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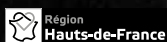
LECOANET
HEMANT

PRESS PACK

THE
ORIENTALISTS
OF HAUTE COUTURE

MUSEUM FOR LACE AND FASHION - CALAIS

18 June
31 December 2022



VILLE
Calais





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PRE22 RELEASE

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the exhibition «Lecoanet Hemant : the Orientalists of Haute Couture», initially scheduled for 2020, will be presented in 2022.

The Calais Museum for Lace and Fashion presents the first retrospective exhibition dedicated to the Lecoanet Hemant fashion house. It unveils more than forty years of designs blending the art of French couture with the spirit of the East. From the first creations produced by Lecoanet Hemant in its initial incarnation as a Paris-based haute couture house, to today's ready-to-wear outfits designed in India, more than eighty silhouettes are on show visualised in graphic and colourful staging.

From Paris...

The Lecoanet Hemant fashion brand was founded in Paris in 1981 by Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar. One of the most inventive of that period, the fashion house offered exuberant and luxurious fashion. Between 1984 and 2000, thirty-three officially-labelled haute couture collections were created, aimed at a cosmopolitan international clientele. The audacity displayed by the couture house was recognised in 1994 with the award of the Dé d'or (Golden Thimble Award).

... to New-Delhi

In 2000, Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar left Paris for New Delhi, abandoning haute couture made-to-measure for ready-to-wear mass production, a process hitherto unknown in India where shapes and the techniques used remained married to tradition. For twenty years, they have been turning out fashion designs for men and for women in which they fuse Indian know-how - enhanced by inventiveness - with the spirit of French couture.

East meets West

The insatiable duo of globe-trotters brings back from their numerous travels objects and fabrics which inspire them in the creation of the shimmering and sophisticated models that characterise the Lecoanet Hemant look, a melding of textiles and cultures. Present from their very beginnings, variants of the Indian sari and its drapes are omnipresent in their work. The theme of nature has also appeared from the very first collections, with pieces made from plant, mineral or animal based materials: raffia, wood, shells, rice paper.

The visitor is invited on a journey in an abundance of shapes, patterns and textures in the colours of the East. Sumptuous evening gowns, opulent coats and structured suits are presented in the aesthetic world of the couture house thanks to a scenography inspired by themes close to the designers' hearts, combining sound, image, video and text.

Towards eco-responsible fashion

Fashion according to Lecoanet Hemant has taken a more environmentally aware turn since their move to India, in particular through their effort to promote Ramie, one of the world's oldest textile plants. The exhibition thus presents a selection of objects created by established Indian designers, made from this natural fibre which is a member of the nettle family, and is locally produced.

Lecoanet Hemant has also launched «Ayurganic», a line of garments based on the principles of Ayurveda, a traditional Indian well being system. The organic textiles used in this collection are produced artisanally and offer the benefit of medicinal plants.

EXHIBITION FROM 18 JUNE TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

SCIENTIFIC CURATORSHIP

Shazia Boucher, Curator,
Deputy Director of the Museums of Calais

EXHIBITION ORGANISATION

Anne-Claire Laronde, Director-Curator of the Museums of Calais

ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar

SCENOGRAPHY

Studio Tovar / Simon de Tovar and Alain Batifoulrier

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Co-published by Museum for Lace and Fashion and Snoeck editions

A WORD FROM THE EXHIBITION CURATOR

SHAZIA BOUCHER

We wished to create an exhibition imagined as a fairytale. The protagonists are two young men, one arriving in Paris from the French provinces and the other from India, via Germany. They meet in the lecture halls of the fashion school of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture in the late 1970s. They discover Paris at a favorable period for unfettered creativity. In 1981, the budget of the Ministry of Culture under Jack Lang was doubled, fostering a real renewal in state support for the creative industries. In particular, the government made efforts to expand the cultural domain, including in it other forms of creation such as street art, design and above all fashion.

But back to our two companions who in 1981 decide to seal their shared destiny by combining the surname of one with the forename of the other to establish the couture house Lecoanet Hemant. With the freshness and naivety of youth, and no little nerve, they determine to follow the illustrious example of a whole line of couturiers who practise their art in accordance with the precepts of French haute couture. It is now 1984, and Lecoanet Hemant becomes the twenty-fourth couture house to join the hallowed ranks of the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture.

The period 1984 to 2000 sees a succession of haute couture collections presented at the Paris Fashion Weeks, thirty-three in all. The spring-summer 1994 collection ALGAE receives the Dé d'or (Golden Thimble Award) for creative research. In fact, the pair is breaking new ground with their multiple initiatives promoting greener fashion. The previous year, they had designed LES BLANCS MANTEAUX, a collection inspired by a new «eco-friendly» couture and in the following year they unveiled a precursory up-cycling collection with the spring-summer collection, L'ÂGE DU PLASTIQUE.

It is a busy period for the pair: in 1986 they launch a ready-to-wear line and all manner of collaborations and invitations proliferate. They are invited to present their collections all over the world. But despite the long-awaited recognition from the media and institutions, at the end of the 1990s their financial results are bitterly disappointing: the business model no longer works.

Few women can now afford to dress in haute couture. Lecoanet Hemant's significant Middle Eastern clientele is severely affected by the Gulf War in 1990-1991. What to do? Simply shut down the business? Sell out to a large group? In the end, Hemant's links with India (his father is Indian and he lived there until he was fifteen) make the decision for them. They will have to go elsewhere, to do something different, certainly, but taking with them the rich tradition of French haute couture which is built into the DNA of the fashion house.

More than twenty years later, in 2022, although Lecoanet Hemant's haute couture is a thing of the past, the fertile imagination of our two designers has produced a true empire. It is the only international fashion label to design and manufacture its brands entirely in India. Since 2017, the «Genes» line has been turning out collections with an Indo-international spirit, aimed at a clientele of cosmopolitan men and women. The «Ayurgenic» collection features garments made from organically certified fabrics processed in accordance with the principles of Ayurveda, an age-old Indian healing system. Lecoanet Hemant has opened four shops in the cities of Chennai, Lucknow, Mumbai and New Delhi and a fifth shop is planned to open in 2022. In addition to the production of its own lines, Lecoanet Hemant has expanded its activity to include the manufacture under licence of collections for several major European and American fashion labels.

THE EXHIBITION PATHWAY

In the work of Lecoanet Hemant, chronologies and typologies are intermingled in just the same way as materials and techniques are. The essential thing is something other, in the wandering desire to seize the elsewhere and the otherwise. Certain constants emerge, however: nature as both creative material and source of inspiration; the mixing of cultures and know-how; the leitmotif of draped fabric, pushed to the point of obsession. In addition, the scenographic choices are quite clearly orientated towards an invitation to travel: the East as imagined through the vision of Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar, divided into eight themes.

A first display case with vividly coloured male silhouettes welcomes the visitor under the title **India Pop**. The pataka, or «firework», print designed especially for one of the models on show is just one of the representations of popular Indian culture. The association of colours, the graphic designs, the dynamism of the composition... all speak of the imagined world of a richly coloured, exotic India, bordering on the kitsch. Of course, it is the prolific Indian film industry - which turns out almost a thousand films every year - that best conveys this popular culture, to Indians first but also, bolstered by success, to the rest of the world.

The next two display cases trace the epic history of the **Silk Road** with a selection of silhouettes featuring this textile in all its diverse forms. The term «Silk Road» describes a network of trade routes linking Asia to Europe, the earliest accounts of which date back as far as the third century BC. The Chinese long held the production secrets of silk as a fiercely guarded secret, and it was traded in large quantity. Fine georgettes and muslins, heavy Duchess satins, flowing charmeuse silks, luxurious silk brocades are used to equally good effect on elegant evening gowns and coats, shawls and jackets. Luxury is often invisible to the eye. In this instance, the workmanship in the linings and lapels can prove just as refined as that on the outside, as in this court coat which has a cashmere and mink outer and a charmeuse satin



inner which is inlaid with gold and silver laces [UN HIVER DE JADE haute couture collection, spring-summer 1998]. The drapes and folds of the skirts evoke the windings of the sari, while the jacket in the LA BRODERIE ET SON ORIGINE autumn-winter 1997 collection is made from a fabric that has been completely «unravelled» and reconstituted to create a brand new material.

Like a breath of poetic and feather-light air, the visitor next discovers a group of designs made from feathers, entitled **Birds of Paradise**. An ensemble of creations as light and soft as the collection's eponymous bird of the Paradisaeidae family, numbering more than forty species primarily living in Papua-New Guinea and Eastern Australia. The strangeness or wisdom of nature, here it is the male that sports an incredible fan of coloured feathers, in a spectacular display in order to attract a partner with a much duller plumage. There is a bustier dress entirely covered in heron and pigeon feathers with a tree bark design created by Les Ateliers Lemarié [haute couture collection, spring-summer 1999], or this second dress made from finely twisted muslin, assembled with threads and embellished with feathers, or a strange jacket bristling with multi-coloured feathers, both made in the Indian ateliers of the couture house in 2016.

Top in pheasant feathers.

Lecoanet Hemant, ready-to-wear autumn-winter 2016, photo Rahul Arora



The journey continues by awakening all the senses in the three spaces dedicated to **Perfume of the Orient**. Western fascination for the East goes back to Antiquity with the opening of the trade routes. The rarity and «exotic» appearance of oriental luxury objects, including silk fabrics, ceramics, carpets, pearls and precious stones, made them markers of social status. Here, the visitor discovers sumptuous embroideries with metallic glints, like those of more traditional Indian, Chinese or Egyptian inspiration adorning elegant dresses. Folds and drapes are skilfully arranged directly on the fashion model's body, in order to achieve a perfect fall. This is illustrated in particular in the silhouettes of the ROBES SUSPENDUES collection [haute couture collection, spring-summer 2000], the last to be designed in Paris. For Lecoanet Hemant, the East also evokes the heady and sensual perfumes of rose, jasmine, musk, myrrh, sandalwood, frangipani or citrus, described wonderfully by Baudelaire in the sensual *Invitation au voyage*:

«...The rarest flowers
Mingling their fragrance
With the faint scent of amber,
The ornate ceilings,
The limpid mirrors,
The oriental splendour,
All would whisper there
Secretly to the soul
In its soft, native language.

There all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure...»

Evening gown in charmeuse satin.
Lecoanet Hemant, ROBES SUSPENDUES collection,
haute couture spring-summer 2000, photo Dhruv Kakoti



Nature, one of the most fertile sources of inspiration for the Lecoanet Hemant couture house, is a prime feature in several display cases evocatively named **Shalimar Gardens**. This term refers to a group of royal gardens constructed in the time of the Mughal Dynasty (1526-1857). One of those gardens, designed under the Emperor Shah Jahan in 1641-1642, is located in Lahore in Pakistan. It was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1981 as a representative example of Mughal expression at its zenith. This type of garden is designed in terraces featuring straight avenues adorned with trees and flower beds and punctuated with pavilions and vast stretches of water. A second group of Mughal gardens is to be found in the Indian city of Srinagar. Here, the diversity of the technical workmanship predominates: textiles hand-painted with delicate decorations of landscapes, traditional Indonesian fabrics with flower bed designs, raffia embroideries, fir cones or twigs inspired by a woodland walk or a fabric woven with luxuriant plant life in collaboration with the *ateliers d'Aubussonais réunis* for the keynote piece of the spring-summer 1997 haute couture collection entitled UN CABINET DE CURIOSITÉS.

The One Thousand and One Nights is a set of tales whose form has changed over time and in translation. These stories go back to the eighth century and are thought to have originated in India or Persia. The structure of the book is based on one main story, with the addition of tales whose number varies according to the version. The first European version of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, translated by Antoine Galland, was published in several volumes between 1704 and 1717. He added certain tales which post-dated the original version, including the stories of Aladdin, Ali Baba and Sinbad the Sailor which are among the best known. Here, the theme is illustrated by a series of sumptuous dresses in which the material of preference is lace. This is used in a variety of ways: cut out and reassembled, inlaid, appliquéd, painted, with placed motifs forming a mirror effect and even simply peeping through a slit made in a fine fabric voile placed over the lace.

Jacket made from fabric panels embroidered with sequins,
and assembled in such a way as to create undulating movement.
Lecoanet Hemant, ALGAE collection, haute couture spring-summer 1994
(Golden Thimble Award), photo Brij Verma

Darjeeling Express, or the journey by train, is one of the best ways of discovering India. The spectacle is both inside and outside the train carriage. Inside, traditional garments jostle with jeans and polos in compartments brimming with effects of all kinds. Through the windows, we discover a country of marked contrasts, from megacities with populations that are measured in millions to the majestic landscapes of the Himalayas. The four display cases dedicated to this theme highlight the diversity of materials and a taste for technical and aesthetic exploration. Take the example of this asymmetric jacket made from pineapple fibres, entirely sculpted on the bias and with no visible seams [ALGAE, haute couture collection, spring-summer 1994, Golden Thimble Award] or this «ravioli» coat entirely made from hinged leather discs, from 2015. Two tops made from iridescent shells and mother-of-pearl buttons stand next to a jacket assembled from panels of fabric entirely embroidered with sequins and sewn in such a way as to create undulating movement, in reference to the water-and seabed-inspired theme of the 1994 ALGAE collection.



The splendours of the Maharajas evoke the spirit of the great Indian dignitaries, with their costumes and sparkling jewels, whose primary preoccupation consisted in organising sumptuous celebrations in exquisitely sophisticated palaces. It was from the mid-eighteenth century that the Maharajas (the term meaning «great king») wielded their authority over territories of varying sizes, mainly located in the centre of India. In the nineteenth century, the British occupation accorded autonomy to these local sovereigns in the management of their states. It was Indian independence, declared in 1947, that strangely signalled the end of the golden age of these monarchs' lavish lifestyles. The two spaces dedicated to this theme present a variety of garments characterised by the opulence and sumptuousness of their materials and skilled technical workmanship, in particular in the art of embroidery. Like this bodice entirely embroidered with multicoloured threads, beads, sequins, Swarovski © stones and plaited gold cords, in the spirit of embroideries on Gujarati wedding dresses in the LE VOYAGE D'IBN BATTÛTA haute couture autumn-winter 1996 collection, or this coat dress in silk brocade from Varanasi, its silhouette inspired by the coats worn by the Mughal emperors, designed in the ateliers in India in 2002. It is displayed alongside two short dresses made in a Chinese brocade and a Tibetan brocade respectively, both from the autumn-winter 1991 collection, HOMMAGE À PALLADIO. It is the blend of inspirations, materials and shapes that most effectively characterises these exceptional pieces.

Bodice entirely embroidered with multicoloured threads, beads, sequins, Swarovski © stones and plaited gold cords, in the spirit of embroideries on Gujarati wedding dresses. Lecoanet Hemant, LE VOYAGE D'IBN BATTÛTA collection, haute couture autumn-winter 1996, photo Dhruv Kakoti



FOCUS ON SPECIFIC WORKS

«Pataka» (firework) trouser suit in printed cotton

Lecoanet Hemant, men's collection, 2006, atelier in Gurgaon

The fabric used for this classic-cut suit is explosive: an original print inspired by an advertising hoarding for the «Standard» firework brand. It is an ensemble from the first collection for the LHMEN label for men, launched in 2006. Highly popular in India, in spite of their potential danger, fireworks in their boxes with bright and colourful printing represent an iconic image of India for our designers. It was when he first arrived in 2002 that Hemant Sagar noticed, as he walked through the streets of New Delhi which he describes as «cosmic Indian soup», two small hoardings for the famous firework brand, displayed above a workshop. Intrigued, he negotiated their purchase, without necessarily intending to do anything with them. It was several years later, when Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar decided to have their own fabrics designed for the men's collection, that they cut out and reassembled elements of the advertising hoardings, creating an unusual print from them. The model met with enormous success after it was worn by a popular Indian actor, Ranbir Singh.

Photo Yohan Rousselot



**Evening dress in silk muslin and crepe, over a skirt
in charmeuse satin and Leavers lace, embroidered top**

Lecoanet Hemant, UN HIVER DE JADE collection

haute couture autumn-winter 1998

Featuring abundantly in the Parisian designs of the couture house between 1984 and 2000, lace is treated as a recreational material by the couturiers. In fact, they exploit the multiple aesthetic and plastic possibilities of this material: cut out, inlaid, appliqué, repainted, re-embroidered, overlaid... it is rarely used as a simple width of fabric. This dress illustrates yet another way in which lace is worked by the designers: inner/outer lace. On the bodice of the dress, the presence of lace is discreet, the cut-out motifs being sandwiched between two layers of muslin. By contrast, the satin of the skirt is entirely covered by it, itself partly covered by the muslin of the dress. This plastic implementation illustrates a principle dear to the designers: the balance between outer sobriety and inner richness. After their move to India, the couture house no longer sourced raw materials and fabrics from Europe. They thus created artificial laces in their embroidery ateliers. These resemble guipure, but are really an embroidery on soluble paper.

Photo Dhruv Kakoti



**Gilet in Tibetan brocade and mink,
over a dress in velvet and lamé lace**

Lecoanet Hemant, LE VOYAGE D'IBN BATTÛTA collection
haute couture autumn-winter 1996

This gilet is made from a brocade fabric purchased on a trip to Tibet. It is made from a weave of peacock feathers, gold yarns and coloured yarns to form a shimmering floral decoration. The large mink collar accentuates the luxuriance of the piece. Like most other couture houses, during the 1980s and 1990s, Lecoanet Hemant did make use of fur for its refined aspect. Today, the move towards more eco-friendly and ethical fashion has prompted the couture house to stop using this material. Worn over a dress in velvet and lamé lace, the gilet is presented in the same display case as two other silhouettes made from Indian brocade and Chinese brocade. In fact, this is a fabric that features largely in the haute couture collections of the fashion house because, for our designers, it expresses the sophistication of traditional skills in the art of couture.

Evening gown in embroidered charmeuse satin

Lecoanet Hemant, ROBES SUSPENDUES collection
haute couture spring-summer 2000

This gown is from the thirty-third haute couture collection presented by the fashion house before the move to India. The theme of suspension, of architectonic order, is illustrated on the pieces in the collection through swathes of fabric secured at the back by a variety of contrivances, in this case by rivers of pearls. The designers say that they were also inspired by the paintings of Watteau with his portrayals of long folds on the back of dresses in the French style. The technique of draping, in accordance with the principle of freedom and non-securing of the sari, is a constant in the couturiers' work. To ensure a perfect fall for the draping, it is necessary to construct the garment directly on the fashion model's body. These draped dresses were designed individually for a particular fashion model, and her absence on the day of the catwalk show constituted a real nightmare!



Asymmetric jacket in pineapple fibre

Lecoanet Hemant, ALGAE collection
haute couture spring-summer 1994

Lecoanet Hemant was awarded the Dé d'Or (Golden Thimble Award) for «creative research» for the ALGAE spring-summer 1994 haute couture collection. The incorporation of novel materials into couture has always been a hallmark of the designers' approach, with the impetus of discoveries made during the many trips undertaken by this pair of wanderers with a passion for world culture. One example is this asymmetric jacket in pineapple fibre, a material used to make traditional costumes in the Philippines. Inspired by nature, the shape of the garment echoes the design of leaf veins through the bias assembly of panels of fabric attached together with piping seams. With no visible seaming, the vein design is replicated on the back, thus enveloping the entire body in a dynamic and elegant construction. The use of traditional materials, combined with the observation of nature, thus gives form to a design of great modernity.



EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT LECOANET HEMANT

LECOANET HEMANT, OR THE PARISIANS OF INDIAN FASHION

Shazia Boucher talks with Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar of the couture house, Lecoanet Hemant.

Excerpts from the catalogue

What were the origins of the Lecoanet Hemant fashion house?

DL and HS / *It was in 1979, during our studies, that we and some friends came up with the idea of designing a joint collection. The group naturally dispersed at the end of the academic year, just Lecoanet and Hemant were left!*

Together, we opened a small atelier in the 16th Arrondissement of Paris where we made outfits ourselves for our clients. Everything happened very quickly after that and we opened our first Paris boutique there in February 1981.

What are your respective roles within the fashion house?

HS / *Didier has always been the designer and modelist [...], his eye, his technique, his artistic vision are the essence of the label. For my part, I take care of logistics and the financial aspects [...]. Those positions have remained unchanged from the beginnings of our collaboration, even though the fashion house has grown enormously.*

Was it easier to get into fashion in the early 1980s than it is today?

DL and HS / *At the time, there was an identifiable fashion; today we ask ourselves whether that criterion is still relevant. But opening a couture house has always been madness, now just as it was in the 1980s.*

Since the time we started, we have gradually become professionalised. Some of our valued employees have assisted us in this: Madame Juliette (ed: Juliette Cambursano), who worked in Balenciaga's ateliers before becoming later Meilleure ouvrière de France, or Roy Gonzalès, who spent time at the Maison Jean Patou, for example. But Didier really came to own his art in the nineties. In that regard, the Maison Lecoanet was awarded the Dé d'or (Golden Thimble Award) in January 1994.

How would you define the Lecoanet Hemant style?

DL and HS / *The Lecoanet Hemant style is a poetic look, interpreted through time and cultures. It is a union between a vision of the East expressed through the*

modulations of the drape-sarong, sari, lungi and dhoti - and a certain idea of tailoring. [...] To us it seemed obvious, natural to combine cultures. [...] Our heritage is hybrid; yet we inculcate our teams with the fundamentals of French fashion. In fact, even in the design of a simple t-shirt, the Lecoanet Hemant style reflects a chic, a French art de vivre.

Do you have a muse or female ideal for whom you design?

DL and HS / [...] We might even say that the Lecoanet Hemant woman of old has today become a Lecoanet Hemant thought, which can be summed up as a cosmopolitan lifestyle. The label's goal is to contribute to the internationalisation of India, while at the same time maintaining a certain Indian character. We are following a path that is totally different from our work in France, where we tended to be known as the Orientalists of fashion; now we are effectively the Parisians of Indian fashion.

What was behind your decision to leave France for India in the early 2000s?

DL and HS / A variety of factors prompted the move. First, a decline in the number of haute couture clients combined with the crisis in the Middle East from 1990 and, second, our determination to further develop our ready-to-wear offer, which would have been impossible in France without resorting to subcontracting, which would have contradicted our approach at the time.

Today, you have built up a true empire in India.

DL and HS / Lecoanet Hemant is the only international label established in India, which both designs and manufactures a collection in India for India.

The operation of our Paris couture house inspired our current establishment. We launch two collections a year for our Genes line. Each one with models for women and men. Each one is split into five lines for separate launch as the season progresses. These take account of the diverse range of climates and cultures, and the festivities specific to the various regions of this country.

We also design thirty or so models a year for private clients, in an haute couture spirit, essentially for Bollywood celebrities, sometimes for the Red Carpet or for formal occasions, as in 2018 for the young Princess Ananya Raje, a member of the Scindia princely family, when she attended the Bal des Débutantes in Paris.

How do you distribute your collections?

DL and HS / We opened a number of boutiques before establishing an online presence. Approximately fifty percent of today's market is accounted for by the three major cities - New Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta - and twenty or so cities with populations of less than ten million. The remaining fifty percent is located in the rest of the country where the lack of infrastructures makes it difficult to

move goods and this therefore hinders the development of large shops.

Are you committed to ecological and ethical fashion?

DL and HS / We have designed a line of garments, LH Ayurganic. These are garments designed in fabrics that are processed in line with the principles of Ayurveda: the artisanal, manual processing of textiles, with no chemicals, which takes in the region of two weeks to make. The aim is to bring to the metabolism the benefits of the plants used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine.

We are also in the process of working on the design of a new generation of the plant fibre, «ramie», in collaboration with the government of Meghalaya - one of the smallest states in India, close to Darjeeling - which enjoys one of the highest rainfall rates in the world. These plantations will be a source of income for the farmers with whom we are working. In addition to its commercialisation, we are obviously planning to use this eco-friendly fibre for our future collections.

Staging your first major monographic exhibition in a French museum dedicated to fashion and lace is no small thing...

DL and HS / We are very moved and honoured to be able to show this retrospective in France. Attending a haute couture show in the 1980s was the preserve of an elite, and you only saw snippets in the television news reports. Looking back, you realise that they were true portable works of art which we made for a handful of very privileged women.

What does lace represent for you?

DL and HS / Since we never worked in any other couture house before opening ours, we discovered fabrics «as we went along» and lace has triggered a constantly renewed fascination in us. For example, we remember a reference in hand-painted silk lace which we had to use sparingly because they were the last coupons in existence. We used them by cutting them up and assembling them to create a mosaic resembling the television test card. We were greatly inspired by this technique. Similarly, we have been captivated by the fineness of Chantilly lace. As we are constantly on the lookout for new technologies, we would be excited to achieve a similar degree of fineness using a 3D printer. We also design imitation laces in our embroidery ateliers. Technically, they look like guipure, but in actual fact it is embroidery on water soluble paper.

What does the future hold for creative couture in India?

DL and HS / The situation is paradoxical. Unlike in China, the word «revolution» is not in the Indian vocabulary - cultural and religious heritage has too strong a hold for that. Yet fashion has something transgressive about it. Virtually all the major Indian designers (Manish Arora and Rahul Mishra among others) have either left the country to show their collections or chosen to take the commercial



route. We want to change mentalities, and we'd like to reach a situation in which India is not associated simply with sub-contracting for wealthy countries. In a way, we are tightrope walkers who seek inspiration in the skills of Indian artisan trades and the art of French couture, combining them with new technologies.

Where do you see the Lecoanet Hemant fashion house in 10 years' time? Or 20 years? Will it succeed its founders?

HS / That change is already under way: Didier Lecoanet is now Creative Director; he guides and directs design rather than being its originator. For my part, I manage strategy. We hold 100% of the company shares and have committed to longevity and quality; these precepts should survive us.

CHRONOLOGY

LECOANET HEMANT is a fashion house founded in Paris in 1981 by Didier Lecoanet (France, Chaumont, 1955) and Hemant Sagar (India, New Delhi, 1957).

1978 / Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar meet as students at the fashion school of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture in Paris.

1979 / Creation of the Lecoanet Hemant label, its name registered in the following year.

1981 / The first Lecoanet Hemant boutique opens opposite the Élysée Palace in Paris on 13 February 1981, at 84 Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.

1982 / First catwalk show under the patronage of the jewellery house, Cartier, at the Hôtel Intercontinental.

1984 / Lecoanet Hemant officially becomes the twenty-fourth haute couture fashion house. Henceforth, the label is included on the calendar of haute couture fashion shows, presenting two seasonal collections a year from 1984 to 2000.

1986 / The label's first presentation in India. Launch of a luxury ready-to-wear collection in France, which remains on the market until 2000. From now on, the fashion house is regularly invited to present catwalk shows worldwide: Tokyo, Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Sydney, Riga (Latvia), Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Kuwait, Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Qingdao (China), Vilnius (Lithuania), Athens, Chicago.

1994 / European Dé d'Or (Golden Thimble Award) for fashion, for «creative research»; ex æquo with Erik Mortensen for Jean-Louis Scherrer, Golden Thimble Award for «grand tradition».

2000 / Closure of the fashion house in Paris and relocation to India.

2001 / Creation of the LH corporate line dedicated to workwear in the hotels, schools and spas sectors.

2006 / Creation of the LHMAN label, a line of garments and accessories for men.

2007 / Opening of the new headquarters and factory in Gurgaon (now Gurugram), architect: Arun Rewal.

2009 / Launch of the LH Ayurgenic line.

2010 / Opening of the first boutique in New Delhi.

2015 / Launch of the ready-to-wear line, GENES.

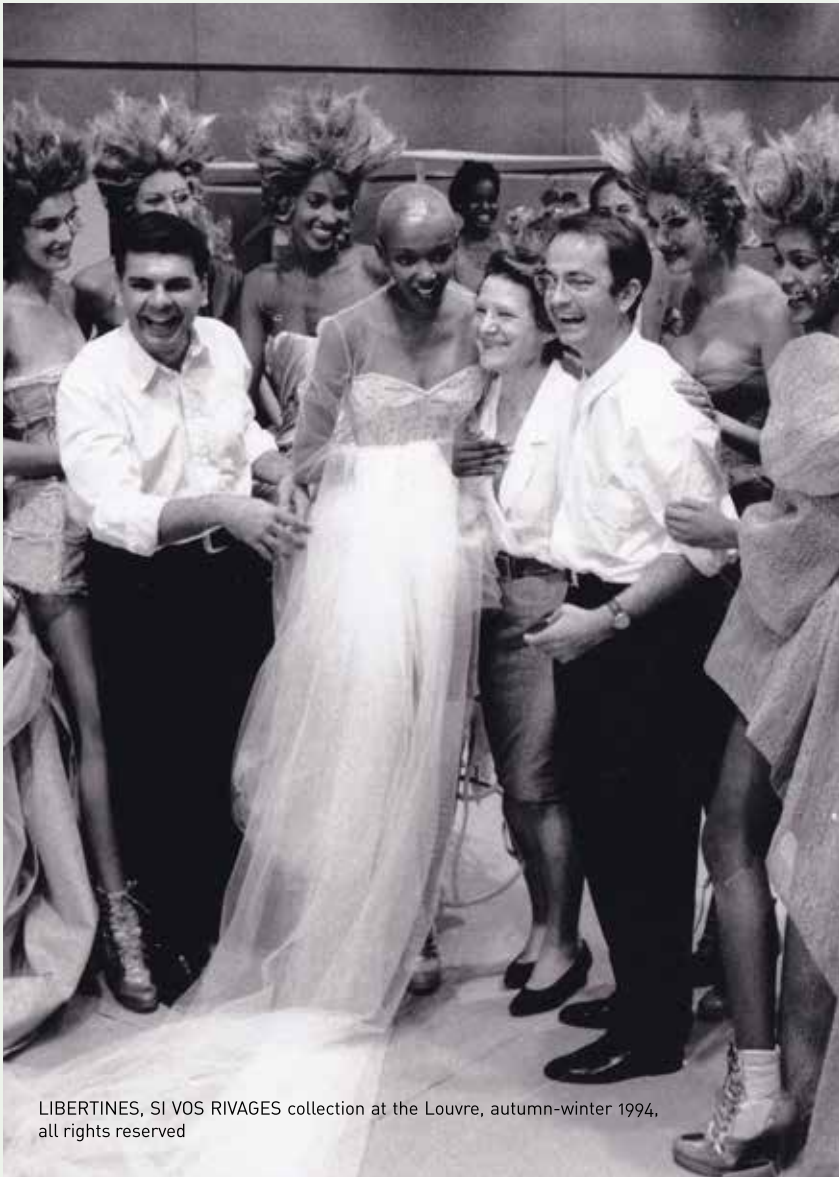
2017 / Retrospective *From Haute Couture to the Technologies of Elegance* in New Delhi (Bikaner House).

2018 / Organisation of the exhibition *Fabric to Fashion*, aiming to promote ramie, a plant fibre, in association with the French Institute and the government of Meghalaya, presented at the French Embassy in New Delhi.

2020 / Partial reorientation of the activity towards the fabrication of masks and protective wear for health workers in India.

2021 / Important augmentation of the activity of manufacturing for international labels.

2022 / Transfer of the production of Lecoanet Hemant lines to a new facility.
A new boutique to open in 2022.



LIBERTINES, SI VOS RIVAGES collection at the Louvre, autumn-winter 1994,
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HAUTE COUTURE COLLECTIONS

LECOANET HEMANT has been part of the haute couture calendar since January 1984 and received the official «couture création» designation in the same year. Not counting an initial «trial» collection in 1982, they have no fewer than thirty-three haute couture collections to their name.

* The collection *ALGAE*, spring-summer 1994, receives the Golden Thimble Award.

** The couture house is located in a private mansion in the Marais district, 24 rue Vieille-du-temple.

00 – ZEN – spring-summer 1983 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Thursday 30 September 1982 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by Japan, Samurai culture and the practice of Zen*

01 – MOUSSON – spring-summer 1984 – Musée Jacquemart-André – Tuesday 24 January 1984 – 76 passages – *collection inspired by Asia in the rainy season*

02 – MÉDICIS – autumn-winter 1984-1985 – Pavillon Gabriel – Wednesday 25 July 1984 – 79 passages – *collection inspired by the Italian Renaissance*

03 – LA LOUISIANE – spring-summer 1985 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Thursday 31 January 1985 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by the southern states of the USA*

04 – UN HIVER MOGHOL – autumn-winter 1985-1986 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Tuesday 23 July 1985 – 75 passages – *collection in homage to the Year of India in France*

05 – UN ÉTÉ SUR LA RIVIERA – spring-summer 1986 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Tuesday 28 January 1986 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by Deauville, the French Riviera of Normandy*

06 – CH'AN – autumn-winter 1986-1987 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Tuesday 29 July 1986 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by Chinese Buddhism*

07 – AUJOURD'HUI À PARIS – spring-summer 1987 – Hôtel Intercontinental – Tuesday 27 January 1987 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by Paris life, from the Opera to the café terrace*

08 – À UNE STAR IMAGINAIRE – autumn-winter 1987-1988 – Hôtel Intercontinental – July 1987 – 75 passages – *collection inspired by the cosmopolitan stars*

09 – MACUMBA ! – spring-summer 1988 – Studio Bonaparte – Tuesday 26 January 1988 – 72 passages – *collection inspired by Brazil*

10 – TENDIXZEHN – autumn-winter 1988-1989 – Studio Bonaparte – Wednesday 27 July 1988 – 60 passages – *anniversary collection*

11 – TEQUILA SUNRISE – spring-summer 1989 – Drouot Montaigne – Wednesday 25 January 1989 – 60 passages – *collection inspired by Mexico, New Mexico and the (real!) Mexico*

12 – LA ROUTE DE LA SOIE – autumn-winter 1989-1990 – Pavillon Gabriel – Wednesday 26 July 1989 – 61 passages – *collection inspired by the Silk Road, from the Shalimar Gardens to the Gobi Desert*

13 – LES PIRATES – spring-summer 1990 – Palais Galliera – Wednesday 24 January 1990 – 64 passages – *collection inspired by Red Rackham, Blackbeard and Captain Hook... by their treasures from across the world*

14 – RETOUR D'ÉGYPTE – autumn-winter 1990-1991 – Pavillon Gabriel – Wednesday 25 July 1990 – 60 passages – *collection inspired by Ancient Egypt, its pyramids and its queens*

15 – HAUTE COUTURE LIGHT – spring-summer 1991 – Palais Galliera – Wednesday 30 January 1991 – 59 passages – *collection inspired by the simplification imposed by the political climate, a pacifist proposal*

16 – HOMMAGE À PALLADIO – autumn-winter 1991-1992 – Hôtel George-V – Wednesday 24 July 1991 – 56 passages – *collection inspired by floral sculptures, corollas and colours in homage to the modern architect of the Renaissance*

17 – DU CRÉPUSCULE À L'AUBE – spring-summer 1992 – Hôtel George-V – Wednesday 29 January 1992 – 48 passages – *collection inspired by the colours of the desert*

18 – PARFUMS DE VOYAGES – autumn-winter 1992-1993 – Hôtel George-V – Wednesday 29 July 1992 – 47 passages – *collection inspired by mystical lands*

19 – LES BLANCS MANTEAUX – spring-summer 1993 – marché couvert des Blancs-Manteaux – Wednesday 27 January 1993 – 50 passages – *collection inspired by this new exhibition venue and new «eco-friendly» couture*

20 – LE BHOUTAN – autumn-winter 1993-1994 – La Bourse du commerce – Tuesday 20 July 1993 – 50 passages – *collection inspired by Tibet*

21 – ALGAE** – spring-summer 1994 – Carrousel du Louvre – Tuesday 18 January 1994 – 49 passages – *collection inspired by water and the seabed*

22 – LIBERTINES, SI VOS RIVAGES – autumn-winter 1994-1995 – Carrousel du Louvre – Tuesday 19 July 1994 – 48 passages – *collection inspired by libertine thinking*

23 – L'ÂGE DU PLASTIQUE – spring-summer 1995 – Carrousel du Louvre – Tuesday 24 January 1995 – 36 passages – *collection inspired by the lightness of the air*

24 – VOYAGE – autumn-winter 1995-1996 – Carrousel du Louvre – Monday 10 July 1995 – 51 passages – *collection inspired by destinations distant in space and time*

25 – NOSTALGIE DES COLONIES – spring-summer 1996 – Couture house** – Monday 22 January 1996 – 30 passages – *collection inspired by the Indies and their textile traditions*

26 – LE VOYAGE D'IBN BATTÛTA autumn-winter 1996-1997 – Maison de couture – Wednesday 10 July 1996 – 40 passages – *collection inspired by the fourteenth-century Moroccan explorer Ibn Battûta*

27 – UN CABINET DE CURIOSITÉS – spring-summer 1997 – Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine – Monday 20 January 1997 – 22 passages – *collection inspired by rare, new and unusual objects brought back from distant travels*

28 – LA BRODERIE ET SON ORIGINE – autumn-winter 1997-1998 – Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique – Monday 7 July 1997 – 33 passages – *collection inspired by the ancient art of embroidery*

29 – TRACES – spring-summer 1998 – Hôtel Marriott – Saturday 17 January 1998 – 38 passages – *collection inspired by writing and its origin*

30 – UN HIVER DE JADE – autumn-winter 1998-1999 – Maison de couture – Saturday 18 July 1998 – 26 passages – *collection inspired by the chinoiserie and treasures of the Maharajas*

31 – ATLANTIDE – spring-summer 1999 – Théâtre de l'Athénée – Saturday 16 January 1999 – 24 passages – *collection inspired by the legendary submerged island of Atlantis*

32 – SUR LES TRACES DE GENGIS KHAN – autumn-winter 1999-2000 – Jardins du Palais-Royal – Wednesday 21 July 1999 – 31 passages – *collection inspired by the steppes of Central Asia*

33 – ROBES SUSPENDUES – spring-summer 2000 – Town hall, Boulogne-Billancourt – Sunday 16 January 2000 – 32 passages – *collection inspired by the splendours of nature*

CURATION, ARTISTIC DIRECTION, SCENOGRAPHY, CATALOGUE AND PARTNERS

CURATION

Shazia Boucher, Curator,
Deputy Director of the Museums of Calais

EXHIBITION ORGANISATION

Anne-Claire Laronde, Director-Curator of the Museums of Calais

ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Didier Lecoanet and Hemant Sagar

SCENOGRAPHY

Studio Tovar / Simon de Tovar and Alain Batifoulrier

CATALOGUE DE L'EXPOSITION

Co-published by Museum For Lace And Fashion and Snoeck Éditions
160 pages, bilingual (French/English), 30 €.

Authors: Shazia Boucher, Renuka George, Sylvie Marot, Aurélie Samuel

PARTNERS

Maison Lemarié

Founded in 1880, Maison Lemarié is one of the world's few remaining plumassiers, or feather-makers, and over the years it has become partner of choice for the great couture houses and fashion designers. Although feather work is the maison's original area of expertise, its know-how also extends to the sphere of flowers, in particular Chanel's Camélia pieces, and the manipulation and embellishment of textiles, creating encrustations and sophisticated flounces at its couture atelier. The maison purchased the Maison Lognon pleating house in 2014 and today it turns out a multitude of pleating creations for the greatest names in fashion. For some years now, Lemarié has been lending its expertise to brands in the development of merchandising and event projects.

Maison Bucol

Established in 1924, the Maison BUCOL owes its name to its founders, Claude Buchet and Charles Colcombet. From 1854, the Colcombet family ran a ribbon factory in Saint-Étienne, itself the scion of an eighteenth century manufactory. Winner of the Prix d'Honneur at the Universal Exposition of 1900, Colcombet worked with Parisian haute couture circles from the outset and exported its products across the world. During the twentieth century, the company expanded its range of high-quality silk products to include increasingly innovative and original fabrics. In the world of fashion, Maison BUCOL has steadily acquired an enviable reputation as a designer and manufacturer of top-end fabrics, recognised for their sophistication, the quality of their fibres and for the subtlety and hues of their prints and jacquards.

MEDIA PARTNERS

The exhibition receives the media support of France Bleu Nord and Télérama.



MUSEUM FOR LACE AND FASHION

Established in Calais, inside an authentic nineteenth century lace factory, the Museum for Lace and Fashion is a specialist museum for the famous lace woven on looms.

A museum of both fashion and industry, its vast galleries present the techniques, the lingerie and haute couture associated with this prestigious textile, as well as its most contemporary aspects.

The high point of a visit to this important museum is to discover the lace weaving looms in operation, those monumental cast iron machines that produce this exceptional fabric.

Derived from a technique invented in England in the nineteenth century, today lace woven on Leavers looms is primarily produced in Northern France. Sophisticated and innovative, it is contributing to the creative renewal of fashion and luxury in lingerie, clothing and a range of other fields.

The Museum for Lace and Fashion is a focal hub for fashion. In its exhibition gallery, it showcases great couturiers and renowned young designers alike (Olivier Theyskens, Hubert de Givenchy, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Anne Valérie Hash, Iris Van Herpen, on aura tout vu). Its contemporary gallery is dedicated to the burgeoning scene of up-to-the minute design in textiles and fashion.

All year-round, the Museum for Lace and Fashion stages a varied selection of activities for individual visitors or groups: cultural activities for families, exchanges-encounters, textile workshops, guided tours, artistic interventions and shows. Enjoying a town-centre location, the museum also offers a number of services: auditorium, restaurant and shop, a resource and archive centre.



VISUALS AVAILABLE FOR THE PRESS



1 / Mink coat,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



2 / Evening gown,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



3 / Tapestry top,
photo Ashish Arora



4 / «Ravioli» coat,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



5 / Embroidered bodice,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



6 / Dress in silk muslin,
photo Ashish Arora



7 / Brocade gilet,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



8 / Evening gown,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



9 / Coat and
skirt ensemble,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



10 / Portrait of
Didier Lecoanet and
Hemant Sagar,
photo Miki Alcalde



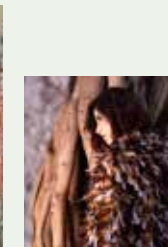
11 / Asymmetrical jacket,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



12 / «Ayurganic»
collection,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



13 / Jacket, photo Brij Verma



14 / Top in pheasant
feathers, photo Rahul Arora



15 / Evening gown,
photo Dhruv Kakoti



16 / «Pataka» (firework)
suit, photo Yohan Rousselot



17 / Lecoanet Hemant head
office and ateliers in Gurgaon,
near New Delhi,
architect Arun Rewal

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Museum for Lace and Fashion
135 quai du Commerce - 62100 Calais
+ 33 (0)3 21 00 42 30

www.cite-dentelle.fr

Exhibition from 18 June to 31 December 2022.
Open daily from 10.00am to 6.00pm (5.00pm from 1 November to 31 March).
Closed on Tuesdays, on 1 January, 1 May and 25 December.

Full admission price 7€ /4€
(concessions and groups - consult the website)

On the site: restaurant, shop and documentation centre.

Find the exhibition program and visiting conditions at **www.cite-dentelle.fr**
and follow @citedentellemode and the exhibition on social networks



PRESS CONTACT

Agence Observatoire, Paris
Aurélie Cadot : aureliecadot@observatoire.fr / +33 (0)6 80 61 04 17

