



HOT POCKETS

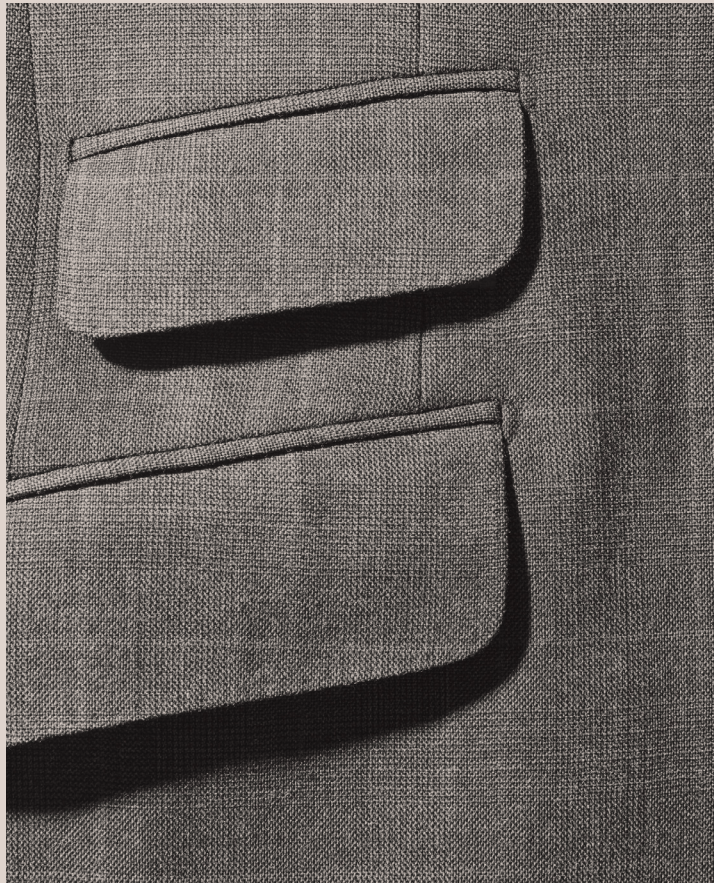
by Harriet Fitch Little

Jeans can look silly: Fake rips and applied bleach stains have made a design famed for its practicality feel anything but. Don't mistake the tiny inner pocket on the front right of jeans for just another embellishment, however. Introduced by the father of modern denim, Levi Strauss, the pocket was added to blue jeans around the 1870s so that miners in Gold Rush-era California could protect their precious pocket watches from getting crushed on the job. Later, the practical appeal of that safe pouch contributed to cowboys' (now iconic) affection for Levi's. (Top: iPhone cover from Building Block. Center: Chalk Shelby Bucket Bag by Filippa K. Bottom: Gallery Accessories Buckle Bag by Ganni.)

KATIE CALAUTTI

Object Matters

A short history of pockets—and why women lack them.



What's in your pockets? If the answer is, "I don't have any," then you're probably wearing a garment designed for women. The fist-sized pouch of hidden fabric holds a surprisingly gendered history.

In 1250 A.D. in medieval England, both men and women strapped bags to the outside of their tunics. As fashions changed, fitchets—slits in outerwear that allowed access to bags worn hidden beneath—became au courant.

A few hundred years later in the 17th century, men's fashion took a giant leap forward in functionality: Slimmer versions of purses were sewn into the seams of breeches to deter thieves. In the 1800s, tailors standardized a suit design still used today, featuring 17 pockets that could hold any number of necessities. A figure thusly outfitted was someone to reckon with: a man with as many means as he had space to store them.

Women's clothing, on the other hand, continued to offer inconvenient or nonexistent places for valuables. Accessing under-garment bags was a complicated en-

deavor, and when the 1700s ushered in slimmer Grecian-inspired fashions with no room to hide bulky pouches, storage was removed altogether and resigned to handheld purses. By the 1800s, it was clear that pockets symbolized two things: power and privacy—freedoms females were not granted. It was assumed that women had nothing of value to hold, and no agency to hold it.

To this day, women lack convenient garment storage. Major strides were made in the early 1900s when women co-opted menswear and donned pants. But the 1950s ushered in a revival of slimmed-down designs, with little room for hip-exaggerating pockets. In 1954, Christian Dior reportedly said, "Men have pockets to keep things in, women for decoration."

Blame it on sexism in the fashion industry (and beyond), or the commercialism of the handbag industry, but for such a seemingly small feat of design, the weight of your pockets isn't just determined by what's inside them.

Writer and former dancer *Suzanne Snider* remembers *Isadora Duncan*: the rebel dancer who challenged classical ballet more than a century ago.

SUZANNE SNIDER

Peer Review

Duncan is known as the mother of modern expressive dance. "The dancer of the future will dance, not in the form of nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in its greatest and purest expression," she once wrote.

Last May, inside a small recital hall, I watched as 10 dancers under the age of six balanced tall peacock feathers in their palms. They wore pink silk tunics and flowers in their hair (the sole boy in the group wore green) to celebrate 16 weeks of training as "Duncan dancers." How I landed at this recital involved four years of parenting (my daughter was among the performers) and more than a century of Isadora Duncan's artistic influence on the world.

Duncan is often described as the mother of modern dance, a legacy eclipsed by the more sensational details of her personal life. For the young Duncan dancers on stage, it mattered little that Duncan, born in 1877, had been—among other things—bisexual, an atheist and a communist sympathizer, or that she adopted six of her female dance students (popularly referred to as "The Isadorables"). My daughter doesn't know that Duncan gave birth to three children by three different fathers (two children drowned and the third died shortly after birth) or of Duncan's storied death by strangulation when her long silk scarf became trapped in a wheel of a moving car. (This final tragedy inspired Gertrude Stein's quip, "Affectation can be dangerous.") All of this is of lesser importance to dance historians, as well, who

cite Duncan's break from ballet as her major contribution. Duncan campaigned for "natural" movement, which involved bare feet, sheer and flowy toga-like clothing and stripped-down sets; a Duncan dancer's movement and energy comes from her solar plexus, a radical departure from the rigidity of the balletic torso.

This made little impression on me as a student of dance in the 1990s; Duncan felt less like our mother and more like an embarrassing great aunt—overly emotional and a little old-fashioned. I rejected nature as source material. I realize now that her coup was too successful for us to notice there had been a coup at all. Her return to walking, skipping and breathing as dance had paved the way for the "pedestrian" and "gestural" work by postmodern choreographers whose work I found more edgy and cool.

Dance critic Deborah Jowitt described Duncan's technique as a form "that expressed woman's freedom...to put away corsets, take lovers, bear children out of wedlock, and to dance like that kind of woman..." How had I missed this transmission of radical feminism? My daughter and the rest of the 2018 cohort of Duncan dancers were wiser; they eagerly received and embodied this offering and I now understood it as liberation.

