In a Barbie World

A new trend has invaded the fashion world, known as Barbiecore. An explosion of everything pink, everything ballet-dancer-inspired, everything straight out of a plastic doll box.

Barbiecore has progressed alongside not only Greta Gerwig’s 2023 Barbie film starring Margot Robbie & Ryan Gosling, but also Pierpaolo Piccolli’s all-pink Maison Valentino FW 2022 collection. It is embracing the girliest-of-girly aesthetics that would make an inner child squeal with delight, with anything from bold hot pink mini dresses to soft baby pink bags.

In the afterglow of major players embracing the single-hue phenomenon, the fad has trickled onto red carpets and into street style and everyday clothes. Even Florence Pugh has given the trend her stamp of approval — she rocked the embracing the girliest-of-girly aesthetics for a nickname for fashion lovers is: does Barbiecore have true staying power? Or will it fade out as the seasons change and becomes another page in an ever-filling book of trend deaths?

Only time will tell if and how long Barbiecore sticks around, but in a time when it’s surprising because society is going more digital and fashion trends are beginning to come from the internet and shape trends through a different medium.

Fashion magazines were impactful when print was popular, and they want to match that popularity digitally with a new audience. Additionally, digital magazine content can give more people access into the world of fashion and peak interest. It shapes what we wear and teaches us more about the fashion industry.

As magazines change their format with the times, their impact on society and the fashion industry should not be overlooked.

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In a Barbie World by Stephanie Hegedus ’24

Fashion magazines going digital

In the past, magazines were people’s way to get updated on celebrities’ lives or tips for anything and everything. Fashion magazines, in particular played a huge role in the fashion industry and how society would dress. Today, many magazines are going the digital route and releasing less or printed copies.

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Philadelphia-born, Zyaire Valentine started his interest in fashion at an early age from watching his great aunt design and construct gowns. Zyaire received a lot of attention for his Black Lights collection debut at the 2022 Albright Fashion Showcase. Valentine’s innovative gown features plaid ruffles, a tulle underskirt and a patent leather bust. His inspiration for his gown was a Punk Couture concept that draws inspiration from the 2021 film “Cruella” and 1970s punk culture. Valentine expresses political statements in his garment, as he says that he is “inspired by curvilinear shapes and sleek yet dynamic silhouettes that is a nod to the Black Lives Matter movement as well as an ode to the LGBTQ+ community.”

Valentine describes his brand image as editorial from researching Haute Couture and Avant-Garde runways. Valentine states, “I have a knack for drama when it comes to my design process. I like to play with juxtaposing fabrics and textiles or to create really elaborate and demanding garments.” Some designers he takes inspirations from are Alexander McQueen, Olivier Rousteing of Balmain, and costume designer Colleen Atwood. Some of his favorite works are Alexander McQueen’s collection “Voss” and “Horn of Plenty” and Colleen Atwood’s projects in the movies “The Huntsman: Winter’s War” or “Fantastic Beasts.”

Valentine is also interested in exploring textiles closely and experimenting to research his collections more in depth. His Albright Creative Research Experience (ACRE) project “Testing the Design and Construction Limitations of Imitation Patent Leather Stretch Knit Fabric” with Paula Trimpey allowed him to explore this subject area. For the ACRE, the pair tested the limitation of stretch vinyl fabric as seen in Valentine’s fashion show gown. The experiment included burning, and even heating it in the microwave and testing it out on a sewing machine. Valentine is also planning on showcasing more garments that use this fabric as he states, “While you guys have already seen one of the gowns, the other two can hopefully be seen somewhere soon!”

Lastly, Zyaire was part of a fashion trip to Paris with professor MeeAe Oh-Ranck, which has expanded his worldly view on fashion. Valentine never traveled out of the country before, so this was truly a life changing experience for him. Valentine saw various designers’ exhibitions. “To see these garments in person and to almost be able to touch them was so inspiring to me.” – Zyaire Valentine ’23
Albright’s 2022 eight collection runway show featured designers who are both current students and alumni: Olivia Connor ’18, Nayalaijah Fournillier ’22, Camille Fuller ’17, Nick Kedge ’22, Sarah Kim ’24, Jennifer Raineri ’17, Liz Polley ’07 and Jennifer Raineri ’17. Inspiration for each of the designers’ collections came from current trends, couture, ready-to-wear and bold, wild colors. The event was organized by VERY New York—a company created by alumnus Scott French ’87 and Mai Vu. Nick Kedge ’22 started designing his collection in his senior seminar with Albright Professor Paula Trimpey. When designing, Kedge pays very close attention to detail and incorporates basic shapes and silhouettes into his garments. This way, his garments are organic and have a flow to them. Kedge found that he had to navigate around supply chain issues while trying to put his collection together. “I ended up losing some fabric in the mail and it had been a weird process of getting here but I am excited,” he said just before the show.

Alumnus Jonathan Otero ’20 is a pattern maker at Curtain Call, and a sewing floor coordinator at Stitch Fix. Otero was definitely excited for New York Fashion Week. The pieces throughout his collection were found to be very expressive, colorful and over the top. Some of Otero’s garments were also hand painted by Steven Mykel, who is a self-taught artist.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in costume design from Albright, Jennifer Raineri ’17 went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts degree in costume design and production at the University of Alabama. She has both designed and draped for multiple plays.

“Tm used to working in theater, but back stage and I’m fascinated to see the different types of protocol used for this year’s runway show,” said Raineri who is also very passionate about recreating historical patterns which serves as inspiration for her current designs.

Interested in fashion illustration at a very young age, Olivia Connor ’18 arrived at Albright with no formal sewing experience. This was Connor’s first post-pandemic collection and she looks forward to returning to the runway in the future.

Camille Fuller ’17 graduated from Albright with a degree in fashion design and merchandising and now specializes in sustainable design with a particular emphasis on natural dyeing techniques. Her fashion label is called Anchorage and is produced in small batch pieces made with natural fabrics and dyes. Fuller has earned certification as a Sustainable Design Entrepreneur from the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Elizabeth Polley ’07 is an alumna who majored in fashion and literature. After Albright, she earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in both costume design and technology. She was also the costume shop manager and studio supervisor for Kean University. This fall marks Polley’s second Albright NYFW showing, which she was excited to experience alongside current students as the college’s new assistant professor of theater.

Still the only college to take on the runway at New York Fashion Week, Albright College has made its debut once again for the second year in a row, on New York’s famous Fifth Avenue.

All the designers offered huge thanks to Albright College, VERY New York, Albright’s Fashion Department, and the artists who have helped them throughout the process.
Entrepreneur Mary Dougherty is most known for her successful boutique Nicole Miller Manayunk, but she’s worn many other hats during her decades-long career in fashion. After modeling for a tradeshow while in high school, Dougherty became enamored with the fashion industry. After graduation, she got a position as a wholesale representative for a variety of brands, including Saint Michelle by Shelli Segal. After a bad deal with a shady boss that resulted in her not getting paid for months of work, Mary almost decided to end her career in fashion. But her love of clothing prevailed, and she began working as a wholesale supplier again.

In 1989, Nicole Miller tapped Dougherty to represent her brand. Dougherty was known for her mobile showroom—a tricked-out RV filled to the brim with wholesale clothing. This was her first solo wholesale venture and marked the beginning of her relationship with Nicole Miller. Dougherty was one of the few women on the road, and was often mistaken as a secretary or assistant. She enjoyed the freedom of selling wholesale and swore she would never go into retail. But after a meeting in 1992 with Miller and her business partner, Dougherty became persuaded.

“When I decided to throw my hat in the ring for retail, I had already had almost a lifetime experience of what to do and what not to do.”

Nicole Miller Manayunk was an instant success when Dougherty opened it in 1994. She threw an opening night party with Philadelphia in-crowd at the time. Philly sports legends such as Tug McGraw and Mike Quick, Philadelphia Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie, then-mayor Ed Rendell, and, of course, Nicole Miller were all in attendance.

“It put us on the map.” Dougherty says about the event. “Everyone showed up from sports personalities to actresses and models. It was a hit.”

Throughout her 28 years of running Nicole Miller Manayunk, Dougherty made a lot of great memories and changed a great deal of lives. About the sense of community, she forged with her boutique, Dougherty says, “It was about making women feel great about themselves and about her. She was open to any experiences that may come to her. She wants people to know that she worked hard for her career, and it was not handed to her.

Although her next move may be unclear for right now, whatever path she decides to go down next, she’ll be sure to do it fashionably.

“Good things always come to an end and in August of 2022, the doors of Nicole Miller Manayunk closed for good. Dougherty decided to close the boutique after Nicole Miller sold her brand to the Gordon Brothers in February of the same year.

“We got through everything. But Nicole selling the company to a private equity firm out of Boston was not a hurdle I could jump.”

Dougherty remains positive for the next chapter of her life, and she’s open to any experiences that may come to her. She wants people to know that she worked hard for her career, and it was not handed to her.

In addition to creating new trends, television reintroduces styles of the past. The fourth season of “Stranger Things,” set in a small Indiana town in the mid-1980s, was released on Netflix this past summer. This resulted in a resurgence of ’80s fashion trends, such as baggy jeans and denim, high top sneakers, excessive accessories, bright colors and loud patterns.

The style influencers of shows like these are evident in retail stores and countless TikTok videos and even on the runway. The fashion of TV has such an impact on its audience that it can be considered a style of its own.

Is Instagram the new place to shop?

A virtual mall has exploded on Generation Z’s social media platforms. Instagram has become the new hub for shoppers. Today’s young people are engaging with the world in a new and shared manner.

Platforms like Instagram bring celebrities, micro-influencers and ordinary people together. Many people find inspiration for fashion through Instagram because of the increasing interest in showing off individual fashion styles online.

Celebrity and influencers collaborate with brands to promote products through their own personal Instagram accounts. Influencers like what they see they can buy these products without even leaving the app, or their couch. Instagram has become a simpler version of shopping for consumers who enjoy digital shopping. It allows all brands to use the same platform to reach consumers. Influencers, and micro-influencers are not the only people who have influence over consumers. Users often follow influencers who inspire them to shop the brands they are wearing in their posts.

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How did you discover fashion?
My mom taught me how to sew when I was young. It’s something that I’ve always loved doing. I can remember hunting for leftover fabrics and all strange materials to make costumes, cutting up thrift-store jeans to make skirts and dresses. I went through grades K-12 in schools that did not have art programs, so I never thought of myself as being an artist or even creative. I took for granted that I could sew and make things as just something that I did, not a skill I had learned or a talent that I possessed.

I didn’t give much thought to a career in the fashion industry until late into college, even though I had worked as a sales associate in a clothing store when I was 16. I was a store manager all through college and when I graduated from Penn State with a marketing degree, I landed a job as a buyer for Bon-Ton. After a few years, I finally felt ready to go back to school and earned my master’s degree in fashion design from Drexel.

Tell us about your current research project.
My focus is on action and disruption — research, experimentation and developing practices that will make a difference. I feel strongly that the fashion industry is at a tipping point. We need to rethink the entire product process and take a hard look at the lifecycle of products if we’re going to stop polluting the Earth and harming her people.

We need to create practices in which businesses support the communities so that the people and the planet are being centered. I’ve been researching and experimenting with bio-based and compostable materials for the fashion industry. It may be a bit radical, but we may be able to stop millions of tonnes of fashion pollution and waste by creating clothing and accessories that can be planted in our backyards, instead of what we’re doing now. Wouldn’t it be amazing if a trendy pair of shoes could nourish our soil at the end of its life? I just finished a research paper proposing this idea and presented it at the Global Fashion Conference. The ideas are meant to be a “one size fits all” solution to the fashion industry’s challenges. They are meant to be considered as an alternative to conventional thinking allowing design students and industry professionals an opportunity to pause, ideate, and challenge the norm. In the midst of great uncertainty and insecurity, new ideas will emerge and better ways of making can start to take shape.

Take us through your fashion industry journey.
After grad school, I started working as a designer for Motherhood Maternity in Philly, and then became the senior designer for their sister brand, A Pea in a Pod, which is a higher-end, fashion-forward maternity label. I had the opportunity to design custom-made evening gowns for several celebrities during their pregnancies, which was pretty exciting.

After eight years in the maternity sector, I became the design director for Catherines, a women’swear lifestyle brand serving customers who wear sizes XL-6X. I loved working at both brands, because I really felt like I was designing clothing for “real” women. We weren’t just following trends and making cool clothes. We were designing clothes that helped women feel comfortable, beautiful and confident. After five years at Catherines, I stepped back to reflect on my time in the industry, and refocus on what was really important to me. I struggled throughout my career to justify the way the majority of the fashion industry operates.

There’s many negative social and environmental impacts in the entire production process, people being harmed and exploited, destruction being done to our planet. I thought that teaching the next generation of fashion industry professionals was my best chance at changing the system.

So I started teaching at Drexel in 2018, and spent time developing classes and research papers proposing this idea and presented it at the Global Fashion Conference. The ideas are meant to be a “one size fits all” solution to the fashion industry’s challenges. They are meant to be considered as an alternative to conventional thinking allowing design students and industry professionals an opportunity to pause, ideate, and challenge the norm. In the midst of great uncertainty and insecurity, new ideas will emerge and better ways of making can start to take shape.

“Share a quote that’s meaningful to you.
I once read this quote scribbled on a piece of paper in a shared workspace, so I can’t claim it as my own, but it’s become my personal mantra and something that I share with everyone: “What we know becomes truly valuable when it rubs up against what other people know.”

Have any fashion tips?
Be thoughtful. What measures are in your closet that you’ve forgotten before buying something new? When shopping, visualize how many times and ways you will be able to wear a new item before buying it.

Ask questions. There’s lots of marketing campaigns selling “sustainable fashion,” but what does that even mean? Look at garment labels, ask where and by whom products are being made, and what materials are being used. When you think you have an answer, ask more questions!” - Elizabeth Quinn
Say goodbye to slicked back buns, minimalist makeup looks, and white button ups seen in every outfit inspiration image on Pinterest. The "clean girl" aesthetic is fading out just as fast as it emerged during the unpredictable fashion trends that appeared post-COVID. With the end of this era (even though it will probably resurface), comes a new (recycled) trend that is taking social media by storm, and it goes by the name of "Indie sleaze."

Indie sleaze started in the mid 2000s and lasted until the early 2010s, when risqué American Apparel advertisements and the artsy world of Tumblr dominated the Internet. Images featured messy hair, smokey and smudged eyeliner and eyeshadow, all black or very dark colored outfits, and washed-out flash photography — aspects completely opposite of the perfect, pristine and polished look that is the clean girl. The revival of the grungy, disheveled look is a godsend for fashionistas who can’t or simply don’t want to conform to the very exclusive look of the clean girl, where flawless skin and perfect straight hair was the standard.

While the clean girl aesthetic feeds off of being accepted into society via copying popular influencer’s outfits and staged photos, the grungy, dirty trend has no desire to do so. Indie sleaze can be seen as tacky, promiscuous and grimy, but there is a sense of freedom to it. Nobody cares what you look like – there is no reason to mimic every other influencer on Instagram or TikTok. Also, there are no set rules, like the need to have blemish-free skin and pin straight hair to be seen as the It girl. Indie sleaze actually goes against the status quo, where individuals taking part in this trend want to look different. They want the messy hair and makeup and punk-inspired clothing to stand out against the crowd — just as long as they seem cool doing it.

Similarly to the clean girl aesthetic, Indie sleaze is most likely not going to reign superior or last long. The climax and saturation rates of fashion trends are at an all-time high, thanks to social media platforms, as well as the increasing popularity of fast fashion. As already seen in stores and online, certain fashion brands are showcasing apparel associated with Indie sleaze, like leather pants, velvet dresses and oversized and distressed denim jackets. However, don’t expect these pieces to be around for an extended period of time, as a new fashion trend will take its place.

Even if Indie sleaze is just another trend passing through our feeds on social media, its meaning still stands — be as messy and as carefree as you desire. While the clean girl aesthetic was very exclusive and strict, Indie sleaze is rooted in being yourself, and is a form of resistance against the status quo. This ‘clean’ to ‘dirty’ transition highlights how niche and different trends can be, and how one emerges to completely rebel the other. So, the question is, which It girl do you want to be?