



# The American Look: Sportswear, Fashion and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s New York

*Rebecca Arnold*

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Drawing on a wonderful array of sources, from fashion magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* to department store records and surviving garments, *The American Look* presents a rich and multi-faceted exploration of the development of a distinct New York fashion style in the 1930s and 1940s.

Tracing the growth of the sportswear fashion industry from its functional origins to its adoption as casual wear for all occasions by career women and housewives alike, author Rebecca Arnold shows how New York's emergent style in the interwar period was both dynamic and modern--much like the city itself. She argues that its essence was expressive of the American ideal of athletic, long-limbed figures and related to theories of body image, gender and class; that its designers such as Claire McCardell, Clare Potter and Tina Leser, were themselves embodiments of the modern, active woman; and that its style was connected not just to ideals of patriotism and democracy, but to notions of cleanliness and hygiene.

Beautifully illustrated, *The American Look* offers a unique insight into fashion, modernity and ideas of Americanness in the twentieth century.

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