

Practice Makes Progress

From ripped jeans to bound feet to powdered wigs, fashion throughout history has always puzzled and amazed me. Remember those Silly Bands in fourth grade? Or when our parents dyed their hair with Kool-aid? Or when people don full coats of animal fur, taking lives for a luxury?

These fashion fads vex me. But what confuses me the most is an obsession with fashion. Sure, being a sports fanatic or a political junkie is understandable: sports and politics are two well-defined, well-organized aspects of life. But fashion is defined by its very defiance of societal ideas of right and wrong—it seems that there is no sense of ethics or order. It is school without rules, society without government, life without morals. Even politics, with its heated nature, has developed the idea of “political correctness” to define what should and shouldn’t be said; fashion has nothing of the sort.

I recently read the article, “Amsterdam to Antwerp: Culture Guide of Two Cities United by Creativity” by Francesca Soler. And Soler fulfills her duty as a tour guide of the two cities, focusing in on fashionable points of focus. How she stays interested, I do not understand: while she may enjoy the impractical wonder of a three-roomed hotel at Antwerp’s “Room National” or the single-room “Graanmarkt 13,” I gawk at its entrepreneurial impracticality.

I know I sound harsh. The problem is that art—and especially fashion—often doesn’t seem to have any discernable meaning. The brain is a wonder in terms of pattern recognition, and from that we discover with innocent wonder the marvels of math and science. But human nature—bleh. I look at art and find nothing, no meaning, no reason. It’s an unpredictable mess.

Nature, on the other hand, is a wonderful role model. Not only does Man derive all his knowledge from it, but he also finds that Nature is always evolving, progressing. The universe is infinite—and therefore Nature never ceases to amaze. The fact that *every* living organism on Earth is different, whether it is a stripe of a zebra, the fingerprint of a human, or a mutation of a bacterial cell. The fact that stars grow, die, are reborn from their own ashes as if they were Dumbledore’s phoenixes. The fact that time and space are indefinite, as well as dimensions and universes we might never discover. The fact that Nature is dynamic, innovating, forever; and though quantum mechanics states that there is a fundamental probability in everything, patterns are much more defined and what is healthy is naturally beautiful. This is art, a natural radiance that stems from the order of the universe.

Unlike ripped jeans.

Perhaps the problem is that people are trying *too hard*. It brings to light the strangely negative high-schooler view of the “try-hard” student—perhaps some of the fashion artists of today are simply working too much when attempting to impress, to create, to redefine the old. But little is coming out of it. I see a one-roomed hotel. A three-roomed hotel. Instead of the intricate face of a chipmunk, every whisker an emphatic line against the golden sun in the background.

Or perhaps people are focusing on the wrong subjects. There is too much attention on what already exists. To flare-up already flared-up items, or gild already gilded surfaces. It is just reinterpretation that gets redundant and loses its meaning, repeating what should not be restated.

The two cities Soler describes have some mention of this innovative beauty. Soler points out enthusiastically that a new museum is positioned on the same block as a building from the 1890s, forming a controversial choice that emphasizes the dynamism of Amsterdam culture. She also mentions that in the Amsterdam was the richest city in Europe during the sixteenth century. To see the city changing, bustling, still *alive*, is art to me. To put the old next to the new and see the difference, is art to me. To know that the *spirit* of fashionable extravagance is still there, is art to me. That is natural, that is progression, that is patterns and beauty. The minutia, the obsession, the overcommitment loses meaning to me.

Nature taught us beauty, and yet people are becoming ever more distracted from it. Societal standards move farther away every day, and fashion is becoming drained of originality to boot. Beauty should be natural, not conjured. People just need to go with the flow. To learn to let go and move on.