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# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CLOTHING AND FASHION



VOLUME 1:  
Academic Dress to Eyeglasses

*Valerie Steele, Editor in Chief*

**CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

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## Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion

Valerie Steele, Editor in Chief

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## PREFACE

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*The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* is the product of a new, multidisciplinary field of inquiry and an extraordinary international collaboration. The emerging field of fashion studies, sometimes known as the “new” fashion history, differs significantly from traditional dress history, which tended to focus on the stylistic analysis of elite fashions. By contrast, contemporary fashion studies asks new questions, approaches a much wider range of topics, and draws on the expertise of scholars across the disciplines. Whereas traditional fashion reference books tend to be limited to an alphabetical survey of individual designers, this encyclopedia seeks to provide critical insights into the history and contemporary experience of clothing and fashion. By identifying the world’s preeminent authorities, and by approaching the subject with a global focus and an interdisciplinary perspective, the editorial board of *The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* aims to provide the interested reader with an authoritative introduction to the wide range of issues that define the field. These issues include Eurocentrism vs. multiculturalism; gender and sexual identity; the relationship between fashion and other cultural manifestations, such as music; theories of fashion; clothing and material culture; and the fashion system, encompassing the design, manufacture, marketing, and representation of fashion. The editors of the encyclopedia, whose expertise spans a wide range of disciplines, subject matter, and geographical areas, have enlisted over 325 authors in an international survey of clothing, fashion, and related subjects from prehistoric times to the present.

*The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* contains 640 essays ranging from specific topics such as “African Textiles” and “Zoot Suit” to conceptual articles such as “Globalization” and “Music and Fashion,” the latter cross-referenced to related entries such as “Hip-Hop Fashion.” Naturally, we have tried to include all of the topics that readers would expect to find, including essays on specific fashion designers: Christian Dior, Coco Chanel, Yves St. Laurent, and dozens more. But these essays are neither hagiographies of great “artists” nor potted biographies of successful businesspeople. Of the hundreds of possible candidates for inclusion, we have concentrated on those who made a lasting contribution to the arts of fashion and to fashion culture; each designer’s work is not only described in detail but also analyzed with reference to its social and cultural context. Readers interested in, say, Dior can also find related essays on topics such as the “New Look” and “Paris Fashion.” Of course, fashion is a part of most people’s lives, not only because they wear clothes, but also because they constantly consume images of fashion. This encyclopedia addresses the subject of fashion across the media, with essays on “Fashion Photography” (and on individual photographers such as Richard Avedon, Guy Bourdin, and Helmut Newton), “Caricature and Fashion,” and “Film and Fashion.” The encyclopedia also includes unexpected topics, such as “Cross-dressing,” “Footbinding,” and “Supermodels.” There is even an essay on “The Future of Fashion.” Because the production and marketing of textiles, clothing, and accessories is an integral part of the fashion system, the encyclopedia includes a wide range of essays on such topics as “Techno-textiles,” “Sweatshops,” “Fashion Magazines,” and “Department Stores.”

Typically, fashion refers to the phenomenon of a regular pattern of change in the prevailing mode of dress. Thus, for example, it could be said that miniskirts were in fashion during the 1960s. Most writers assumed that there existed a vast difference between modern Western fashion and traditional non-Western “costume.” (For detailed analyses

of “fashion” and other closely related terms, and a discussion of the important distinctions among them, please refer to the individual essays on “Fashion” and on “Clothing, Costume, and Dress.”) Traditionally, most publications on fashion have focused almost exclusively on couture or designer fashions worn by elite Western women during the past 200 years. The clothing, adornment, and bodily practices of men, subcultural groups, working-class people, and non-Western and/or premodern peoples tended to be regarded as existing outside the realm of fashion; such topics were treated by scholars, if at all, as subfields of sociology, anthropology, folk arts, or decorative arts. This encyclopedia takes a very different approach. There are, for example, numerous entries on the clothing fashions of different historical periods and geographical areas. Fashion, in these pages, is not treated solely as a phenomenon of the modern Western world; full recognition is given to such fashion-oriented cultures as Tang dynasty China and Heian period Japan. (See, for example, the entries on “China, History of Dress,” “Japanese Traditional Dress and Adornment,” and “Japanese Fashion.”) Survey essays in those fields are complemented by more specific topical entries (“Kimono”; “Qipao”), just as Phyllis Tortora’s magisterial survey of “Europe and America, History of Dress (400–1900 C.E.)” sets the stage for numerous topical entries for the world of Western dress. And as Parminder Bhachu’s essay on “Salwar-Kameez” demonstrates, the categories of “Western” and “non-Western,” like those of “traditional” and “modern” dress, are highly permeable; similarly, disciplinary boundaries between history, sociology, anthropology, material culture, and other academic fields are transcended in the new field of fashion studies. It has been our explicit aim in this encyclopedia to create a work that is historical, cross-cultural, and multicultural in approach, and that will facilitate dichronic and comparative research.

The editorial team spent considerable time and effort identifying significant topics and commissioning articles from scholars who are among the world’s leading authorities in their fields. Dorothy Ko, for example, is unquestionably the world’s greatest expert on footbinding. A respected scholar of Chinese women’s history, Professor Ko takes an unexpected, yet thoroughly documented, view of this 1,000-year practice. Readers of her essay may want to explore further by reading her book *Every Step a Lotus* (2001). Elizabeth Barber, author of our essay on “Prehistoric Clothing,” is famous as the author of *Women’s Work: The First 20,000 Years* (1994). Elizabeth Anne Coleman, whose 1982 exhibition *The Genius of Charles James* at the Brooklyn Museum was one of the first museum exhibitions to treat fashionable dresses unambiguously as works of art, has contributed a deeply insightful survey of James’s work for this encyclopedia; her catalogue of that exhibition is *the* authoritative book on the subject. The list of highlights could go on and on. Walter Karcheski Jr., chief curator of the Frasier Historical Arms Foundation and a world-renowned historian of armor, has contributed an exemplary essay on armor with particular attention to its relationship with clothing. The essay on “Jewish Costume” by Orpa Slapak and Esther Juhasz of the Technical University of Israel is both wide-ranging and deeply learned. One of the greatest pleasures of being Editor-in-Chief of this book has been the opportunity to read hundreds of lucid and authoritative essays by a stellar team of expert contributors.

Since the nineteenth century there have been numerous descriptive and illustrated histories of dress, including classic works such as Auguste Racinet’s six-volume *Le Costume Historique* (1888), Octave Uzanne’s *Les Modes de Paris* (1898), and Elizabeth McClellan’s *Historic Dress of America* (1906). There were also pioneering attempts to interpret the cultural significance of fashion, such as Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), George Simmel’s *Philosophie der Mode* (1905), and J.C. Flügel’s *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930). (The history of the study of fashion is also described and analyzed in this encyclopedia; see the essays on “Historical Studies of Fashion” and “Theories of Fashion,” as well as individual essays on many of the most important fashion theorists from “Jean Baudrillard” and “Walter Benjamin” to “George Simmel” and “Thorstein Veblen.”)

Among the most popular fashion histories published in the mid-twentieth century were those by James Laver, C. Willett Cunnington, and François Boucher, who amassed a wealth of information and developed a detailed chronology of styles, although Laver’s and Cunnington’s attempts to interpret these styles, often in terms of women’s sexual

psychology, were seriously flawed. More useful in the long run were detailed studies based on the interpretation of artifacts, often carried out by curators or collectors such as Doris Langley Moore. Their work laid an essential foundation for further advances in the study of clothing and fashion. There remains a division between object-oriented researchers (often curators) and university-based fashion theorists (some of whom lack detailed knowledge about the history and construction of dress). As with maritime and military history, dress history has become increasingly concerned with larger issues of social and cultural significance; as the field has moved on, some scholars have remained trapped in older, antiquarian approaches to the subject. Conversely, until very recently few scholars outside the narrow confines of costume history showed any interest in clothing as a subject of scholarly enquiry, probably in part because of the long association of fashion with “femininity” and “frivolity.” Certainly, few academics thought of fashion as a subject to be taken seriously. (For example, scholarly studies of history very seldom include index entries for “clothing,” “dress,” “fashion,” and related items.) The basic fact that virtually all humans wear clothes on a daily basis was perhaps too obvious to be noticed; it faded into the background of ordinary behavior.

In recent years, however, the study of fashion has been revolutionized, as scholars from other disciplines began exploring the intersections between dress, body, and the cultural construction of identity. Awareness began to spread in the academic world that clothing is not only a part of daily life, but that the ways people choose, acquire, wear, and vary their dress can say a great deal about such issues as class, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, group identity and behavior, and aesthetics. Cultural, social, and economic historians, art historians open to new methodologies, anthropologists, semioticians, philosophers, students of material culture and design history, and scholars informed by feminist theory, critical theory, cultural studies, and studies in gender and sexuality all showed increasing interest in the hitherto despised subject of fashion. Pioneering works include Ellen Moers’ *The Dandy* (1960), Anne Hollander’s *Seeing Through Clothes* (1978), Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), Philippe Perrot’s *Les Dessus et les dessous de la bourgeoisie* (1981), Elizabeth Wilson’s *Adorned in Dreams* (1985), my own first two books *Fashion and Eroticism* (1985) and *Paris Fashion* (1988), Rozsika Parker’s *The Subversive Stitch* (1989), Daniel Roche’s *La Culture des apparences* (1989), and Caroline Evans’s and Minna Thornton’s *Women and Fashion* (1989). By the 1990s, the field was rapidly expanding.

In 1997, when I founded *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, the journal took as its starting point a definition of “fashion” as “the cultural construction of the embodied identity.” By that definition, the term fashion embraced all forms of self-fashioning—from street styles like punk and hip-hop to body alterations such as tattooing and piercing. In many ways, this encyclopedia represents the flowering of a new generation of fashion scholars and curators, many of whom have published in *Fashion Theory*. Among them are Rebecca Arnold, Djurdja Bartlett, Christopher Breward, Caroline Evans, Amy de la Haye, Peter McNeil, Alexandra Palmer, and Claire Wilcox, to name only a few. Yet those wishing to study fashion still confront problems with professional training, since few universities offer advanced degrees in the subject. Nevertheless, the new approach to fashion studies has had a real and positive impact, not only in academe but in the museum world as well.

Just as the history of fashion was becoming richer and more theoretically sophisticated in the 1980s and 1990s, so also the exhibition of fashion in museums was moving away from static antiquarian displays to theatrical presentations of innovative themes. As fashion exhibitions proliferated, a much wider public began to take fashion seriously as a cultural phenomenon. The recent revolution in the study and display of fashion has contributed to the richness and depth of this encyclopedia and will also, I believe, make it a work that is interesting and useful to a very large and diverse readership. It will appeal, of course, to professionals and students in fashion design, museum studies, theatrical costume, textile arts, and other strongly clothing-related fields; but I hope it will also be extensively used by “mainstream” historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, journalists, and many others. Because all people wear clothes, there is almost no field of enquiry into

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human affairs that cannot be enriched by a consideration of clothing and fashion; I hope that this encyclopedia, the first of its kind, will assist its readers in making use of that insight.

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*Valerie Steele*  
*New York, October 2004*