

We Are What We Eat.

Modern consumerism has ingrained in society the mentality that the mere accumulation of material goods is synonymous with happiness, well-being, and other measures of success. This delusion brings widespread overconsumption – and the socio-environmental consequences that come with it. Because this consumerist culture surrounds us all, many of us find ourselves stuck in endless social media scrolls, unable to curb our shopping addictions, and ultimately consuming in a way that adds little value to our lives but is detrimental to others.

This collection represents my interpretation of the phrase “you are what you eat” through the lens of modern consumerism. These days, we consume goods the way we consume food – as if it is a necessity. Furthermore, our consumption is not just defined by *what* we consume, but by the practices and institutions that are behind it. I have decided to focus specifically on the fast fashion industry, although this phenomenon is widespread. As the second largest polluter after oil, the fashion industry contributes significantly to environmental destruction. Fast fashion companies have evolved to a calendar of 52 micro-seasons a year (as opposed to the traditional Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer seasons), encouraging rapid consumption and disposal. Garment factory workers in countries like Bangladesh are tremendously underpaid and work in physically demanding and hazardous environments. Thus, when I say “we are what we eat” in terms of consumption, I am not just referring to our consumption habits but also the consequences that come with it.

This collection provides a visual embodiment of this concept. With my designs, I merged human anatomy with pieces of our consumption in fashion – fabric scraps, threads, tags, receipts. In these pieces, human anatomy cannot be separated from the material, communicating the idea that we cannot separate our person from our decisions, habits, and consequences. Some of these pieces feature faux receipts, which symbolize our excessive buying habits. If you look closely, you can see that each unique receipt displays my own commentary on modern consumerism. The writings on these receipts sum up the many flaws that I find with the fashion industry and with consumerism, and reading these words will help viewers understand the purpose of this collection.

As someone who has fallen into the trap of consumerism and is still struggling to escape it, I understand that changing our habits isn't as simple as flipping a switch. Sometimes it's really hard to resist the urge to buy that trending item that everyone has been raving about. Sometimes it's hard to shop more sustainably and ethically when your wallet bears the burden. With the way we've been raised and the way the world works, it's really hard to change our consumption habits. The purpose of my collection is not to make every viewer uproot their current lifestyle in exchange for a more ethical one (although I wouldn't be upset if that were the case). Rather, recognizing the difficulties of such change and knowing my own shortcomings, I created this collection to help people open their eyes to the faults of consumerism. Perhaps, by pointing out these concepts, viewers may be inspired to enact some sort of change in their own lives, however small.

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