

the arbitrary SWAPPER

will this week swap eight compact disc jewel cases for a pair of butter-yellow pants, size 30 x 32, men's or women's. TO MAKE THIS SWAP, OR TO PROPOSE YOUR OWN, SWAPPER@THEEXILE.MATINIC.US

# THE EXILE

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## FASHION (SUFFER FOR)

OUR PREHISTORIC FOREBEARS LIVED NAKED; we cannot. Style is more or less man's attempt to make the best of this bad situation. Stripped, at some point in the evolutionary process, of the weather-proof exterior Mother Nature so lovingly continued to knit for most of his mammalian brethren, man had no choice but to acknowledge that he would have to clothe himself. Somewhere between the death of the dinosaurs and the birth of hot pants, it seems man also resolved that if he had to wear something, it might as well be fabulous.

Style was born of necessity and resilience. It lives on in a state of cyclic evolution. Clothing has become the symbolic declaration of status and purpose we daily carry as second-skin. For this reason, style-cultivation is the most obvious aesthetic symptom of self-cultivation, which is the subterranean biographical narrative of artists and all those with the leisure or the prerogative for introspection. Clothing design is thereby forced to cater to the most consumer narcissism of any design genre. While we will happily settle for derivative kitchenware, we indignantly balk at outdated jeans. Style, more than any other outlet for expression, is primarily about the concept of self. It is resultantly a cruel and peerless analytical resource.

Fashion is the viral proliferation of the aggregated styles of the introspective. It is entirely subjective and subcultural. To be well-dressed by the standards of one's subcultural niche is to become a walking representation of the subculture's ideals. Form, color, texture, and the other components of style are the basis for the representational code. Those who bother to consider fashion are those who ultimately set its symbolic terms. Industrialization and inertia conspire to eventually proliferate these symbolic terms to the very margins of the subculture, at which point the fashion changes. Once a style that originated in the East Village trickles down to pre-hip, mall-dwelling middle-schoolers in suburban Pennsylvania, the symbolic terms have become blunted and must be redefined.

As important as the intra- and inter-cultural coding associated with fashion is its potential historical relevance. Our small population cross-section, we urban students of the turn of the twenty-first century, will be examined and remembered by posterity largely in terms of the way we dress. Our current fashion ciphers will someday be the visual points of reference for our place in time. We can easily join, if we have not already, the ranks of the introspective few who determine the fashion regime that will be forever associated with the circumstances of our youth. We are not defined by what we wear, but what we wear should be defined by us. A humble suggestion: let us leave hot pants buried where they lie. ■

### PERHAPS YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT



Not a raccoon being strangled by a python, but actually a young Hillary Clinton in a pair of glasses which normally require you to provide proof of age (eighty-five years) and employment (middle-school English teacher) to buy.

He's two-ply. He's going home alone.



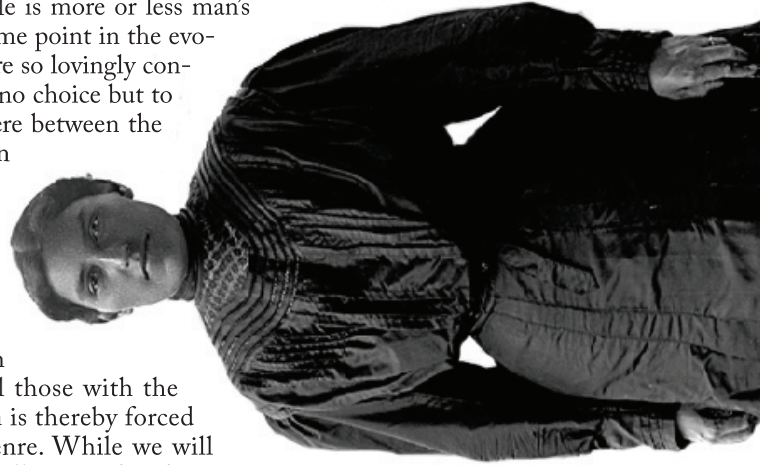
Not produced in a sweat shop, but, rather, at one point the feet of a sweat shop worker.



Overcome scoliosis and poor lighting conditions with one contraption.



« "A woman poses in her best dress". From the Blue Cloud Abbey (Marvin, S.D.) Native American Photograph Collection. Glass-plate negative, ca. 1900.



**Bohème Meets Bauhaus (A Suggestion).** IMPECCABLE FORM can be as representative of unbounded thought as amorphous yards of paisley print. Deconstructed detailing of hyper-constructed pieces in stiff fabrics melds with separates ering either on the side of body-illusory abstraction or spare contour-orientation to create sharp, controlled lines juxtaposed with thin, free-form pieces acting as softening agents. Shades of gray, or gray outlined with black are the default backdrop for accents of deep, cool green and blue. Pale brown, neutral, and mauve tones accommodate careful shots of bright, warm color with an emphasis on orange and coral. The sleek innovation of the Bauhaus and the irreverent awareness of Bohemia are referenced in combination to create an environmentally-conscious, architectural, intricate, and unabashedly young look. Flat shoes are foundational and entirely-unadorned black ballet flats or round-toed, mid-calf boots for women are ideal. All skirts have pockets, and most jackets have cloak-inspired hoods. Umbrellas and stilettos are non-permissible, and purses are ill-advised. ■

**E. LEIPZIGER'S TEMPLE OF FASHION!**  
 476 PENNSYLVANIA AV., WASHINGTON, D. C.

It is a responsible case that an entering a CLOTHING ESTABLISHMENT, every Customer mentally propounds to himself the following questions:  
 FIRST—“Will Garments that may be Sold in this Establishment, prove to be JUST AS RECOMMENDED?”  
 SECOND—“Are Garments Sold CHEAPER here than elsewhere?”

It is right and proper that both of these questions should be asked—because no one likes to purchase a GARMENT AS A GOOD ONE, and have it prove to be made from cheap Cloth, and sewed with rotten Silk.

Written in is pleased to pay \$15 for a Coat, and then learn that a neighbor bought equally as good an article in another establishment for \$12 or \$16. It is therefore proper and just, that every one who contemplates buying

**CLOTHING WELL MADE!**  
 Neatly and Strongly Sewed!  
 Made from Cloth, Fine and Coarse, of the BEST QUALITY, and Sold AT UNPRECEDENTED LOW PRICES!

READER! These valuable items of Information, and Garments of this DESCRIPTION, and at these PRICES, can be obtained at

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 Two Doors east of United States Hotel, WASHINGTON, D. C.

# Citius, altius, fortius, populace

THE GRAPH TO THE RIGHT indicates the size of the populations of the cities in which the Summer Olympics have been held since their inception in 1896. The area, rather than the radius, of the circle is presented proportionately to the population living within the host city's boundaries taken from the nearest census data to the year in which the games were held. Some interesting observations can be made. While the obvious trend is towards a chronological increase in population, early games were just as likely to be in a European city of Western historical significance but demographic insignificance, like Helsinki or Antwerp. No doubt the U.S. pattern of demographic clustering within 'metropolitan areas' rather than city boundaries proper contributes to the deceptively small sizes of Los Angeles and Atlanta (in 2000, the census year nearest 1996, Atlanta had a population of only 416,476, while the Atlanta metropolitan area had a population of 4,112,198). Also shown on the graph is the aesthetic evolution of the visual identity of the Games, ranging from the Beaux-Arts imagery of Paris 1900 through the psychedelic modernism of Mexico City 1968 and towards the cutesy logographic representations of Sydney, Athens, and Beijing.



## DARE CALL IT ART?

IS FASHION AN ARTFORM? The customary answer will depend largely on whether the person being asked is fashionable or not: the fashionable say yes, the unfashionable say no. To get to the heart of the matter, and to provide something approaching an objective answer, we must first get at the issue of what, exactly constitutes an artform. In doing so, we run the simultaneous risk of accidentally legitimating things which are clearly non-artistic, and accidentally disempowering others which have long enjoyed the default protection of the title 'art.'

At the center of the question of fashion's legitimacy as art is the indistinct line between *producers* of fashion and *consumers* of it. In other arts, the distinction is that between creator and appreciator. We may say that the art patron who collects notable paintings is a man of good taste, but never do we determine him an *artist* of his own right. Elsewhere, the relationship is market-based, as in fashion, but of a clearer demarcation: the architect designs and builds, the resident merely occupies.

With fashion we are in the difficult position of observing a continuous gradient of roles between the sketch artists—working without material and thus without any physical limitation—on the one hand, and on the other the passive consumer—whose aesthetic articulation consists entirely of socially and practically-decided actions of selection. In between these poles are a range of 'artists' whose artistic expression is variously limited by the extent to which their articulation is a process of creation or a process of selection.

This concept of limitation by way of selection is unavoidable in determining fashion's status as art. However, the precedents leave us with unclear standards of orientation. The painter selects amongst a limited range of available pigments. A classical composer selects amongst a limited range of physical instruments. Only the writer is truly unlimited in his ability to convey non-contingent meaning.

It seems fairly clear that the *designer* of clothing qualifies as a legitimate artist, as they appear no more or less limited in their selection of pre-defined choices than the painter or composer. But what of the 'fashionista,' the consumer who makes no original wearable objects of their own but merely combines the pre-produced material objects of others in new and unique ways? Is this person closer to the artist or merely to the curator? Clearly, the answer depends on the *extent* to which a production of aesthetic sensibility is a process of selection and juxtaposition as opposed to first-order creation.

This, however, is a troublesome line to draw. The photographer produces absolutely nothing of his own; certainly he is more chained to pre-existing reality than even the most diletante clothes-wearer. Do we thus exclude him from the realm of art?

A useful refinement might be to include, in addition to the index between selection and creation, an index between novelty and banality. Thus, the photographer, entirely selective but sometimes novel, can be considered an artist if the latter quality is met. Similarly, the clothes-wearer might override their own passive role in the production of clothes by asserting at all times before-unknown articulations of existing materials.

Here in THE EXILE's editorial caverns, we welcome your letters, complaints, abstracts, stray paragraphs, dominant poems, accidental photographs, napping drawings, jungle books, sentences consisting only of adverbs, tales better left untold, mockeries. Of poems. SUBMISSIONS@THEEXILE.MATINIC.US