

CRUISING

I am constantly cruising.

We are all constantly cruising.

Cruising is the active verb of *to cruise*, a code word used by gay men to define searching for anonymous sexual encounters in semi-public places or outdoors.

I am repurposing cruising without the sexual climax, taking the act of searching minus the deep thrill or replacing that with another type of thrill.

(Insert your own meaning here)

This essay is like a memoir, a holy self-reflective essay about how I perceive style, how I reference.

How saving images in a folder on my desktop or phone is the new photocopying.

How I got over pretentiousness and my fear of mixing too many references.

How my generation is the one that straddles analogue and digital, born in the early 80s, a teenager in the mid-late 90s, an undergrad at the turn of the new century, still figuring it out via My Space and selfies on Nokia colour screen flip phones.

How my generation remembers how it was to be purist and understands how it is to be a living palimpsest of multiple subcultures, a style-tourist.

How my generation is self-conscious and constantly deconstructing, looking for clarity, unlike today's generation who appear to have the sense of freedom to be so many different things.

But this essay is about how I am constantly cruising, how it hasn't stopped my feelings of self-consciousness but has made me understand, to refine and to feel like a kid discovering things.

It doesn't feel so hard to have some style today, it can be bought so easily, you can queue up for it, beg for discount for it, influence it and fake enough knowledge of it to pass under the judgement radar. By spending the time, it takes to travel to work cruising it is possible to have reinvented yourself to fit your mood or desire or whoever you want to be aligned to and have it neatly packaged waiting for you at your destination. We want to look authentic,

individual but also part of something collective. So does this mean that the tribes and subcultures I remember from my teenage years have just morphed into something else, something more fluid? Clothes are interchangeable surfaces that for many aren't imbued with the same meanings that they are for some. Does the fact that I work in fashion mean that I attach too much over analysed significance to those meanings when I cruise? Does the fact that I work in fashion, along with my other very important obsessions affect my cruising? Like how a scientist or statistician might cruise something that I would miss or pay no heed to, it's all down to what we as individuals see as important in all the facets that make us human.

Helmut Lang said

“You cannot put together a personality with clothes. It only reaches up to the neck. And then
it ends.”

DIE WOCH, 1995

Some use the surface area of a screen to build their personality, I've learnt this while cruising. Becoming versions of their own reality, Hypebeast Vogue versions of what we assume we could/should be, but does it matter? We can still act like purists whilst being a tourist, but educating ourselves in the process.

Cruising enables us to constantly educate ourselves.

I have become more open, have a clearer understanding of brands that I would usually dismiss, cruising has taught me to follow their references, to track backwards, sideways, to be 360 degrees more understanding. Before all my references came from editorials, from films, from older kids. I aligned myself to a sub-culture, buried myself in the visual and narrative associated to it. I lived and breathed it and stood apart from my peers.

Maybe today it is more relaxed, because information is so readily available, because the only rules are those self-imposed by yourself? Maybe being more relaxed, knowing my core philosophies and identity won't make my style any less, I won't look any less disciplined or

loyal, to some it'll show my education, to some I'll be a tragic hot mess and to others I'll be a strong look.

One thing, I do not own a rail of NOW, I am still attached to the silhouette of my youth. I still care when those I cruise seem to care only for the NEXT and what might add a few extra levels of cache to themselves.

Cruising has taught me that style today, that youth culture and sub-cultures need redefining, or left to brew for longer than the lifespan of a story. I have known for a long time that nothing is really new, what makes it so is the meaning and context given to it. That personality, individuality, subversion and authenticity succeed when consumption and materialism do not matter. When clothes are worn and styles are adopted not for the sake of them but for valid truthful reasons known only to the self. Fashion style visionaries, true fashion style visionaries, those few who really stand apart are lost to the click like click like arthritis that is generation now. Owning a rail of clothes that makes you align to many different sub-cultures is not being stylish. Sticking to your UNIFORM, understanding references, signs, subtle details, being more analogue in your translation.

Cruising is the best education.

BIO:

David Hopwood a graduate of the Royal College of Art in Fashion Womenswear has a solid and continually developing knowledge of the fashion industry, both in the UK and Europe. He has worked in various areas of the industry, for brands including, Bottega Veneta, Matthew Miller and Mulberry for example. Alongside working on smaller projects with artists and other creatives such as Julie Verhoeven, POP Magazine, Spartacus Chetwyndd, Baron Magazine and Marfa Journal.

David is a Senior Lecturer on the BA (Hons) Fashion Design at Bucks New University in the U.K. and from September 2018 will be Course Leader for the new BA (Hons) Fashion Promotion and Communication course at Bucks.