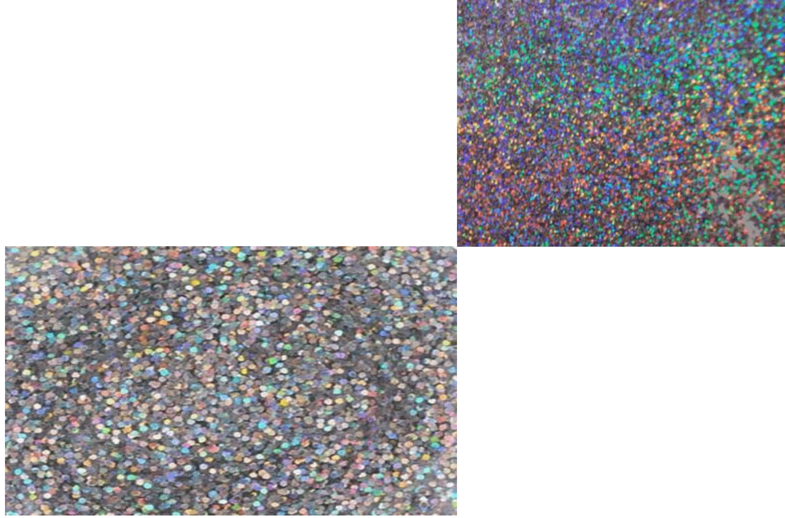
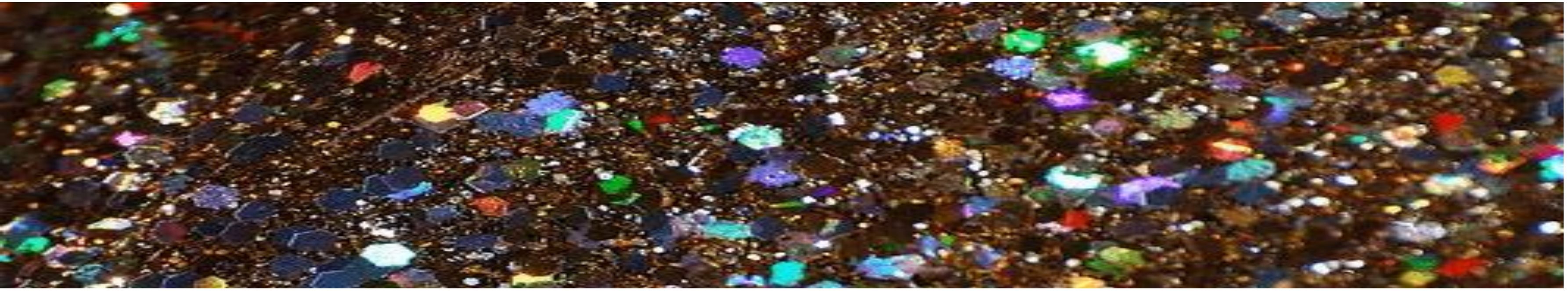
WHAT MAKES UP OUR CULTURAL FABRIC?





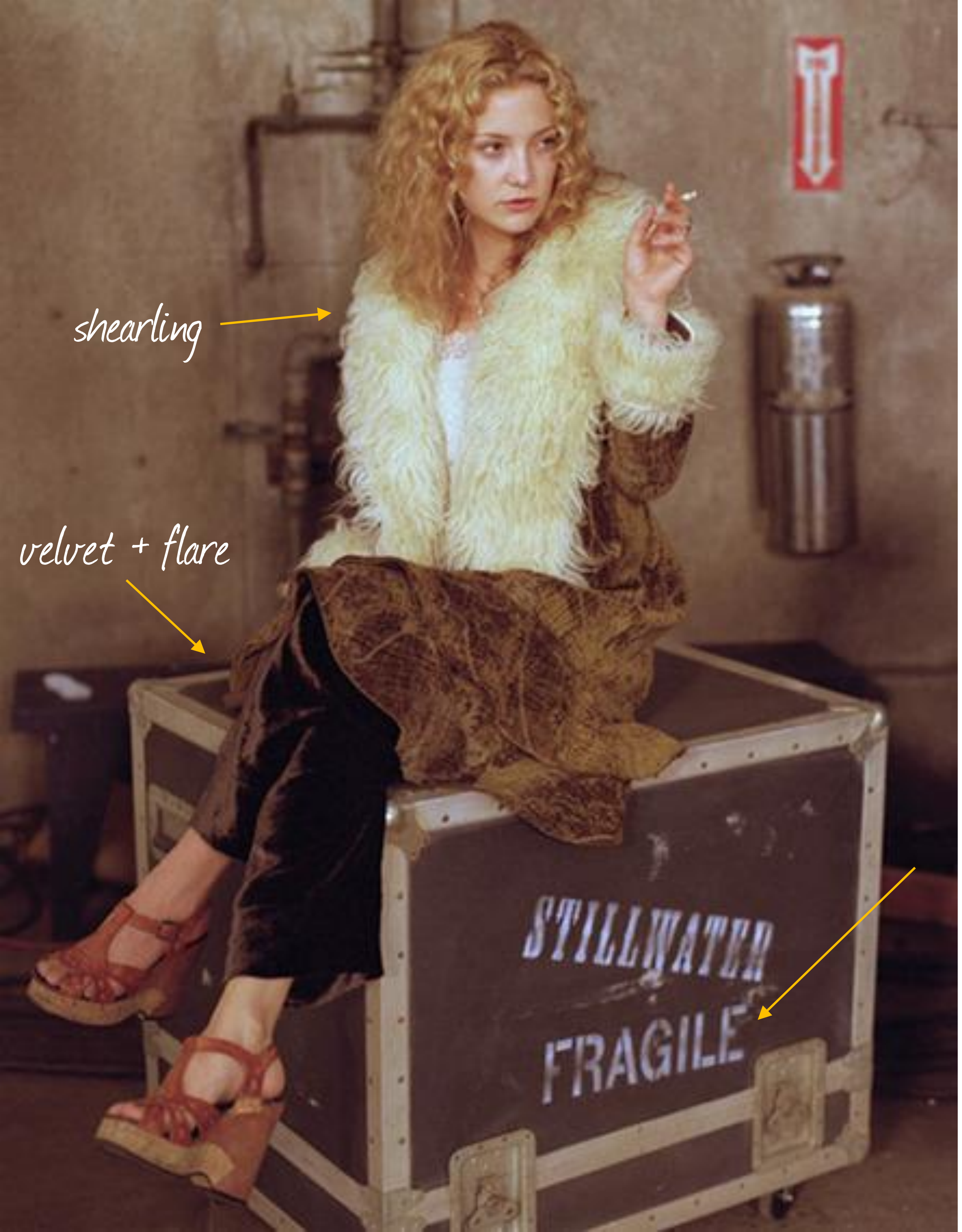
by Diyana Noory

Almost Famous,
postmodern dress,
and vintage fashion

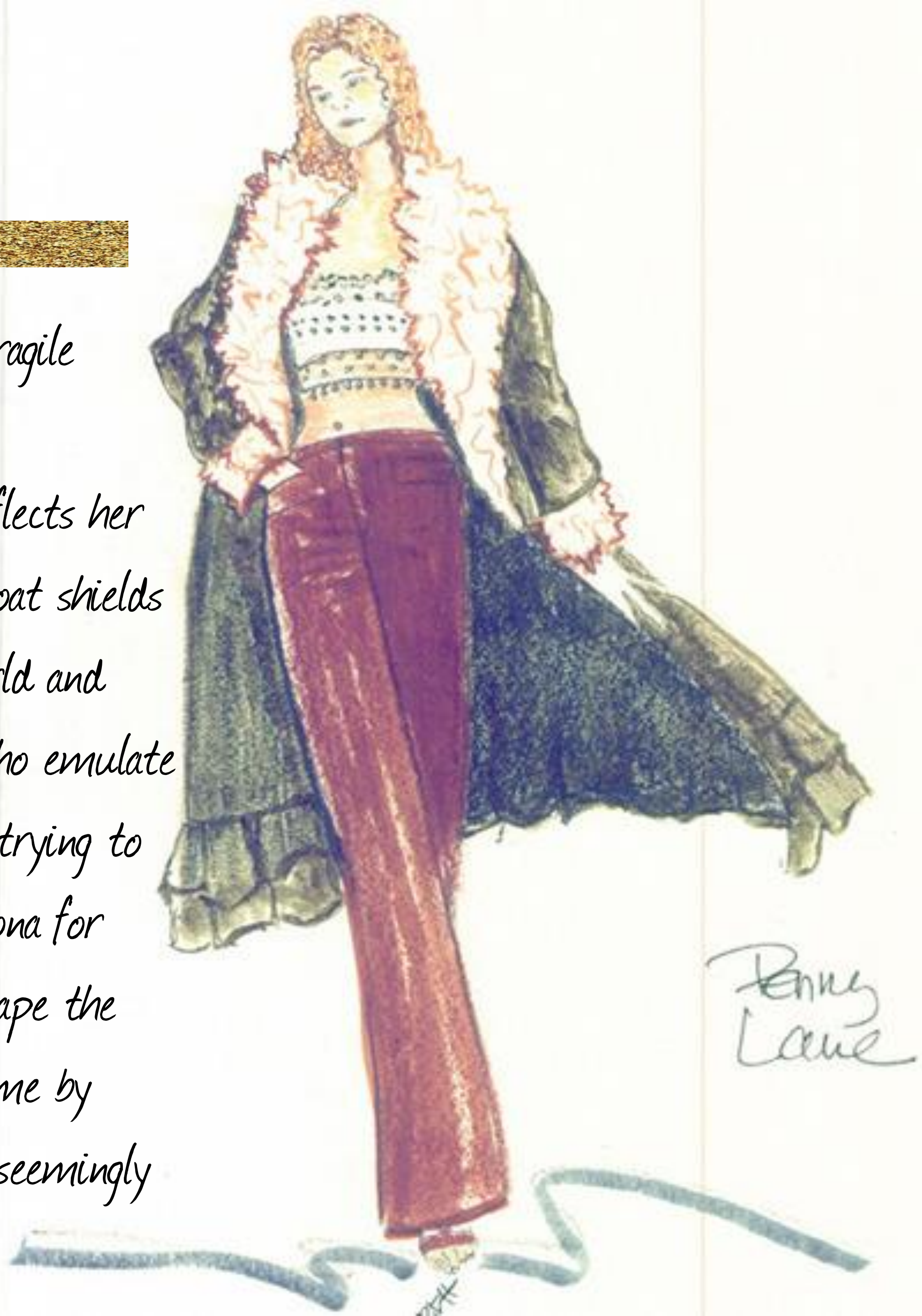
ALMOST FAMOUS

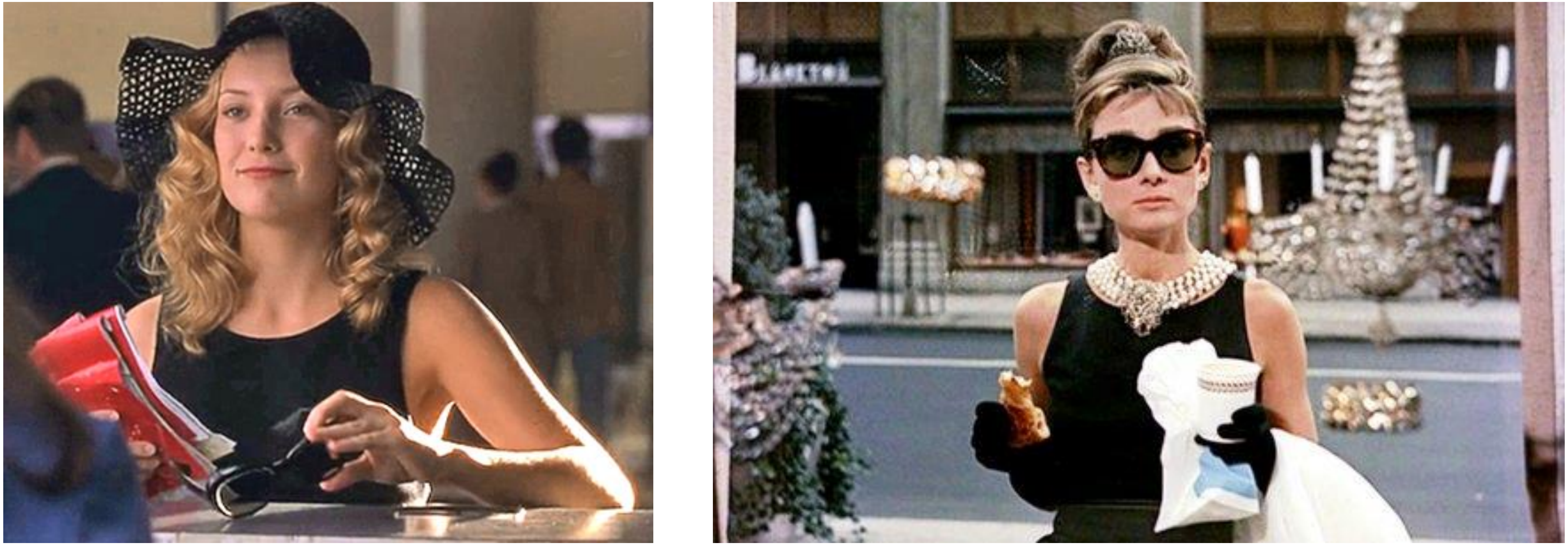
(2000)

A Vinyl Films Production of
Untitled
The Plaza
Continental
and
Philip Seymour Hoffman
Written and Directed by
Cameron Crowe


shearling
velvet + flare
STILLWATER
FRAGILE

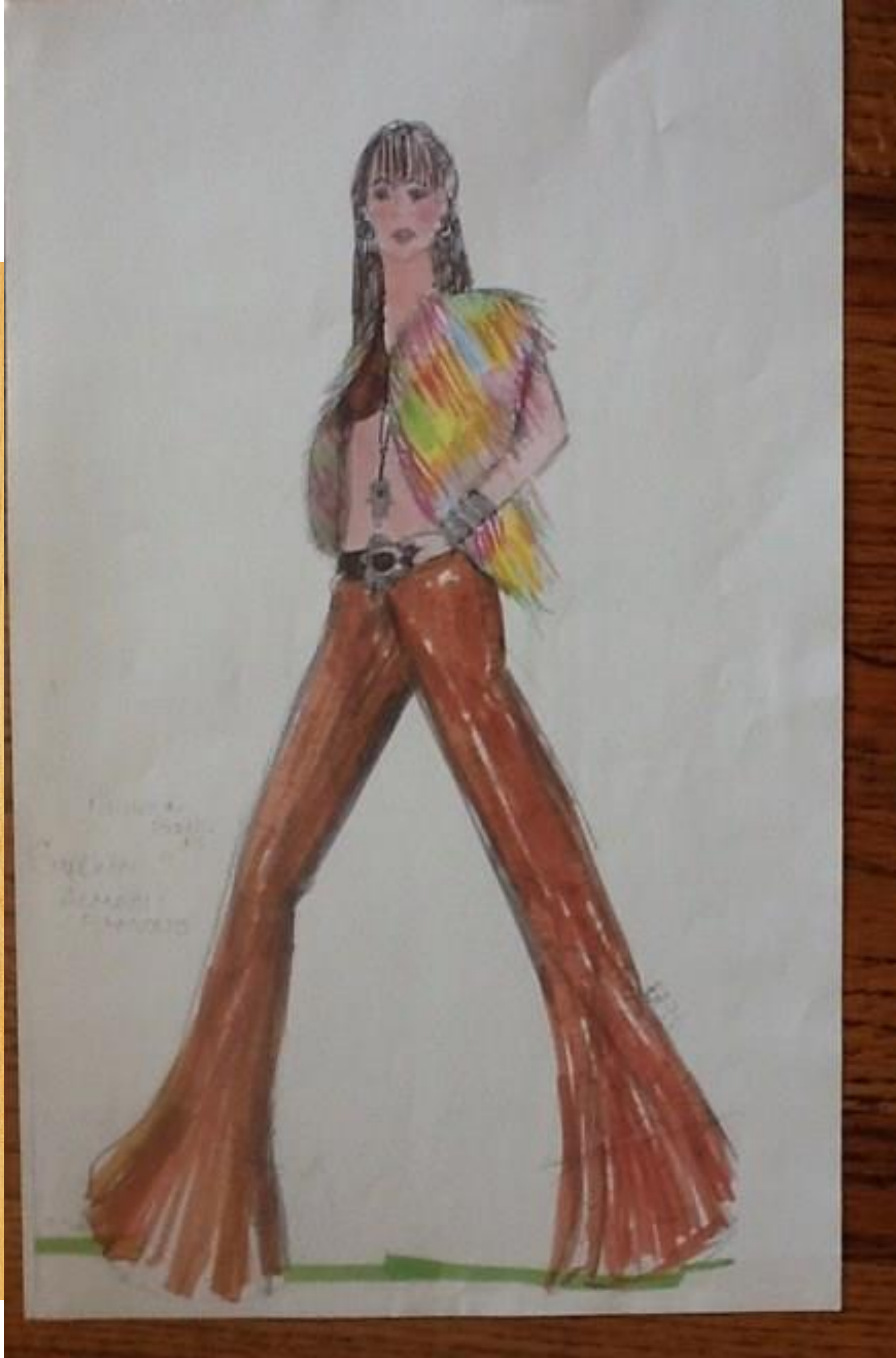
Penny Lane is a fragile character whose clothing reflects her personality; her coat shields her from the world and likewise, those who emulate her style may be trying to mold a new persona for themselves or escape the reality of their time by dressing like this seemingly ideal 70s babe.

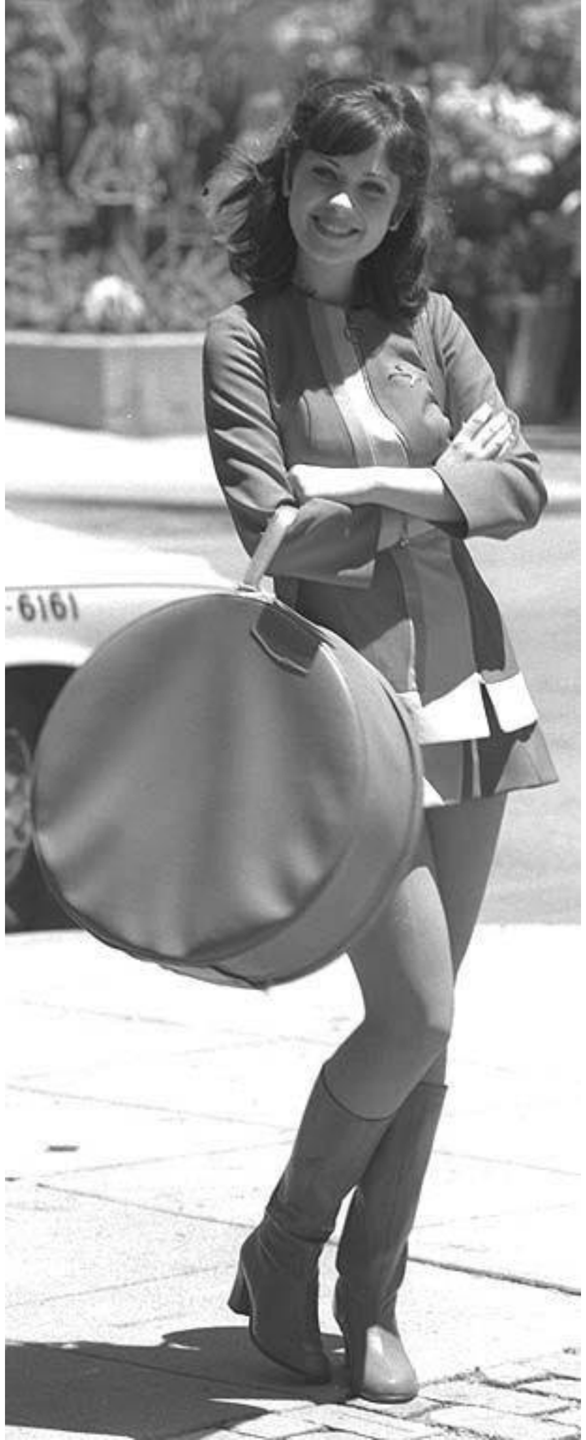




At the end of *Almost Famous*, Penny Lane channels a glamorous new persona that mirrors Holly Golightly of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, played by Audrey Hepburn. Both of these women mask their insecurities and fears beneath beautiful, sophisticated exteriors.

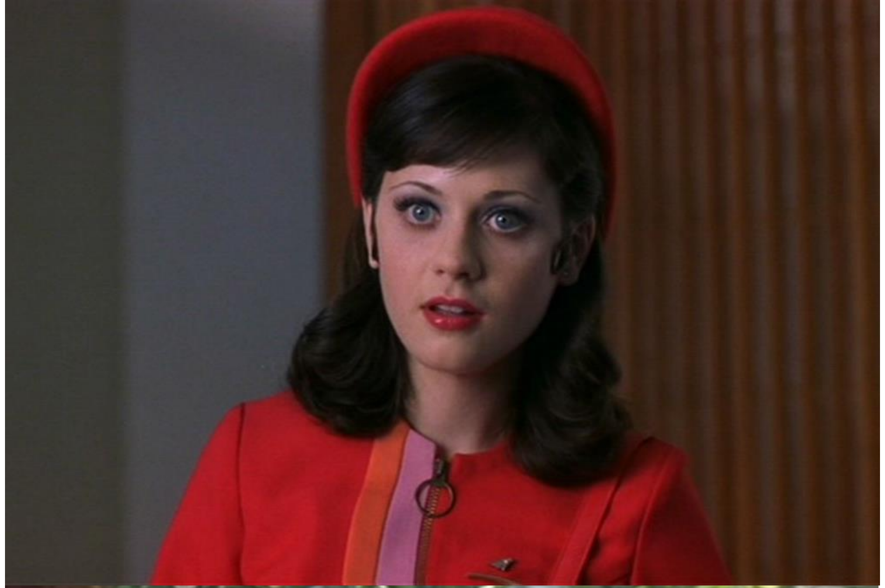
"In that time period, and I think Bianca Jagger kind of started it, it was the beginning of thrift shopping. So all of Anna Pacquin's dresses were 30s-influenced, like she had got them at the vintage store, though we actually made all her dresses. For Fairuza Balk, I made the black lace ponchos and the really wide bell-bottoms and I cut up lengths of boa and stitched them down into the shape of a vest and she wore that. She was more flamboyant. Kate was the romantic, Anna was the shy kind of vintage put-together from the past and Fairuza was loud, the den mother. She was the most outrageous."
– Betsy Heimann, *Almost Famous* costume designer

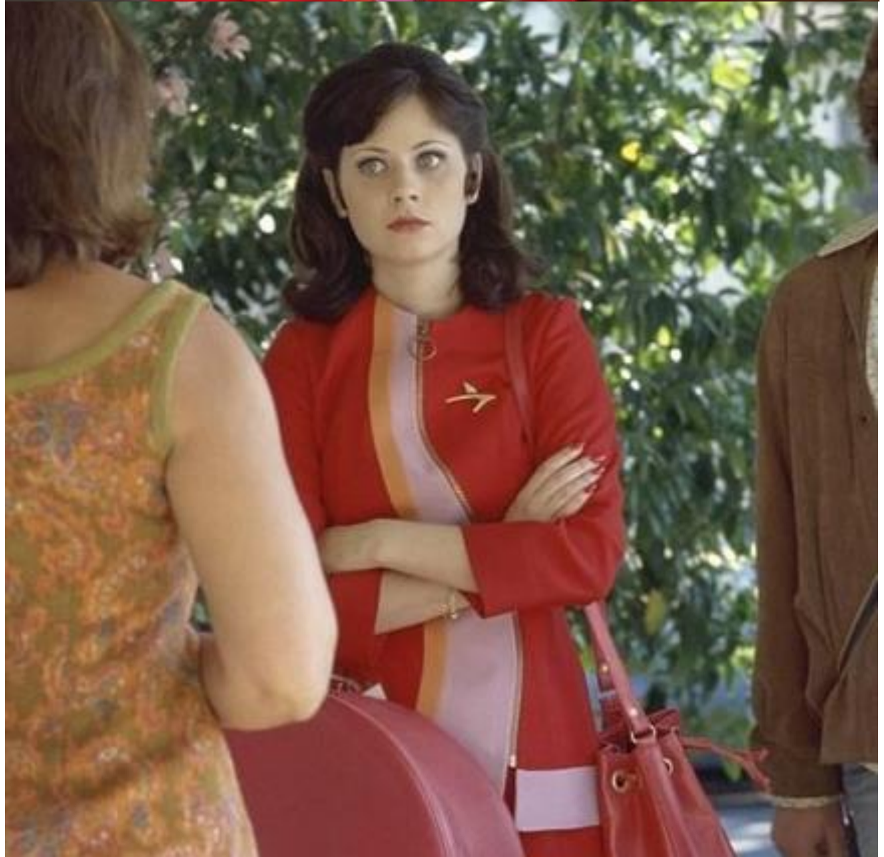




Dior FW15

Betsy Heimann recreated this Pacific Southwest Airlines outfit for Zooey Deschanel's character, Anita Miller, by getting her assistant to track down an old PSA flight attendant who still had her stewardess outfit.





Nostalgia in Almost Famous

The aim of nostalgia is to make audiences feel sentimental, in particular about their youth. *Almost Famous* complicates the audience's understanding of "real history" by delivering pleasant nostalgia; this may or may not be intentional. Frederic Jameson criticizes this by saying that nostalgic films cause an estrangement from history. When cinema mediates on the past, it brings to light issues of provenance, authority, and authenticity: by creating "pastiche of the stereotypical past", thereby encouraging a historically inaccurate reading of the past.

Almost Famous is a more traditional and sentimental coming of age story that tells of good times where the teen experience is prioritized; the film stars a group of twenty-somethings enjoying the carefree adolescent life of the rock and roll stardom world. It neatly illustrates Jameson's concern with the way nostalgia films run the risk of delivering images of the past through stylistic connotation; that is, implying history through glossy images and defining specific eras by fashion. This is clearly represented by the emphasis on costume in this film. David Shumway criticizes *Almost Famous* for suffering, in its pastiche, from what he calls the "postmodern image-society, in which images are supposed to replace any more substantial understanding of past or present". According to Shumway, "commodified nostalgia involves the revival by the culture industry of certain fashions and styles of a particular past era". Nonetheless, *Almost Famous* is an enjoyable and poignant film as audiences are drawn nostalgically to the film's setting in the rock and roll world of early 1970s America and become nostalgic for their own youth and coming of age.

Nostalgia in Almost Famous

The style displayed by characters like Penny Lane embodies the ideal bohemian girl; the girl who postmodern dressers seek to emulate at music festivals, on Halloween, at the beach, or anywhere they go. Despite her clear character flaws and insecurities, a lot of focus is placed on her aesthetic and it is an ideal that is strived for in fashion. Time and time again magazines feature boho spreads and trendy music festival style is in line with hers.

VINTAGE CLOTHING

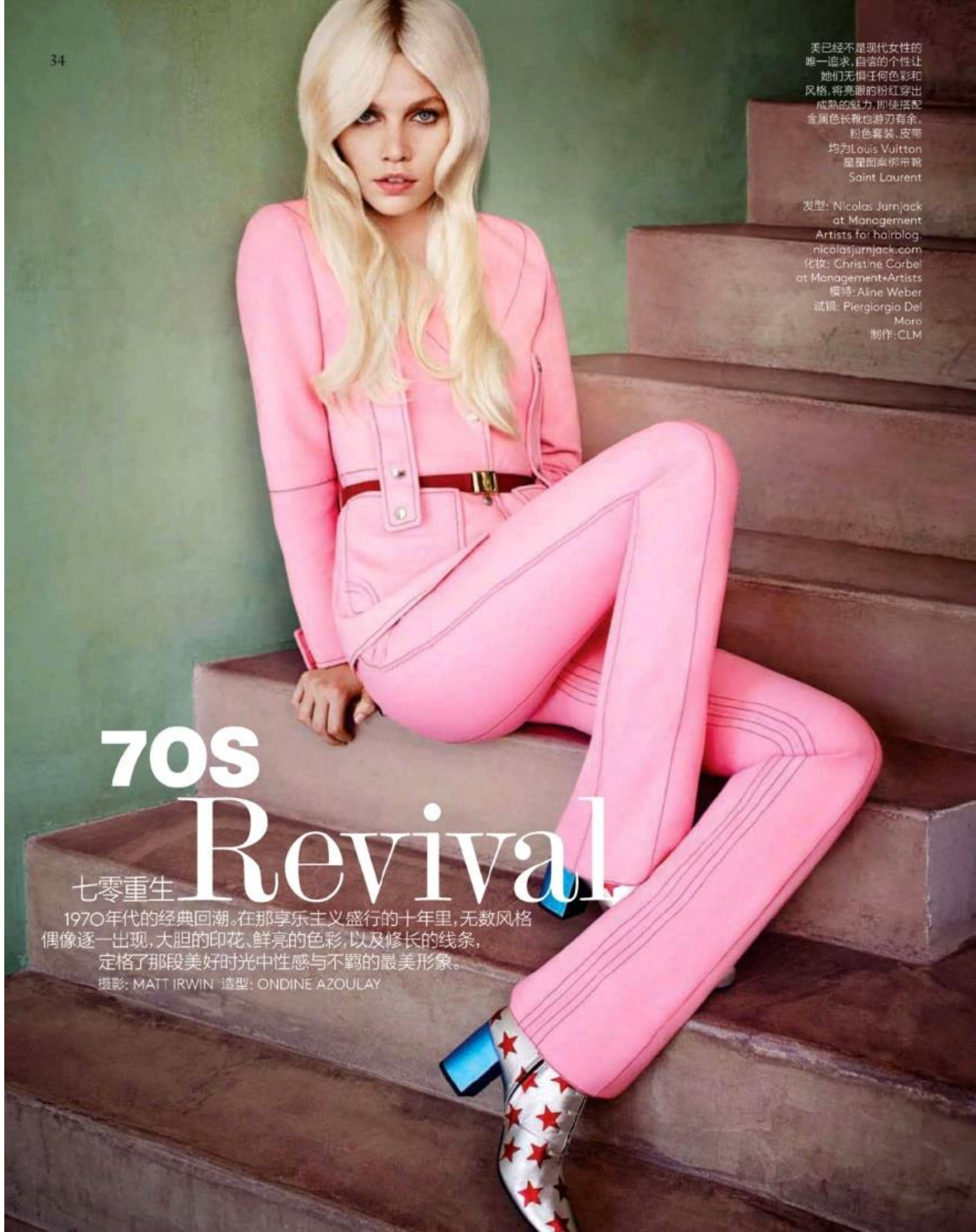
Wearing vintage involves recognizing a special type of clothing, and being aware of and appreciating specifics such as when an item was produced or why it was worn. Vintage is dressing for audiences that understand the significance of the clothing; a connoisseurship is required to identify authentic vintage, and this can be considered "subcultural capital" in a Bourdiueian line of thought. The wearer is involved in changing the value of an item from what it once was during its original time of production. Additionally, many wearers claim that buying vintage clothing feel unique as they are set apart from mass market shoppers. Vintage wearers most highly value original items that are at least 25 years old, and designer items are especially coveted. These items are not only collected, but also worn therefore they must meet contemporary demands in regards to convenience and body shape, and as such selection is guided by the consumer's look, age, and personality.

While many existing studies connect vintage with authenticity, nostalgia, and identity, Aleit Veenstra and Giselinde Kuipers investigated the relationship between vintage style and consumer culture. They feel that current theories on consumption, fashion, and subculture are not sufficient in explaining vintage practices. They regard vintage as a form of consumption as opposed to an expression of subcultural identity. This aesthetic preference for authenticity as expressed through vintage has evolved into a broader, more mainstream practice. They state that "vintage communicates and expresses a longing for an authentic identity that is informed by a sense of nostalgia.."

Jameson, who wrote on the postmodern society as characterized by pastiche, said that the "random cannibalization of all styles of the past" does not mean that people have nostalgia for the actual past; instead, it is "an identical copy for which no original ever existed" as all styles are inspired by previous pieces. Clothing itself is capable of conveying messages; according to Diana Cane, "clothing as a form of communication has become a set of dialects, rather than a universal language."

All in all, vintage dress is neither mainstream nor subcultural. However, it reveals elements of subcultural consumer culture in regards to identity and communication through consumption. By wearing vintage clothing, people project their commodified awareness and make statements on contemporary consumerism.

70S
REVIVAL
FASHION



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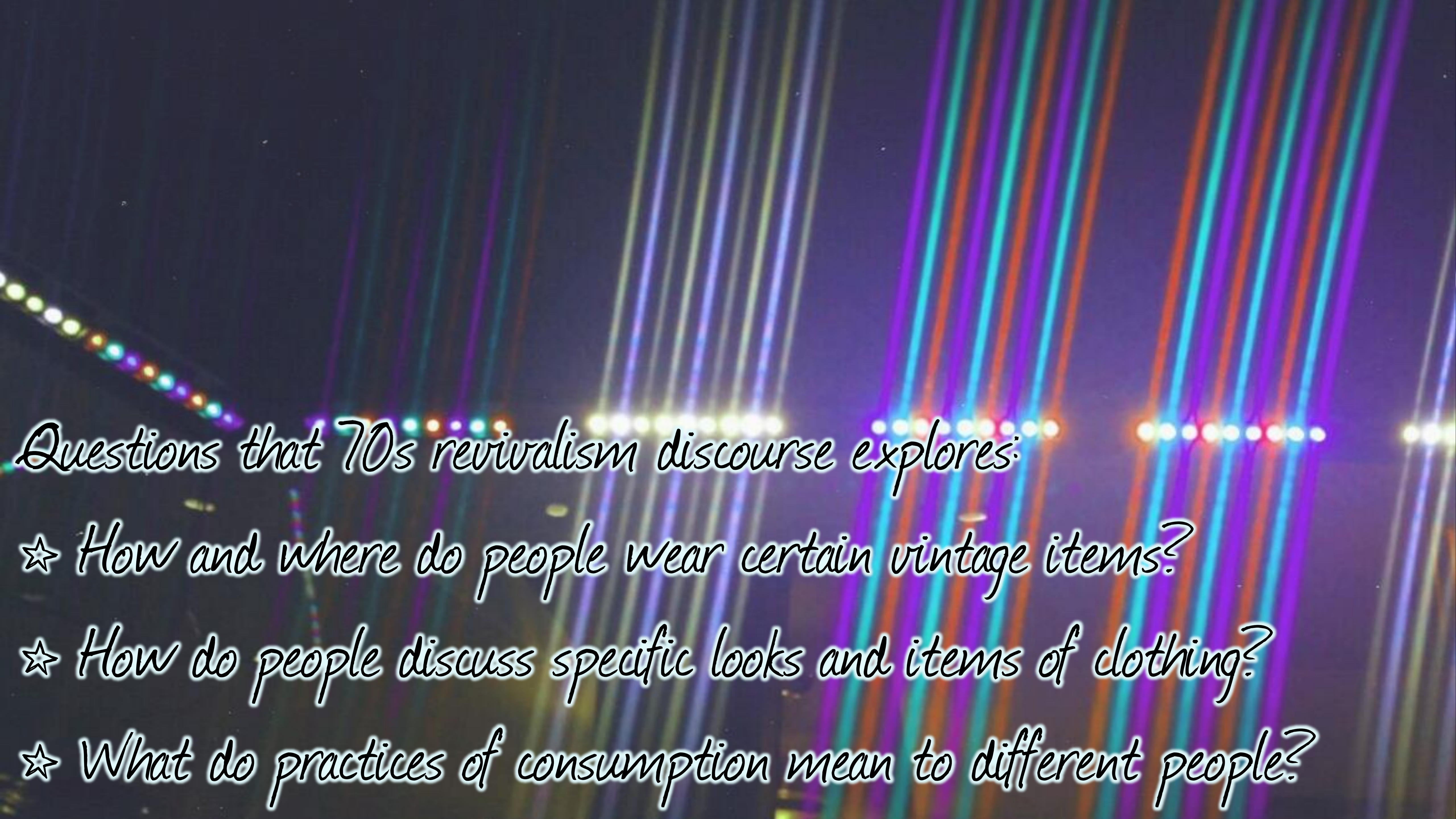
美已经不是现代女性的
唯一追求,自信的个性让
她们无惧任何色彩和
风格,将亮眼的粉红穿出
成熟的魅力,即使搭配
金属色长靴也游刃有余。
粉色套装、皮带
均为Louis Vuitton
星星图案绑带靴
Saint Laurent

发型: Nicolas Jurnjack
at Management
Artists for hairblog.
nicolasjurnjack.com
化妆: Christine Corbel
at Management+Artists
模特:Aline Weber
试镜: Piergiorgio Del
Moro
制作:CLM

70S
七零重生 Revival

1970年代的经典回潮。在那享乐主义盛行的十年里,无数风格
偶像逐一出现,大胆的印花、鲜亮的色彩,以及修长的线条,
定格了那段美好时光中性感与不羁的最美形象。

摄影: MATT IRWIN 造型: ONDINE AZOULAY



Questions that 70s revivalism discourse explores:

☆ How and where do people wear certain vintage items?

☆ How do people discuss specific looks and items of clothing?

☆ What do practices of consumption mean to different people?

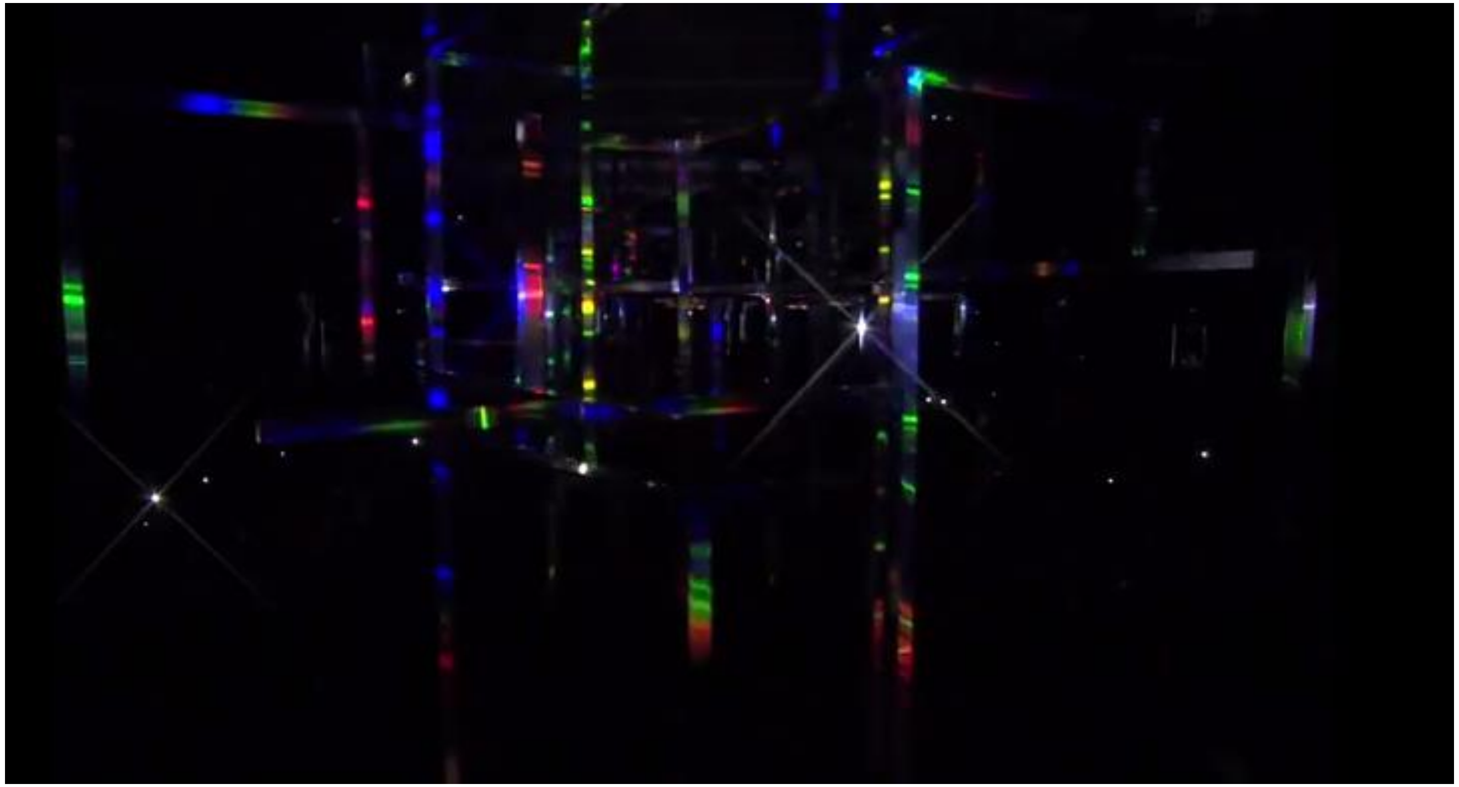
In terms of style, 70s revivalism discourse investigates how 70s fashion has been re-appropriated and worn in new ways throughout the late 1990s and the early part of the twenty-first century. It identifies and analyzes the different ways people discuss 70s retro fashion and their dispositions.

70s revivalism is a complex space: it includes re-appropriation as opposed to just nostalgia; spontaneity and fun, and the utilization of cultural capital through diverse displays of knowledge. The clothing of the decade is being re-worn, but outfits are being assembled by contemporary individuals who are not trying to relive the 70s exactly as they were but to draw inspiration from whatever past sources they choose. Certain elements of 70s style that are romanticized include the rustic, peasant-girl image of 70s femininity, which also carries hippie and bohemian implications, and includes features like florals, gingham checks, smock tops, A-lines with ruffles, and ruched blouses.

Glitter and glam rock at Saint Laurent's seductive and psychadelic SS15 Show

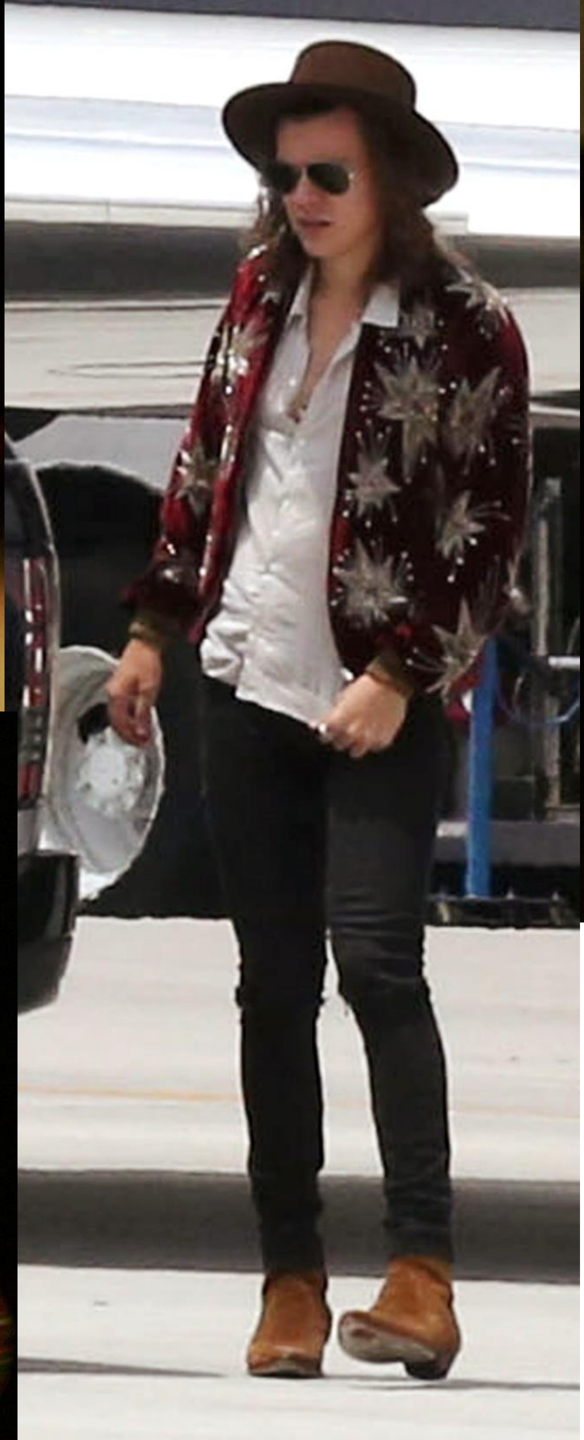
Interesting to note:

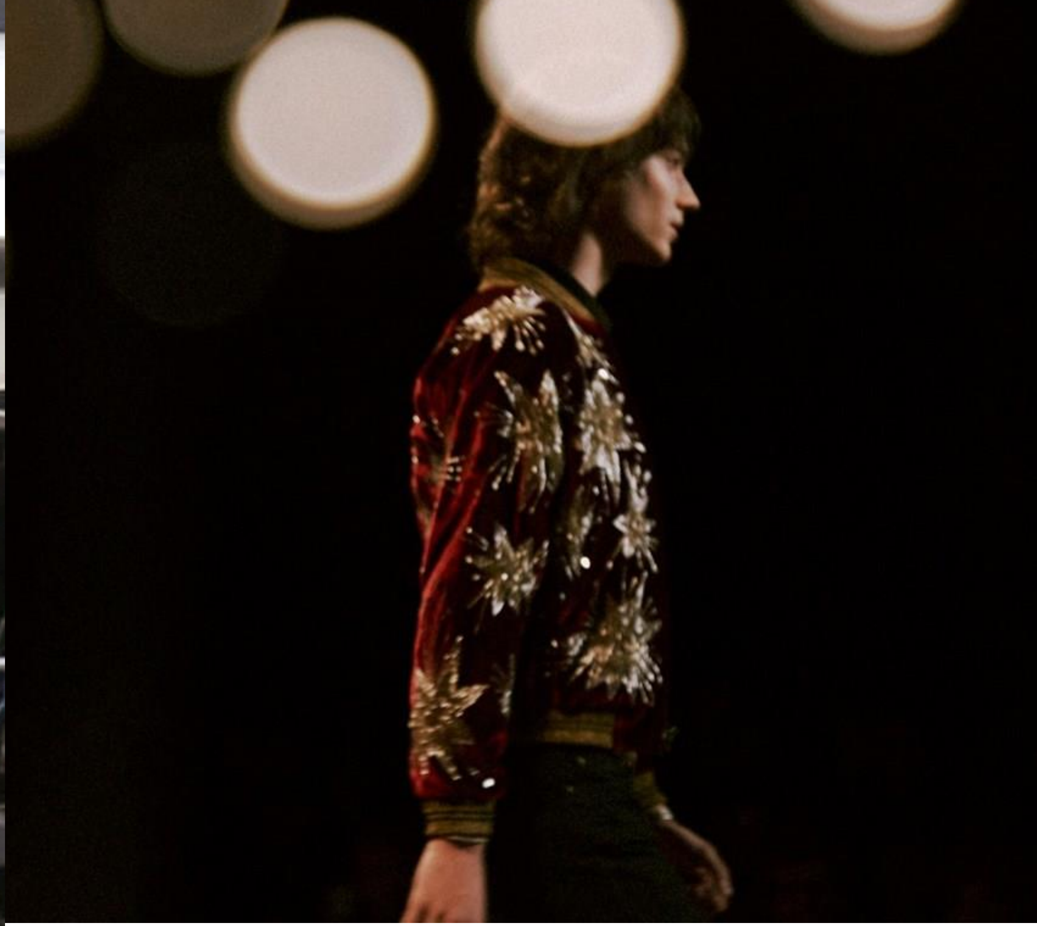
The people in the comment section of this video and of similar shows that are clearly inspired by older fashion are usually either enraged by the designer's "lack of originality", or delighted by their references to the past and the ways certain elements of older fashion have been revamped to suit modern day consumers.



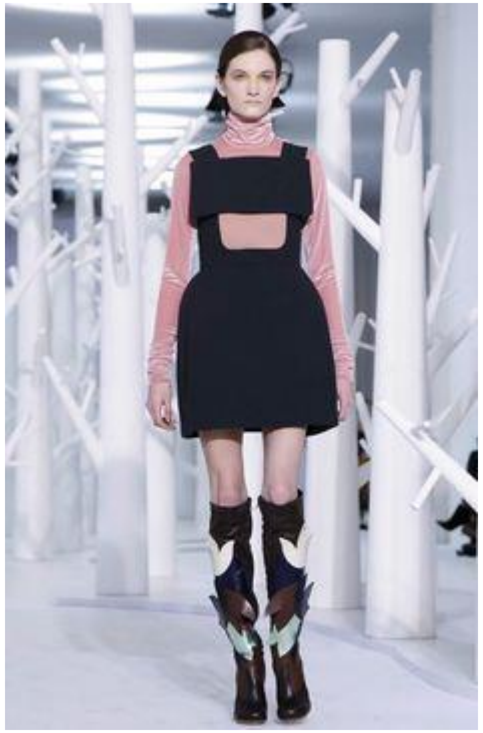
Click above to watch

Saint Laurent SS15

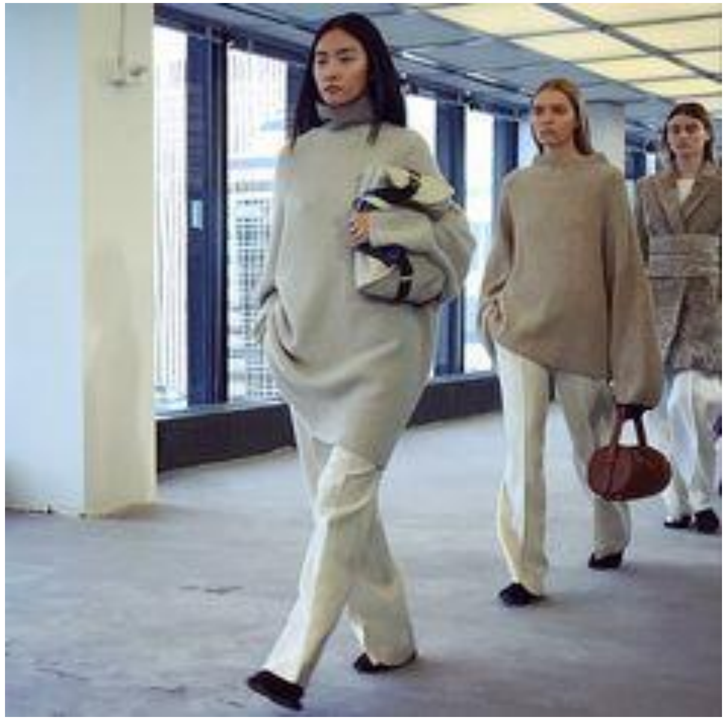




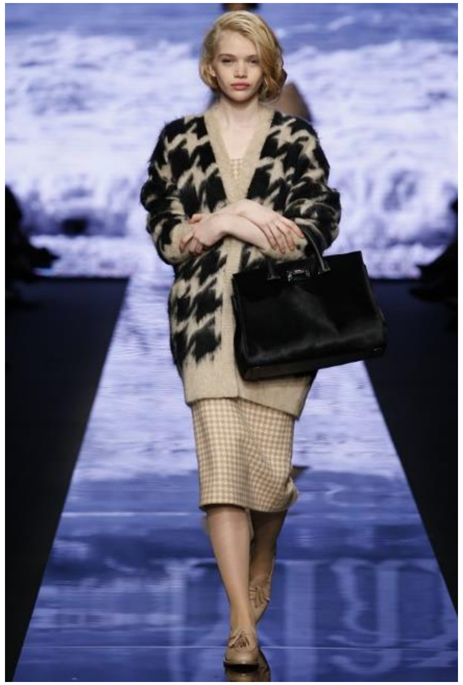
Harry Styles wears an embroidered velvet jacket from Saint Laurent's SS15 collection. The star is known for emulating the style of '70s rockers like Mick Jagger and David Bowie, dressing in a postmodern manner that defies gender norms.



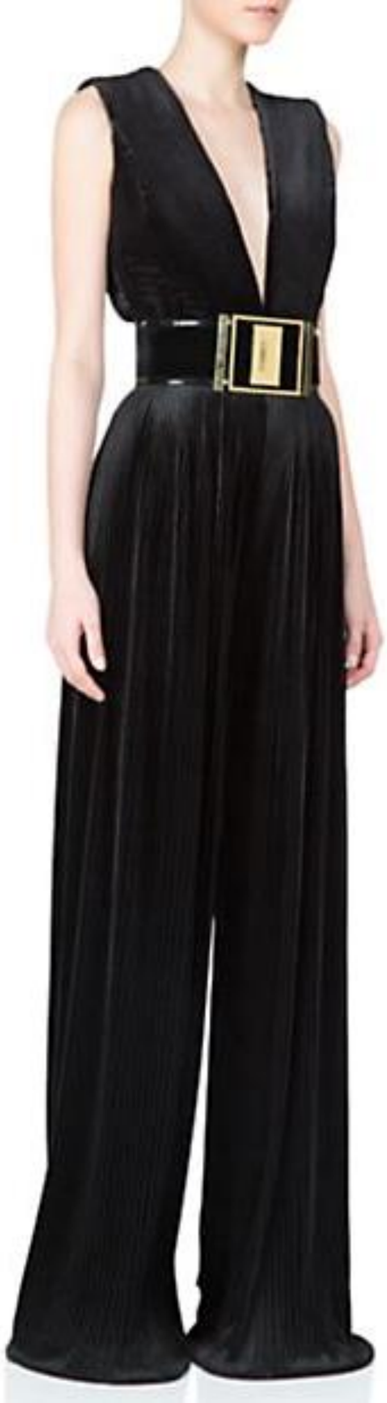
Velvet
at DelPozo FW15



Loose silhouettes
at The Row FW15



Houndstooth at
Max Mara FW15

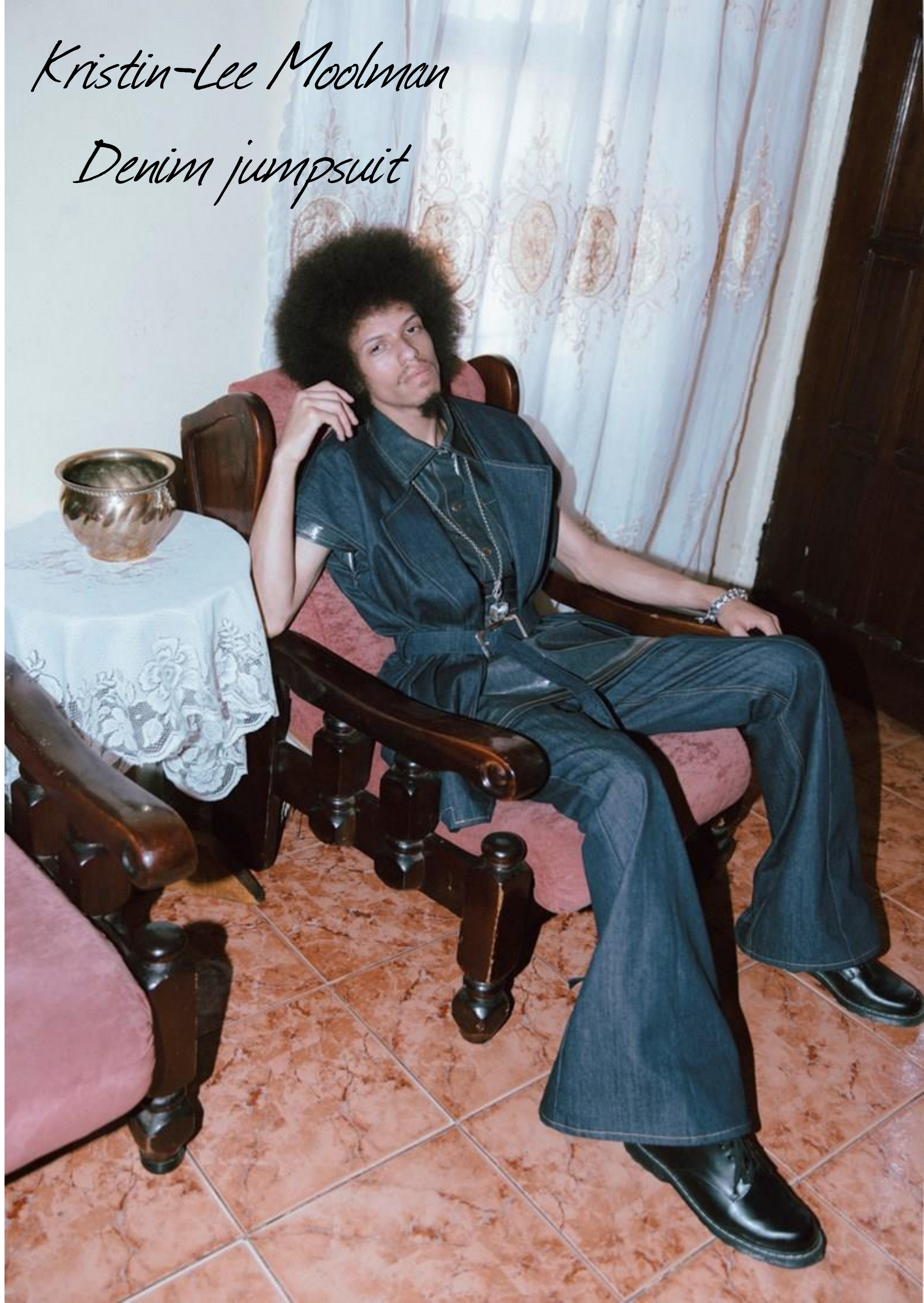


WIDE LEGS

Balmain

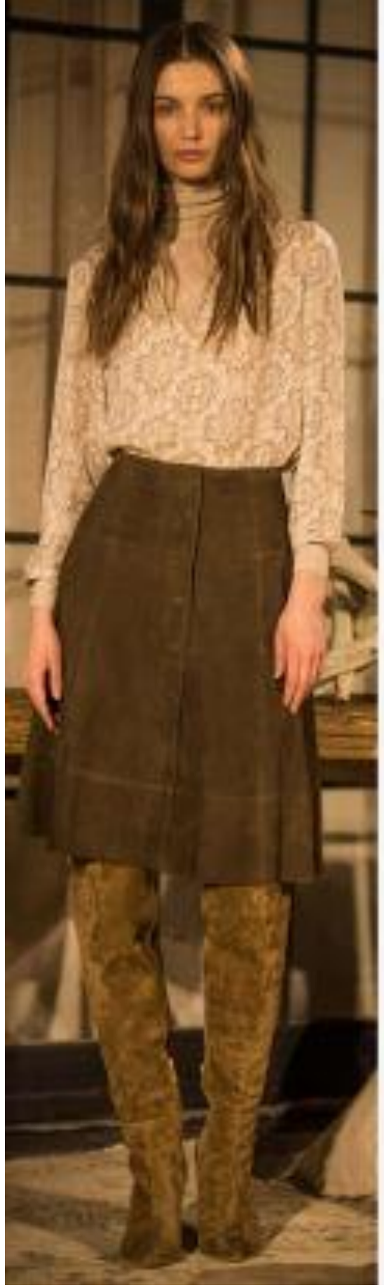
Pleated wide leg jumpsuit

Saks Fifth Avenue

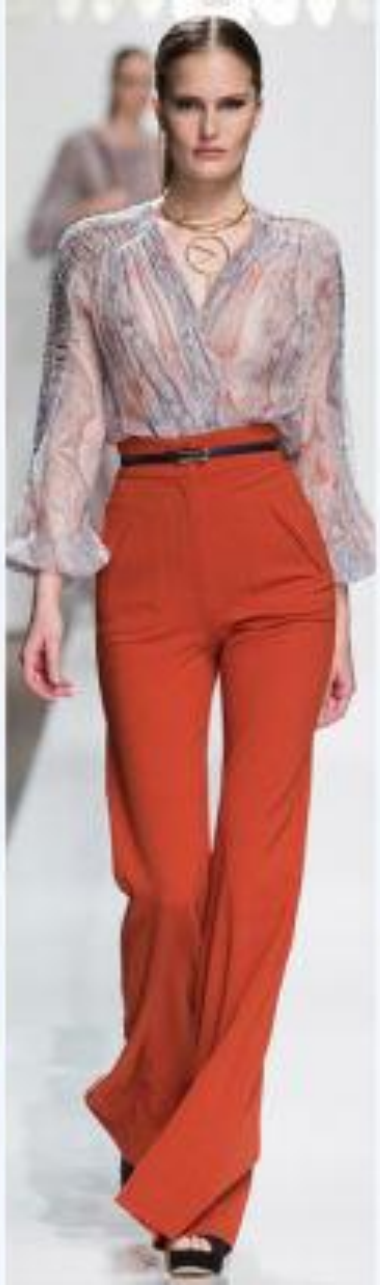


Kristin-Lee Moolman

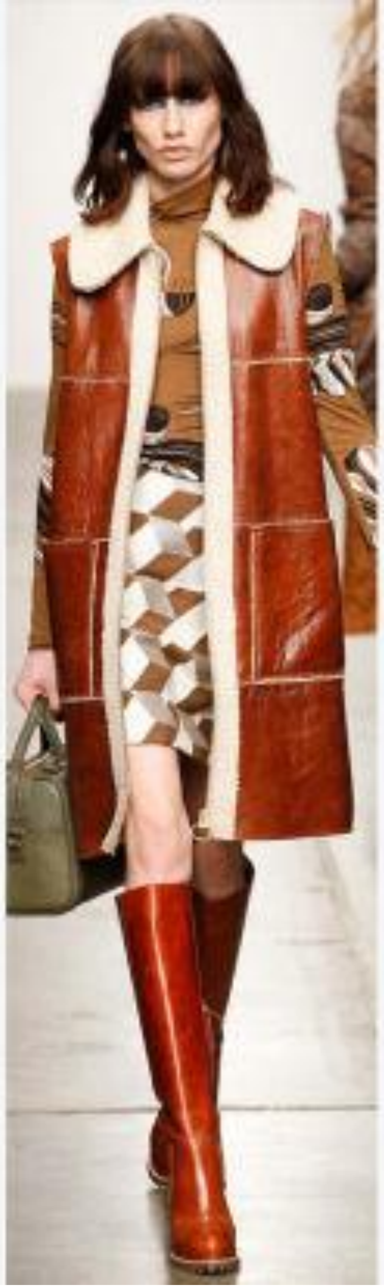
Denim jumpsuit



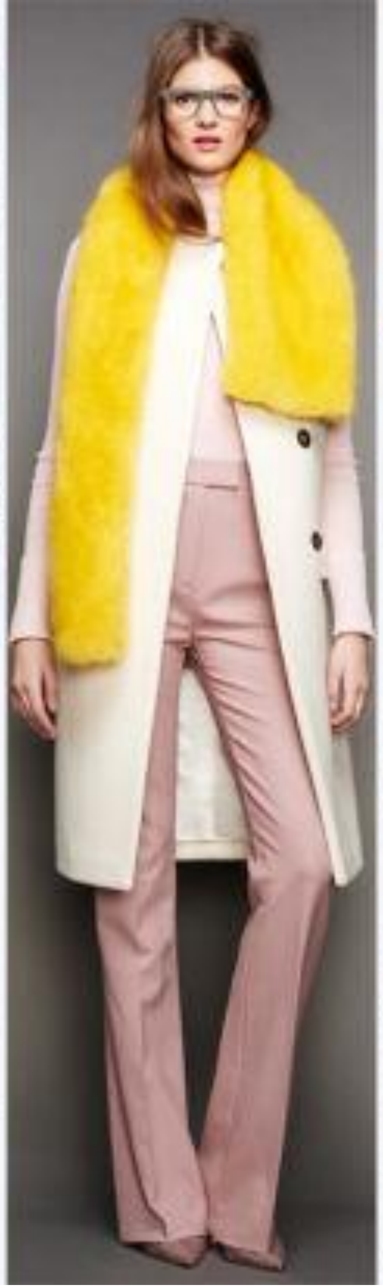
Joie



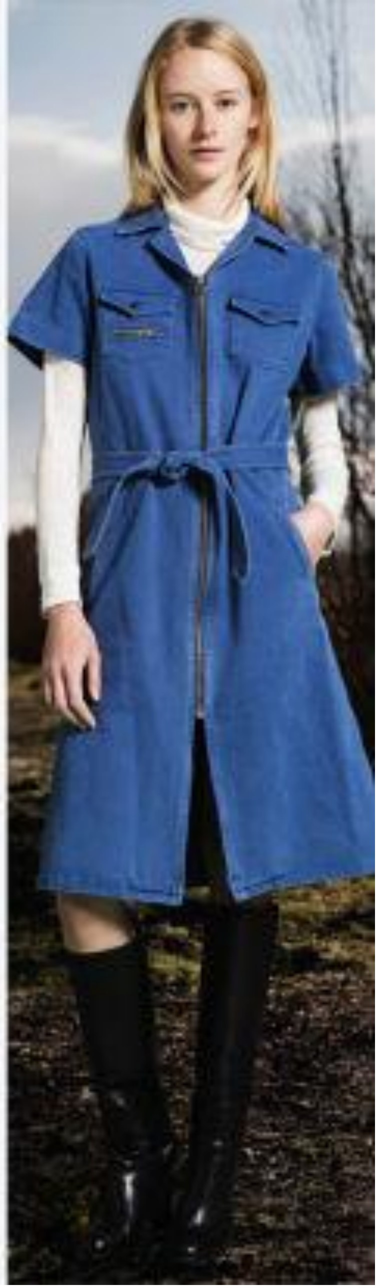
Zimmermann



Karen Walker

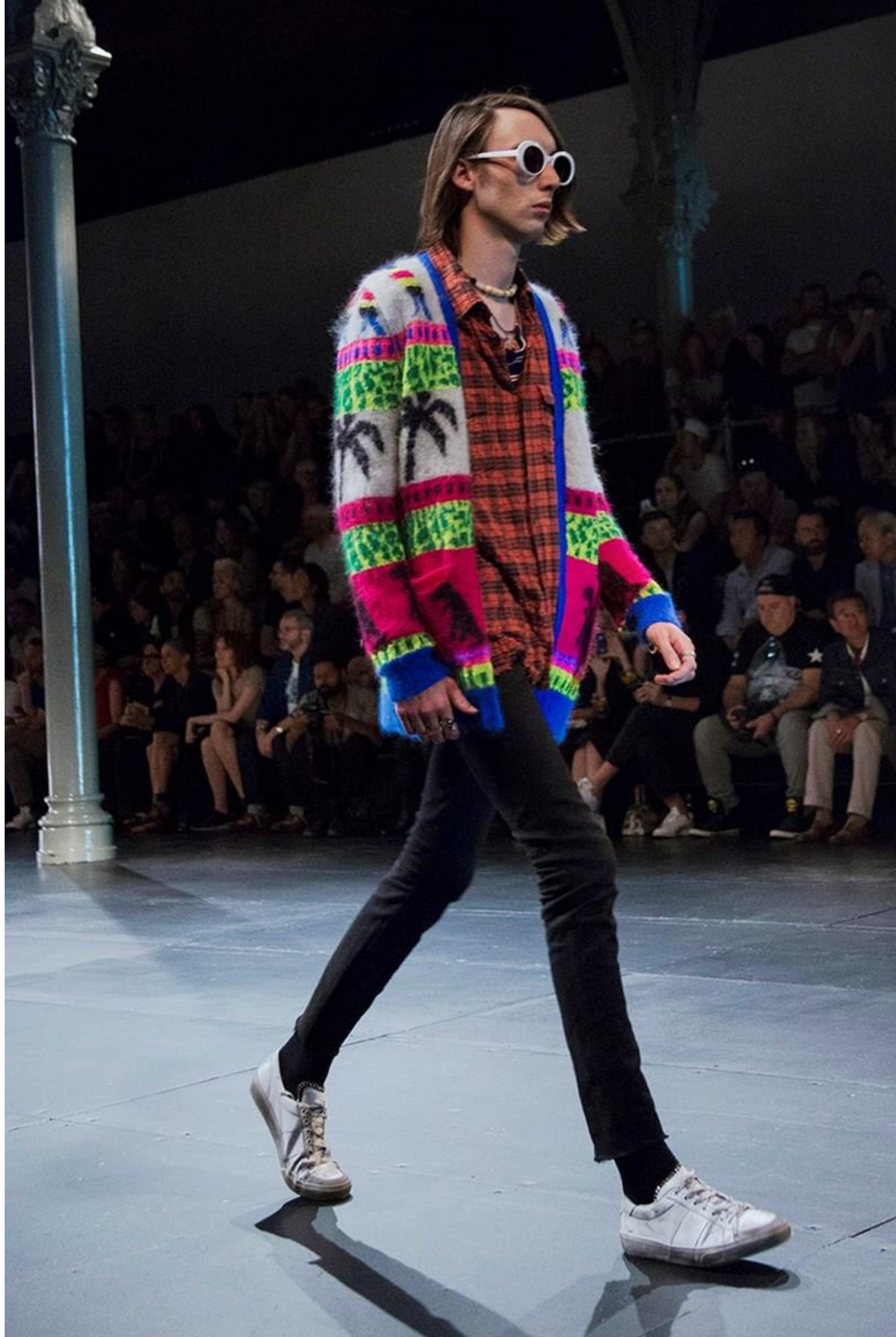


J. Crew



Sea

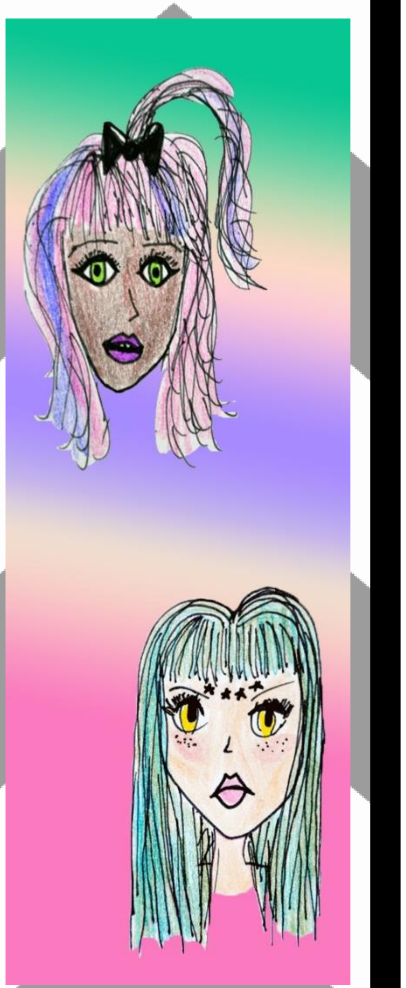
POSTMODERN DRESS



Hipster Culture

Hipsters choose to avoid fashionable currents and clichés, and employ irony as a form of collective enjoyment of "failed" objects such as old technology, "out of style" vintage fashion, and "tacky" clothing. Hipster culture is not so much a counter culture as it is a conserver culture, as these people try to hold on to items of the past: a positive or non-ironic element of it involves a genuine aesthetic enjoyment of forgotten objects, but this is typically dismissed as nostalgia, a lack of creativity or repetition.

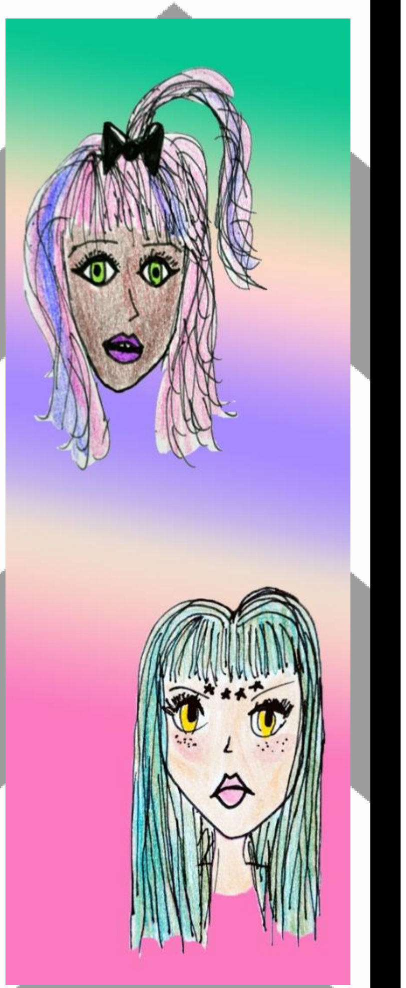
Aesthetic Expression and Individuality



Some individuals wear vintage for aesthetic expression, others to save the environment through recycling. In these cases people wear items in a manner unrelated to a historical context, seemingly with a disregard for how certain items are relevant to a particular historical time period or their association with gender. These types of people express a set of ideals that differ from those stated through the mainstream aesthetic expression and coding system. A traditional or modernist observer may find their appearance surprising as they do not see the typical characteristics they would use to classify a fashionable look.

Individuality in fashion is accomplished by employing one or more of the four following characteristics: gender-coding, avoidance of social standing, body mapping, and the body politics. Postmodern dress eliminates cues of social standing such as class, race, or gender by mixing and matching high end and used pieces, drawing inspiration from many cultures (whilst encouraging wariness of appropriation), and encouraging androgyny.

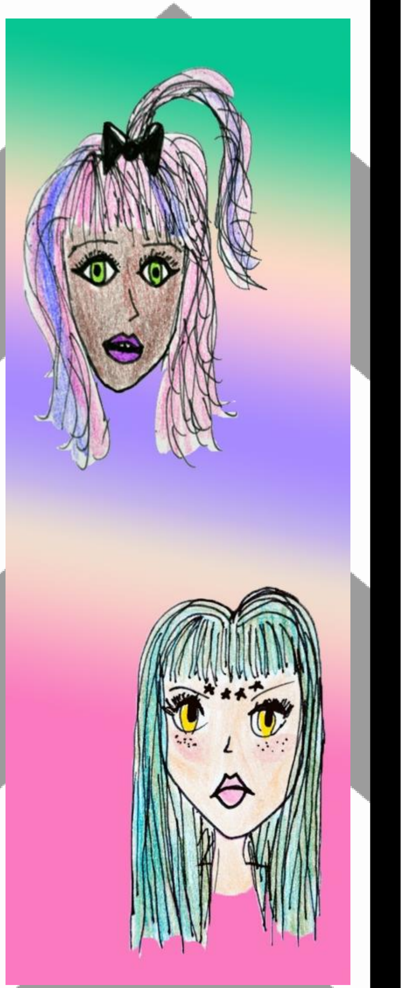
Aesthetic Expression and Individuality



In a study conducted by Betsy Henderson, it was found that mass market shoppers typically desire the aesthetic look that is portrayed in fashion through the use of fashionable brands. On the other hand, alternative shoppers develop their own look by choosing to shop only at used clothing sources and further personalizing clothing items and appearance. Between these two types of shoppers are cross-shoppers are those who select from multiple sources.

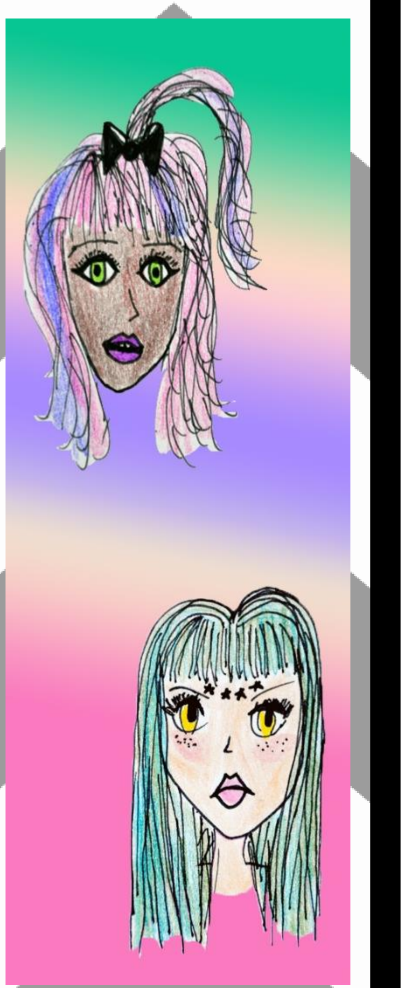
Alternative shoppers may even dress badly intentionally, as eye-catching combinations of unexpected clothing are satirical plays against societal expectations. One person interviewed in the study explained how deliberate bad taste thrived at 70s themed roller disco parties she had attended: "It's very intentional. I have a concept on the 70s just being a period of bad taste, a decade of it. The color combinations are not quite appealing to anything. The bad taste, we try and get the most out of it."

Aesthetic Expression and Individuality



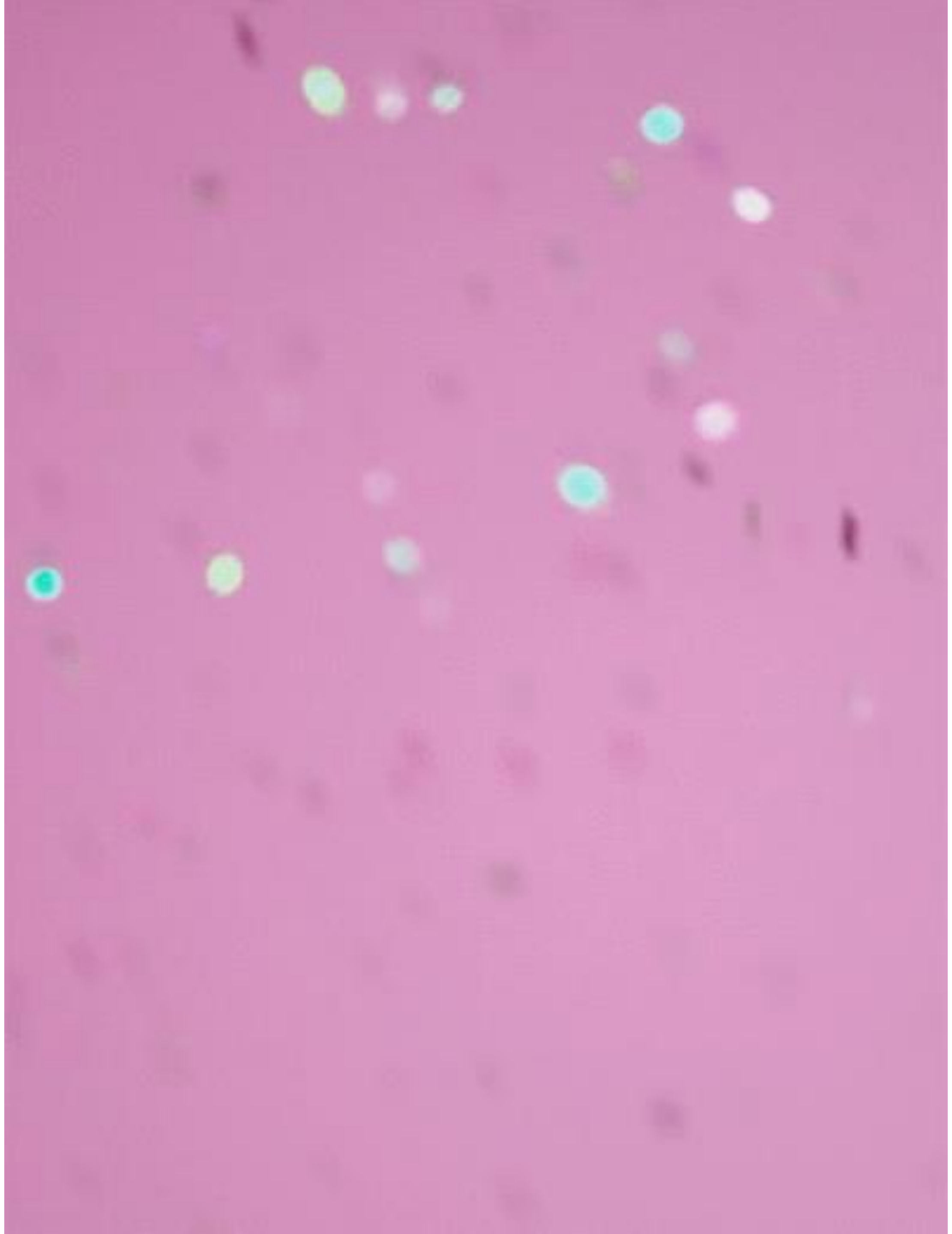
Young people place a high importance on authenticity, and it is used as a tool to construct identities through consumer behaviour. David Muggleton, however, feels that authenticity must be completely removed from postmodern vocabulary because everything draws inspiration from another source; in particular, he does not believe in the authenticity that is ascribed to youth cultures. For example, retro groups such as the 60s or 70s scene that *Almost Famous* characters embody tend to be judged as inauthentic as they do not seem to be innovative or progressive, rather copying the styles of their more "authentic" youth predecessors. According to the theories of Jameson or Jean Baudrillard, these youth groups may instead be referred to as pastiche or as simulacrum, "the identical copy for which no original has ever existed".

Aesthetic Expression and Individuality



Retro fits well with postmodernity, as retro items are fragments of a time that has past and as such they are open for interpretation. Dressing in historical items may create a feeling of sophisticated individuality, as one is resisting the consumption of uniform mass-produced products and boycotting global fashion superbrands that produce products in unethical ways. At the same time, Alice Cicolini argues that retro clothes may have already become a brand. How "different" can retro be when retro has become so widely fashionable?

THE



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