

## Groovy Baby! WQmen's Fashion in the 1960s

### The Revolution of retail

Women's fashion of the 1960s maintained a complex relationship with identity politics, gendered stereotypes, socio-cultural and political ideologies, and notions of liberation. Evolving at an accelerated pace, fashion and retail interacted with the metamorphosing consumerist counterculture of America. Strident feminists like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem were transformed into fashionable celebrities, idols to thousands of college educated women who copied their styles and the idea of being an independent "Single Girl". Between 1960 and 1971, the uniform for women's liberation took on many guises. It ranged from the smartly dressed newspaper columnist in a dress, fake eyelashes, and immaculately styled hair, to the "dress-for-success" woman in man's suit and make-up-less face. Although the symbiosis between 1960s fashion and feminism is undeniable, it is theoretically problematic because materialism, consumerism, and the aesthetic expression of femininity regularly conflicted with the ideologies of radical left-wing feminist groups like WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell). It is easy to consider "the feminists" as a homogenous mass of women, unified by gender and their defiance of patriarchy. However the multiple factions within feminism which took over a decade to come into full fruition demonstrate that political ideology is never universal.

#### Fashion Timeline:



"Busy Gal" Barbie (1960-1961)

**1959:** Introduction of the Barbie Doll – originally modelled on a "naughty" cartoon character which had been translated into a 3d German adult doll.

**1960:** Birth control pill comes onto the market; Jacqueline Kennedy becomes First Lady and introduces the pillbox hat.

**1962:** Diana Vreeland becomes Editor of *Vogue*, Helen Gurley Brown writes *Sex and the Single Girl*.

**1963:** Publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan.

**1964:** Civil Rights Act; Mary Quant introduces the mini-skirt; the Beatles come to America and working-class "mod" culture booms. Simultaneously French designer Andre Courrèges introduces the "space age" look.

**1965:** "Go-go boots" and "Mary Jane" flats are popularised.

**1966:** Edwardian influences replace space age fashion; NOW (National Organisation for Women) founded by Betty Friedan.

**1967:** "Cover Girl" forced to remove hexachlorophene from their products and launch medicated "natural look" make-up.

**1968:** *Vogue* writer Anthony West, publishes "Who Takes Advantage of American Women? Men"; Women protest at Miss America finals in Atlantic City; Ti-Grace Atkinson unites far left radical women's groups into the "Feminists".

**1969:** Apollo 11 lands on the moon.

**1970:** Publication of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex*, and Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful*.

**1971:** Retailers begin to endorse the no-bra look, as mannequins appear with nipples.

**Models of the 1960s:** Veruschka (Vera von Lehndorff), Twiggy (Leslie Hornby), Jean Shrimpton, Penelope Tree, Angelica Huston, Edie Sedgwick, Marisa Berenson, Peggy Moffitt, Colleen Corby.

# The Transatlantic Women's Movement: Cultural and Literary Perspectives

## Primary sources

**Mary Quant:** "I came in wanting to create for people like me and for a life that was very real: women who had a job a fantasy life that took that job into account." (Lobenthal 1990, 9)

**Gloria Guinness:** "You asked me to report to you on the new super world of the young. Well, I have bad news. We are being licked. They are invading our territories, stealing our pleasures and destroying our illusions." (Guinness 1964, 120-121)

**Penelope Tree:** "You can't look like *Vogue*. It doesn't want you to... It just wants to show you what individuality is." (Lobenthal, 181)

**Germaine Greer:** "Women are so brainwashed about the physical image that they should have that, despite popular fiction on the point, they rarely dress with *éclat*. They are often apologetic about their bodies, considered in relation to that plastic object of desire whose image is radiated through the media." (Greer 1971, 261)

**Una Stannard:** "[Women] obediently conform every time the fashion masters crack the whip. A woman conforms to all the whims of the cosmetic and fashion industries so that she will not be singled out from the mass of women, so that she will look very like other woman and thus manage to pass as one of the fair sex." (Stannard 1971, 188-189)

## Secondary sources

- 1) "Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer, Kate Millett, and others who were prominent in the movement differed from each other, often dramatically, in their dress, grooming and manners. Their styles of self-presentation were visible statements of philosophy, identity and past history that connected them to other women who shared similar beliefs, loyalties and experiences." (Scott 2005, 284)
- 2) "All subcultures establish trends which feed back into the dominant culture and in fashion as elsewhere, nonconformist space must be continually renegotiated. By a process of symbiosis, cultural "deviance" is disarmed." (Evans and Thornton 1981, 31)
- 3) What typified the 1960s was "the consolidation of a new feminine ideal. Young, single, economically self-sufficient, the ideal incarnated the notion of movement, of a culture in transition." (Radner 2000, 128)

## Bibliography

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