

THE GIANTS OF SPORTSWEAR



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== FASHION TRENDS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES ==

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INTRODUCTION

What does sportswear tell us fashion-wise? The Giants of Sportswear recounts the history of the big sportswear labels and highlights the work of designers who revolutionised the world of sportswear.

Looking at personalities in fashion past and present and the past makes us wonder why designers make us radiate and look elegant while doing sports. Sportswear has invaded the catwalks of Paris, Milan and New York, after ruling the streets of New York, Tokyo and London decades before. The world of fashion is open to female designers in sportswear. Stella McCartney, Beyonce, Rihanna make sportswear stylish and glamorous again. Today's sportswear makes us feel both comfortable and elegant, at one with ourselves and in shape. Sportswear has become our second skin. Fall under the spell of sportswear, read its history, feel its elegance and comfort, and get the vibe of sports!

Anyone can do sports. It's just a matter of picking the right sport and sporting outfit that suits you. But there's more to it than just the right pair of running shoes.

Especially for this book, I tested sports shoes from all the big sports labels and I can reveal the most successful pair of sport shoes: the Nike Air Force. The best designer sport shoes were Hogan Rebels. Adidas' Stan Smiths made the most successful comeback in sportswear. Most of my friends label Nike as the most popular brand. Nike's popularity may have something to do with the brand's concept of customising, which means that any client can choose his own model and colour of shoe... Every detail matters in the world of sportswear. Fashion is about recycling, sportswear is about inventing.

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**Are your
sneakers
new or
brand new?**
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Designers try to stun the press with the introduction of the most spectacular sportswear item. Sportswear turns fashion into a marriage between old and new. White is the new black in sportswear. The white elements in successive summer collections from Chloé, Lacoste and Moncler take us back to the early days of tennis, cricket and rugby. Pleated skirts in hockey and netball are favoured because they bring back the style of a British girls' school. There's now a declaration of love from high fashion to the world of sports and vice versa. Sportswear is the secret weapon of 'haute couture'. Why? Maybe because sportswear is about our first impression. Sportswear is linked to sports at a higher and more glamorous level. Sports and sportswear are one. Sport is versatile and rich. So is sportswear. We have definitely seen a glamorisation of sportswear during the last decade. Top Haute Couture brands Chanel, Vivienne Westwood, Dirk Bikkembergs, Prada and Rick Owens add elements from sportswear to their collections and 'turn the catwalk into an unlikely place of SPORT'

Do we absolutely need to be fashionable when doing sports? Stella McCartney says YES in our interview in which she opens up about her collaboration with Adidas.

Sportswear is more than catwalk nonsense and is now finally being taken seriously. Women in the world of sports are becoming more important and open up a new field for players from the big sports labels. The regular sports lover may wonder about this new formality of sportswear and question why there is more to it than practical function and comfort.

A runner needs the correct clothes to perform at a peak level. Winning remains the ultimate goal. Winning in style is the goal of the sports star who becomes the face of the brand and when the brand is his face. That is also why brands have adopted a logo or created a name to make the brand live on in the minds of everyone. Within fashion it is time to think about the attraction of sportswear. Sportswear starts where fashion once started: from fabric to outfit. It is all about the material to create comfort. Sportswear is a billion dollar business and one of the most lucrative and important businesses in the world of fashion. Sportswear evokes our sense of comfort and style. That is why men and women buy sports items. They simply want or need them. That is the usual attitude towards sportswear. Now, however, unconventional approaches are in each new collection of sports outfits and sneakers

* Vogue editor Nick Remsen.

from the leading brands, or latest gadgets in the world of sports. The dividing line between sportswear, street wear and Haute Couture has disappeared. Sportswear has entered leading fashion magazines that seek and promise the perfect body and outfit. Let's get stylishly in shape and relax while reading the story of the giants of sportswear and be inspired by the leading ladies in the international sportswear arena. Listen to the message: 'A healthy mind in a healthy body,' and enjoy! Our body is our investment in the future. Hello sports, hello sportswear...



© Andy De Decker



© Chanel

THE HISTORY OF SPORTSWEAR IN HIGH FASHION

Is sportswear more than catwalk nonsense?

Television and the internet bring sports into our world and convince us of the stylish aspect of sportswear today. Sports brands and Haute Couture labels have a clear vision of how to create and promote their clothes. The idea for this book started as I strolled through the streets of New York in 2010 and saw women going to the office in a suit with white sneakers. I saw how sneakers became more and more popular. Later on, I bumped into Zinedine Zidane on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles.

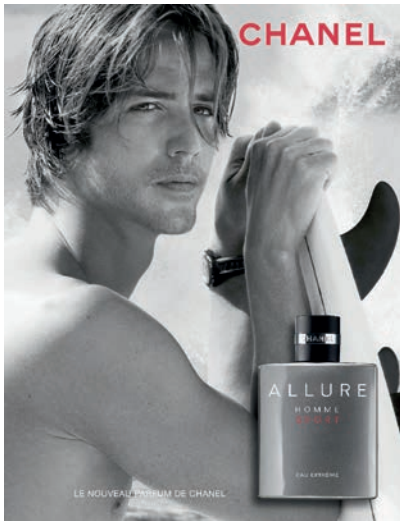
I walked into the Chanel shop and instead of finding Haute Couture dresses I found – to my surprise – a ski outfit in the middle of summer. Karl Lagerfeld said in 2014 that the only way to wear your Chanel couture gown was with a pair of trainers. ‘The more fanciful the gown, the better,’ he opined.



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When did sportswear and high fashion come together for the first time?

Sportswear became a must-have item in the wardrobe of the 1920s elite who wanted to excel in horse racing, cycling, tennis and rugby, and embrace the comfort that sportswear promised. Coco Chanel was the first designer to adopt a sporty look and create *sportive* clothes for women of class. Her style and collections were influenced by sports such as horse racing, fishing and tennis. The famous Chanel suit was made of jersey taken from the sports industry. Her style was extremely masculine. Chanel introduced a more casual style for women and was an



© Chanel

early pioneer in sportswear. She was the first Parisian designer who knew that sport sells, well before American designers followed in her footsteps. She had discovered the secret weapon of the fashion industry in 'sportswear'. Chanel became a fashion prophet while saying, 'Simplicity is the key to all true elegance.' Chanel now has a popular perfume for men entitled, 'Allure Sport' and the Chanel brand focuses regularly on the sports theme with high-profile campaigns.

What do sportswear and Haute Couture have in common?

Haute Couture refers to the profession of a traditional tailor who produces tailor-made clothes. This means clothes in the right size and shape for each customer. Tailor-made clothes and the attention to a high quality manufacturing process were synonymous. Charles Frederick Worth (1826-1895) was the first couturier in Paris to start a revolution in the world of fashion. Worth signed his clothes. His signature or label would then become a collector's item. This simple act hailed the start of branding. He also hired models instead of dolls to show his clothes. His work as a couturier is remembered today as his designs are still used in modern fashions. His name on clothes had the appeal for customers that the logo has on sports brands today.

The name Haute Couture is a protected trademark and refers to clothes which are made by hand. There are only eleven Parisian couturiers who are members of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*. To be a member of this elite group, every fashion house must employ at least twenty people and create at least 75 new designs. When we speak of Haute Couture we think of the hard work and beautiful creations of employees who embroider, sew, knit, design or print by hand. They work with all kinds of materials from leather to feathers. Top French couturier Maxime Simoens explained to me that the difference between Haute Couture and ready-to-wear is about distribution. Ready-to-wear is created for masses of women, whereas Haute Couture is created for just one woman in particular. This difference



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Fashion
happens.
Sportswear
happens
a lot.
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is also reflected in the higher price for Haute Couture, bespoke pieces. Simoens stresses that he always thinks of ‘women in value’ when creating his clothes.

In 1957, Dior described Haute Couture as ‘the last treasure troves of pretty things. Haute Couture should not be accessible to everyone. It just should be there, so that we can feel its influence.’

Was this the end of Haute Couture? The final stages of the art date back to the swinging ‘60s when the American trend of the mass production of clothing became widespread. Fashion became open to everyone and not just to the ‘happy few’ who could afford a couturier who made the right clothes for the right occasion. Haute Couture and ready-to-wear were equally popular and had their own followers yet still influenced each other. Haute Couture reinvented itself by incorporating ready-to-wear, street wear and sportswear.

The success of sportswear goes back to the 1960s but had its breakthrough in the 1980s with the launch of Jane Fonda’s legendary fitness video. Italian labels such as Kappa, Fila and Gucci paved the way for the success of sportswear today.

When is something out of fashion? I think already before the first season.

Adidas, O'Neill, Champion, K-Way and Le Coq Sportif were internationally seen as pioneers in sportswear. Aerobics, sneakers, sunglasses, comfy leggings and T-shirts were part of the daily life of the power dressing '80s.

Sportswear trickled down to a larger, more mass audience and the media gave it the attention it deserved. Top models such as Cindy Crawford, Claudia Schiffer and Christy Turlington were the new *sportive* and curvy celebrities of their generation.

The bikini girl on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* became a superstar and had a promising career. The sporty image of the up-and-coming girl was part of the booming fashion scene. Everyone wanted to spend his/her money on sportswear and bought flashy clothes in the 1980s.

Sportswear became extremely important for the generations X & Y growing up in the '80s and '90s, belonging to hip hop and rap cultures and wearing hoodies and tracksuits.

Music and sports superstars the Beastie Boys, Run DMC and Michael Jordan turned the sports shoe into daily wear. Aerobics and jogging became the trend followed by a million amateur sportsmen. Sports became the aesthetics of a whole generation and sportswear became a true hype.

Thanks to the Internet and social media, sportswear has become an even bigger hype. Nowadays, bloggers and wannabe models have a record number of 'likes' on their Facebook, Instagram or Twitter pages, and people wonder what or who is next.



© Nike

Let's get back to where it all began...

In Britain, designer John Redfern was the tailor who made activewear for women on the sports field. His clothes were designed for tennis, yachting and archery but were worn by women all day.



© Adidas

In France, couturiers Patou and Chanel launched the trend of making sportswear sit next to high fashion and attracted attention from leading magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*.

Vogue, the world's leading fashion monthly publication, has long covered sport, and dedicated some of its front covers to female athletes and sporting heroines.

In 1929 *Vogue* also published the first ad for sportswear by Abercrombie and Fitch in which they showed the positive image of a girl in sportswear. The sports hype started for *Vogue* in The June Issue in 1940, merging the shape of the letters of the alphabet by artist Erté with sportswomen of the time.

The magazine has since then dedicated more and more pages to sports in both their summer and winter editions. *Vogue* often marvels in the world of sports and shows its readers how sports and fitness are part of people's health-conscious lives today. 'Sporty chic' makes us dream of ski resorts around the globe with multifunctional flashy items, and daring ski outfits in wintertime for skiing on and off piste.

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