

Fig 4: Past, Present, and Fashion Future

This illustration explores three eras in fashion history, the past specific to the mid-20th century, the present, and the imagined future.

The leftmost figure represents mid-20th-century men's fashion, where sleekness, expressions of wealth, and conformity were emphasized. Along with a suit, this figure is sporting evening gloves and a cane. In the early 20th century, walking canes expressed class and wealth, as few could afford the illustrious gold and silver handles (Classy Walking Canes). Walking canes also have an interesting history of concealing weapons and illicit substances, a trope often found in spy movies. Evening gloves were also worn to express class, but also functioned as a separation between men and women, and the upper and lower classes. While dancing men would typically wear evening gloves, as it was seen as improper for a man to touch a woman with bare hands. The history of gloves on waiters history dates back to the development of restaurants in 16th-century Europe, to ensure the servers did not touch or eat the food.

The mid-20th century figure holds his hat out courteously, as a figure wearing an amalgamation of different aesthetics reaches out to him.

Her style is inspired by "chaos theory," a combination of different aesthetics particular to Gen Z fashion (Washington Post). Her hair is dyed pink and is a mixture of loose pieces and cornrows braided into a star pattern. This new braiding technique is called "freestyle" which is "rooted in African symbolism" (Allure). She is wearing a hoop earring, another African iconographic symbol, dating back to 2500 B.C.E in the Nubian empire, the modern-day Sudan area (Roma Designer Jewelry). She wears a small vest atop a striped shirt pink cargo pants, and hot pink Converse boots for shoes. The vest, which originated in England in the 17th century, was first worn by King Charles and became a harbinger of men's fashion, especially upper-class men. A vest would have been an important article for the 1950s figure as well. The cargo pants originated from Britain as well, in 20th-century military uniforms. Now, they are often used as workwear attire. Stripes have a complex history, ranging from iconic images of prisoners and sailors, and representing patriotism for the United States and France (due to Coco Chanel's Breton top), among others. Stripes have a history of representing "outcasts", as "court jesters, prostitutes, mad men, and criminals" were condemned to wear stripes in medieval Europe (The Good Trade).

In the modern day, stripes are a symbol of counter-cultural fashion movements, as well as symbols of style and refinement, or patriotism for the upper class.

The final figure represents a possible future for the fashion industry. For this figure, I focused on a mixture of naturalism and technology. In my experience, Gen Z chaos theory seems to be a response to the information overload of the digital world, where images and articles of clothing from different areas are accessible with the click of a button, and all of this information is collected in the highly unorganized sea of the internet. In the future, I imagine technology taking a more pervasive hold on the human body as well as fashion, as things like neuralink continue to develop. The future figure has bolts on her leggings, suggesting some sort of cyborg or metal quality. She wears a VR headset as well. Her shirt has a large three-dimensional flower with petals and wrapping vines. She also has glowing wings, which can fly (that touch is just something I would love for the future). The figure has warped hands and feet, inspired by the warped hands and feet of AI drawings. Although I did not use AI for this (or any) drawing, I wanted to suggest its presence as it has become an increasingly popular tool within everyday and creative life.

On the right-hand side of the illustration lies a black hole, which the future figure is flying towards. This figure is flying towards a black hole due to the inevitable climate crisis in which overconsumption plays a large part. The fashion industry makes up for "4 to 8.6" percent of global greenhouse gas emissions (NRDC). Although the future of fashion, and fashion history is important and exciting, it's important to consider the global effect of overconsumption, as it's leading up to inevitable destruction.



The fashion industry and consumerism are haunted by the looming climate crisis

Glowing colors to suggest a holographic quality

Emphasis on naturalism and tactility

"Girification," a new term for the feminization of everyday things, is seen in the vibrant pink color of the cargo shorts.

Converse is a staple in the punk rock and skate communities, the boots especially are a counter-cultural symbol