



Dress Code: The Naked Truth About Fashion

Mari Grinde Arntzen

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As Oscar Wilde once wrote, “Fashion is a form of ugliness so absolutely unbearable that we have to alter it every six months.” And yet it serves to make us beautiful, or at least make us feel beautiful. In this book, Mari Grinde Arntzen asks how and why this is—how can fashion simultaneously attract us to its glamour and repel us with its superficiality and how being called “fashionable” can be at once a compliment and an insult.

Arntzen guides us through the major figures and brands of today’s fashion industry, showing how they shape us and in turn why we love to be shaped by them. She examines both everyday, affordable “fast fashion” brands, as well as the luxury market, to show how fashion commands a powerful influence on every socioeconomic level of our society. Stepping into our closets with us, she thinks about what happens when we get dressed: why fashion can make us feel powerful, beautiful, and original at the same time that it forces us into conformity. Stripping off the layers of the world’s fifth largest industry, garment by garment, she holds fashion up as a phenomenon, business, and art, exploring the questions it forces us to ask about the body, image, celebrity, and self-obsession.

Ultimately, Arntzen asks the most direct question: what is fashion? How has it taken such a powerful hold on the world, forever propelling us toward its concepts of beauty?

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