

Yves Saint
Laurent, 1986

With models in
looks from his fall
1972 collection

After Christian
Dior's funeral, 1957



With Loulou de la
Falaise and Betty
Catroux, 1978



Saint Laurent,
1958

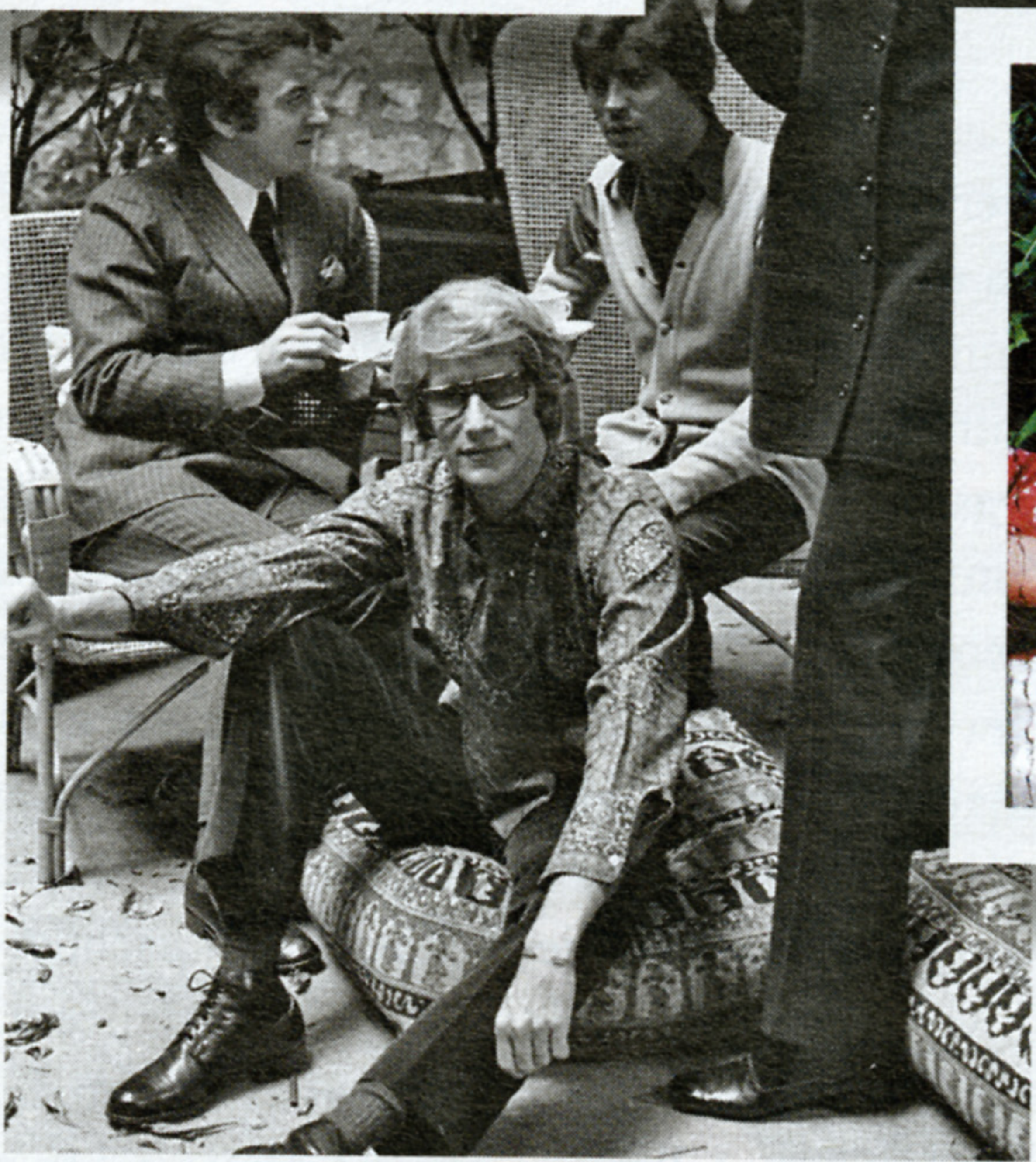


Saint Laurent takes his bow, surrounded by his models, 1981.

With a model, 1965



With Pierre Bergé and François and Betty Catroux, 1968



In Marrakech, 1976

Yves Saint Laurent

Fashion god Yves Saint Laurent is gone, but certainly not forgotten.

Fashion lost one of its finest on June 1, when the legendary couturier Yves Saint Laurent, 71, died at his Paris home of brain cancer, according to his longtime business partner, Pierre Bergé. He had quite a life. From his celebrated entrée into design in 1957 at Dior, where, at age 21, he replaced the late Christian Dior, through his retirement in 2002, Saint Laurent hypnotized with his imaginative creations. An exacting sense of color, cut, exoticism and androgyny were his signatures, as was the infamously fragile constitution that led him to retreat from the fashion world altogether in his final years. Yet his influence remains strong—current designers such as Marc Jacobs, Miuccia Prada and Jean Paul Gaultier frequently reference Saint Laurent's work in their own collections. Over the course of his 40-plus-year career, Saint Laurent regularly produced a legacy of instant classics (the trapeze dress, the safari jacket, the Mondrian shift and the eternally iconic *le smoking*) not to mention the concept of ready-to-wear, which he launched in 1966 with his Rive Gauche collection. Then there are those initials, three letters—YSL—that will forever be associated with the pinnacle of French chic. Here, a few of Saint Laurent's confidants and colleagues share memories of their dear friend Yves.

—JESSICA IREDALE

Yves Saint Laurent

Models in Broadway suits and boater hats from the 1978 *Porgy and Bess* couture collection

"He said, 'How long it takes to do a collection depends on my mind and my life. It's a very bad life sometimes, but the results are often better.' The results were often spectacular. And for those of us lucky enough to experience his creative genius firsthand, Yves Saint Laurent will always be the king of fashion, who ruled the runways with breathtaking clothes, exquisite taste, dazzling color and an undying passion for his craft. Thank you, Yves."

OSCAR DE LA RENTA:

"I love rooms full of light, and my wife doesn't like rooms with a lot of light. We went to see Yves in the house that he had in Normandy, and he showed us through the house. We walked into the most wonderful, beautiful bedroom that had a very tender, very romantic lighting. All the curtains were drawn, and it looked absolutely mysterious and beautiful. Then Pierre ran to open all the windows, and Yves walked right behind him and said, 'No!!!' He wanted Annette to look at the room just with that kind of light. Many times early on, when I went to Paris with Annette and with my first wife, Françoise, we would spend time with Yves. Both my wives loved Yves. He didn't have a huge circle of friends, so I was honored that he always spent time with me. Not only was he a great fashion designer, he was a great, great artist."

CLARA SAINT, FORMER PRESS AGENT, YVES SAINT LAURENT:

"He didn't see the world of fashion. He was a solitary spirit, with a small circle of friends. He never integrated into the fashion world."

"We first met when Margot Fonteyn invited me to luncheon with Yves and Pierre Bergé at Maxim's. We instantly had a link. It was as if we'd always known each other. We never separated. When he opened the first Rive Gauche ready-to-wear boutique, in 1966, he asked if I wanted to work with him, to take care of press. I had never worked before. I thought it was a little too easy to take care of one shop. But in a year there were 40 Rive Gauche shops. The success was incredible. Cars were parked three-deep at the curb, and after a fortnight, nothing was left.... People talk about Yves suffering, but he was also one of the funniest people you can imagine. We would be on the floor with

laughter at times. He had an incredible eye and did caricatures of people for us, which amused us a lot. He saw people exactly as they were. He had an absolute eye."

FRANCOIS-MARIE BANIER, PHOTOGRAPHER AND WRITER:

"Immediately we spoke deeply about everything. His world, his work, sex, freedom and his gods: Pierre Bergé, Christian Dior, Maria Callas, Picasso, Chanel. What questions he asked! Why navy blue, black, beige? Shouldn't one take color and fantasy to the maximum?"

"I loved that he talked about his mother, of his sisters and how he terrorized them as a young boy. I was terrified by his years at school, where his classmates made him suffer. I loved the secrets of the world of Christian Dior, where he started; the portraits of the influential women over whom Monsieur Dior reigned. I loved the solitude of his memories. And the fidelity of his friends: Fernando Sanchez, Betty Catroux, Loulou de la Falaise, Anne-Marie Munoz. I loved less his need for solitude. There were many moments when he would only go from his home to the couture house and back home. It was at that moment that I decided to show him the pictures of people I'd photographed in the street. My solitaires. I brought them to him to make him come out of himself.... In the first years of my photography, he sponsored me and paid for labs. I remember calling him when I was 16 from Salvador Dalí's suite at the Meurice Hotel and asking if he wanted to pose for him. He said he couldn't do a thing like that.... He was very, very funny. One night we were leaving L'Escargot [a restaurant in Paris], and Yves laid down on the street corner on a cardboard box. Suddenly he started to scream. A hand emerged from the box and was pulling at his trousers."

"Pierre and I used to laugh that Yves could lose sleep because Madame Ida, the premiere of his atelier, had gotten the shoulder on a jacket wrong. But without that focus on perfection, he wouldn't have had his work.... He was profoundly haunted by sexuality. No other couturier understood desire as profoundly.... Yves was a flame in the service of women, of his art. He gave everything to his métier, like a saint gives everything to God." —with contributions by Katya Foreman, Ellen Groves and Robert Murphy

"I remember the day after the death of Christian Dior, when [Yves] became the head of the house, always looking like a boy of 16 years old."



1986
With Hélène Rochas at the Musée des Arts de la Mode



1998
With Pierre Bergé, outside the Marigny Theater in Paris



2002
Looks from Yves Saint Laurent's spring 2002 haute couture retrospective show: Claudia Schiffer in a classic le smoking; a bridal ensemble; designs from the 1967 African collection.

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