

# **A Study on Clothing of Marie Antoinette**

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## **Introduction**

### **1. The purpose and method of the study**

The 18th century witnessed the colorful Rococo artistic trends transformed formal and solemn style in the previous Baroque period into delicate and elegant curves. Baroque clothing emphasized formality as well as luxuriousness to show the dignity of the royal family and the noble class. Tired of such formality and oppression, people began to seek pleasure and amusement in the Rococo era. Such changed inclination to the pursuit for pleasure of the royal court and nobility made clothes more attractive and elegant.

At that time, leading the culture of the century, France exerted its strong influence over Europe and spread clothing culture as the global center for fashion, along with art.

Marie Antoinette, the queen of Louis XVI served as a fashion leader in the 18th century and at the same time her life-style full of extravagance and vanity eventually became one of the causes of the French Revolution. There have been a variety of studies on her like many others who had a strong influence in their times. The question whether she was an evil women having intended to collapse France with extravagance and dissipation, or a scapegoat in her times is still an issue among many historians. In addition, as shown in the term 'Marie Antoinette Myth', her life has been a favorite subject for many researchers. In this regard, it is possible to say that her clothing is a key means to describe her as well as invaluable topic in the course of analyzing her and her age. Nonetheless, few studies on the clothing of Marie Antoinette have been conducted so far in the area of clothing. Therefore, this study aims to analyze her clothing in everyday life from a historical perspective. Furthermore, this study is to examine social implications of her clothing, by analyzing the clothing of queen Marie Antoinette, which led a fashion trend in that era and was blamed for by the public at the same time. Also, we hope that this study on her clothing will provide bases for the studies on the background of the Rococo-era fashion trend, artistic development in the Rococo period, and others.

Range of this study is limited to the period from Marie Antoinette's marriage to the breakout of the French Revolution. As a method of research, we reviewed and analyzed the French history books, her portraits and biographies, and relating literature.

## Conclusion

This study analyzed the clothing of Marie Antoinette, who was a fashion icon of the age, on the basis of the Rococo artistic trend in the 18th century characterized as elegance and delicacy of curves along with brightness and luxury. Also, the study was conducted to find out social implications of clothing through the study on her clothing, which had profound influences on history of the 18th century clothing.

It is notable that Marie Antoinette appointed Rose Berdin as 'costume minister' and made her produce the queen's clothes. Excessive money had been paid for clothes through the 'costume minister', and fraud scandals happened such as the Madam Kauai's Fraud, which anyhow resulted in indirectly proving her extravagance and dissipation. From a historic point of view it is possible to mention that her extravagant and luxurious clothes reflect the spirit of the age of the Rococo in the 18th century, even though it could be a matter of her personality. She probably expressed herself in the context of social and cultural situations in the 18th century.

Marie Antoinette embodied her taste well everywhere if possible; she altered the palace as she liked and ordered to make chairs in her favorite colors and patterns. Also, she created the garden 'Petit Trianon' only for her, where she enjoyed the freedom as a woman not a queen, dressed in comfortable costume in court. When she wore this simplistic robe altered from England's jacket, now the public blamed the queen for not being careful.

Marie Antoinette quickly accepted a new style of clothing, as well. By wearing a white muslin dress in a portrait displayed at the exhibition in the Louvre Palace in 1783, she surprised the conservative society of the age. This smooth and simple clothing popular in England, which was comfortable without artificial curves, was introduced into France later. Nonetheless, it was rejected in the French court due to their formalism.

In this era when it is considered more important and at higher level of culture how to wear stylishly than devoted to study, the value of clothing depended on its aesthetic quality as well as utility to wear. As a result, patterns and ornaments in this era were more elegant, attractive and luxurious than ever. Given even the luxurious and beautiful clothes in the period of the Rococo changed grossly according to the social changes, it is clear that society has an impact on clothing to a larger degree.

## References

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