



The Bikini: A Cultural History (Temporis)

Patrik Alac

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It was in 1946 that the world first came to hear of a coral atoll in the Marshall Islands called Bikini. The following year, French couturier Louis Reart borrowed the name and applied it to a bathing costume for women. Breaking with decades of boring conformity, Reart dared to 'undress' women's bodies in order to better emphasize what remained clothed -- albeit in tiny wisps of material. By taking up the bikini as popular beachwear, women also found themselves thinking differently about their bodies. An ideal of perfection was many times reinforced by the appearance on the cinema screen of such stars as Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot and Ursula Andress, all of whom featured in bikinis that accentuated their own gloriously curvaceous contours. More than a bathing costume, the bikini made its own contribution during the 1970s to the sexual revolution, to the changing relationship between men and women in general.

This book investigates the history of the bikini as a way of noting the change in the perception of women by society, as women have regained responsibility for the way they look and laid claim once more to full sexual equality. A wealth of pictures throughout the book illustrates this womanly progression step-by-step over more than 50 years.

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