

GESTURES

MUSES' MASKS

Gestures may have an author and it may have a subject but they are, in essence, irrelevant. Instead we, the reader, are invited into a shared voyeurism, a participation in the creation of meaning featuring a multitude of interest- and entry-points. Ripe for interpretation, these contents represent a collective muse in both its meanings: there is no singular person or detail of focus, but many of them, supplying a ruminatory journey through the poetic channels of description.

“We can expect clothing to constitute an excellent poetic object; first, because it mobilizes with great variety all the qualities of matter: substance, form, colour, tactility, movement, rigidity, luminosity; next, because touching the body and functioning simultaneously as its substitute and its mask, it is certainly the object of a very important investment.”

Foreword by
EMILY R. PELLERIN

— Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (1967)

Stripped bare of external context, each brief entry in the forthcoming pages is paradoxically enlarged in its relevance. As pure, its lines exist in substance and in meaning as-is, evoking a significance that is tightly contained – pressurized, taut, and capsulized – and explosively connotative (clothing, in its form as a visible presentation, could never not be; its translation to text maintains this potency).

Void of hyperspecificity, this catalogue is deliberately, tantalizingly abridged, wherein each and every detail brandishes a suggestion, feeds a trope, harbours an implication. As participants, we conjure characters, we create the subjects.

We are, in turn, invited into the text to find ourselves as an amalgamation of the details described: the oversized red trousers or white leather platform low-tops is me; the navy linen double-breasted blazer, acid wash blue jeans, black leather belt is me. In one breath, *Gestures*' recitations enable this duplex of vantage points as we find ourselves through one window the voyeur, through the next, the muse.

Through these nimble perspectives, we are on a tandem experience of function-ally wading through the subcultures of style within the eddies of a precise

poesy of form, one which is structured acutely and with intention: *Gestures*' barren aesthetic guise, technical and stoic, tactically belies its flamboyant subversiveness.

If clothing is an adornment to the body then it is utterly contrarian to display it with such proclamatory lack of ornament. These spartan renditions of visual rendezvous, flagrantly atemporal and unsituated, imply – and, in turn, implicate us in – the influences of capital and capitalism, of commerce both fast and slow, of fashion as an industrial complex; and how such systems feed into, inform, and dictate identity.

Gestures compiles defiances of and allegiances to these systems; it illustrates subjugations by and mutilations of them. Yet, despite its subversion, it is in deference to them.

Opaque as it is descriptive, omissive as it is detailed, this text is an homage to clothing and all its tangents, appendages, networks of production and labour and beauty. (Imitation, however perverse, is the highest form of flattery.) Head to heels, each entry into *Gestures* layers; each description motions the way clothing motions, with a base layer, tucked into, atop of, and “x”-CM tall. A hierarchy of this-and-that from

the body outward and top to toe, this set of sartorial observations is an obstinate fawning over fashion; a denuded ode in the flesh.

The primary author of *Gestures* displays a restrained clothing style. Despite the decentralized perspective that I believe is an active part of this body of work, there is in reality an authorial presence behind its production. (That person does not care to be The Point and I will do my best not to make them one.) Their personal library of style references is vast, and it is voracious, at once absorbent and tactfully honed. Navy, black, and white are in their repertoire of expressions, as are crisp cuts and fine tailoring.

All subtle statements, soft and shy but nonetheless prolifically significant – again, potent. I believe that the interest in how clothing occurs for other subjects is, for this author, a re-placed attention to how obscurities, idiosyncrasies, accoutrement and flair speak out, speak about, or speak for a wearer. With constraint at the author's sartorial core, *Gestures* is an exercise in the possibility of verboseness, of loud-mouthiness, of raconteur-ism.

The storytelling contained here is both truth and a product of imagination, that of the voyeur and of the muse. It is a witnessing of how instinct and commerce show up in the public realm, how uniform has the capacity to breach the confines of uniformity (of expectation, of control). Its observations sourced from a neutral wellspring (and the limits of its gaze asymptotic), *Gestures* allows us to participate, in abundance, in a glorification and a critique of quotidian expressions. It is a celebration of identity – the individual and the collective – and a chronicle of personhood and memory and resources, of creativity, of eccentricity, grandeur and banality.

Levelled in their exaltation, these personalities are memorialised with a straight-face and even-keel, shown with a generous homogeneity that allows each moment to exist, meaningfully, as-is. Through this ethnography, we are onlookers and looked-at, becoming and bearing witness to the poeticism of the clothing objects. We rove through each vestimentary gesture, follow the movement of the masks, dwell in the subtexts and wallow in the wealth of what they very well may or may not mean.

(INTERLUDE)

Words by
EMILY R. PELLERIN

UNHINGED	Sound of WATCHES WATCHES and a held-open, deep-pocketed trench coat, camel-coloured gabardine with shiny plastic circle buttons; patent black shin- high, lace-up combat boots and a tight-fitting black turtleneck; wire-framed	circular spectacles, and one small braid dangling a bright-orange plastic bead, a sparkle amidst a forest of full, bushy beard spouting WATCHES WATCHES, WATCHES WATCHES WATCHES.
CLOSURE	Button Metal Button (Denim) Zipper Pearl Snap Eye Hook/Hooks Velcro Laces Drawstring Tie: Necktie, Bow tie, Knots Buckle	
MEMORY	Baked into us are the remembrances of how to function, to digest, live, breathe, to move our bodies—gifts of the instincts of our foreparents. They grant us signal reception, interpretation. <i>“This is what it means when the dog snarls,”</i> and I recede. <i>“This is what it means when the doves cry,”</i> and I dance. <i>“This is what it means when she cries,”</i> and I gesture empathy. The sword is wielded, I cower; the air is hot, my pores open and I sweat, slow sure and salty.	Instinct is the base layer for expression. A more topical memory piles experience and reference onto and into the gifts of my species and of my people, a primordial nature and nurture mingle with those honed locally, recently. This makes me. And I begin to express, I begin to art-iculate my individuality, my body as canvas, brush-strokes onto the sculptural portrait of the form, flourishes of impact as substance, colour, tactility, movement, rigidity, luminosity. References and histories enlivened, brought to life, breathed into and empowered.

SUGGESTIONS	Under-wear: Silkies, for skiing; String for the slinky ilk; Skivvies for the nibs and nabs; Strappy support for the swingin' doo-das; Strappy support for the swingin' ta-tas;	Somethin' (anythin') for social-sphere suitability, for sanitary senses, for sartorial consummation.	MORE ABOUT ME AS WELL AS MORE ABOUT MANY PEOPLE	For many of us, clothing speaks – an exclamation of self – and its tone is our tone, its language our language.	(How fun, though, would it be if, for those of whom clothing is just functional, these people opted for nudity!)
RAT'S-EYE VIEW	sashay of a vast, quivering silk chiffon hem, marigold, a shield of golden dust grazing the crude concrete of the city sidewalks; two 3-inch talons, attenuated and barely there, climbing to a sepia leather sole strapped with a thin piece of mahogany- brown leather rope around the ankle, another holding	down the ball, dancing strut-strut-strut one step forward and one step forward, the gossamer fabric of the hem just out of the grasp of the spears of <i>tacones</i> ; what an elusive and vulnerable textile, romantic, weightless... wistful, soiled by the grit of the ground.		Those who seek translation, seek legibility in me are automatic incompatibilities, because they do not share the understanding that legibility is an antithesis to intent. For many people, the gesture of clothing is less an articulation than a utility.	Despite the fact that for some, clothing is a utility and not an articulation, and for others, they do not want or attempt to be articulate, clothing will forever be "saying something," even if the wearer does or doesn't care about exactness, or subtleties, or meanings or micro-meanings.
MILLINERY GESTURE (MEXICO)	Sombrero		~	HOW OFTEN DID CHE GUEVARA DO LAUNDRY?	
CARCERAL GESTURE (USA)	Orange Scrubs				
CONSTRUCTION GESTURE (JAPAN)	Jumpsuit		~	WHAT DID THE SWANS THINK ABOUT BJÖRK'S DRESS?	
DEBONAIR GESTURE (ITALY)	Neckerchief				
STRAIGHT WHITE MALE GESTURE (USA)	Someone once told me you "cannot" wear more than one statement piece.				
MILITARY GESTURE (SOUTH AFRICA)	Scarlet Scarf		~	WAS HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S EMPEROR HUNG?	