



GRAY M.C.A.
FASHION ILLUSTRATION DESIGN MODERN TEXTILES

FASHION COMMUNICATION:
HISTORIES AND THEORIES

ual: central
saint martins



AN EXHIBITION
THE LIFE AND WORK OF
GLADYS PERINT PALMER

AN EXHIBITION CURATED BY

FASHION HISTORIES & THEORIES STUDENTS IN
COLLABORATION WITH GRAY M.C.A. FASHION
ILLUSTRATION GALLERY

ISABELLA CORAÇA AND DR ELIZABETH KUTESKO

CATALINA BROWN
ELLIS DOWLE
KIM ERIYA
GRACE GEORGESON
JASMINE HODGKINS-MANTLE
ISABEL HORTON
CHARLOTTE MOORE
LILY MORGAN
CAILEE MOY
LILY PAISNER
POLLY PARKER
EVA PHILLIPS
JASMINE POWELL
GRACE PRITCHARD
FRANCESCA SIMMONDS
JADE WALMSLEY
FELIX BEECH-WARD

DESIGN BY HELENA TRAILL



THEME 5: A KEEN EYE FOR DETAIL!

GPP ‘Drawing is not looking, but seeing, people look but they don’t see. They miss seeing the funny things, the beautiful things, the grotesque things.’ Gladys speaking to San Fran Chronicle in 2013.

LIST OF OBJECTS

(Right) Jean Paul Gaultier Spring/Summer 2002

Pen, Water colour, acrylic on card stock

GPP has a unique ability to pick details of a collection and translate them into the focus of her illustrations. Here, she brings our attention to the Gaultier’s catwalk headdress, intentionally making the garment secondary. Her illustrations are commercially successful, yet her artistic voice sets her apart from the rest.

A NOTE ON THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition celebrates the life and work of fashion illustrator Gladys Perint Palmer (GPP). It is the culmination of a group project between Final Year Fashion Histories and Theories students and Gray M.C.A. Fashion Illustration Gallery, which took place at Central Saint Martins, London from 8th October to 10th December 2025. Students examined GPP’s rich archive within the broader context of visual storytelling and the value of fashion illustration in representing and mediating fashion’s meanings. Bridging theory with practice, our aim was to examine how fashion illustration operates as a go-between fashion and its communication in the wider world. We also explored GPP’s connections to the institution, which she frequently referred to as the foundation of her subsequent success as a fashion illustrator, editor and commentator. By drawing comparisons between GPP’s illustrations and the garments that she represented, students responded critically and curatorially to GPP’s archive. Situating her work into themes that offer historical and theoretical readings of fashion illustration’s storytelling capacity, their exhibition, which is spread between the library vitrines and the street, articulates why GPP was such an important and influential voice in the fashion industry.

Dr Elizabeth Kutesko

Pathway Leader, Fashion Histories & Theories, CSM

THE LIBRARY VITRINES WILL BE ON DISPLAY
FROM NOVEMBER 26TH 2025 TO JANUARY 12TH
2026 AT CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS



AT GIVENCHY
THE FASHION
FLOCK
TOGETHER....

BIRDS



THEME 4: SATIRE

satire and observation are consistent features in GPP's work. Here, we show GPP's inimitable skill of capturing personality, humour, and energy through her technical prowess and wit. Her subjects always jump out of the paper with effervescent life. Her drawings remain simultaneously timeless and relevant. When asked about her sophisticated use of satire, GPP exclaims, "I relish the absurd and tell the truth. I love to puncture pretension" (29 May 2013).

LIST OF OBJECTS

But are they wearing underwear?

Pen, ink, watercolour, and acrylic paint on paper, ca.2002

Hermès Clan

Pen, ink and acrylic paint on cardstock, 1987

Alexander McQueen for Givenchy Autumn/Winter 1997

Pastel, charcoal, oil, and ink on paper

(Right) *People In Fashion*

Pen, ink and oil pastels on paper, 2000

GPP could capture social moments with its many larger-than-life characters like no other. This illustration registers a *Vogue* party, attended by industry personalities including *Italian Vogue* editor Anna Piaggi and model Alek Wek. But her focus lies on designer John Galliano, who, she remarked, looked 'brown and very fit'.



HATS
OF A FEATHER BY PHILIP TREACY



Saint Martin's sketchpad, c.1958



THEME 3: MOVEMENT

“What makes a difference between Gladys’ work ... is that she does not draw a still subject, but her drawings have life because they capture a moment, a situation”, recalled Valentino.

The artist must move fast when drawing fashion illustrations. GPP applies her technical understanding of (e)motion to tell a fashion story, from the movement of hair to the position of feet. Her illustrations always capture the feeling in the moment, be it on the runway, during a photoshoot, or one of fiction. Movement is the essence of her style and personality.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Running Girl
Watercolour, pastels and ink on paper, 1993

(Right) Bloomers by Issey Miyake
Watercolour, pastel and ink on paper, 1980s

With an undeniable energy, GPP’s illustrations are never passive. Here she uses her knowledge of fabric and the figure to communicate Issey Miyake’s distinctive way of playing with the body. Likely captured at a show, this will have been swiftly created, showing the deeper levels of motion involved in fashion illustration.

GPP ONE OF A KIND CONNIE GRAY, GRAY M.C.A

No other contemporary fashion illustrator has captured the elegance, wit, and irony of fashion with such a distinctive visual language as Gladys Perint Palmer - or GPP as she is known in the industry. Internationally recognised as one of the foremost commentators on fashion for over sixty years, GPP has remained consistently relevant through a period that has witnessed a radical transformation in how fashion has been documented - from the golden age of fashion illustration (which GPP entered just as it was waning), through the dominance of photography, to the rise of digital media. Across all three eras, her distinctive style has retained a vitality and humour that remains unparalleled.

GPP has always been, One of a Kind. A creative force whose vision was shaped by her education at Central Saint Martins, where she learnt rigour, curiosity, individuality, and the courage to defy the rules. When GPP enrolled at Central Saint Martins in 1956, she was to be amongst the last generation of students taught by Muriel Pemberton, the visionary who established fashion as an academic discipline within British art education. Pemberton’s philosophy to ‘*learn the rules, then break them*’ became both a mantra and a guiding principle for GPP. Pemberton taught that a fashion artist must first master observation and a disciplined line before attempting to distort or exaggerate. Only once these elements were learnt could true experimentation begin. This dynamic between discipline and rebellion lies at the heart of GPP’s enduring success as a fashion illustrator, editor, commentator and educator. The other formative influence at Central Saint Martins was Elizabeth Suter, who emphasised the power of negative space, and the expressive possibilities of colour. Between the two, GPP developed a visual narrative that led her to being named in *The Fashion Book* (Phaidon Press, 1998) as one of the 500 most influential people in fashion since 1860 - an honour that underlines her influence far beyond the traditional realms of fashion illustration.

In fact, GPP occupies a singular position in the history of fashion illustration. Both as a woman who defied the male dominance in the field of illustrating fashion, and as an artist who expanded the graphic language established by the great masters such as René Gruau (1909 – 2004) and Antonio Lopez (1943 – 1987). Whilst Gruau perfected the art of graphic elegance and Antonio captured sensual vitality, GPP introduced irony which at times aligns her more closely with the caricaturists of the eighteenth century than with the idealised elegance of more traditional fashion illustration. Designers and editors alike recognised this rare, energised talent. For instance, Valentino said, “What makes a difference between Gladys’ work and most of the others is that she does not draw a still subject, but her drawings have life because they capture a moment, a situation.” This sense of energy defines her style. Her line is always swift and honest, her subjects confident and alive. She captures fashion as if it is a moving picture.

From her first *Vogue* cover in 1962 and her early illustrations for both American and British *Harper’s Bazaar*, GPP’s fresh, spontaneous style mirrored the energy of a new generation breaking free from post war conservatism. Over the following decades as Fashion Editor of the *San Francisco Examiner* and as an illustrator for publications including *The Sunday Times*, *The New York Times*, *Elle*, *L’Officiel*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*, she sat front row (or her preferred elevated row 3) documenting the key looks from each new season’s collections of the world’s most famous designers. There were also advertising campaigns for brands such as Missoni, Dior, NYFW and Oscar de la Renta and special commissions for clients as diverse as Gianni Versace for his book *Do Not Disturb* (Abbeville Books, 1994) and ‘Crown to Couture’ in 2023 for Historic Royal Palaces. Throughout her career, she has drawn, celebrated and critiqued fashion as both art and theatre, balancing her approval with a subtle acidic undertone if she was underwhelmed by what she witnessed.



THEME 2: TEXTURES AND TECHNIQUES

Gladys Perint Palmer's incomparable technique is the focus of the following series of sketches. In each, a bold use of line is offset by skilful application of colour. Armed with an ever-evolving illustrative style, GPP's works command a fluidity so rarely seen in fashion illustration. She refers to her style as 'the Gladys technique' and maintains an unconventional toolkit, stating 'I keep changing my tools. At present, I am using an ink dropper and my fingers. In the past, I have used an eagle's feather. I don't know what's next'.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Alexander McQueen's Autumn/Winter 1996
Pastel on paper

(Right) Yohji Yamamoto, Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior Autumn/Winter 1998
Pastel on paper

The use of pastels and gaps in colour in the left and right-hand drawings help give the effect of knitwear, as if mimicking wool weave. By using solid colour (central model), it gives a silk-like effect, with runway lighting also being taken into consideration. The use of different colours and mediums help to give life and texture to the drawings.



Her influence is undeniably global. During the 1970s, GPP worked as a columnist and illustrator for the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, where she brought her sharp eye and wit to a rapidly modernising Asian fashion scene. Her column combined commentary, caricature, and cultural observation which underlined her understanding that fashion is never just about clothes but about identity, attitude, and society. Equally significant was her long and creative association with the legendary Italian fashion editor Anna Piaggi. Both women shared a belief in fashion as theatre. GPP illustrated Piaggi's eccentric, visually extravagant briefs with an intelligence that translated Piaggi's flamboyant imagination into iconic illustrations for the pages of *Grazia* (Italia), *Pui* and *Vogue Italia* with a flair that cemented her reputation further.

The reason that GPP's illustrations endure is because they have their own unique visual narrative. Each artwork conveys a story told through an economy of line, composition and atmosphere. Her line communicates humour, elegance, and movement without the need for further embellishment. As Colin McDowell, former Fashion Editor of *The Sunday Times*, wrote: "Gladys is old school in her approach. She is not a painter but an illustrator of rare quality, perhaps the last of a long and honoured lineage. Gladys has a highly distinctive style - shrewd, detached, and amused - based on a gaze that has become wise and sardonic over time. It is this ability to combine shrewd observation with artistic expression that has kept her work at the forefront for decades."



THE STREET

THEME 1: RUNWAY

Gladys Perint Palmer's runway illustrations capture the movement and intensity of fashion in real time. Working directly at the show, she sketched on large sheets of paper, allowing sweeping gestures and bold lines to mirror the dynamism of the models and fabric before her. Her spontaneous, large-scale drawings privilege motion over precision, distilling the essence of a collection through angles and the suggestion of movement. By translating the runway's transience into fluid, immediate mark-making, Palmer transformed illustration into a performative act, one that positioned her not as a passive observer but as an active participant in fashion's spectacle.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Versace Spring/Summer 1992
Ink and watercolour on paper

Fax to GPP
20th April 1995

Alberta Ferretti Spring/Summer 1998
Ink and pastel on paper, signed

(Right) Gareth Pugh Fall/Winter 2007
Ink and gouache on gloss paper

Amid club kids and drag queens, GPP stood at the centre of what *Vogue* called "legendary British fashion happenings". She captured Gareth Pugh's fall collection mid-strut, highlighting the sculptural tire pieces that wrap around the body. The side angle emphasizes dimension and silhouette, bringing movement, drama and energy into what the camera fails to capture.

The philosophy that GPP learned at Central Saint Martins - '*learn the rules, then break them*' - later became the guiding principle in her teaching. When she was appointed Director of Fashion at The Academy of Art University in San Francisco in 1995, she carried the British fashion school's spirit across the Atlantic. At the time, The Academy was the largest independent art school in the United States but with a struggling fashion department. Under her leadership, it experienced the fastest growth in fashion student enrolment in its history. GPP transformed the fashion school into one of the most dynamic and respected fashion programmes in the world, encouraging students to draw boldly, to think critically, and to find their own voices. Her success was such that The Academy became the first fashion school to present MA graduate shows at New York Fashion Week - a testament to her tenacity and vision in creating a high-profile platform for emerging talent.

This exhibition, curated by the graduate students of Fashion Histories and Theories at Central Saint Martins, represents a full circle moment in GPP's extraordinary career. From her early training under Muriel Pemberton, to her influence over six decades as a fashion illustrator, editor, and educator, in 2025 GPP is now the subject rather than the student in the very institution where her artistic journey began. It honours not only her singular vision but the remarkable trajectory of a woman who has shaped the evolving narrative of fashion and in doing so has become a key visual reference in 20th and 21st century fashion history.

Connie Gray
Gray M.C.A.



PARIS 1963 SUMMER

Feminine - youthful - Shifts, smocks. Thigh level jumper-tops. Narrow skirts - higher waists - high busts. Less bias cut. Shoulder yokes and below yoke gathers. Wide V neck lines. Blouse-and-skirts for the evening. Polka dots - pin spots. Cuffs. Abstract and floral silk prints. Tiny buttons, loop fastenings. Asymmetrical seams. Fly fronts. Raglan sleeves. Built up necklines. Tie-scarfs. Coats not fitted. Over blouses drawn in at the waist with flared peplums. A lot of back buttoning. For the evening tiny shoulder straps, plunging necklines, halter necks. Apron panels. Coloured beading. One shoulder effects with choker scarfs. Stiff waistbands. High slits. Cowl drapes. At Ricci back capes attached to sleeve centre seams. Hoods. Short white gloves at Dior. High necked dickies under jacket jackets. Pullover suits at St. Laurent. Shirts at Laroche. Dior Leg o'mutton sleeve. Courreges evening pyjamas. White furs at Lanvin.

(Above) Gladys' notes from Paris Summer Collections, 1963

VITRINE 4: GPP'S DESK

“I keep changing my tools. At present, I am using an ink dropper and my fingers. In the past, I have used an eagle's feather. I don't know what's next”

This installation reimagines GPP's workspace, inspired by her Paris fashion week sketchbook. Drawing quick lines during the shows, GPP would return to her desk and translate these observations into refined compositions.

Known for her instinctive and experimental use of materials, GPP's inspirations bridge Japanese woodcuts with an appreciation for artists including Toulouse-Lautrec, Modigliani, and Matisse. Here, we invite you to gain an intimate insight into the creative process of the renowned fashion illustrator.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Paris Fashion Week Sketchbook
Spring/Summer 1963

From Dior to Courrèges, this portfolio captures GPP's studies during Paris fashion week. Word and image reveal her ability to communicate the trends of the season.

FASHION HISTORIES & THEORIES STUDENTS

Gladys Perint Palmer (GPP) is a name that cannot be missed if you know a thing or two about fashion. A principal figure in the fashion industry for over 50 years, she has worked across fashion illustration, fashion writing and fashion education. This exhibition showcases the world and work of GPP in collaboration with Gray M.C.A, who has generously lent original illustrations and ephemera from the fashion illustrator's personal archive.

The success and longevity of a career so vibrant can be attributed to two things: talent and wit. Ever since she was a child, GPP has never lacked character nor gumption. Those depicted in an illustration are a part of her, whether this be through social commentary or via the technical skill learned from her mentor Muriel Pemberton at Central Saint Martins.

We hope that this exhibition, organised in the library vitrines and the street, will enable you to feel closely acquainted with GPP's work and character. Friends with Gianni Versace and foes with Dolce and Gabbana, *The Life and Work of Gladys Perint Palmer* is an amalgamation of everything that makes GPP an undisputable force in the world of fashion illustration.

(Left) Junya Watanabe, S/S 1992, *Sunday Times Style*, October 1991

THE LIBRARY

VITRINES

VITRINE 1: REPUTATION

Signature illustrative style and unmissable wit, Gladys Perint Palmer built a career grounded in both artistry and observation, capturing fashion's energy with affection and candour. The selected works feature her global recognition, self-aware humour, and lifelong commitment to portraying fashion as an art form worthy of both critique and admiration.

Wit and line combine to expose the vanity and social hierarchies that underpin the industry she chronicled. GPP is fashion's longest working female fashion illustrator, whose career spans five decades and continues to inspire new generations. Though now retired, she continues to be sought after, a testament to her distinctive voice and contribution to the field.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Trendsetter Fashion Business & Marketing, 2001

L'Officiel Paris, 1990

Collection of invitations, 2013-14

Missonologia-II mondo dei Missoni

Colour film, 1994

(Right) Self-portrait for *San Francisco Examiner*

Marker on card stock, possibly 1985

Upon becoming fashion editor for the *San Francisco Examiner* (1985-1991), GPP drew this self-portrait, thus marking the beginning of her involvement with writing alongside illustration. Nobody is spared from her humorous commentary, not even herself.



VITRINE 3: PIVOTAL MOMENTS

World-renowned fashion illustrator Gladys Perint Palmer (GPP) has produced over 2000 pieces of work throughout her six-decade career. Here, we spotlight some of her pivotal moments, from close relationships with industry figures to promotional material for various fashion weeks. Even in our current world of digital content, GPP's illustrations have stood the test of time.

Far from conventional, GPP has often rejected the boundaries imposed on fashion illustrators. She refuses to confine herself to drawing, having also ventured in the world of writing. Punctuated by a sharp wit and a biting critique, GPP's works are honest and expressive, but not always everybody's cup of tea!

LIST OF OBJECTS

Double-page spread
Harper's Bazaar, August 1969

Letter from Nancy White
27th February 1970

Promotional material for New York Fashion Week
2011

Letter to *Vogue*
2nd November 2011

Three photographs
Film

(Right) Sketch of André Leon Talley
Pen and pastel on paper, 2000

Fashion journalist André Leon Talley was a close friend of GPP. But that didn't protect him from her sharp commentary. He has featured in many of her satirical drawings, which often include captions such as 'Hello little people' or 'Bonjour Mr. Tall'. Here she pokes at his love for furs by adding 'anti-fur' onto his companion's bag.



VITRINE 2: MEMORIES

To know something meaningfully, you must learn its history. The same principle applies to GPP. Her early childhood in Hungary, her formative years in England, and her Foundation studies at Central Saint Martins tell us one thing clearly: if GPP was going to do anything, she was going to draw. Here we delve into her life before widespread recognition; the life that made her who she is, a life that she made for herself.

LIST OF OBJECTS

Sketch at The Parsons School of Design
Charcoal and watercolour on paper, 1961

Letter to Mr Cox
1961

Childhood drawings
Mixed media on paper

Miscellaneous drawings
Charcoal on paper, ca.1959-62

L'Official India, 2015



**"IF I WANTED TO GET
ATTENTION FROM ADULTS,
I WOULD START DRAWING"**

Gladys with her parents, Budapest, Hungary, c.1947