

# **Fashion: A Philosophy**

Lars Svendsen

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Fashion is at once a familiar yet mysteriously elite world that we all experience, whether we're buying a new pair of jeans, reading *Vogue*, or watching the latest episode of *Project Runway*. Lars Svendsen dives into that world in *Fashion*, exploring the myths, ideas, and history that make up haute couture, the must-have trends over the centuries, and the very concept of fashion itself.

Fashion opens with an exploration of all the possible meanings encompassed by the word "fashion," as Svendsen probes its elusive place in art, politics, and history. Ultimately, however, he focuses on the most common use of the term: clothing. With his trademark dry wit, he deftly dismantles many of the axioms of the industry and its supporters. For example, he points out that some of the latest fashions shown on runways aren't actually "fashionable" in any sense of the word, arguing that they're more akin to modern art works, and he argues against the increasingly prevalent idea that plastic surgery and body modification are part of a new wave of consumerism. Svendsen draws upon the writings of thinkers from Adam Smith to Roland Barthes to analyze fashion as both a historical phenomenon and a philosophy of aesthetics. He also traces the connections between the concepts of fashion and modernity and ultimately considers the importance of evolving fashions to such fields as art, politics, and philosophy.

Whether critiquing a relentless media culture that promotes perfect bodies or parsing the never-ending debate over the merits of conformity versus individual style, Lars Svendsen offers an engaging and intriguing analysis of fashion and the motivations behind its constant pursuit of the new.



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