossroads of genres—masculine and feminine—and cultures. Tamy Tazi also upended time-honored canons to provide women with a more casual look. The traditionally masculine apparel that she reinvented gave women a daring and powerful form to their emancipation, without denying them their femininity.

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These sketches by Yves Saint Laurent prefigure the whirlwind of colors and shapes found in his fall-winter 1976 collection. Considered “revolutionary” by *The New York Times*, it marked a turning point in the couturier’s career. He transformed the female silhouette by evoking the costumes of Russian ballets, but also and above all, by drawing on the Moroccan man’s wardrobe. All these drawn figures, dressed in burnous, *jabadors* and *sarouals*, capture the beauty of a body in motion, free to dance and pirouette, liberated from all canons. “What I am offering [women] is not a new silhouette, but rather freedom,” said Yves Saint Laurent

3.2

These illustrations were done in Yves Saint Laurent's Parisian office and workspace, known as the Studio, and evoke the hats seen in his sketches for the fall-winter 1976 collection. In the couturier's drawings, these short, colorful, and pompom-adorned hats seem transformed by the figures' head movements. The rhythm felt in the drawings evokes the dances, songs and colors of the Gnawa brotherhood that the couturier could see in Marrakech.

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3.3

The *burnous*—from the Amazigh *abernous*,— also called a *selham*, is a hooded, sleeveless woolen cape. Yves Saint Laurent and Tamy Tazi reimagined this emblematic apparel from the Moroccan man’s wardrobe by daringly using masterful associations of colors and by applying a new female silhouette. This unique crossover approach would revolutionize dress codes in Morocco and abroad.

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3.4

The *jabador* is a man's jacket with a stand up collar and fastened with numerous buttons. This richly embroidered formal apparel is traditionally worn over a *saroual*. Fernando Sanchez collaborated with Boujemaa, a tailor in the Marrakech medina, to create many jackets for his personal use, while Tamy Tazi and Yves Saint Laurent reinterpreted this article of clothing. By enriching it with ornaments and color, they freed themselves from Moroccan conventions and adapted it to the female silhouette. Cut close to the body, the jacket becomes more supple, less stiff, to become a luxurious and comfortable outfit, in line with its menswear inspiration.

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This wool jersey caftan is adorned with hand-tailored embroidery (*maâlem*) affixed to velvet appliqués in a more forceful tone. The pattern of this embroidery, inspired by one found on a cushioned ottoman, recalls a similar pattern that adorns the jacket designed by Yves Saint Laurent. The similarities between the patterns seen on the jacket and the caftan bear witness to the close aesthetic bond and friendship shared between Yves Saint Laurent and Tamy Tazi.

3.6

These two articles of clothing—a jacket designed by Yves Saint Laurent and a tunic by Tamy Tazi—feature practically the same pattern. They reflect a merging of cultures together with haute couture expertise. Both are inspired by the outfits worn by brides in Mahdia, Tunisia, which feature large silk ribbons, embellished with floche threads and straps. Tamy Tazi reproduced this type of caftan in numerous colors throughout her career.

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4. Inspiration

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Strongly encouraged by Yves Saint Laurent and Fernando Sanchez, Tamy Tazi established her couture workshop in Casablanca in 1974. She went on to design uniquely refined clothing by reinventing ceremonial and at-home caftans. Her creations were at the crossroads of two worlds: the Moroccan tradition and the haute couture world she was familiar with as the representative of the House of Yves Saint Laurent in Casablanca. Her friendship with Yves Saint Laurent, for whom Morocco was a real source of figurative and chromatic inspiration, encouraged Tamy Tazi to conceive of clothing that enhanced the richness and uniqueness of Moroccan heritage. By drawing on her collection of antique embroidery and her ongoing research, she was able to breathe new life into a traditional repertoire. In this way, she participated in the reinvention of the caftan and, by extension, in the emancipation of women. As for Yves Saint Laurent, he applied—with a perfectly mastered sobriety and sense of fantasy—the art of embroidery and passementerie to comfortable, urban clothing that accompanied women in their daily lives.

4.1

This ceremonial dress from the Anti-Atlas is richly decorated with stylized flowers and multicolored pompoms. Pompoms are decorative elements par excellence used by the Berbers of this region of Morocco. The four corners of this dress are striped and embellished, while the borders are enhanced by numerous patterns. Tamy Tazi would employ this vast repertoire of decorative elements, which she expanded and adapted to the caftan, thus contributing to the recognition of these embellishments beyond their traditional universe.

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4.2

Inspired by age-old embroidery from Chaouen, the embroidery used on this caftan was traditionally intended for at-home use, like the one shown in this panel which evokes multicolored mosaics. We can imagine Tamy Tazi's passion for this ancestral knowledge and expertise, which she ended up mixing and reinventing when applying them to her outfits.

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4.3

This short white silk tunic is enriched with embroidery inspired by that of Meknes. Tamy Tazi has always had an intimate knowledge of Moroccan embroidery, which she collects. Traditionally, this type of embroidery was usually seen on household items such as tablecloths, placemats, sheets and curtains. By applying it to her caftans, and by using new colors and materials, Tamy Tazi reinvented Meknes embroidery.

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5. An explosion of colors

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With Tamy Tazi, the caftan was given a new contour and a style all its own. She broke with the age-old use of heavy silks that concealed the body of Moroccan women, choosing instead light, fluid and transparent fabrics that emphasized the silhouette and allowed for more fitted cuts. Her friendship with Yves Saint Laurent also gave her access to wool jerseys, silk muslins and printed fabrics that prestigious suppliers would produce exclusively for the couturier. With the help of her friend, she gave voice to these fabrics, animating and embellishing them by overlaying patterns and embroidery of dazzling finesse. Different worlds encountered one another, and the caftan became couture. Yves Saint Laurent encouraged Tamy Tazi's affection for vibrant tones and daring color combinations, which he was using in his work: *"The boldness seen in my clothing, I owe to this country, to its forceful harmonies, to its brazen fusions, to its feverish creativity."*

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A symphony of colors and shapes, this cape evokes the bougainvilleas at the Majorelle Garden. The couturier transformed into clothing his sensations and perceptions of the floral world that surrounded him during his stays in Marrakech. This multiplicity of juxtaposed and colliding shapes and colors also reminds us of the luxuriance of Rabat embroidery, of which the couturier had an intimate knowledge.

5.2

Thanks to her friendship with Yves Saint Laurent, Tamy Tazi has access to fabrics exclusively designed for the French designer by major textile manufacturers. As seen here, Tamy Tazi transformed this flowery dream, conceived by Yves Saint Laurent and manufactured by the House of Abraham*, by combining it with a particularly light and wonderfully supple *chibka* embroidery.

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This door curtain was part of the trousseau that every adolescent woman had to embroider for her wedding. Yves Saint Laurent and Tamy Tazi were fascinated by the floral exuberance and the profusion of patterns and colors specific to Rabat embroidery. They both collected a number of these door curtains. Those in the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé collection were sold at auction in 2015 to benefit the Fondation Jardin Majorelle.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Tamy Tazi, as well as to her children and grand-children, for their invaluable and unconditional support in making this exhibition possible.

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A Moroccan Friendship
Tamy Tazi, Fernando Sanchez, Yves Saint Laurent
Exhibition from 16 October 2021 through 29 May 2022

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