

# La Mode en Majesté

## Royal Thai Dress from Tradition to Modernity

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Press release



Her Majesty Queen Sirikit for Vogue, 1962 © Horst P. Horst / Condé Nast via Getty Images

**May 13**  
**— Nov 1, 2026**

This exhibition is organised in collaboration with Sustainable Arts and Crafts Institute of Thailand (SACIT), the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles (QSMT), Royal Thai Embassy in Paris and the Musée des Arts Décoratif (MAD). It is held in celebration of the 340th anniversary of the first diplomatic relations and the 170th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between France and Thailand.

# La Mode en Majesté

## Royal Thai Dress from Tradition to Modernity

1. Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit in Paris  
visiting Balmain  
(44, rue François I<sup>er</sup>) —  
October 12, 1960  
Paris, Patrimoine Balmain  
© Patrimoine Balmain

2. *Thai Chakraphat* —  
1981  
Unknown Thai designer  
Plain silk, silk and  
metal-thread brocade,  
beads, metallic threads  
and sequins  
Collection of Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit

From May 13 to November 1, 2026, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs presents, under the high patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya, the exhibition *La Mode en Majesté. Royal Thai Dress From Tradition to Modernity*. This event is organised as part of the 340th anniversary of the first diplomatic mission and the 170th anniversary of Franco-Thai diplomatic relations (1856–2026). The exhibition is organised in partnership with The Sustainable Arts and Crafts Institute of Thailand (SACIT), the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles (QSMT), The Royal Thai Embassy in Paris and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD).



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1.

Objects, textiles, and photographs from the royal collections complete this presentation. Through the prism of fashion, the exhibition analyses the role of costume as a cultural and diplomatic language. Presented for the first time in France, these court wardrobes, structured around the eight formats of traditional costume, were conceived by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, in collaboration with Thai historians and designers. This project offers an unprecedented reading of the evolution of dress at the Thai court, from the 1960s to the present day. Nearly 200 pieces, dresses and accessories designed primarily by the couturier Pierre Balmain and the house of Lesage, as well as by Thai designers, highlight the development of Thai court dress and its place on the international stage.



3. Thai Chakri, chong kraben variation — 1982

Pierre Balmain (French, 1914-1982)  
Silk and metal-thread brocade, plain silk, beads and sequins  
Collection of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit

4. Evening Gown (detail) — 1985

Erik Mortensen (Danish, 1926-1998)  
for Balmain  
Silk and metal-thread brocade, 19<sup>th</sup> century; silk  
Collection of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit

### Thailand and France: Fashion as Cultural Diplomacy

The exhibition opens with the 1960s, a period during which Her Majesty Queen Sirikit maintained close relations with the great French couture houses and undertook an official visit to France with her husband, King Rama IX. She played a decisive role in the modernisation of court attire, presenting her creations during official trips made in 1960 to 14 European countries and the United States. With the couturier Pierre Balmain, she developed a new expression of Thai royal elegance, reconciling fidelity to heritage with international openness. The exhibition presents a selection of pieces from the wardrobes of the royal family, offering insight into the richness of Thai textile traditions and accessories.

Committed to the preservation of craftsmanship, Queen Sirikit created the SUPPORT Foundation in 1976, dedicated to safeguarding textile arts and handicrafts. Today, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Suthida, the Foundation continues this mission, while Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya extends its legacy through her commitment to contemporary creation and support for Thai designers.

### Queen Sirikit and the Modernisation of Court Attire

From the first Siamese embassies to the Court of France to contemporary collaborations in the fields of art, haute couture, fashion, and textiles, these exchanges contribute to the representation of Thailand and France on the international stage. The exhibition pathway considers fashion as a form of cultural diplomacy, based on image, materials, and craftsmanship. Thai silks and ceremonial attire gained international visibility through collaborations with Parisian couture, while French expertise in turn contributed to the global dissemination of Thai textiles, in a relationship founded on reciprocity and creative exchange.

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5. From left to right:

Evening Gown —  
1960  
Pierre Balmain  
(French, 1914-1982)  
Silk satin embroidered  
with metallic threads  
and crystals  
Collection of Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit

Evening Gown —  
1960  
Pierre Balmain  
(French, 1914-1982)  
Cotton lace, metallic  
threads, plastic threads,  
beads and sequins  
Collection of Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit

Evening Gown —  
1960  
Pierre Balmain  
(French, 1914-1982)  
Silk satin with silk thread  
and braid, bead, paillette,  
and gold-metal coil  
embroidery  
Collection of Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit

### Queen Sirikit: The Image of a Nation

The exhibition is structured around the wardrobe of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, whose style and modernity profoundly influenced the international perception of Thailand at a pivotal moment in its history. In the 1960s, her appearances during state visits, particularly abroad, attracted the attention of the international press, making her an emblematic figure whose elegance extended beyond the diplomatic sphere. In the context of the post-Second World War period, as Thailand reaffirmed its place on the world stage under the reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), clothing became a vehicle of identity affirmation, combining refinement and cultural continuity.

### Celebrations of Hands: Crafts and Accessories

An essential section of the exhibition is dedicated to Thai craftsmanship, focusing on the techniques and processes used to create the accessories and decorative elements that accompany Thai court dress today.

Selected craft objects are presented alongside close-up videos of the making process, offering insight into the skilled hands, methods, and material knowledge behind court attire and its continued influence on contemporary creation. The practices highlighted include lipao weaving, folding fan painting, niello work, and gold damascening — crafts historically associated with court culture and still used today in the making of refined accessories accompanying Thai dress — as well as Bencharong ceramic painting, presented within the broader context of royal decorative arts.

The preservation of these traditions is closely linked to the work of the SUPPORT Foundation, established to safeguard traditional skills and support sustainable livelihoods for rural artisans. Through long-term support, training, and market development, the Foundation plays a central role in the transmission and continuity of craft practices. In addition, a programme of demonstrations by Thai master artisans will be presented at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.



### Thai Fashion Today: Contemporary Thai Dress

The exhibition presents Thai fashion as a constantly evolving tradition. Alongside historical pieces associated with Queen Sirikit, it also brings together outfits worn or commissioned by Her Majesty Queen Suthida and Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya. These works testify to the continuity of the principles established under the reign of Queen Sirikit — clarity of form, mastery of textiles, reinterpretation of traditional dress — which continue to nourish contemporary creation and the international influence of Thai fashion.

The exhibition concludes with a presentation of contemporary Thai designers, heirs and interpreters of this still deeply rooted and living tradition. The creations of the house SIRIVANNAVARI, founded by Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya, enter into dialogue with those of designers such as ASAVA, VATIT ITTHI, WISHARAWISH, TIRAPAN, and MESHMUSEUM. These works inscribe Thai dress in the present and the future, affirming the voice of contemporary Thai creation within international fashion ecosystems.

### Partnerships

*La Mode en Majesté. Royal Thai Dress from Tradition to Modernity* is organised in partnership with the Sustainable Arts and Crafts Institute of Thailand (SACIT), The Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles (QSMT), The Royal Embassy of Thailand and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD),

6. Thai Inspired  
Two-piece Ensemble —  
2025  
SIRIVANNAVARI  
(Thailand, founded 2005)  
Silk, glass and crystal  
beads, cotton thread,  
flat metal strips, and  
upcycled plastic;  
embroidery reminiscent  
of cape jasmine  
Collection  
of SIRIVANNAVARI

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### Modern National Heritage: Pierre Balmain and Haute Couture

For her state visits abroad, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit entrusted Pierre Balmain with the design of a wardrobe capable of translating Thai heritage through the craftsmanship of the French house. The couturier approached Thai attire as a true haute couture composition, conducting an in-depth study of forms, proportions, and textiles, derived from

a tradition based on wrapping and draping rather than Western tailoring. Working with Thai silk, brocade, mat mii (ikat), and embroidery, he developed silhouettes suited to international official contexts, both deeply rooted in tradition and open to modernity. The exhibition reveals, for the first time, the process of work and research between Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the House of Balmain, the House of Lesage, and the SUPPORT Foundation through drawings and samples of textiles and embroidery.

7. Shoes —  
René Mancini  
(France, founded 1936)  
*Mat mii* (ikat) silk, velvet  
and beads  
Collection of Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit



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# Useful information

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## — Press contacts

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## — Curators

Béatrice Quette,  
Curator of the Asian  
and Islamic collections

assisted by Astrid Novembre,  
Exhibition assistant,  
and Louise Lartillot,  
Curator assistant  
bourse du Japon

The curator team at the Queen Sirikit  
Museum of Textiles, in collaboration  
with SACIT (Sustainable Arts and Crafts  
Institute of Thailand)

→ Piyavara Teekara Natenoi  
Director, Queen Sirikit Museum  
of Textiles  
→ Sappasit Foongfaungchaveng  
Independent Curator  
→ Sarttarat Muddin  
Chief Curator & Educator, Queen  
Sirikit Museum of Textiles  
→ Alisa Saisavetvaree  
Curator, Queen Sirikit Museum  
of Textiles  
Conservation & Registration Team  
Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles

## — Les Arts Décoratifs

**The not-for-profit organization  
Les Arts Décoratifs brings together  
the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the  
Musée Nissim de Camondo, the  
Camondo School, the Ateliers du  
Carrousel, and the Library.**

Lionel Sauvage, President  
Sophie-Justine Lieber,  
Chief Executive Officer  
Camille Herody, Deputy Chief  
Executive Officer  
Bénédicte Gady, Museum Director,  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer

## — Musée des Arts Décoratifs

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 50  
Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides,  
Tuileries

### Opening hours

\* Tuesday to Friday, 11 am – 6 pm  
\* Open late in temporary exhibition  
on Thursdays until 9 pm

### Admission

→ General admission: €15  
→ Concession: €10  
→ Free for under 26

## — Musée Nissim de Camondo

63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 53 89 06 40

### Opening hours

Closed from August 4, 2024  
through 2027

## — Library

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 36  
Open Monday to Friday 10 am – 6 pm

## — Publications and images

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 68

## — Visitor engagement

### Activities for individuals

Reservation *via* the online ticketing

### Activities for groups

[reservation@madparis.fr](mailto:reservation@madparis.fr)

+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66

### Conferences, round tables and colloquiums

Reservation *via* the online ticketing

[conference@madparis.fr](mailto:conference@madparis.fr)

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## — École Camondo

266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 43 35 44 28

## — Ateliers du Carrousel

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris  
63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 02

## — Bookshop & Gift Store

105 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
+33 (0) 1 42 60 64 94  
Open 11 am – 18:30 pm  
Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm  
Closed Monday

## — Loulou Restaurant

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris  
or access via the Carrousel gardens  
Open daily 12 pm – 2:30 pm  
and 7 pm – 11 pm  
+33 (0) 1 42 60 41 96

## — Le Camondo Restaurant

61 bis rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris  
Open Tuesday to Saturday from  
noon to midnight and Sunday during  
the day  
+33 (0) 1 45 63 40 40

## — Internet and social media

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