

[HIGH-LIFE TAILOR]. Illustrated catalogs and brochures of the High-Life Tailor. Paris, Bessonnat & Cie, Albert Jarach et Paul Chambry, Draeger, 1894-1937.

54 brochures, catalogs, and ephemera (ranging from 10 cm to 28 cm) in the publisher's original paper wrappers, most often stapled, with covers illustrated in color, and one catalog bound in soft green gilt stamped morocco. All the items in the collection are very good to near fine condition, with the exception of a few items with surface rubbing, two catalogs with spine splits, a few with scattered foxing, some wrinkling and occasional turned corners, but overall the items are exceptionally well preserved.

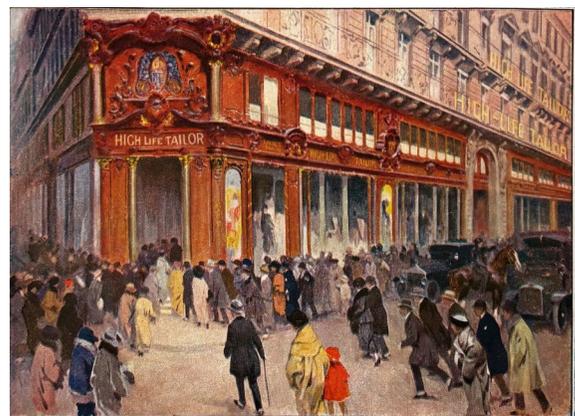
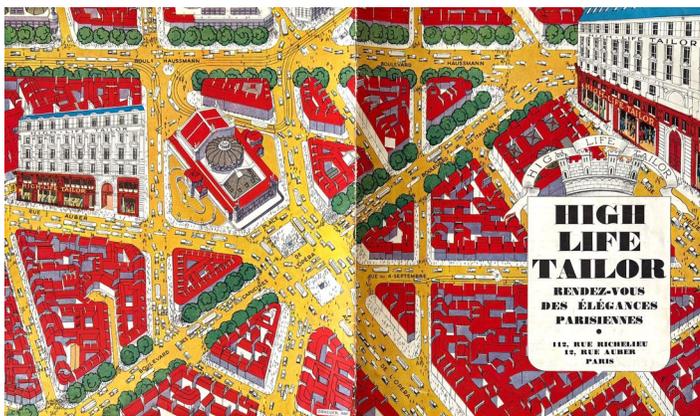
\$3,900



Above: Autumn-Winter, 1929, full color center spread

Advertising an identity of timeless elegance: 1894-1937

A vibrant and colorful collection of fashion catalogs and ephemeral items documenting the more than 40-year history of an active and successful Parisian custom tailoring firm, the High-Life Tailor (HLT), who specialized in men's and women's clothing for different seasons, including ready-to-wear and made-to-measure options, displayed in elegantly illustrated catalogs and brochures—15 of those included here include fabric samples. HLT's primary offerings were suits and overcoats for men, ranging from casual to formal, and dresses, gowns, suits, overcoats, and wraps for women, distinctly fashionable and urban chic in style. Their more than 40-year run as a firm, and the consistent issuing of artistically designed and well-produced promotional materials—printed on glossy paper and accompanied by novel and original content—speaks to HLT's profitable stability as a firm.



The firm, their premises shown above, described themselves in their advertisements as follows:

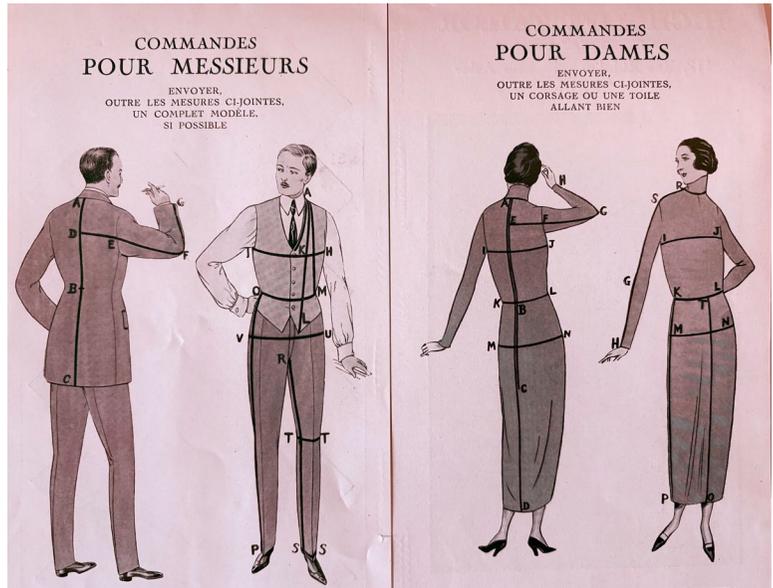
HIGHLIFE TAILOR is driven by a singular principle: comfort, comfort, and yet more comfort, without ever sacrificing elegance or good taste. Hence, undoubtedly, the universality of its renown. Their two shops—at 12 Rue Auber and 112 Rue Richelieu—are overflowing with orders; much like art museums, they are open to every passerby, welcoming all visitors to come and gather impressions of the latest fashions. HIGHLIFE TAILOR will send its deluxe catalog—featuring suits available without a fitting, along with instructions on how to take your own strictly accurate measurements—upon request...

HLT maintained no branches outside of the French capital, instead concentrating their physical footprint in two centrally located museum-like Parisian shops. They relied on their robust advertising presence, achieved through their deluxe catalogs, and a self-measuring system that allowed customers to order clothing remotely. Suits and dresses could be made-to-measure for remote customers who desired the latest Paris couture.

More than sales brochures:

The firm's up-to-date production methods for their printed items, incorporating modern artistic movements in their graphic design, projected a sophisticated image of high-fashion, while also grounding themselves in the respected and prestigious sartorial traditions of the past. These depictions of the past, whether ancient Greece, the age of Enlightenment, or the Dandys of the Second Empire, present moments of luxury and tranquility, sophistication and the comfort afforded by just the right suit of clothing or the elegance of a flowing gown:

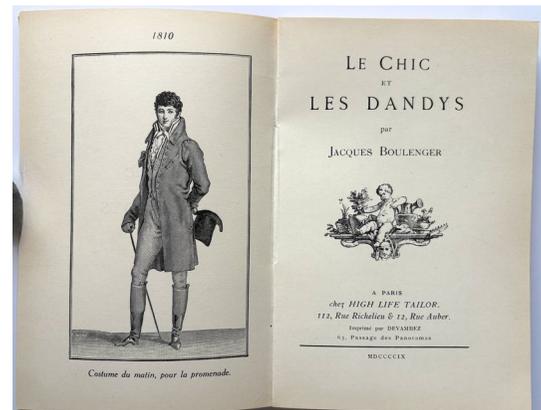
HLT sold the concept of "life-style" as much as they sold garments.



Below right: from 1906, "Journée d'une Femme du Monde au XVIII^{me} siècle"; Below left: from 1909, with fashion illustrations and a "lost" tale from the "Mille et une Nuits" with special illustrations.



HLT's stylish catalogs were illustrated by a who's-who of the period. Typically, the catalogs incorporate current clothing lines alongside historical clothing styles from the past. There are also caricatures of contemporary figures, historical depictions of the primary epochs of European culture and fashion, and countless elegantly attired Parisians. Often the catalogs combining original textual contributions on different themes, such as the Arabian Nights, China and the Great Wall, Dance across the ages, the Napoleonic period, 18th century café society, and contemporary celebrities, juxtaposed to the latest fashions. There are special publications included, like *Le Chic, et Les Dandys*, by Jacques Boulenger (right).



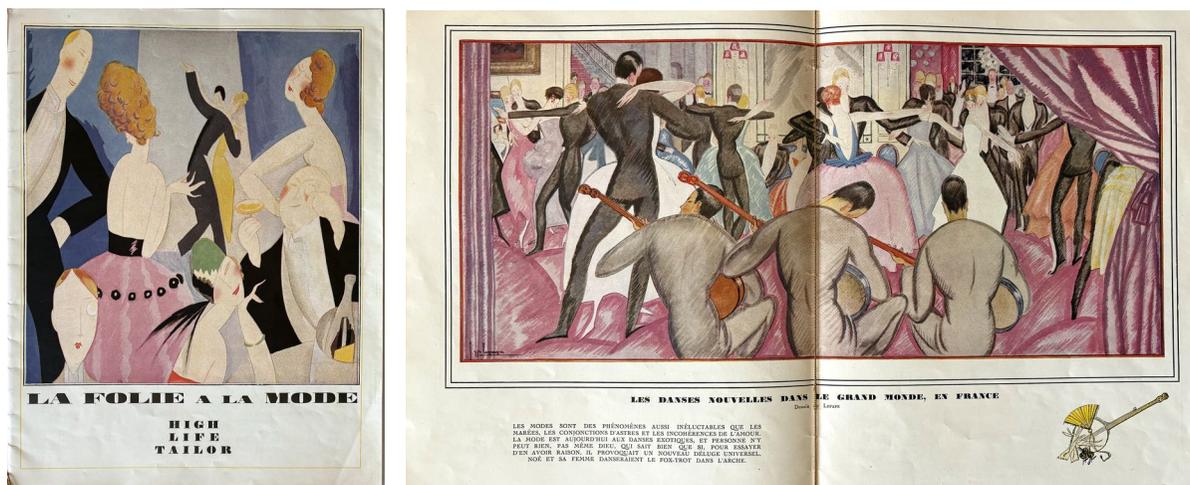
The frequent tendency to present the past and the present side-by-side is a kind of trademark of the firm, under the rubric of “aujourd’hui et autrefois”, that is, “today and yesteryear”—comparing and contrasting contemporary style with style of the past.



Above: Catalog (1909): "Aujourd'hui. Autrefois", with fashion illustrations and caricatures of both contemporary and historic figures, like Napoleon I & Theodore Roosevelt.

Reflecting the Cultural and Historical moments of HLT's contemporary world:

Beyond the clothing and the contemporary celebrities, the collection affords a look at advertising trends according to the dominant artistic movements of the day, as well as the socio-economic state of Europe. For example, the graphic design of the early catalogs embodies the Belle Époque, while those of the 1920s, which embrace the jazz age of flappers and nightclubs, are modernist in design, and finally, the later catalogs reflect the popularity of Art Deco. We note that the collection has fewer catalogs during the years of World War I, a period when HLT also offered military uniforms, meanwhile the catalogs of the 1920s grew in size, color, and ambition until the years of the Depression weighed on expensive production and the catalogs were reduced in physical size and the number of pages.



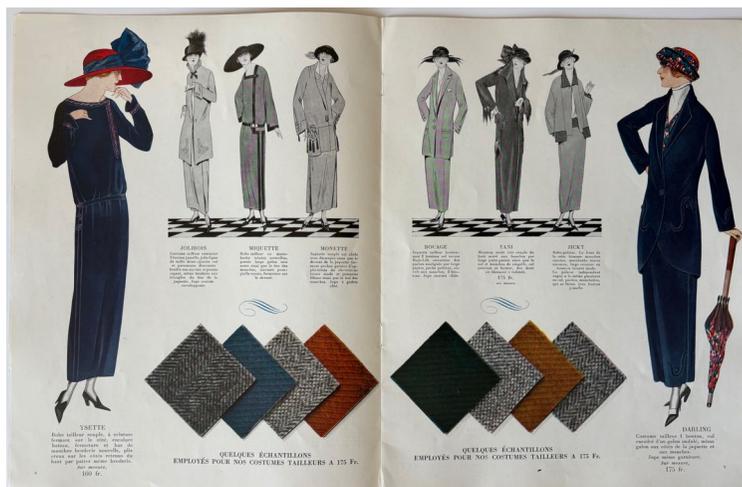
Above: Catalog (1920): "La Folie à la Mode", Dominated by special illustrations by numerous artists, and an introductory text, with fashion illustrations--a striking difference to the catalogs of the war years.

Below: two examples from Autumn-Winter, 1927-1928 (left) and Summer 1931 (right).



Among the illustrators whose work appeared in HLT catalogs: Ferdinand Bac, George Barbier, Benito, Lucien Bessonnat, Georges Blott, Bernard Boutet de Monvel, Leonetto Cappiello, Paul Destez, André Devambes, Maximilian Fischer, Foa, Jean-Louis Forain, Henry Gerbault, Jules Girardet, Auguste Gorguet, Jules Grün, Albert Guillaume, Louis-Welden Hawkins, Joseph Hémard, Marcel Hemjic, Daniel Hernandez, Paul Jarach, Job, Léopold Kowalsky, Laviny, Charles Léandre, Maurice Leloir, René Lelong, Georges Lepape, Serafino Macchiati, Ludovico Marchetti, Charles Martin, Edgard Maxence, Henri Mirande, Hector Moloch, Edgard de Saint-Pierre de Montzaigle, Adrien Moreau, Manuel Orazi, Francisque Poulbot, René Préjelan, Louis Ridet, Louis Sabattier, Jean Sala, Saviny, Georges Scott, Sem, Joseph Sirat, Henry Tenré, René Vincent, Hermann Vogel, Ernest Vulliemin, Alphonse Willette, and Édouard Zier.

The High-Life Tailor Advertising Collection provides a vivid and full color portrait of Parisian fashion and innovative retail strategy during the first half of the twentieth century. The more than 50 items present here testify to the long tenure of the High-Life Tailor as a Parisian institution and contextualize the evolving couture styles as well as the manner in which fashion was advertised. “The chic and novelty of [HLT’s] diverse creations have ensured the renown and ever-growing success of their brand...”



“L’Art de s’Habiller [the Art of Dressing]”:



“As the MESSENGER of elegance and whimsy, Fashion has ruled the world since the very day coquetry invented the first mirror.

In an era when a tranquil existence allowed for cumbersome attire, the rigid hoops of the crinoline reigned supreme. Then, the voluminous skirt diminished in size, gathering at the back to create a peculiar silhouette. Later, the sleeve—in its turn—assumed exaggerated proportions; the waist grew slender, while the lengthened skirt played upon a cascade of silky ruffles.

Sports and an active lifestyle would finally liberate women from all these constraints. She emerged slender—supple at the waist, her bearing youthful and light—clad in short, graceful dresses. Refined in its sensibilities, taste had recognized the supreme harmony of the feminine form; fashion now respected these lines rather than distorting them.

Yet, while the intricate styles of yesteryear could be executed even by unskilled hands, the ideal simplicity of modern attire demands a perfection that only the most competent specialists can achieve.

The coat and dress of 1925 require the same impeccable cut as men’s garments; for this very reason, HIGH LIFE TAILOR—thanks to its elite staff—has secured the leading position in the realm of both feminine elegance and masculine fashion.

The chic and novelty of its diverse creations have ensured the renown and ever-growing success of the House.”

A complete list of the items in the High-Life Tailor Collection:

- 1). Summer, 1894. Promotional card, 12 cm. Color print on one side (17 Faubourg-Montmartre address).
- 2). [1894?]. Small promotional card, 10 cm. (17 Faubourg-Montmartre address).

- 3). [1898]. Catalog illustrated with important contemporary artists and statesmen living the French "High Life", includes a Queen Victoria caricature, 16 pp., oblong 23 cm.
- 4). 1899. Catalog illustrated with fashion and caricatures by Molloch, 14 pp., oblong 23 cm.
- 5). Winter, 1900. Folding promotional card designed as a man's coat, 11 cm.
- 6). 1900. Folded brochure advertising "Curiosités Parisiennes" for the Exposition Universelle, listing libraries, museums, circuses, theaters, Balls, and music halls, 14 cm.
- 7). Winter, 1901-1902. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 12 pp. 28 cm.
- 8). Spring-Summer, 1902. Catalog. Illustrated covers, fashion drawings and Molloch caricatures, 10 pp. 24 cm.
- 9). Summer, 1903. Catalog. Illustrated with fashion and caricatures. 14 pp., 28 cm.
- 10). Winter, 1903. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 12 pp. 21 cm. oblong.
- 11). Spring, 1904. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, "100 ans de mode", 20 pp, oblong 24 cm.
- 12). Winter, 1904-1905. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 12 pp., with fabric sample, 22 cm.
- 13). 1905. Catalog. "Célébrités Contemporaines" in color caricatures, fashion illustrations, 12 pp, plus covers, and 2 fabric samples, oblong 22.5 cm.
- 14). c.1905. Catalog. "Epître à mon habit", fashion illustrations with a fabric sample for men's pardessus, the cover featuring a Beardsley-esque drawing, 12 pp., 22 cm.
- 15). c.1905. Catalog. "Plaque illustrée par le Maître Guillaume", fashion illustrations and special color scenes by Guillaume, 16 pp., 27.5 cm.
- 16). 1906. Catalog. "La Journée d'une Femme du Monde au XVIIIème siècle", special illustrations and fashion illustrations, 12 pp., 28.5 cm.
- 17). Winter, 1906. Catalog. "Exhibition de models", fashion illustrations, 12 pp. in a gilt stamped morocco binding, 23 cm.
- 18). Winter, 1907. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, fabric sample, 12 pp., 23.5.
- 19). 1908. Catalog. "Sous l'Empire", special illustrations and fashion illustrations, with 2 fabric samples, 16 pp., 25.5 cm.
- 20). Winter, 1908-1909. Catalog. "À Travers les Ages", fashion illustrations, vignettes of fashion over the ages, fabric sample, 12 pp., 23.5 cm.
- 21). 1909. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, fabric sample, and a "lost" tale from the "Mille et une Nuits" with special illustrations, 24 pp., 25 cm.
- 22). c.1909. Catalog. "Aujourd'hui. Autrefois", fashion illustrations, 2 fabric samples, series of caricatures of contemporary figures, including Theodore Roosevelt, 16 pp., 25.5 cm.
- 23). 1909. Booklet. "Mes visites. Ouvrage à l'usage des Dames du Monde, précédé de, Les Visites dans tous les Temps par Redelsperger", poetry, a journal for recording one's visits, and fashion illustrations, leather covers, 44 pp., 16.5 cm.
- 24). 1909. Booklet. "Le Chic et les Dandys" by Jacques Boulenger, a fashion history, 1810-45 ; 22 pp, 10 plates depicting gentlemen's fashion in the first half of the 19th century and contemporary counterparts.
- 25). Winter, 1910. Catalog. "Le Tailleur Inconnu", fashion illustrations, fabric sample, 12 pp., 22.5.
- 26). Summer, 1911. Catalog. "La Mystérieuse affaire de la Formule", fashion illustrations, 2 fabric samples, special illustrations, and a 12 pp. mystery tale, 24 pp. total, 26.5 cm.

- 27). [1911]. Portfolio. "Nos Artistes donnent leur opinion sur la toilette de la Femme à notre époque", 4 color plates (by Bernard B. de Monvel, Maurice Leloir, and L. Sabattier) with a fifth on in black on the back of the inner wrapper with the text [by. J.R.], "Enquête sur la mode féminine", 32 cm.
- 28). Summer, 1912. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, fabric sample, 12 pp., 21 cm.
- 29). Autumn-Winter, 1912. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, fabric sample, 2 color equestrian cover, 12 pp., 21 cm.
- 30). 1913. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, special illustrations, literary quotations and epigrams, 16 pp., 27.5 cm.
- 31). 1913. Catalog. The same catalog as no. [30] in special illustrated covers that include 4 fabric samples on the inside front and back covers.
- 32). Winter, 1913-1914. Catalog. "L'Indiscutable Prevue", Fashion illustrations, 2 fabric samples, 12 pp., 20.5 cm.
- 33). Spring-Summer, 1914. Catalog. "Pays d'Arvor", fashion illustrations, 3 fabric samples, special Bretagne themed illustrations, 12 pp., 26.5 cm.
- 34). Winter, 1915-1916. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, including military uniforms, 16 pp., 21 cm.
- 35). Winter, 1916-1917. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, including military uniforms, 16 pp., 21 cm.
- 36). Summer, 1917. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, featuring military uniforms on the first page, 12 pp., 21 cm.
- 37). 1920. Catalog. "La Folie à la Mode", Dominated by special illustrations by numerous artists, and an introductory text, with fashion illustrations--a striking difference to the catalogs of the war years, 16 pp., 27 cm.
- 38). Winter, 1920-1921. Catalog. "Et après la Salopetie?", fashion illustrations, and a special poem of 12 quatrains on what comes after overalls... 12 pp., 21.5 cm.
- 39). 1921. Catalog. "Danses de Jadis", special illustrations of the history of dance from ancient Greece to the 19th cen., fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 27 cm.
- 40). Winter, 1921-1922. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 16pp., 21.5 cm.
- 41). Spring-Summer, 1922. Catalog. "Confucius..." special China themed illustrations and a text describing an archeological mission to the Great Wall, fashion illustrations, and a special flyer laid in with illustrated fabric samples and instructions for measurements for men and women when ordering custom fitted suits.
- 42). Spring-Summer, 1923. Catalog. "Autrefois et aujourd'hui", fashion illustrations, introductory text with a look back to the First Empire and the Grand Salon de Frascati, a high society café in the Boulevard Montmartre (1789-1857), and a special flyer laid in with illustrated fabric samples and instructions for measurements for men and women when ordering custom fitted suits. 16 pp., 27 cm.
- 43). Autumn-Winter, 1924-1925. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 24 cm.
- 44). Spring-Summer, 1925. Catalog. "L'Art de s'Habiller", fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 26.7 cm.
- 45). Autumn-Winter, 1925-1926. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 16 pp. 23.7 cm.
- 46). 1926. Catalog. "Rendez-vous des Élégance Parisiennes", fashion illustrations, covers with illustrated Paris street plan showing HLT's two locations, 12 pp., 26 cm.
- 47). Spring-Summer, 1927. Catalog. Stylized fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 21.5 cm.
- 48). Autumn-Winter, 1927-1928. Catalog. Illustrated portfolio wrapper with enclosure, 8 loose plates, paginated 1-16, fashion illustrations, 20.7 cm.

- 49). Spring-Summer, 1929. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 21.2 cm.
- 50). Autumn-Winter, 1929. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 14 pp., plus covers, 19 cm.
- 51). 1930. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 12 pp., plus covers, 18 cm.
- 52). Summer, 1931. Catalog. Fashion illustrations, 16 pp., 17 cm.
- 53). Spring-Summer, 1936. Catalog. 3 leaf folding wrapper with 2 glassine folding sheets laid in with fashion illustrations, oblong 13 cm.
- 54). Winter, 1936-1937. Catalog. 3 leaf folding wrapper with 2 glassine folding sheets laid in with fashion illustrations, 17.3 cm.