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FASHION FAIRY TALE
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Andrea Byrne's *Dragon / Flamboyant Spirit*, an illustration from Natori's book

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Laura Bush wore red lace by the Texas designer Michael Finkels. Both women soon fell under the far more flattering sway of Oscar de la Renta, who later also dressed them for their daughters' weddings.

That the designer professes to be crazy about working with both women is further proof that party doesn't dictate choices in fashion, or friendship, but occasionally the ladies do play off one another in an effort to make their own style statements. Though de la Renta dressed Ann Romney for her convention speech, Michelle Obama has yet to wear a single de la Renta design as first lady, instead supporting a broad spectrum of emerging American brands, from the Row to Tracy Reese. When George H.W. Bush served as Ronald Reagan's vice president, there was reportedly no love lost between their wives. After Barbara Bush became first lady, she avoided wearing "Reagan red," opting instead for the supple blue that became her signature color (most often in evening frocks by Arnold Scaasi). She was also famous for her three-strand Kenneth Jay Lane costume pearls, but in another bit of bipartisan style sharing, Lane had designed a near identical set for Jackie Kennedy, who wore them often before they were donated to the Smithsonian.

Of course, even the most stylish first ladies can commit the occasional fashion don't. Nancy Reagan looked a tad silly in the black satin knickers that Galanos made her for an official Paris trip, and Hillary Clinton's first inaugural hat was alternately compared to a chipmunk and a UFO. May Todd Lincoln's headpieces were so elaborate that a senator once said she looked as if she were wearing a flower pot, and her husband, referring to her penchant for generous trains and low-cut necklines, advised her to try moving "some of that tail... nearer the head!"

Still, you have to give Mrs. Lincoln credit for her unabashed passion for clothes. Fortunately for all of us, that too cuts across party lines. ■



'A BIGGER SPLASH' AT LONDON'S TATE MODERN, DISPLAYS WORKS BY DAVID HOCKNEY, JACKSON POLLOCK, AND NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE.

Niki de Saint Phalle's *Shooting Picture*, 1965



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Queen Elizabeth



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