

DANDY STYLE

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W. & D. Downey, 'Oscar Wilde', 1891. Silver print photograph. Manchester Art Gallery (2008.40.8.2417).

Foreword: Dandy Style

Christopher Breward

The early 2020s seem as good a time as any to revisit the idea and materials of dandyism. For we are in one of those pivotal moments in the history of culture when the dandy's detached gaze finds renewed focus, and dandies seem to thrive in the 'twenties', whenever they may fall. In the 1820s, arguably the first peaking of the style, dandyism captured the imagination of a generation traumatised by war in Europe and North America and energised by the transforming possibilities of technology in the fields of industrial production and trade. Revolutions and the dawn of empires called for a new attitude, new philosophies and – a new wardrobe. In the 1920s, the generation emerging from the trenches of the First World War, and working through an imminent global Depression, found that a reinvention of old-style elegance suited a new 'modern' era. While the politics of first-wave dandyism may have faded in the epoch of political extremes, the distanced pose of that 'roaring' decade seemed perfect as an emblem fit for celluloid reproduction and avant-garde experimentation. And now, in the early twenty-first century, it is time it seems for another radical realignment of 'Dandy Style'. A decade of austerity, populism and a recent plague, whose long-term social and economic effects are as yet unknown, has set a context of exhaustion and anticipation which offers fertile ground for new directions in dandyism's bicentennial story.

That is not to say that dandyism only recurs once every hundred years. It is a powerful concept and metaphor that has been reinvented by every generation. The anglophile French writers and artists of the 1830s, 40s and 50s captured its power to symbolise the experience of modern life. Balzac and Baudelaire translated it for Delacroix and Manet. The Wildean decadents of the 1890s focused on its amoral aspects, as a medium for exploring the transgressive aspects of psychology and desire. Aubrey Beardsley reduced it to a suggestive black line. On the rebound from the neophilic radicals of the 1920s, mid-century celebrants of the dandy creed captured its nostalgic, Neo-Romantic elements for a mass audience eager for escapism. It became the stuff of Gainsborough movies, Georgette Heyer novels and chocolate box wrapping. And from the 1960s onwards, dandyism was regularly refashioned, literally, for the consumerist fantasies and identity politics of boomers, X-ers and millennials: as subcultural shorthand for 'cool'. It is, in essence, a palimpsest, overwritten every thirty years or so, but always bearing a trace of its former incarnations. The ultimate in layering, as the fashionistas might say.

7 'Travis' (Jason Evans), *Strictly*, 1991. Photograph, colour, on paper. Tate (P11786).



in July 1991. Styled by Simon Foxtan and photographed by 'Travis' (a pseudonym for Jason Evans) in suburban London (Northfields), the series made links between different sartorial traditions and juxtaposed classic English tailoring with louder, patterned designer garments and street styles (figs 7 and 8). The images celebrated the black British communities' contribution to British style and culture; the magazine spread opened by quoting James Laver's comment on Beau Brummell's attitude to style and dressing: 'No perfumes . . . but very fine linen, plenty of it and country washing. If John Bull turns round to look after you, you are either too stiff, too tight or too fashionable.'³⁰ Through the 1980s, stylists such as Foxtan, along with Ray Petri and his Buffalo collective, had created images for lifestyle magazines, such as *i-D*, *The Face* and *Arena*, to articulate the multicultural nature of Britain and British men's style and to offer new perspectives on late twentieth-century masculinities.³¹ Drawing on ideas from the 1960s rude boy style, Dean Chalkley and Harris Elliott investigated the continuing sartorial explorations set in motion by this stylish group in their book and exhibition *Return of the Rudeboy*.³² Elliott differentiates the rude boy from dandies, as the former's style was 'rooted in survival and defiance . . . sartorially and stylistically "cut", but with an attitude which was needed to withstand all who challenged their existence'.³³ In 2005 the Victoria and Albert Museum's *Black British Style* exhibition (which toured to Manchester Art Gallery) offered a comprehensive exploration of the contribution of black Britons and the influence of diasporic dress styles on British



8 'Travis' (Jason Evans), *Strictly*, 1991. Photograph, colour, on paper. Tate (P11787).

culture from the Windrush generation onwards. The importance of the dandy in black diaspora style is highlighted by his 'ability to wear the clothes of the white man with a difference', combining 'colors, patterns, textures and histories literally, symbolically, and metaphorically'.³⁴ Carol Tulloch, Michael McMillan and Christine Checinska all note the dandified styles of those men that arrived as part of the Windrush generation and how they drew on Caribbean tailoring traditions to create distinct black British street styles and other forms of sartorial syncretism in what Checinska dubs 'the great masculine enunciation'.³⁵ The ongoing influence of what William Dalrymple describes as 'promiscuous mingling of races and ideas, modes of dress and ways of living'³⁶ is also considered in Chapter 8 of this book, where Jay McCauley Bowstead examines particular British designers' approaches to menswear in a globalised world.

Elliott contrasts rude boys with dandies, and raises a pertinent point: that the very term 'dandy' is filled with contention and has been open to multiple definitions. Its original meanings and associations, from Brummell's manifestations through to the later waves in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have been gradually corrupted, reappropriated and misused. Rather than relating to a restrained elegance and particular set of rigid sartorial codes, the word has been applied to men's efforts to create stylish and extravagant manifestations of dressed appearance. In *I Am Dandy*, Nathaniel Adams explores contemporary interpretations of British dandyism through photographic portraiture and accompanying interviews to discuss both

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Creative Collecting: How Museums Acquire Men's Fashion

Miles Lambert

As has often been observed, women's clothing vastly outnumbers men's in most museum and private collections. This overwhelming focus on collecting womenswear has also resulted in an historical paucity of studies of men's clothing more broadly, and the imbalance raises the 'question of what narratives and insights have been missed'.¹ One reason for the traditional focus on women's garments is the still prevalent view that fashion exhibits its novelty and nuances more clearly in female dress.² In addition, men can be seen more often to wear out their clothes, habitually to prefer plainer, functional, long-lasting garments and only rarely to offer pieces as donations. Julia Petrov has noted how museums were initially predominantly masculine spaces that 'mirrored the social processes of the elite', functioning 'as public monuments to the established order' and 'appear[ing] to function as a "boy's pocket", offering up collections of treasures . . . selected for masculine tastes'.³ Collecting is a 'highly gendered activity' reflected in the development of museum and private collections, and the hierarchies of the fine and decorative arts allocated fashion and textiles only a relatively lowly position. Petrov has also observed that donors of clothing to museums tend to be women, perhaps 'because women are seen as keepers of family histories', reflecting this stereotyping and gendering of fashion.⁴ Focusing on temporary exhibitions, rather than permanent collections and displays, fashion historian and exhibition maker Jeffrey Horsley undertook a survey of fashion exhibitions containing menswear since 1971, and this confirmed the lack of representation of both historic and contemporary men's clothing in such shows. Of over 940 exhibitions identified, only 18 had titles that indicated they were dedicated to menswear. Significantly, Horsley also identified instances where menswear could have been included but was



58 (left) Charles Conder, *Self-portrait*, c.1895–1900. Oil on canvas, framed 68.5 x 56 cm. Manchester Art Gallery (1925.291).

59 (right) Brown velvet jacket and waistcoat, 1885–90. Manchester Art Gallery (1952.140).

X-ray examination has shown that previously the collar was deeper, falling over the lapel of his crimson coat, and more in keeping with other portraits of Byron.¹⁶ The painting was probably commissioned by a friend of Byron's, most likely the radical MP Sir Francis Burdett, for Byron's publisher John Murray, to illustrate Byron's extended narrative poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The way in which Byron is portrayed by Westall resonates with the character of the hero that Byron first introduces in *Childe Harold*. Educated and sophisticated in style, with a disrespect for authority, his cynical, arrogant and self-destructive characteristics became associated with Byron himself and provide the legacy of the Byronic hero in popular culture.¹⁷ Over his coat and casually covering one shoulder Byron wears a sketchily rendered black cloak, echoing the background drapery of Lawrence's portraits, and the historic Romanticism of Byron's self-image.

By the late nineteenth century, artists were becoming 'self-consciously "artistic"' in their choice of dress, and many painters of the time explored image and identity in self-portraits.¹⁸ In his self-portrait, painted around 1895–1900 when he was studying at the Académie Julian in Paris (where he became part of an artistic circle that included Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pierre Bonnard), Charles Conder (1868–1909) presents himself in a soft brown, probably velvet, jacket (fig. 58). The loose, expressive brushwork replicates the soft texture of velvet that appears to change colour with the light. Conder's soft collar, bold cravat and reddish-blond hair echo Aesthetic movement ideals that challenged men's dress conventions and reflected



60 Ford Madox Brown, *Frederick Henry Snow Pendleton*, 1837. Oil on panel, framed 34.5 x 31 cm. Manchester Art Gallery (1913.10).

the 'outsider' status often adopted by artists from the 1880s onwards (fig. 59). The challenge offered by the brown velvet suit, when worn by men in artistic or creative fields, continued as a trope into the twentieth century. This can be seen in the 1921 self-portrait, *Portrait of the Artist as the Painter Raphael*, by Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) and was also adopted by Sir Roy Strong in the 1970s, as discussed in Chapter 2.¹⁹

Joanna Woodall posited that the monochromatic male wardrobe of the mid-nineteenth century 'seems somewhat more exaggerated in portraiture than in surviving dress'.²⁰ Museum collections of men's clothing indicate the ubiquity, but not exclusivity, of dark colours, as they infused the portrait and sitter with *gravitas*.²¹ Like Lawrence, many artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries were sensitive to the powerful aesthetic possibilities of men's black clothing. Ford Madox Brown (1821–1893) painted an early, charmingly youthful portrait of his friend Frederick Henry Snow Pendleton (1818–1888) in 1837 in the prevalent Romantic fashion of black coat and cravat, with a mere glimmer of his frilled white shirt (fig. 60). Later in

65 Gilbert & George in Fournier Street, London, 10 August 1972.



photographs, placed side by side, in which they wear suits and ties, complete with buttonholes and pocket squares, and recline on the grass as if fresh from a wedding, but with ‘George the Cunt’ and ‘Gilbert the Shit’ in cut-out white letters across their respective chests. The juxtaposition between the clothes and the lettering is typical of their oppositional style. As they have aged, this contrast between their conservative, apparently benign, appearance and the topics they address has become more pronounced. The contrast is particularly evident in promotional pictures for their 2016 show *The Banners*, in which the pair, dressed in tweeds, are photographed between works that read ‘Gilbert and George say ... Burn that Book’ and ‘Gilbert and George say ... Fuck the Planet’.

Former world champion middleweight boxer Chris Eubank Senior’s adoption of tweeds is, he claims, without irony or conscious provocation. A man whose wealth and reputation were made through the bloody and violent business of receiving and inflicting physical damage, Eubank sustained his dandy pose throughout his boxing career (1984–98). He made his home in Brighton, as did the original dandy, Beau Brummell, but where Brummell modelled restraint, Eubank adopted a more flamboyant approach. He acquired the title of Lord of the Manor, a capacious wardrobe of tweed and pinstripe suits, jodhpurs (comfortable and practical, he says, because of his muscular thighs⁹), a bowler hat, a cane and a monocle, and became renowned for driving round his adopted town in a stretch Humvee and talking with a lisp. In 2010, Eubank began a collaboration with tailoring firm The Cad & the Dandy, and has since routinely teamed formal jackets and shirts with the denim jodhpurs he designed for them (fig. 66). Despite the ridicule directed at Eubank’s flamboyant dress, 2019 witnessed a fashion for jogging bottoms that aped the distinctive shape of his favoured jodhpurs: baggy round the thigh and tight from knee to ankle. Regardless of the apparent lack of guile with which Eubank adopted the dress, accessories and

speech of the white British upper classes, the appropriation of this style by a black sportsman born into the working class and elevated by his efforts in the boxing ring is a subversive act, as was Jimi Hendrix’s adoption of British military dress uniform, discussed below.

Salford-born poet John Cooper Clarke (1949–) shares Eubank’s interest in tailoring, but his style is as different from Eubank’s as his silhouette and profession. Rake thin in tight, dark trousers (originally drainpipe jeans, more recently jeggings), a tailored jacket, pocket square and skinny tie or cravat, topped with a spiky black *coupe sauvage*, Cooper Clarke’s appearance is as superficially oppositional as Eubank’s is superficially old-fashioned (fig. 67). He claims to have come to his tailored silhouette through chance encounters with ‘a fella called Tom who had a similar figure, with the long thin legs ... he used to wear these great styles and I asked him where he got them. And he told me he made them himself’.¹⁰ ‘Tom’ is Savile Row-trained bespoke tailor Sir Tom Baker (his shop opened in 1996). In a long conversation on Cooper Clarke’s BBC 6 Music programme ‘The Suit’, the pair discussed the latter’s preference for jeans over suit trousers (‘for extra support’ and for the half-moon pocket), and boots over shoes (socks should be hidden).¹¹ Like Millings and Nutter, Baker has a client list that includes



66 Chris Eubank outside ITV Studios, 6 June 2016.

79 Hand-coloured plate from *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1857. Manchester Art Gallery.

At various later periods, almost measurable in steps of a single generation, fashion for men revisited an earlier ostentation. Rebellious artistic figures and devotees of the Aesthetic movement in the 1880s and 1890s, typified by Oscar Wilde, sported deliberately unstructured velvet suits, both tactile and sensory. They revelled in military-inspired frogging and braiding, subverting the seriousness of army uniforms, and also circumvented traditional precepts by creating and wearing costume with deliberately 'feminine' decoration, such as floral embroidery or painting (fig. 84).¹⁸

The 'bright young things' of the interwar period, a generation later, also flirted with flamboyant dress, androgynous styling and dress reform.¹⁹ The Men's Dress Reform Party (MDRP) was founded in 1929 to 'beautify' men.²⁰ Campaigns were launched by the MDRP to encourage men to ditch the still ubiquitous three-piece woollen suit, and to choose instead looser jackets and shorts without waistcoats;



80 (left) Daguerreotype photograph, undated (c.1840s). Manchester Art Gallery (2008.40.1.29).



81 (below) Ambrotype photograph, undated (c.1840s). Manchester Art Gallery (2008.40.2.174).

thing embedded in the football terraces' whose 'main purpose was to *camouflage* its proponents', through 'subversion [where] social and cultural norms are upturned'.²¹ In the multiple histories of the subcultural casual, it is the Scallys of Liverpool and the Perry Boys of Manchester who are credited with linking this style of dress and particular brands with football-terrace hooliganism. Although theirs was not the first subculture to be associated with football supporter violence, their style differed from previous terrace bootboy looks, being derived from a soul boy look, particularly the wedge haircut. Their wardrobes incorporated British heritage brands (often worn by the British middle classes as leisure wear): Fred Perry polo shirts, straight-legged jeans or cords by Lois, Lee or Levi's, and trainers (particularly Adidas, but also Puma and Fila) along with, initially hard to source, European branded sportswear that was acquired at European football matches.²² Mairi MacKenzie defines 'casuals' as participants in 'a particular form of British working-class dandyism' that could also be linked to the late nineteenth-century working-class gangs of Manchester and Salford, such as the Scuttlers, who wore 'a loose white scarf... a peaked cap rather over one eye', and trousers 'of fustian... with "bell bottoms"'.²³

Ian Hough connects the early casuals to late 1980s and early 90s rave culture, not so much through clothing style as through illegal activities such as football hooliganism and drug taking.²⁴ The connection is also important in terms of male dress, not just from the continuation of a particular casual subculture style, but also through the dressing down of the mid-1980s 'Hard Times', which moved away from the flamboyant extravagances of early 80s New Romantics.²⁵ Comfort for long nights of drug-induced dancing became of premier importance, although this could be traced back to the mods' use of amphetamines and the all-nighters of northern soul clubs in the north-west of England in the late 1970s (fig. 105). The loose-fitting and casual clothes, including ponchos, dungarees and baggy T-shirts, which allowed people to 'totally relax and freak out', also drew from a post-hippie, psychedelic 'summer of love' style that included flared jeans, 'smiley face' logos and tie-dye, an influence seen in the



104 'Group of Skins by Mercedes, UK, 1980s'. Photograph by Gavin Watson.



105 'Group of Madchester fans drinking, Paris, 1990s'. Photograph by Peter Walsh.

Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2014 collections of British designer Craig Green (1986-) (fig. 106).²⁶ Epitomising the late 1980s Madchester 'baggy' music scene style, the lead singer of Manchester band The Stone Roses, Ian Brown (1963-), drew from the working-class 'Perry Boy' terrace looks, combined with 1960s and loose-fitting hip-hop styles such as flared jeans, Adidas tracksuits and branded sweatshirts.²⁷

Beginning as an athletic shoe company, Adidas designed its first garment, a synthetic fibre tracksuit for German footballer Franz Beckenbauer, in 1967.²⁸ This innovative take on traditional sportswear, combining zip-front jacket and trousers, has links with the American athletic 'crew-neck' sweatshirt but also the more traditional two-piece men's suit and was, Hardy Amies stated, 'the only totally new garment' to appear in menswear in his lifetime.²⁹ Like much sportswear, it began as a functional item, intended to keep athletes warm prior to competing, but has been appropriated into men's (and women's) casual wardrobes since the 1970s, as it makes wearers 'feel comfortable, informal, cosy'.³⁰ By the late 1970s in Britain, the tracksuit was worn across classes and races, with links to both white working-class football supporter culture and black British identity. Both Carol Tulloch and Jo Turney identify the tracksuit's adoption as being associated with major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, and with black musicians such as Bob Marley and Run DMC; the latter sported Adidas tracksuits for the release of their 1986 track 'My Adidas'.³¹ The popularity of rap and hip-hop as a musical style in Britain, and the development of home-grown forms of rap, such as grime, saw a continued importance of the tracksuit as subcultural garment. Grime MC Novelist (1997-) noted the importance of the tracksuit as casual daily wear: 'Telling me to take off my tracksuit, it's like