

# Wrap Star

Since Adam and Eve first used fig leaves to make “aprons,” these garments have weathered mixed fashion fortunes. But at the spring collections, they leapt from the kitchen to the catwalk. At Miu Miu, they were slung over silky skirts; Junya Watanabe’s models swayed with tribal-motif aprons over patchwork denim skirts; and at Marc Jacobs, a 1940s-style apron was cinched with a Lurex-shot sash. Up to the early 20th century, aprons were predominantly worn by servants. But in 1917, according to Elda Danese’s book “The House Dress,” Herbert Hoover, then the director of the Food Administration, developed a plan for civilians to supply food to the military; housewives were issued a beret and coveralls that became known as the Hoover Apron. During World War II, Diana Vreeland, working at Harper’s Bazaar, challenged the designer Claire McCardell to create an attractive garment to meet the needs of women “who faced the facts of life.” McCardell’s “popover,” a tie-fastened denim shift with patch pockets and a quilted oven mitt, sold in the hundreds of thousands. Soon aprons became associated with apple-pie moms, but across the Atlantic stars like Sophia Loren were using them to emphasize their swaying hips. With the advent of women’s liberation, though, aprons became passé, and it wasn’t until the ’90s that designers like Helmut Lang and artists like Andrea Zittel began re-examining them. At Zittel’s Smockshop (smockshop.org), artists still produce one-off versions. Lately, the cult of the apron has been gaining ground—witness “Desperate Housewives” and the earthy *mamacitas* of Pedro Almodóvar’s films. Apron•ology, a magazine targeting haute-apron fanciers, was introduced this month. In Japan, “hadaka apron” fetishists enjoy imagery of women wearing nothing but an apron—an aesthetic that evokes some of Thakoon Panichgul’s flesh-baring dresses. Whether the apron’s latest reinvention is a response to our current economic climate, a longing for the maternal comforts of home or just a formalist conceit, one thing is certain: once spring is in the air, more than a few women will be tying one on. ZARAH CRAWFORD

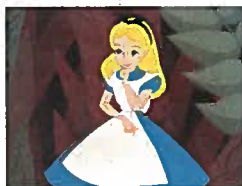


**Claire McCardell** redefined American style with her functional smocks.



A 1951 evening dress by **Jean Dessès** made apron dressing glamorous.

## RETURN ENGAGEMENT



**Alice in Wonderland** may well be the most famous apron wearer ever.



According to 1950s ad campaigns, **desperate housewives** could glam up their chores with cheery aprons.

In her 1979 “Untitled Film Still No. 35,” **Cindy Sherman** assumed a domestic persona.



Prairie aprons were just one element in **Marc Jacobs's** multilayered Americana collection.

There is nothing remotely dowdy about **Miu Miu's** slinky, hip-slung aprons.



## NOW TOTING | HARD-CORE ACCESSORIES

The work of the Amsterdam-based designer Ted Noten comes with a manifesto: “Jewelry should be famously curious.” His pieces—a brooch cast from chewed gum, shattered porcelain cups hanging from a gold chain—are not your standard charm bracelet. A few years ago, when Noten, a former psychiatric nurse, was invited to create a piece with pearls for an exhibition, he dressed a dead mouse in pearls and encased it in an acrylic pendant. He recently expanded into handbags with gold-plated guns, pills and designer logos. This April you can see his creations at the Ornamentum Gallery at the SOFA fair (sofaexpo.com) in New York City. MAURA EGAN