

The New Normal

By Dan Fairhurst



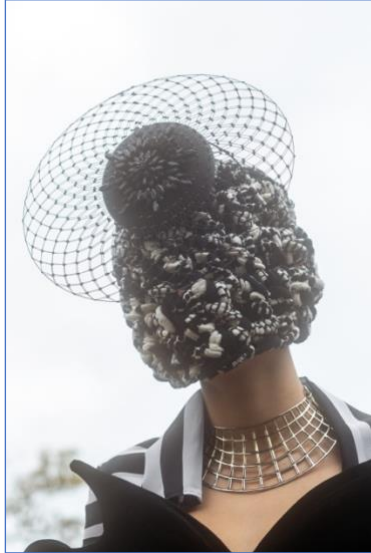
*“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person.
Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.”
Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)*



With the current threat of pandemics and climate change amid growing opposition to facial-recognition technologies, could wearing masks in daily life soon become “the new normal”?



Masks have been used since time immemorial to conceal or transform; to rid the onlooker of any pre-conceived notions of the wearer's identity. As the circumstances of COVID-19 begin to normalise this practice as a daily necessity, could attitudes to masks as a form of disguise change to that of a free form of decoration? As we get more comfortable (and creative) interacting with each other with our mouths and noses covered, the idea of concealing our faces entirely for the ultimate makeover seems like a near-future possibility. How might strangers treat one another differently if they were unable to determine someone's gender, age, or any other identifying characteristics? And what effect might this have on how we all choose to dress?



The freeing qualities of wearing a mask in daily life may precipitate a major shift in fashion: if we couldn't be judged for how our perceived identity relates to our personal style, we would likely feel braver and more experimental with what we wear. While the practical cuts of contemporary clothing may not evolve very drastically, creatively adorning our heads as daily practice could bring a renewed focus to the human form and help remove the tired identity tropes that keep western suits and gowns and gender-specific clothing so relentlessly fixed in our vocabulary. And if this approach to fashion becomes 'the new normal', could the walls of intersectional prejudice slowly start to break down?



This editorial features knitwear and crochet masks and millinery to explore the notion of freedom of expression through anonymity in the 21st century with classic silhouettes reimagined through a retro-futuristic lens.

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Shot on location in Potsdam, Germany