

Grès couture – Timeline

1903

Germaine Émilie Krebs is born in Paris, in the 17th arrondissement.

Around 1920

Madame Grès originally wanted to become a dancer and then a sculptor, but turns to sewing, a trade her family considered more "suitable".

1924-1930

Germaine Krebs receives training in the fashion house Maison Premet on Place Vendôme in Paris.

1933

The house "Alix Burton" is opened on Rue de Miromesnil by Julie Barton and "Mademoiselle Alix", Germaine Krebs' nickname. The house's first summer collection is characteristic of the future Grès couture: draping with few seams and the use of new fabrics. One year later, the house is renamed "Maison Alix" and Mademoiselle Alix takes over as head.

1935

Alix makes the costumes for the play "The Trojan War Will Not Take Place" by Jean Giraudoux, which achieve great success in fashion publications.

1937

Germaine Krebs marries the Russian artist Serge Czerefkow, called Grès.

1938

Alix becomes a 50% shareholder of Maison Alix.

1940

The designer leaves Paris with her daughter during the exodus and takes refuge in Haute-Garonne. Unable to go to the hairdresser and unwilling to waste her time on her hair, she starts wearing her famous turban.

1942

Germaine Krebs sells her shares of Maison Alix and founds her own house, Grès, at 1 Rue de la Paix. The first Grès collection, triumphant, transcends the technique of draping.

1944

To set an example, the most emblematic French couture houses, Grès and Balenciaga, are closed in January by order of the Germans. After numerous run-ins with the German and French authorities, Madame Grès is allowed to reopen her house in March provided she renounces draping. In July, a red, white and blue collection is presented.

1945

Grès participates in the travelling exhibition "The Theatre of Fashion" that promotes the influence of French couture.

1948

Grès introduces the kimono sleeve in her creations, modernising it.

1949

Madame Grès receives the title of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

1958

At the instigation of the National Institute of Education and the Ford Corporation, Madame Grès goes to India with a group of experts to study the reorganisation of a local textile production site.

1959

Cabochard, inspired by Madame Grès' trip to India, is launched. Cabochard quickly becomes an international success and a classic of the perfume industry. The company Parfums Grès is founded.

Spring-Summer collection with strong Indian influences.

1960

The company Grès is propelled to the rank of international business thanks to the success of Cabochard. Its models are exported to 35 countries and 85% of its sales come from exports.

1966

With the "sexy" clothing trend, Madame Grès adapts her models to give glimpses of the body between the pleats.

1972

Madame Grès is unanimously elected President of the Syndical Chamber for Haute Couture in Paris.

1974

The company Grès is ordered to pay 10 million francs to its dealer in the United States for the fragrances due to "failure to execute the contract".

1976

Madame Grès De receives the first Dé d'or de la Haute Couture ("golden sewing thimble" for Haute Couture) award. Ironical for a designer whose work has never featured seams.

1978

Madame Grès receives the Creative Leadership in the Art Profession Award from New York University.

Madame Grès travels to Japan where she presents a retrospective of her models which is very successful, especially with local designers such as Issey Miyake.

1979

A Grès-Cartier jewellery collection is created.

1980

Attempt at a ready-to-wear collection.

The first book about Madame Grès is published; she buys all the copies when the book comes out.

1981

Madame Grès turns down a retrospective of her works at the Musée Galliera at the last minute.

1983

Madame Grès is appointed Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres.

1984

The Bernard Tapie Group buys a 66% stake in the company Grès and tries to diversify the house's activities by creating an office furniture line.

1986

The Bernard Tapie Group sells its shares to the Jacques Esterel Group. Bernard Tapie sells the fragrance and accessories business to the English Beecham Group.

Madame Grès finally reaches her ultimate goal: to create a dress with no seams.

1987

8 May - The company Grès files for bankruptcy and the company's assets are liquidated.

1988

The company is bought by the Japanese group Yagi Tsusho Limited, which still owns it.

Madame Grès makes her last public appearance at the Fashion Industry Oscars.

1990

Madame Grès and her daughter Anne leave for Saint-Paul-de-Vence.

1992

Madame Grès is placed in a nursing home.

1993

Madame Grès death in Var is kept secret until the following year.

1994

The first Grès retrospective is organised by MOMA in New York City before Madame Grès' death is made public.

2004

"Madame Grès, Between Light and Shadow" exhibition at the Museum of Bourgoin-Jallieu.

2007

"Madame Grès, Sphinx of Fashion" retrospective at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

2011

"Madame Grès, the Designer at Work" exhibition created by the Musée Galliera and presented at the Musée Bourdelle in Paris.