

Aesthetics Are Redefining Personal Style

By Nadia Schoenauer

Coastal Granddaughter. Clean Girl. Mob Wife. Eclectic Grandpa.

For those with a screentime of over 8 hours, these words are not meaningless phrases but rather a sincere description of one's style. As social media algorithms dictate what we see and wear, the development of one's style has evolved into a curated experience, one distinctly characterized by social media.

For decades, personal style was a deeply individual expression, one shaped by subculture, personal experience, and necessity. Today, however, social media has brought a new era of aesthetic-driven dressing, one where style is neatly packaged within a series of criteria. Consumers are shaped by social platforms, guided by influencers and affiliate links to consume fast-fashion and micro-trends.

Aesthetics such as "coastal granddaughter," "clean girl," and "eclectic grandpa" have risen in popularity in niche sections of the internet gaining a cult-like following among young users. These aesthetics serve as templates consumers can adopt with a simple shopping spree.

Historically, fashion and the development of personal style evolved through personal experience. One's unique personal style was influenced by their lived experience. These "aesthetics" formed around the community through the presence of shared interests and ideas.

The accessibility of fashion through social media has led to a paradox: while there is more exposure to diverse styles than ever before, individuality is often sacrificed for the sake of belonging to a recognizable aesthetic. Instead of curating a wardrobe based on personal tastes, many are dressing to appeal to preconceived notions on what style is, what style is *supposed* to be.

Yet, the rise of specific "branded aesthetics" aren't inherently negative. For some, these aesthetics provide a helpful starting point for those exploring and experimenting with fashion. Others find joy in alternating aesthetics; treating fashion as an evolving medium rather than a rigid identity.

However, the growing influence of dressing within an aesthetic raises questions about the future of personal style. Are we moving toward a world where individuality is sacrificed for social media approval? Or will these aesthetics serve as a starting point for deeper personal exploration?

Perhaps the key lies in balance; using these aesthetics as inspiration rather than rigid guidelines. Instead of subscribing to a single category, individuals can blend influences, taking what resonates and discarding what doesn't. Focusing on building a complete and versatile wardrobe in the process.

Ultimately, personal style has always evolved alongside culture. While modern aesthetics provide an easy entry point for self-expression, true personal style emerges when individuals move beyond the constraints of trends and develop a wardrobe that feels uniquely their own.