



1000 Dessous: history of Lingerie

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This is an intimate exploration of the props of our theatre of desire. Since the beginning of civilization, women have worn underwear. Justified as protection, or a hygienic necessity, this "second skin" was devised to satisfy perverse erotic instincts. A "trap laid by Venus" to entertain and stimulate the fantasies of both the woman who wears them and the man who discovers them. Corsets, bras and panties are not utilitarian items - they are elements in a mystic ritual linking man and woman. They act as an obsessive focus for fantasy, for the sex they conceal is powerless without the decorations and seductions which separate us from it. Pleasure would perish without censorship. Women have always known how to stimulate the latent fetishism of the men around them. Under her dress, a Greek girl of the classical period would wear a belt around her hips which was of no practical use except to draw attention to her femininity. Likewise, the women of Rome already wore garters round their thighs, though the stocking had not yet been invented. In our own century, vamps, starlets, pin-ups and models have filled our cinema screens, our advertising hoardings, our office calendars and our imaginations with the erotic engineering of the garter belt and the surreptitious rustle of nylon stockings. "Dessous" traces the evolution of this living mythology from its first steps in the dawn of civilization to its apotheosis in the films and advertising campaigns of the modern world. Lavishly illustrated, it demonstrates how the conflict between the need to conceal and the will to reveal has provided women with the means to explore their own sexuality and exercise an erotic ascendancy over men. The result is a richly aphrodisiacal meditation, an intimate exploration of the props of our theatre of desire.

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