

[ADVERTISING]



A 1966 advert for Alamac's Bobbie Brooks Sportswear from Taschen's 20th Century Fashion.

I've seen the future – and it's stretch fabric

20th Century Fashion: 100 Years of Apparel Ads

edited by Jim Heimann and Alison A Nieder
Taschen £27.99, pp463

Some things only really make sense in their time and fashion is one of them. That is possibly the only explanation for why the bunch of guys in this 1960s advert for a Bobbie Brooks sports outfit are wielding baseball bats and what look like rolled-up yoga mats. It is one of several pleasures to be had from Taschen's picture book *20th Century Fashion*, which chronicles a century

of style through fashion adverts and showcases the images that persuaded an eager public that what it needed, more than anything, was an oversized butterfly collar, a Sta-Flat girdle or a white, all-in-one jumpsuit.

A wrinkly elephant wearing trousers, for instance, alerts us to the crease-free glories of "Sanforized plus" cotton. A naked woman lies next to a Weyenberg shoe under the decidedly anti-feminist headline: "Keep her where she belongs." Converse sneakers, we're told, are "Limousines for your Feet". And then there's the wartime ad for Lee Jeans, apologising

to its customers for a recent lack in supply, that opens with the line: "You'll wake up some morning with the last belligerent Jap gone the way of his ignoble ancestors..." Alongside the headscratchers is a host of arresting visuals. From gorgeous 20s luxury to the peppy colours and mind-altering swirls of the 60s, to the 80s raunch of Calvin Klein, these ads didn't just change the way we dress, but the way we saw the world. **EMMA JOHN**

To order 20th Century Fashion for £25.99 with free UK p&p, go to observer.co.uk/bookshop or call 0330 333 6847