

BORING OR INSPIRING:

6

2

A Look Into Derivative Fashion

Looking back at the recent history of fashion, it is clear that certain trends and clothing pieces tend to resurface over the decades. While designers have spearheaded many throwback trends on the runway, fashion consumers have held control over their popularization through street style dissemination. The popular trends change every year, but one thing remains stagnant: fashion is derivative. Derivative or cyclical, fashion takes trends that originated in prior decades and re-integrates them into current times. Much of this repetition involves innovating and modernizing old styles instead of copying the trends exactly. A brief glance at recent fashion reveals overt nods to historically popular styles, but with a constant recycling of trends, when will the industry get tired? While our era's creativity will certainly feel some consequences from its monotony moving forward, derivative fashion will likely lead to a renewal of former trends that are unrecognizable from the past.

We see derivative fashion everywhere. It's inherent in many creative fields to recreate what once was popular — if it worked then, why can't it work now and be made even better? According to classical fashion forecasters, such cyclical trends normally stick around for a few years in a decade, fall out of style, and circle back around 20 years later in an altered form, reports Grace Gordon at Savoir Flair. This is mostly due to fashion nostalgia, according to Nicole Kliet at The Zoe Report. The styles that we wore as kids or young adults hold a strong sense of nostalgia that when looking back on photographs or reminiscing on memories, we want to replicate.

In looking back and analyzing fashion history, this cycle can be clearly identified and is obviously

prevalent in the industry. The influx of tracksuits and low-rise jeans in Y2K fashion actually originated in 70s menswear. The 60s hatched the foundation for baggy clothes via men's suits and mini skirts — both of which became popular again in the 70s, 90s, and 2000s. Baggy clothes are recycled today as staple pieces for androgynous fashion, contributing to a blurring of gender norms.

Crop tops, a beloved fashion trend from the late 2010s, that has remained popular are another great example of a cyclical trend. According to Emma McFall at Fashion at Brown, crop tops were born in the 40s as a result of fabric rationing. They resurfaced in the 70s and 80s in men's gym wear to get around gym policies requiring shirts and in womenswear as inspiration grew surrounding Madonna and Cher's midriff-baring outfits, according to Priya Elan at The Guardian.

In the rest of the art world, nods to past eras are often seen as well. Realism rejected Romanticism and derivative art intentionally, while Surrealism grew from Cubism in its emphasis on creative independence, reports My Modern Met. This pattern begs the question, does the prevalence of derivative art and fashion show that it is more accepted than pure originality? Some of the most shocking and memorable shows have been those that break through the norms and set new trends for the next coming years. In one famously flopped SS93 show for Perry Ellis, Marc Jacobs designed a grunge collection that got him fired. Models were draped in oversized grunge wear, which became

writing **SOFIA WEDDLE**
photography **HENRY ABRAMS**
LANE

modeling **AUGUST ESCANDON & JARRIAH COCKHREN**
design **THANDIWE TEMBO**

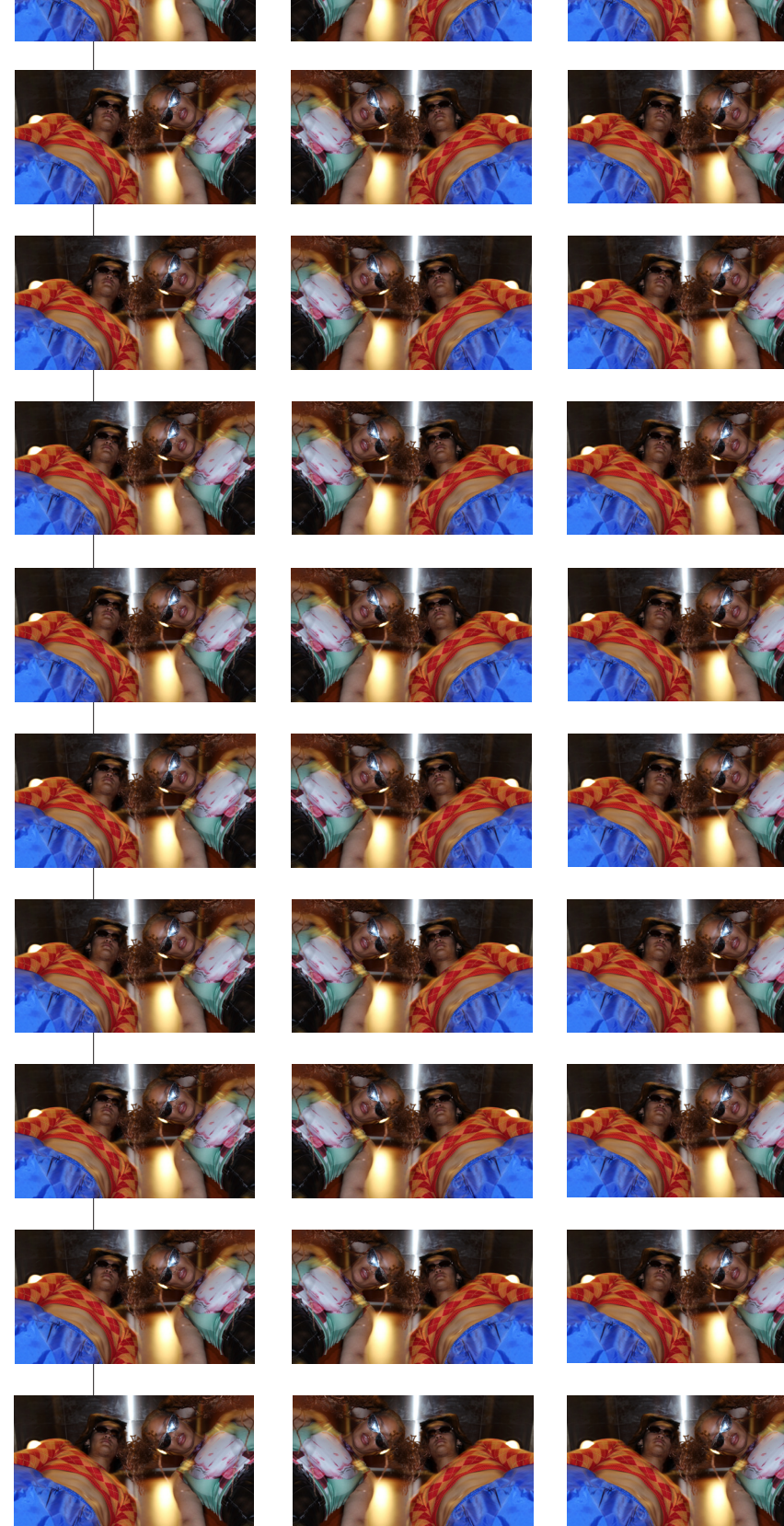
stylists **AVERY PARKER & ALANA**

**FASHION
WILL
CONTINUE
TO ECHO
ITSELF
WITH TREND
CYCLES.**

popular later in the 90s but was originally bashed by critics, as reported by Hilary George-Parkin at Who What Wear. This show was uniquely non-derivative, which was primarily why it was so initially hated, so it is easy to understand why designers base new trends on something that worked before, rather than pushing fashion boundaries.

While Marc Jacobs was revered years after his show for being a leader in 90s grunge, the show flopped because it was not based on that ever-repeated 20-year cycle. Interestingly enough, the designs in his show have been echoed in similar styles throughout the 2000s.

Despite being derivative, cyclical trends often look completely new each time that they go through a resurgence and the new versions become individually referenceable on their own. Think thigh-high boots as high fashion, biker shorts worn for aesthetic and not athletic purposes, and Crocs as ironic fashion. The origin of some trends are often forgotten, but they do have historical bearing: thigh-high boots were used by the military in the 19th century, and YSL subsequently spearheaded women's stocking boots in the 60s (according to Jessica Bucci at Startup Fashion). Biker shorts were used for actual racing, and crocs were popularized by 2000s kids for their functionality. These trends are derivative, but at the same time memorable because of their creative modernization.



The beauty of fashion is that it all holds a past, but each repetition of it is evolved to fit the needs and wants of the modern consumer. By that right, fashion will not get boring. The ever-altering of trends creates a form of creative fashion that is distinct from the past and uniquely a sign of the current times.

Going 30 years forward, sustainable and tech-driven fashion will probably take control. Think Etsy, thrifting, and Manus x Machina, all whipped into one. This push for sustainability will grow out of the increased transparency surrounding fast-fashion impacts, as well as the more environmentally conscious generation that will make up the majority of adult consumers. With the increase in second-hand shopping, derivative fashion will likely be even more amplified. Second-hand clothes mostly date around 10 to 20 years prior. People will increasingly mix decades together, formulating new trends defined by the old. It is difficult to hypothesize tech-driven trends, as that would require hypothesizing the future of the tech industry. One thing is certain though; as technology develops, fashion will follow alongside to remain updated and integrated with everyday-use tech.

Fashion will continue to echo itself with trend cycles. Maybe fashion will become more redundant and basic, but I believe trends will change so much that they are unrecognizable from the past. Putting on an outfit every day is creativity at its base, and even if those outfits are repetitive or an over-recycling of trends, they are new to us at the moment. Through derivative fashion, we can connect to the past, evolve it, and eventually create new trends through the unrecognizable morphing of the old; none of which I would classify as boring fashion.



HOW TO BECOME BEAUTIFUL

I was eight years old when I started getting acne. I knew what it was and I knew that I wasn't supposed to like it. Somehow, I didn't care. I knew that I was more than my pimples and nobody worth my time would make me feel bad about them. How did I know that? I'd like to think that I was wise beyond my years. Ten years later, and I still don't have the answer. All I know is that I have never felt more beautiful than when I was eight years old.

When I was 11, I started to look at myself — really look at myself. My skin, my teeth, my height, my weight. It was all fair game. Nobody around me looked quite like me, and I started to take notice. Every moment I spent in my predominantly-white hometown reminded me of what I was not. Not pretty enough, not skinny enough, not light enough. Quickly, I forgot what beauty felt like.

At 13, I discovered the term 'beauty standard'. Suddenly, I understood why I didn't feel pretty anymore and I thought I knew exactly how to fix it. I began to analyze and emulate girls that fit these standards, following the prettiest celebrities I knew on social media in hopes that their beauty would somehow rub off on me through my cell phone screen. My worth became determined by my proximity to this unattainable benchmark and I became obsessed with hiding the parts that didn't

fit my standards. I did everything in my power to make myself prettier and smaller, because I thought that was how the world of appearing feminine worked. My relationship with femininity became more about my desire to fit beauty standards and less about my personal identity. I sacrificed everything that made me uniquely me to avoid being masculinized as a tall, Black woman, and it worked — until it didn't, and I lost who I was.

By the time I turned 16, I was tired. Sure, I felt accepted, but I didn't feel like myself anymore. I didn't even feel beautiful. I wore clothes I didn't feel comfortable in, curated a 10-step skincare routine, and followed trends that I didn't like — for what? Unfulfilled and exhausted, I knew that something needed to change. I needed to move, to learn, to grow. I wanted my eight year old brain back — the one that loved every inch of myself unapologetically, even if nobody else did.

I knew that I had to focus on the things that made me feel truly beautiful. It took a lot of time, effort, and tears, but once I found those things, everything else became easy. Once I realized that my body was the least interesting or beautiful thing about me, I got to know the rest of myself. I found beauty in my passions and interests, likes and dislikes. After years of shielding my eyes from mirrors, I



forced myself to look at my body in all of its glory and I have never felt freer. I allowed myself to love the parts of me that I once hated, becoming infatuated with my beautiful dark skin, my powerful height, and my bouncy curls. I felt feminine and womanly without forcing myself to fit into society's narrow perception of what a "beautiful woman" is. I finally felt secure and comfortable in my own skin.

In prioritizing myself, I had to let go of my obsession with others' perceptions of me. I had to refocus my attention from external validation, especially the idea of male validation that often feels like a prerequisite for womanhood, where I was constantly awaiting approval from my male counterparts. I took to social media, a tool that I once used to fixate on others, to help me fall in love with myself. Once I started curating my social media feeds to be more inclusive and align with my new values, I understood the triviality of these external pressures. If others can be beautiful without looking like (or forcing themselves to look like) Barbie dolls, so can I.

Becoming beautiful is an incredibly long journey and one that I am still embarking on. It requires constant effort and sometimes, I mess up. I still get jealous of other girls, anxious about my body, and uncomfortable in my skin. Especially as a

first-year college student, I feel like I'm constantly performing, trying to put my best foot forward with no room for error. But, that's part of the human experience and forward growth. Through all of these blips, I still love and forgive myself because my faults do not negate my beauty.

I am proud to say that 18-year-old me and eight-year-old me have a lot in common. We have the same tiny gap between our front teeth and acne scars on our cheeks. Most importantly, we have the same definition of beauty. Beauty is simple. It is smiling in the mirror even when my skin is breaking out. It is dancing in a bikini even when I'm bloated from eating. It is spending time alone with myself because I love and appreciate my own company. Beauty can be anything I want it to be because, at the end of the day, nobody needs to find me beautiful but me.

**I WANTED MY EIGHT YEAR
OLD BRAIN BACK — THE ONE
THAT LOVED EVERY INCH OF
MYSELF UNAPOLOGETICALLY,
EVEN IF NOBODY ELSE DID.**