

The Forties Effect: An Appraisal of the Definitive 1940's Look and its Influence on Fashion

The Forties
Effect

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Abstract *This article explores 1940's fashion. Much has been documented about the huge influence Dior's 1947 New Look had on fashionable clothing, as the industry conspired to reinvent itself as an economic and cultural power after World War II. The introduction of highly feminised and luxurious styles reinstated fashion as a viable concern globally and has arguably been recognised as the defining style of the 1940's. During World War II the fashion system of design, manufacture and export within the western world, virtually ceased. Many dress historians (Arnold, 2008; Breward, 1997; Guenther, 2004; McDowell, 1997; Robinson, 1976; Taylor, 1992; Steele, 1998; Veillon, 2002; Walford, 2008; Wilson & Taylor; 1989) have suggested that fashion ideas froze from 1939 to 1947. Deeper research identifies that during this period of style and trend starvation, many diverse and interesting design ideas arose from the restrictions imposed and Veillon (2002, p.145), has suggested that this period instigated what we now identify as Street Style (Polhemus, 2010). This research investigates the diversity of design ideas produced between 1939-1947 in order to establish whether pre or post 1947 can be upheld as the definitive 1940's look, one that influences contemporary fashion designers and one that we identify with as a conclusive style today.*

Key words *Forties; Style; Fashion; Influence*

Introduction

The research focuses upon the period 1939-1947 in female, western fashion. It considers fashionable clothing at all levels of production, from those made at home to the haute couture and examines how the fashion industry defines 1940's style and its enduring design influence. With the occupation of Paris and the introduction of strict clothing rationing in Europe and to a lesser extent the USA, fashion could no longer be dominated by couture clothes, designed for a wealthy clientele. It became democratised, controlled by legions of home dressmakers, ingeniously fashioning an abundance of style ideas established as a result of the efficiency restrictions imposed. As Veillon (2002) said, "The traditional image of woman subjected to the whims of fashion and to strict rules was shaken. A new style was about to be born." (p. 38) Before the outbreak of war in 1939, couturier collections featured garments showing

fuller skirts reaching just below the knee, this length would remain in style for day dresses throughout the war years. Emphasis was moving to the back, with halter necklines and high-necked, backless evening gowns with sleeves. Dresses with matching jackets were worn to the theatre, nightclubs, and elegant restaurants. Day clothes predicted the uniform silhouette of 1939-1945, boxy jackets with shoulder padding and knee length skirts either flared or straight.

It is important to distinguish what constituted the defining looks both pre and post 1947. Early 1940's style has been described as ugly, square, clumpy, boxy and ungainly (Breward, 1997; Howell, 2012; McDowell 1997; Taylor 1992). Oxforddictionaries.com (2013) describes 'ugly' as "unpleasant or repulsive, especially in appearance." (p. 1) In this context the clothes have generally received an unfavorable evaluation. Austerity initiatives such as Britain's *Make Do and Mend* (introduced in 1943), were not concerned with fashion and stylish clothes. Contemporary fashion photographs and illustrations of the prevailing silhouettes reveal a utilitarian look often produced from odd scraps of fabric or re-worked from older garments and worn with bulky wedge shoes and oversize hats and turbans. The clothes appear to be poorly constructed, produced in an amateurish, home dress-made way, often due to reduced professional manufacturing capabilities. For instance hand-knitting was greatly encouraged, old pieces of knitwear were unraveled and scraps of wool were used to knit garments. This led to a resourceful ingenuity in design with many bizarre colour groupings. Examples of sparse 1940's knitwear could be seen at a vintage 1940's event I attended in Haworth, located in the Yorkshire region of the



Figure 1.
1940's vintage twinset worn at Haworth 1940's weekend



Figure 2.
1940's Fair Isle vintage jumper worn at Haworth 1940's weekend

UK and include the twinset in Figure 1 and horizontal stripe sweater in Figure 2.

The New Look introduced by Christian Dior in 1947, was essentially a collaboration between French textile magnates, devised in order to re-instate the French fashion industry as a global force. Through the sponsorship of mill owner Marcel Boussac, Dior launched his couture house in February 1947. It was an immediate global success, christened by the editor of American Harpers Bazaar, Carmel Snow, as the New Look. Dior's highly feminized clothes were the opposite of homemade, boxy wartime fashions. The look featured, a full bust, sloping shoulders, and a tiny corseted waist above full circle, ankle length skirts. As rationing was still a force in many countries, the collection caused an outrage. "Mr. Dior we abhor dresses to the floor," (LaCava, 2013, p. 2) screamed the placards outside a Chicago department store when the collection was shown in the USA. The adverse publicity however only served to promote the collection, embraced by women seemingly starved of luxury through years of wartime austerity.

Arguably a clear definition of pre and post 1947 can be established. From 1939-1947, boxy jackets, padded shoulders, angular hips, fitted skirts enhanced by wartime design restrictions and fabric shortages abounded. Hadley Freeman (2000) summed it up in his Guardian report, "The cinched waist, the angular hips, the fitted skirt: this structured almost parodic description of the female form is what comes to mind when thinking of 1940's fashion." (p. 20) Post 1947 can be defined as a return to femininity achieved through rounded shoulders, padded bras and hips, an abundance of fabric and an increased flamboyance in design, despite continued post-war restrictions. This look continued well into the 1950's.

Following the theory about material culture in which the relationship between products and their social context is examined (Berger, 2009; Kirkham & Webb, 2013; Woodward, 2007), I explore the recurring assemblage of 1940's styles in fashionable dress. This assesses predominant forties styles and their legacy to the fashion industry and is contextualized through an historical overview of the period, a study of original 1940's garments, analysis of forties influences on contemporary fashion designers, scrutiny of fashion students' work and an evaluation of styles at a 1940's vintage event. The main objectives are to:

Identify the different stylistic characteristics of pre and post 1947 styles in western female fashion.

Explore the opinions of fashion consumers and fashion professionals including: designers, students, academics, vintage consumers and journalist's and consider their understanding of 1940's looks, their influence on fashion and if these views form a varied perspective.

Discuss design ideas created during the period 1939-1947 and consider the ways in which 1940's fashion potentially instigated street style.

Historical Overview

The literature review, which is mainly embedded in the text, considered the small amount of research into the history and aesthetics of 1940's fashion (Arnold, 2008; Breward, 1997; Guenther, 2004; Hardon 2010; McDowell, 1997; Robinson, 1976; Taylor, 1992; Walford, 2008). Several less scholarly publications

were considered. These were picture journals of 1940's styles and focused predominantly on early 1940's clothes, providing a useful visual insight (Baker & Elgin, 2006; Howell, 2012; Sessions, 2013). During World War II, the fashion industry and its established system of design and production slowed down in Europe. Consumption of fashion became rationed with the introduction of clothing coupons restricting how many clothes an individual could purchase. The seasonal showing of collections to buyers also changed, as manufacturing became geared to the war effort. Fashion almost stopped and from its decline an interesting new approach to clothing the body emerged. "The result was innovative and more unique clothes on the streets than had ever been seen before." (McDowell, 1997 p. 97)

The occupation of Paris from 1940-1944 has been cited as the catalyst for the fashion crisis (Taylor, 1992). A much broader investigation of the period did not take place until 1990 when Veillon published her research into the activities of Parisian couturiers. This analysis was expanded by Taylor who discussed how, 12000 employees remained in the couture trade with over sixty couture houses continuing in business. She commented,

From 1940-1944 French couture style evolved as usual despite the extraordinary circumstances of its manufacture. Waists grew smaller and hems and hips wider and fuller, with more emphasis on drapery. Alongside these styles, the Victorian mood—so prevalent in Paris in the late 1930's—continued to inspire the couturiers, with bustle effects and fuller skirts. Shoulders remained large and very square (1992, p. 131).

The first significant investigation of fashion in the UK during this period was through an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in 1997, 'Forties Fashion and the New Look'. In its display of garments, the exhibition described the journey from sinuous 1930's glamour, through to shoulder padded wartime gravity and the full-skirted New Look. Reviewing the exhibition Christopher Breward (1997) said, "Nostalgia, perhaps, is the primary sensation encouraged by a display that prioritizes notions of the 'classic' image or the 'classic' cut, and many visitors appeared to be pining romantically for the lost era of glamour and sophistication conjured up by the exhibition designers." (p. 318) The British Government introduced a Make Do and Mend programme in 1943 to encourage people to repair or remake old clothes as well as a utility scheme. Utility was a series of restrictions applied to the manufacture of clothes. These needed to be, "Basic necessary garments not fashion fads or extreme designs." (Wilson & Taylor, 1989, p. 118) Make do and Mend was a great success and a book was published featuring a 'Mrs Sew and Sew' character. She encouraged those who could sew as well as those who could not to ransack their wardrobes, making dresses from old sheets and curtains or coats from discarded blankets or bedspreads. Incongruous fashion statements were made using patch-worked scraps of fabric.

The French, English and German governments issued ration cards that controlled the number of clothes purchased within a year. Many articles in magazines and newspapers offered creative solutions for people to make the most of their paltry quota and collections from couturiers who remained open were conceived "With regard to the Parisian woman's new way of life, her comfort, walking, the terrible

cold, all are provided for, but elegance is maintained.” (Veillon, 1990, p. 34) The Nazi government introduced its first clothing ration card, the Reichskleiderkarte in 1939. Similar to their French and English counterparts this quickly inspired women to create their own individual styles, incorporating traditional dirndl skirts with the prevalent forties boxy silhouette, “We had to,” one woman recalled, “Trying to stay clean or to look nice in even the smallest way made us feel better in all of that grimness.” (Guenther, 2004, p. 272)

Fashion historians such as Taylor (1992) have noted that designers and couturiers who continued in business seemed stylistically at sea. She commented, “They seemed to have lost their flair, turning out a jumble of directionless styles, some with bustles, some severe and tailored.” (p. 137) Women in France quickly reacted to the restrictions by employing a diversity of innovative clothing ideas derived from available resources and the fashion quickly spread for outfits made of different and unusual fabrics. This established a market place of ideas and previous perceptions about what could or could not be worn and the sort of materials from which fashionable clothes could be made were turned on their heads. Veillon (1992) suggested that this period instigated what we now term street style and modish clothes were, “No longer the exclusive property of a wealthy class that could have their clothes made to order. The trends created, ‘a wartime fashion’ in which ‘street wear’ sometimes combined with the eccentric.” (p. 145) Street styles set fashion trends and this reached its zenith with the ‘Liberation of Paris’ in 1944, when women celebrated in their finery on the actual streets. The revelry was epitomised by young women wearing victory frocks, made in boxy forties styles from English, German, French and Russian flags and worn with wedge shoes and unmanicured, frizzy hair.

Examination of 1940’s Garments

Object-based research in significant UK fashion collections (Leeds Museums and Galleries, Imperial War Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Bath Museum of Fashion and Snibston Discovery Museum) allowed me to examine both original 1940’s clothes and contemporary fashion inspired by the 1940’s. Cross referencing this with theory related to material culture expanded my knowledge of pre and post 1947 fashion and the social value of the clothes through an increased awareness of how they were designed, produced, worn and in what circumstances. It allowed me to consider the social and historical context of individual garments and compare this to my secondary research. Through the observation and handling of garments I was able to identify both subtle and obvious differences between both pre and post 1947 female fashion. I also had the opportunity to discuss these differences with costume curator Natalie Raw from Leeds Museums and Galleries. She confirmed their collection contained some interesting examples of clothes from the early 1940’s that retained a sense of fashion in their ingenious and homemade approach to cut and style. The utility garments in the collection detailed how manufacturers produced fashionable garments within the confines of design and fabric restrictions. They contrasted markedly with the post 1947 garments I examined, which used a demonstrably greater volume of fabric in the cut and in the longer skirt lengths.

The costume collections included other artifacts related to the garments such as a 1943 photograph from The Imperial War Museum. This depicts pupils from a London County Council dressmaking class holding a fashion show to demonstrate how they had reconstructed garments during the Make do and Mend campaign. Interestingly the ideas were all been transplanted onto the prevailing boxy, short-skirted silhouette of the early 1940's. The fashion show featured amongst others a Mrs. Johnson, wearing a re-structured version of her wedding dress bought twenty years previously and a Mrs. Hill, sporting a skirt constructed from a pair of postman's trousers.

The difference in the silhouettes of the early and late 1940's was illustrated in some of the structured garments I examined. They included a brown overcoat from 1943, designed with a utility label and produced by an unknown manufacturer under strict rules governing use of design and fabric. The coat is cut to the knee with little flare to the skirt yet has narrow pleats. The padded masculine shoulders give squareness to the aesthetic. This contrasts with the bell shaped, Dior jacket from the New Look collection in 1947, which is cut in a way that emphasises roundedness. The bust looks very curved and the jacket is fitted with a narrow almond sleeve and a curved, unpadded shoulder. This iconic outfit of jacket and full circle, ankle length skirt, utilising a non-utilitarian, extravagant length of fabric, was quickly copied by other designers working in the late 1940's and demonstrates how manufacturers quickly established their own versions of the New Look.

Analysis of Forties Influences on Contemporary Fashion

An analysis of contemporary trends influenced by 1940's fashion reveals how fashion designers have interpreted the look. There has been much research suggesting that fashion revivals are inaccurate (Baines, 1981; Clark & Palmer, 2004; Jenkyn-Jones, 2011) however fashion designers unlike costumiers are not concerned with reinterpreting historical and vintage fashion looks accurately. In general they translate retrospective looks in a new and contemporary way. As Bromley and Wojciechowska (2008) said, "Although the silhouette was extended and the proportions altered from what one would see as balanced, the 1940's has been a source of inspiration for a number of designers from the 1970's onwards." (p. 69) The Internet unearthed several press reports about 1940's inspired styles and revealed how journalistic catch phrases encapsulate fashion and popular culture from the decade (Copping, 2007; Hayes, 2003). Reports for both newspapers and magazines, incorporate catchy titles referring to forties popular culture. Phrases include, "The boogie-woogie bugle boy of Paris; Forties fashion with a flourish as Galliano brings a sense of fun to Paris," (Hayes, 2003, p. 1) "Fashion: Brief encounter with the Forties," (Hume, 1994, p. 1) this refers to the David Lean film 'Brief Encounter' from 1945, "Nip and tuck: Forties fashion is a cinch." (Copping, 2007, p. 1). Interestingly my analysis identified that the fashion press generally classified a forties look as pre 1947 and the catch phrases in the news stories are early forties references.

Arguably the first contemporary fashion designer to be enthused by the 1940's was Yves Saint-Laurent in his spring/summer collection for 1971. Saint-Laurent was inspired by the cross-dressing

superstar, Candy Darling who featured in Andy Warhol's underground movies. She had adopted vintage early forties looks as staple parts of her wardrobe in an attempt to recapture some of the glamour of Hollywood's past. Saint-Laurent's collection caused great controversy, it was felt that it romanticized the German occupation of Paris and marked a return to the ugly utilitarianism of the time. Christened "Une Grande Farce" by the French newspaper France-Soir the collection parodied the sartorial aesthetics of the early 1940's featuring wedge heels, shoulder padding and faux furs.

The early forties look resurfaced again during the mid 1980's when the shoulder padded inverted triangle look of 'power dressing', boxy jackets and tight knee length skirts, evoked Joan Crawford's wardrobe in 'Mildred Pierce' (1945). Popularized by actress Joan Collins in the television series 'Dynasty', the styles marked a return to Hollywood glamour in a decade that thrived on excess and consumerism. Inspired by the growing trend for vintage fashion in the 1990's designers such as Calvin Klein incorporated 1940's looks into their collections "Calvin Klein's collection is central to the current run of Forties-style dressing. What some smart women are buying instead is second-hand Forties dresses that touch the knee right at the point Klein decreed in his autumn show." (Hume, 1994, p. 1) In 2003 John Galliano presented a forties inspired collection for his own label. Press reports declared he, "Sent out models plastered in Joan Crawford style makeup in square shouldered jackets, pencil skirts and curvy dresses paired with seamed stockings and topped off with natty trilby hats and turbans - all to a souped-up version of the Andrews Sisters' Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy. He even threw in "Vargos Girl" style saucy lingerie." (Hayes, 2003, p. 19)

Analysis of Fashion Students' Work

Action-based research in the design studio allowed me to work with fashion students developing their degree collections, which are the culmination of their course. This methodology took place over a ten-year period (2002 -2012) in a UK University, fashion department. I analyzed photographs of approximately 500 different collections within this timescale in order to identify how many had been inspired by the 1940's. I also devised a short questionnaire that was sent to over two hundred fashion students in a university fashion department. The questions attempted to identify how burgeoning fashion specialists defined 1940's looks. I received 56 replies and queries included:

What does 1940's fashion signify to you?

Are there any contemporary fashion designers who incorporate 1940's looks in their work?

Do you consider 1940's fashion to be an important decade in dress history?

Who would you consider to be the most important fashion designer in the 1940's?

The majority of fashion design courses both at undergraduate and postgraduate level culminate in the student producing a capsule collection of garments for a targeted market. This forms a major part of their degree assessment. The student usually writes their own statement of intent for this project in con-

sultation with their tutors and the majority, choose to produce a ready-to-wear collection targeted at designer level. Arguably this is because the students recognize an opportunity to make a significant fashion statement that encapsulates their vision and individuality as a designer. They are encouraged to reflect upon everything they have learnt throughout their course including research, design, styling, fabrication, pattern cutting, garment making and use this knowledge to successfully realize their collection. The student designers select design inspiration from many sources, which includes, amongst many others: nature, architecture, street-style, popular culture, fine art, theatre etc. In the same way as professional designers such as John Galliano and Yves Saint-Laurent, students are often inspired by periods in fashion history. Fashion curriculums teach students about decades such as the 1940's and emphasize how important it is for the designer to incorporate aesthetic aspects of the period or decade: such as colors, fabrics and silhouettes and rework them in a new and contemporary way. I wanted to specifically identify student collections that incorporated themes from the 1940's in order to establish how popular the decade was as a source of inspiration and whether the chosen themes derived from the pre or post 1947 New Look.

I classified the main stylistic characteristics of pre and post 1940's fashion in the introduction and my first concern was to use this analysis to group the student's collections into either an early or late 1940's category. My study initially confirmed that of all the decades from the preceding one hundred years, the 1940's proved most popular. The bias cut looks of the 1930's came a close second with almost equal helpings of 1950's and 1970's styles. Other decades from the past 150 years of fashion history were barely represented. It could be argued that 1940's styles predominated when they were a recognized fashion trend. A ten-year period in fashion however is a significant amount of time and trends do not last this long. My analysis confirmed there were 27 collections inspired by the 1940's in this timescale and the years with the most forties looks were, 2008 with eight and 2010 with ten. There was a huge revival in fashion for shoulder padded forties looks in 2010, which could account for the trend. The looks in 2008 could suggest that students were predicting this trend.

My second concern was to identify if the 1940's styles were predominantly pre or post 1947. From the 27 different collections identified, 21 proved to have a pre 1947 feel with the remaining six, post 1947. The early 1940's were clearly in the majority and on further analysis these clothes demonstrated a greater diversity of ideas and styles incorporating home knitted looks, military detailing, patch pockets inspired by Make do and Mend, trouser suited tailoring and the knee length 'Mildred Pierce' look in Figure 3. The post 1947 looks in Figure 4 consisted of two variations of the full-skirted look of the Dior, New Look suit or his long, straight mid calf look. From this analysis, it could reasonably be concluded there is a prevalent bias for fashion students to design fashionable clothes derived from early 1940's looks. There are limitations to this study and further research could consider professional designer collections over a ten-year period. It could however be argued that fashion students enter industry as professionals and this bias towards interpretation of early 1940's styles remains.



Figure 3.
Pre 1947 inspired forties styles from University of Huddersfield fashion students



Figure 4.
Post 1947 inspired forties styles from University of Huddersfield fashion students

Analysis of Vintage 1940's Event

Vintage clothing is a term used to describe new or second hand garments originating from a previous era. The wearing of vintage dress or mixing vintage pieces with contemporary fashion has become increasingly popular as a fashionable style since the early 1990's. Arguably this interest is partly due to its increased visibility through specialist vintage events and its promotion by top models and celebrities such as: Dita Von Teese, Kate Moss, Chloë Sevigny and Tatiana Sorokko etc. Many high street retailers and department stores such as Top Shop, Urban Outfitters and Liberty now include vintage sections within their stores. The promotion of sustainability in fashion since the 1990's has encouraged the re-using, recycling and repairing of clothing and at the beginning of the economic recession in 2008 the British Government re-introduced an updated version of the Make do and Mend booklet. It could be

contended that the popularity of vintage clothing has risen during recent years as a yearning for familiarity in a society that is constantly changing with technological advancements. This has led to a monopoly of places to buy vintage dress including; antique fairs, flea markets, charity-run second hand clothing shops, vintage clothing shops and vintage fashion and textile fairs.

Participant observation at a vintage 1940's weekend in the village of Haworth, in the Yorkshire region of the UK, provided an opportunity to scrutinize how people interpreted a forties look through the way they dressed for the event. It also allowed me to talk to the participants about their perceptions of 1940's styles. The Haworth 1940's event is a charitable occasion held annually and is an opportunity for devotees of vintage clothing from all over the UK, to dress up in 1940s outfits and enjoy a range of nostalgic activities. The occasion also includes multiple stalls and outlets to purchase vintage clothes and enhance the popularity of vintage fashion assisting the visitors to reconnect with a time gone by. It also provided an opportunity to talk to the participants about their perceptions of what constitutes a traditional forties look. Whilst not necessarily a fashion orientated occasion, the weekend provided an excellent opportunity to analyze how the general public interpreted forties looks, in the way they dressed for the event. Potentially this gives added depth to the research as the results could be compared to the analysis of the fashion students, designers and journalists.

There appeared to be no age or gender restrictions as both young and old dressed in a variety of styles as well as uniforms from World War II. It was apparent that the majority of styles worn represented the period 1939-1947 and reflected the clothing restrictions of this era (Figures 5, 6). A variety of designs were experimented with; including knitwear, trousers, 'Land Girl' looks and clothes that had been patched or re-worked with decorative details from other garments. There were few if any examples of New Look styles however several people wore 1950's orientated looks, which evolved from the styles of the New Look (Figure 7). To the trained sartorial eye these styles appeared out of place and in discussion with the participants it was evident they perceived these looks to be derived from the early forties. This demonstrates a more generalist vintage approach to dressing for the event that belied historical accuracy.



Figure 5.
Pre 1947 inspired forties styles from Haworth 1940's weekend



Figure 6.
Pre 1947 inspired forties styles from Haworth 1940's weekend



Figure 7.
Post 1947 inspired forties styles from Haworth 1940's weekend

The 1940's and 'Street Style'

Inferring that the early forties instigated street style could be an area for much greater enquiry. During a period of austerity and the temporary suspension of the fashion industry, style hungry clothes wearers created diverse and individual outfits from limited resources. Contemporary street style is often considered an anti fashion look, one that derives from individuals creating their own designs that do not evolve from catwalk styles. This creates a sartorial supermarket from which the fashion devotee can pick and mix. Contemporary trends often originate from anti fashion looks such as Punk, Goth, Grunge or Beatnik. These looks evolve from sub-cultural groups who react to the mainstream and like the dress-makers in the early 1940's often create an enduring aesthetic from limited resources. In today's fashion

industry these styles can influence mainstream styles on the catwalk and in the high street.

I attended a study day at Leeds Museums and Galleries, 'Fashions from the Home Front' (2013) in which various speakers delivered papers that analyzed fashion in World Wars I and II. One particular talk focused upon Make do and Mend and the speaker, Meredith Towne observed that Make do and Mend had been prevalent for many years before World War II amongst low income households who had no choice but to recycle clothing in new and interesting ways. She argued that the deprivation of war allowed the government to sanction this iconic term as a viable concern for all. In this way it could be considered that the origins of street style are routed much further back in the history of home dressmaking. The New Look in 1947 reacted to the street styles of the early 1940's in its return to an opulent, austere and luxurious aesthetic, which set the tone for 1950's fashion. This only really began to wane with the advent of youth-culture styles at the end of the 1950's. The ambiance and rebellion of these designs, which often derived from street culture, had a great affinity with the Make do and Mend period of 1939 - 1947.

Conclusion

In the questionnaire given to fashion students one enquiry asked, 'Who would you consider to be the most important fashion designer in the 1940's?' All 56 replies cited Christian Dior and the significance of the New Look collection in 1947. This does not necessarily imply that post Dior, 1947 was the defining look rather it suggests that 1947 was a defining year in fashion. In order to identify the different stylistic characteristics of pre and post 1947 styles in western female fashion, the research focuses on historical analysis, a brief study of 1940's garments, fashion designers inspired by the forties, fashion students' work and 1940's vintage consumers in order to establish whether pre or post 1947 could be upheld as the definitive forties look. The results strongly suggest that pre 1947 styles be considered the most definitive of the decade. I recognize there are limitations to this analysis and a wider perspective could have involved a more in-depth scrutiny of contemporary fashion designers work or considered further perceptions of non-fashion specialists. Successive research could further identify how the fashion industry defines early 1940's style and its lasting design influence both as a reconstructed forties look on contemporary catwalks and as a catalyst for the social and cultural inversion established by the alternative ways of dressing instigated by street style, which in turn influence the design of fashionable clothes.

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