



What Shall I Wear?

Claire McCardell

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The revolutionary fashion designer credited with originating "The American Look," Claire McCardell designed for the emerging active lifestyle of women in the 1940s and '50s.

She was the originator of mix-and-match separates, open-backed sundresses, and feminine denim fashion; she started the trend for ballet flats as a wartime leather-rationing measure. Spaghetti straps, brass hooks and eyes as fasteners, rivets, menswear details and fabrics: they were all started by McCardell. Her Monastic and Pop-over dresses achieved cult status, and her fashions were taken up by working women, the suburban set, and high society alike.

First published in 1956, *What Shall I Wear?* is a distillation of McCardell's democratic fashion philosophy and a chattily vivacious guide to looking effortlessly stylish. Mostly eschewing Paris, although she studied there and was influenced by Vionnet and Madame Gres, McCardell preferred an unadorned aesthetic; modern and minimalist, elegant and relaxed, even for evening, with wool jersey and tweed among her favorite fabrics.

What Shall I Wear? provides a glimpse into the sources of McCardell's inspiration--travel, sports, the American leisure lifestyle, and her own closet--and how she transformed them into fashion, all the while approaching design from her chosen vantage point of usefulness. A retro treat for designers and everyone who loves fashion--vintage and contemporary--and teeming with charming illustrations and still-solid advice for finding your own best look, creatively shopping on a budget, and building a real wardrobe that is chic and individual, *What Shall I Wear?* is a tribute to the American spirit in fashion.

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