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Traverse 

# eHow

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## Fashion Illustrations of the 1950s

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Fashion illustration communicates the look of fashion through an illustration, drawing or painting. Fashion illustrations of the 1950s were noteworthy for their impact after the second world war. When austerity set in during wartime, everybody rationed and spent with caution. Fabric and qualified sewers were few, and fashion illustrations of the time reflected austerity as well. The end of the war brought a new more prosperous mindset to fashion illustration, just as to life itself. Illustrators were important assets to '50s era advertising in general, and fashion illustrators above all were especially admired.

### Illustration Techniques

The '50s fashion illustrator had a distinctive drawing technique. A well-defined primary illustration was positioned under the top, final illustration paper, and used as a guide for the artist who applied color and then black lines. A light table was often used so that thicker textured illustration

paper could be used for the final artwork.

## Drawing Styles

Bold black strokes and visual textures were prevalent in 1950s fashion drawings, particularly to show design and texture features. Other techniques, such as romantic images created with soft pastels, and popular pen and ink, wash illustrations had a more "finished" sketch look, like those that illustrators sketched at the couture collections.

## Sewing Pattern Illustrations

Sewing pattern envelopes were common sites for fashion illustrations, and required impact and visual textures for the benefit of pattern consumers. Simplicity, Butterick and other pattern companies focused on the garment so the artist developed color areas first, then showed garment design and color details, leaving the high light areas detail free to avoid a flat or even effect. These were lovely drawings with attention to detail. Sewing pattern envelopes, according to Pattern Junkie.com, "were chock full of eye-candy, calling out to you: 'Buy me, Sew me. With me your life will be joyous, glamorous, carefree.'"

## Notable Illustrators

The '50s era saw true fashion icons of the day, the illustrators who brought a new fashion sense to millions of women across the world. At the end of World War II Dior designed the "New Look," a feminine style that was molded upon a woman's feminine curves. This look aimed to counter the

depression of the recent war, as Dior believed women were fed-up with the uniforms and plain clothing of WW II. His optimistic use of watercolor and other mediums highlighted his great fashion work. Rene Gruau's exaggerated sense of fashion design had a lasting impact on the fashion industry of the time. Alfredo Boiret, another noted illustrator, worked for iconic designers Dior, Chanel, and Balmain, in addition to top fashion magazines, Vogue and Glamour. Another illustrator, known in the '50s as a shoe illustrator, eventually became more famous for his soup can prints, but Andy Warhol was a great influence in fashion illustration.

## Resources

- [Victoria and Albert Museum, 1950s](#)
- [Fifties Web.com, Fifties Dresses](#)