Bad Girls of Fashion: Style Rebels from Cleopatra to Lady Gaga by J. Croll

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Abstract


Vancouver journalist and fashion historian Jennifer Croll, author of *Fashion that Changed the World* (2014), has here shifted gears to acquaint younger readers with the role of fashion in the history of women's empowerment and liberation. Through the lens of biography, Croll traces the gradual rise of Girl Power reflected in, and partly driven by, the fashion choices of forty women, all of them “Style Rebels.” She divides them into ten categories that include Leaders, Modernizers, Instigators, Gender-Benders, Radicals, Decadents, and Freaks.

Egypt's Queen Cleopatra VII and England's Queen Elizabeth I crafted their regal images partly through their fashion choices; Cixi, the Dowager Empress of China, also outlawed the binding and deforming of girls' feet; the excesses of France's Queen Marie Antoinette helped to seal her doom; Amelia Bloomer and George Sand (aka Aurore Dupin) scandalized nineteenth-century society by shunning traditional women's clothing; Coco Chanel replaced traditional corsetry and petticoats with comfortable fashions (and gave the world an eponymous perfume); fashion magazine editors Diana Vreeland and Anna Wintour reigned as arbiters (many said “dictators”) of late-twentieth-century fashion; artists as geographically and culturally diverse as Japan's Yoko Ono and Rei Kawakubo and Mexico's Frida Kahlo influenced fashion with their idiosyncratic styles; movie stars such as Louise Brooks, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, Diane Keaton, and Cher Bono became trend-setters in fashion by expanding acceptable boundaries of femininity and gender; while pop-star singers Madonna, Lady Gaga, Björk, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, Beth Ditto, and the ladies of Pussy Riot pushed still further the limits of attention-grabbing self-expression in their attire (or lack of it).

Croll's cast of characters is a large one—this is only a partial list—but one that she stage-manages adroitly. It's also one that could have been considerably expanded; one notes, for example, the absence of such iconic, fashion trend-setters as Katherine Hepburn and pioneer aviator Amelia Earhart. Book designer Natalie Olsen has provided a stunning layout, one awash in bold colours, and illustrated with both photographs and original, caricature portraits by Polish illustrator Ada Buchholc. In this serious contribution to social history, the author neither shuns, nor sensationalizes, but treats lightly some of her subjects' love affairs, marital infidelities, sexual preferences, and the role and influence of Lesbian fashions. These nonetheless mark this excellent book as one best suited to older, the publishers suggest ages 12+, and adult readers. Recommended for all public, high-school, and academic curriculum libraries, as well as specialized women's studies collections.

Highly Recommended: 4 out of 4 stars
Reviewer: Merrill Distad

Historian and author Merrill Distad enjoyed a four-decade career building libraries and library collections.
Deakin News!
Jennifer Croll is the author of Fashion That Changed the World and has written for magazines including NYLON, Adbusters, and Dazed and Confused. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. Ada Buchholc is a Polish illustrator whose clients around the world include New Republic, Little White Lies, and enRoute. George Sand. Marie Antoinette. Coco Chanel. Lady Gaga. Twiggy. These are only a few of the women we meet. And each story inspires us to be truly ourselves in the most fabulous way possible. 29 May 2018 - Published on Amazon.com. I loved the Bad Girls of Fashion! I’m sure there were women left out but for me this book was just the right length and had just enough info on each lady to pike my interest. Read Bad Girls of Fashion by Jennifer Croll and Ada Buchholc by Jennifer Croll, Ada Buchholc for free with a 30 day free trial. Read eBook on the web, iPad, iPhone and Android. Readers will learn not only about changing fashion styles through history, but about changing historical attitudes toward women, and the links between fashion and art, film, music, politics, and feminism. With an energetic, appealing writing style, Croll demonstrates how through the ages, women – often without other means of power – have used fashion as a tool, and how their influence continues to shape how women present themselves today. Published: Annick Press an imprint of eBOUND Canada on Sep 13, 2016. Additional Information about Bad Girls of Fashion. ISBN: 9781554517886.