

Women's Fashion (1939–43)

Abstract

In the 1920s, German cities were cosmopolitan places. The “New Woman” [*neue Frau*] of the Weimar era was often identified by her unconventional tastes in clothing, including shorter hemlines as well as more androgynous and youthful styles. When the Nazis came to power, they attempted to promote fashions that appealed to nationalist fantasies of peasant culture, like the dirndl shown in the first image here. This style was featured in popular magazines like *Die Koralle* and *Die Dame*.

In reality, however, most women wore modern urban styles similar to those in other European countries, and in peacetime the regime encouraged the growth of the fashion industry, as a way to demonstrate Germany's expanding economy to international audiences. Designers such as Hilda Romatzki created outfits like the white skirt and floral jacket (below) that were featured in the Berliner Modelle Gesellschaft's (the organization of German fashion designers) 1943 collection. After the onset of war in 1939, pants became a more practical for women, who travelled around on bicycles and worked in factories. Officially, the Nazi state rejected certain modern looks, discouraging the use of heavy makeup, permanent hair waves, and female smoking. Despite public pronouncements against these practices, women mostly continued to dress and act as they wished—that is until the war and its effect precluded the purchase of makeup, hair products, and new clothes impossible.

Source





Source: 1) *Trachten unserer Zeit* (1939), Callwey Verlag, Munich.
2) *Die Dame*, no. 12, June 1940. Courtesy of Kunstbibliothek Berlin.
3) *Die Mode* (Januar–Februar 1943). Courtesy of Kunstbibliothek Berlin.

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