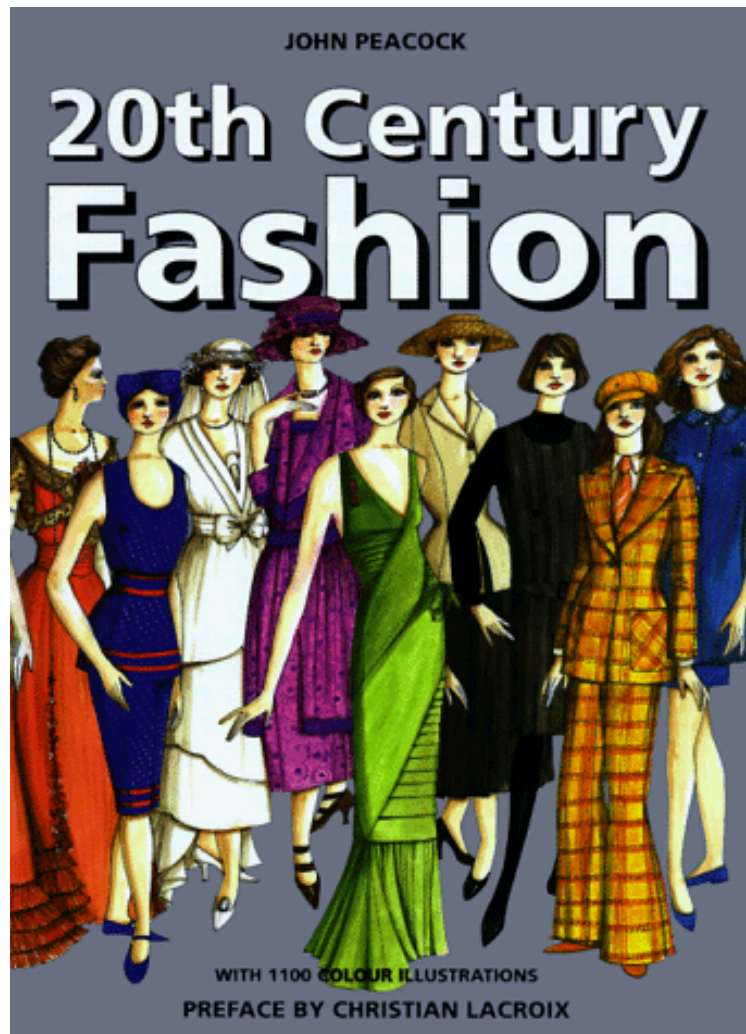


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20th-Century Fashion : The Complete Sourcebook

John Peacock

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John Peacock : 20th-Century Fashion : The Complete Sourcebook before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 20th-Century Fashion : The Complete Sourcebook:

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Some strengths, but some serious weaknesses By Elizabeth A. Root I am very disappointed with this item. I bought it on the strength of Peacock's Shoes: The Complete Sourcebook, and the fact that Thames Hudson was the publisher (another reputation bites the dust). One problem that both books share is that the title doesn't really convey the scope. I realize that it is hard to define vague areas, but this is more or less Western European and American fashion, it is only about women's clothing, not even the 2003 reprint covers the entire 20th century (it's 1900-1990), and "complete sourcebook" is a bit of an exaggeration. Christian Lacroix claims in the Preface that the fashions of the 1990s are too diverse to be covered. How "fashion" is defined is one of the chief

problems with the book. The basic plan is a good one: fashions for various occasions along with their associated underwear and accessories. The book is broken up into sections covering 5 years (e.g., 1900-1904). Each section has a page each of haute couture, accessories (usually shoes, purses, hats, wraps, and oddly enough, tops such as blouses and sweaters), leisure wear, underwear, evening wear, bridal fashions and two pages of day wear. Coats, jewelry, wigs, gloves, etc., are covered only sporadically. All are illustrated in color by 1100 drawings of a number of garments with dates; only the haute couture are attributed to specific designers. Apparently in order to save pages, the keys to the illustrations, with detailed information about the items, are grouped together in 10 year increments. I find this a bit annoying, but I understand the motive. This is followed by a very useful section with silhouettes for the beginning and ending of each five year period, with description of typical details: e.g. fabrics, trimmings, necklines. This is followed by brief vitas of designers and a bibliography. There are some oddities in this admirable plan. I was born in 1953, so I remember several decades. Slips start vanishing from the illustrations in the 1960s, even though Peacock still shows plenty of dresses, and are pretty much absent in the 1980s. I suspect more women wore slips later: dresses and skirts were actually more popular than a decade earlier. Contrary to the impression conveyed in the drawings, women did not stop carrying purses in 1970-1974 and 1985-1990. Worse, Peacock has ignored some of the major trends in 20th century clothing: blue jeans and denim; the decline of hats; and the rise of the woman's business suit. Even given that a book of this size can't really be "complete" this is a major failing. The industrial revolution made clothing relatively cheap: even the poor could afford new clothing and affect designs. As Christian Lacroix says in the Preface: "... the more the century progresses, the greater the gulf between magazine images of fashion and what is actually being worn on the street." Peacock seems to ignore this. Lacroix continues less accurately: "There is no risk of that with this book ... the every day is ... side by side with fashion's idealized images." Peacock himself says: "As dictated by the couturier, fashionable dress represents an ideal which few women attain but to which many aspire." He states that this book is his impression of the "ideal". I question defining fashion as strictly determined by couturiers or designers. They are a phenomenon of only the last couple of centuries; fashion existed long before they did. Historically, fashionable clothing was available only to the fairly wealthy and was an indication of their status. Now more people can afford designer clothes, but choose not to wear them. Bell-bottom jeans were as much a fashion of the 1960s-1970s as mini-skirts. Further, jeans were later created by some of the fashion designers that Peacock lists. There are only hints that hats were pretty much abandoned except for cold weather and, in some cases, religious venues. Someone once described this as the greatest revolution in Western costume! When I was young, most women would never have gone to church or anything other than the most casual event without gloves and a hat. If they didn't have a hat, many put a handkerchief on their head. Now it is very common for women to be bare-headed. Lastly, the business suit, particularly the knee-length versions that have probably been the most common, are virtually ignored. The variety of types of garments are a major strength of this book, and some people may want it for that reason. I think it is a very poor representation of how people, even those consciously following some fashion, actually dressed. I suspect that many people with a great interest in the fashion of these years have this information already, and it is questionable as a sole, basic source. Certainly I wouldn't suggest that a novelist, say, rely on this as a representation of clothing in the last half of the century at least. One wanting typical clothing would do better to consult Tom Tierney's American Family paperdoll series (American Family of the 1940s Paper Dolls, etc.).

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
Theatrical costumer
By JPI purchase this book after referencing a friend's copy. This book is an excellent reference source and I love all the visuals.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Essential for any costumer
By Marcia Heiser I've been needing this book for decades, now finally was able to get it! Thanks, now on with the Creativity! (Stealing and reproducing all the great styles!)

A detailed history and sourcebook of 20th-century fashion. From the styles of the early 1900s to those of today, John Peacock charts the development of women's fashion in all its aspects: couture wear, day wear, under-wear, leisure wear, evening wear, bridal wear and accessories. Fashion's greatest international designers and designs are all found here: Worth's visiting dresses, Poiret's and Chanel's suits, Balenciaga's classic gowns, Dior's New Look, Mary Quant's mini-dresses; right up to designs from Vivienne Westwood, Christian Lacroix, Calvin Klein and many others. Photography could never capture so faithfully the dazzling variety of these designs. John Peacock's research has allowed him to reproduce in detail their lines, shapes, weaves, patterns and colours. Arranged by decade, the pictures are accompanied by descriptions of each garment and accessory, including fabric, cut and pattern. The reference section includes a time-chart summarizing the development of fashion and dress-shapes, biographies of couturiers and designers, and a bibliography. John Peacock was for several years senior costume designer for BBC Television and is now Head of Costume for BBC, Pebble Mill, Birmingham. He has also written "Fashion Sketchbook 1920-1960" (1977) and "Costume 1066-1966" (1986), both published by Thames and Hudson.

From Library Journal
An experienced costume and fashion designer, as well as a lecturer and author on fashion history, Peacock has meticulously created a visually rich sourcebook illustrating 90 years in the development of women's fashions. Each division, representing a decade, begins with his choice of the "ideal" work of leading couturiers,

followed by sketches of leisure, day, evening, and bridal wear, as well as underwear and accessories. Principal changes for five-year periods are depicted through a fashionable silhouetted outline, with notes on various modifications. Brief biographical data are included for selected designers, though birth/death dates are not provided for all entries. For deeper insight into the social and economic factors influencing the evolution of style, see Lew Hall's *Common Threads* (LJ 1/93). Recommended as a valuable source of inspiration and a visual history for the fashion enthusiast, historian, designer, and theater arts students and to libraries serving those patrons.- Vicki Gadberry, Mars Hill Coll. Lib., N.C. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.