World Clothing and Fashion: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Social Influence

Reviewer(s):

Janet Croft (Head of Access Services, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma, USA)

Citation:


DOI

http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/RR-04-2015-0086

Keywords:
Clothing, Encyclopedias, Fashion

Review Number:
2015/171

Review Subject:
World Clothing and Fashion: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Social Influence Mary Ellen Snodgrass

Publisher Name:
M.E. Sharpe

Place of Publication:
Armonk, NY

Publication Year:
2014

Price:
£88 $155

Publisher:
Emerald Group Publishing Limited

Article

It seems highly counter-intuitive that an encyclopedia of an almost purely visual phenomenon – fashion and clothing – should have an extremely limited number of illustrations, and that those few illustrations should be in black and white. This is reason enough to consider this reference work not worth purchasing.

The encyclopedia is also not extremely well written, researched or fact-checked. For example, the article on Erte attributes Cecil Beaton’s iconic My Fair Lady (1964) Ascot scene costumes to him; Erte was an influence on Beaton’s concept for the scene but not the designer. The essay on
Hippie and Mod fashions describes Mary Quant in such a way that it sounds like she was only a model instead of an influential designer and entrepreneur; the article under her own name is more accurate. The essay on Japanese fashion shows what looks like a Chinese brocade coat, labelled as a kimono; the article on Central American, Mexican and Caribbean clothing mislabels the pictured cornrow-and-braids hairstyle as dreadlocks. The author’s opinions are also often curious. Were Cretan men really less interested in fashion simply because they wore less clothing, as the article on Greek clothing, ancient, states? The frescos of Knossos would argue against this; the male and female figures are equally beautifully coiffed and clothed; the men’s kilts as elaborately bordered as the women’s skirts and bodices; and the loincloths she mentions as typical male wear were practical garments worn by both sexes for the bull dancing.

Such carelessness, on top of the inadequate illustrations, leads me to recommend against the purchase of this book.