



## Audio Transcript

Rules of fashion dictate how women should dress to suit the time of day, season, social occasion, or activity. These two 1940s ensembles are featured in the Exhibition *Night and Day* at the Museum at FIT. While they may look similar, sharing black velvet jackets and bold color, they were worn for very different occasions.

This day ensemble was designed by Antonio Castillo in the mid 1940s for the Elizabeth Arden couture salon. The city was a setting in which trousers were inappropriate, but they would have been considered fashionable daywear for weekends in the country. A bold plaid replaces the traditional tweed usually reserved for country day suits and the velvet jacket adds an air of formality making it most appropriate for the afternoon. While the rich fabric and decorative trim allude to a man's smoking jacket, it retains the feminine hourglass silhouette fashionable at the time. Accessories with alpine flair would have completed the look. This ensemble belonged to the heiress and philanthropist, Doris Duke who led an active lifestyle and often wore trousers in relaxed social settings. It would have been a perfect outfit for a weekend at Roughpoint, her estate in Newport, Rhode Island.

From the same period, this 1947 semi-formal dinner ensemble by Charles James has the silhouette and skirt length of a day suit. But pairing luxurious silk taffeta and silk velvet clearly intended it for evening. The three-quarter length was more functional than a long gown, making it perfect for a night out on the town. Many after five settings such as cocktails, restaurant dinners or the theater did not require formal eveningwear. When indoors, the sculpted jacket with an elegant petal-like hem could be removed to reveal a sunburst-pleated bodice. Worn with gloves and a velvet cocktail hat, the ensemble was the ideal backdrop for sparkling jewels.