

Self Expression: Clothing Edition

Ever since I can remember, I have adored putting thought into my style/ fashion choices. Earlier than most, I refused when my mom chose clothes for me and opted to leave the house in a tutu, striped tights and those light-up shoes from the 90's! So much so, that after obsessively watching the show "Project Runway," I decided my career would be a fashion designer. I can confirm that that dream never came to fruition, but I still manage to use fashion as a form of self expression and enjoy piecing together outfits.

The fun thing about fashion and style is that it's what you make it. Sure, there are diehards who stick to a brand religiously, but rarely is one person's entire wardrobe singular. With that, style is also fluid and ever-changing (apart from those who are stuck in their heyday decade of fashion). For example, in highschool, I was much more conservative with my style choices-- jeans, tshirt, converse and natural hair color. However, once I was in college, I began experimenting with my hair color, adding accessories (I literally wore 10 bracelets on each wrist everyday) and expanding my pieces to include dresses, skirts, layers and even some fringe!

The act of exploring one's style can highlight different aspects of their personality and create a sense of belonging. I can say from experience, nothing brings me joy like when someone recognizes the band dawned on my tshirt-- a signifier of my music taste and a rally call to other like-minded fans. Style also serves as an unspoken "rule" amongst different groups and cultures. When I join my partner at the skatepark, I fit in with my branded tshirt, slim black jeans and checkered Vans. However, that same outfit doesn't blend in as well if I wore it into my office at work, which has a different style culture entirely.

For the past decade or so, my wardrobe has been predominately black (with some white and red occasionally). I find myself drawn to the elegance and ease of wearing black. I also feel like it conveys my "style." Although the use of black can be associated with gothic fashion, my style is a mix of gothic, skater, rocker and vintage. Because of this, my fashion icons are Vampiria, Courtney Love, Joan Jett and Mia Farrow. Along with garments, style can also be expressed with makeup, hair, accessories and even tattoos. For me, I do my makeup with a fair skintone, black wing-tipped eyeliner and a red lip. My hair is colored jet black with micro-bands and long layers. My shoes consist of Doc Martens boots, high-top converse and Vans slip-ons.

And my tattoos showcase my various interests and things that are meaningful to me. Also, once you get one tattoo, it is almost impossible not to get more!

With the proliferation of the technological age, it is easier than ever to find brands that suit your personal style. So I end this piece with a list I have compiled of brands/ websites of where I have found some of my “hero pieces.” For the goth/ alt looks, I suggest checking out: [Midnight Hour](#), [Disturbia](#), [Foxblood](#), [BlackMilk](#), [Ovate](#) and [La Femme En Noir](#). For the more vintage looks, check out: [Classic Rock Couture](#), [OXKNIT](#), [MadCap](#) and [Joanie](#). Honorable mention as well to [SUK Workwear](#) for creating some stylish, yet versatile pieces.