

LISA ARMSTRONG

The Investment Dresser

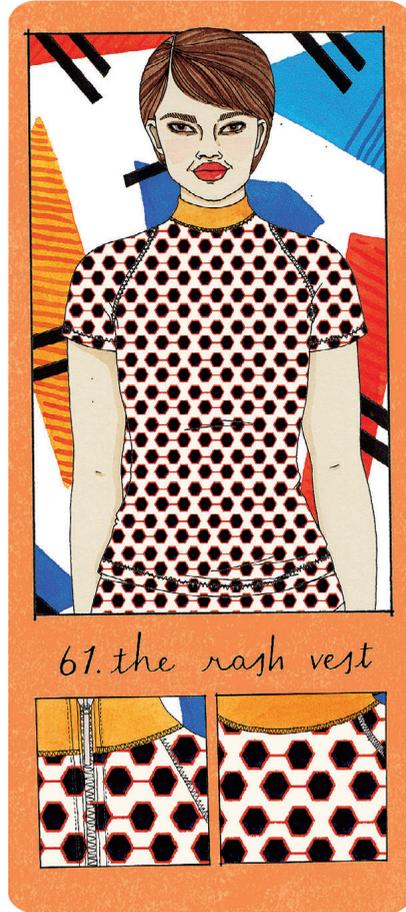
So hot right now: rash vests

believe it's called status elevation – this business of upgrading a basic piece of “shmatte” that you used to buy from Amazon – or JD Sports – into “an intelligently thought out piece of design”.

And it is a business. Take the humble rash vest. Once these were gruesome, clammy items (and that was before you put one on and spent eight hours roasting BUT NOT BURNING in the sun). They came in disgustingly sugary colours because, at this end of the industry, they sincerely believe all they have to do to make a sporty item appeal to wimmin is shrink it and pink it. You bought these hideous products of man's cruelty grudgingly because, well, they were hideous but you're so fair skinned you make Ron Weasley look swarthy.

If it's any consolation, the Beckhams wear rash vests. Or the junior partners do. Once, when interviewing Victoria at her home, I spied a yellow Post-it with the immortal words “Rash Vest for Brooklyn” Biro'd across it. I was impressed – by the organisation if not the vest.

But eureka! – rash vests have made it into American *Vogue*. Inevitably, they don't come from JD Sports, but from



labels that not only charge \$300 a pop but can't be bothered to ship outside America. Annoyingly, they are genuinely stylish and, well, intelligently designed. You'd be proud to wear one, honestly. And you should, because if your skin is remotely delicate and you're spending any time in or on the water, they're the most effective way to shield it.

Guess what? J Crew and Boden now do lovely ones, providing the

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equivalent of SPF50. No more cream palaver – although, unattractively, Boden's have been out of stock for weeks.

That leaves J Crew's stripy, spotty and floral ones: all chic, all conceived to mix and match with its swimwear. They're not cheap, so it's worth checking out the children's range, as an age 14 will fit someone up to size 10/12. The adults come in at between £70 to £180. That's 10 times the price of my previous ones. But this time I will actually wear them. ●

Three Best RASH VESTS



#HIGH STREET HIT

Coral short-sleeve, £24.99, by *O'Neill*, from *surfdome.com*



Navy long-sleeve, £130, by *Orlebar Brown*, from *matches fashion.com*



Blue and orange print, £145, by *Mara Hoffman*, from *net-a-porter.com*