



ANMS0438[004]

Title

Woman modelling Peter O'Sullivan designed swimwear

Date

1930s

Primary Maker

E H Turnor

Name

Photograph

History

Peter O'Sullivan became the first Australian to successfully design and manufacture swimwear for export to the United States by creating two innovations. He is purported to have designed the square belt buckle, a feature popularly known as the 'Superman Buckle' and throughout the 1930s submitted patents for innovative designs both within Australia as well as England and America. These applications include designs for the small

skirt across the front of both men's and women's swimsuits known as the 'modesty panel' and an inbuilt support system for men's bathers. O'Sullivan's 'modesty panel' became a feature of Australian and international swimwear fashions right up until the 1970s. His Black Lance swimwear range in the 1930s featured low cut backs, fashionable colours and decorative flourishes. Fashion trends aside O'Sullivan was also interested in providing a better fit and comfort for Australians as the popularity of water sports increased. The O'Sullivan collection includes measurements and notes for swimwear designs for local Surf Life Saving clubs as well as pamphlets on movement and exercise. The O'Sullivan collection as a whole provides a rare example of the design process of Australian produced swimwear from start to finish, from design to distribution. O'Sullivan's selection of clippings, his sketches and the finished products track an influence of global styles that were siphoned through an Australian market to produce distinctly Australian products.