

180 

Culture Flash

Against
Monoculture



vol.6

April, 2025



EVERYTHING IS A COPY OF
A COPY OF
A COPY OF
AN ADVERT
THAT WAS A COPY OF
A COPY OF
A MASTERPIECE
THAT WAS A COPY OF
A COPY OF
AN ORIGINAL IDEA
THAT WAS A VERSION OF
A COMMON THOUGHT

Has everything started to look the same?

In a 2016 article from The Verge titled "Welcome to Airspace: How Silicon Valley helps spread the same sterile aesthetic across the world", Kyle Chayka coined the term AirSpace, referring to "a harmonization of tastes", particularly visible in the interior aesthetics of Airbnbs as they all seemed to look exactly the same, no matter where they were located.

It's safe to say in the almost 10 years that have passed since, we're seeing just how much social media is influencing not only the physical world but personal taste and style at large. In the words of Alexandra Hildreth, writer and fashion commentator: "You can tell someone's screen time from their outfit." In a time where algorithms are determining and driving the mass adoption of trends at lightning speed and monoculture is looming, is there even such a thing as cultivating personal taste anymore?



Where there's a mainstream, there's a counter movement

In a time where culture can seem flattened by the Almighty Algorithm, there's new opportunities to stand out and surprise each other. Yes, there's life after brain rot.

People, and brands, are finding ways of regaining their uniqueness and standing out from uniformity.

Who are these people that are challenging the status quo? And what's their impact?

The shift

From

Algorithm-driven monoculture, causing a homogenization of style and taste across the world.

To

A tapestry of intentional, weird and wonderful niches that live outside of the mainstream.



Counter Movements

01

Movement 1

The end of hype-based overconsumption

Project pan advocates for fully finishing makeup, skincare and haircare products before buying new ones.

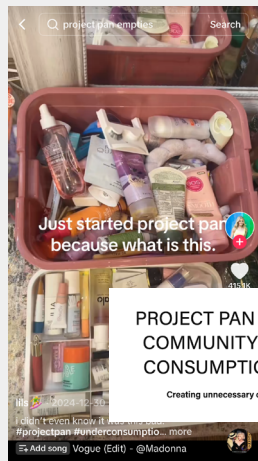
@rebecca.sowden went viral on TikTok for sharing her No Buy 2025 rules, inspiring others to tag along.

An adoption of a more conscious shopping mindset by only purchasing necessities

The cost of living crisis, growing climate awareness, and a search for personal style are fueling the rise of low to no-buy plans on social media.

In response to the pressure felt by many to keep up with the rapid social media trend cycle, people are cutting impulse buys and unnecessary spending. Fad products are falling out of favor due to their environmental impact and their ability to distract from personal identity.

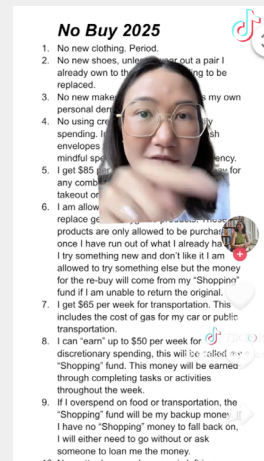
Putting a stop to buying new, trendy clothes or make-up product and even eating out is encouraging people to find new ways to make the most of their existing possessions before repurchasing.



hypebae

PROJECT PAN IS THE BEAUTY COMMUNITY'S ANSWER TO CONSUMPTION OVERLOAD

Creating unnecessary cosmetic waste is so 2024.

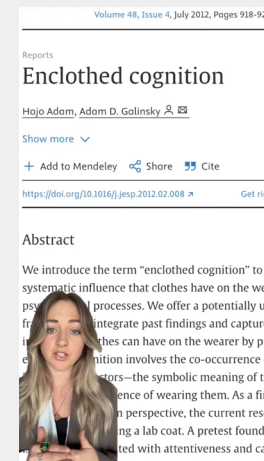


No Buy 2025

1. No new clothing. Period.
2. No new shoes, unless you get out a pair I already own to the store to be replaced.
3. No new makeup. I will only buy for my own personal identity.
4. No using credit cards. I will only use cash envelopes.
5. I get \$85 per week for my own personal use. I will only use it for takeout or groceries.
6. I am allowed to replace gear. I will only replace products that are only allowed to be purchased once I have run out of what I already have.
7. I get \$65 per week for transportation. This includes the cost of gas for my car or public transportation.
8. I can "earn" up to \$50 per week for discretionary spending. This will be rolled into my "Shopping" fund. This money will be earned through completing tasks or activities throughout the week.
9. If I overspend on food or transportation, the "Shopping" fund will be my backup money. I have no "Shopping" money to fall back on. I will either need to go without or ask someone to loan me the money.
10. No matter how much money is left in my



The easiest way to lose personal style
According to fashion psychology



Volume 48, Issue 4, July 2012, Pages 918-925

Enlothed cognition

Hojo Adam, Adam D. Galinsky

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.02.008

Abstract

We introduce the term "enlothed cognition" to describe the systematic influence that clothes have on the wearer's psychological processes. We offer a potentially unifying framework that integrates past findings and captures the ways in which clothes can have on the wearer by proposing that enlothed cognition involves the co-occurrence of two processes—the symbolic meaning of the clothes and the experience of wearing them. As a first step in this perspective, the current research examines the effect of wearing a lab coat. A pretest found that people who were asked to attend with attentiveness and care to their work in a lab coat would

Movement 2

In search of a raw, once owned, identity

Creators are ditching the trend cycle for self-rediscovery. [Emma Chamberlain](#) declutters her closet, [Mina Le](#) embraces basics, and [Vogue](#) declares [micro-trends dead](#) and the [normcore comeback](#).

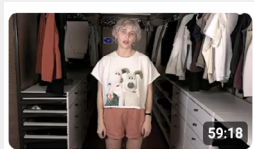
Short restaurant menus are gaining popularity. Embracing a less is more approach, they aim to reduce diner overwhelm and make their offerings more memorable.

Starting from a blank page to rediscover one's true self expression

Brands and individual professionals—across everything from accessories to architecture—are moving away from copy-pasted diner uniformity, capturing distinct POVs and even 'mess' that reflect unique, relatable identities.

Constantly being exposed to algorithm-optimized content, known to reward extreme opinions, paired with a constant pressure to keep up with trends is making it harder for people to be in touch with what they authentically want or like. Now, being on-trend is not only an overwhelming task, but it's also becoming a low-status signal, with microtrends giving away how chronically online you are.

This global microtrend fatigue has left many feeling burnt out, sparking a shift in behavior. People are now embracing simplicity as a way to **recover themselves**, cleanse their palate by refocusing on the core of what they genuinely like. The emphasis sits on authenticity, finding personal preferences, and cultivating a unique personality with intention.



i got rid of (almost) everything
3.9M views • 3 months ago



@aserejeband



@arorygardiner



Movement 3

A pushback against algorithmic curation and recommendation

Discovery engines [Cosmos](#) and [Arca](#) have been designed to combat doom scrolling and sameness by streamlining discovery into a more intentional and valuable experience.

Creators [@ethan.uncurated](#) and [@karenxcheng](#) face algorithmic challenges, arguing that content has become a commodity. Still, they remain authentic, even launching [Patreon](#) accounts to express themselves more freely.



A crave for unfiltered discovery is challenging the dominance of algorithm-based engines

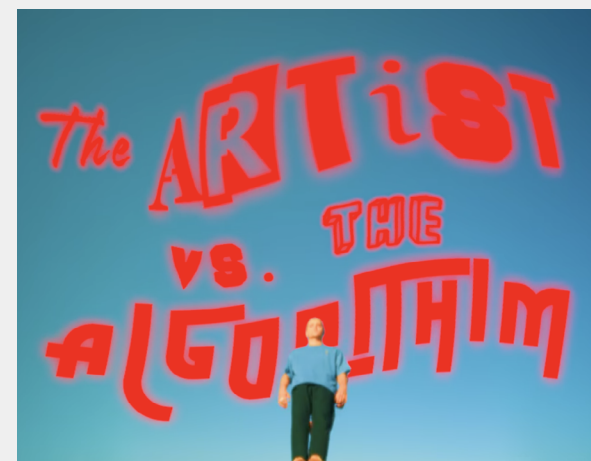
Many discuss that big platforms like Spotify and Pinterest have turned the discovery process into an echo chamber, and users are starting to flee towards alternatives that enable fresher ways to explore.

A powerful wave of platforms and creators is emerging, prioritizing artistry, organic discovery and handmade curation over algorithm-driven suggestions.

The goal is simple: to reclaim platforms as tools for self-guided enrichment, helping users discover new forms of art and culture.



We spoke with alt-indie band [almost a.m.](#) about their journey

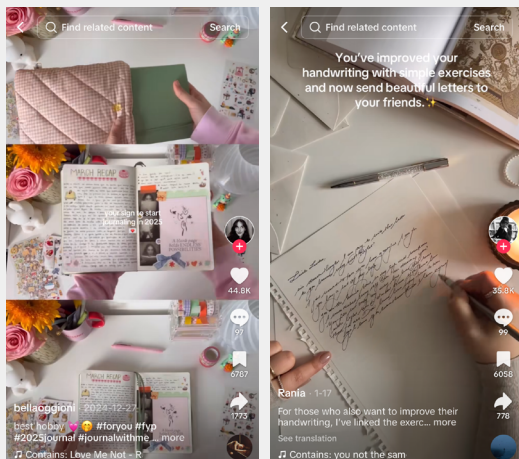


sharing their choice to be artists before content creators. By conceptually “going back in time when art was more valuable,” they express their frustration with having to “[pray to an algorithm to chase a dream](#)”.

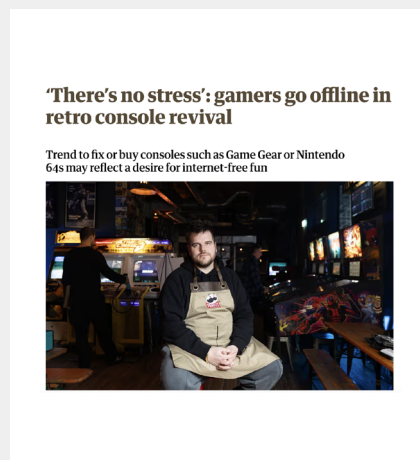
Movement 4

The comeback to past traditions

Stationery, handwriting letters and journaling are making young audiences fall back to analog traditions. A trend backed up by creators that inspire others to follow this tactile writing.



Retro consoles are having a comeback. Video game lovers are rediscovering the charm of old game consoles to help preserve timeless gaming legacy.



Revisiting old passions and going back to cultural roots is becoming a form of finding idiosyncrasy

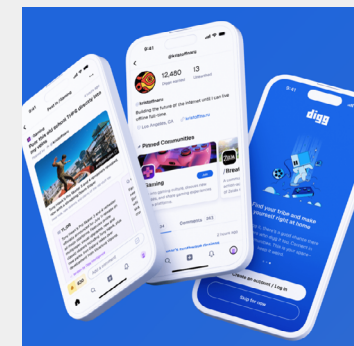
Teeth blackening is a primarily Asian ancient practice that symbolizes status or female maturity and beauty. Artists **SAILORR** and **Molly Santana** have embraced it as a reference to their cultures.



People are finding comfort in historical experiences to rediscover less saturated entertainment, which is why retro or analog versions of longstanding passions are coming back.

Moreover, as eurocentric beauty standards and looks have expanded globally through the last decades, ancestry and ethnic traditions are resurging as retaliation to reinstate one's identity and depart from the norm.

This last phenomenon can be seen in recent plastic surgery trends, e.g. ethnic rhinoplasty becoming a trend and the current "undetectable" procedures rising in the latest months.

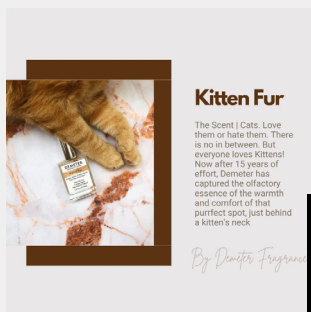


Digg is relaunching 7 years after its shut down in order to "bring the fun back" amidst the current digital landscape.

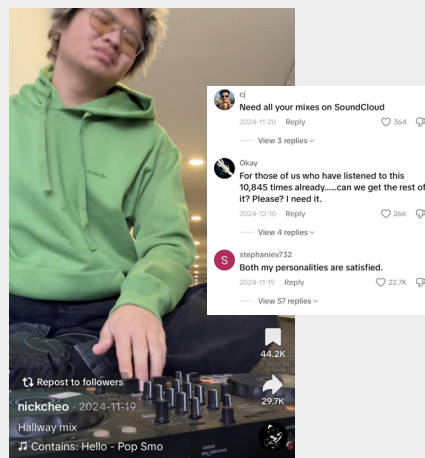
Movement 5

Breaking monotony with unexpected pairings

Fragrance brands are coming up with truly unique, strange scents. Brands such as Demeter are crafting hyper-specific perfumes to bring in new olfactory experiences, such as animal related ones.



Odd music remixes that surprisingly match are going viral on TikTok. @nickcheo is one of the top leaders of the trend, gathering over 250K followers and landing club DJ sets due to his viral remixes.



Finding ways of standing out with unpredictable collabs

In a landscape where brands are following the same trends, identity dilution is inevitable. Even constant innovation falls flat when the outcome is repetitive.

As audiences rediscover their individuality, they also gravitate toward bold, personality-driven brands that challenge the norm and showcase their unique POV. As a result, brands are turning to unconventional collaborations—placing their products (and themselves) in a new light.

These pairings not only surprise and engage audiences but also expand reach, embracing the weird and the absurd in a fresh way. More than a tactic, this approach strengthens brand worldbuilding, creating distinct identities in an otherwise homogenized space.

On has partnered with Elmo to promote soft wins in contrast to hardcore competition around running.



Movement 6

An exploration of niche, yet-to-be-discovered hobbies and adventures

As viral hotspots become increasingly oversaturated, **hidden cultural experiences are on the rise**. Travel creator [@hirokojapan.travel](#) is pushing back, curating bespoke itineraries that uncover lesser-known gems.

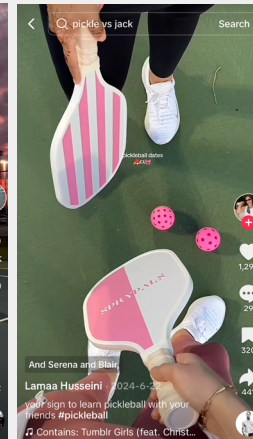
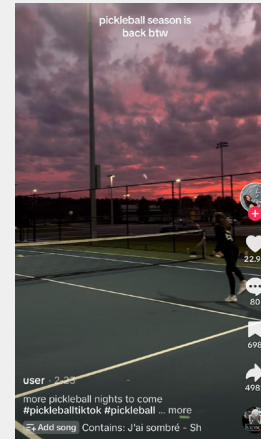


E.l.f. cosmetics now sponsors the high-school girls wrestling competition in the U.S. breaking barriers in the nation's fastest growing high-school sport.



Subculture first, aesthetic second

Pickleball has been crowning America's fastest-growing sports. This is due to its community-centered nature and its accessibility.



Platforms have accelerated the trend of certain aesthetics without the people wearing them actually being part of the subculture they come from. In opposition to this aesthetic commodification, such as **pink pilates princess** or **tenniscore**, niche pastimes that are rooted in everyday lifestyles are propelling.

Less commercialized sports centered around small, tight-knit communities are grabbing attention due to the sense of belonging they create. This can also be seen in tourism and hospitality, as travellers and foodies search for local, underground spots to experience the culture. Adopting these ways of living then affect the way the members dress and get around.

Cheat Sheet

02

In short, these are the countermovements to monoculture



A pushback against algorithmic curation and recommendation

A craving for unfiltered discovery is challenging the dominance of algorithm-based engines.



The comeback of past traditions

Revisiting old passions and going back to cultural roots is becoming a form of finding idiosyncrasy.



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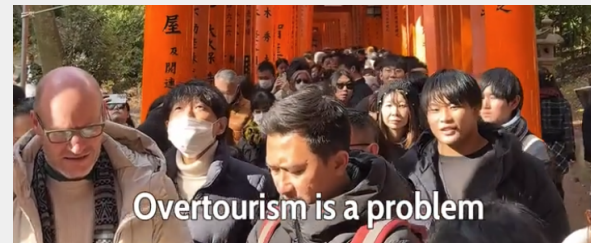
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An adoption of a more conscious shopping mindset by only purchasing necessities.



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An exploration of niche, yet-to-be-discovered hobbies and adventures

Subculture first, aesthetic second.

Opportunities for Brands

Cultivate your identity and POV⁰¹

Having a strong brand personality and values is key to staying true to a brand's purpose overtime.

This makes it easier to convert beliefs into truly meaningful and authentic actions and products.

Show up⁰² in unexpected ways

Breaking monotony and industry standards can be done with the right dose of unpredictability, but make sure to stay authentic to the brand's tone.

Think of crazy collabs, fun content with twists and turns, experiment with visual treatments, etc.

Pay tribute to your subculture(s)⁰³

Leveraging the power of subcultures is a smart move to engage loyal niches.

However, beware that it needs to be a bilateral action. Brands need to contribute something to the members in order to be credible and show sincere intentions.

Join IRL⁰⁴ and digital forces

Start incorporating analog cues into your strategy, thereby showing your online audience you care about balancing digital and real-life worlds.

Create a sense of belonging both online and offline, also partnering with key local communities, making your audience feel connected beyond a product purchase.

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Every day, our **180 LUXE** team observes and analyses online communities.

Using a blend of social listening tools and qualitative / coolhunting approaches, in order to enrich analysis for brands & organisations.

We monitor rising trends & behaviors, and identify rising KOLs / KOCs within specific tribes.

Get in touch if you want to know more about our methodologies: **[180 Global](#)**

Any questions or comments about this Culture Flash series?

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With love,

180 LUXE