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## The Biggest Trend in Fashion May Be Getting Rid of Your Fashion

How the drive to dress for the cameras took over one man's life, and why he decided it was time to stop.



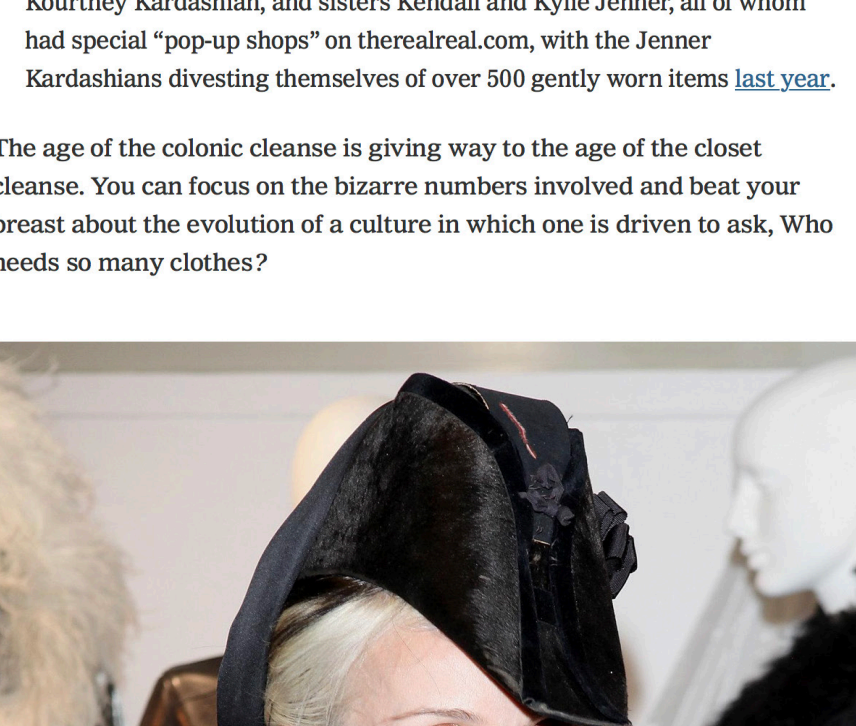
Cameron Silver, wearing an Alexander McQueen jacket. Karsten Moran for The New York Times

By Vanessa Friedman  
May 3, 2018

Forget fringe and feathers; forget saying no to fur. It is possible that the biggest trend in fashion is about to become getting rid of all of your ... fashion.

Next week [Cameron Silver](#) — the founder of the Los Angeles vintage store Decades, famous male peacock, fashion director of H by Halston and its QVC face — will use his store and website, [decadesinc.com](#), to sell off 400 pieces of his own wardrobe collected over the last 35 years. Soon after that, another 100 to 200 pieces will be offered on [grailed.com](#).

This follows the wardrobe auction in February of 30 pieces from the closet/apartment of the street-style star [Anna Dello Russo](#) at Christie's, along with the sale of 150 additional pieces on Net-a-Porter. And that followed the 2008 sale by [Daphne Guinness](#) of approximately 1,000 pieces of Chanel, Versace, Valentino and Saint Laurent (among other names) at Kerry Taylor Auctions.



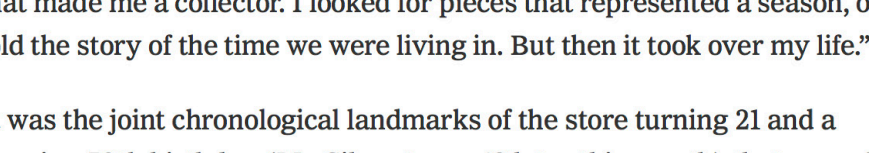
Anna Dello Russo in her home in Milan. Alessandro Grassani for The New York Times

Amid it all were smaller sell-offs by [Chloé Sevigny](#) along with Khloé and Kourtney Kardashian, and sisters Kendall and Kylie Jenner, all of whom had special “pop-up shops” on [therealreal.com](#), with the Jenner Kardashians divesting themselves of over 500 gently worn items [last year](#).

The age of the colonic cleanse is giving way to the age of the closet cleanse. You can focus on the bizarre numbers involved and beat your breast about the evolution of a culture in which one is driven to ask, Who needs so many clothes?



Daphne Guinness at a charity auction for the Daphne Guinness collection, being sold to benefit the Isabella Blow Foundation at Christie's South Kensington in London in 2012. Dave M. Benett/Getty Images



Chloé Sevigny's Instagram account shows a post from March 25, announcing her clothing sale on the RealReal. A portion of proceeds will benefit Hetrick-Martin Institute in support of L.G.B.Q.T. youth.

“Owning Decades was like opening a weird Pandora's box for me,” Mr. Silver said. “I was obsessed with clothes growing up, but it was the store that made me a collector. I looked for pieces that represented a season, or told the story of the time we were living in. But then it took over my life.”

It was the joint chronological landmarks of the store turning 21 and a looming 50th birthday (Mr. Silver turns 49 later this month) that served as motivation, he said, “to liberate myself from all these possessions.”



Mr. Silver's collection includes this Givenchy bird of paradise suit. Karsten Moran for The New York Times

Yet while it is a legitimate question, a more relevant one may be: After decades in which fast fashion gave rise to accessible luxury and spurred an accelerated seasonal cycle that in turn spurred a binge of accumulation, be it shirtdresses or sneakers, Supreme or Hermès, are we finally reaching a tipping point?

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“I hope so,” said Mr. Silver, who had a wardrobe of “thousands” of pieces scattered between his homes in Los Angeles, New York and Pennsylvania, including, he said, “50 man furs in storage in L.A., and I don't even wear fur. It's what I spent money on instead of buying a house in Malibu.”

He still loves clothes, but he has some new mantras, and he regards them with the same passion he once regarded a hot pink Jil Sander by Raf Simons suit. Specifically: “It's chic to repeat” and “The best new clothes are old clothes.”

“The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up,” and there is something symbolic and cathartic about shedding wardrobes.

Many of the sellers cited personal, emotional reasons for divesting themselves of their clothes: Ms. Guinness sold hers in part as a reaction to the end of her marriage to Spyros Niarchos; Ms. Della Russo did so after the deaths of her mentors Manuela Pavesi and Franca Sozzani, and the beginning of a new relationship. And many, though not all, attached the proceeds of the sale (or at least a portion) to a charity, almost as a form of penance for the indulgence.



Lesage embroidered sequin and leather vest, seen here in detail. Karsten Moran for The New York Times

But just as the clothes themselves often reflect specific moments in time — Mr. Silver noted that his wardrobe is “an opportunity to see how we got to this men's-wear-focused moment,” with pieces from designers like Paco Rabanne, Stephen Sprouse, Issey Miyake, Haider Ackermann and Alexander McQueen — the sell-offs themselves may tell us something specific about our particular moment.

They are not, for example, part of the same continuum really as the sales by celebrities like [Liza Minnelli](#) and [Jane Fonda](#), which have also become something of a thing but which relate more to Hollywood mythology than fashion (or, say, the recent Russell Crowe [divorce auction](#), which was mostly about the value of his own celebrity, and buying a piece of it).



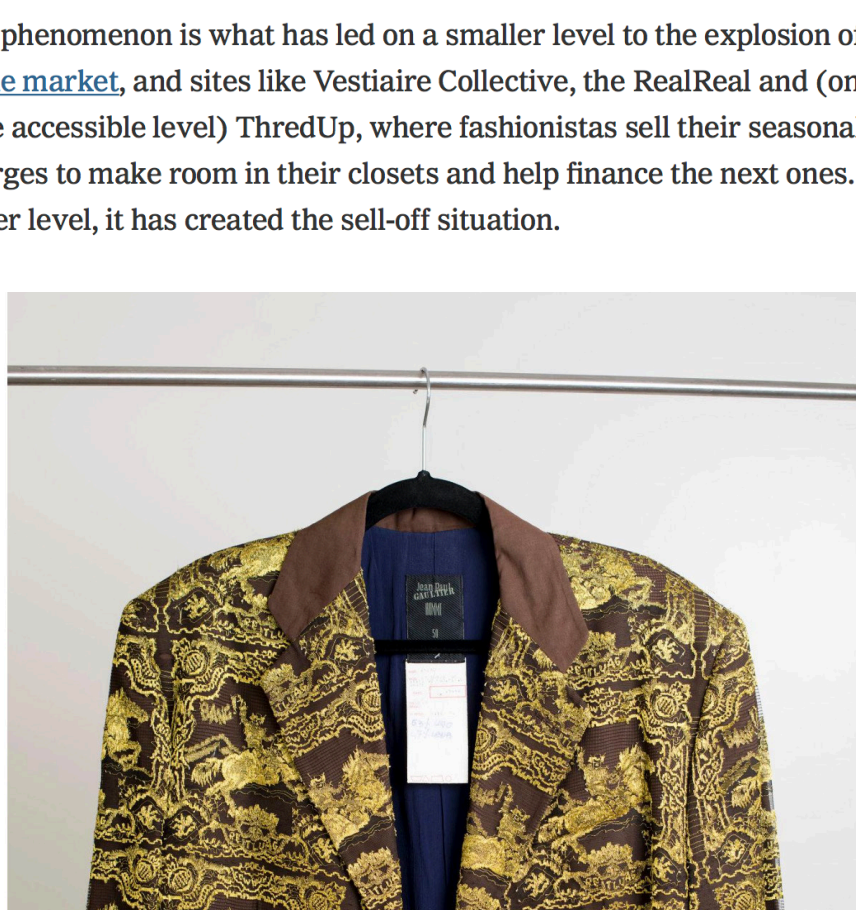
A jacket by Moschino. Karsten Moran for The New York Times

Instead, the sales by Mr. Silver and his ilk seem more purely related to the current consumer culture. They are products of the way in which visual consumption and the need to fill the digital void with more Crazy Outfits! and Even Wilder Looks! have begun to drive actual consumption to unsustainable levels. Not in the ecological sense, though that is part of it, but in the psychological sense.

It's a peculiarly contemporary vicious cycle: If your personal brand and your professional brand are increasingly interchangeable, and part of that brand is dressing in a seriously eye-catching way, and that kind of dressing then causes photographers to seek you out and take pictures, that in turn creates pressure to dress more crazily and change more often and get more stuff, which gets more pictures and so on and so on ad infinitum.

“The expectation that whenever I showed up, I would wear something that turned heads or dropped jaws was really strong,” Mr. Silver said. “Every Met Gala had to be a bigger fashion moment, which in turn encouraged me to be extra social and go out like crazy. It was like performance art, but at a certain point I felt like my wardrobe took over my authenticity.”

This phenomenon is what has led on a smaller level to the explosion of the [resale market](#), and sites like Vestiaire Collective, the RealReal and (on a more accessible level) ThredUp, where fashionistas sell their seasonal splurges to make room in their closets and help finance the next ones. On a bigger level, it has created the sell-off situation.



A Jean Paul Gaultier lace-overlay jacket. Karsten Moran for The New York Times

Once upon a time, great fashion plates — Nan Kempner, [Jacqueline de Ribes](#) — collected clothes the way they collected jewelry and porcelain and then left them to a museum like the Met's Costume Institute or the Palais Galliera in Paris, understanding that they would become cultural relics. Now they can divest earlier, and with purpose.

Valerie Steele, the director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, said in an email that the auction used to sell only 18th-, 19th- and early-20th-century pieces.

“But now ‘vintage’ means anything more than three seasons old, and even less sometimes,” Ms. Steele wrote. “There is no incentive for collectors waiting until their clothes have ‘aged’ into fashion history, especially when the latest fashions are on display in museums. And it's certainly true that people (and heirs) increasingly seek to monetize fashion collections.”

Besides, Mr. Silver said, “not every museum wants everything.” Indeed, before he decided to sell off his clothes, he donated a number of pieces to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for “[Reigning Men](#),” a show on men's wear that opened in April 2016.

And it's not like he won't have anything left. There are still 300 pairs of shoes, he said, “and suits in 50 shades of gray from pretty much every designer you can name,” since gray suits have become his new uniform. But, Mr. Silver said, “it feels great to be free from the pressure to figure out who's the hottest new designer or what's the most important new silhouette.”

It's a monster of our own creation. But there seems to be a growing (and welcome) consensus that it's time to cut off its head.

Correction: May 7, 2018

An earlier version of this article misstated part of the name of a museum. It is the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, not the Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art.