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The clothing worn in the past affords an invaluable insight into lifestyles that have disappeared forever. Choice of dress has always been affected by numerous influences-social and economic, artistic and technical-and, of course, the vagaries of individual taste.

Art of Dress Details

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From Reader Review Art of Dress for online ebook

W.M. Gordon says

Very detailed and lusciously illustrated.

Bethany says

This is a good description of the evolution of clothing as it relates to society. I was hoping for a bit more detail regarding the fashion changes and maybe more of a story than just a recitation of facts. Interesting for someone interested in clothing progression for the time period, but not for the average reader.

Eyehavenofilter says

The clothing worn in the past affords invaluable insight into the lifestyle that has disappeared forever. Choice of dress, has always been affected by numerous influences, social status, economic and artistic views, technical ability of the creator and of course the taste of the client or person that the clothing is made for. This collection represented here is sectioned off into 8 separate chapters.

The first two (Gorgeous Attyre and Careless Romance) primarily represented by paintings of the ear from 1500 to 1603 and from 1603 to 1702.

The third entitled Wigs and drapery has a few photos and starts with 1660 and ends in 1720.

Uniformly Elegant has more photos and has some incredible material with some of the most beautiful embroidery I've ever seen.

Perfect Cut and Fit moves on to switching, gathering, silks and satins that are lush and soft, with brocades and edging that is amazing.

Tyranny of Fashion has lovely trim, velvets and ball gowns.

Swaddling to Sailor Suits: Children's Clothes, has children dressed as small adults with very little room to play.

Dress Suitable to Their Station. Clothe soft Servants, how they ever got any work done being so restricted is beyond me.

Thank goodness for stretchable material, I would have died back then.

But the clothing is just beautiful to look at, hell to actually wear.

The book certainly shows what it was like to live back then, trying to duplicate the embroidery or trim to the standard seen in some of these paintings, cost a fortune for costume designers.

Juliana Palacios says

The author writes in a snotty demeanor and repeats information. Still interesting to see the evolution of dress though!

SamuraiKitty says

This is a luscious book of historical fashion. Informative and gorgeous photographs. I highly recommend.

Tory says

The engaging history is accompanied by wonderful photos of period dress.

Ashley says

I'm probably the only person I know who would want to read about the history of English fashion . . . but I really liked this book. Each chapter was divided into major periods of fashion and not only did the author discuss the types of clothes that people wore (and why), but also the fashion industry and market for each time period--the manufacturing of fabrics, the booths and shops that specialized in lace or linen, and the people who were commissioned for the sewing like tailors, mantua-makers, or seamstresses, and the development of the sewing machine. It's crazy how English fashion was dictated by either the current monarch or the French.

Usually it's women's fashion that I find more interesting, but the detailed descriptions of men's fashion really intrigued me--until the late 1800s, men dressed like clowns! One of my favorite parts of the book described the history of men's wigs. Men started to wear them in the 1600s because the French king lost his hair and had a wig made--so everyone had a wig made and then it became a status symbol because they were so expensive to make. The author describes a crime ring in London of robbers carrying children in baskets on top of their heads so the children could snatch the giant wigs from unsuspecting fashionable fellows--men were warned not to wear their wigs in certain parts of London!

Well, I could go on and on about this book. But if I could go back in time, I would visit Queen Elizabeth's court to see all of the amazing clothes that she and her court wore--some men even mortgaged their property in order to buy a suit of clothes that would catch the Queen's eye and possibly her favor. That's a whole lot of pearls and silk velvet. But thank goodness men don't wear pantaloons and stockings anymore--by the way, the modern men's tie evolved from the Elizabethan ruff so I guess some things have hung around.

Laura says

The Art of Dress is a wonderfully thorough overview of English fashion, perfect for anyone with an interest in fashion history. Spanning 1500-1914, it provides an in-depth look at not only what was in style at a particular time, but why something was in style, and how fashions evolved over the years.

Many fashion books I've read focus on women's fashion, so I love that this book delves just as deeply into men's fashion. In addition, it has entire chapters devoted to children's fashion and servant's clothing, as well as sections detailing how and where people shopped, the development of the fashion industry, and how styles were disseminated. It is clearly very well-researched and is filled with photos, paintings, prints, and primary sources.

The text can be dense and slow. And at times, I found some of the information repetitive. For example, the second half of every chapter discusses how and where people shopped in a certain time period, but the information doesn't change - the same streets and same stores in London. I swear the book covers the development of department stores at least three times! It would have been better to consolidate the shopping information into one chapter at the end of the book, as was done with children and servant's clothing.

But despite a few minor quibbles, it's a very informative and interesting book filled with beautiful fashion.
