

Fear and clothing: Slow fashion's timeless appeal

Lifestyle

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A weekly reverie on the vagaries and charms of fashion

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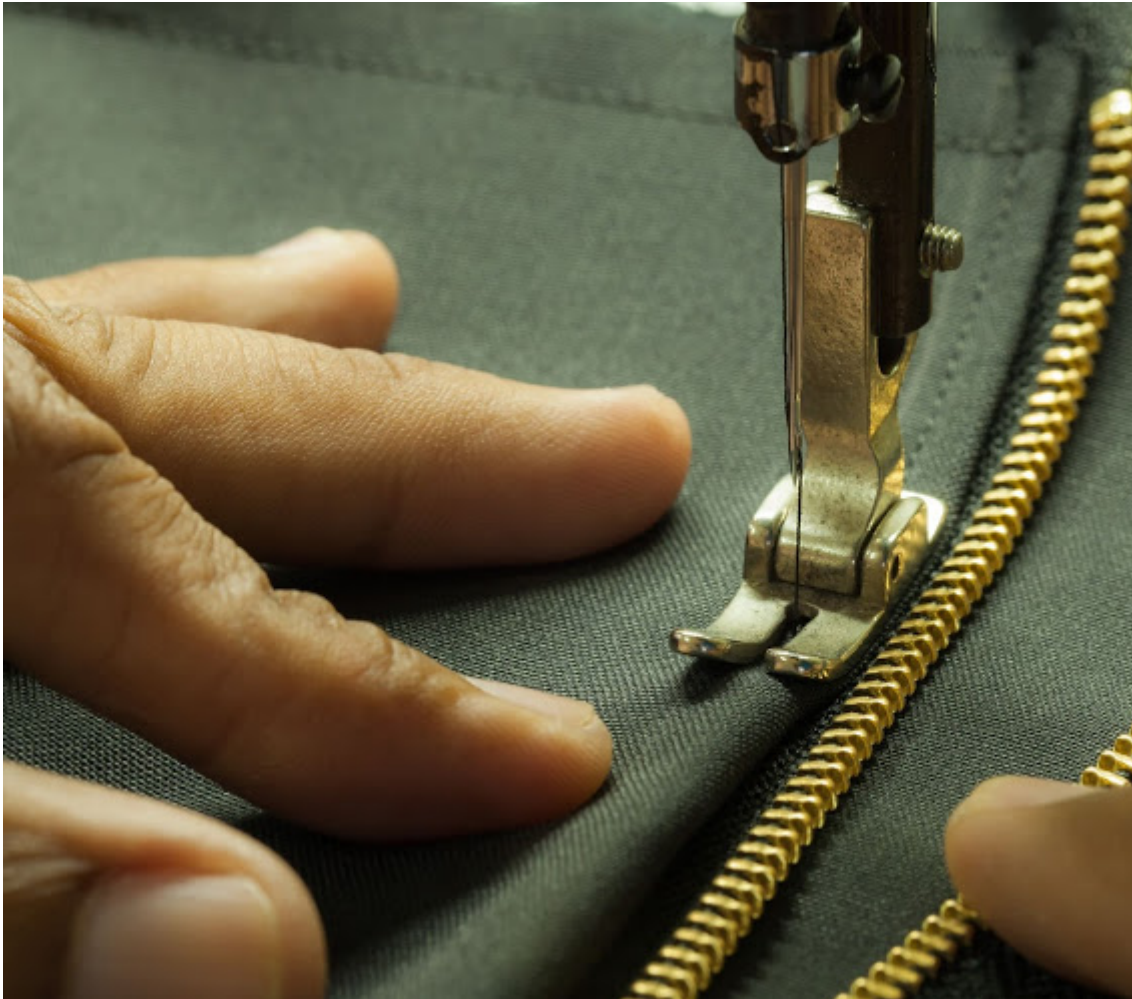


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Everything moves at the speed of tweet these days. As quickly as a story takes hold in the slipstream of the Internet, receives a million

angry retweets, subtweets and comments, so it floats away on yesterday's feed. Last week's passionate indignation is now just a vague discomfiting memory. Yesterday's news is really just that. This mad daily refrain now sets the pace of our lives. It is not surprising that it feels as if the skein knitting the world together is unravelling, and trailing hopelessly in the wake of all the sound and fury. It's as if Donald Trump is now the malicious ghost in the machine, the time machine that he haunts angrily. He has taken charge of the daily narrative, spooked all the clocks and is now manically altering the space-time continuum one angry tweet at a time. How to make it all stop?

I have a solution. Take up with a bespoke tailor. I know, I know you think my brain has finally given up the ghost (hopefully Trump's ghost). How can bespoke tailoring stand up to the bigger issues at hand? Bear with me. Short of taking up four hours of daily meditation and mindfulness training, there is no better way to be in the moment than to have someone slowly and meticulously measure you; and then for that someone to make things slowly and meticulously over many months; and then to fit those slowly and meticulously made things on you, once in calico and once in the real fabric; and then to pick and unpick them slowly and meticulously; and then to take a few more weeks to perfect the ultimate slowly and meticulously crafted garment.

I have become something of a regular with the lovely Elizabeth Kading. She is a bespoke shirt maker - although she is so much more than that. She is like Calypso casting a magic spell on all who wash up in five8ths, her store at 44 Stanley in Johannesburg. Lining the walls are the patterns for the magic tricks she calls clothes. I call them time machines. These shirts and shirt dresses, made in Italian and Japanese milled cottons, have the ability to slow down time and suddenly make it meaningful again. The very act of making these clothes is about asserting a human pace on life gone viral. It is about the process, and it is about waiting. Everything matters - the pattern, the stitches, the outcome, the shirt. If only because making clothes like this is the perfect antidote to everything fast, furious and tweety. Slow fashion may be the ultimate luxury in this crazy sped-up world, and that is a kind of magic.



PINKY PROMISE In my five8ths bespoke shirt-dress.

Image: Aspasia Karras

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