

Every 30 seconds
an e-girl sucks dick
for a pair of
used Tabi's.



The Tabi has been around since Margiela's debut show in 1988, but is undeniably experiencing its largest surge in popularity now. Why?

Fantasy.

Do you remember the days when kids got bullied for being a little too obsessed with the Eragon dragon books, or Lord of the Rings, or Harry Potter, or Greek mythology? Those kids are seriously the OG Tabi Girls. They got the allure of fantasy creatures, the swank of being part human, part creature. A pair of Tabis seems right at home in these special worlds, worlds we grew up in, and the fantastic aesthetics of which grow more desirable as we seek to distance ourselves from a reality that seems less magical every day. (see #fairycore; the popularity of elf ears in editorials). .

Status.

Tabis cost a lot. Not only do they point to the class status of the wearer through their luxury, they also indicate the wearer's inclusion in a relatively exclusive group of people who not only Know About Fashion, but know fashion well enough to wear a shoe that the "uninitiated" find at best odd and at worst unacceptable and repulsive. And they do so with pride.

Tik Tok Orientalism.

I think interest in the "exoticism" of pan-Asian culture has hit an all time high in Western popular culture. I term this cultural obsession "Tik Tok Orientalism," in homage to the white e-girls who brashly imitate all variations of Japanese kawaii fashion. Most Tabi wearers are more sophisticated and subtle in their style than the Tik Tok Orientalists, but I believe their interest in the shoe is related to the same big fat appreciation (obsession? Idk) for Japanese aesthetics. After all, Margiela designed the Tabi to look like a traditional split-toe Japanese work shoe.



HIGH F E M M E A E S T H T X

My wallet was pickpocketed a few weeks ago and today I realized I should probably get a new one. I ended up searching "kawaii wallet" online. I saw one I liked because it had a pair of bunny ears that stuck up on the back. Which got me thinking: I'm in my 20s, why do I want a wallet with bunny ears on it? I've written critically about im baby culture but I haven't said anything about how much can be gained from dressing the part of the cutie-pie.

I think of high femme aesthetics as existing on a spectrum that has the sexy bombshell look on one end and the cute anime school girl look on the other. The two ends seem very different -- one is mature and knowingly sexy and the other is emphatically youthful and is most effectively worn when it seems that the subject is unaware of her sexiness. But to me, both ends do the same thing in the end.

Looking cute can be protective. When done well, it can help you get what you want with less effort. The motifs and designs of hyper-cute clothing are easy to recognize and they have a system of well-known characters and values associated with them.

This legibility lets you easily hop into a pre-cut quasi-character, that conveniently comes with its own associated values -- innocence, purity, sweetness, vulnerability.

If you play your cards right, seeming like any of these things can come in handy, and all you had to do was put on a sailor skirt.

Looking sexy can also be protective. When done well, it too can help you get the job done easier. Hyper-sexiness is quickly read and perceived, especially by men, and has its own set of associated characteristics -- being a bimbo, being a good fuck, being a slut, being an object of desire. The focus is on how you look, so you've got more room to process and plot unnoticed.

I spend a lot of time at both ends of the high femme axis. Sometimes I feel weird about it because most of my friends dress a lot more androgynous than me. I've wondered if I'm insecure that I won't be thought of as "hot enough" if I dress less cute or sexy. But at the bottom of it all, I'm just a girl trying to get what I want in the world, and I'd be lying if I said that that involves just dressing for myself.



H E A
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What does a heartbroken person look like? The popular portrayal of the heartbroken individual is lazy and reductive. The mascara-streaked face of a woman? Someone who looks like they barely made it out of bed? Lana del Rey lyrics floating on the back of your eyelids as you stare out of a window?

Looking heartbroken is not so simple nor so dramatic. To look heartbroken is to signal vacancy. This can be very subtle, but if you look hard enough at the heartbroken individual, no matter how good they are at hiding it, it's always there. Once the hysterics fade away or become less frequent, the look of heartbreak lives on. It's not the presence of tears but the absence, because you're at a party and you're wearing something quite nice and you're trying to have a good time. It's a hauntedness that settles in the eyes and the fingers.

For the heartbroken individual, suffering is so overwhelming that all other points of self, including self-presentation, become irrelevant or dislocated. Dress is often referred to as a form of self expression. For someone in the deepest darkest throes of true heartbreak, self expression is a joke.



PLASTIC / SURGERY / FILTERS



Instagram recently banned "plastic surgery" face filters. A popular opinion is that these filters represent the dysphoric, posthuman future of beauty.

***This is the
"experimental" beauty
we are told to fear.***



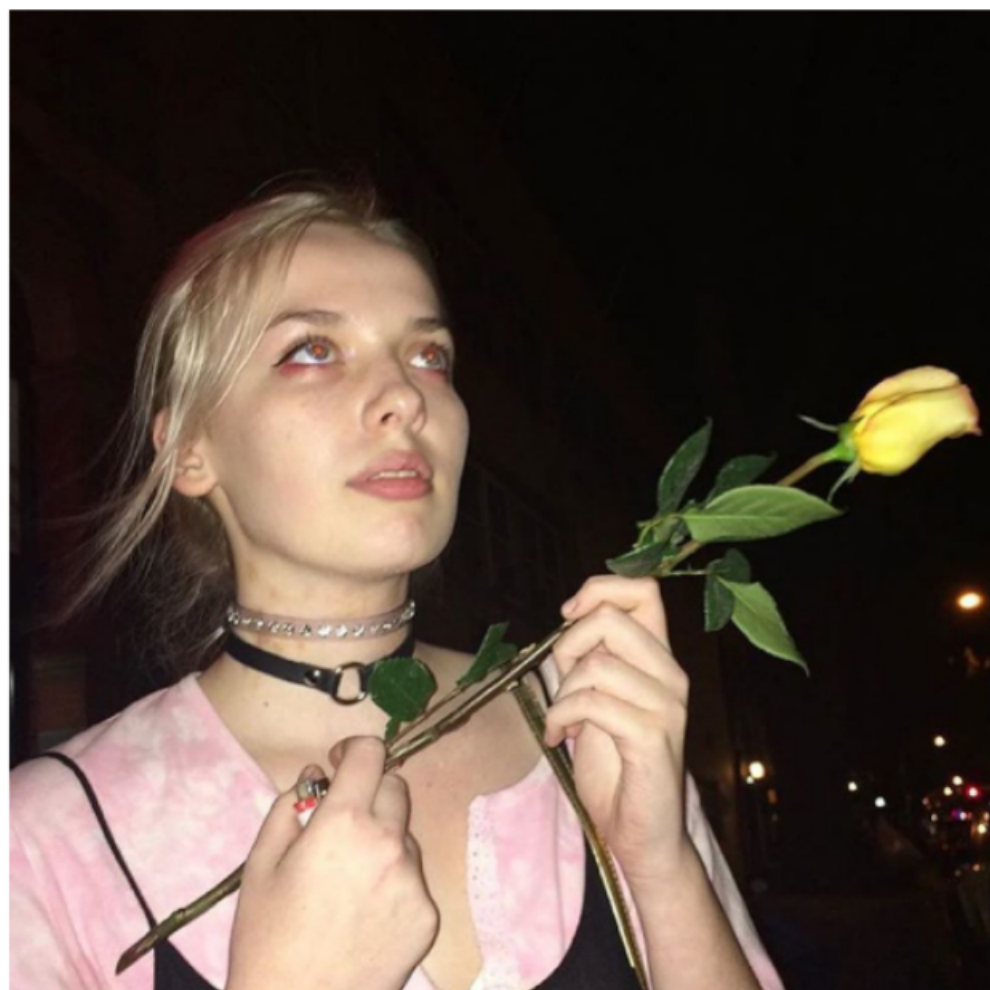
*Never before have we been able to wash away our imperfections so quickly, so sweetly. This, they imply, is fully automated luxury beauty in its infancy. With the aid of filters, the image is *fetishized, and the face becomes frozen as a 'face-object' - a flat, perfect object of a face.*

I have a hard time seeing the use of “plastic surgery” filters as something really new. Beauty is ALWAYS revisionist. Say you’re a rich bitch in 1450 and you hire someone to paint your likeness... obviously you wouldn’t be painted as busted as you actually are. It was expected that the features of a female sitter would be subtly or dramatically revised according to prevailing beauty standards. The neck would be elongated, forehead made higher, skin made more alabaster. Beauty is a loop of revision!

As plastic surgery becomes more popular, faces become more symbolic than ever. Coveted facial features have always been a symbol of difference (sexual, material). But now it’s not just about being rich enough to look “well-bred”, it’s about having the power to re-write the semiotics of your face!*

*Many critics warn that filters & FaceTune can lead to dysphoria and eventual surgical adjustment. Surgery is violent and permanent (duh), but the violence and permanence of becoming more beautiful is not novel. Disfigurement is the OG beauty tool. During the Renaissance, women powdered their faces with lead or arsenic powders for a paler complexion. Over time, these compounds often contributed to health problems (like muscle paralysis) and even to early death. Remember the cute face stickers shaped like stars and moons in *The Favorite*? Beauty patches like those were used to cover up holes in the face caused by lead makeup.*

My concern with plastic surgery and its cultural derivatives is that eventually everyone who can afford to look like Bella Hadid will and being horny will be more boring than it already is.



DEATH
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*Perhaps the most loathsome trend of the 2010s:
The incorporation of BDSM/fetishwear into
mainstream "alternative fashion".*

*I can't pinpoint a moment when I recall this trend
taking off, but I do remember walking to Search
and Destroy on St Marks in Late 2015 and buying
an O-ring leather choker and wearing it EVERY DAY
of the rest of my freshman year of college. My
family back home in South Carolina was so
worried. I was very naive (and a Virgin) and
basically unaware that a choker of this nature was
designed to be worn to indicate a preference for
sexual submission (outside of its function in the
bedroom). .*

*A lot of energy was put towards the
destigmatization of sexual kinks and taboos (Kind
of) in the 2010s which has (mostly) left us with
a kinder world to have sex in. But it also left us with
the vacuous obliteration of a legitimate subculture
(BDSM/queer kink) and its trademarks aesthetics
were co-opted and reconfigured by millions of
middle class girls in chokers who want to be
slapped and called a whore.*

*Death by going mainstream has existed since
Hegel, but the mainstreaming of BDSM garments
and accessories not only gutted a subculture IMO,
but also had a noticeable effect on mainstream
sexual dynamics.*



IRRELEVANCE

I think it's hard for us to imagine true irrelevance these days. The most minor of celebrities can still manage to get people buy their "merch" long after their five minutes of fame are up.

But what about when famous people really could become irrelevant, forgotten, used up? This is the story of Vikki Dougan. Dougan was born exceptionally pretty in 1929 in Brooklyn. Like many pretty girls who came of age in post-war America, she changed her name, got married while still in her teens, and tried to make it as a model. It was slow-going til 1953, when a publicist had the idea of promoting Dougan by sending her around Hollywood in a revealing backless dress. The dress was meant to contrast dresses made to emphasize the bosom, which were the dominant style. And it worked.

Thanks to high press coverage, Dougan landed small film parts, went on a few dates with Sinatra, and modeled for Playboy. But by 1959, Dougan and her young daughter were living off a \$40-a-month unemployment check. By the 1970s, Dougan was thoroughly irrelevant.

As I researched Dougan, I learned about the bright bits of her life, like how she was allegedly the inspiration for Jessica Rabbit. I also came to feel very sad about how her life turned out. I hate how women are denied modality in America. If you think women shouldn't be famous just for being beautiful, you're WRONG!

Why do we demand that talented women must also be beautiful to be beloved? And that beautiful women must also be talented to be respected? Why are we obsessed with - no, expectant of, "the full package"? I'm sick of models-turned-activists-turned-coders. If a gal wants to do a billion things, that's great but please do not punish women for not complying with a neoliberal feminist agenda.

It's deeply sexist to demand that beauty and brains/talent/virtue must be displayed simultaneously to exist truly and harmoniously. Vikki Dougan deserved better and so does every Insta-thot who gets called a dumb slut in the comments. I demand #feminism include #BimboTheory. Only then will women be free to be beautiful and something else too.