

SYNTHESIS

Summer '23

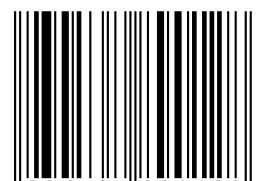
The future issue



Hot takes on techwear's roots

Brand updates
new lines & more

Lululemon steps in?



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SYNTHESIS UPDATES

Techwear Takes Center Stage: Nike's Innovative Collaboration with ACRONYM

Nike's partnership with renowned techwear brand ACRONYM has set the fashion scene abuzz. The collaboration combines Nike's expertise in athletic wear with ACRONYM's futuristic aesthetic and functional designs. The result is a collection of cutting-edge techwear garments that seamlessly blend style and performance. With features like weather-resistant fabrics, modular components, and innovative pocket systems, this collaboration pushes the boundaries of fashion and functionality. Nike's venture into techwear signals a growing trend of mainstream brands embracing the futuristic aesthetic and utility-driven design principles of the techwear movement.



Revolutionizing Urban Commutes: Veilance's Smart Outerwear Line

Canadian techwear brand Veilance has unveiled a groundbreaking line of smart outerwear designed to enhance urban commuting. The collection integrates advanced technologies like embedded sensors, built-in GPS, and smartphone connectivity into their garments. These features provide real-time weather updates, optimize temperature regulation, and even offer navigation assistance. Veilance's smart outerwear aims to transform the way we navigate cities, making urban commutes more comfortable, efficient, and safe. As techwear continues to evolve, Veilance's innovative approach showcases the potential for technology to seamlessly integrate with fashion, enhancing our daily lives.



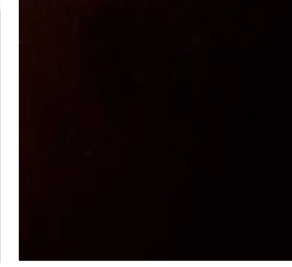
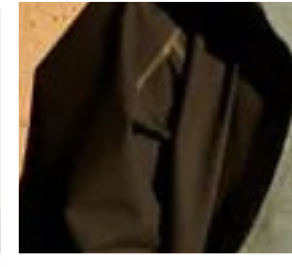
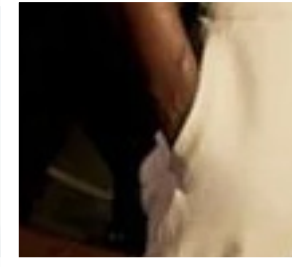
Sustainability Meets Techwear: Patagonia's Eco-Friendly Techwear Collection

Outdoor apparel giant Patagonia is making waves in the techwear scene with its latest eco-friendly collection. Fusing sustainable materials and advanced technology, the brand offers a range of high-performance garments designed for outdoor enthusiasts. Patagonia's collection incorporates recycled fabrics, environmentally friendly dyes, and innovative production methods that reduce waste. From weather-resistant jackets to moisture-wicking base layers, their eco-techwear line demonstrates a commitment to both style and sustainability. With sustainability becoming an increasingly critical concern, Patagonia's efforts highlight the importance of responsible fashion practices in the techwear industry.



Athleisure giant or techwear pioneer? Lululemon is both.

By ev_w_
Published January 17th, 2021 on tchwr.com



"The theme of the past century of Western fashion is this: We take clothes designed for activity, and we adapt them for inactivity," argues a recent article in The Atlantic, titled "Everything You Wear is Athleisure." But it was only recently that the term, "athleisure," referring to athletic clothing altered for casual or social occasions, entered common parlance.

It gained traction with the meteoric rise of yoga leggings sold by Lululemon, a Vancouver-based brand founded in 1998 as brands like Acronym and Arc'teryx were also taking off. As these companies were pioneering the style that would become known as "techwear," Lululemon built a brand that would become synonymous with athleisure (and representative of a multibillion dollar empire).

Arguably little distinguishes one term from the other: Both "techwear" and "athleisure" refer to function-forward garments designed with purpose-specific materials and features. But the visual aesthetics of each niche reflect the difference in their target demographics: Techwear is primarily marketed to men, athleisure to women.

Perhaps due to the inaccurate perception that it is focused exclusively on comfort or has become too mainstream to be interesting anymore, "athleisure", and Lululemon by association, have gained a bad rap in certain circles. But for better or worse, Lululemon, especially through its Lab label, is breaking new ground in its efforts to bridge the gendered divide between athleisure and techwear.

In 2009, Lululemon began an experiment with its Lab sublabel, which updates its activewear with an avowed streetwear tilt. "Lab allows us to flex a slightly different muscle than we get to do in the main Lululemon line," Lab design lead Ben Stubbington told FastCompany. "It gives us room to play with design, instigate ideas, and try new things."

"We've taken away much of the curve seaming that accentuates the female form," Chief Product Officer Sun Choe told Fast Company. "We've taken out some of that in the interests of minimalism, which makes the clothes feel a little less feminine." Indeed, Lab seems to be trading some of the softness of athleisure for the harder look of techwear.

THE CORRUPTION OF TECHWEAR

By Leslie Zhang
Originally published by by Grailed

The term “tech ninja” (and its first cousin “goth ninja”) has been banished from vernacular into the dungeon of cringe-inducing 2014 fashion forum slang. Yet its essence covertly lives on, hijacking common perception of what techwear is and should be. Essentially, the massively complex terms is boiled down to a rudimentary—and highly conspicuous—silhouette of Acronym’s J1A-GT zipped up over a face mask, grid-checked Guerrilla Group tank and a pair of P24s that some scoff at as “school shooter” wear.

This corruption of technical wear—which should broadly encompass any “clothing for everyday life with special fabric, construction and properties that allow for breathability, movement, water-resistance and comfort”—is rooted in techno-orientalism, the phenomenon in which East Asia and East Asians are imagined in hyper-technological terms. This stereotype predicts an “Asianized” future, wherein global society dangles between aggressive modernity and dystopic living conditions. Such representations emerged as the West watched in

simultaneous awe and fear of East Asia’s rapid development in the latter half of the 20th century. Exacerbated by Japan’s economic boom, fortified by China’s manufacturing might and invigorated by the rise of tech-centered chaebol like Samsung and Hyundai in South Korea, the “East” was suddenly unfairly characterized as innovation-driven future overlords.

Techno-orientalism helped birth speculative fiction and cyberpunk, which have undeniably influenced techwear’s development. Genre-defining works and their landscapes are ridden with East Asian references, from William Gibson’s dystopic take on Chiba in his novel *Neuromancer* to the *Blade Runner* franchise’s billboard geishas and Japanese- and Chinese-littered signage and even video game *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*’s reimagining of the currently pastoral Hengsha Island into a two-story megacity.

Errolson Hugh—the man responsible for techwear’s staple labels Acronym, Stone Island Shadow Project, Arc’teryx Veilance and NikeLab ACG—said that Acronym’s aesthetic is deeply related to science fiction and technological developments’

impact on society. “One of the ideas I always come back to—I can’t remember where I first heard it—is the proposition that everyone is already a cyborg,” Hugh told Highsnobiety. “Contact lenses, a phone that’s basically external memory. Things you carry around on a day-to-day basis augment you in ways that a few decades ago were science fiction.”

Acronym, Hugh’s full-time project, is one of the earliest explicitly “techwear” labels and is the likely cause behind the term “tech ninja.” Acronym’s promotional videos are dubbed “Acronymjutsu”—jutsu meaning technique, method, spell or skill in Japanese, commonly associated with Masashi Kishimoto’s hit anime Naruto). A 2010 video featured



Nike ACG Smith Summit

\$195.00



Errolson Hugh (center), with William Gibson (right, beanie) and the Acronym Team

excerpts from the bloody anime film Ninja Scroll. Beyond the P25, a pair of pants inspired by traditional karate gi, and the aforementioned videos, Acronym has not produced anything blatantly inspired by East Asia. In fact, Acronym has maintained a steady focus on functionality over the years, though the label has arguably embraced more aggressively fashion-forward design in recent seasons.

Gibson, author of Neuromancer, is a known supporter and actively wears Acronym—one of his author headshots features him in an Acronym jacket. “My rule is that if Dick Cheney couldn’t wear it without creating a stir, I shouldn’t

either,” said Gibson, referring to a 2005 incident in which the former vice president of the United States drew sharp criticism for wearing a highly utilitarian military parka to a Holocaust memorial event. “There’s an idea called ‘gray man’, in the security business, that I find interesting. They teach people to dress unobtrusively. Chinos instead of combat pants, and if you really need the extra pockets, a better design conceals them.”

Unfortunately for Gibson, subtlety was pushed to the background when techwear joined the ranks of popular science fiction media, mutating from a garment type rooted in inno-

ACRONYM®

Featured looks - SS23



J1W-GTPL

2L Gore-Tex Pa-clite Plus Interops Jacket Gen. 1 Hardshell (WP)

\$1,787.00



J96-GT

3L Gore-Tex Pro Jacket Gen. 1 Hardshell (WP)

\$1,630.00



J111TS-CH

Micro Twill Tec Sys Jacket Gen. 1 Lightshell (WR)

\$1,223.00

ified, profitable aesthetic. The definition of techwear circulating on the internet became heavily coordinated ensembles limited to a narrow selection of silhouettes and designers. With its (justifiably) limited supply and high price tag, Acronym quickly became a social media status symbol.

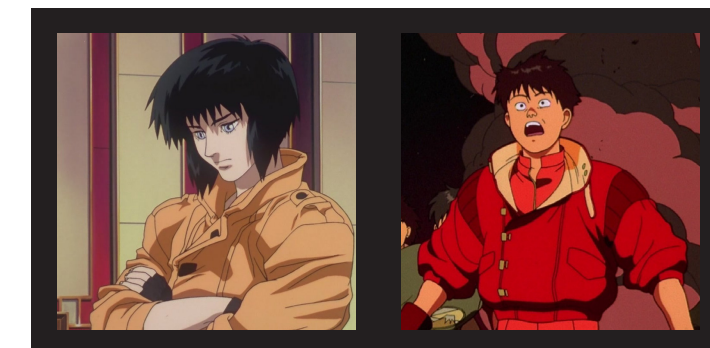
This is best demonstrated by the skyrocketing demand for “cheap techwear” online. Some new and eager enthusiasts shirk affordable staples from Uniqlo’s Airism, Heat Tech or Block Tech lines or outdoor sportswear brands like The North Face, clamoring instead for Chinese factory replicas of popular Acronym and Arc’teryx Veilance pieces. Recent years have seen the emergence of labels like Guerrilla Group and Taobao brands like Enshadower and Chrota that sacrifice functional elements for affordability and ramp up the flashiness. As such, the influence of traditional East Asian garments is much more palpable: from Guerrilla Group’s feudal Japan-inspired Spring/Summer 2016 collection to Chrota’s (pretty nonfunctional) “function wool kimono.”

The role East Asia plays in proliferating and prolonging the “tech ninja” take on techwear is complex and echoes Japan’s reclaiming of cyberpunk.

Unlike many cyberpunk works that have been slammed for exploiting East Asian culture without adequate East Asian representation, techwear is developed and consumed by Asians: Errolson Hugh, despite his ethnically ambiguous name, is of Chinese-Jamaican descent; Guerrilla Group and 4Dimension are based in Taiwan; Taobao labels riffing on techwear are based in China; and Instagram accounts like acrhive and techwear.looks are filled with kitted out Asians.

The role East Asia plays in proliferating and prolonging the “tech ninja” take on techwear is complex and echoes

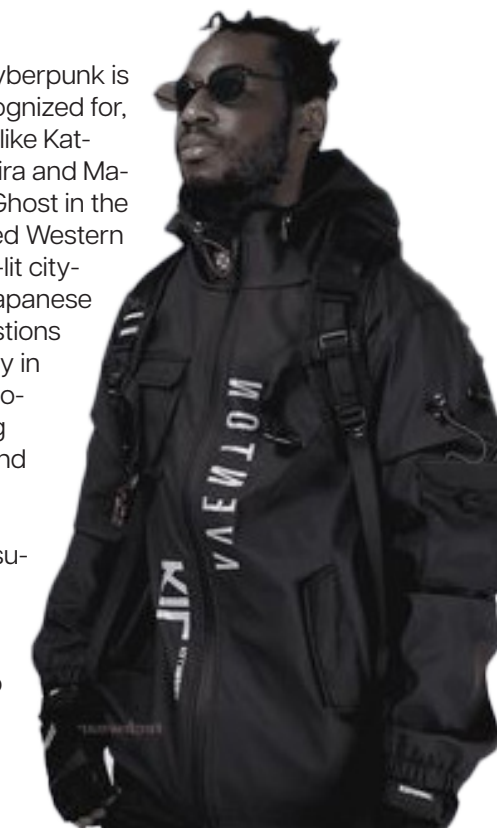
Japan’s reclaiming of cyberpunk. Japanese cyberpunk focuses less on the dramatic, tech-infused dystopias familiar to Western audiences and more on issues of dehumanization and invasiveness inflicted by technology and machinery on individuals, taking cues from Western body horror films



Jackets from Akira, Left, and Ghost in the Shell

like David Lynch’s Eraserhead or David Cronenberg’s Videodrome.

What Japanese cyberpunk is internationally recognized for, however, are titles like Katsuhiro Otomo’s Akira and Masamune Shirow’s Ghost in the Shell, which married Western cyberpunk’s neon-lit cityscapes with the Japanese counterpart’s questions regarding humanity in the face of technology. The resounding success of Akira and Ghost in the Shell provided an entire generation with visual and conceptual inspiration. With an established homegrown link to Western cyberpunk, East Asian brands perhaps felt it appropriate





ARC'TERYX

