

Slowear

by Silvia Bombardini



Faustine Steinmetz, SS15

We might not yet be mourning seasonal styles per se, but trying to get by in the slushy flow of trends social media almost hourly present us with, patience indeed could be wearing thin. It should come as no surprise, then, when a newfound longing for inertia, reverie and boredom tempts those most attuned to the pace of the web, enough so that the wonder of it as appears to have worn down: and finds its shape in voluminous but cosy, ageless, seemingly homespun attires. Soft and wrinkled with their roots in workwear, these simple, unfussy silhouettes are a far cry from the sophisticated minimalism we're well familiar with. In this day and age when the youth struggle to make end meets, some of them seem to have forgotten how to pine after luxury: keeping up with the speed while standing out from the crowd, might have finally been recognised as the exhausting, somehow oxymoronic ordeal it is. Elitism is every so often frowned upon now. Rather, the perception of purchasing time spent through handmade garments and goods, when there's so little of it to spare in our daily life, coupled with the promise of a lasting lifespan: this is the preciousness of slowear. Contemporary, maybe despite itself, slowear appears timeless in what has been termed a Post-Trend Universe.

A certain bravery of sentiment defines perhaps its disciples – tactility and textures, missed as they had been in the digital world, are sensually pursued. As the length of our hemlines no longer chronicles the decade we live in, ethically conscious at last, young people grow concerned with the quality and weave of the most primary elements in their uncomplicated wardrobes. Favoured if substantial rather than flimsy, cloth, before design, holds their attention by touch. Emotional attachment is allowed and relished in a firm post-fast fashion stance: rather than thrown away, garments are mended, something previously unheard of by the young people of the 21st century. One's own small but virtuous step against the pull of consumerism, if not exactly yet a matter of convenience surrounded as we are by piles and piles of cheap fashion, repair rapidly becomes a matter of love. But maybe most of all it's the time spent on it, by themselves or professionals, that makes a patched up piece so valuable to Slow Wearers. Practiced Swedish label Nudie Jeans, for one, has been blogging the *user stories* of each doctored pair for a few years now, London's most prestigious colleges offer darning workshops to their students, and countless YouTube tutorials teach online the finest pleasures of traditional Japanese Sashiko stitching. Alternatively, it's the traces of wear themselves that can be treasured: as a badge of honour, like in Kate Fletcher's *Local Wisdom* project that sets to research and promote the Craft of Use, or for their narrative potential, as does Emily Spivack in her recently published *Worn Stories*. Designers may even try to replicate them, pushing the theme further than your conventional distressed denim – though that itself could have just now reached its ideal form, in the laborious work of Parisian-born Faustine Steinmetz in particular. Kanye West as well did give it a go, with those hole-riddled sweaters in his dubiously received adidas Yeezy Boost debut.

Nothing wrong, nor original surely, with what's arguably high fashion borrowing from the streets: post-trend as this universe might be, the fundamental ways of the industry seem to remain the same. Equally unsurprising, then, that Slow Wearers won't find themselves among Kanye's customers. Neighbours to the Urban Farmers, a similar distress with overconsumption does motivate them – although one may venture that even more than politics, their choices could be driven by romantic sensibilities.

If there were an ethnographic study of this blooming tribe, it would find them tied to the sundry group of Millennials devoted to various Slow movements who, having learned from a very young age to tame and filter the internet, are effortlessly informed but value experiential over intellectual knowledge. An inherent grasp of technology, despite their resentment of its cult of speed, is what differentiates them from similarly inclined ancestors. They do not wish to flee the virtual realm and move back to the woods – what they're looking for is an alcove of quiescence within it. They watch digitally shot, contemporary contemplative cinema by filmmakers the likes of Filipino Lav Diaz or Portuguese Pedro Costa, or the luscious films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul from Thailand. They listen to Space music playlists on Spotify and play meditative videogames like David O'Reilly's *Mountain* or Way to Go by studio AATOAA, where nothing much happens but the sight of a landscape enclosed in lucid sunlight. Their particular type of patience finds its roots in spirituality, in mysticism and especially in cosmology, that appears these days to have captured

anew the interest of the youth, thanks, perhaps ironically, to NASA's award winning social media presence. They would cut their hair according to the lunar calendar and will surely be watching the eclipse this coming March 20, but also follow the #aurora #timelapse tweets of active astronauts and there's a 1.5 billion pixel image of the Andromeda Galaxy from the [Hubble Space Telescope](#) as their desktop's background.

All considered it is no wonder that it took a while for this Slow thoughtfulness to seep into our closets, entwined as the idea of change is to that of fashion. But the virtues of interminable choice on- and offline are easily lost to those young enough not to remember a different time. To their eyes, this restless freedom might even register as its opposite, a mesmeric measure of control. But it's still the same epicurean wish to relish life's pleasures that inspired the original Slow Food movement in 1986 Italy which sets the pace and spirit of slowear. As much as food, fashion doesn't need to mirror society's rush: instead of running after our busy schedules, it can offer respite, soothe our bodies and soul – be tender, nostalgic, intimate. It can be flavourful, well-seasoned, and where was once competitive, could become almost rebelliously convivial.