

The True Story Behind Princess Diana's Revenge Dress

Princess Diana's revenge dress was a sexy and daring (for the time) little black dress by Greek designer Christina Stambolian. She wore it to a Vanity Fair gala at London's Serpentine Gallery on June 29, 1994 – the very night her husband, Prince Charles, confessed on British television that he had cheated on her. According to Wild and Fitzwilliams, this iconic look was a bold statement that helped her take control of the narrative of her life. « Diana clearly stole the show that day, » Fitzwilliams says. As for the dress itself, it was slinky, short and sexy with its off-the-shoulder, cleavage-baring neckline, a serious departure from other royal choices at the time, even for a [style icon like Diana](#). To complete the head-turning look, Diana paired the dress with black tights, high heels and a multistrand pearl choker with a huge sapphire in the center.



This daring dress was seen as Diana's (very) public answer to Charles's infamous television interview, in which he admitted to an affair with his now-wife, [Queen Camilla](#). « weeks up until this event, there had been lots of press coverage about the ITV interview, and it was kind of preannounced that he was going to admit that he had been unfaithful, » says Wild. “And the night the whole world talked about Prince Charles and his infidelity, Diana stepped out wearing this really, really striking dress. Without saying anything at all, she reclaimed the narrative and kicked Prince Charles off the front page in a seemingly effortless way.”

Of course, this move was brilliant, says Fitzwilliams: “The revenge dress was a triumph for Diana. She told the world in the most dramatic way what she felt and instantly won people’s sympathies.”

“Diana had, apparently, bought it three years earlier, but she had never worn it because she considered it to be a little bit too risky, » says Wild. “It was a very different dress to what we had seen the princess wear before—or, in fact, any royal.”

The royal family’s dress code calls for modesty, elegance and non-provocative styles for women. The revenge dress worn by Princess Diana was a purposely defiant and provocative choice. Plus, black is a color traditionally reserved for funerals, at least when you’re part of the British royal family.

Wild says. “As a member of the royal family, you are meant to be apolitical, and that includes your own personal views. This was Diana being incredibly personal. And incredibly indiscreet. She was saying exactly what she felt with the help of this dress and necklace. [The revenge dress] demonstrates the power of our clothing, the power to say far more with a dress than words could ever do, » says Wild. “It was a public act of revenge and rebellion. The establishment was trying to silence Diana, and she said no to that.”

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