



# Elsa Schiaparelli: A Biography

*Meryle Secrest*

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**The first biography of the grand couturier, surrealist, and embattled figure (her medium was apparel), whose extraordinary work has stood the test of time.**

Her style was a social revolution through clothing-luxurious, eccentric, ironic, sexy; synonymous with fashion innovation and chicsesse. She was audacious; her fashions were inspired from the whimsical to the most practical-from a Venetian cape of the commedia dell'arte to a Soviet parachute. She collaborated on her designs with some of the greatest artists of the twentieth-century: on jewelry with Jean Schlumberger; on clothes with Salvador Dalí; with Jean Cocteau, Alberto Giacometti; with photographers Man Ray, Horst, Cecil Beaton, and the young Richard Avedon. Her name: Elsa Schiaparelli. She was known as the Queen of Fashion; a headline attraction in the international glitter-glamour show of the late twenties and thirties; she gave fabulous parties-and went to those given by others; she lived and worked seriously and hard in much-photographed residences and was a guest at others; she knew the "everybodies" who were always "there" and inevitably became one of them herself, feted in Rome (where she was born), Paris, New York, London, Moscow, Dallas, Hollywood, Dublin. Now, Meryle Secrest, acclaimed biographer-whose work has been called "enthraling" (*WSJ*); "captivating" (*WP Book World*); "Rich in detail, scrupulously researched, sympathetically written" (*NYRB*), and who has captured the lives of many of the twentieth-century's most iconic, cultural figures, among them: Frank Lloyd Wright, Bernard Berenson, Leonard Bernstein, Duveen; Richard Rodgers; Modigliani; Stephen Sondheim-gives us the never-before-told story of this most extraordinary fashion designer, perhaps *the* most extraordinary fashion designer of the twentieth-century, who in her time was more famous than Chanel.

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