

Basic Detail Report



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Title
Annette Kellermann brand one piece swimming tights

Date
1910s

Primary Maker
Asbury Mills

Medium
Machine knitted stockingette

Dimensions
Overall (laid flat): 930 x 450 mm

Name
Swimsuit

History

Born in 1886 in Marrickville, Sydney, Annette Kellerman was a New South Wales swimming champion who left for England at age 18 to help her struggling family. She competed as a long distance swimmer, attempting to swim the English Channel three times, and swam against men in the annual race along the Seine in 1907, coming equal third. Kellerman established herself as a performer through exotic swimming and diving demonstrations. By 1906 she had moved to vaudeville theatre in America as 'Australia's Mermaid' and quickly progressed to the big screen. Kellerman enjoyed tremendous success as a silent movie star in mythological underwater films, including Neptune's Daughter (1914) and Daughter of the Gods (1916). Her move to vaudeville theatre in America, titillating underwater films and trademark figure-hugging suits pushed the boundaries of 20th century propriety and turned her into an international star. Kellerman was dubbed 'the perfect woman' and compared to classical ideals of beauty such as the Venus de Milo, by Dr Dudley Sargent, director of a Harvard University gymnasium. She championed women's health, beauty and fitness by giving lectures and writing books such as Physical Beauty and How to Keep It (1918) and the partly autobiographic text How to swim (1918). Kellerman also taught physical fitness through correspondence courses.