

Edited by Denis Laurent

Jules François  
CRAHAY.

REDISCOVERING A GRAND COUTURIER

*J. Crahay, Nina Ricci, Lanvin*

Lannoo



fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 16 | Sleeveless woollen tweed dress, Jules Crahay Paris, Spring–Summer 1952, *Vogue Paris*, April 1952.



fig. 17 | Jules François Crahay, 14 February 1959.

Givenchy in 1952 and Pierre Cardin in 1953, most newcomers failed, and the number of attempts decreased over the decade. Most of the disappointed designers opted to work as employees in well-established houses. Marc Bohan, for instance, who had opened his own house in the same year as Crahay but had to close it after just one collection, went to work for Jean Patou.<sup>35</sup>

In 1952, Jules Crahay was hired as a designer by Maison Nina Ricci.<sup>36</sup> It had been founded in 1932 on rue des Capucines and was led by the Italian-born couturier and her son, Robert Ricci, a skilled businessman.<sup>37</sup> Nina Ricci's generosity towards Crahay during his time as a prisoner of war may have played a role in the Belgian designer's interest in the house.<sup>38</sup> Nina Ricci clientele consisted mainly of French bourgeois women with traditional tastes, and owed much of its financial success to its perfumes, including the famous *L'Air du Temps*, created in 1948. Crahay, who was 35 in 1952, assisted Madame Ricci with her collections. It seems that he took full responsibility for some of the haute couture collection designs right from the beginning, starting with a few, gradually taking on more.<sup>39</sup> A little later, probably in 1955, he was also given the task of designing the Boutique line.<sup>40</sup> Like the haute couture collections, the garments were produced in ateliers on the premises.<sup>41</sup>

These pieces were probably for the “La Boutique de Nina Ricci” label or the “Nina Ricci Jeunes Femmes” collections.<sup>42</sup>

Jules Crahay's role at the Nina Ricci house became increasingly important. He gradually asserted himself as its main designer. He surrounded himself with new young assistants and additional ateliers were opened. However, until 1959, the only name that was officially ever communicated was that of Nina Ricci. Due to the lack of archival material, it is not possible with certainty to attribute specific haute couture designs from this period to the Belgian couturier. Nevertheless, his significant contribution did not escape the notice of attentive observers. These included John Fairchild, a highly influential journalist for *Women's Wear Daily*, a daily newspaper for fashion professionals, often referred to by its initials, *WWD*. In 1957, pondering the future of haute couture after Christian Dior's death, Fairchild mentioned Jules Crahay as an as yet unknown but up-and-coming designer.<sup>43</sup> Three months later, John Fairchild placed Jules Crahay among the creators who were shaping fashion in Paris, alongside Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin, Guy Laroche, Madame Grès and Antonio Castillo.<sup>44</sup> Just before the designer's talent became evident to all, the journalist already knew that “Jules

François Crahay has done a great deal to put Nina Ricci back in the fashion picture. The 41-year-old Belgian, the first Belgian in the Paris Couture, knows his metier. He is capable of doing every step in fashion creating [...]. Crahay constantly pushes Ricci's ateliers to better fit and better cut."<sup>45</sup>

Jules François Crahay's big moment arrived on 27 January 1959, when he presented the first complete collection he had personally signed for Nina Ricci. It

consisted of about 200 designs, of which, as was customary, only a portion was shown to the press.<sup>46</sup> It was a triumph. Journalists were effusive in their praise, with John Fairchild taking the lead. Just a few hours after the presentation, he wrote that "A New Star Rises in the Paris Fashion Sky."<sup>47</sup> "Nina Ricci's Jules François Crahay has shaken the roots of Paris fashion tonight. The 41-year-old Belgian designer has brought back clothes such as those the late Christian Dior used to make. Buyers are on the telephone to Ricci trying to reserve places for



fig. 18 | Jules François Crahay sitting in front of Henrietta Shaw, duchess of Bedford, who is wearing a *Crocus* suit and, behind her, a model wearing a pink "bourgeron" suit, Nina Ricci 1959 Spring–Summer collection. Photograph by Mark Shaw.

tomorrow's showing. Crahay is the first serious challenge to the Balenciaga and Givenchy school of fashion."<sup>48</sup> Fairchild's support, which would prove enduring, played a fundamental role in Jules Crahay's success in the United States.

Indeed, on the day after the press presentation, American store buyers crowded their designated showing. The results were phenomenal. Three weeks later, Nina Ricci had sold 250 models to American professional buyers, a number rivalling Balenciaga's best sales, while it had sold only 15 the previous season.<sup>49</sup> At that time, Parisian haute couture was highly dependent on the sale of patterns to American department stores and manufacturers, who reproduced them for sale in the United States. The 15 major department stores that covered Paris collections were the arbiters of fashion across the Atlantic.<sup>50</sup>

In *The New York Times*, Carrie Donovan wrote, "The fashion history that was made yesterday by a heretofore unknown, Jules François Crahay, designer for Nina Ricci, has all Paris talking today. The press, American store buyers, manufacturers and some of the most elegant women in Paris rushed to the unpretentious house of Ricci. This is quite a dizzying change for so quiet an establishment. Since 1932, when Mme Ricci founded it in association with her son Robert, it has enjoyed a very good small private clientele, but has never caused even the faintest ripple of excitement. What brought the house out of its semi-anonymity was a collection that was feminine in the extreme – beautiful in colouring and fabric, unbizarre and elegant. [...] The cause of it all, a quiet, modest man with pepper-and-salt hair, seemed a little stunned by all the commotion."<sup>51</sup>

The success was such that attempts were made to lure Crahay away from Ricci, while some believed he might be capable of starting again under his own name.<sup>52</sup> "This designer, whose art has been compared to that of the late Christian Dior, was asked about his future plans. He replied that he was quite happy at Nina Ricci and did not contemplate starting his own house again. 'After all,' he said, 'there are not backers like Mr. Dior's millionaire Boussac around every corner.'<sup>53</sup>

The difference between the way the American and the French press reported on the collection is striking. While Jules Crahay was personally celebrated in the United States, his name is not mentioned even once in the pages of *L'Officiel* in 1959. The collection is appreciated, but the fact that it was designed by a new head couturier was not even reported. Only the house is mentioned. Nina Ricci explicitly acknowledged the

role of the United States in the house's sudden rise to prominence by publishing a thank-you advertisement in *Women's Wear Daily* on 18 February: "We at Nina Ricci wish to thank the American Press and the American Fashion Business for the warm reception accorded our Spring-Summer Collection. Our Ateliers are fully engaged completing orders which will be delivered February 25. Each garment will be personally inspected by Mr. Crahay and his assistants before shipment."<sup>54</sup>

At that time, Maison Nina Ricci had fifteen working ateliers, employing about five hundred people specialized in various aspects of fashion design.<sup>55</sup> Alongside Crahay, who designed the collections, the creative team included his assistant, Jean-Marie Armand (who would establish his own fashion house in 1965), the German Claude Ohm (who would become a photographer), and the Swiss Erika Hansee, who drew the fashion sketches.<sup>56</sup> The team worked on the haute couture collections as well as on the ready-to-wear collection of around a hundred models.<sup>57</sup>



fig. 19 | The ateliers at Maison Nina Ricci, 1959.

Jules François Crahay was a true old-school couturier. Like Balenciaga, he could not draw. His starting point was the fabric, which he worked directly on the model.<sup>58</sup> "Couture to me means working on a fabric like a sculptor."<sup>59</sup> "His sketches are thoroughly primitive and his real work is done scissors in hand. He often cuts and makes his own first muslins himself in order to show his premières the line he wants to achieve. His real passion is cutting, and his pet hate, too many seams, darts, tucks etc. He says he is always experimenting to find a new cut which will eliminate as many seams as possible and achieve a purest simplest line."<sup>60</sup> Marc Audibet, a close friend of Crahay's, also affirms that the Belgian designer had an intimate relationship with fabrics and lived fashion rather than thinking it. Noting that he himself was also always trying to achieve a cut with as few seams as

# VOGUE

60c

OCTOBER 1

Coats for  
a coat year  
Surprises under coats

“The Alluring  
Woman”

Good Buys  
Bulletin

ADVANCED  
EDITION



fig. 20 | *Vogue* US, October 1959, coat from the Nina Ricci 1959 Autumn–Winter collection. Photograph by Irving Penn.

# PETUNIA, CROCUS AND DAISY

The first complete collection designed by Jules François Crahay for Nina Ricci for the 1959 Spring–Summer season remains one of his most remarkable. The as yet unknown Belgian couturier presented a strikingly shaped, feminine silhouette, indeed, a sharp contrast to the enveloping, waistline-obscuring shapes that dominated fashion at the time, influenced by styles such as the sack-dresses introduced by Cristóbal Balenciaga in 1957 and the Trapeze line launched by Yves Saint Laurent for Dior in 1958.

Jules Crahay's designs favoured rounded shoulders, a deeply plunging neckline, a waistline accentuated by a wide belt that narrowed the torso and a flared, bell-shaped or *bourdon*, skirt. The critics applauded this “extremely feminine” fashion, “in the spirit of Christian Dior” that marked a return of “natural” curved shapes, and considered it to be the newest of the new Paris silhouette shapes.<sup>175</sup> The catwalk show opened with tailored suits, which met with tremendous applause from the press, as well as from buyers and private clients. The first models were variations on what Jules Crahay called the *tailleur bourgeron* (named after a workers' shirt), also described by fashion journalists as a tunic suit, a trench-coat suit or a safari jacket suit. Its long tunic jacket with softened shoulders was strapped with a belt that clearly defines the waistline and flares out over the hips, on top of the dome-shaped bell (*bourdon*) skirt, kept in shape by a stiff petticoat. These suits were named after flowers and came in very fresh colours. Jules François Crahay would later state that he had introduced the first pink suit ever to have been presented in Paris.<sup>176</sup>

These *bourgeron* suits were followed by blazer suits in a very slightly loose-fitting masculine cut, but with a longer jacket, slightly pinched by darts starting from the basque, with sleeves set into round shoulders, discreetly widened by outward-curved seams, with a thin cambered

collar or a shawl lapel, fastened with three buttons. These suits were presented in various fabrics, including apricot, black-and-white houndstooth check, and a greige fabric trimmed with navy or in blue with a white trim. But the most striking version, which elicited lots of orders, was the one in “poison green” or “parrot green” Gerondeau wool: the famous *Crocus* suit that the name of Jules François Crahay is inextricably associated with even today.

The dresses that followed cultivated a soft romantic femininity. The bodices had plunging necklines down to the waist, sometimes finished with a bow or a rose, with shoulders girded by wide, round Bertha collars (particularly noted in the press), draped scarves or fold-over collars. The show notes boast “the beauty of the blousing bodices, framing the shoulders like upright palatine collars, and the movements of the scarves that envelop the bust”.<sup>177</sup>

Here, too, the waistline was systematically accentuated, most frequently by a high belt. Jules Crahay distinguished between an X-line and a Y-line. In the first, the blousing segments of the bodice continued through the slender waist into the rounded hips, accentuated by the bell-shaped *jupes-bourdons* (skirts that, according to Crahay, “adapt crinoline to the Deux-chevaux [automobile]”).<sup>178</sup> In the second line, the neckline branched into a vertical line that reached down to below the waist. The bodices of these dresses consist of a large shawl draped over the shoulders, in “Marie-Antoinette-style”, and then, passing beneath the belt, extending to the hem of the skirt.<sup>179</sup> Most of the gala dresses in the collection were in this line.

To further poeticise and soften his volumes, Jules Crahay liked to toy with transparency, using organdie, tulle or fine starched linen<sup>180</sup> to re-veil or support fabrics. Black or coloured lace against a white background fabric was also strongly present, as were sumptuous silks.

The 1959 Autumn–Winter collection was a continuation of the previous season's, with rounded shapes, plunging necklines, marked waistlines and bell skirts. The

fig. 71, 72, 73,  
214

fig. 18, 70

fig. 18, 69

fig. 20, 21, 74,  
75, 76



novelty here was situated primarily in the upper part of the chest, with a raised neckline and a sloping shoulder line, creating new proportions. The cinched waist contrasted with the impressive volume of the puffy sleeves, the wrap-over corsages, the pelerines and very wide Richelieu collars.<sup>181</sup> These featured in both the suits and the dresses, turning this into an immediately recognisable line.

## TO THE SOUTH AND TO THE EAST

From 1960 on, Jules Crahay began introducing elements in his collections that evoked an “elsewhere”. The couturier referred to these as realms of inspiration, rather than deliberate influences. His 1960 Spring–Summer collection seemed drenched in southerly sunlight, with extremely short bolero<sup>182</sup> sets and “gypsy” dresses with pleated ruffles reminiscent of Andalusian folklore (such as the aptly named *Espagne*). Pleated silk muslin bayadère dresses<sup>183</sup> worn with “gypsy earrings” introduced multicoloured dancing movements.

fig. 25, 27, 77,  
78, 79

For the following season, Jules François Crahay turned East, presenting a “Boyard style” collection (after the name the Russian aristocracy had been known by since the Middle Ages). The dresses, suits and coats featured collars, hems and cuffs covered with opulent furs, while the fabrics exuded a sumptuousness that was “sometimes a tad barbaric”, with quasi-byzantine glossy effects and deliberate cross-body chromatic disharmonies.<sup>184</sup> The lamés, brocades, damasks and velvets of his evening wear combined fierce colours to create Ivan-the-Terrible-style “Boyard coats”, “Boyarina dresses” and “fake Cossack frock coats”.<sup>185</sup>

fig. 31, 34,  
81, 82

This slightly theatrical collection proved to be highly successful in the United States. It was described as the hottest of the season “by 100 degrees Fahrenheit” and provided

Nina Ricci with the greatest numbers of orders from American department stores and producers in the history of the house.<sup>186</sup>

Both the Andalusian gypsy inspiration and the Russian influence would frequently recur in the course of Jules François Crahay’s career, both at Nina Ricci and at Lanvin. In 1962, for instance, for summer, Crahay dressed the ladies of Paris in swirling pleated ruffled skirts or strawberry-coloured organ-die dresses with a scalloped stole worn like a mantilla and, in winter, in suits, dresses and coats that framed their faces with an Anna Karenina-style fur-trimmed hood.

fig. 204

fig. 95

fig. 99

## LEADER OF THE YOUNG, CHEERFUL SCHOOL OF FASHION

In the early 1960s, Jules Crahay became the leader of a young, gay school of fashion, as opposed to the austere purity of Balenciaga.<sup>187</sup> “Fashion must be gay, pretty, wearable and young,” said the couturier.<sup>188</sup> But as a master of structure, Crahay still combined fanciful inspiration with the rigour of his tailoring.

Declaring his opposition to the elegance incarnated at the time by the school of Balenciaga and Givenchy, Crahay stated his preference for playful ideas, amusing details and theatrical gestures. His fashion embodied haute couture’s response to the first signs of the cheerfulness that we associate with the 1960s.<sup>189</sup> For the winter of 1960, for instance, Crahay shifted his garments *du côté du cœur*, towards the heart. Fastenings and openings were consistently placed off-centre, while dresses and coats were asymmetrically elongated, “like an arum lily”, with a skirt ending in a sharp sideways point, evoking the inverted corolla of this exotic flower. This play on

length was yet another theme of the collection, which presented long coats worn over short dresses.<sup>190</sup>

fig. 85, 86

For his next collection, structured as a smart combination of rectangles and diagonals, the couturier presented garments captured in asymmetric balance. “The whole collection creates a systematic contradiction between the rigour of the line and the feigned nonchalance of the wearer.”<sup>191</sup> This resulted in a diagonally draped “whirlwind-dress” and an “explosive dress” achieved by means of a sudden, diagonally tilted voluminousness. His “backwards tilted dresses in a great frisson of flares and ruffles à la Gloria Swanson illustrate the sense of drama and theatricality that characterises Crahay’s work and contributes to his commercial success.”<sup>192</sup>

fig. 28, 29, 30,  
90, 95, 96

The particularly popular 1962 Spring–Summer collection, entitled *Tom-Boy et Belle de nuit* (Tomboy and Evening Primrose), put forward a “fun fashion” characterised by “inventive playfulness” and “a great splash of colours.”<sup>193</sup> Women played with their identity by alternating a “slightly boyish” suit and swirling “dervish skirts”. As *Women’s Wear Daily* stated, “Crahay’s day clothes at Ricci are young, gay, in the mood and oh so commercial.”<sup>194</sup> They added that Crahay was determined not to be influenced by Balenciaga, but that his room for manoeuvre was limited, given the latter’s tyrannical influence on fashion trends.<sup>195</sup>

fig. 3, 40, 41,  
102, 103

Finally, for Autumn–Winter 1963, his last season with Nina Ricci, Jules François Crahay presented the *Ligne Double-Jeu* (Double-play) collection featuring very cheerful looks reminiscent of Russian female students, in which things were not always as they seemed. “Metamorphic games” found their expression in suits as, when a model dropped the jacket, viewers discovered to their surprise that her large fur collar in fact adorned a waistcoat worn underneath the jacket, as well as in coats with an integrated waistcoat or trompe-l’œil dresses that were half-dress, half-shirt, giving the impression of a man’s shirt, half tucked into the skirt.<sup>196</sup>

When the highly successful Jules François Crahay began working for Maison Jeanne

Lanvin at the end of 1963, *Women’s Wear Daily* described his brand of fashion as energetic, jazzy, at times theatrical, but always fun.<sup>197</sup>

## SUPERMAN

In 1965, *Women’s Wear Daily* commented, “Like d’Artagnan, François Crahay never surrenders his cape.”<sup>198</sup> Indeed, the cape, a sleeveless overgarment hanging from the shoulders, was a favourite theme of the Belgian couturier, who even considered himself as the person who had revived it in the 1960s.<sup>199</sup> He appreciated the physical freedom it gave to women, and he kept including variations on this typology, from his first collections at Nina Ricci until the end of his career. Jules François Crahay presented short capes, like pelerines, or long capes down to the floor, semi-circular capes or pointed capes, symmetrical or asymmetrical. Hooded or not, fastened at the front by a button at the neck or a shoulder tie, collarless, with a tailored collar or a fur collar, made from heavy fabrics or diaphanous fabrics, simple woollens, silk satins, airy muslins or luxurious damasks, to complement women’s outfits for any hour and in any season. Crahay also designed coats, dresses and suits with a cape-like effect, with flared back panels, sometimes blurring the boundary between a cape and a shawl – another typology he particularly enjoyed.

For Autumn–Winter 1960 Jules Crahay achieved great success with his reversible capes, some of which were also two-toned, made from double-sided wool. These large, lightweight capes, which sometimes featured a fur collar, were thrown over the suits to soften the silhouette.

fig. 80

For the next season he presented a collarless cape, slit at the sides and buttoned on one shoulder, with a central panel that created the illusion of a dress. For evenings, he dressed women in a cape fringed with ostrich feathers, and for the seaside in a “chainmail” cape.

fig. 84

fig. 33, 87

The winter of 1961 seemed to especially fly the flag of the cape, with double-sided examples, pelerines worn over coats, cape-coats cut on the bias, and an evening cape gown in yellow silk gabardine, edged with sable. The most noted and copied designs were the cape jackets with collars lengthening into free-hanging panels at the back.

fig. 32

Other propositions for the summer of 1962 included an asymmetrical printed muslin cape, floating over the shoulders of a dress in the same material or, to cover the neckline of an evening gown, a short round cape in a heavy white satin Ziberline trimmed with pearls, rhinestones and crystals.

fig. 89

The following season, Jules Crahay presented coat-capes and cocoon capes, often with high raised collars. In the spring of 1963, he introduced more buoyant, softer light-weight capes, to be worn in the morning, in the same type of tweed as the skirt, and in the evenings in a crepe fabric matching the dress. Finally, a couple of months later, the couturier came up with more innovations on the theme, with mink capes and capes in silk damask and lurex, cut to a point, to be pulled over the head like a poncho.

It was no wonder then that in early 1964 Jules François Crahay was described as being “as partial to capes as Superman!”<sup>200</sup> The couturier took this passion with him when he joined Lanvin, where he also created some memorable cape designs, including the cape-culotte for the summer of 1967, the tent cape with a pelerine with theatrical volume for the winter of 1976, and the fur-trimmed, padded taffeta plaid poncho for the winter of 1977.

fig. 136, 142,  
144, 145, 164,  
175, 176, 177,  
182, 198, 199

## TAKE FLIGHT AND ESCAPE

Jules François Crahay asserted that his 1963 Spring–Summer collection, *Tissu – vole. Du rectangle au cerf-volant* (Toile in flight,

from a rectangle to a kite), responded to a hankering for lightness, for light-hearted suppleness, for soaring and escape. It was proof, he asserted, that “lightness can be constructed”.<sup>201</sup> The notions of lightness and soaring speak from his “bird dresses” and “kite dresses”, consisting of large, billowing rectangles, with super-sized sleeves or wings at the back. These designs were made from muslins with floral prints of restrained transparency. The light and airy dresses, of a “moving youthfulness”, fluttered like “big colourful butterflies”<sup>202</sup>, demonstrating Crahay’s rapid stylistic evolution towards ever greater suppleness. While his 1959 Spring–Summer collection had been strictly structured and had culminated in tailored suits, four years on his “flou” garments were triumphant. And whereas the couturier had used prints sparingly in the first years of his career, here they take centre stage. Crahay showed tremendous talent in the way he applied them to showcase his play on transparency and opacity. For the rest of his career, he used prints so often that his name became closely linked with them.

fig. 1, 39,  
97, 98

The attention paid to the back, the wings, was also apparent in dresses and suits with pointed shawl backs that emerged from the sleeves, such as a coat dress in baby pink wool. This was yet another transformation of the cape and it too strove for suppleness and fluidity. In this collection “of a liberating joy”, Jules François Crahay also takes us to another place by evoking an exoticism sourced closer to home, with “smock jacket” suits and two-piece “Parisian peasant” dresses, and the exoticism of faraway parts, with “geisha jackets” consisting of a narrow bodice framed by wide, rectangular sleeves, “Japanese-inspired elements” integrated in airy evening dresses and surprising Japanese straw hats designed by Jacques Le Brigant. Both the theme of the “luxury peasant” and the freely borrowed elements of Asian costume were to become essential elements of Jules François Crahay’s design language at Lanvin. Clearly, these were part of a vision of fashion as a realm of pleasure, dreams and escapism.

fig. 100

fig. 101



fig. 71 | Nina Ricci 1959 Spring–Summer Haute Couture collection.  
Photograph by Frank Horvat.

fig. 72 | Nina Ricci 1959 Spring–Summer Haute Couture collection.  
Detail from the FLM collection. Photograph by Louis Kerckhof.





fig. 122 | Jeanne Lanvin 1968 Spring–Summer Haute Couture collection. From the wardrobe of Madame Jean Michard Pellisier. FLM collection. Photograph by Louis Kerckhof.



fig. 123 | Jeanne Lanvin 1968 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection.  
Photograph by Jean-Louis Guégan.

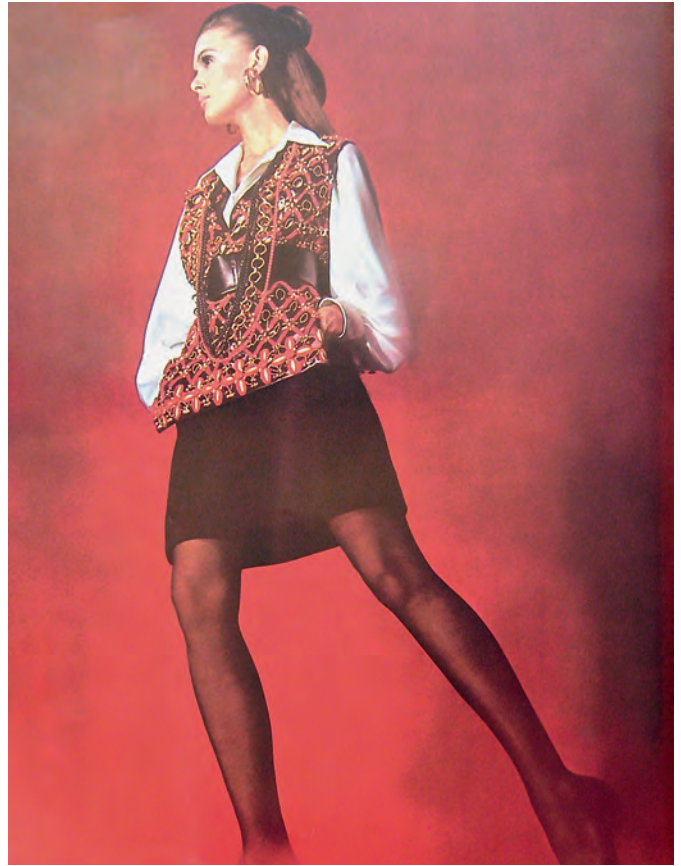


fig. 124 | Jeanne Lanvin 1968 Autumn-Winter Haute Couture collection.  
Photograph by Roland Bianchini.



fig. 125 | Jeanne Lanvin 1968 Autumn-Winter Haute Couture collection.  
Photograph by John Stewart.



fig. 126 | Jeanne Lanvin 1968 Autumn-Winter Haute Couture collection.  
Photograph by Jean-Louis Guégan.

H.C. ETE 1973

ELSA

57



fig. 148 | Elsa model sketch, Lanvin 1973 Spring–Summer Haute Couture collection. Lanvin heritage.





fig. 149 | Elsa, Lanvin 1973 Spring–Summer Haute Couture collection.  
FLM collection. Photograph by Louis Kerckhof.



fig. 165 | *Marie-Antionette* model sketch, Lanvin 1976 Autumn-Winter Haute Couture collection. Lanvin heritage.



fig. 166 | *Marie-Antionette*, Lanvin 1976 Autumn–Winter Haute Couture collection. FLM collection. Photograph by Louis Kerckhof.



fig. 167 | *Marie-Antionette*, Lanvin 1976 Autumn–Winter Haute Couture collection. Detail from the FLM collection. Photograph by Louis Kerckhof.

# Timeline

- 1917** Crahay was born on 21 May in Liège, Belgium, to a dressmaker mother and an unidentified father.
- 1917-1933** Grows up in Liège “with a needle in his hand”, fascinated by his mother Françoise Crahay's couture house, which employs about 20 seamstresses.
- 1934-1936** Studies cutting and assembling in Paris.
- 1936** Returns to Liège to work for the family fashion house.
- 1938** Enters his mandatory military service, which is extended until Belgium's entry into World War II.
- 1940** Taken prisoner on 11 May 1940, during the capture of the fort of Eben-Emael.
- 1940-1945** Prisoner of war at Stalag XI-B prisoner camp north of Hanover for the duration of the war. Designs costumes for the stalag theatre group.
- 1945** Repatriated to Belgium on 8 May.  
His mother dies on 28 May.  
Takes over the fashion house, renaming it Jules Crahay.
- 1951** Moves to Paris.  
Takes over the haute couture house of Jane Régny at 22 avenue Pierre-I<sup>er</sup>-de-Serbie in Paris, changing its name to his own.
- 1952** The Jules Crahay haute couture house closes after only two collections.  
Becomes a designer for Nina Ricci, where he assists the founder with haute couture.
- c. 1955** He also takes on the conception of the Nina Ricci Boutique line.
- 1957** John Fairchild of *Women's Wear Daily* mentions Crahay as an important up-and-coming couturier.

- 1959** Spring–Summer 1959 sees the first complete haute couture collection designed by Crahay for Nina Ricci. It is a great success and propels the fashion house and its designer to the top of Parisian haute couture.
- Filene's of Boston awards Crahay the Design Talent Prize.
- Chrysler automotive company orders a special collection of six designs by Crahay from Nina Ricci to promote its Imperial car model.
- 1960** Resuscitates the typology of the cape, to which he will remain attached throughout his career.
- Designs a collection of stockings in the United States, the first of a series of accessory lines he will supervise over the coming years.
- 1961** In terms of turnover, Nina Ricci is the number three Parisian haute couture fashion house.
- The New York Times* publishes a portrait of Crahay.
- Nina Ricci signs an agreement with Cole-Mort for the production and distribution in the United States of a Mademoiselle Ricci collection designed by Crahay in collaboration with Ruben Torres.
- 1962** Receives the Neiman Marcus Award in Dallas.
- Crahay's designs are worn by Jackie Kennedy, Lee Radziwill, Princess Paola of Belgium, Queen Farah Diba of Iran, Claudia Cardinale, Ingrid Bergman, Deborah Kerr, etc.
- 1963** Spring–Summer 1963: the *Tissu – Vole* collection, in which Crahay demonstrates his talent for flou and print.
- In March, he is contracted by Maison Jeanne Lanvin to replace designer Antonio Castillo. Crahay is reputed to be the best-paid couturier in Paris.
- His first design for Lanvin is Maryll Orsini's gown for her wedding to Bernard Lanvin.
- Crahay designs the costumes for Ingrid Bergman in *The Visit*, directed by Bernhard Wicki.
- 1964** Spring–Summer 1964: his first collection for Jeanne Lanvin is a resounding success.
- Crahay receives the Maison Blanche Award in New Orleans.