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Mummies and Mannequins: Elena Izcue, Modern Peruvian Design and Paris Fashion

Alida R. Jekabson

Abstract

Artist and designer Elena Izcue first encountered pre-Columbian objects as part of her training in the 1920s at the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Lima. Spurred by new archaeological activity in the region, her access to these collections and resulting work in the arts paralleled a growing national recognition of the relevance of pre-Columbian history to a modern Peruvian identity. In 1927 Izcue secured government sponsorship to move to Paris to continue her studies in textile design.

This argument will examine varying contexts for the display of Izcue's work in Paris and New York between 1927 and 1939. Ranging from department stores, exhibitions and fashion media, also notable is the artist's involvement in Peruvian national pavilions at world expositions in these cities. Additionally, her innovations in design would lead to collaborations with the House of Worth and Elsa Schiaparelli. Examining Izcue's textiles and garments produced and displayed in these transnational contexts indicates a troubling factor in the historiography of modernism. Appropriated motifs in Izcue's fashion collaborations were praised for their formal qualities and lent prestige to her European collaborators. However, Izcue's own work was usually displayed in tandem with pre-Columbian artifacts and traditional dress, inherently binding her practice to a constructed nationality. Critically reframing these display practices provides a case study in methods to collapse historically binary narratives of modernism that privilege the universal over national, instead pointing to the global trajectory and continued relevance of Izcue's work.

Keywords: fashion • identity • modernism • nationalism • pre-Columbian art
• World's Fairs • museums and exhibitions

On a winter night in early 1938, the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* opened at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Designed and executed by Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray, among other artists, visitors used flashlights distributed by Man Ray to illuminate their way down a corridor to the grotto-like exhibition space (Neufert 2012, 119). Lining this dark passageway were mannequins that had been clothed and modified by the participating artists. Encountering Dalí's mannequin with the beam of the provided flashlight would reveal the form mostly unclothed, the torso, stomach and thighs covered with small spoons clustering around a suggestively cracked egg on the chest (fig.1). The mannequin also sported a pair of gloves, a belt, and most strikingly, covering the mannequin's head was a bright pink knitted hood, a bird's head mask perched on top.

This knitted hood, a “mask for winter sports by [Elsa] Schiaparelli,” was praised in the press for her contribution to Surrealist “couture” (Read 1938). This object is often cited as an early instance of the collaboration between Dalí and the Italian designer. The garment covered the mannequin's face, a flap with space for eyes, nose and mouth integrated into the piece. The headdress extends down the wearer's body, the thick woven material draping from the jawline and across the chest. Delving further into the presence of this knitted hood in the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* offers a renewed perspective on the garment and what this object can tell us about lesser-known histories of exchange and collaboration in modern fashion and art history. De-centering the knitted hood from the surrealist exposition allows for an examination of its origins in the practice and history of artist, designer and educator Elena Izcue.



Fig.1: Gaston Paris, *Mannequin (Dalí)*, 1938, Gelatin silver print, image: 19.7 x 18 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund 2007.101

The first appearance of this hood in Paris was a year earlier, at the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* as part of the Peruvian pavilion, a government-sponsored building at the fair. After Izcue's studies in Lima at the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* and in various museum collections of pre-Columbian art in 1927, she secured government aid to study in Paris with her sister,

The first appearance of this hood in Paris was a year earlier, at the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* as part of the Peruvian pavilion, a government-sponsored building at the fair. After Izcue's studies in Lima at the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* and in various museum collections of pre-Columbian art in 1927, she secured government aid to study in Paris with her sister,

Victoria. Following the success of their Paris workshop, Elena Izcue served as an artistic director for the 1937 pavilion with fashion illustrator and photographer Reynaldo Luza. The journey of the knitted hood, along with other objects and designs, from Izcue's homeland of Peru, to museum and fair displays abroad, to fashion collections and Dalí's mannequin is a narrative involving questions of authenticity, appropriation, and the history of modernism. In her scholarship on modernism and Latin America, Andrea Giunta outlines "Since the sixteenth century, America has been an active element in the construction of European modernity: the 'encounter of two worlds' also forced a change in the conceptualization of the world." (Giunta 1995, 313).

This argument will focus on key moments of this encounter by centering on Izcue, altering conceptualizations of fashion history. There has been little scholarship on Izcue's contributions to Parisian fashion, aligning with larger elisions of Latin American designers from fashion history (Root 2013, 393). Her work in Peru and the Americas is well known, especially for her design education in published textbooks *El arte peruano en la escuela*, a curriculum for young students based on her studies of pre-Columbian motifs and history. Beginning with a case study of the appearance and mention of the knitted hood throughout varied sources of Peruvian design, national exhibitions and European and North American fashion media, these sources lead to her most historically visible, but rarely attributed design influence in the 1938 Surrealist Exposition in Paris. Incorporating Reynaldo Luza and his photographs expands the record of their work in Paris and later at the New York World's Fair in 1939. Examining Izcue's larger history of collaboration with design houses such as Worth and Schiaparelli demonstrates the limitations she faced within the context of Latin American art in inter-war Paris. Izcue's 1935 exhibition of textiles and ancient art in New York serves as a final example of her involvement with the fashion market, as her textiles and accessories were integrated into a display of ancient objects. It is in Izcue's authentic identification with pre-Columbian history and specific artifacts (figs. 7, 8) unearthed during her studies in Peru that one can appreciate the role played by nationalism and archaeology in the development of her designs.

Part 1: National Pavilion to Surrealist Gallery: Izcue, Schiaparelli, and Appropriation

Prior to his participation at the 1937 Exposition, Reynaldo Luza established his career as a fashion illustrator and photographer for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* (Protzel 2011, 13). By the time of the fair, Luza's work was increasingly reflective of his national identity, continuing with his fashion work, but also beginning to deeply delve into Peruvian textile and costume history. At the fair, Luza's and Izcue's vision resulted in

a pavilion that relied heavily on motifs sourced from pre-Columbian cultures to communicate the potential for modern engagement with the past. The 1937 structure contained custom stained glass and wrought iron gates inserted into the entryways and windows of the exhibitions. The design of these architectural additions echoed the symmetrical serpent and cacti forms of the Raimondi stele, a Chavin era (1100 – 500 B.C.E.) stone carving (Burian 2021). Modern interpretations of these ancient artifacts in metal and colored glass not only disrupted the clean, administrative design of the prefabricated pavilion but also distinguished the achievement of contemporary Peruvian domestic design.

Anthropologist Sven Schuster argues that expositions and fairs in the early years of the twentieth century were an opportunity for Latin American nations to “reconstruct their version of ‘Latin American antiquity’.” The frequent display of mummies and other ancient objects, such as a mummy bundle from Paracas included in the Peruvian pavilion at the Seville exposition in 1929 (which would appear at many foreign displays thereafter) was a method of promoting the nation-state as “the culmination of thousands of years of ‘American’ history” (Schuster 2018, 74). Izcue was a member of the archaeological society that uncovered this Paracas mummy (Antrobus 1997, 157), indicating her intensive knowledge of and experience with pre-Columbian, specifically Andean, archaeology and history.

Inside the Paris pavilion was an arrangement of ancient objects, modern art and commercial products, their selection overseen by Izcue and Luza. Scholars have noted that painter José Sabogal and his ‘group’ participated as a part of the display (Villegas 2013, 279). The few existing images of the interior show a gallery-like space containing paintings and sculptures, the walls and columns adorned with designs based on Pre-Columbian art. A series of photographs by Luza, titled *fantasía indígena*, were taken at the exterior of the pavilion. These images further reflect ideas about national identity and fashion guiding both artists.

Staged in front of the most ‘Peruvian’ building in Paris, Luza’s photographs capture models clad in traditional Andean garments (fig. 2). The background of these images is relatively vacant and suggests a white cube structure, save for the custom iron doors visible in other photographs from the series. In the selected image, a model stands in front of the pavilion. Over her everyday dress, she wears a thick shawl bordered with geometric patterns. It is her pale head covering that stands out. Reminiscent of a ski-mask or balaclava, her knitted woolen mask resembles a *waq’ollo*. A *waq’ollo* is a knitted mask traditionally worn by men as part of *Capac Qolla*, a dance from the Cusco region with pre-conquest origins. In the version shown at the Paris pavilion, the base of the mask widens into a capelet, extending past the

shoulders. A checker-board effect is achieved with the open weave of the textile against the underlying fabric. Here, Peruvian fashion is staged on white, European women's bodies. The garments, worn and modeled to fulfill the artistic vision of Luza and Izcue are an extension of an engagement with Andean heritage mediated by Euro-American expectations. Much like the gates inserted into the fair architecture, the garments in Luza's photographs deliberately conform to European standards of national or ethnic representation.

Izcue and Luza's success and recognition in Paris propelled them to reprise their work at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. The Peruvian pavilion at the Fair contained the same group of objects based on traditional craft disciplines for the 1937 Peruvian pavilion in Paris (Majluf 1999, 150).

The displacement of José Sabogal and *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* from the pavilion in 1939 by the government opened the sphere of official Peruvian representation (Majluf 1999, 168). In the New York Peruvian pavilion, Chiclín, Nazca, and Chimu ceramics and gold as well as feather work textiles from the *Museo Rafael Larco Herrera* were on view in casework installed in the interior walls as well as hanging from the mezzanine railing. The Larco Herrera brothers, in addition to their collection of pre-Columbian art, were strong supporters of Izcue and her work. In New York, the press noted the "jewel-laden



Fig. 2: Reynaldo Luza, *Untitled* (from the series "fantasía indígena") c. 1937. Archivo Reynaldo Luza

mummies preserved in their ceremonial splendor" (Half 1939, 26) and classified the ceramics as "fun, for many have a humorous touch" (All 1939, 401). The installation of ancient objects presented an image of Peru that disregarded the immediate past, such as changing leadership and border disputes with Bolivia and Chile. Instead, this display privileged newly discovered, significant artifacts as markers of modernity, solidifying national identity and its connection to the expanding archaeological record of the Andes.

As Luza's photos indicate, part of illustrating the history of the country in both pavilions was through dress. *Women's Wear Daily* reported that the New York pavilion contained mannequins that would "trace the growth of Peru as reflected in modes of dress from the luxurious Inca fashions, through Colonial bustles and petticoats to the conventional attire" (Interesting 1939, np). The reference to these mannequins

further supports their inclusion in the previous exhibition at the 1937 Paris pavilion. Concurrent with the photographs by Reynaldo Luza staged in front of the above-referenced Paris pavilion, in October 1937, *Harper's Bazaar* magazine published a two-page spread titled "Peruvian Magic." The article detailed Elsa Schiaparelli's experiences at the Peruvian pavilion in Paris. While Izcue is not named, her artistic direction of the pavilion reverberates in Schiaparelli's work. Schiaparelli's exposure to the garments displayed at the pavilion lead to her next successful collection. She also found an opportunity for further collaboration with Salvador Dalí and other Surrealists, as seen in the image of her pink knitted hood at the Surrealist Exposition the following year (fig. 1).

The story of Schiaparelli's visit to the pavilion in *Harper's Bazaar* is foregrounded by a lengthy and romantic narrative of the history of Peruvian dress, detailing the pleated dresses of *las tapadas* (a distinctly Lima based dress tradition dating to the eighteenth century) and their brightly embroidered shawls. Turning to Schiaparelli's experience, the text details "she was fascinated by the treasures and the costumes of the Inca...She looked at the wonderful Inca headdresses, the capes in brilliant feathers" (Peruvian 1939, 72) continuing to list the belts, wool and pleated skirts as well as pants and other traditional dress on view at the pavilion. This account found in *Harper's Bazaar* further confirms and aligns with previous sources that point to the existence of mannequins at the pavilion, each displaying costumes from across Peruvian history. While the design of the woolen mask in Luza's photo (fig. 2) cannot be directly attributed to Izcue and her collaborator Luza, its presence at the pavilion was due to their direction.

Luza's later reporting on Latin American fashion in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1940 further indicates the nature of inspiration Schiaparelli gathered at the 1937 Peruvian Pavilion. Discussing the *chullo* hat worn by men in the highlands, he mentions showing "these bonnets to Madame Schiaparelli at the Paris Exhibition" (Luza 1940, 144). Given the designer's relationship with both Izcue and Luza, one can conclude she was toured through the pavilion by Luza, and perhaps Izcue, viewing the artwork, Pre-Columbian objects and Peruvian costumes on view, including the woolen mask. In his report, Luza concludes by noting that "bonnets" were the "sensation of her autumn collection" (Luza 1940, 144).

Looking to Schiaparelli's autumn collection, examining the accompanying drawings in the *Harper's Bazaar* feature "Peruvian Magic," there is a significant visual parallel between these images and garments in Luza's photography. Examining these drawings and the corresponding signature, they can be attributed to Luza himself as an illustrator for *Harper's Bazaar*. Notably, the woolen mask from in front of the Fair pavilion is reproduced almost exactly in the illustration of Schiaparelli's collection,

presented in the publication with the *chullo* hat, described for the magazine's readers as a "Peruvian hood worn in the mountains for winter sports" (Peruvian 1938, 72). The woolen masks from the photographs of the pavilion and the Surrealist exposition, as well as the publication, are identical with the exception of their color (figs. 1, 2). Each component of the hood is replicated, from the short tassel on top of the head, to the smaller, tufted adornments lining the face and head of the wearer to the brow line, where the hood covers the face. In Luza's drawing, as well as in both images, the flap covering the face is visible as well. Perhaps the most unique and unifying element of the illustrated and photographed garments is the extension and visibility of the hood's open-knit pattern to the wearer's shoulders.

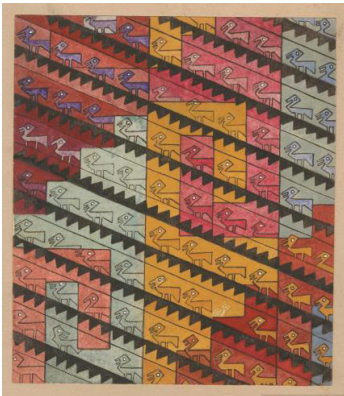


Fig. 3: Elena Izcue, *Design for fabric print*, c.1925-1926. Watercolor on paper, 27.5 x 24 cm, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru, Donation of Elba de Izcue Jordán

The intertwining of garments from the Peruvian pavilion in Paris and Schiaparelli's designs extends beyond the woolen mask. In later images from Luza's series *fantasía indígena*, taken in Peru in the early 1940s, models are shown wearing the *montero*, a wide, flat brimmed hat as well as *puños*, embroidered armbands. Versions of these styles appeared in Schiaparelli's 1937 collection and were similarly illustrated in the *Harper's Bazaar* article. The article concludes Schiaparelli's experiences at the pavilion, "since Schiaparelli is the dressmaker who treats the entire world as a work-basket, repercussions of these beautiful fashions appear in her 1937 collection" (Peruvian 1938, 72). Anthropologist Philip Ainsworth Means,

Izcue's long-time supporter and former director of the Department of Archaeology at Museo Nacional in Lima, even confessed to the designer in a letter that he had trouble differentiating between the work of Izcue and Schiaparelli (Vaudry 2019). Also intersecting with Schiaparelli's work are *puños* illustrated in a 1941 advertisement for a Peruvian trade exhibition in the United States featuring merchandise designed by Izcue, indicating her sustained practice of exhibiting this type of clothing (Trade 1940, 7). These Peruvian garments designed or selected by Izcue, when placed in Schiaparelli's "work-basket," elevated and promoted the designer's reputation in the fashion market.

Schiaparelli's interest in Peru as part of her "worldly workbasket" can be traced to the development of her famed Shocking Pink color, as seen in Luza's *Harper's Bazaar* illustrations. In some sources, Luza is credited with introducing Schiaparelli to the color and shades of bright pink appear across the archives of Izcue and Luza (fig. 3). In the referenced textile design, Izcue employs bright pink as part of a geometric composition, birds running through blocks of color that recall the mixed technique

textiles or pieced tie-dyes of the Chancay or Wari cultures. Schiaparelli's autobiography contains one of her most quoted statements about the origins of "shocking pink," citing Peru as a factor of its creation:

Bright, impossible, imprudent, becoming, life-giving, like all the light and the birds and the fish in the world put together, a color of China and Peru but not of the West—a shocking color, pure and undiluted (Schiaparelli 1954, 89-90).

Explicitly relegating the hue to the 'purity' of non-Western traditions, Schiaparelli successfully integrated "Shocking Pink" into her brand, from perfume to couture around the time of the 1937 Fair. The knitted hood replicated by Schiaparelli for her collection, and used by Dalí in his exposition, stood apart from the white or cream hood at the pavilion, as it was crafted from a bright, shocking pink wool. Examining the clothing at the Paris pavilion in the context of Schiaparelli's practice and designs underlines the framing of these fashions in the context of identity and authenticity. In the pavilion, epitome of a nationalist setting, the hats, skirts and belts were staged for an audience to consume an 'authentic' Peruvian national identity. In fashion media and on the market, the forms were appropriated and consumed as part of modern trends, reaching the avant-garde art world and entering the historical record via Schiaparelli as a marked moment in her involvement with Surrealism.

Part 2: Izcue Studio: Modern Fashion and pre-Columbian Art in Paris

The international contexts for the display of Izcue's work in world's fairs and through other exhibitions and collaborative opportunities with designers and patrons, including the Peruvian government, supported her vision as an artist deeply invested in building Peruvian national identity through design. Izcue's career in Paris, as well as her work with notable fashion houses further confirms the limitations she faced. In developing her practice outside of Peru, Elena Izcue and her sister Victoria sought to interpret and make relevant pre-Columbian, specifically Andean, designs and imagery for the modern era. Their interpretations aligned with Peruvian President Augusto Leguia's investment in looking to the material culture of the past to create new symbols of national unity. Soon after arriving in Paris, an article appeared in the Peruvian press in 1928, in which the

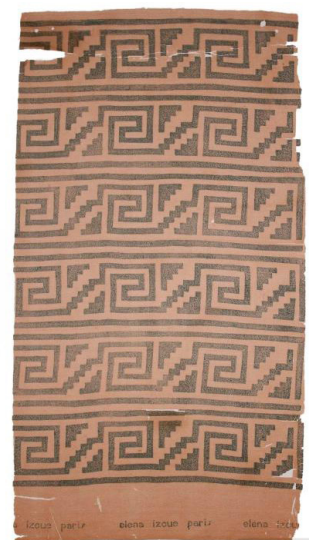


Fig. 4: Elena Izcue, *Textile Design*, c. 1928-1936, Hand printed natural silk, dimensions variable. Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru. Photo: Daniel Giannoni

reporter praises and summarizes Izcue's contributions to the creation of a "clearly Peruvian ornamental art," before asking the artist about her experiences abroad. After detailing her early travels in Portugal and her frustrations in searching for teachers in Paris, Izcue describes viewing works of modern European decorative art (de la Guerra 1928). While appreciating the objects on view, Izcue claims, "they could not compare in originality, beauty and depth with our Incan motifs" (de la Guerra 1928). She continues, posing a rhetorical question to the reader "and I thought: how could I learn to make these works, to fill them with a fresh breath of Incan Art?" (de la Guerra 1928).

In her search to create her own type of work, Izcue became skilled in printmaking, fabric printing, goldwork, and ceramics in her studies. Sister Victoria attended *École des Arts Décoratifs* while Elena took courses at *Académie de la Grande Chaumière* with artists like Fernand Léger (Antrobus 1997, 168). In their Paris studio, lined with books, textiles, painting and pottery, Izcue and her sister produced a range of textiles, patterned fabric, knits and accessories such as scarves, shawls, purses and powder boxes (García y García 1933). The illustrated examples (figs. 4, 5) indicate the range of designs, each hand printed. The sisters used a combination of fadeless vegetable and mineral dyes on fabrics such as silk, velvet, linen, and cotton (Ainsworth Means 1936, 249), achieving the pastel-colored ground of abstracted lines to tightly gridded and filled patterns on sumptuous velvet. In these designs and products, Izcue expanded on her studies of ancient objects at the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* and her workbooks *El Arte Peruano en la escuela* to demonstrate their relevance within the realms of Parisian design and fashion. Throughout their residency, Izcue's techniques as well as her designs were praised in international press for their authenticity, use of natural dyes, "an ancient Inca method" (Textiles 1935), and in Peruvian press, for their "indigenous" qualities (Hermanas 1936). The sisters initially found success in selling their textiles in small batches to private clients, including a Peruvian aristocrat living in Paris, Angustias San Carlos.

Izcue's patron wore a scarf by the designer to a presentation of the couturier Jean-Charles Worth's winter collection in 1926 (Vaudry 2019). Worth is rumored to have noticed the accessory and asked to meet the designer, hiring Izcue "right away" (Antrobus 1997, 169). In her chapter discussing the application of pre-Columbian motifs to French design, Élodie Vaudry notes the absence of Izcue from the



Fig. 5: Elena Izcue, *Textile Design*, c. 1928-1936. Hand printed natural silk, 39 x 28cm, Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru. Photo: Daniel Giannoni

archives of the House of Worth, with only a limited reference to a ‘Miss Elene’ from Peru assisting with a presentation of mannequins featuring her designs for Worth in 1933 (Vaudry 2019). The Peruvian press also noted this display, and the presence of an entire vitrine titled *Peruvian Art – Mademoiselle Izcue* dedicated to her work (García y García 1933). Their partnership ended in 1937, several years after the House of Worth was purchased by the couturier Paquin (Vaudry 2019).



Fig. 6: Elena Izcue, *Handkerchief*, c.1929-1938, Hand printed silk, dimensions variable. Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru. Photo: Daniel Giannoni

The collection of the Lima Art Museum (MALI) contains a number of works created by Izcue for Worth. Included are her advertisement designs for several of Worth’s perfume campaigns. A number of handkerchiefs are also in the collection bearing the Worth monogram or the initials J.C.W. These examples range from the muted, blue grey handkerchief with an arrangement of playful, green pastel circles, each bearing the “W” monogram for the fashion house to a minimal design, with gridded squares in graduating brown, pink and purple tones, checkering the center and corners of the fabric (fig. 6). Another textile from Izcue’s archives (fig. 5), closely replicates another design for Worth.

In this example, abstract and parallel lines are punctuated by a bird motif silhouetted in red, replicated along both axes. These accessories are important evidence of collaboration between Izcue and Worth, but also as an instance demonstrating Izcue’s talent and success as a designer. Fealty to her academic roots in the study of Pre-Columbian art forms is reflected in both her production techniques and sense of clarity in design. The elision of Izcue from Worth’s archive indicates Izcue’s positionality within the realm of modern French fashion; viewed as an expert in Pre-Columbian art, her contributions were presented as inextricable from her nationality. This characterization is only partially accurate, as seen in the Izcue’s archive at MALI. Of all her designs for Worth, some recall Pre-Columbian motifs, while other handkerchiefs exhibit a playful, novelty aesthetic outside of ancient source material.

Several years after beginning to work for Worth, Izcue was introduced to Elsa Schiaparelli at a fashion show in Paris by her aristocratic patron. There are few details about their first meeting, but it resulted in a multi-year collaboration between the two women (Vaudry 2019). At this point in her career, Schiaparelli was rapidly gaining success. Her twenty-six workrooms employed more than two thousand people and her establishment in the *Rue Cambon* was bringing in around hundred and twenty million francs a year (Laver 1985, 235). As was the case in Worth’s archive, Vaudry also notes the absence of Izcue from Schiaparelli’s archive. She does point to a pair

of undated square buttons found in the collection of the *Museo de Arte de Lima* made by Izcue for Schiaparelli. Each contains a stylized feline, a form that Izcue included in *El arte peruano en la escuela*. While direct archival records may be lacking, the nature of Izcue's influence on Schiaparelli extends far beyond these buttons as discussed previously in relation to the knit woolen mask shown by both designers. Izcue's interpretations of pre-Columbian art from Peru, adapted and appropriated by Schiaparelli bolstered her visibility in the realms of fashion as well as within Surrealist circles.

Similarly, Worth's and Schiaparelli's interest in Izcue mirrored the broader cultural framework for Latin American art, fashion, and design in the city, synthesizing or placing within national boundaries forms and materials perceived as non-Western. In art historian Michele Greet's discussion of early Latin American art exhibitions in Paris, she summarizes the French critical reception of works with "styles bordering on abstraction" in the years leading up to Izcue's arrival in the city. "Critics frequently could not reconcile styles bordering on abstraction with expectations of tropical, primitive or politically radical content" (Greet 2018, 72). Applying these superficial expectations from the realm of fine arts to Izcue's practice in textiles and design for the House of Worth, and her work and relationship with Schiaparelli, results in a deeper understanding for the national and regionalist reception and discussion of her work. Izcue's success was limited by a hierarchy that valued abstraction from a non-European source and by a non-European artist as inherently bound to "primitive" or national histories, as opposed to the universalizing modern qualities associated with ancient forms employed by European artists and designers.

This phenomenon was also reflected in the 1931 *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* in Paris, where the presentation of forms and materials from the Middle East, Africa and Asia were subsequently appropriated into jewelry collections by French designers (Gindhart 2020). Art historian Maria Gindhart names this act as a "civilizing mission" that reinforced French cultural superiority over these regions, some which were French colonies. While Peru has a differing relationship to French imperialism, the practice of sourcing from non-Western regions and colonies to bolster the sophistication of French fashion can be applied to Izcue's history. Looking at these appropriative acts by jewelry designers at the Fair in tandem with the designer's work for Worth, Izcue's strong connection to a Peruvian national identity was viewed by the fashion market in service of its associations with an exotic and ancient Peru. Her designs, part of a relatively new and novel category of "Latin American" art, contributed to an elevated modern French fashion.

In the years leading up to Izcue's arrival in Paris, interest in and visibility of pre-Co-

lumbian and Latin American art in the city was bolstered by institutions, museums and galleries, together with the artists, intellectuals and diplomats from the region who converged in Paris during the turn of the century. In 1928 the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* organized an exhibition of ancient American art with objects from across the western hemisphere (Pillsbury and Doutriaux 2012, 4). The exhibition is a marked moment in the integration and appropriation of Pre-Columbian sources into European modernism. The display included loans from European private collections and the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro* in Paris, a collection frequented by both European and Latin American artists in the early 20th century. Curator of pre-Columbian art Joanne Pillsbury further connects the increasing collecting and visibility of Pre-Columbian art abroad, such as the presentation at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, to the development of modernism, arguing that “as interest in modern art grew, so did interest in some of its sources, and as a result, pre-Columbian art began to be displayed with greater regularity in art museums in the United States and Europe” (Pillsbury 2019, 124). A cross-continental audience developed for pre-Columbian art exhibitions, setting the stage for the popular reception of Izcue’s work in textiles and her collaborations with artists and designers.

Part 3: Elena Izcue in New York: The *Paracas Textile* and the *Exhibition of Modern Peruvian Art*

Aside from the many photographs of the knitted hood on Dali’s mannequin at the 1938 Surrealist exposition, there are few photographs of Izcue’s design work or artistic direction in exhibitions, fair pavilions and for designers. Examining a comparable exhibition that coincided with her Paris career provides insight into her practice and involvement with fashion. Izcue’s most visible and widely documented exhibition was the 1935 *Exhibition of Modern Peruvian Art* in New York, featuring ancient objects and modern textiles. In the United States, scholarship and display of pre-Columbian art during the early twentieth century was entrenched in a Pan-American ethos that reinforced the United States’ role in developing Latin American economic and political policies. The U.S. government’s 1933 Good Neighbor policy towards nations to the south defined the U.S. hemispheric supremacy that would extend to the collecting practices of individuals and institutions.



Fig. 7: Nazca, Mantle (“*The Paracas Textile*”), 100-300 CE, Cotton, camelid fiber, 24 5/8 × 58 11/16 in. (62.5 × 149 cm). Brooklyn Museum, John Thomas Underwood Memorial Fund, 38.121

Through studying and presenting the pre-Columbian past, collectors in the U.S. as well as museums sought to influence perception of Latin American Art in the U.S., framing ancient Peruvian objects and their formal qualities as the primary sources for



Fig. 8: Elena Izcue, *Study of Nazca mantle*, conserved in the Brooklyn Museum, originally in the collection of Rafael Larco Herrera, c.1925. Watercolor on paper, dimensions variable, Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru

contemporary art-making in Latin America. At this time, a well preserved ancient textile known as the *Paracas Textile*, attracted attention and notoriety. Now part of the collection of the Brooklyn Museum (fig. 7), the object was heralded as “the rarest piece of archeological textile in the world” the first time it was shown in the U.S. in 1935. The rare textile was hand-carried to New York by Elena and Victoria in a “little black handbag” (Modern 1935, 1). On view as part of their *Exhibition of Modern Peruvian Art* (Textiles 1935, np), it came from the Trocadero Museum in Paris through Rafael Larco Herrero. The mantle is noted for its intricacy and quality of preservation, specifically for the ninety needle-knitted figures at the border of the fabric, interpreted as a depiction

of life on Peru’s south Coast. Many of the images illustrated in the textile depict native flora and fauna, as well as cultivated plants. Also visible are severed human trophy heads suggesting the practice of ritual sacrifice. According to contemporary research, the figures may represent humans “impersonating gods and acting as intermediaries between the real and supernatural worlds” (Brooklyn Museum, n.d.). This complex imagery captivated Izcue herself, as seen in her earlier studies of the textile in Lima (fig. 8). In her 1935 exhibition, the *Paracas Textile* and other ancient objects were incorporated in displays of Izcue’s own work.

The *Exhibition of Modern Peruvian Art* consisted of a display of “pottery, textiles and ornaments” from a variety of pre-Columbian cultures alongside four hundred pieces of Izcue’s work (Ainsworth Means 1935), primarily handkerchiefs, scarves and textiles (Famous 1935, 17). Philip Ainsworth Means authored the catalogue foreword and was a member of the exhibition’s organizing committee, headed by philanthropist Anne Morgan and sculptor Malvina Hoffman, who both met Izcue in Paris. Other notable artists and patrons sat on the organizing committee, such as Le Corbusier and collector Robert Bliss, whose wife Mildred was known to harbor an affinity for ancient Peruvian textiles. On display in the Fuller Building in Manhattan, the project was sponsored by various institutions, including the Peruvian American Association (Means 1935). In photographs documenting the modern contribution to the Fuller Building exhibition, the Izcue scarves are displayed in a manner reminiscent of a department store (fig. 9), the mannequin heads and other supporting structures showcasing designs described as “a fish copied from a ribbon woven thousands of



Fig. 9: View of the Exhibition in New York, December 1935. Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru

years ago, geometrical figures taken from a funeral urn” (Textiles 1935). A photograph of Victoria Izcue at the exhibition with supporters gives insight into the style of display (fig. 10). Behind the four figures are boards containing drawings or perhaps mounted textiles, appearing to be in a similar condition to the *Paracas Textile*. These were presented alongside drawings of ceramics and pattern studies. To the left of the display is a poster advertising the artists and Peru, including an enlargement of cross-knit figures in the style of the *Paracas Textile*.

New York press coverage praised Izcue’s exhibition and her “geometrical” designs overall. “The influence of Elena Izcue in starting a renaissance of ancient Peruvian art is comparable with the work of Diego Rivera in Mexico,” was the opinion of one reporter (Two 1935, 21). Her hand-printed designs “show both a practical and an artistic understanding of the vogues of today, as well as an appreciation of the ancient prototypes,” and most coverage praised her modern presentation of pre-Columbian motifs as providing a “Peruvian air” (Story 1935, 14). Izcue’s contributions to the 1935 New York exhibition presented a narrative of Peru that made a powerful visual statement in connecting the imagery and motifs of a Pre-Columbian past with modern artists from Peru. Earlier that year, an exhibition of the work of designer Ruth Reeves was staged at Radio City Music Hall, signaling the popularity of Latin American and Pre-Columbian designs and textiles in the U.S. This exhibition, together with the inclusion of the *Paracas Textile*, provides a detailed case study of the relationship between ancient objects and modern textiles on view in the Peruvian pavilions in world expositions in Paris and New York.



Fig. 10: Victoria Izcue explains the Exposition to Anne Morgan, Malvina Hoffman and Philip Ainsworth Means, 1935. Archive of Peruvian Art, Museum of Art of Lima, Lima, Peru

Conclusion

By the 1930s, Izcue and her collaborators strongly influenced the visual language of Peruvian design and national identity. These garments and textiles were often shown in tandem with pre-Columbian objects, including mummy bundles from Paracas.

Official displays of bodies abroad became a documented practice, connecting past achievements, spectacles of antiquity, with the development of a modern Peru. The popularity of pre-Columbian and contemporary Peruvian dress and textiles was a phenomenon that presented a curious challenge to Latin American artists. It was customary for artists to study and work in Europe in order to establish their professional credentials. Ironically, the viewpoint of most European artists and academies held that any “evidence of this knowledge and training [i.e., European education] was judged to somehow impede the possibility of a unique or native perspective” (Greet 2018, 72). Coupled with the appropriative nature of fashion and Izcue’s government sponsorship, her work abroad became known for its ‘native’ perspective, despite her extensive experience and education both in Peru and in Paris.

Returning to the case of the bright pink *waq’ollo*-style knitted hood, in the Surrealist context, this object was viewed as “already in itself sufficiently disturbing” (Read 1938). Mistakenly perceived as an original contribution by Schiaparelli, when viewed as a component of Dalí’s entire mannequin, the object takes on another dimension of modernist history. It is unknown at the time of writing if Schiaparelli discussed the source of the knitted hood with Dalí, but its display nonetheless engages with Surrealist approaches to pre-Columbian art. These engagements sometimes led to anthropological and archaeological research, but overall were “inevitably colored by twentieth century debates about the ‘primitive’” (Ades, Eter, Speranza 2012, 3). Returning to Andrea Giunta’s arguments on the development of modernism, she names these appropriative acts by Western artists, including Surrealists, “as food for a self-centered discourse” (Giunta 1995, 311).

Peruvian writer Dora Mayer de Zulen foreshadowed these appropriative acts in an article about Izcue’s book *El Arte Peruano en La Escuela*. Published in 1927, de Zulen writes that with Izcue in Paris, the “common people” will take inspiration from ancient Peruvian art. She continues, arguing that the women will use their sewing baskets, and the “capitalists will then take them [Peruvian designs] to their factories [...] because the inventiveness of the Old World is worn out and exhausted [...]” (de Zulen 1927). These predictions played themselves out in the studios of Worth and Schiaparelli, in addition to the overall climate and reception of art from Latin America in Europe and the U.S., although neither European designers admitted to a lack of ‘inventiveness.’ The pink knitted hood used by Dalí extends de Zulen’s predictions into the realm of art, and further demonstrates how centering Izcue in this narrative provides a comprehensive context for the existence of the object and the circumstances of its circulation. Viewing Izcue as an actor in the theater of fashion, recognizing and discussing her influence and contributions is a powerful exercise in performing and expanding the often intertwined, inseparable histories of fashion and modernism.

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