METAMAG

HOOK'D



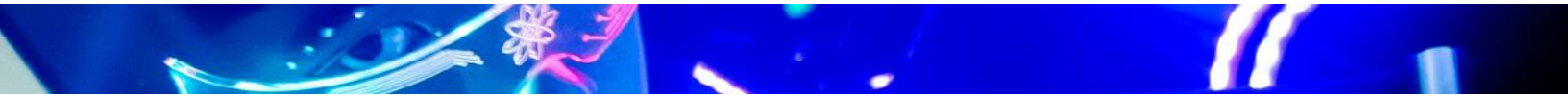
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Welcome to the METAMAG.

An edition dedicated to technology and the digital transformation of the fashion world.

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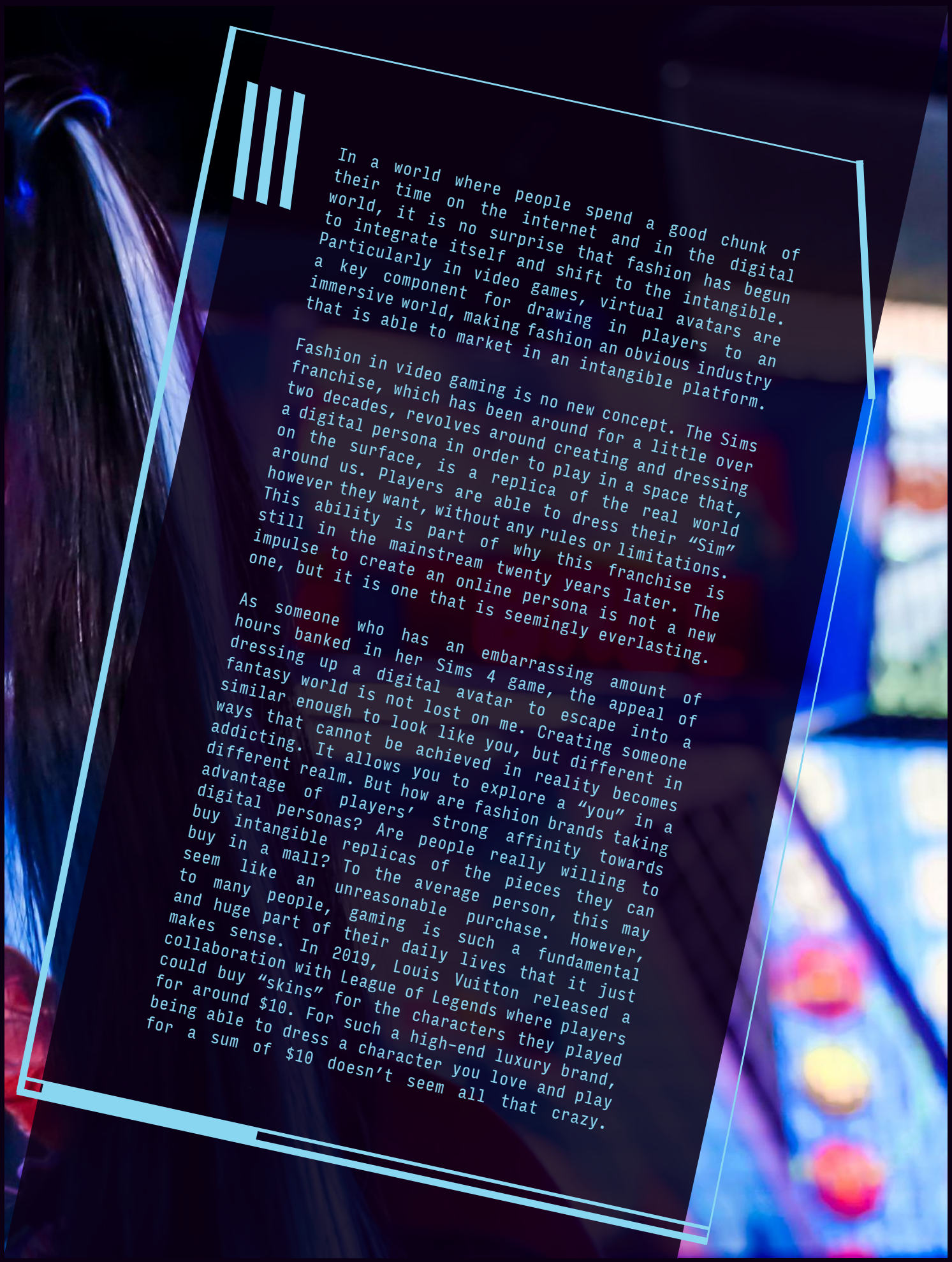
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CREATE YOUR AVATAR


YOU
Love



III

In a world where people spend a good chunk of their time on the internet and in the digital world, it is no surprise that fashion has begun to integrate itself and shift to the intangible. Particularly in video games, virtual avatars are a key component for drawing in players to an immersive world, making fashion an obvious industry that is able to market in an intangible platform.

Fashion in video gaming is no new concept. The Sims franchise, which has been around for a little over two decades, revolves around creating and dressing a digital persona in order to play in a space that, on the surface, is a replica of the real world around us. Players are able to dress their “Sim” however they want, without any rules or limitations. This ability is part of why this franchise is still in the mainstream twenty years later. The impulse to create an online persona is not a new one, but it is one that is seemingly everlasting.

As someone who has an embarrassing amount of hours banked in her Sims 4 game, the appeal of dressing up a digital avatar to escape into a fantasy world is not lost on me. Creating someone similar enough to look like you, but different in ways that cannot be achieved in reality becomes addicting. It allows you to explore a “you” in a different realm. But how are fashion brands taking advantage of players’ strong affinity towards digital personas? Are people really willing to buy intangible replicas of the pieces they can buy in a mall? To the average person, this may seem like an unreasonable purchase. However, to many people, gaming is such a fundamental and huge part of their daily lives that it just makes sense. In 2019, Louis Vuitton released a collaboration with League of Legends where players could buy “skins” for the characters they played for around $10. For such a high-end luxury brand, being able to dress a character you love and play for a sum of $10 doesn’t seem all that crazy.

More recently in 2021, Fortnite announced that their players can now buy Balenciaga sets for their avatars to wear when fighting other players. The set also includes interactive Balenciaga accessories such as backpacks and tools that can be used during games. In addition, we have seen brands such as Marc Jacobs and Valentino appear in Animal Crossing. The franchise has been around for many years, but recently gained a new wave of players due to its latest game releasing during the start of the pandemic.

Not only are people paying to dress the characters they play online, but they are also willing to pay for “skins” that dress up the items they use in game. Valorant, which is currently the most popular first-person shooter, makes most of their income from their skin shop, allowing players to use real money in order to accessorize the weapons they use in game.

But what are the effects of fashion moving into the digital world?

Can we even really call it “fashion” anymore if we ourselves are not wearing the pieces?



Avha Mohanty



For one, the fashion industry and the effects of fast-fashion on the environment have proved to be extremely detrimental towards our planet. Digital fashion, however, is proving to be a much more climate-friendly option for fashion, though digital pollution does need to be taken into account eventually. With designing clothing for video gaming, real fabric need not be wasted, which is a big step towards reducing the amount of waste that physical fashion produces.

To answer the second question, fashion in video games, though seemingly fundamentally different than a tangible piece of clothing, should not be discounted as “fake fashion.” At its core, fashion allows for expression and creativity - it is an extension of art. Clothing in video games, while unconventional, allow players to express freely and virtually with little to no consequence. The freedom that the digital world possesses therefore creates a safe-space for an infinite amount of imagination and leeway.

High fashion, in the real world, is something very “out-of-reach” for the average person. However, when you include big name brands and intricate styles into a market like video-gaming, these trends and pieces become more accessible to the general public. Someone who may not be able to afford a tangible piece of Balenciaga can go on Fortnite and buy something for their character, spending only $10. The lines between high-fashion and every-day wear become blurred, and the exclusive club of luxury doesn’t seem so far away anymore.

While some may see this as a bad thing, luxury items in video games give an opportunity to more consumers to experiment and “wear” clothing they might not have access to in the real world. Having fashion be more readily available to the average player creates a bigger sense of community within an industry that may feel very isolating for some. Furthermore, for some people, their avatars are outlets to showcase aspects of their personality they may not be able to display in the real world.

Don’t get me wrong, there can be downfalls to creating a digital persona separate from your real one. This creates a sense of idealism, creating something that you may not be able to achieve in the real world, fostering unrealistic standards and disappointment. For me, gaming has always seemed like a second life, somewhere I am able to disconnect from my real life and escape into fantasy for a few hours. Disconnection is a huge part of society in the present day, with many feeling as if they can only be themselves in an online or digital setting.


target relocated
mission completed
target relocated
mission completed



Crafting perfect versions of ourselves can be dangerous for our tangible identities. But it can also prove to be a method of experimentation that, sadly, society doesn't always accommodate for. Fear of judgment is a heavy burden to bear when it comes to fashion, whether it be from complete strangers or your close friends. Someone who is too afraid to wear a certain style can experiment with a look on their virtual avatar and figure out which accessories or items foster confidence and self-love. Integrating fashion into video games seems inconsequential on the surface, but it can help many freely express themselves without fear and even lead to a confidence that paves the way for inspiration towards everyday clothing. This connection opens the door for gamers to explore and express creative looks, and maybe learn a thing or two about themselves along the way.



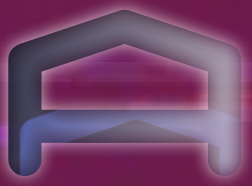
SEEING IN 3D

SOFIE WOLF

photographed by Ayushi Dalal styled by Faith McNabnay hmu by Tania Mendez
set design by Dena Laila layout & edits by Dana Tran







s the world has progressed into the age of technology throughout the last few decades, advances have impacted every facet of life that society had previously known. Not only has communication advanced to a once-unimaginable speed, but every sector of reality has incorporated some dimension of technological upgrades, whether that be for the better or the worse.

3D Printing is one such advancement that has revolutionized many facets of manufacturing, which has been an integral part of global economies for centuries. Manufacturing capabilities skyrocketed during the Industrial Revolution and brought society to its current fast-paced production of nearly all products and the wide availability of commodities. Moreover, it allowed civilization to get what it wants when it wants it, a phenomenon we are so used to now. Whether this upgrade sent us into an emphasis on materialism and short-attention spans or evened the playing field for a more accessible version of life, 3D printing is sure to transform the capabilities of manufactured products.

The origins of 3D printing can be traced back to the 1980s in Japan but did not start to become an integral part of manufacturing until the early 2000s. In this era, 3D printing became a resource for on-demand manufacturing parts. Additionally, the machines and software required were becoming more common and dropping in price, making them available to the general public. Now, there is a shrinking population of those who have yet to add the technology into their supply chain.

3D printing requires both the actual machine printing the item as well as advanced software that can program the precise technology. The fully-fleshed object is accomplished through an additive process, in which multiple layers of material are laid down until the final object is created. This process requires a splicing software that cuts the digital rendering of the object into thousands of layers to be sent through the machine one by one. After the file has been sliced, the item can be sent to the 3D printer and begin production.

With this technology constantly being refined and perfected, it has been brought into several other industries to aid in production. Likewise, the diverse application of the machinery and sustainable use of materials have eased the production of many types of products. As a result, 3D printing has become a process involved in consumer products such as eyeglasses and furniture, revolutionized the fashion of creating artificial limbs, contributed to the reconstruction of ancient artifacts and fossils, and many more applications.

One of the more unique uses of 3D printing is its implementation in the fashion industry. Many luxury brands employ the technology due to its ability to provide customization. When the original emergence of luxury brands began, people were just satisfied with getting their hands on any piece available. Now, with the rise in access to these products and the popularity of high-end fashion among younger generations, companies are looking to see what else they can upgrade to keep users interested. For example, Balenciaga's Autumn Winter 2018 Collection surprised many by incorporating 3D printed pieces into their model's wardrobes. The technology was used to precisely fit each model's curvature and produced clothing to their exact measurements. This use of the technology appeals to many customers in that it can create a customized item that fits them perfectly, which only heightens the luxury experience.



The main appeal of using 3D printing in fashion is its sustainability, which has become a significant industry issue in recent years. With data coming out about the immense amount of waste produced by fast fashion, and the rapid cycle of trends overcoming younger generations, many people are looking to brands with an environmental focus and an aim to produce as little waste as possible. 3D printing allows for this vision to come to fruition. The technology produces almost no waste, as producers can precisely input the amount of material they need and avoid any excess.

Likewise, prototyping of products has incorporated 3D printing. Camper, a popular Spanish footwear company, has begun to use the technology for each new concept model they make. Rather than outsourcing the production, which incurs additional time and money into the process as well as a waste of materials, using 3D printing for these renderings permits a quicker turn-around and allows for higher precision of detail.

The accessibility of these designs also motivates designers to take more risks and produce intricate designs to send on the runway. Whether the pieces are accessories and jewelry that add to the overall feel of the look or a wearable geometric art iteration, the capabilities of 3D printing are upping the fashion game in the luxury world. While much of this technology has not been accessed by more pedestrian brands, the rise in its use is sure to impact the industry in the following years. It is imminent that the cost-effective process in terms of material waste, sustainability and time-effectiveness will appeal to all types of brands.

When manufacturing processes took the world by storm following the Industrial Revolution, society adapted to the wide adoption of factory-made goods and little customization. The emergence of 3D printing has altered this mindset, in that the production of all types of goods has been made easier, more accessible, and faster. Application of the technology into the fashion industry has only further emphasized the reach for sustainability in material use and brands making it a priority to limit their material waste. As the access to 3D printing broadens in upcoming years, consumers of all kinds will continue to reap its benefits in all areas of life.



Ashley Sparks



WELCOME TO THE METAVERSE

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photos... Ayushi Dalal
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layout ... Dana Tran & Emma Sammaie

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amanda foust

I used to be violently against the ideas of NFTs and the Metaverse. Although I could appreciate the decentralization of it and the brilliance of its innovation, I always had something in my gut, telling me that this isn't right and is leaning towards a dystopia. My fears were based on science fiction apocalyptic movies, I realized, but as scary as the Metaverse sounds, I see it as a simulation.

There are multiple debates about whether we are living in a simulation and many theories regarding it as well, but the theory that sums it up the best is the simulation argument brought forth by Nick Bostrom. He mentions that there is a trilemma. In essence, there are 3 assumptions one has to make regarding the truth of living in a simulation, so there is a chance a simulation exists. 1. Humans live long enough to reach a post-human stage, where overwhelming pure simulations are possible, which is low likelihood. 2. Humans at this post-human stage are interested enough to use their superior technology to create this intense simulation, which is also low likelihood. 3. We are 100% living in a simulation.

These philosophical arguments are merely thought experiments, and knowing whether or not we live in a simulation has no ultimate change on how we proceed through life. Even the scientists who manufactured this theory when asked how much it plays a part in their daily lives, they reply not at all. Ultimately, it's just a theory at the end of the day that can virtually never be proven. But, the best thing humans can do instead is make their own simulations.



And, this, we do all the time. A simulation's purpose is to test out a process detached from reality with no consequences, so that they can determine if that process would work out in real life. Every field has basically implemented this architecture, computer science, neuroscience, medicine and surgery, airplane pilots, etc. because it's a universal structural tool. The effectiveness of nuclear bombs was originally simulated.

And, in a lesser degree, this can be said for fashion as well. There are many games online where one can simulate an outfit, to see if it will look good on in the real world. If you maintain this balance of utilizing simulations for their useful purposes, then the Metaverse can be positive.

The Metaverse is a slippery slope, as although it can be used for positive purposes, there is adequate reason to believe its overall goal is malicious. It can be seen as a complete detachment from reality and over-the-nose submersion in prioritizing digital life over real life. After social media, it's clear that the Metaverse is the next step, but the real question lies in whether it's too soon to be relying this heavily on technology, or if we have already made ourselves vulnerable by how much we rely on the Internet right now. The more time goes on, the more it seems we become reliant on technology to fulfill the tasks we don't want to do. When is it "too much" or have we not thought that far ahead? What if we become so immersed in the Metaverse that real life doesn't seem as appealing anymore? We haven't been able to maintain a good balance between technology and reality thus far, so what makes us think we will be able to do it in a much more extreme and detaching way possible?





Monica Villarreal & Jessica Liu

The thing is, the Metaverse is coming regardless. We are out of control in that regard, but we are in control with what we do with this newfound technology at our fingertips.

Fashion companies are maneuvering their way onto technological platforms, as one can see with fashion brands promoting themselves for Bitmoji icons and the customization options on Roblox, made for the users to dress as they normally dress. If the Metaverse is a simulation of our daily life, wouldn't it make sense for us to dress in clothes from different brands in a simulation landscape, to see if it would look good on us in the real world?

On one hand, the Metaverse can be seen as a "dream-verse" where someone can portray the idealized version of themselves that is impossible with reality's biology and genetics. If you pretend to be a different person on Metaverse, that will disconnect you from reality and your duties as a person. This can cause someone to isolate themselves and feed their own delusions through a computer screen. This is where it can be harmful. The solution to bypass this is to make your avatar yourself rather a dream-like version of yourself. This grounds you in reality. I have heard many people my age and some older complain that there was never a rule book for life and how frustrating trial and error is. If we truly believe that, the Metaverse, if you make your avatar yourself rather than an idealized version of yourself that you escape with, can act as that rule book.

Instead of humans feeling inadequate bezcause of objects they don't possess in real life, they can possess those objects in the Metaverse. Many fashion stores, including Gucci, and similarly known brands, are providing outfits in the Metaverse one can wear during their daily life, but also things that are virtually impossible in the real world. There are clothing on fire, shoes that can fly, inhuman jackets that change color. All impossible creativity can be directed into this universe, and since this energy and imagination is exercised in this designated space, the real world can be lived in without distractions of "what-if" or "what-could-be."

It is relieving on the human condition to simulate things that are not realistically or physically possible. It lifts the restrictions off of us, and instead of feeling caged by all of the things we can't do, we can instead live out those healthy inhuman fantasies. Once we get that out of our system, it's easier for us to cope with the real world. But, if we let that fester inside with no release, it's much harder to connect with the real world, and that's when feelings of dissociation, loss of self image and confusion arise. One interesting claim philosopher and cognitive scientist David Chambers brings up in his novel Reality+ is that virtual worlds are genuine, real worlds. This is just a philosophical idea, but if one applies it, it can have profound consequences. If one sees the Metaverse as a real world too, one can live two lives instead of one, very limiting life. Many people feel they were cursed not in the right body, or with the right voice, or with the right sex. The Metaverse is a chance to replace all of that inner turmoil, to help you cope and deal with it in the real world. The Metaverse is a playground for the real world. It's a way for us to revert back to childhood, to reraise ourselves, and if we were given more choices, we can see what the world would be like then.

"We are 100% living in a simulation."

We already have augmented reality seeped into our daily lives. Instagram and Snapchat filters are an augmented and enhanced version of how a human face looks ideally. NFTs as a trend have had a profound impact on how we view the virtual world, with their seamless transition of art from physical to digital. Although NFTs and VR could be ultimately be a trend, at the end of the day, they are necessary building blocks for human civilization to find the limitations of technology.

Humans are determined creatures to stay alive and progress society, and they have shown they will do whatever possible, even if they are backed up against the window ledge. Humans will still keep moving and inventing. That is the beauty of human consciousness, and we should never forget that all these technological experiments thus far have come from the mind of a human. As long as we don't get too immersed in technology and remain in touch with humanity, we will be the ones in control, rather than controlled.

The Metaverse is a gray area, depending on how one implements it into their life. If one uses the avatars and fashion to take advantage of the universality of technology and simulate what they would look like if they wore this outfit, it can be seen as a positive. But, if one gets overwhelmed by the events in it, such as the Metaverse fashion shows, more than reality, it stops being about ways to improve one's life in the real world, and becomes complete distraction and suppression of one's normal life. The Metaverse is coming regardless, so it's imperative one learns how to balance the beneficial additions it can bring, while also being wary of its addictive properties.





Photos by Amelia Tapia Styling by Brianna Stubblefield
Set Design by Kaylan Martin HMUA Joann Chen Layout by Dana Tran

WEB 3.0



DANA TRAN

Technology is completely redefining what it means to be a consumer. Now more than ever, innovation is bleeding across all industries, e-commerce, specifically in retail, being a big one. The emergence of b2b and b2b2c tech will be at the forefront of investments by big-name retailers who are in the race to innovate and adapt to this new digital reality, named as Web 3.0. This digital reality, or the metaverse, is being realized with one key feature in mind: User Experience. We are starting to see the emergence of gamified applications of common practices built to enhance human experiences in the real world through tech. We are also seeing an emergence of virtual marketplaces for creators and brands. This allows for autonomy and monetization of digitized original, one-to-one, pieces. Although the web 3.0 umbrella is not an easily digestible concept in such a CPG-driven economy where tangibility equals value, the idea of participating in a digitized environment where rich user interaction can still occur on similar if not higher levels through technology has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for both innovators to take advantage of and consumers to reap the benefits. A little background: the pandemic set forth a new standard of what online experiences should look like. One that we are seeing a lot is the use of Augmented Reality and AI to simulate and enhance a user's virtual interactions. Augmented reality is the modification of a user's real-world surroundings with the use of computer-generated, interactive images or 3D graphics that are superimposed into one's immediate environment. Think Pokemon Go or Snapchat filters. The development of a virtual shopping experience became the talk amongst retail giants. Polo Ralph Lauren being a big adopter of this through their RL Virtual Experience. Other retailers like Adidas or Ikea actually leveraged AR technology to allow for Virtual Try before you Buy abilities to their consumers. It is important to note some major players that pushed for this innovation.



#1: Threedium's mission is to "bridge the gap between online and in-store experiences" via the creation of 3D models and Augmented Reality displays. With their technology, shoppers will now have the ability to see products in real time, in their surroundings, at different angles, on their body, in their living room, etc. The goal here is to make shoppers more confident in their purchases by allowing for a more transparent shopping experience and simulating in-store abilities. As of recent, they have partnered with FarFetch to put their ring in the race for luxury retail in the metaverse.

#2: DressX has advanced its AR technology to allow users to digitally wear clothing in the app and has also allowed users the ability to create digital clothing to be sold, bought, traded, and auctioned as NFTs in the DressX marketplace. DressX has become an avenue for designers and retailers to take their products and consumer experiences to the next level.

The adoption of AR and AI served as a catalyst for major changes in the tech and retail industries, however, this was only the beginning. Fast forward 2 years later, it has transcended into thousands of other use cases. It comes as no surprise that habitators of the metaverse highly prioritize their digital identities. We see this a lot in the gaming industry, one mainstream example being Fortnite which launched a highly successful brand collaboration with Balenciaga. In real life and in the metaverse, identity and customization is the vogue of digitization, and have continued to push innovation and creativity in that space. The reason why companies are going to be successful in this space is because they will #1: know what their users want and #2: make it easy for them to get it. There are many studies on the psychology of digital avatars and how I interpret it is that one's digital avatar is an expansion of themselves, another form of identity, and a way of expression. Web3 allows people to have an alter-identity without governing or judgment, which is why customization and identity are huge attractions for venture backings.

In the startup ecosystem alone, we see an abundance of companies targeting web3 applications, specifically looking into retail and fashion. I had the cooportunity to connect with Jordan Henry, founder of Hologress, which serves as a meta tailor that leverages cloth/fabric physics and technology to create game-ready outfits for your 3D avatar, allowing you to customize the fit and layering of your digital outfits. Another interesting one is SwivelMeta, who is creating customizable virtual event spaces for luxury retail brands to host product launches and showcase pieces in the metaverse where people (avatars) can be a part of. There are many players projecting to dominate the space with new tech that has yet to be done or creating improved iterations of pre-existing tech, however, will they be a match for the big tech companies who have the money and resources and are already populating the space?

WHERE THERE IS INNOVATION, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SKEPTICISM.

Web3 is acclaimed to be a new version of the web that is a decentralized, user-led internet, controlled via a peer-to-peer network. The argued value add is the ridding of a centralized entity and the dispersion of power amongst the users. People idolize the ability that web3 will have in addressing concerns of data ownership and censorship, which are prevalent in web2, however, this is not a completely positive thing. Many businesses depend on the collection of data as an additional stream of revenue and an avenue of technological development. The sucess of widely used applications built on the web2 domain can be attributed to the collection and utilization of data to enhance user experience. With that, I'm curious to know the effect that web3 will have on the broader economy and how differently businesses will operate in a decentralized ecosystem. As the hype around web3 continues to grow, optimistic individuals and businesses are rolling their sleeves up, ready to jump on what could be the next big thing. However, there is still much to be done before the world is ready to let go of familiarity and enter into newness. I personally am not ready to let go of web2 because I feel like I am just now learning all it has to offer. However, I'm also optimistic that web3 has the potential to completely revolutionize what it means to be a consumer and user in today's world, and whether we know it or not, the change is already happening.



NON-FUNGIBLE FASHION



Photos by Amelia Tapia Styled by June Lozano HMU by Nandita Malhotra
Set Design by Kaylan Martin Layout by Dana Tran

Non-fungible tokens, commonly known as NFTs, have taken the art industry by storm. Within a couple of months, NFTs shifted from being predominantly based on images and videos to having a stake in all kinds of mixed media such as music and – now –metaverse clothing. For example, a digital fashion brand going by the name Rtfkt partnered with young painter Fewocious to create an NFT release that crashed the esteemed Christie auction house. Their virtual shoe (loosely based on Nike's Air-Force Ones) sold from anywhere between three thousand dollars to ten thousand dollars per shoe. Overall, the creatives' net sales came in to be around three million dollars – a substantial contribution to this new (and extremely profitable) market. Since NFT's are generally controlled by the artist or their partnering businesses, artists are able to see larger profit returns in sales. Instances like Rtfkt's show that NFTs could have a future in fashion as virtual property and that art is now able to be verified and transferred digitally.

The main appeal to non-fungible fashion is its authenticity, rareness, and irreplaceability. NFTs are able to be minted and tied to a piece of intellectual property, deeming the art as verifiable and "one of a kind." Within the digital blockchain are records of transactions which occurred on the blockchain's platform. For example, any time someone buys or transfers an item with an NFT, it can be viewed as a transaction through the blockchain. However, the product can no longer be "lost," meaning that anything that occurs on the blockchain is final and able to be traced back for ownership. NFTs can be bought and sold like any consumer good, transferring their ownership from one person to another. However, they differ from traditional goods in that they do not have physical manifestation. Rather, they are what some would consider as digital property.

The best part about this digital property is that, unlike other currencies that operate on blockchain such as Bitcoin or Ethereum, NFTs are non-fungible. With other currencies, money can be interchanged, printed, and removed from the global market as demand fluxuates. However, NFTs act as an irreplaceable tagged object on the blockchain, holding its value in being authentic. NFTs are also unique to producers in that it can allow artists to keep charging fees after artwork is sold, such as in the form of fees to the artist per transfer. Artists are now able to take some profit back from their art being re-sold, something that artists whose art might be currently in circulation at the moment don't get a cut of.



INTEGRATION

The scarcity and authenticated uniqueness that NFTs offer has captured the attention of the fashion industry. Many luxury brands are now taking advantage of the new age of digital consumerism, hoping to beat their counterparts to the punch. These endorsements have given new validity to NFTs, as well as the artists that make them. As a way to capitalize on the NFT craze, Gucci and other fashion brands announced that they will have their own line of NFTs. And as partnerships like Balenciaga and Kaws with Fortnite have already proven, blending art and design to virtual gaming is possible. The latest Louis Vuitton (LV) game has taken this phenomenon one step further, featuring collectable NFTs inside their video game. The luxury brand released a game on their two hundredth birthday called "Louis the Game," where the main character (called Vivienne) travels around a virtual world, tasked with finding hidden NFTs to add to their collection. With the release of Fortnite's collaborations with Balenciaga and Kaws, and LV's "Louis the Game," consumers have become increasingly introduced to digitized fashion and non–fungible fine arts. Many art enthusiasts and creators will admit that the appeal of collecting and displaying their one of a kind art pieces has its perks, and this is no different in the fashion space. NFTs offer the same ownership exclusivity that a designer handbag of limited availability and exclusive buyer access provides. However, skeptics claim that because NFTs are not tangible goods that can be worn or shown off, they should not be considered as highly valued as endorsing luxury brands are advertising. Regardless, the integration of technology into common processes is becoming more and more prevalent, and this certainly goes for the creative industry as well. Though NFTs are not a commonly accepted form of consumerism right now, the looming growth of the Metaverse suggests that integration is not far behind for NFT creators. But with virtual worlds and NFTs, companies are able to control access to certain "online" events and brand releases, adding luxury and validity to their endeavors. For example, Decentraland, an online 3D virtual world, has hosted events such as digital sneaker launches, art exhibitions, and product launch parties. People can participate in buying virtual or even physical artwork by connecting their crypto wallet and making purchases during these events. This limited virtual access allows fashion companies the opportunity to host "private" events globally through the metaverse or similar platforms, something that is not possible with regular launches or events. Not only that, but these virtual events remove the need to travel to attend



Faith McNabnay



LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

As art and design move from more traditional media into the new hybrid metaverse, expressions of creativity are starting to become limitless. Since people can already purchase NFT garments in the virtual world, it's only a matter of time before physical garments are going to have NFT tie-ins. As more connections between the digital and physical world are created, it's clear that the surface of possibilities has just been scratched for this new age of consumerism.

As NFTs change the way ownership works in the new digital age, there are many positives and negatives that come along with this new wave. Blockchain solves some already previously prevailing issues with authentication, as now all transactions are written and stored on this blockchain. Transferring ownership is now also highly reliable and trustworthy as transactions can always be traced back. However, the sustainability of a virtual currency can be troublesome, as lots of electricity is needed to run and operate a system of this scale. With fashion brands trying to stay at the forefront of relevancy, these brands have

VR



Photos by Eunice Tan Styled by Daniel Iridia
HMUA Cynthia Guo & Nandita Malhotra
Layout by Dana Tran

EMILY HARRISON







McAnthony Everest & Jacob Soriano

Strutting down the runway is a virtual model. She embodies futuristic energy in the Metaverse Fashion Week (MVFW) hosted by Decentraland, a virtual reality where designers showcased their collections from March 24 to 27, 2022.

The Metaverse, an online virtual reality made with several cameras to give a life-like 360 view, is a new and modern way to host Fashion Week. Unlike the traditional fashion show experience, Metaverse Fashion Week is free and online, creating an accessible platform for the average person to intake the luxurious fashion show experience.

Users can participate online in the fashion shows through their own avatar and virtual wallet that they can set up before the show. Digital fashion brands like The Fabricant and Auroboros showcased their Metaverse clothing lines in the show. These pieces can be bought as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) during the show with funds from their crypto wallets by scanning a QR code, and they can then be worn on the user's personal avatar on the Decenraland website.

Boson Protocol is a brand platform that works with others to sell physical goods through the Metaverse. There are also big designers like Dolce&Gabbana and Etro that have some Metaverse attire that can be traded for physical clothes.

What also makes MVFW unique is that you can be more creative and wear things that you couldn't physically wear in real-life fashion week. Avatars wore things like glowing wings and halos, along with glowing pants, etc.

This includes donning wearables from Dolce&Gabbana as well as Etro—as seen on the fashion-forward users gracing the virtual streets of Metaverse Fashion Week. One of the most attractive components of Fashion Week through VR, is that it is accessible to everyone. Invitations aren't mandatory [and fame status matters very little. But Decentraland aren't the only ones in the game.

New York Fashion Week takes a new spin by introducing augmented reality (AR) on the runway. Designer Maisie Schloss partnered with Yahoo to present her digitally-crafted fashion line for the brand Maisie Wilen, majorly inspired by Monster High dolls. Schloss featured Frankie Stein, Draculaura, Clawdeen Wolf, and Lagoona Blue as her models.

All models are 7-foot- tall, with some wearing green and blue body paint, ears, and fins to replicate these dolls.

long with her Monster High collection, Schloss featured models wearing VR glasses, a futuristic-looking fall-winter collection with a variety of shiny silver dresses, pants, skirts, and a few early 2000s looks. These models and looks are available online and can be seen in your personal space through their website.

The holographic fashion show was meant to serve as a study of the often blurry line between reality and fantasy, Schloss said. The holograms look realistic, yet are glorified by adding animations to enhance the clothes. The new digital fashion show allows viewers to watch in-person or online, accommodating to COVID-19 concerns. The past couple of years with COVID have enhanced our technology tremendously, giving us the opportunity to create alternative online worlds such as the Metaverse, that will only continue to develop for years on end. Both the Decentraland and New York Fashion week AR, give the public the fashion week experience they couldn't have before with the traditional in-person fashion week.

This is exciting for the average fashion lover whose dream is to attend New York Fashion Week. People love the idea of virtual models and feeling a part of something that is usually more exclusive. Are virtual fashion shows the future of fashion week? As our world slowly turns digital, the Metaverse is rapidly integrating into our real-life experiences. However, this is only the beginning. The future of digital fashion experiences will only continue to evolve until it becomes our new reality.





Cynthia Guo



Kaylan Martin

speculated



claire waheed

photos by Ayushi Dalal
styling by Malcolm Guidry & Elleanor Ross
HMUA Sydney Boo
layout & editing by Dana Tran





Speculative fashion is a vast domain where dress can be virtually whatever one's mind can conjure. It is a practice of making the unthinkable wearable. While incorporating technology into the world of fashion, it uses clothing as a form of progessive or even extremist expression. This realm of fashion does not follow or predict trends, but it is seemingly limitless to what fashion can look like. This idea is derived from the idea of speculative design which came to be from the minds of artists Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby in the 90s.

Dunne and Raby contend that "if we speculate more—about everything—reality will become more malleable"

One such example that includes speculative fashion, design, and technology is the work of design researcher Tina Gorjanc in 2017. Gorjanc's project titled 'Pure Human' involved using tissue engineering technology to turn human cells into leather goods. In fact, Tina used DNA samples from the late designer Alexander McQueen. The cells would be turned into lab-grown skin and made into leather purses, jackets and bags. This collection was made not with the intention to sell, but to send a message about the emergence of increased technology in the fashion world. These pieces were obviously met with a lot of surprise from the public. In an interview for METAL Magazine Gorjanc said, "After two weeks, the shock factor wore off. I think that's because people can adapt quickly to the stretching of boundaries. This is how we are introducing new technologies into the mainstream – we always have to stretch boundaries further because, otherwise, there will not be innovation."

Society cannot speculate about the future of fashion without regarding the most pressing issue at hand in the industry; the overconsumption of textiles and the ever growing empire of fast fashion. The reemergence of past styles and the rapid turnaround time for recent trends is exhausting resources, time, and energy. The pressure of social media forces these trends to pick up speed only to die out when another takes its place. This cycle is a hard one to break and it is discouraging followers from finding their own sense of fashion. Onlookers are trapped in the cycle of overconsumption while constantly conforming to the latest style.

Speculative fashion could be a turning point with encouraging people to dress for themselves, lessening the burden of overconsumption on the environment and bringing a new wave of looks and designs onto runways. The hyper imaginative designs that could come from future artists can persuade people to get creative with their own dress and style while decreasing their dependence on social media and trends for dress inspiration.





Laurie Grobe & Gio Magana




Playing Dress-Up:
A Step Back from Body Positivity

Photos by ***Joyati Modak***
Styled by ***Keya Jain***
HMU by ***Carlota Loza***
Set Design by ***Dena Laila***
Layout by ***Maggie Vereb***

There are certain aisles in retail stores that stand in stark contrast to the remainder of the building. I used to meander into the toy section and find myself in one of the aisles that make it seem as though the whole world has turned pink. As a young child ignorant to the impact of gendered marketing and its ability to perpetuate stereotypes, I was enthralled by the array of dolls in pretty dresses in their rosy boxes. Every doll that I was ever gifted and every corresponding outfit that I could shimmy their bodies into were integral to developing my long-lasting passion for fashion and expression through style. But the stark contrast between my appearance and that of the doll that lay in my sweaty, childish hands was a constant reminder that I could never look the way that Barbie did in her miniature clothing. Not only was her hair traditionally blonde, and her features classically European, but she also had a completely unattainable body type.

Toymaker Mattel estimates that approximately three Barbie dolls are sold each second, and over a billion have been sold since the doll's creation in 1959. She's had over 200 careers over the decades and is portrayed as a champion for encouraging girls to dream to be anything, without regard to their gender. However, beyond the brand's modern, feminist marketing and mission, Barbie has long been linked to causing unhealthy body image and eating disorders in young girls. A standard classic Barbie is described as representing a woman who is 5'9" and 110 pounds, which would categorize her as dangerously underweight. At this height and weight, she would be incapable of menstruating. However, Barbie's close historical relationship with promoting unhealthy beauty standards goes beyond her proportions.

The infamous 1965 "Slumber Party Barbie" was sold alongside a sleeping bag, hair rollers, combs, a scale perpetually set to 110 lbs, and a tiny book titled "How To Lose Weight." The only weight loss tip printed inside? "DON'T EAT!" Countless studies have shown over and over again that girls who are exposed to ultra-thin dolls are more likely to be overly conscious about their weight and potentially develop eating disorders.

keya jain





An estimated one billion different outfits have been made for Barbie and her friends. A huge component of playing with dolls is playing dress-up. and this process of young girls expressing their style on these dolls rather than on their own bodies leads to body dysmorphia and disordered eating. The disappointment that I felt as a pre-teen when I began to experiment with my style beyond playing dress-up with Barbie and started to pay attention to how my clothes looked on me, was largely due to the fact that nothing ever fit quite like I imagined it ideally should. My chest was perpetually too small, my waist never small enough, and my thighs didn't have nearly as much space in between them as they should have. This unhealthy body image that I associated so closely with clothing was counterintuitive: it would take time for me to realize that clothing and style were ways for me to feel better about myself, not outlets to channel my self-hatred through.

I had to undo the damage that using Barbies as a gateway into fashion had done. My ability to grow past my negative view of my body was largely assisted by a shift in culture and conversation surrounding the fashion industry. In recent years, the two biggest trends in the fashion industry have arguably been a push toward both sustainability and body positivity. There has been an overwhelming rally cry that clothes should fit bodies, rather than bodies fitting clothes. Without this emphasis on the fashion industry becoming more inclusive and representative of realistic body types, it would've been immensely more difficult for me to overcome my issues with my body, and I would've been hesitant to grow into the person I am today, who uses clothing and style as an outlet for expression rather than a way to admonish myself. The implementation of NFTs, metaverse, and avatars in this industry threatens the forward movement that has occurred regarding both sustainability and body positivity.

The virtual world as we know it today already plays a major role in perpetuating unhealthy beauty standards and unrealistic expectations. Photo and video manipulation, eating disorders encouraging online culture, misleading weight loss advertisements, and filters damage people's self-perception and esteem. Several fashion brands are taking their digital presence a step further.

In 2018, Balmain introduced a "virtual army" of diverse virtual models. Margot, Shudu, and Zhi are all digitally generated women who faced backlash for taking jobs away from real human models, particularly minorities. Cameron-James Wilson, the creator of the trio, was inspired by his Princess of South Africa Barbie when designing Shudu. Ethnic models often face difficulty finding work in fashion spaces, and these computer-generated models are ultimately created for the purpose profit, rather than hiring women of color to do the same job.



It seems as though the fashion industry has skipped over representing real women of color entirely. Instead of taking adequate time and measures to expand on the traditional visuals of Barbie-esque, Eurocentrically featured, white, thin models, industry leaders have gone straight to digital models of minorities. Although each digital model in Balmain's campaign is diverse in background and ethnicity, they are not diverse in size, and they are not equivalent to representing real women of color. The same can be said for The Diigitals, a digital modeling agency, another of Wilson's inventions.

Computer-generated models are simply too perfect and unrealistic. Even if attempts were made to diversify the CGI models by size, they would still represent something unattainable, due to the inherent fact that they are not real people. Body inclusivity has long called for the representation of real people in fashion spaces, and the increasing implementation of digital models works against this movement.

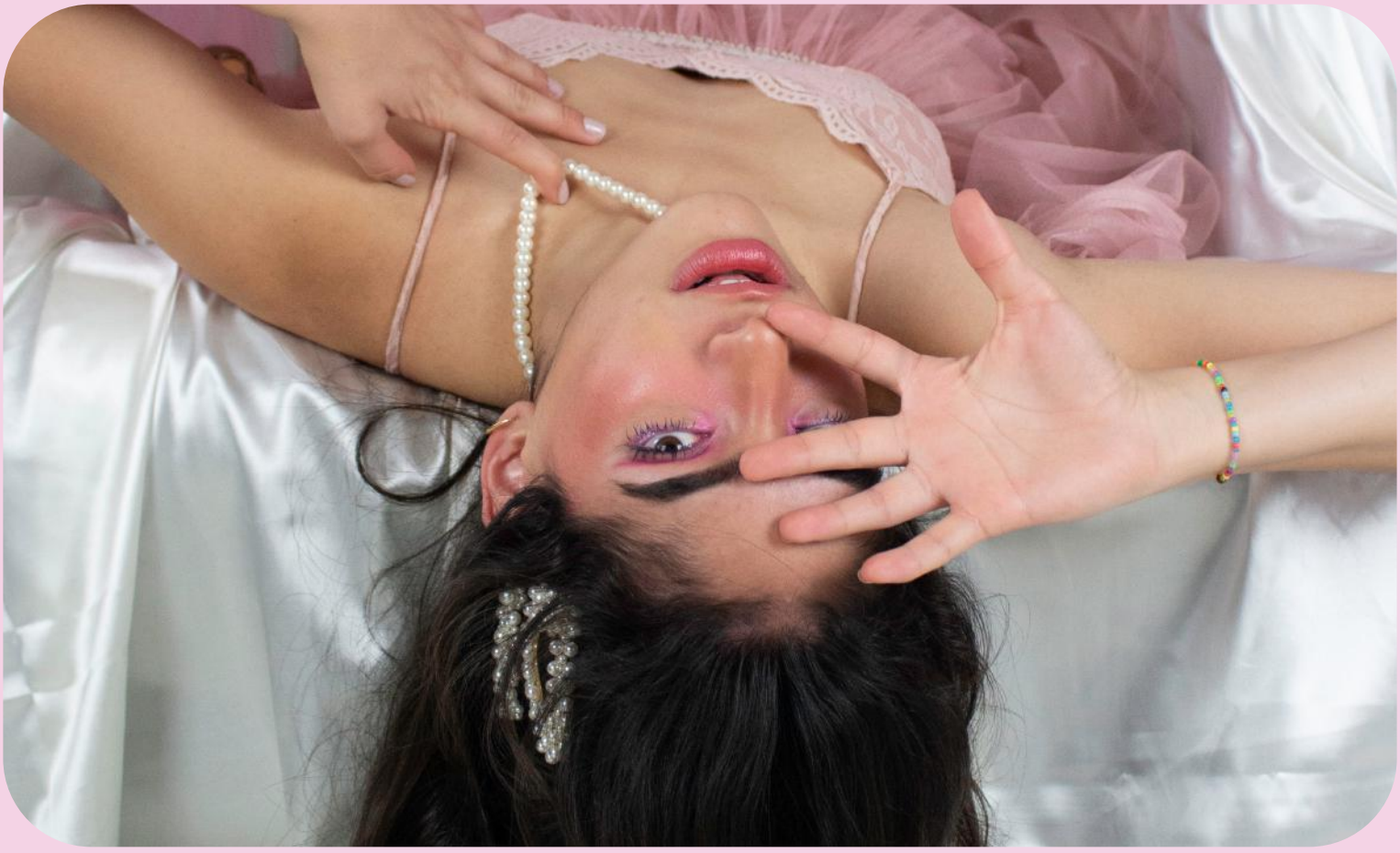
As more and more brands turn to virtual runways, the presence of virtual modeling and avatars has become increasingly apparent and concerning. This past New York Fashion Week, Imitation of Christ created a catwalk in Decentraland, a metaverse destination, and marketplace. Jonathan Simkhai hosted a Metaverse Fashion Week event in Second Life, an online platform that lets users create an avatar for themselves and have a so-called "second life" in this virtual world. Seeing stick-thin models, many of whom suffer from eating disorders themselves, has been a source of body dysmorphia for decades. Constantly viewing or dressing up similarly skinny avatars cannot be beneficial for individuals' body image. By dressing a digital avatar, rather than your own body, and identifying through that, it becomes easy to compare your physical self to this virtual creation.

"Fashion is ultimately about self-expression. it's an inherently personal process."

Brands who are pushing this pillar of fashion aside by turning to virtual and digital fashion are taking advantage of their luxury name-brand status in order to promote consumption for the sake of consumption, rather than the enjoyment of style and the sense of individuality that it can promote.

It is irresponsible to think that the fashion industry should be pursuing technological advancement for the sake of unhelpful innovation. The usefulness and impact of the innovation are clear indicators of its value. Virtual fashion has very few practical uses and actually detracts from fashion's initial purpose as a catalyst for self-expression. And digital fashion's impact appears to be overwhelmingly more negative than positive, as it not only detracts from an individual's self-perception, but also the environment, the modeling industry, and the accessibility of fashion as an industry.

Barbie and Mattel as toy manufacturers have moved towards promoting more inclusivity among their dolls with the introduction of dolls with diverse body types. That being said, it is very difficult to undo the consequences of years of promoting unhealthy body standards. For this reason, I sincerely hope that the fashion industry does not turn away from all of the progress that has been made regarding body positivity and inclusivity in the industry, just to continue to promote impossibly unattainable bodies through the depiction of virtual models and avatars.




Carlota Loza

VIVIAN ARMENDARIZ

HYPERPOP



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW LE STYLING BY KEYA JAIN HMUA BY JOANN CHEN
SET DESIGN BY KAYLAN MARTIN LAYOUT BY MAGGIE VEREB



Hyperpop: the extremist love child of EDM and pop music that gained its certified name and establishment from one small Spotify editorial playlist. To put it simply, hyperpop is the musical manifestation of maximalism. Evolving rapidly over the years, hyperpop is shaking up the music industry. The microgenre originating from the digital world withstands any classification and explicit definition. However, for further context, Wikipedia defines hyperpop as “a loosely-defined music movement and microgenre characterized by a maximalist or exaggerated take on popular music.” It blends elements of pop, dance, EDM, bubblegum bass, emo, and hip hop music with typical features like electronic synths, distorted vocals, intense pitching, erratic sounds, etc. From a production standpoint, distortion distinguishes hyperpop from traditional pop. Additionally, hyperpop frequently parodies traditional pop music. For example, modern pop music often idolizes perfection, while hyperpop creates parodies of that element and embraces imperfections throughout its sound. Inshort, there are no wrong answers in hyperpop.

The booming artists during this time cannot go without mention as they built essential communities that influence hyperpop artists today. However, when talking about the emergence and dawn of hyperpop, musicians A.G. Cook and SOPHIE are the blueprints of this microgenre. A.G. Cook, a music producer from the UK, founded the PC (Personal Computer) Music label and art collective in 2013. Take one listen to the discography of PC Music, and you'll hear the heavy influence it has on hyperpop today. PC Music was an even mix of polished sounds and distorted sounds. The producers and artists under the PC Music label had a familiar sound that solidified the maximalist pop aesthetic and non-genre bounding music. Around 2014, PC Music's popularity grew on Soundcloud and became a product of the digital age, hence the name. What distinguishes the PC Music label from other labels, like RCA or Sony Music, is that the phrase, PC Music, can also describe the common genre/sound (avant-garde, postmodern pop music) put out at the time. It's safe to say that A.G. Cook and PC Music were instrumental pieces to the development of the movement present today. Working closely with PC Music, Scottish producer, and musician SOPHIE and her works secured hyperpop's place in the music industry. Her debut album, Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides, was nominated for a Grammy in 2019. SOPHIE's album experienced high acclamation for its transformative sound and was a breakthrough moment for hyperpop. Despite her tragic passing in 2021, she continues to live on through other artists. SOPHIE, along with many other influential artists, are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. For many, hyperpop is considered the voice of queer culture and serves as a space where individuals can be true to themselves and have no boundaries of self-expression.





IS SOMETHING TRULY FROM THE DIGITAL AGE IF IT DOESN'T COME WITH CONTROVERSY? I DIDN'T THINK SO.

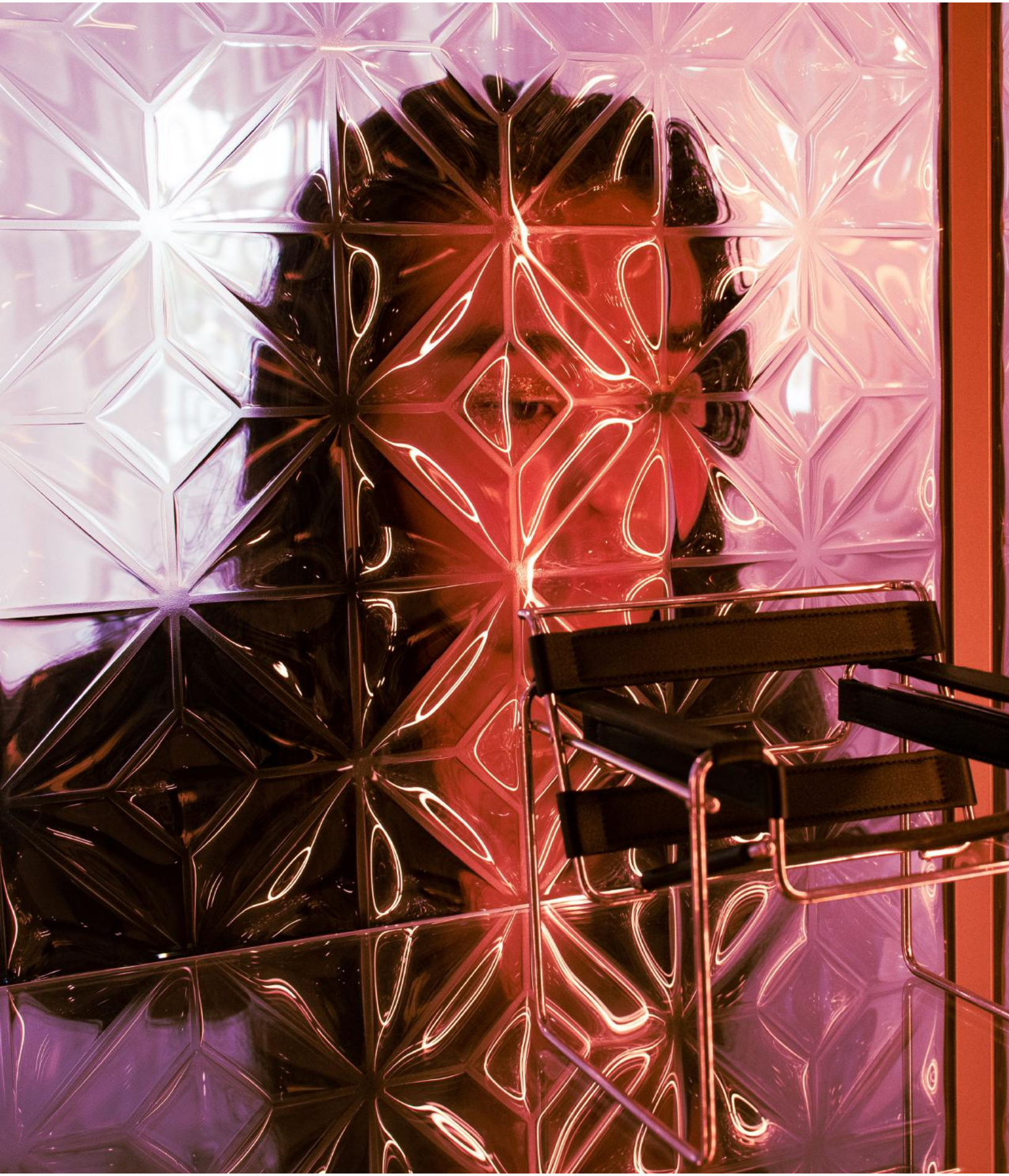
A big drawback surrounding the establishment of hyperpop is that it is arranging and labeling artists whose sound resists categorization. Additionally, with the need to constantly label music, artists believe that the hyperpop tag is thrown onto their music because platforms don't know what else it could be. In response to this, the term digicore developed from Soundcloud in 2021. The digicore classification refers to songs made in the hyperpop scene with more hip hop and
R&B elements and fewer pop elements. Digicore also consists of primarily queer people of color, while hyperpop/ PC music tends to be white artists. Despite the issues surrounding hyperpop that are important to review, hyperpop is a microgenre, movement, and community that is firmly making its way through the music industry. This chaotic and maximalist movement is still in its infancy, and it's bound to grow into something extraordinary.

Emerging hyperpop artists to check out: The glorious four (A.G. Cook, SOPHIE, Charli XCX, 100 Gecs)



Perhaps the most recognized face of hyperpop is Charli XCX. Her status popularized and canonized PC music and hyperpop. In 2016, A.G. Cook became Charli XCX's creative director and produced her next four projects. Her work has a significant influence on hyperpop, but it's her world-renowned status responsible for mainstreaming the microgenre in some ways. The last act responsible for introducing hyperpop into mainstream media is the duo, 100 Gecs. Their debut album, 1000 Gecs, gained massive attention and received praise for being experimental and blending many popular sounds. It's one of the most interesting bodies of work I've heard, to say the least, and has elements of many styles of music, from electronic music to hip hop. The quick success of the album and duo had everyone adding their songs to different playlists. But, a common issue occurred: its eccentric sound didn't mesh well with other music content. In response, Spotify created the editorial playlist titled hyperpop, where things truly took off. The playlist introduced a new crowd to hyperpop. Now, the Spotify playlist has over 300,000 likes and continues to grow. One of the many great things about the digital age is that going viral on any platform is the beginning of a prosperous journey. So, it is safe to say that going viral links to hyperpop. This phenomenon is justifiable on Tik Tok as well. The song "Money Machine" by 100 Gecs off the album, 1000 Gecs, is a famous sound on the app, generating more streams for the duo and its microgenre. Soundcloud also plays a significant role in the growth and recognition of hyperpop. Since the beginning, Soundcloud has been the location where new trends emerge and become mega-popular; however, at the same time, it houses unique styles of music that are exclusive to the app. In my opinion, hyperpop is in the middle: it attracts a sizable underground community but also showcases talented artists who have reached mainstream status. Hyperpop's widespread and developing fanbase makes it a rising genre. Hyperpop is potentially the future of pop music; ultimately, it already sounds like it.







IS DIGITAL FASHION SUSTAINABLE?

photos by BILLY LAWRENCE
styling by RACHEL XING
hmua JOANN CHEN
layout DANA TRAN
set design DENA LAILA

INTANGIBILITY

DOES





Nani Matthews & Rachel Xing

EQUAL SUSTAINABILITY

photos by Billy Lawrence & Emma Samaie
stylist | hmua | set designer Clara Truax
layout by Clara Truax & Dana Tran

THE OTHE




ANOKHI SHAH



Everyone wants to live for the glitz, glamour, and the noise. Everyone wants to be "it." They want to embody this unique and quirky persona. Live and make their own trends and feel caught up in this fast-paced fashion industry. They want to own distinctive pieces, have a collection of statement articles, and become pronounced influencers. They want to immerse themselves in the latest styles and fads. But, they can't. We see ourselves getting distant from what we desire. The fashion industry is exponentially moving to digital heights. Fashion is becoming exquisite and exclusive.

This drastic difference between what we can put our hands on in the real world and the virtual world leads to the inaccessibility of fashion. The speed at which fashion is digitizing clothing is astonishing. The lengths to which people and designers are willing to go to put their brand's name out there are revolutionizing. Designers are throwing themselves at monetizing the NFTs, or non-fungible tokens. They are creating one-of-kind pieces and publishing them on virtual platforms for sale through a blockchain method, preventing their designs from being altered through a proper tracking method. This poshness only leads to one thing: the wealthy being able to enjoy and profit off of the pricey NFTs, and the commoners not being able to fully experience another world of fashion.

The fashion elites like Prada, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, etc. have marked their place in the virtual worlds of NFTS by making designs highly scarce, valuable, and luxurious. Designers are targeting younger audiences by seeping into the gaming world, like Fortnite, to showcase their clothing options. From levitating and color-changing shoes to virtually trying on various skins to find the one you choose to purchase: they have everything.

Top-notch fashion, the 3D NFTs, and the Metaverse are all connected. Decentraland, the online platform that launched Metaverse Fashion week (MVFW), showcased brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Estee Lauder, Philipp Plein, Selfridges, and Dolce & Gabbana. This was an attempt to instigate communication between artists of all expertise to express their designs without imitations. Avatar catwalk with wearable NFTs was displayed and was an avenue to connect with consumers in a unique way. Since the future of fashion is enveloped around technology, the Metaverse provides an exciting approach to retail, while buying and selling digital skins.

But does this mean that luxury culture is accessible to everyone? Unfortunately, NO.

There are aspects to this digital world that are only available to a population that has the wealth to buy skins and designs for their avatar through cryptocurrency. The other billions of people are excluded from the exclusivity that fashion and technology have combined to create. Although they claim to increase their exposure to a multitude of audiences, they are not able to reach those who are willing to know more about these divine statement pieces. It is inaccessible to the majority of the population. The population that they can actually profit off of, people like us.






ÆAR DESIGNERS,
ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT AS WEALTHY AS YOU,
THE GLAMOUR AND POWER OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS
WE LIKE FASHION TOO.
EMBODYING THE FORM OF ESCAPISM.
MAKING A STATEMENT
WE WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE METAVERSE
CAN BE MADE FOR US TOO
LET US INTO YOUR WORLD
IN THIS DIGITIZED ERA
I HEARD THIS NFT
LET US EXPERIENCE
FOR IT IS
THE GLORY OF OWNING DESIGNS
INFINATE AND PLENTIFUL FOR ALL


RCA
MENU
POWER



READING BOOKS

photos by Thao Le & Matthew Le
styling and hmu by Joann Chen
set design by Matthew Le & Joann Chen
layout by Sumer Brito & Dana Tran



Matthew Le



THINK








SMILE!
THEY'RE
WATCHING.

