



Photo: O'Neill

TRUE TO THE ROOTS & BACK TO THE FUTURE

WOMEN'S SWIMWEAR TRENDS

SPRING/SUMMER '14

Next season's swimwear offers a bit of everything for everyone with extensive mix & match programs, wild prints and bright colours; but also vintage inspired shapes next to stylish feminine pieces. While exploring some high fashion styles and branching out into more directional looks, we also see a big return to the roots of surfing with more functional garments. **Report by Anna Langer.**

THE BIG STORY

Mix & Match is not a new story at all, but for 2014 it is THE headline for swimwear, with the vast majority of brands offering their entire line to be mixed individually, or at least parts of their collections. Reflecting our age of personal expression, it's all about individuality and "variety" is the word of the season, according to Body Glove. And so the 2014 swimwear is designed to allow for as much individuality as the customer could possibly wish for, leaving them to mix and match sizes, styles, patterns and even sub-collections, combining a sporty bottom with a more sexy top, vice versa etc. As summed up by Volcom: "We want to invite the customer to create a look as unique as she is."

SHAPES & SILHOUETTES

Next to classic halter tops and triangles that are still important for many of the major players like DC, O'Neill, and Animal; bikini shapes are trending towards high fashion with sexy one-pieces and bustier/bra-style tops, vintage inspired retro looks and a whole array of bandeau tops.

Combining and addressing a new image of femininity, one that is sexy and sporty at the same time, bandeau variations range from cute fringes (Animal), to more sophisticated and twisted versions (Billabong, DC, Protest, Volcom, O'Neill), and even a more sporty take with a one-shouldered model by Insight. Which brings us to the second big theme for 2014: a reconnection to the roots and sports those brands came from. Animal extend their range of cross back tops, while Insight has a whole collection inspired by '90s swimwear and Fox add a sexy edge with their "sporty swim bra top

with a keyhole cut out detail at the centre front, adjustable straps, hook and eye closure at back - sports bra gone sexy!".

When it comes to cup sizes, as well as offering the standard XS-XL range, several brands are branching out to cater for the more well-endowed ladies. O'Neill are extending their range of D cup models "to cover an increasing demand". Rip Curl, Oakley and Protest have noticed that as well, the latter offering up to E cups. And also Hive Swimwear has noticed that "quite a few surfy girls have bigger busts, yet would normally have to go shopping in the grandma's section", offering not only D but also DD cups to make sure all sorts are taken care of.

The sporty trend continues on to the lower half as well, with a couple of brands launching new bottom shapes, such as the Rip Curl 'Cheeky Pants', the 'Butterfly Bottom 2 in 1 Style' from Fox or 'Beehive Pants' from Hive, that have a "functional drawstring around the waistline, so even during the craziest duck dives, it just won't come off." The biggest innovation from the waist down has got to be the 'Surf Leggings' though, that O'Neill and Roxy introduce for 2014. Those functional multi-use pants that are already super popular on the other sides of the ponds in the US and OZ don't only shield the legs against UV rays and protects from wax scratches, but are also a great look to wear in the streets and going out.

SURF SPECIFICS

When it comes to functional swimwear designed to surf in, there are different approaches on offer. Hive, DC, Nikita, Oakley, and Volcom base their whole collection on an active lifestyle, with crossback and sports bra variations of tops,

fitting bottoms and "Bikini Boardies" (Volcom) next to a variety of boardshorts. Oakley call this the "Zero Distraction Technology", using fabrics and shapes that won't come off no matter how wild you're getting and leave you to concentrate on your activities, instead of being distracted by holding up your top to prevent a full flash or getting sand out of your pants.

Rip Curl, Fox, Body Glove, and Animal have specific pieces for surfing integrated in their swimwear collection, offering stylish fashion pieces as well as more sporty models, rash guards and boardshorts. "We are very excited to release our new 'My Bikini' range for summer, our high performance pieces that we developed very closely with our professional girls surf team including Alana Blanchard, Tyler Wright, Bethany Hamilton and Pauline Ado," say Rip Curl.

Other brands decided to dedicate a whole sub-line to their sports related models. Billabong continues their Surf Capsule Collection with a variety of wetsuits, lycras and neoprene shorts, similar to the Roxy Surf Pop line that features "lycra tops, leggings and bikinis specially for surfing." With their extensive 'Superkini' range, O'Neill already has a range of surf-approved swimwear in their regular line, but add the '365 Fitness' line for 2014, "a whole new range of fitness pieces designed for sport or surf with trend-setting pieces such as surf leggings, retro bathing suits, mini-boardshorts and bikinis."

FABRICS & MATERIALS

2014 will not see a major innovation in swimwear fabrics, but there are a couple of welcome technical developments. O'Neill introduce their HyperDry nano-technology coating to their bikini pads, creating a "new type

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PHOTO: NATHAN LAWRENCE

"We want to invite the customer to create a look as unique as she is."
- Volcom.

of pad which absorbs less water and takes less time to dry". Quick drying qualities are also a strong point of the new Xtra Life Lycra Rip Curl is using for their 'Mirage' surf bikini line, next to a light-weight, long lasting fit without thinning material, shape loss or stitched seams. And the new Ecotex variation of the ever-popular Lycra adds a bit of eco-consciousness by Hive.

Animal and O'Neill are also introducing the 4-Way Stretch implemented in the men's range to their female boardshorts, and Nikita have added a more flexible quality to their surf bottoms too: "We have been working hard on good strong fabrics that have better stretch and flexibility so the girl who wears Nikita can be confident knowing that the piece she's wearing has been specifically designed with action in mind and style to boot."

Apart from that, designers have become a lot more playful in their way of working with materials and interpreting fabrics. The biggest trend here being variations of crochet styles (Billabong, Body Glove, Volcom), macramé (RVCA) and knits (Volcom). Body Glove also use a bit of Jacquard in their line and Billabong add a new soft touch fabric with their Peach Touch.

SHADES & COLOURS

The colour palette for 2014 is mainly equipped with the bright colours summer stands for and featured by all brands. Nikita, Protest and Volcom also combine a bit of black & white with some especially flashy shades, with the latter one also joining Body Glove, Animal and Fox's trend for pastels colours, with a "punk" attitude of course. RVCA is adding some earthy tones, while DC, Animal and Billabong are trying out some red, which "didn't work for a while in swim" as the Ozzies know, but "see it back stronger than ever..." Especially combined with a bit of blue (DC & Animal).

DC also introduce an acid washed colourway that is tied with two of their sneaker models. Most brands are taking their bikini prints to the apparel and accessory lines these days, which range from all variations of flowers (vintage at Billabong, paisley at Protest, and tropical at Nikita, Roxy and O'Neill) to various ethno interpretations ('African Stamps' and 'Animal Prints' at Billabong, RVCA and Fox, 'Aztec Geometrics' from Nikita, 'Bali Vibes' from Rip Curl, 'Blurred Ikat' and 'Mandala' prints from Animal and O'Neill or 'Brazilian Art' at Protest and O'Neill) or even combinations.

Not to forget the classics of course, like



Photo: O'Neill

simple colour blocking, dots or stripes that adorn pieces from Body Glove, Nikita, Oakley, Protest, Roxy, O'Neill, and Rip Curl. Next to classic interpretations there are also new takes, like a chevron stripe pattern from Animal and multi-coloured variations by Nikita. Or, fitting the spirit of mix & match, even fusions of both trends, like O'Neill sport in their line: "Ikat, tropical flower, mirror palm tree, animal flower, jungle scenes are used as allovers, sometimes clashed or sometimes combined with a colour-blocked panel."

Apart from those major trends, there are also tie dye variations from Body Glove and O'Neill, futuristic "cosmic" designs from Insight as well as a tie with details from the Moto X range at Fox. Or beach inspired patterns such as the 'Bali Dancer', 'Padang Padang', 'Gypsy Queen' or 'Molokai' patterns the Rip Curl team created during meetings in Indonesia and Hawaii, or the Hive 'Native to Noosa', that reflects inspiration from world class surf breaks such as Noose Heads on the Gold Coast of Australia.

OUTLOOK

With ever increasing competition from high street fashion stores that lure customers with cheap prices, big names and all the latest fashion trends, there is a bigger demand for distinction than ever. One of the most direct ways is a recollection of the roots and basic value of surf brands, with a focus on designs that actually work for the sports. Billabong, DC, Hive, Nikita, and Roxy follow these lines, who see the future in a return to the essence: "Come back to the roots – being authentic – of course including feminine styles in the collection but representing the brands DNA in bright colours and prints." (Roxy)

Another big trait of the boardsports business and brands has always been innovation and creativity with colours, prints, shapes and designs; reason Body Glove, Fox, Volcom and O'Neill. Not to forget functionality and quality of course, as "within surfing, there is definitely still demand for good quality products that allow us girls to have maximum fun, yet still look hot," say Hive, and Volcom agree: "keep it functional yet sexy and give the strong women we cater for what they want, i.e. an opportunity to be unique and to show their personal style."

KEY TRENDS

TOPS: twisted, fringed & one-shouldered bandeau tops / sexy bustiers / sport bra gone sexy

BOTTOMS: surf leggings / tight fits / drawstring pants / mini boardshorts

COLOURS: bright & flashy / ice cream colours / punk pastels / b&w with colour splash / acid wash

PATTERNS: stamped ethno prints / ikat geometrics / tropical / brazilian art / seaside vibes / chevron stripes / dots and dots and dots

FABRICS: Quickdry bikini pads / ecotex lycra / crochet & macramé / soft touch / less shine