

A Lesbian's Lust For Coco by Sydney Pokorny

For some of us, it is a grand passion. A simple shopping trip in which we are seized by a relentless desire to touch every piece of fabric (velvet, leather, lycra, silk, rayon, etc.) We are unable to escape the need to hold every sequined or embroidered jacket and cannot help but detour over to the rack of metallic sparkle shirts. We leave the store hours later, exhausted from sensory overload. For those of us who suffer from this affliction, the men and women who create the clothes we love are idols.

But most lipstick lesbians know there is only one woman who can fan the flames of our desire like no other. Her name is Coco.

Coco Chanel was the Madonna of the fashion industry (or Madonna is the Coco of the music industry, whatever). Coco was not a great dressmaker, just as Madonna is not a great singer. The secret to their success is self-promotion, both women proving that a highly visible image is more important than quality. Their ruthless pursuit of fame is often traced back to a broken family and humble beginnings. The ability to sustain a high gossip profile is another shared characteristic. Both experienced the standard plight of the successful woman, shattered love affairs with men, numerous lovers and a desperate search for fulfillment. (In the realm of sexual liberation, however, one difference is key: Madonna is a faux lesbian, a wanna-be, while Coco's numerous lovers included women.)

The whole wanna-be phenomenon was Coco's idea before Madonna's publicist thought of it. Coco was her own best model. She always wore her own designs. Coco encouraged the belief that any woman who bought Chanel also bought into the idea that she could be Coco. In all her glory, if she only wore the same clothes Coco did. Lately, the wanna-be thing has taken on a new twist since Lagerfeld took over the House of Chanel. Lagerfeld overstates some of the hallmarks of the Chanel style: faux gold chains, gold lamé, embroidery, beaded and jeweled fabrics and transparent fabric.

Maybe it is a latent uniform fetish, but Coco made great suits. I still gasp every time I visit (I am really only a tourist in Chanel land) a Chanel suit. I love the braided edges, the collars and those cute little buttons.

You have to love a woman whom Diana Vreeland trashed by claiming that "Chanel took an entire generation of kings and queens and dressed them like secretaries."

You have to love a woman who could outwit Diana Vreeland by saying things like: "Women are not flowers, therefore they should not smell like one;" "An elegant woman should be able to do her marketing without making housewives laugh;" "Jewelry isn't meant to make you look rich. It's meant to adorn you, which isn't the same thing. My intention is simply to demolish real jewelry." And, on the subject of miniskirts: "Who are they supposed to please? They hardly ever reveal attractive knees."

The entire Chanel look of the early 60s—my favorite look—is the neat, little haircut, simple black dress, some fake jewelry and red lipstick. I think it would be nice if *On Our Backs* would publish a Chanel Issue where each page featured lesbians in a different look from the years 1961-63.