

Why fashion matters essay sample



As this year's splurge of catwalk enthused outfits hit the high street stores, the regular onslaught of fear and loathing resounds across the nation. Social observers and columnists- mostly women - announce, yet again, that fashion sucks. They hate everything about the world that is fashion, from the extravagant nature, the eye-opening prices, its manic neophilia, the company's frenzied eye for making a profit, the corruption and its exploitation of women; and with that, revulsion seems to manifest itself within their voices. Once again, they announce that they are not actually interested in fashion.

Although it's true that some aspects of the business undeniably deserve this treatment, is it justly fair of mankind to make such a statement, when truly, a woman who says she is tired of fashion is pretending, or else she is misleading herself? Yes, the hissy fits of misogynist designers, the supremacist silliness of fashionistas, and all the greed and vanity in between is suited to such conduct, but when a woman states she is tired of fashion, that woman is tired of life.

In the midst of the punters remarks that fashion means nothing to them, that they are 'beyond, and above such ludicrous designs', a woman will try on a classic, calf length camel coat, collarless complete with a straight cut. She cannot say why she needs a new winter coat: the one she has from three years ago is perfectly OK, but, of course, it's wrong. The shape is wrong. The fabric is wrong. She's never picked up Vogue or Marie Claire, says she doesn't know a thing about catwalk trends, what's in or out, or who has just been appointed to this label, or what Alexander McQueen's suicide felt like to his thousands of fashion-followers.

Nor does she know how it came about that six months ago something changed in fashion, as it does every three years or so, when a whole look becomes consigned to fashion history and a new one appears; that somehow, after years of a flashy continental style that exposed as much flesh as possible, the world has turned to minimal, but maximum coverage, as well as the contrasting but ever so glorified, 'into the wild' section. Mannish blazers ranging from camel to collarless military jackets, from duffle coats to quilted-lace ups. This is what we wear today and that, in all likelihood, is what she is going to wear too.

Whatever the culture, period, sex or class, the way we look has always been significant, as not only does it illustrate who we are, but it expresses how we feel. From when our togas needed that exclusive strip of purple dye, or when those Panniers were the 18th century must-have, how you look says a lot about us, in every culture. It is not simply a matter of whether we're wearing last year's Prada boots, or declining this month's camel coat, but it makes a vast difference to how we belong, our feel for the times and the way people distinguish us. It addresses the fundamental human need to belong, to identify ourselves with a group of others like us - whether it's a lifestyle, a religion, a profession, or an attitude. Not a single person can afford to ignore that.

Besides, however we look, we cannot help but give out a credible communication about ourselves as an individual. These messages - some voluntary, some involuntary - show that fashion is, quite literally, what we make of ourselves and how we fashion ourselves (including how we don't). Auspiciously, fashion is a whole host of different aspects such as the widely

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imaginative and sometimes excessively over-the-top, but striking couture and high-fashion that at some point, will, ultimately, influence the rest of the fashion world.

What the puritanical critics seem to miss is the joy of fashion. It is fun to try finding our way through all the breath-taking and radical styles when we feel like it - and when we have the cash - but even our grandma's wardrobe can be a vintage heaven. Considering this, ignorance of trends can be bliss, too. In the end, it is entertaining to experiment with new and innovative ways of looking; it is enjoyable to gaze at the most beautiful materials and colours and the zaniest or most classic shapes. There is something wonderful, if slightly guilt-inducing, about searching for just the right shoes, then buying a highly impractical pair that are too expensive but irresistible.

Given the current climate, the idea that fashion couldn't matter less will no doubt be reiterated a million times. If a constant hassle of mortgage repayments sieges your early-morning door and your life seems to have sullied overnight, then it is entirely likely that you don't care about whether you've adorned a dustbin liner or gone stark naked, never mind what hem lengths and dress shapes are in the current trends.

Unfortunately for us, fashion is a lifestyle that should not be disregarded and not merely because spending July in Crocs isn't exactly aesthetically life-enhancing. The argument that fashion is going to stop having any relevance to our modern day society is both reductive and misogynistic. There is inevitably a school of thought that believes it is intrinsically sneerable, meaningless and, at the very least, instantly dismissible when financial push

comes to desperate shove, as it is doing now. And then there's the fact that, even though we are living in the 21st century, there remain a few dissonant voices that shriek that caring about fashion means you are unquestionably shallow, vain and self-centred - to which the only reasonable answer, it seems to me, is: " Maybe, but you're dressed like someone's gran."

Although it is understandable, we cannot help but feel sorrow for the individuals who don't understand our need to feel chic and attractive. Secondly, for those solemn few who maintain their ' vain and self-centred' comments, the lesson that needs to be learnt are that fashion is not just about what's so called ' in', but rather about self- expression, fantasy, projection, self-worth, identity. Others may call these things frivolous and shallow; I'd call them having a pulse, recession or not.

What the truth boils down to, is fashion remains the key to individuality; whether we follow the Haute Couture herd, or chose to ignore the trends completely, fashion is not only a lifestyle choice; at its best, fashion is an art form that transforms the craft of the entire clothes trade and that will continue to matter in our society until the very end of time.