

A woman with dark skin and styled hair is seated on a patterned chair. She is wearing a voluminous white fur coat over a bright orange bikini top. She holds a large, ornate white fan in her right hand. Her accessories include multiple necklaces, including a long beaded one, and she is wearing blue thigh-high stockings and high-heeled sandals. The background features a wall with traditional East Asian floral and architectural wallpaper. The word "Lingerie" is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image.

Lingerie

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Foreword

“Know, first, who you are, and then adorn yourself accordingly.”

— Epictetus



“Volupté” ensemble
under wire bra and panties.

Chantelle creation. Fall/ Winter 2003

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Lingerie is directly and very strongly related to a woman's intimacy. For centuries, men have always believed that lingerie was created with the aim of seducing them. This desire to seduce undeniably exists.

However, in choosing to wear pretty and seductive underwear, women behave and carry themselves in a slightly egoistic and indeed narcissistic way. Furthermore, lingerie can help a woman feel good about her body, helping her thus to like and accept it, and in doing this, affirming a real sense of self-confidence. The reason behind it is simple. Surprisingly, although no-one can see our underwear, it contributes effectively in enhancing our silhouette and sometimes even shaping it to our personal preferences.

All too often, lingerie has been treated as an object of seduction. Men themselves have created this phenomenon: to see a woman only in her underwear is infinitely more sensual and sexual than seeing a woman entirely naked. One could associate lingerie with high heels for the latter effect, the way in which a woman walks, making her more seductive, charming and provocative.



Chantal Thomass

Collection Fall/ Winter 2001-2002

Associated with stockings, high heels have a power, an obvious fetishist virtue, for both men and women. The perception and judgement of the female body has gone through changes over the years, if one compares for example, our time, the beginning of the 21st century, to the years between 1960 and 1970.

In the 1960s, when a woman married, and moreover when she became a mother, her body could no longer be considered seductive. Today, this outlook is completely old-fashioned and obsolete. Women feel the need to be attractive, whatever their age, whether it be prior to marriage or after, and even years later.

As proof, a grandmother today can still be a beautiful woman and feel it by dressing herself in some appealing underwear, which enables her to make her body more beautiful. This evolution (or revolution?) of morals concerning lingerie is directly related to the innovations and technical contingencies in the creation of underwear, and the subjection to historical events. The history of lingerie deserves to be put in the spotlight. Lingerie, in contrast with the world of fashion, is a state of mind. One can love lingerie and envy looking after one's body whether one is 15 or 75! The world of prêt-à-porter is a completely different universe from that of the world of underwear.



Clothes always target a particular age group: the fashion of a teenage 15 year-old is different from that of a 30 year-old woman.

This is why lingerie is more a question of mentality and of human nature. A plump woman can feel good in her body, accept who she is and have a desire to emphasize that beauty by wearing gorgeous underwear. Lingerie should respond to all these aspirations and suit every kind of woman. A designer's work should be orientated towards this fulfilment.

Pair of stays

first half of the 17th century
Iron, Inv. 2002.2.X
Leloir Fund, Musée Galliera, Paris





To create lingerie that satisfies different women's styles, one should observe those women who surround you: daughters, assistants, even women in the street! Poses, which one notices in films, can also help to inspire. Besides those who surround, who play an important role in suggesting new designs, the material is also a source of inspiration.



Pair of stays

English, c. 1660-70
pink watered silk backed with
linen stiffened
with whalebone and trimmed with
pink silk ribbons
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London





The fabrics are essential. Lingerie is the type of clothing worn closest to the female body and is in contact with its intimacy, the fabrics and lace have to be agreeable, but not exclusively. Today, lingerie has to be comfortable and practical. If it was 30 years ago, French women (in contrast with American women, for example) accepted and did not balk at wearing and hand-washing a piece of delicate lingerie, with lace, which even needed ironing at times. Today, that is no longer acceptable.



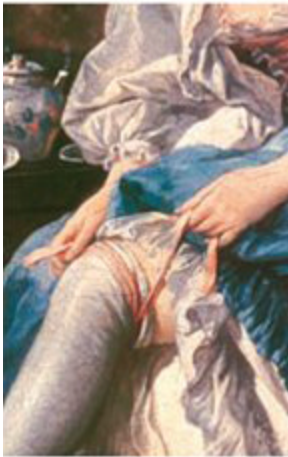
The Morning Toilet

Jan Steen, c.1663
Oil on wood, 64.7 x 53 cm
Royal collection, London





Lingerie should be machine-washable, with no need for ironing, and should incorporate all the essential elements of comfort, with the beauty of the creations. The evolution of different textiles used in the creation and the making of underwear remains an unforgettable aspect. Besides the materials, the colour of lingerie plays an important role too.



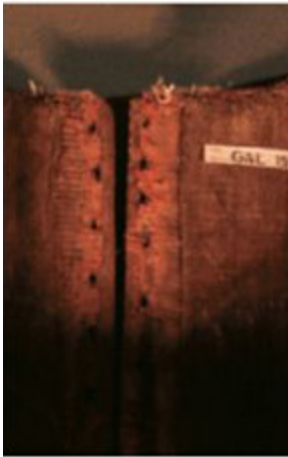
The Toilet

François Boucher, 1742
Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 65.5 cm
Thyssen-Bornemisza collection,
Madrid





Black and white are always extremely flattering colours for the skin. Black, (more particularly) allows the softening of bodily flaws that we all have. Hot colours (pink, red, raspberry) are also enhancing colours. On the other hand, cold colours used for lingerie are always more difficult to work with. Greens and blues are magnificent, but all too often evoke swimming costumes.



Body with whalebone

18th century

Fabric decorated with flowers,

Inv. 1920.1.1856

Leloir Fund, Musée Galliera, Paris





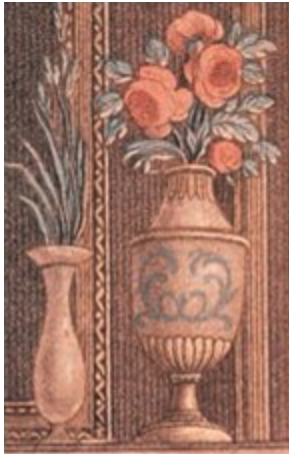
Lingerie should be associated with women's pleasure. The element of seduction remains, especially with certain pieces of underwear, which are not trivial. Certain pieces are fascinating and provoke an inevitable attraction. Stockings and suspenders make a woman extremely enticing, indeed entrancing. Strapless bras, girdles and bras can be worn under a transparent blouse.



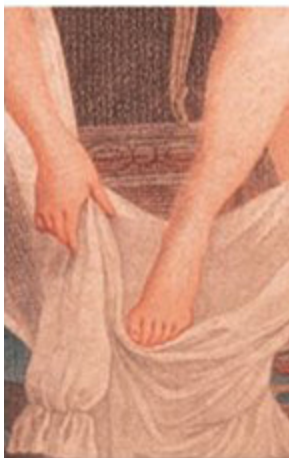
“Undressed for the bath”

Anonymous, 18th century
Engraving from the series “Baths
and Toilets”
Musée Carnavalet, Paris





This could produce a mysterious and clashing effect and can be fascinating to the eyes of others and overtly flattering for the woman who dress in this way. There are two kinds of lingerie in my opinion. On the one hand, a woman has the underwear that she desires to show (girdles, suspenders and stockings), and on the other hand the kind of underwear that one wears uniquely for oneself.



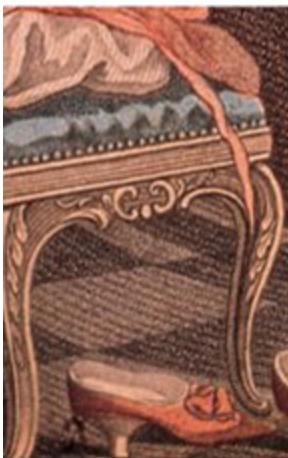
Baths and Toilets #7

Anonymous, 18th century
Engraving
Musée Carnavalet, Paris





This latter category should be pleasant for the eye, but also extremely comfortable. Concerning tights, for example, I believe it is very important to make tights which are charming and delicious, so that one could wear them every day and be able, despite everything else, to conserve a seductive power, when one undresses in the presence of a man.



Baths and Toilets no.10

Anonymous, 18th century
Engraving
Musée Carnavalet, Paris