

The line where fashion and culture collide

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The adornment of one's body has roots in survival. Beyond Darwin's threads, fashion serves as a mirror for the overriding trends of society. Religion, entertainment and culture are just a few of the influences expressed through fashion. Perhaps the most obvious yet easily overlooked cue in understanding the inner is realizing the implications of the outer.



Courtesy of versace.iespana.es

Dresses from designers such as Versace (above) often reflect the culture and norm of the time.

The stifling constraints of Victorian society translated into fashion via the corset. Contorting the body into an unnatural shape, the practice of corseting often inflicted women with breathing problems and muscular deterioration. The strict boundaries of manner and the unrealistic practice of penance shaped society as well.

Religious practices also translate into what one wears. Rastafarians will dread their locks in an expression of their devotion to Jah and the refusal of Babylon, the personification of oppression. Buddhist monks don yellow ochre robes, a color representative of death. A yellow leaf in autumn is the last stage before it falls from the tree to the ground, to decom-

pose and become fertile soil for next season's growth. The wearing of the color represents the cyclical nature of life.

Brazil, a country of heated weather and emotions, is home to colorful and skimpy outfits in an attempt to cool off. The culture is vivacious and so are the hues and shades. The laid back vibe of the South American jewel is encompassed in casual clothing of a body hugging nature. The culture breathes sex, and so too do the cuts of short skirts, deep V's and sprayed on pants.

American fashion is regionalized as well as influenced by culture. New York fashion tends to be more edgy and closely related to the European fashion houses, it being a Mecca in its own right. Comparatively, West Coast fashion relies much more heavily on trends—many of them sparked by movie stars and the music industry. In the middle of the spectrum, between art and pop art, is the Midwest.

With the sexual revolution of the '60s came more liberating clothing. Ankle length skirts became antiquated ways of covering one's body and one's independence. The '80s saw a shift in the workplace, with more women in corporate jobs, thus it became vogue to wear a tailored business suit. The '90s saw a rise in sexual interest. From Madonna's unforgettable pointy bra to Britney Spear's abs, not only interest rose, but also what was viewed as acceptable behavior. With this came a more abbreviated wardrobe. Preteens now wear padded bras and hip huggers, a cue for the moral implications of our time.

Only one facet of a culture, fashion is a cue for the larger picture that is society. Personality, morals, and location influence much more than initially recognized.

There's no question that ABC's primetime soap opera "Desperate Housewives" is a hit series, with a 2005 Golden Globe for best television series for a musical or comedy to prove it. The dark comedy takes us down the road of Wisteria Lane in modern-day suburbia, where Mary Alice Young commits suicide on the first episode. Young's commentary from beyond the grave takes us into the lives of her family, neighbors and friends, and shows us that the perfect fairy tale lives of the housewives aren't always as they seem. These days, viewers can't seem to get enough, and it seems like they are becoming desperate for more "Desperate Housewives."

The storyline revolves around a central group of girlfriends who begin to create the buzz of the neighborhood. The well-developed personalities include Susan Mayer (Teri Hatcher, right,) a single mother, recently divorced, who is dying to find love; Bree Van De Kamp (Marcia Cross), the clone of Martha Stewart who is in deep denial about her dysfunction-



Courtesy of wireimage.com

The depravity of desperate housewives a hit on primetime

ally; Lynette Scavo (Felicity Huffman), who enjoys the everyday merry-go-round of raising children while her husband is at work; and Gabrielle Solis (Eva Longoria), the ex-model who traded in a fast-paced life of modeling to marry a rich husband, move to suburbia and have an affair with the barely-legal lawn boy.

But what is it about the show that has the public glued to their TVs every Sunday night at 9 p.m.? According to UNCW student, Stephanie Hillis, it's the show's "thickening plot every week and its ability to keep us hanging. We also develop relationships with the characters. Some we love, some we hate and with some it is a mixture of both."

Although one would think that "Desperate Housewives" would target a predominately female audience, males are also just as fascinated with the show as women are.

Allen Thomas, a UNCW student, calls the show, "the best show on television." Thomas also says he likes the show because "in every

episode something happens that completely blows you out of the water. There are so many plot twists, and the things that happen to these people are so completely insane."

Phillip Maxwell, also a UNCW student, agrees with Thomas. "The show is so well-written, and each character was so well cast. They like to leave us hanging for a month, and that drives me crazy. I'm always ready to find out what happens next."

That's one twist behind "Desperate Housewives": they love to leave fans hanging. With all of the successful drama occurring, viewers should be looking forward to many more seasons of secrets, lies and deceptions from the residents of Wisteria Lane.

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