



**In nine days' time, a virtual boutique is holding a vintage Chanel sale. Covetable pieces, reasonable prices, gift wrapping... Avril Groom can hardly wait.**

**N**othing justifies a designer's claim to greatness better than the ability of their work to stand the test of time. If their archive pieces instantly call to mind a specific and unwise fashion moment, they are likely to become no more than a footnote in social history. But if these pieces could look elegant worn today, with today's accessories, then that designer's identity has true longevity.

This criterion makes Chanel the ideal choice for only the second single-designer sale held by Yoox.com, the Italian-based virtual boutique selling multi-brand fashion and design. For anyone who has endured the scrum of size 6 bodies, piles of discarded clothes and flying coat hangers at Chanel's own occasional past-season sales, the idea is bliss. In the early afternoon of November 12, from the comfort of your desk, you will be able to view images of over 100 items, from little black evening dresses to iconic costume jewellery to the classic organza camellia brooches, and order them direct for delivery within 48 hours, spoilingly wrapped in tissue paper in a beautiful box.

The sale's emphasis is on current wearability rather than museum-style precious pieces – as Yoox founder Federico Marchetti says, "We are not an archive house but a store." The oldest items come from the 1950s, when Coco Chanel re-established her Paris house after the war, but many more are from the period of Karl Lagerfeld's tenure as designer, starting in the mid-1980s. This fits Yoox's philosophy which is not so much a vintage marketplace, as Marchetti points out, "but a source of things that are rare and hard to find, be they new or older. So we might have this season's items from various designers which are so hot they have already sold out in the stores, or it could be pieces from just a few seasons back which have already become desirable classics and are therefore also not easy to track down. We have occasional exclusives

Left: red strapless 1980s Chanel dress, £720.

where designers do small ranges for us – for instance, Hussein Chalayan is doing next spring's men's wear only for Yoox, also appearing in November."

Yoox first began offering vintage sales shortly after it was set up seven years ago, arranged by the well-known New York-based stylist and fashion consultant Holly Brubach. "I had many sources in the vintage field, such as top dealers Didier Ludot and Keni Valenti, and we put together sales with specialist themes such as Hollywood glamour," she says. "I love Yoox's concept that such items should live and be worn." The idea for single-designer sales was Marchetti's; he realised that people were starting to collect past pieces from specific design houses. Since his company is based in Milan, he chose to start with Gucci and the sale took place in May this year. A month later, at the FT Business of Luxury Summit in Venice, Marchetti shared a platform with Gucci CEO Mark Lee, who agreed to buy the

unsold pieces to keep in the Gucci archives.

On the idea of Chanel he sounded out Brubach, a noted Chanel wearer. "I felt it was a great plan," she says. "The notion of wonderfully made things from the past being part of the modern wardrobe is so popular, and it was hard to imagine a better candidate than Chanel. It never goes out of style and is the ultimate

# SALE OF LAST CENTURY

