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Reflections on Personal Style

by [Katia Jean Paul](#)
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When fashion meets intention

What is style? Is style innate or something that we cultivate with time? The popularity of street style blogs illustrates our growing fascination with the distinctive and intriguing ways people the world over visually articulate themselves. Below, we ponder on fashion, style, and how the latter two converge to create a singular mode of self-expression.

Fashion vs. style

Are fashion and style interchangeable? At first glance, they do appear to be. Celebrities, royals, and men and women in positions of power, afforded the best in trendy, designer wares are almost always said to be stylish, and thus populate the covers of magazines and best-dressed lists as style archetypes for us to emulate. But if fashion equates style, why is it then, that in spite of the industry's ever-changing prescriptions, images of the late actress Audrey Hepburn in a minimalist black dress and pearls or the late Princess Grace's inimitable chic still exemplify quintessential style and permeate our collective consciousness to this day? And why is it that despite the introduction of new garments season after season, certain pieces—like the little black dress—still populate women's closets, decades after their induction into the fashion sphere?

At its core, fashion is concerned with clothes. It is a business. Clothing is its main commodity. And as a result, like any other business, its survival depends on novelty. Style, however, is concerned with the wearer and his or her relationship to him or herself. Clothes make up a visual lexicon at the wearer's disposal to formulate his or her identity and style rests on the wearer's ability to successfully articulate that self to the world. In that respect, one can exude style without adhering to the sartorial prescriptions of the moment, just as someone with a closet brimming with the trendiest wares may not exhibit an ounce of style.

Fashion, then, is merely an instrument. Style rests on one's ability to articulate one's real self with said instrument. A rare inclination in a world where clothes are seen as merely functional or utilitarian, and that despite the numerous inspirations afforded by fashion, a world in constant proliferation.

Keeping up with fashion requires a lot of money. Style requires little of it. Style requires self-awareness, self-knowledge, confidence, personality, inventiveness, and the courage to express one's true self in an increasingly fast-paced world that renders individuality almost obsolete.

Innate vs. learned

Is one born with style or can style be learned? It's doubtful that we come out of the womb with a fully articulated self, hence doubtful that one is stylish from birth. Style requires self-knowledge, and that in itself is acquired through experience and self-exploration. Perhaps certain people become attuned to their inner selves much earlier than others. What's more, humans are complex beings and as such, are constantly evolving. Thus, our style, much like ourselves, is ever-changing and requires ongoing self-assessment.

Necessity vs. luxury

Is style necessary or merely a luxury? Granted, being stylish doesn't save any lives, and won't put an end to war or famine. Nevertheless, matters of style carry certain social implications. For one, as *Psychology Today* editor-at-large Hara Estroff Marano put it best, "Style presumes that you are a person of interest; that the world is a place of interest, that life is worth making the effort for." The author also incisively points out that style implies a degree of moral responsibility. Once we limit ourselves to pieces reflective of our personal style, **consumption** no longer becomes something we blindly partake in to excess, or at the behest of marketers. And in that verve, we do our part, however small, to reduce the waste that currently engulfs our planet.

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I totally agree with the article. "Fashion" is the current trend, e.g. when bellbottoms were "in". "Style" is a way to express oneself, e.g. people/friends known for being "really casual", "classic, consrvative", "frolicky, fun", "all about sex", "dressing for success/power". In all the categories, so to speak, there will be "fashion". So there will be our own "style" which can likely be worn for years. Again, the "quality versus quantity" principle applies. I find my trendy friends have many, many short-life pieces while those more on the style side have maybe fewer, but better quality pieces which they adjust with accessories.



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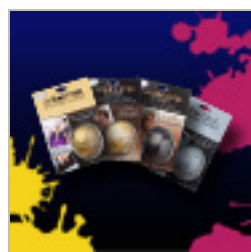
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interesting article...yes, there is alot of excess. things aren't made to last, quality fashion is hard to find

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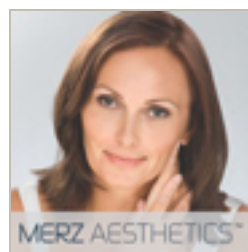
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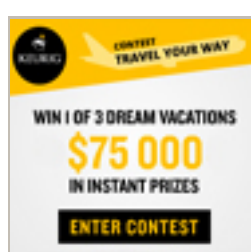


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