

## Historical research of Twentieth century fashion through designing a specialist website

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**ABSTRACT:** The role of fashion in history, is not just confined to the study of dress and costume, but encompasses design and innovation, taste and zeitgeist, treats as its subjects both people and objects, and crosses over into related disciplines such as the history of art, social and cultural conditions, political events and technology. Throughout the 20th century cross-cultural and historical influences exerted a profound impact upon fashion design.

This study explores the decades of the 20th century- every decade had its own personality, which was formed by both the people and the events that dominated it-through explaining how fashion has reflected the social, political, economic, and technological changes, discussing major changes in the fashion industry, describing fashion trends, and naming the major designers and illustrators of the past 100 years.

This study aims to design a specialist website of 20th century fashion, which including as much relevant information about the century fashion as possible and is documented with scientific references. It could be a trusted source for fashion designers, and anyone interested in fashion history.

In order to build a specialist website of 20th century fashion within the domain of usefulness and reliability, many aspects taking into account, such as: information quantity and quality, information sources, evidences, facts, explanation, variety in issues, ease in use the website and adding the author contact.

**KEYWORDS:** history of fashion; 20<sup>th</sup> century fashion decades; 20<sup>th</sup> century fashion designers website for fashion; haute couture.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Fashion is fast and forward, challenging and changing, and constantly in motion. It thrives on change, and change is the engine that fuels it [1]. Fashion is the outward and visible sign of a civilization, it is part of social history. The civilization and the social history of the twentieth century have swept right out of the context of previous times. The new look that science, industrial development, technology and social and economic changes have given to nearly every aspect of daily life rubbed off on fashion which, as one the arts mineurs, has always held up its own mirror to life. [2]

20th century fashion began in one particular city-Paris- [3] the place where all the refinements of civilized life reach their fullest expression, from avant-garde art to elegant fashion [4]. During the Second World War, when Paris was isolated by German occupation, Britain and America found that necessity proved to be the mother of invention and they developed their own fashion styles. Post-war prosperity created a youth culture that spawned what is now called street-level or 'underground' fashion. [3]

At the beginning of the 20th century the few big names in fashion, who called themselves "couturiers," considered themselves the keepers of the Holy Grail of haute couture. [5] French haute couture founder is Charles Frederick Worth, an Englishman, though its city of destiny always is Paris [6]. Worth was the first person to understand how to make himself a star. He devised a small cloth label that was embroidered with his jaunty signature, and sewed it into every one of his designs. The brand was born. Worth also launched a new collection once a year, thus introducing the concept of change in fashion as a means of driving sales- a ground breaking innovation that designers still benefit from to this day. [5]

Since then, the great masters of fashion have become legends in themselves and their numbers, because of their influences on fashion is reflective of societal, political, or economic change. For example: Coco Chanel's 1920s Knits, Christian Dior's 1947 New Look, and Yves Saint Laurent's 1960s pantsuit reflect the ever-changing image of women and their role in society. And they had artistic merit include colorful birds of paradise such as Paul Poiret and John Galliano, shy recluses like Cristobal Balenciaga and Martin Margiela, highly sensitive, artistic characters such as Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent as well as capable pragmatists such as Coco Chanel and Giorgio Armani [5], [7] . At the end of the 20th century fashion became increasingly spectacular. Catwalk shows by designers like Alexander McQueen and Versace were theatrical displays, commanding international press attention and a host of celebrity guests. [8]

Several threads run through 20<sup>th</sup> century fashion. Haute couture clothing is exclusive, made-to-measure clothing fitted to the individual's exact proportions. Prêt- a-porter, in contrast, is ready-to-wear. The designer's creations are mass-produced in a range of standardized sizes. Feeding off the trends set by expensive, designer fashion is a host of businesses: dressmakers and mail order catalogues, department stores and high street multiple retailers who now sell cheaper, ready-to-wear fashion. [3]

At the turn of the 20th century it was fashionable for women to wear long skirts, corsets and yards of fabric if they could afford it. For most women, the First World War drove all preoccupation with fashion from the mind and forced them into working clothes and uniforms- and of course mourning garments. The 1920s and 1930s saw hemlines rise and a set of couture fashion houses emerged which designed clothes that reflected the growing desire for clothes that helped people to enjoy themselves. Rationing during the Second World War and economic downturns had a radical effect on fashion during the 20th century. Many fashion houses closed during the war as most women could not afford to buy clothes that weren't necessities and many materials became unavailable. As the war continued, women devised a new mix-and-match formula to stretch their wardrobes. Suits gave way to contrasting shirts and skirts. British Vogue patriotically focused on DIY fashion and 'Make Do and Mend'. [3], [5], [9]

After the end of the war, innovations in textiles technology resulted in the manufacture of new synthetic fibres (such as nylon, polyester and acrylic) which created a consumer market for affordable, easy care clothing. By the end of 1950s, a new emphasis people had emerged. Rock and roll, a new music style, featured youthful performers and helped fuel the focus on youth. Fashion traditions were broken in 1960s; a new category of women's fashions- termed 'Junior'- were designed to suit the leaner and less curvaceous youthful figure. The 1970s were characterized by gypsy dresses, and both sexes wore bell-bottom pants, while the later years of the decade gave rise to the anti-fashion, anarchistic punk look. Eighties fashions reflected the economic boom and were typified by power dressing. The working woman's image of aggressive femininity was expressed in her clothes, gaudy colors and conspicuous consumption while, in contrast, 1990s style became minimalist. The effects of the expansion of mass production and mass merchandizing of the 1980s led to the homogenization of the 1990s. Many other styles from the '90s also continued on into the '00s, but just became more refined. The overall styles of the 2000s are best described as polished versions of earlier fashions, honing in on the basics to create new styles that were inspired by the past. At the end of the 20th century, fashion had entered an age of pluralism. There was no single trend, but something for everybody if anything, designers were inspired by fabric innovations and new ways of construction. As attitudes towards women changed during the century, so did their clothing; the cycle of change was endless. Certain looks and silhouettes recur throughout the period. Meanwhile, present day styles are evidence that fashion is cyclical with the rise in popularity of real vintage and vintage-inspired clothes. [3], [7], [9], [10], [11].

Fashions and styles have changed dramatically over the decades in the 20th century. Throughout the century the role of the women in society, youth culture, music and film, the two major war and the industrial developments exerted a profound impact upon fashion design. 20th century fashion is a rich inspiration source for designers. Designer clothing and accessories were once again at the forefront of fashion. Fashions revive and renew over the decades. It is interesting to see how ideas from the past are often reinterpreted for today's fashion.

This study examines how and why fashion evolves and changes and the factors that effect it, focusing on the development of fashion design and how it has grown into a major force for the future and how key designers and illustrators relate to fashion throughout the decades. This study is addressed to fashion designers and anyone interested in fashion history through a specialist and documented website, so that, they can on the cutting edge of what is happening in the 20th century known as fashion.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, information is collected from trustworthy sources, taking into account gathering of as much relevant information about the 20th century fashion as possible, the rigorous collection and organization of evidence, and the

verification of the authenticity and veracity of information and its sources. This information based on facts and doesn't reflect bias.

Information is sorted and divided into the main titles of the study, 20th century fashion (Influences, Decades, Trends, Designers, Illustrators, Haute couture and Gallery). Each title includes subtitles, as follows: The first title "Influences" includes political, social and culture conditions, fashion trends and development and arts and other influences. This title examines the factors that affected the fashion during the 20th century. The second title "Decades" includes the decades of the 20th century (The Belle Époque 1900-1914, Suited and Booted 1914-1919, Boom and Bust 1920-1929, The Glamour years 1930-1938, Make, Do and Mend 1939-1946, New World-New Look, Minis and Mods 1957-1966, The Daisy Age 1967-1978, Dress to Empress and Back to Basic 1988-2000). This title looks at the prevailing fashion trends through the way in which they impact social history and explores the main features of each decade which supported by images. The third title "Trends". This title highlights the trends of the 20th century divided per four years. The fourth title "Designers" includes the key designers relate to fashion during the 20th century (Paul Poiret, Mariano Fortuny, Madeleine Vionnet, Coco Chanel, Elsa Schiaparelli, Gilbert Adrian, Christian Dior, Cristobal Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent, André Courrèges, Vivienne Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier, Gianni Versace, Christian Lacroix, Valentino, John Galliano, Giorgio Armani, Donna Karan, Alexander McQueen and Dolce& Gabbana). This title underpins designers' ideas, informs the shapes and proportions they use, influences the materials they choose to work with and determines the techniques they employ to put them together. The fifth title "Illustrators" includes masters of fashion illustration during the 20th century. This title describes their career and major works. The sixes title "Haute Couture", which explores the history of the haute couture during the 20th century, its techniques and atelier. The last title "Gallery" includes images of the clothes which reflects the main features of each decades of the 20th century.

After that, the website creation was initiated, starting with choosing a domain name (www.20centuryfashion.com), registering it, and then purchasing web hosting for the website. Identifying the website target audience and finalizing the graphical user interface (GUI) has been performed prior to figuring out what it is that the potential customers search for, which is knowing as the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) task. The next step was to create the website structure, designing wireframes, defining and implementing the styling guidelines, using the Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). The website core modules has been built using the most recent version of WordPress Content Management System (CMS), in addition to other Web technologies, such as: HTML 5, Javascript, PHP, and MySQL Database. After finalize building the website core structure the next step was to transfer the study information into website pages where the main titles of the study are the main sections of the website. The final task was to test all the website modules, including all the developed pages and the website core functions; followed up with any needed debugging and/or fixing to ensure the full functionality of the website and the friendly use by the website target audience.

### 3 RESULTS

Pages backgrounds of the website were designed by using Adobe Photoshop CS6. The homepage includes the name of the website, links, and two outfits, one of them belongs to 1900s and the other belongs to 1990s. The design of the homepage reflects the dramatical changes that occurred during the century. Each page contains a menu bar at the top of the screen, which contains all the website links, such as Home, About, Influences, Designers, Trends, Decades, Illustrators, Haute Couture, Gallery, and References. Each link name can be seen in a large scale which lies vertically on the right side of its respective page. The pages design provides the best task flow for the user. Pages backgrounds were added to the website and Information of the study were transferred to the website. The following figures show the pages of the website provided with their respective explanation.



Fig. 1. Website homepage

Fig. 1 shows Website homepage: By clicking on a certain link, the user is redirected to its related page

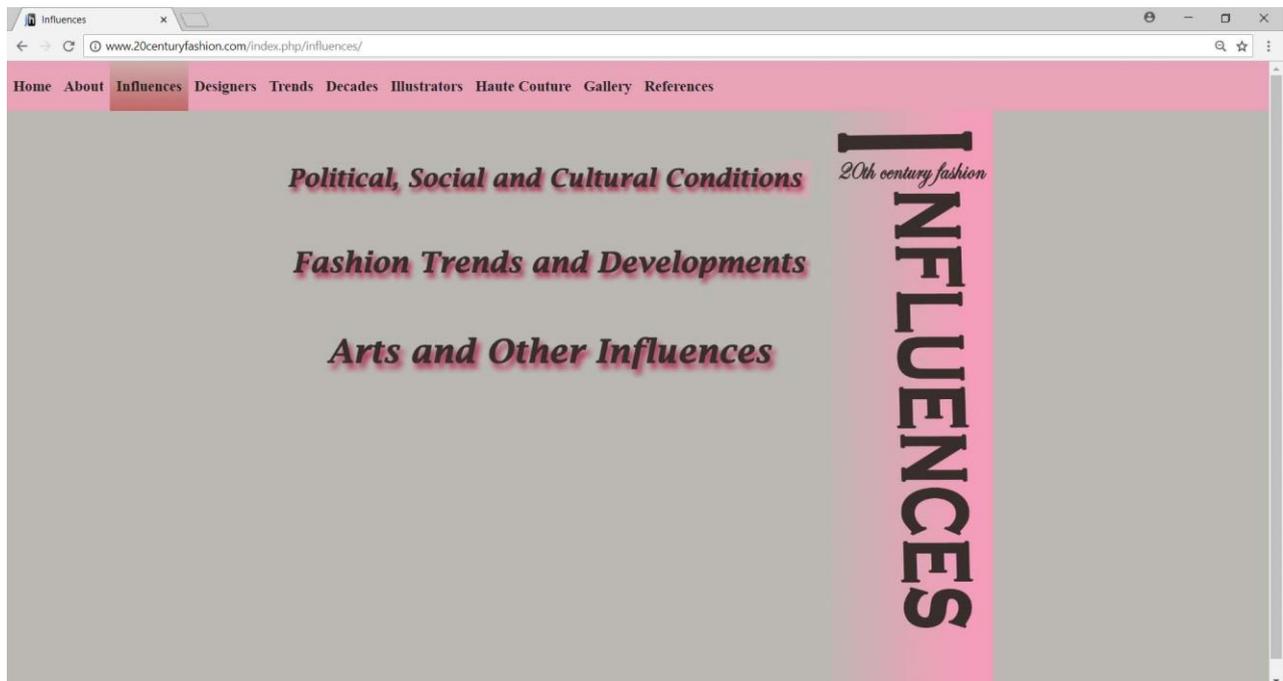


Fig. 2. "Influences" page

Fig. 2 shows "Influences" page: the page contains three links, by clicking on a certain link, the user is redirected to its related page.

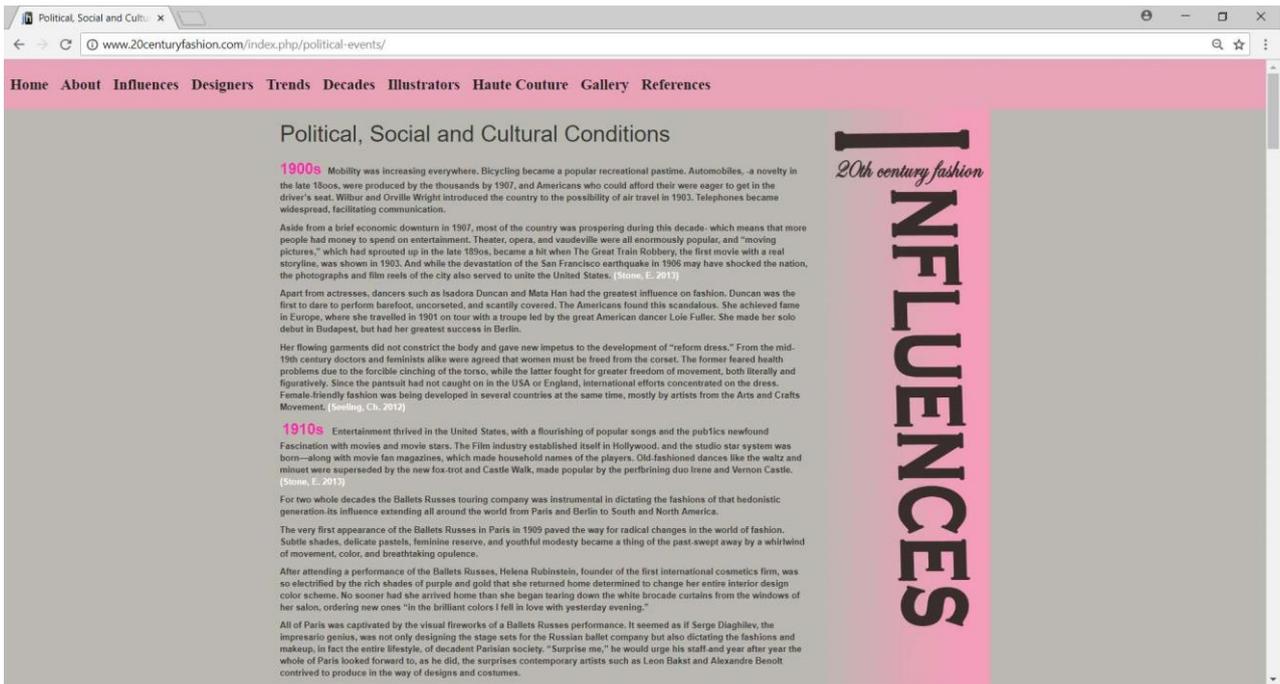


Fig. 3. "Political, Social and Cultural Conditions" first subpage

Fig. 3 shows "Political, Social and Cultural Conditions" first subpage: Information was divided into decades that began in 1900s and ended in 1990s.



Fig. 4. "Political, Social and Cultural Conditions" first subpage

Fig. 4 shows "Political, Social and Cultural Conditions" first subpage: Information was documented with references. When the cursor is hovered over the reference, a box pops up showing the full reference. This action is applied to all pages that contain references.

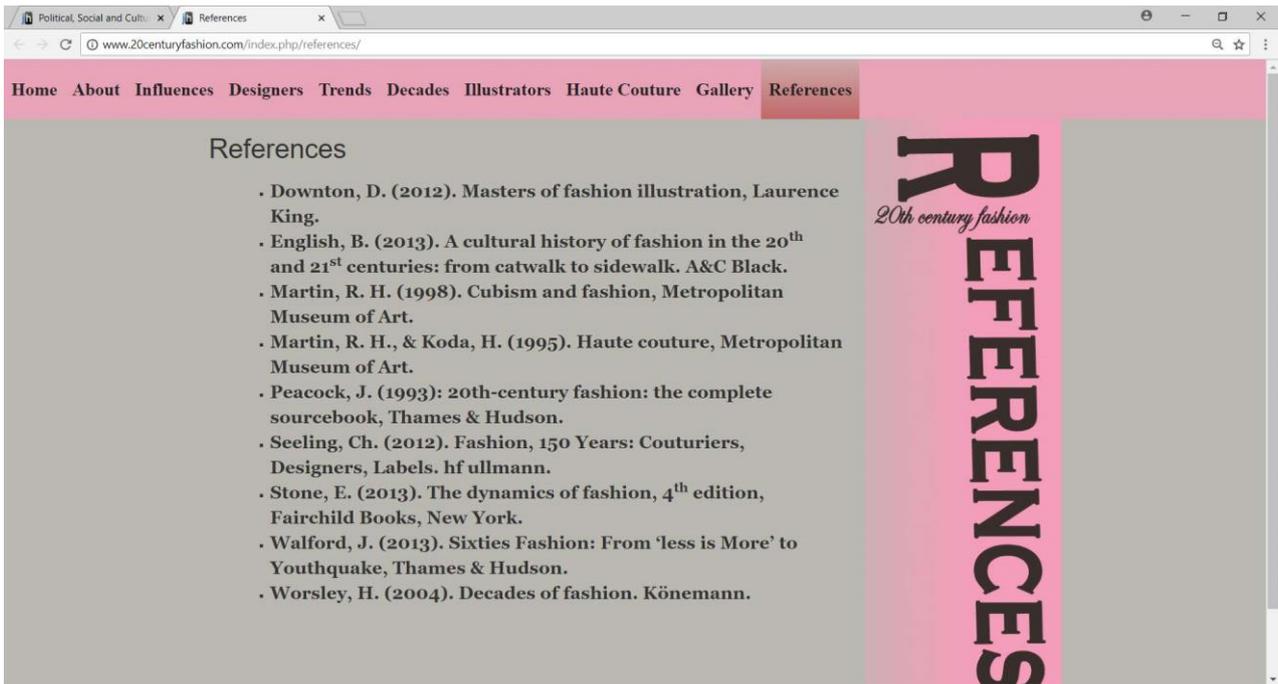


Fig. 5. "References" page

Fig. 5 shows "References" page: by clicking on the reference, the user is redirected to "references" page.

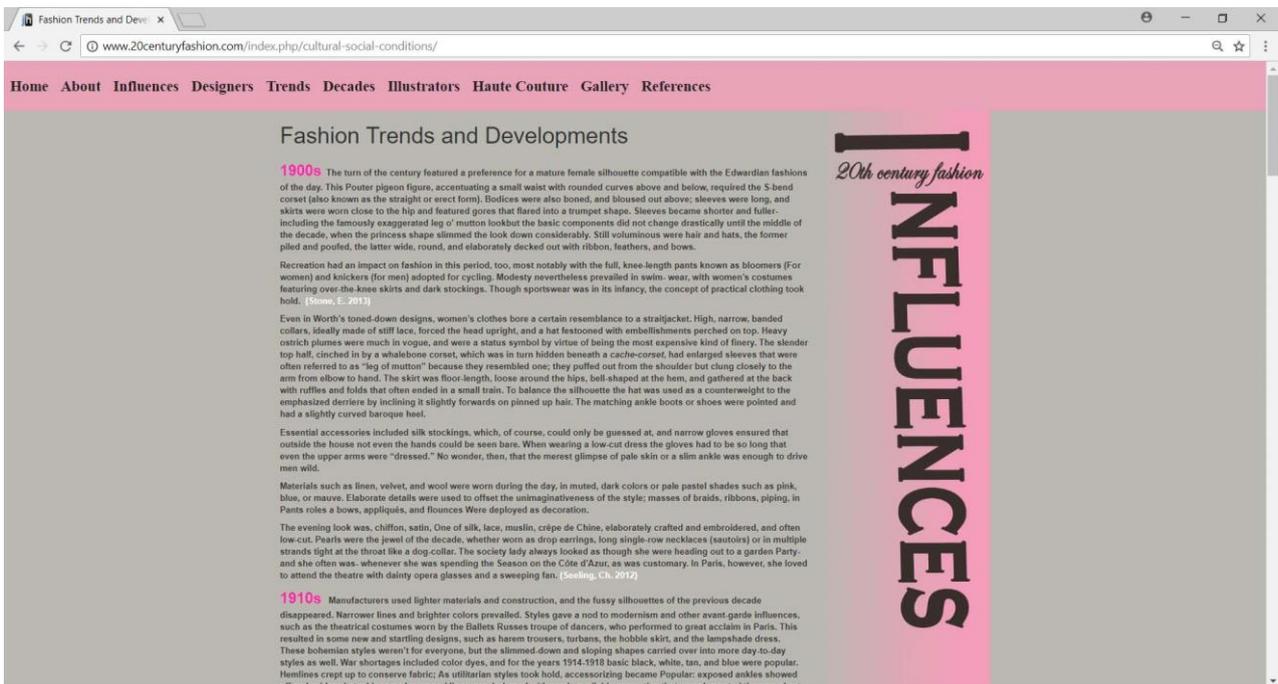
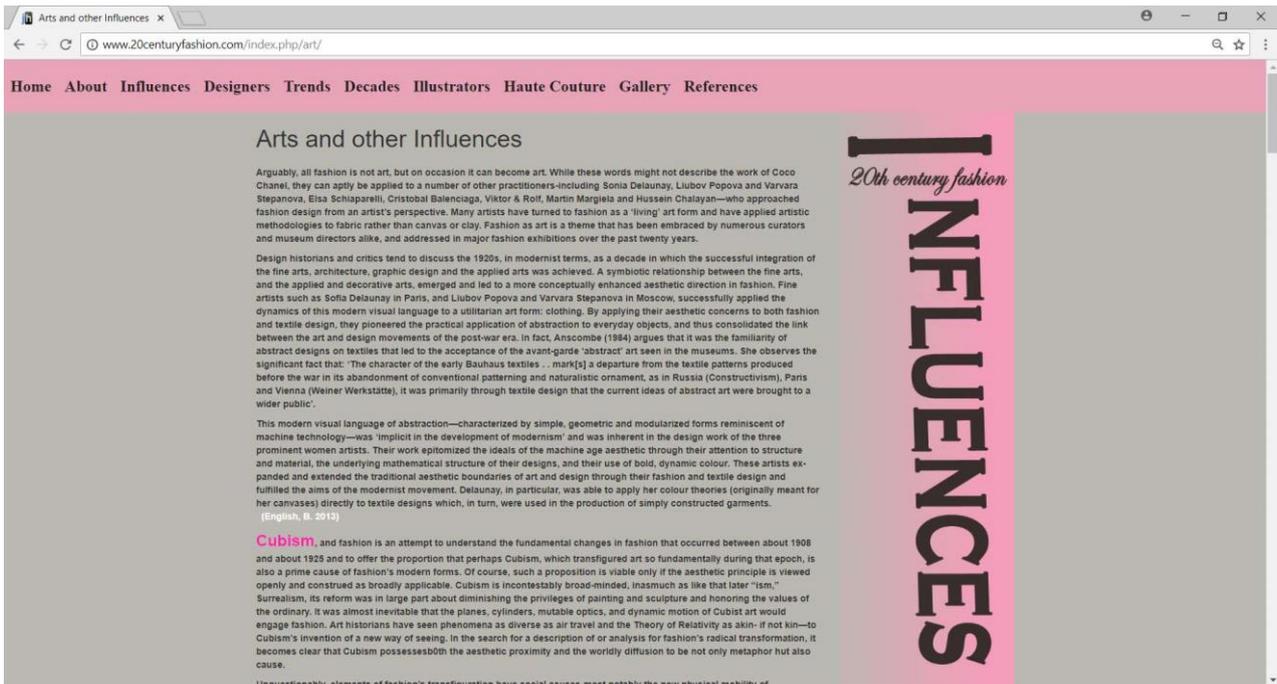


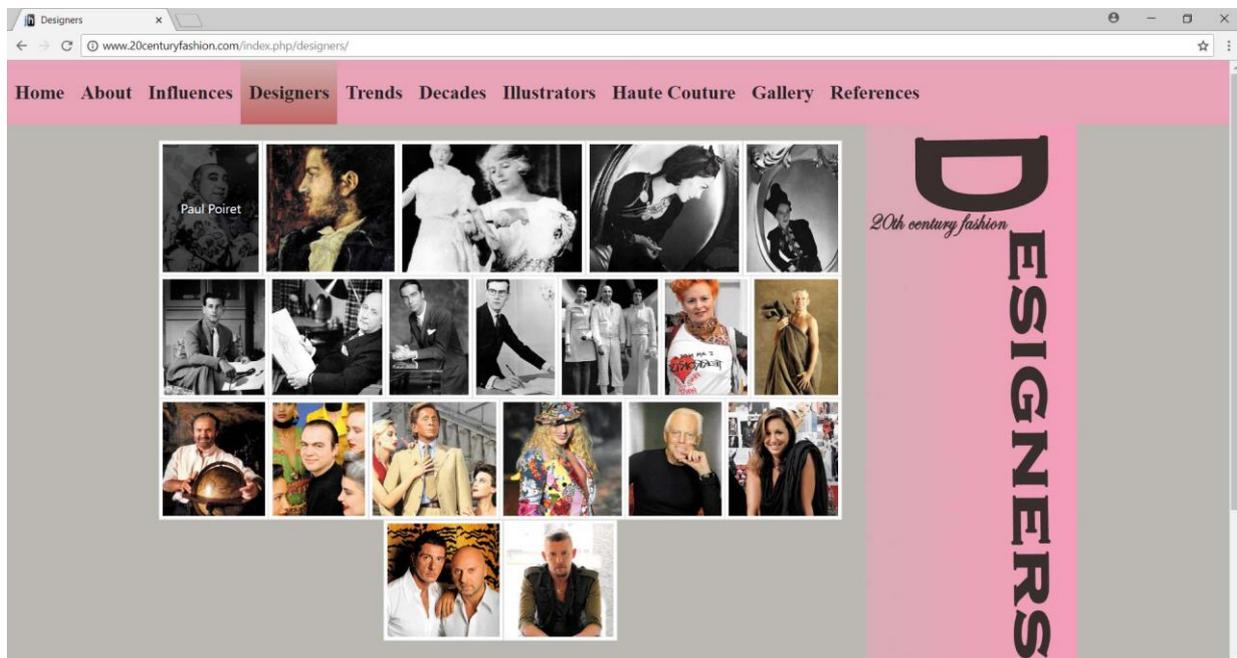
Fig. 6. "Fashion Trends and Developments" second subpage

Fig. 6 shows "Fashion Trends and Developments" second subpage: Information was divided into decades that began in 1900s and ended in 1990s.



**Fig. 7. “Arts and other Influences” third subpage: Information describes the arts that affected fashion during 20th century, focusing on cubism and surrealism.**

Fig. 7 shows “Arts and other Influences” third subpage: Information describes the arts that affected fashion during 20th century, focusing on cubism and surrealism.



**Fig. 8. “Designers” page**

Fig. 8 shows “Designers” page: The page contains the images of the designers relate to fashion during the 20th century. When the cursor is hovered over the designer’s image, his name appears.

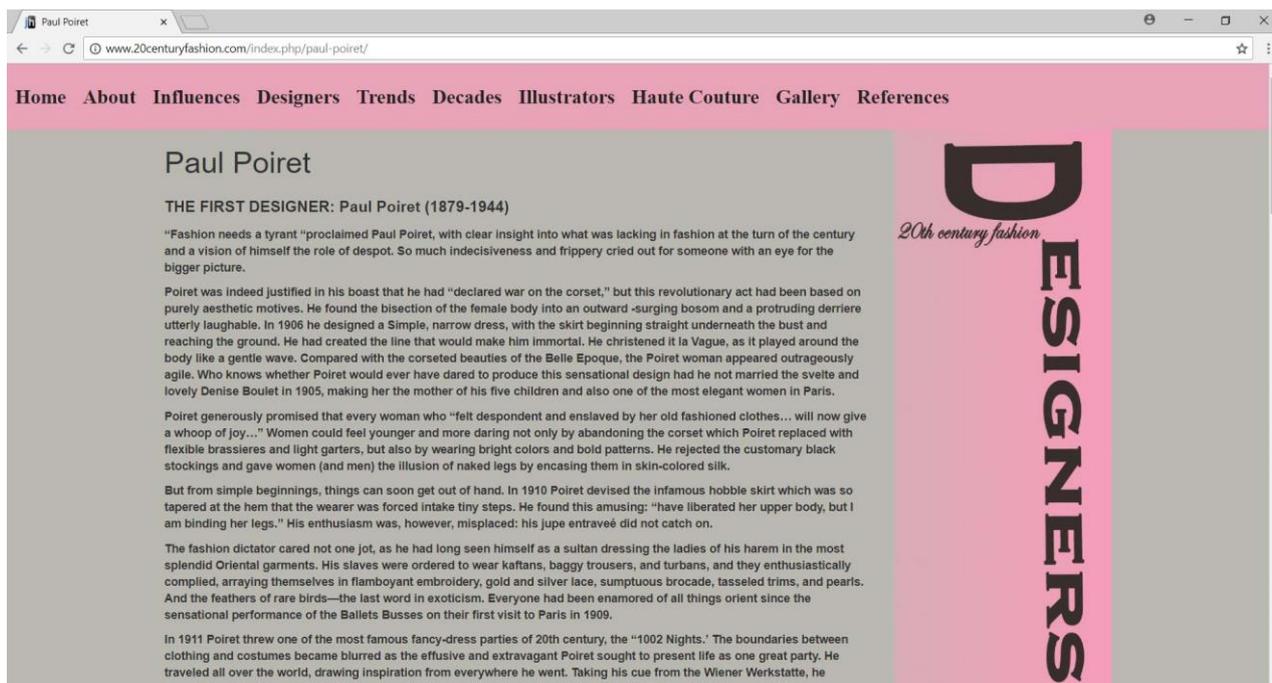


Fig. 9. "Paul Poiret" first subpage

Fig. 9 shows "Paul Poiret" first subpage: By clicking on the designer's image, the user is redirected to its related page.

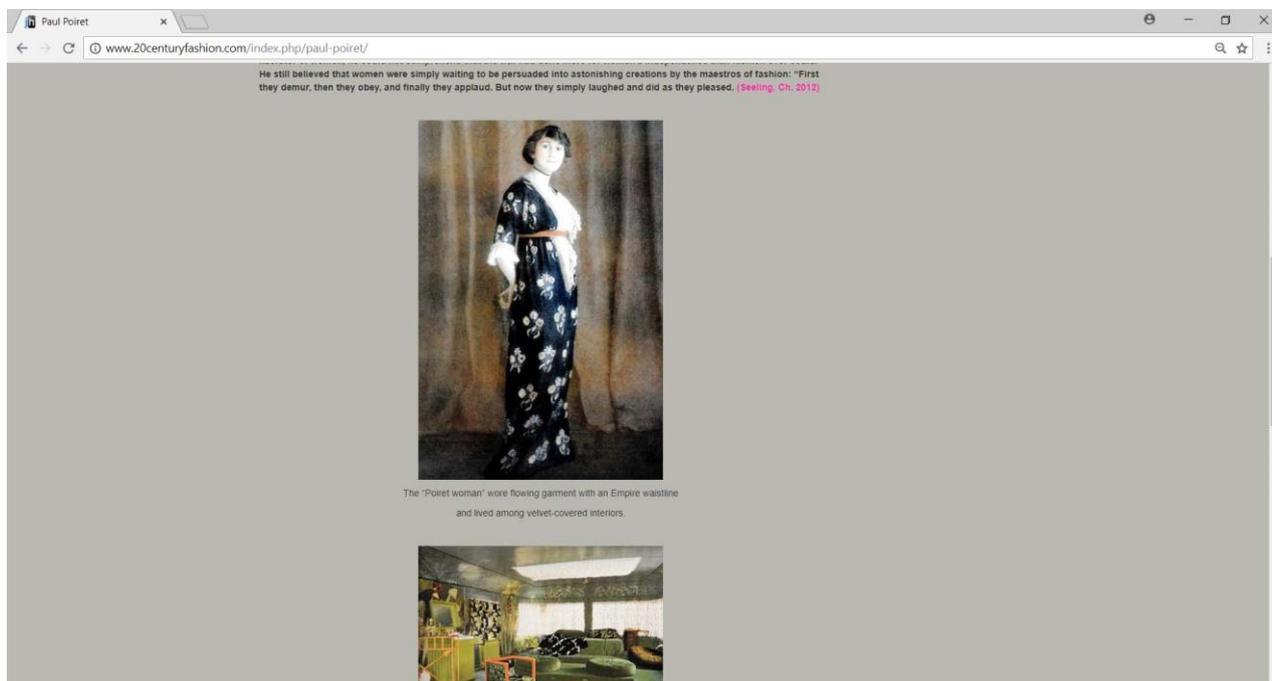


Fig. 10. "Paul Poiret" first subpage

Fig. 10 shows "Paul Poiret" first subpage: The information of the designer is supported by images of his major works.

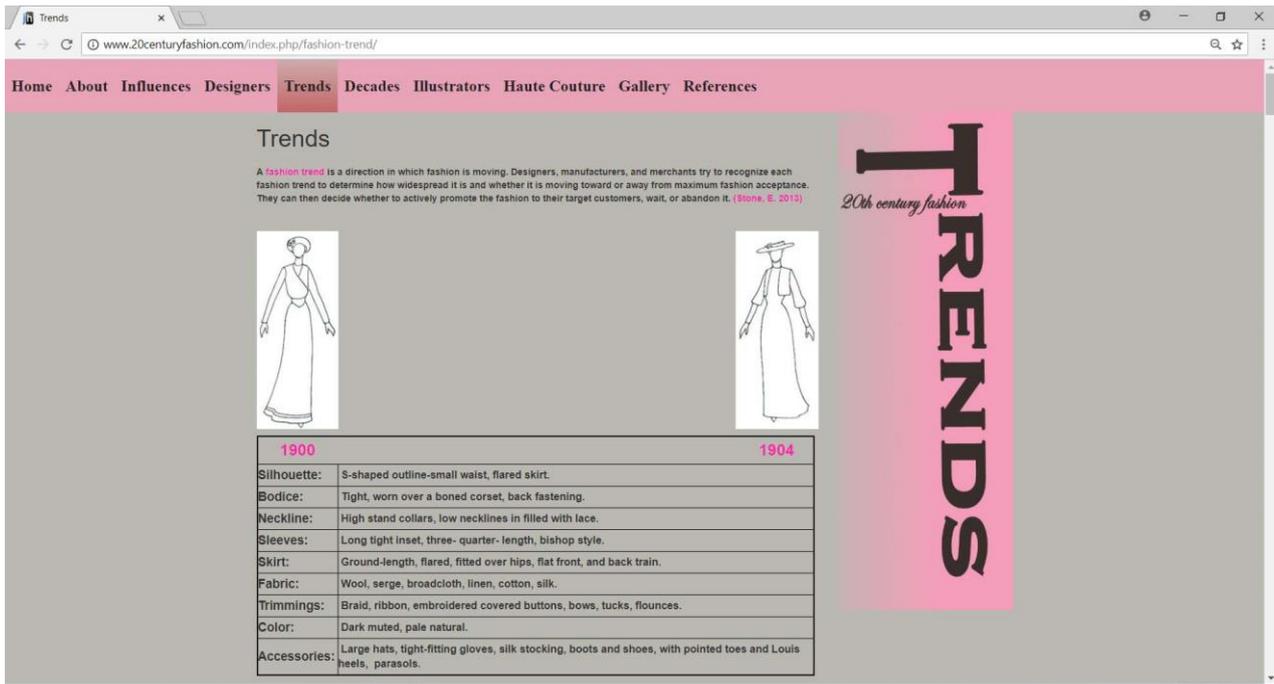


Fig. 11. "Trends" page

Fig. 11 shows "Trends" page: This page contains the meaning of the word 'fashion trend' and highlights the trends of 20th century fashion which divided into periods (per 4 years). Each period is placed in a table and includes two outfits, one belongs to the beginning of the period and the other belongs to its end.

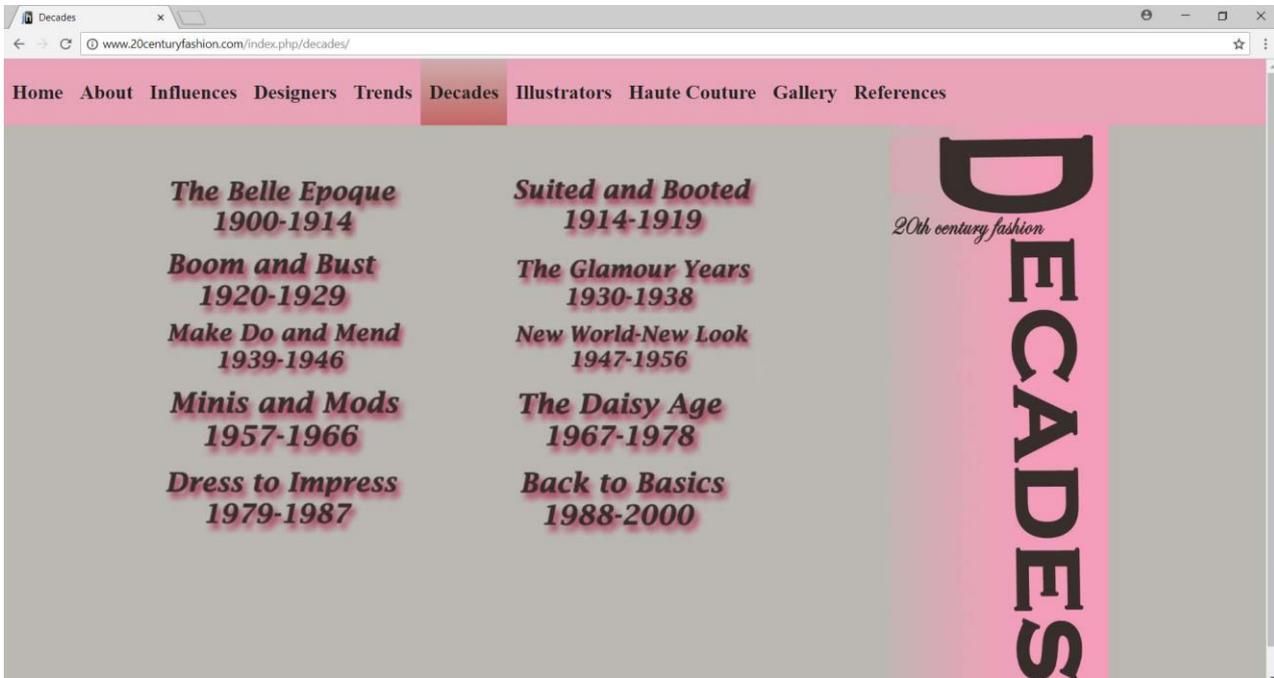


Fig. 12. "Decades" page

Fig. 12 shows "Decades" page: the page contains ten links refers to the decades of the 20th century fashion, by clicking on a certain link, the user is redirected to its related page.

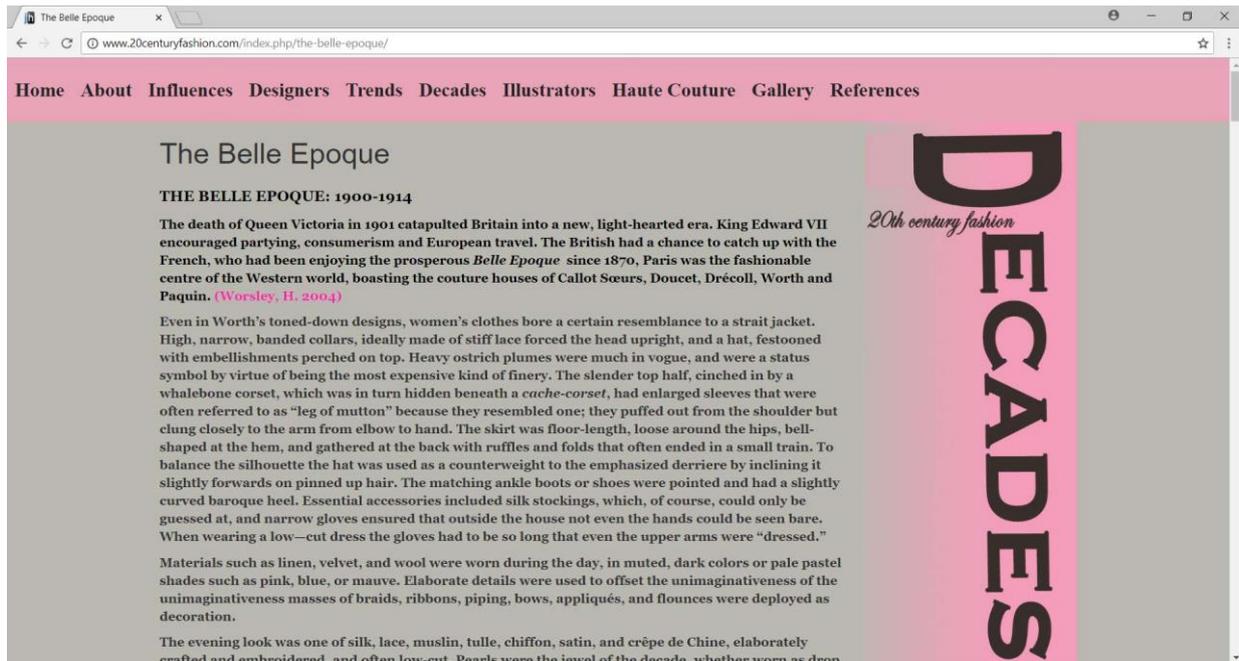


Fig. 13. "The Belle Époque 1900-1914" first subpage

Fig. 13 shows "The Belle Époque 1900-1914" first subpage: This subpage explores the main features of the decade.

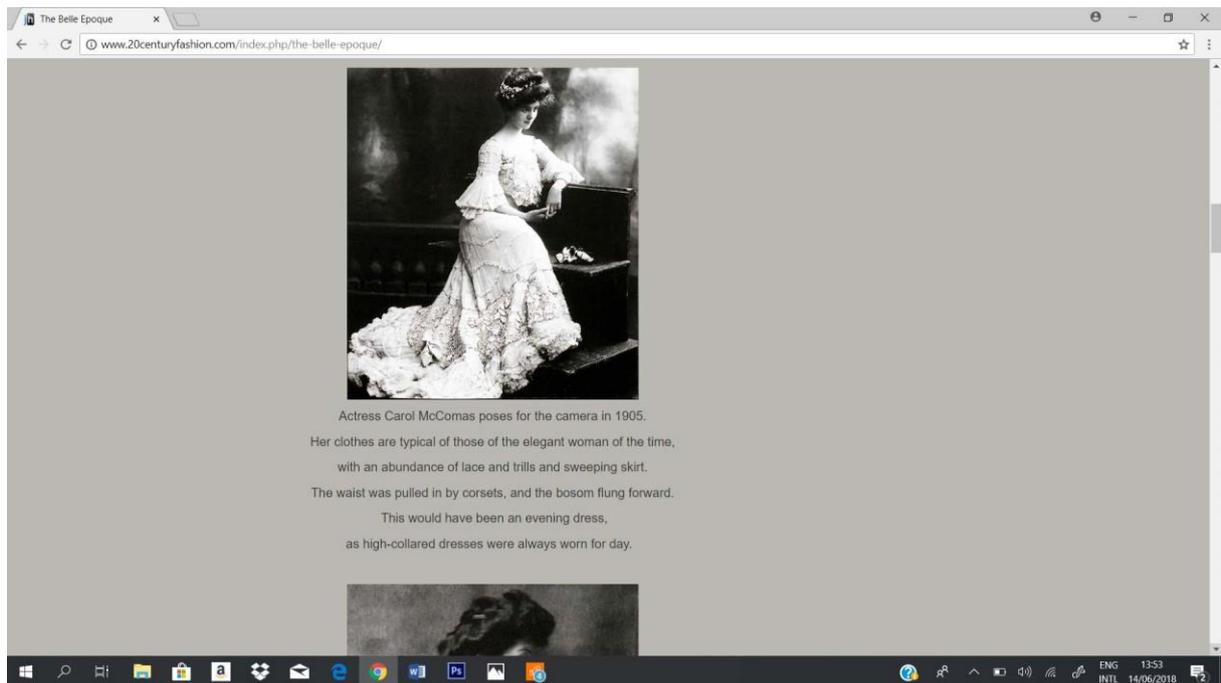


Fig. 14. "The Belle Époque 1900-1914" first subpage

Fig. 14 shows "The Belle Époque 1900-1914" first subpage: Images of outfits that reflect the features of the decade.

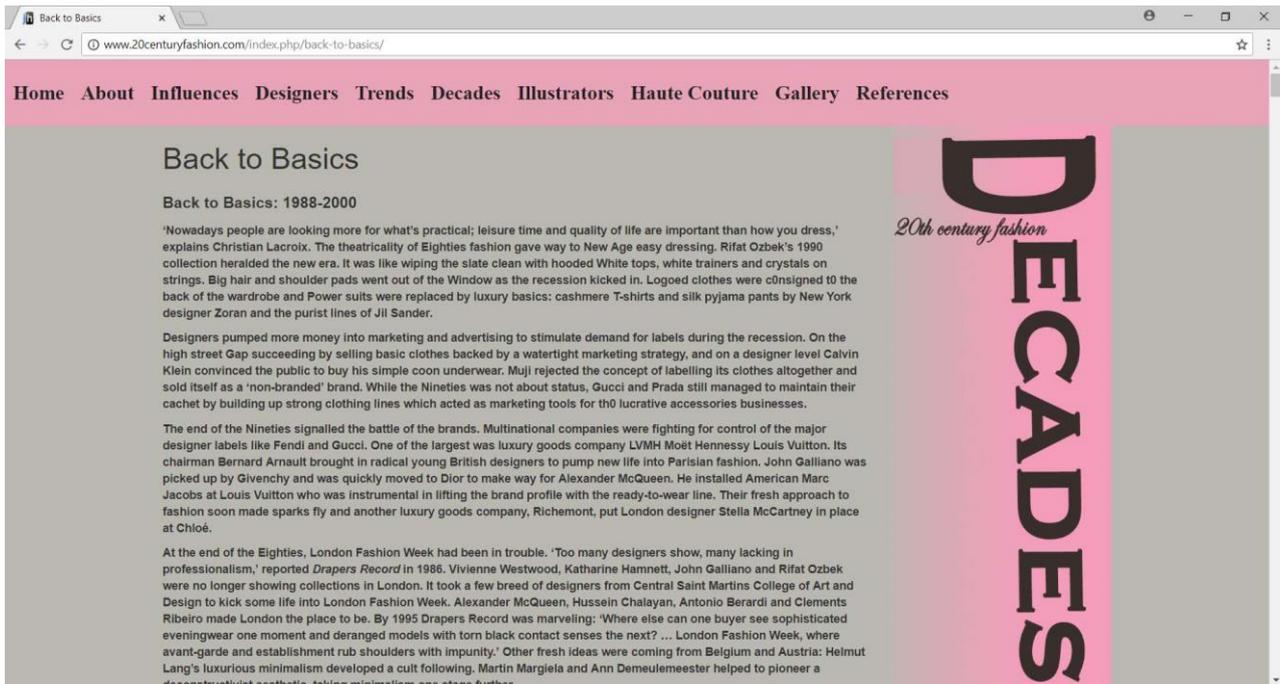


Fig. 15. "Back to Basics" last subpage

Fig. 15 shows "Back to Basics" last subpage: This subpage explores the main features of the decade.

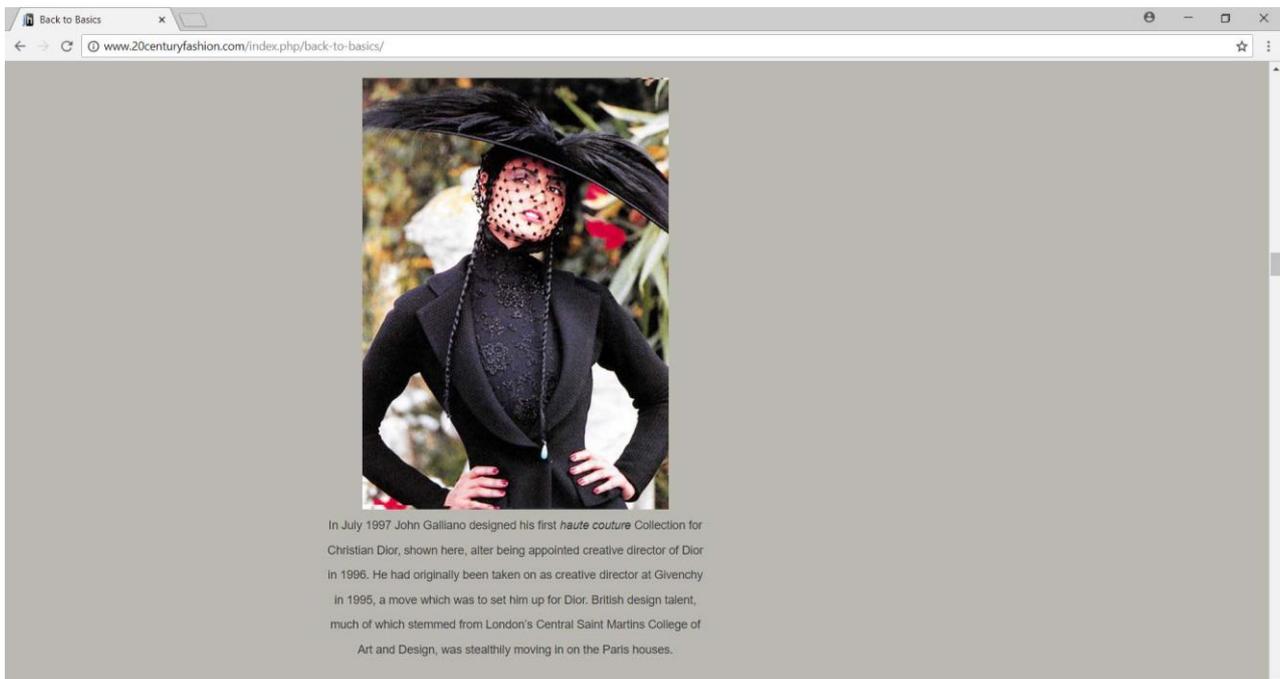


Fig. 16. "Back to Basics" last subpage

Fig. 16 shows "Back to Basics" last subpage: Images of outfits that reflect the features of the decade.

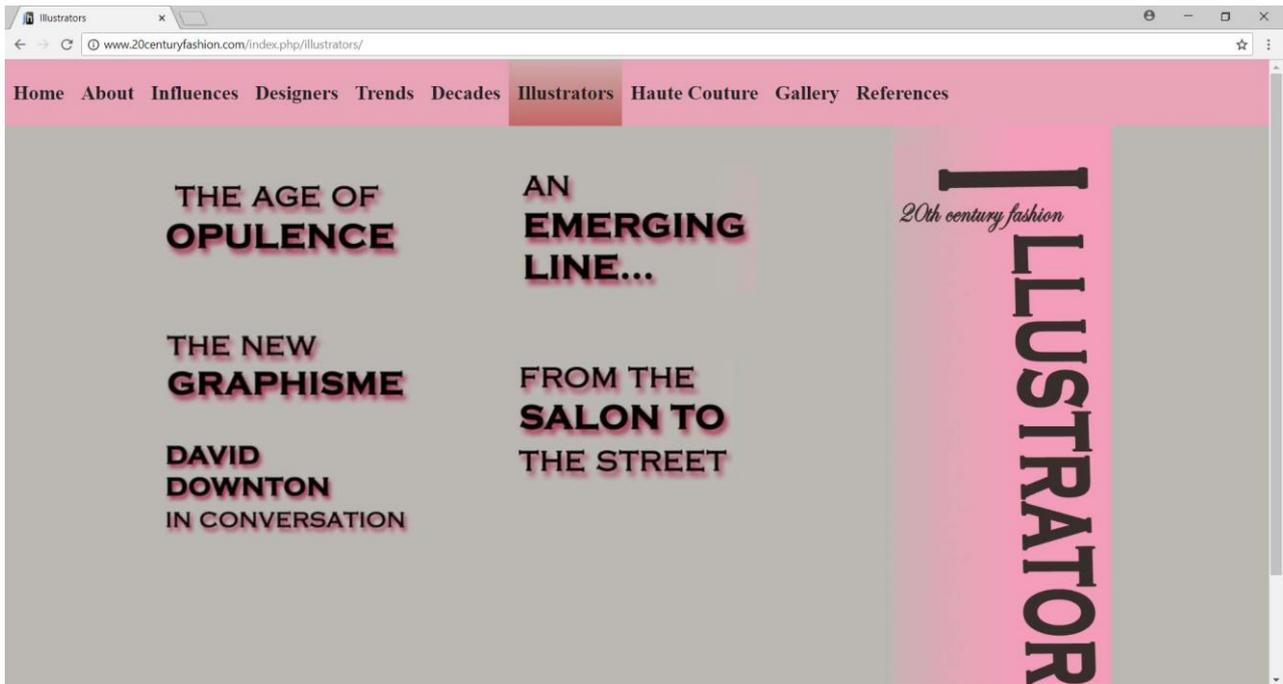


Fig. 17. "Illustrators" page

Fig. 17 shows "Illustrators" page: this page contains five links refers to the categories of the 20th century fashion illustrators, by clicking on a certain link, the user is redirected to its related page.

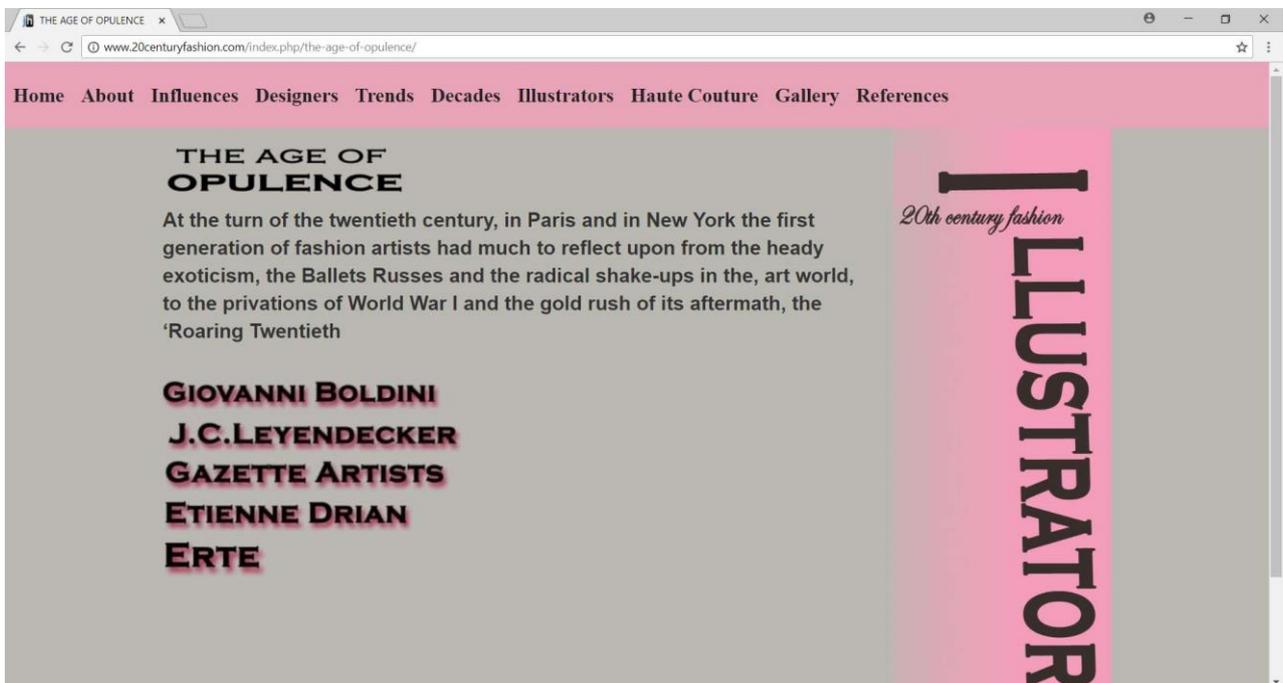


Fig. 18. "THE AGE OF OPULENCE" first subpage

Fig. 18 shows "THE AGE OF OPULENCE" first subpage: The page contains an introduction of this category and five links for the main Illustrators names of it.

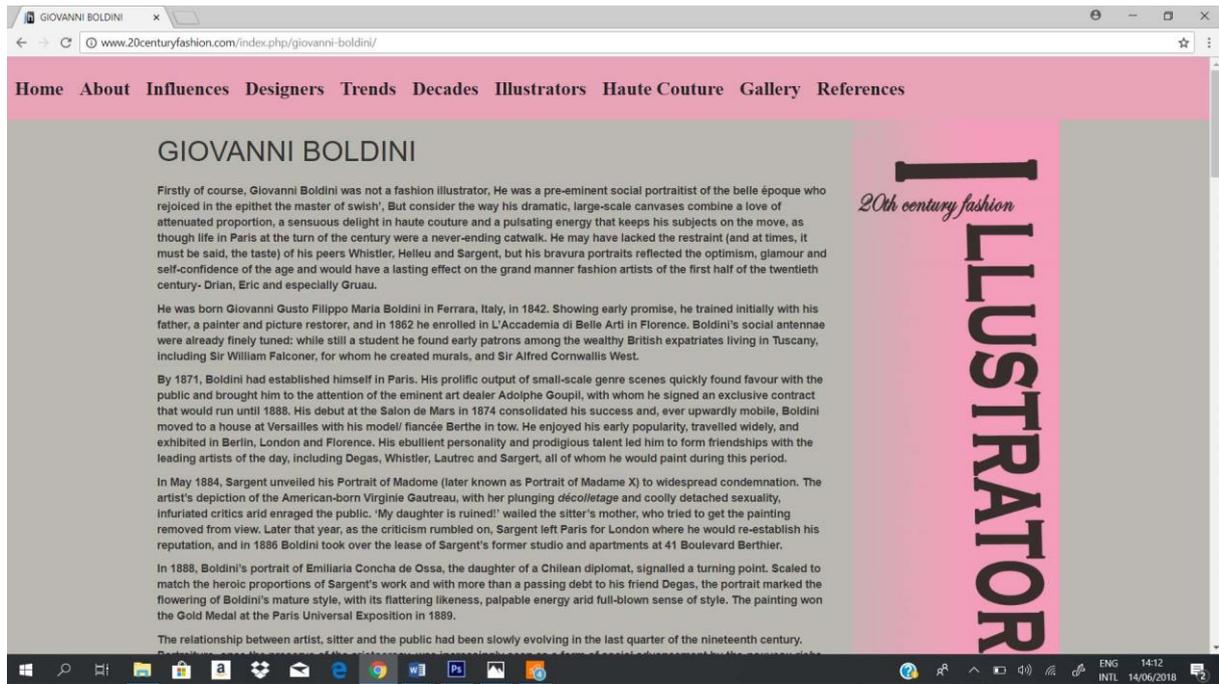


Fig. 19. "GIOVANNI BOLDINI" first sub-subpage

Fig. 19 shows "GIOVANNI BOLDINI" first sub-subpage: Describes the fashion illustrator's career and his major works.

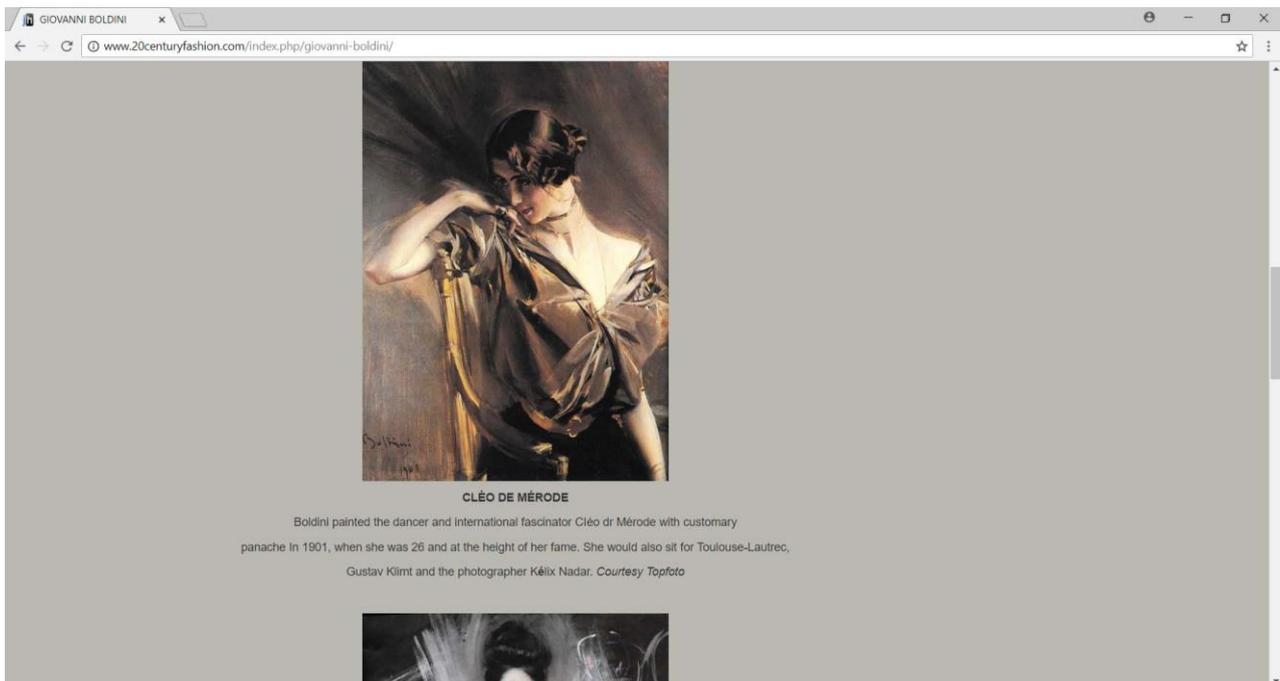


Fig. 20. "GIOVANNI BOLDINI" first sub-subpage

Fig. 20 shows "GIOVANNI BOLDINI" first sub-subpage: Images reflects the fashion illustrator's major works.

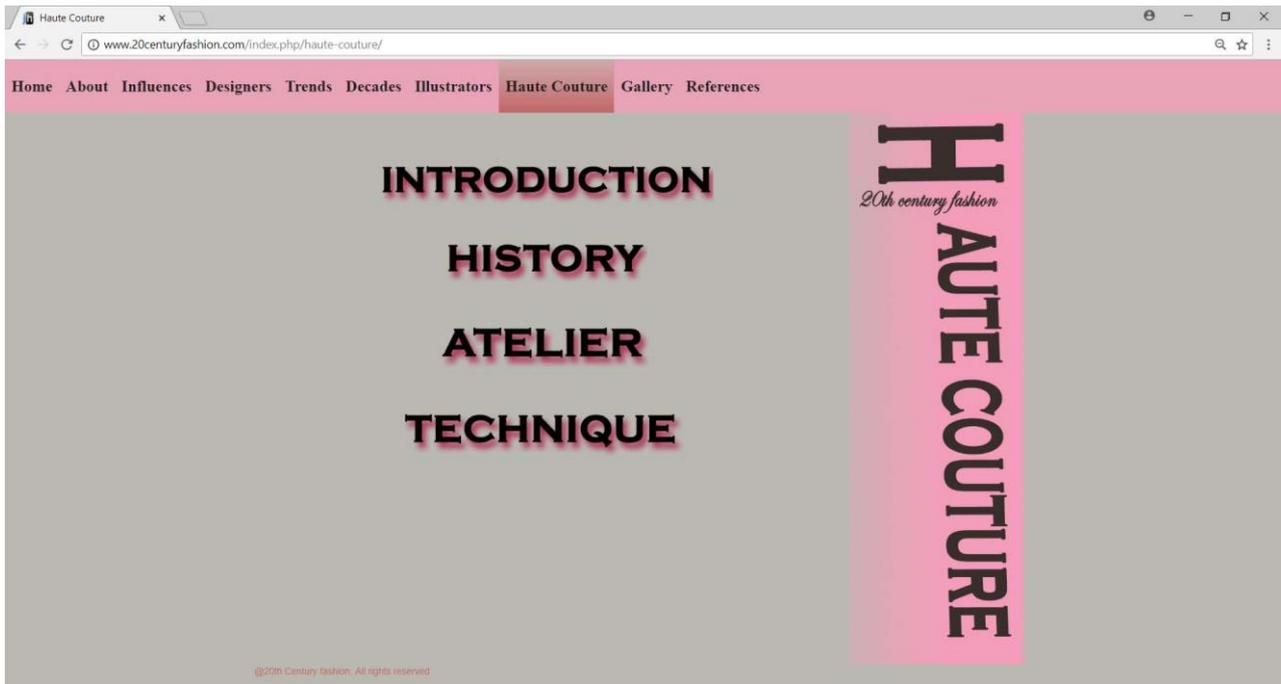


Fig. 21. "Haute Couture" page

Fig. 21 shows "Haute Couture" page: this page contains four links includes introduction, history, atelier and technique of haute couture during the 20th century, by clicking on a certain link, the user is redirected to its related page.

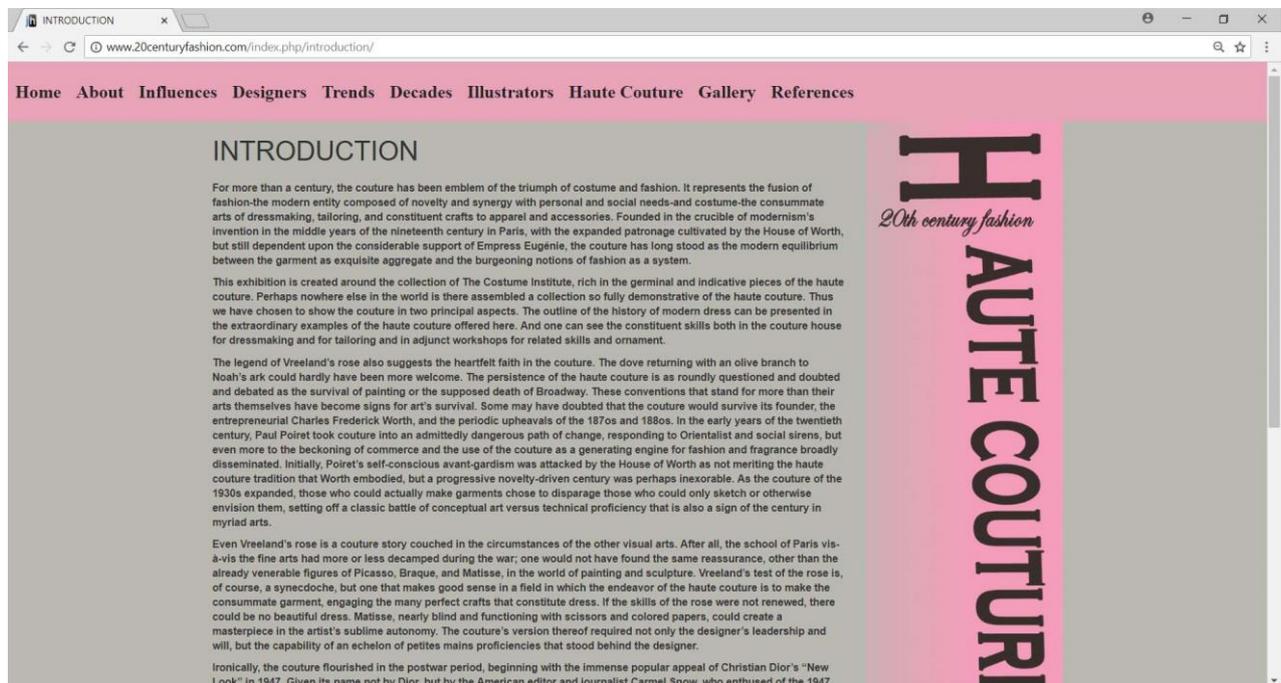


Fig. 22. "Introduction" first subpage

Fig. 22 shows "Introduction" first subpage: This subpage presents the meaning of haute couture and its beginning.



Fig. 23. "History" second subpage

Fig. 23 shows "History" second subpage: This subpage explores the history of haute couture during the 20th century.

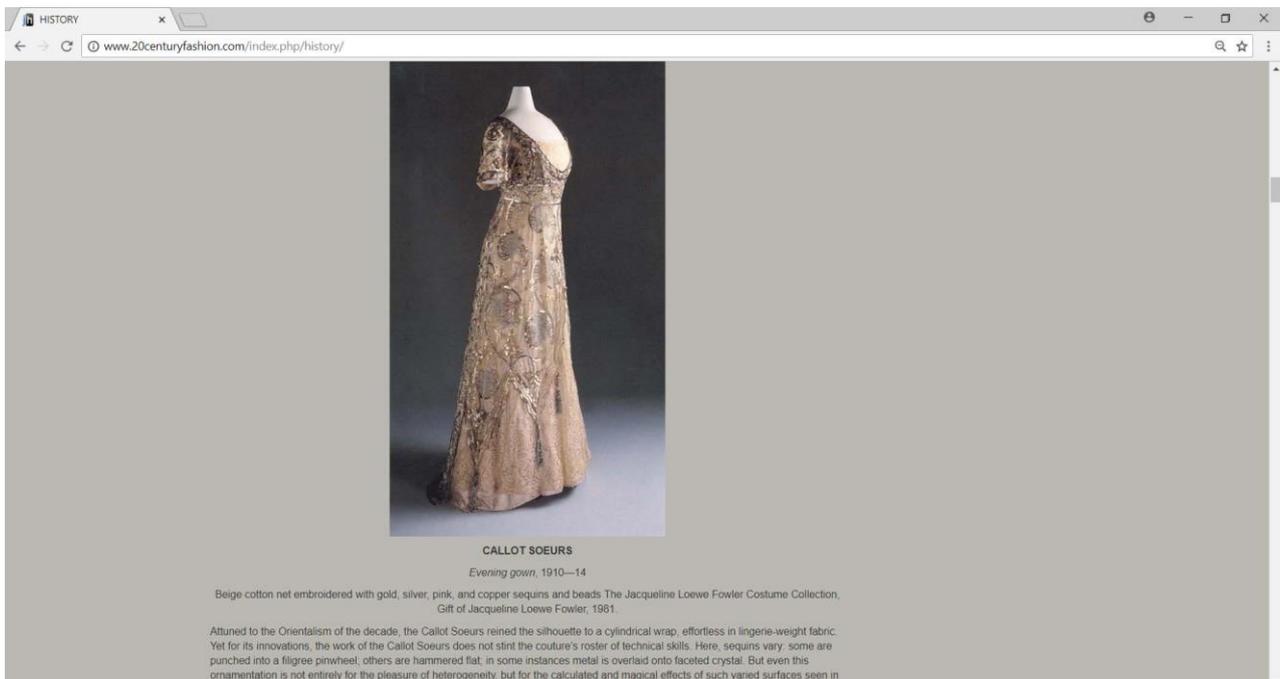


Fig. 24. "History" second subpage

Fig. 24 shows "History" second subpage: Images were placed to support the information.

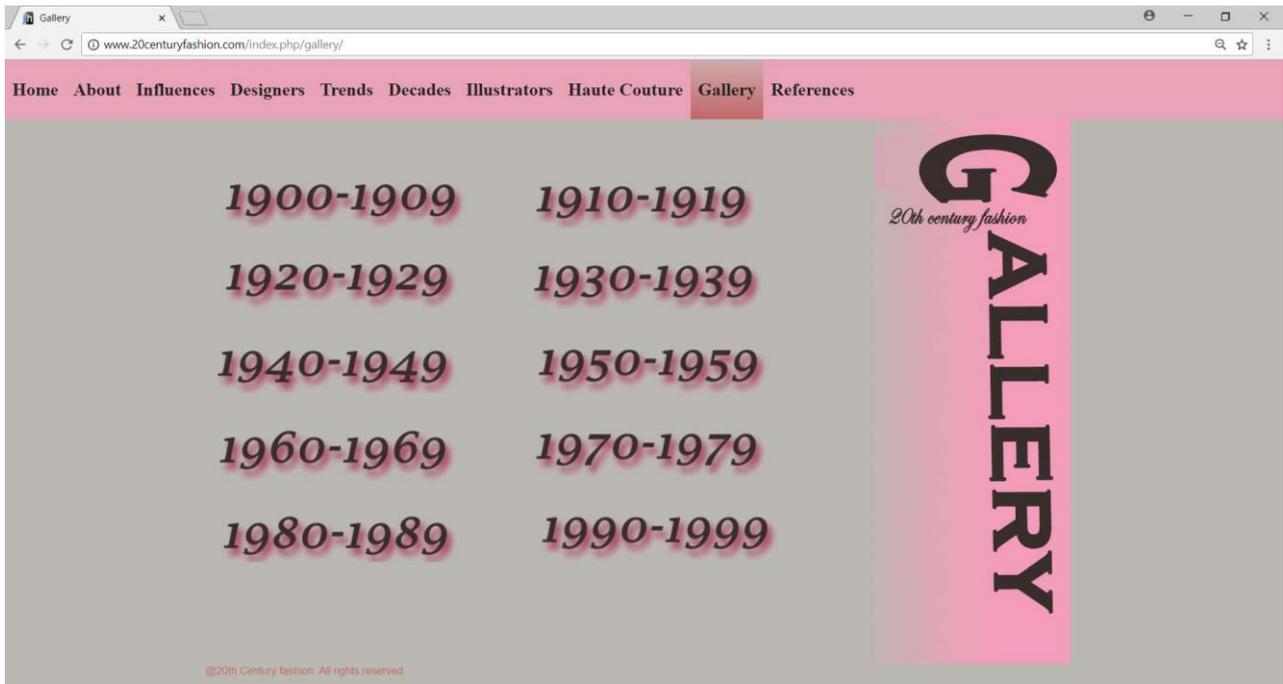


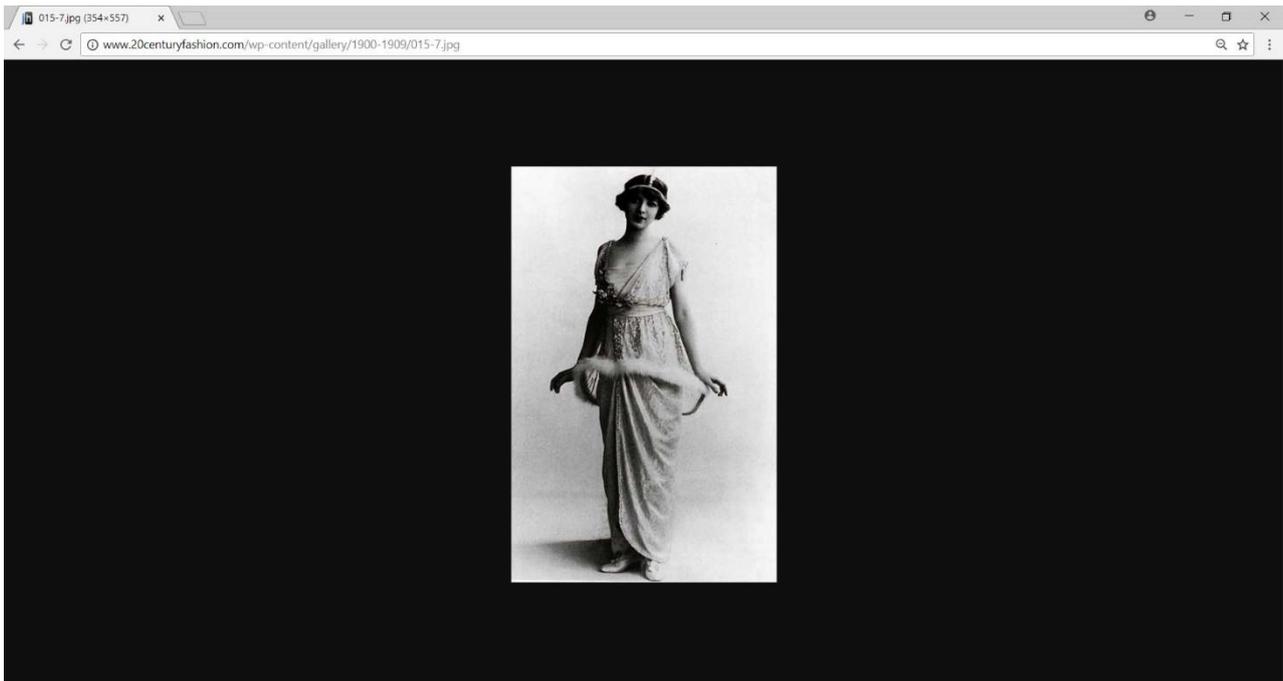
Fig. 25. "Gallery" page

Fig. 25 shows "Gallery" page: This page contains ten links, which refer to the periods during the 20th century. By clicking on a certain link the user is redirected to its related page.



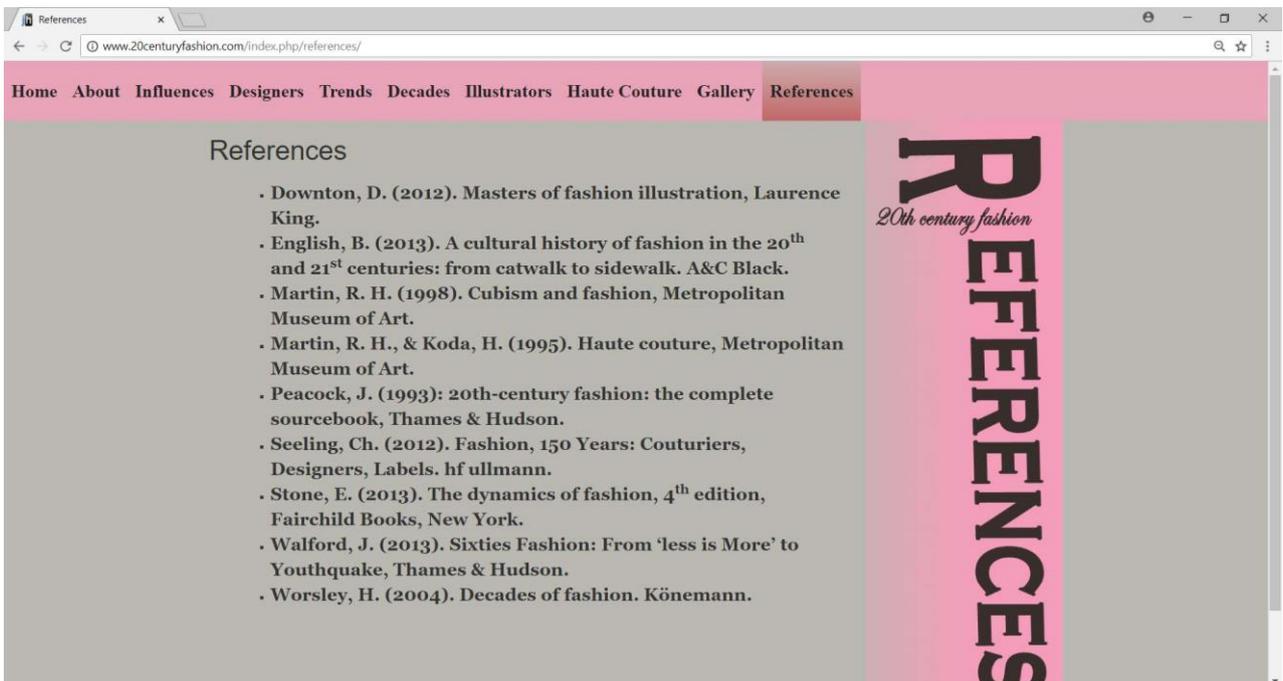
Fig. 26. "1900-1909" subpage

Fig. 26 shows "1900-1909" subpage: The subpage contains images, which reflect the main features of clothes during the period '1900-1909'. There are two buttons 'back & next', which lead the user to call the previous or next image.



**Fig. 27. Separate page:** By clicking on the image, it will be opened in a separate page.

Fig. 27 shows Separate page: By clicking on the image, it will be opened in a separate page.



**Fig. 28. "References" page**

Fig. 28 shows "References" page: This page contains the references of literature that used in collecting the information.

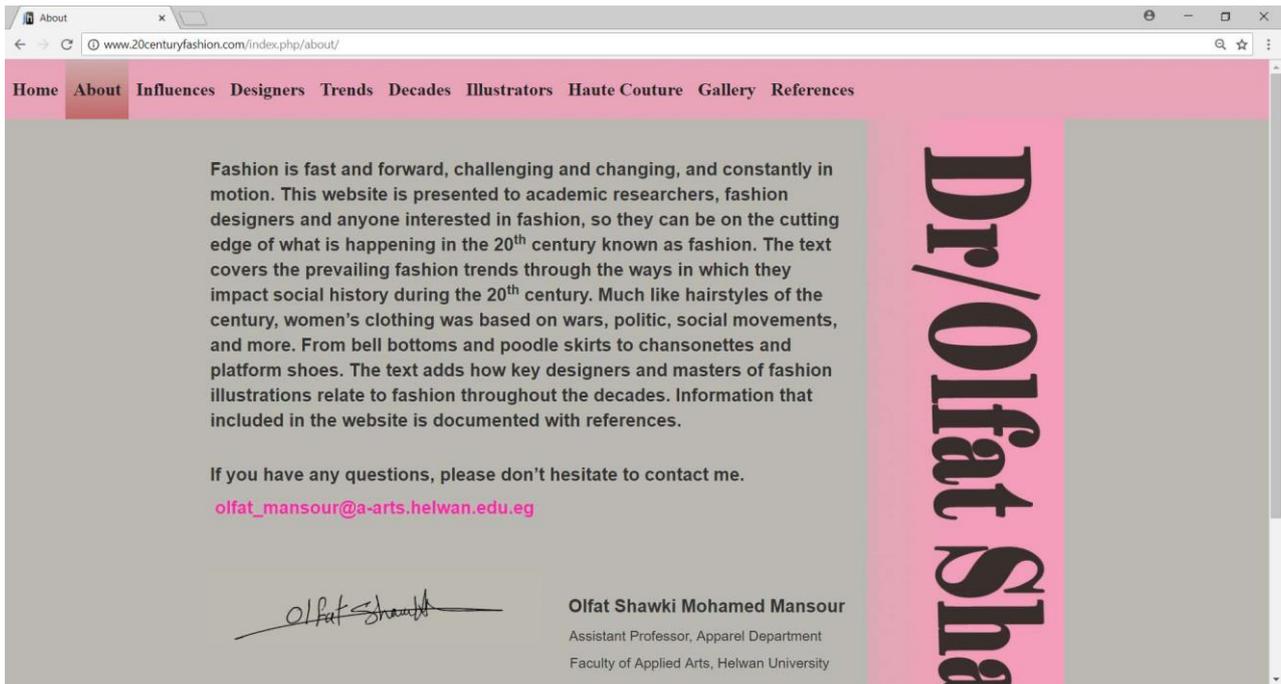


Fig. 29. "About" page

Fig. 29 shows "About" page: This page contains an introduction of the website and the researcher's name, career, and e-mail.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Fashion designer Coco Chanel said, "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street; fashion had to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening" (Kass, 2011). Fashion can be viewed as an expressive art, with the human body as its canvas, and as a representation of one's class, career, imagination, and mood. During the 20th century decades, fashion evolved tremendously. The changes in political, economic, social, cultural and technological fields had the greatest impact on the silhouette of women, accessories, fashion details, materials, colors and methods of implementation.

Surviving historical garments and images which record what people have worn in the past provide an invaluable research resource for many fashion designers. Broad awareness of fashion history enables some designers to permeate their collections with real meaning. The dialogues these designers create between past and present engender a new set of narratives. Narratives which will, in due course, return to the archives to be re-used by the designers of the future. [12]

The present study tried to present a useful and trusted specialist website of 20th century fashion for fashion designers, and anyone interested in fashion history. When designing the website the researcher considered the following:

- The gathering of as much relevant information about 20th century fashion as possible.
- The rigorous collection and organization of information, and the verification of the authenticity and its sources.
- Information contains the breadth and depth needed and is written in a form that is usable.
- Information based on facts and doesn't reflect opinions or bias.
- The selection, organization, and analysis of the most pertinent collected evidence.
- Variety in issues that the website include.
- Explain relationships between historical factors that affect fashion and the fashion trends for each decade.
- Documenting the text with references.
- Pages designing reflects the purpose of the study.
- The designing of the pages is simple and provides the best task flow for the user.
- Providing the website with the researcher's email for clarification.

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