

# Every Trend Is a Fad

shion used to seem as fleet-  
ing as a skittish deer. Whatever it had been always seemed over again by the time it made its way into stores. What was available for sale was like old milk you have to keep sniffing cautiously to tell if it might still be remotely enjoyable. Something has changed since then. These days a lot of consumers put off buying until the clearance sales. People wait for the first expiry date before making the grab. Isn't anyone afraid what's hot could be not again any second anymore?

Now that the dictates of fashion are a thing of the past, a belief persists that consumers have taken over and are holding in their hands the instrument for exerting their power and scripting their own lives, and that instrument is the internet. But the worldwide shopping mall isn't all that liberated. The command to buy won't stop ringing in your ears. Shoppers can refine and extend offerings in what amounts to an incentive to heed that command. They're

helping manufacturers keep up with currents in the air. Then surplus production continually diversifies the inventory, casting a wide net over shoppers.

Trends are made of sequences of deviant behavior and the imitation thereof. Deviations frequently arise from a surfeit of the now. An outburst may come when individuals no longer see themselves in the uniform and seek marks of distinction that make them feel special again. Breaking off from the mass of sameness and its ossified conventions starts as an isolated quirk. Deviation only becomes fashion when a lot of people are imitating it, at the moment when a collective subconscious coalesces into what's in the air and brings forth the next big thing.

A lot of trendsetters don't even notice their deviation. What they're doing seems completely self-evident to them. Only observers can sense the potential of stepping out of the uniform in what other people are doing. They want to draw the deviation out into visibility and have a feel for the right moment and the ideal platform. Their gaze bundles up desire. But it's not yet clear if this particular desire will actually get in style. Until the spark flies, it wavers. It needs this loading inhibition phase to gather momentum and warm up. Trends can attain high speeds that are hard for

a body still cool to sustain. It warms up running in place. But it can't waver too long. Trends are too transitory to survive long in expectancy. At a certain point, a trend either takes off, or it goes up in smoke.

When a deviation does catch on, it spreads like wildfire. Now everything goes fast. The deviation stops being a deviation and turns into what's in the air. Whoever was still standing there perplexed yesterday gets caught up today. What looked like offbeat behavior just a second ago feels like a big consensus now. Everyone has heard about it, without having been told about or understanding it. Some people want to have been the first to have known about it, others gripe around or pick on people who do it better. That's how things have to be—without envy, there would be no glamour. Dressed in a fantasy that promises a potential freedom or simply not missing out, an existing order gets whirled into disarray. Stored-up tension unloads in the divergence. And that's the beginning of the end. It goes out as fast as it came in. What still looked like magic yesterday loses its cohesive power today. Every trend is a fad. Now the emperor has no clothes, and it doesn't look good.

And then everyone walks away.

In fashion, it's considered dangerous to be one of the first or

one of the last. The first are the laughing stock, since no one understands their deviation yet. The last wavered too long and missed the moment, too self-conscious to get it together. Fashion's waverers have a lot in common with inept poker players. While bad poker players are constantly looking out for the bluff—which isn't actually that decisive for the game—fashion's waverers are waiting because they're looking out for the hype they're afraid of falling for—that surge with no real backing, that's about to burst like a soap bubble. But what reality is supposed to back a trend in the first place?

Anything that has stood in fashion's limelight disappears into the darkness; it gets stripped of value and forgotten. The know-it-alls who understand every feeling without having felt it brag about how they've known for a long time: it wasn't all that. Less mellow people feel duped by the big thing that's no longer supposed to be in all of a sudden. And the ones cheated by life complain about how the others who had fun where they wouldn't have dared go otherwise are such fashion victims.

Fashion's firsts pay the price for having been in style. No one pays attention to them anymore. Their fifteen minutes are over. Some try desperately to turn back time by betraying the trend in hindsight and claiming never to have had anything to do with it, whatever it was.