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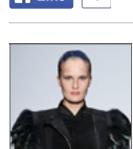
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by Katia Jean Paul published February 28, 2014

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The Crop Top Creeps Up Again This Spring

enjoying a robust revival... and shows no signs of fading back into obscurity. Katia Jean Paul reflects on spring-summer 2014's must-have accessory: a sliver of skin.

The '80s throwback, which made a triumphant return on the fashion stage last spring, is

Last spring, when I first realized that the crop top had crept back up from the dark recesses of fashions past, with women everywhere baring their midriffs, I cringed. My very last memory of the half-shirt wonder was the summer

Before the craze: Women wearing crop tops during a dance rehearsal at the Palace of the Republic in East

Berlin, 1976. Source: German Federal Archive.

of 1999, when three of my high school friends showed up at my doorstep one faithful Saturday afternoon to surprise me on my birthday. When I opened the door, I was greeted with balloons, the requisite happy birthday jingle, gifts, and... the exposed—and admittedly toned—midsections of three lithe figures. I was touched by the gesture, of course, and delighted to see my gal pals, but their bare midriffs taunted me as we walked down the quiet residential street where I lived. Perhaps it was my belief that my stomach wasn't up to par in the face of naturally flat bellies, or the utter certainty that my parents would sooner burn me at the stake than let me leave the house with my belly button exposed for the world to see. And, incidentally, I seemed to had adopted the same attitude towards the crop top when, without any coaxing from my folks whatsoever, my immediate thought when seeing my friends in the half-shirt was, *Now, that's kind of a revealing thing for a 15-year-old to be wearing!* And therein lies the problem with the crop top: it's not exactly what you would call modest attire. "Put away your midriff, ladies!" "Leave something to the imagination!" "Quit pandering to the male gaze!", some might say and,

for a long time, I was right there with them, clamoring for a return to decency. But between then and now,

something has changed. The thing is, crop tops aren't what they used to be. Well, technically they are, only this

time around, much like anything redux, they're new and improved!

restrained, giving off that come hither look while keeping it classy.

Yes, those flimsy tops, like the mesh crop top Madonna gyrated in in the 1983 music video for "Lucky Star", torn tees popularized by the cult '80s flick Flashdance, or sporty bralets that passed for crop tops, are in still in circulation, but the more recent variations are not only more versatile, lending themselves so beautifully to layering come fall and winter, they're also easy on the eyes. The latest offerings are elegant, sophisticated, and much less in your face. They come sleeveless, short sleeved, or long sleeved, and are laced, textured, even bejeweled. And the most appealing: when paired with a high-waisted pleated or pencil skirt or trousers, the ones

that cut right above the belly button reveal just enough, not too much; a sliver of skin that is both sexy and

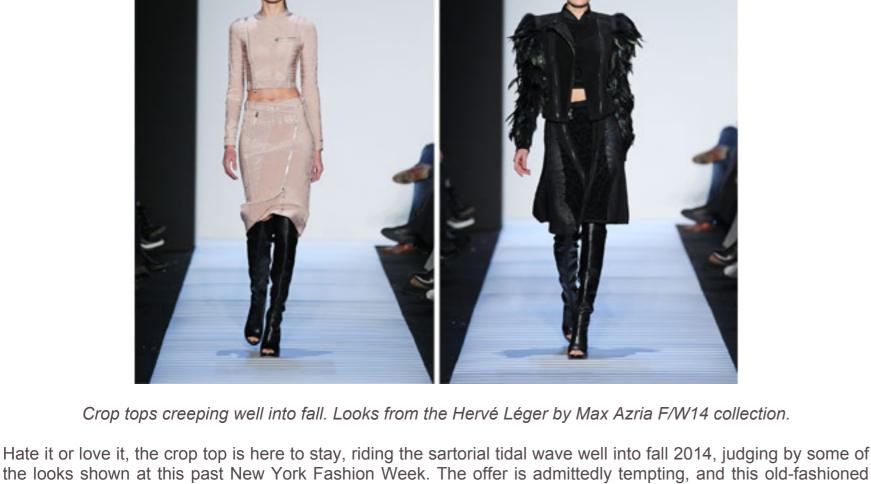
They're so alluring, in fact, that even with a rock hard six-pack, I wouldn't hesitate to go for the lesser-cropped top over its belly-baring counterpart, cut right under the chest. The former is, simply put, retro glam. Though fashion purists are quick to argue that only small figures can lay claim to the crop top, I say have at it. A flat stomach is still required, of course, but I'd wager slim and curvy gals alike can partake in the trend. Much like anything else, the key is to wear one that flatters your figure. A crop top cut close to the body, as opposed to a loose-fitting one, will accentuate the waist, without adding unnecessary bulk to curvier silhouettes. If you can't picture it, just imagine Marilyn Monroe, in all her buxom beauty, rocking a lesser-cropped top with a high-waisted pencil skirt. Better yet, a Google search for "crop top" will yield plenty of images of Beyoncé donning the cropped shirt to perfection. Never did I think I would be writing this, but this steadfast revival has made me a believer in the cutoff shirt .Yes, I love me some crop tops!







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gal is, well, sold! Question is: are you?

Fashion, art, architecture, design, TV, and film: Katia Jean Paul is a Montreal-based writer who

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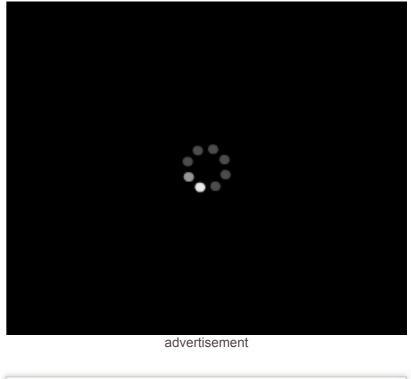
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