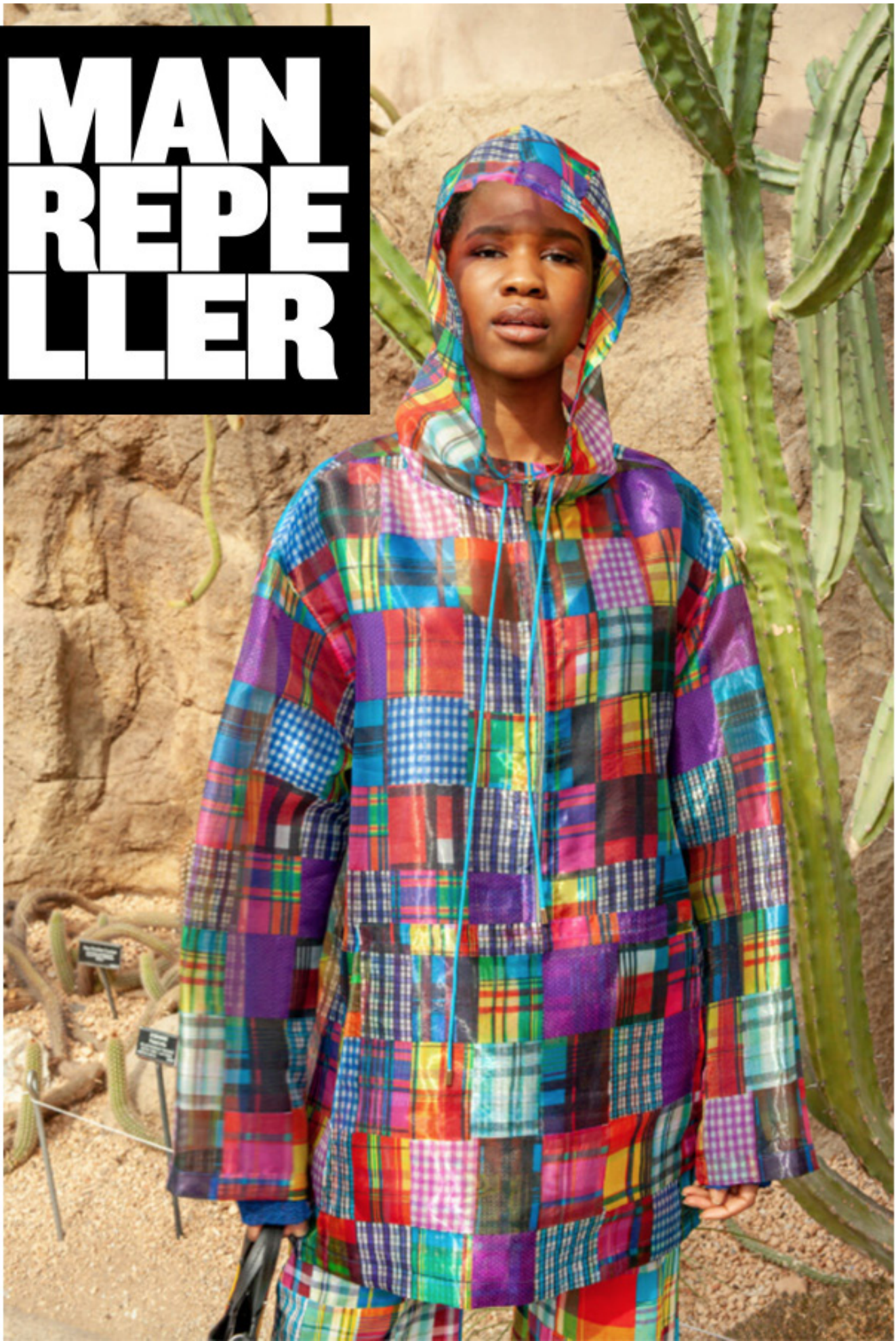


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The Trend That Is Everywhere and Nowhere at the Same Time

by Harling Ross | 03.01.19



Against all perceivable odds, quilts are... not having a moment. Yes, they have manifested with notable frequency on runways in recent seasons, earning a spot on more than one Fall/Winter 2019 trend recap. Yes, they have been the subject of multiple editorials declaring quilting a trend, or even an obsession. Yes, they have become a unique signature for cult-favorite brands like Bode and Carleen. Yes, Raf Simons used them in his famed Kardashian campaign for Calvin Klein. Yes, Supreme — the bonafide maker of fashion moments — has produced a number of patchwork items, including an anorak, a cardigan and a pair of sweatpants. But despite these substantial indicators of viral aesthetic fame, quilted clothing has only danced with the prospect of “blowing up” — so to speak — remaining, for the most part, a niche. A novelty. A thing that is somehow everywhere in theory but nowhere in practice (and by “nowhere in practice” I mean rarely seen on Instagram, street style or fast fashion storefronts — places that tend to highlight what people are actually wearing out in the world).

Maybe that's why I can't stop thinking about quilted clothes. There is a special kind of pleasure, I'm realizing, in loving a trend that isn't quite a trend. It offers the best of both worlds: the participatory thrill of opting into a burgeoning movement combined with the delight of tapping into something that still feels distinctive, seemingly exempt from the cannibalistic nature of social media. I can obsess over quilted clothes without worrying about getting tired of them because they're not even close to peaking. In that sense, even though quilting is by no means a new phenomenon, it bears specific characteristics that are essentially tailor-made for circumventing the usual pitfalls of fashion's trend cycle as it exists now in 2019.

For one, quilting is a spectacularly arduous endeavor, one that does not lend itself to large-scale production at low costs: "Patchwork quilts are time-intensive, hand-worked artifacts, and faking the look tends to result in objects that look, well, *fake*," *GQ* wrote in a story last year. "Your local mall brand has had no trouble riffing on the botanical prints that have been popular recently, but this type of statement will be harder to successfully recreate on the cheap."



Bode jacket, **B Sides** skirt, **The Elder Statesman** hat, **Agnelle** gloves via [MATCHESFASHION](#)

Thus, while quilted clothing may not be prohibitively expensive to buy (there is a treasure trove of vintage quilted jackets on Etsy, many of which are under \$100), it may be prohibitively expensive to make anew in vast quantities, at least for the fast fashion brands that typically have a hand in cementing a trend's ubiquity and subsequent over-saturation.

When brands do have the means to produce quilted pieces, however, the fact that they are often made with leftover scraps of clothing means they can be especially conducive to environmentally-friendly initiatives (another way quilting subverts the negative impact of most fashion phenomenons). On Vogue.com, Bode designer Emily Bode credits this aspect of quilting with its recent surge in popularity, calling it "a really natural way for brands to become more sustainable."

Brooklyn-based brand Ace & Jig, well-known for their signature quilted kimono jackets, also points to this impetus as the reason they have embraced this particular style: "As a no-waste company, we aim to save all of our textile scraps from the cutting room floor and use them to create one-of-a-kind products," a representative told Fashionista.



Peter Pilotto jacket, Marni top via Yoox, Albertus Swanepoel bucket hat

Moreover, there are also certain unquantifiable qualities about quilts and the clothes they beget that make them uniquely suited to our time: a rare marriage of function and aesthetic appeal, a one-of-a-kind sensibility that conveys the same appeal as a personality quiz (“What Your Quilted Garment Says About You!”), an efficient means of mixing patterns without the usual mental effort required to determine what goes best with what, and – perhaps most importantly – an innate association with homespun comfort, the same kind spawned by throwing your keys on the counter after a long trip, or tucking yourself into bed, or smelling your best friend’s neck.

Quilted clothing is not having a moment because it transcends the concept of “moments.” It demands time and attention to detail. It is personal, nostalgic even. It is the opposite of instant gratification, which, as it turns out, can sometimes illuminate the most gratifying thing of all: an excuse to move a little more slowly, to set your own pace in a world that never stands still.



Thom Browne jacket, LOROD T-shirt, Zimmermann pants, Maryam Nassir Zadeh shoes