

Future Today

HOW FASHION ANSWERED THE ATOMIC AGE

In the summer of 1946, Louis sat in a small Parisian café near the Seine, where the chairs still wobbled slightly and the coffee was stronger than it ought to be. The chestnut trees lining the street had grown fresh leaves, as if determined to prove that life had returned to Paris after the long years of war. The air smelled of damp earth, of hope, and of a faint trace of coal that clung stubbornly to the walls.

He took a sip of his café noir and winced. Bitter. Much like his thoughts. The previous evening still lingered.

He had met several former engineering students - men who, like him, had once believed in formulas and constructions, in the clear logic of numbers and steel. Yet while they now spoke of new projects - bridges, machines, the rebuilding of a shattered nation - he had become the object of their amusement.

“An engineer in the swimwear business!” one had laughed, raising his glass. ***“Well, at least you’re still working with tension,”*** another added to loud laughter.

He had laughed along. Of course he had. What else was there to do? And yet something inside him had tightened, like a poorly fitted bolt.

His mother’s business: Lingerie and swimwear. Fabrics, cuts, customers with very specific expectations - and he, a trained engineer, precise and rational, caught between tape measures and fashion journals.

He had not ended up here by choice. The war had disrupted everything. The large-scale projects he had trained for existed only on paper, not yet in reality. His mother, however, had a functioning business - one of the few to survive the war - and

she needed someone to carry it forward. And so he stayed.

But now things had changed. There was work again. Everywhere. France, Europe the entire world needed engineers; and yet he sat there, thinking about pieces of fabric.

Or rather: very small pieces of fabric.

He ran a hand across his chin and looked out onto the street. Women passed by in modest bathing suits - garments that concealed far more than they revealed. Conventions that carried more weight than any technical necessity.

And that, precisely, was the problem!

His idea had long since taken shape. Radical, perhaps - but clear: a bathing suit reduced to its essentials, functionally calculated, aesthetically deliberate. Not a whim - a construction.

He had sketched, calculated, discarded, refined. For him, it had been a technical problem: minimise material, maximise movement, preserve structural integrity. **But it was not a technical problem. It was a social one, and that could not be solved with equations alone.**

Only now did he notice that the café had grown quieter. Not silent - Paris was never silent - but subdued. Almost everyone was reading a newspaper.

A headline image caught his eye: a towering column of smoke rising into the sky, grotesque and strangely compelling. **An atomic explosion.** The Americans had detonated a new atomic weapon in the Pacific. A force that surpassed anything seen before. Terrifying but fascinating. He leaned forward slightly.

The man at the next table noticed his interest and silently slid the newspaper towards him. ***“Incredible, isn’t it?”*** he murmured. Louis nodded.

The image was immense. That shape - the rising mushroom - felt unreal. Final. It was not merely an explosion. **It was an event that shifted the boundaries of what was imaginable.**

He read the headline. The word *atomic bomb* stood out, accompanied by the name of a remote atoll - a place he had never heard of, now suddenly on everyone's lips. He placed the paper back on the table, yet the image remained.

That force. That impact. The ability to change everything in a single moment.

And then - quietly, almost imperceptibly - something aligned. His design was no longer a question of fashion. An Explosion. It was an event.

A construction that would disrupt norms precisely because it had been reduced too far to be ignored. He leaned back.

The comparison had become disarmingly simple: somewhere on an atoll in the Pacific, an explosion had shifted boundaries. At the same time in his mother's shop there lay a swimwear design that could do the same - on a different scale, but with similar effect.

He stood, placed a few coins on the table, and stepped out into the bright Parisian afternoon. The decision had already been made. Nothing remained to be altered. Only the timing mattered. The test took place on July 1st 1946. He calculated.

A few days were enough - long enough for the name to spread, not long enough for it to fade.

Five days after the explosion on **July 5th, 1946**, **Louis Réard** unveiled his new design - named after the very place in the Pacific that had captured the world's attention. **The atoll was called Bikini.**

What began as a rational exercise in material reduction became a cultural shockwave. An engineer had calculated efficiency; the world responded with emotion. His design was initially

met with shock, even rejection - and it would take nearly two decades, aided by figures such as Brigitte Bardot and Ursula Andress, before the Bikini would conquer the world.



Just as in legal and fiduciary structuring, success is never defined by design alone - it depends on foresight. A system must be robust enough to function independently, yet flexible enough to withstand interpretation, change, and external pressure.

Much like the **Bikini Atoll**, which lent its name to something far beyond its original context, structures in life and business often carry consequences well beyond their initial intent.

At **Carey Zurich**, we understand this balance between precision and perception—between engineering logic and human emotion. With over 23 years of experience in the fiduciary business, we design solutions that are not only effective today but remain resilient as circumstances evolve - because true stability is not rigidity, but adaptability.

In the end, whether in engineering, fashion, or wealth structuring, it is not the boldest construction that endures, but the one that is carefully considered - and responsibly executed.

And as with every structure we build, **we care(y).**



Beat H. Haering

CAREY ZURICH

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