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Sydney College of the Arts  
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MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
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RESEARCH PAPER

# **POSTCARDS FROM NOWHERE**

By

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November 2011

This volume is presented as a record of the work undertaken for  
the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Sydney College of the Arts,  
University of Sydney.

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## Introduction.

It is through everyday observation, as a jeweller and consumer, that *Postcards From Nowhere* established its foundations. As a practising jeweller, very much interested in fashion, I tend to be observant of fashion jewellery available to men in the retail market. What was becoming consistently more apparent in my observations was the extreme divide between mainstream men's fashion jewellery and alternative jewellery options, for alternative men. This initially raised the questions of what men can wear what and why?

Furthermore, it became very clear from the jewellery available that you either abide by what is on offer on a mainstream level – bland and un-ornate jewellery, or you belong to a recognised sub-culture in order to wear the more decorative, elaborate designed pieces. This seemed problematic to me as a jewellery maker and wearer – as there seemed to be no option available for me? As my taste crosses the boundaries of traditional men's jewellery, but does not find many (if any) similarities within western sub-cultures, I have had to produce my own pieces for many years. Retrospectively, the collection I have made, titled *Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere*, 2011, has been in the process of evolution for sometime. It is only now that I am considering where my work fits within the conventions of western masculinity and society.

In chapter one, an initial investigation into the different sub-groupings of men allows for the boundaries between the societal norms of jewellery usage and the radical sub-cultural use of jewellery to be illustrated. Firstly, investigating the

traditional, and therefore the majority of men, I created my own definition of 'the everyman'. The everyman (image 1) is a part of the 'masses' and belongs within a stylistic demographic. His clothing is generally not ornate and often lacks any printed designs. Generally wearing monochromatic shirts, on top of tight black denim jeans - the everyman is aesthetically ambiguous.

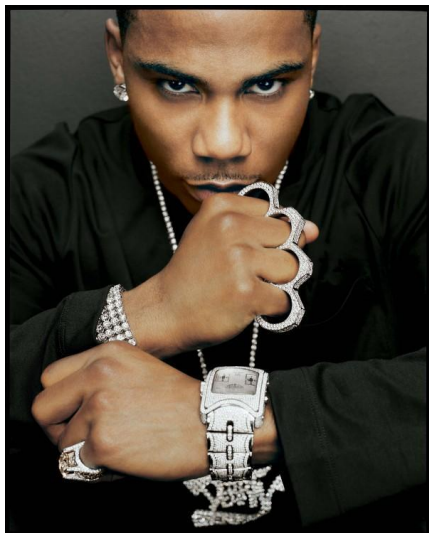


**Image 1**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*everyman collage,*  
2011

This blank aesthetic is a major reason I have chosen the everyman as my target wearer and muse. The neutrality of his (large block toned) shirt is not dissimilar to a gallery wall: a public, living exhibition space. Furthermore, the everyman's jewellery parallels his bland and colourless clothing, with the use of dark toned, plain

jewellery. This intrigued me as a maker, as the everyman represents a male jewellery wearer who may not only be restricted by societal norms, but perhaps also by the variety of jewellery available.

In contrast to the everyman, three sub-cultures are explored: hip-hop, punk and drag. These sub-cultures originally existed very much on the periphery of mainstream, normative society. All associated with oppressed and discriminated histories, these sub-cultures prove that through alienation, can come a sense of freedom as well as rebellion, from societal norms.<sup>1</sup> In these examples, this 'freedom' is extremely noticeable within their individual styles of dress and jewellery (images: 2, 3 & 4). For example, members of hip-hop sub-culture adorn themselves with jewellery they call 'bling'.



**Image 2**  
Photographer Unknown,  
*Nelly*,  
2008  
[www.popmusicology.com](http://www.popmusicology.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel S. Traber, 'L.A.'s "White Minority": Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginilization', *Cultural Critique*, vol. 48, Minnesota: University of Mn. Press, 2001, p.30

Bling has become a prime example of where men's trends, that is wearing excessive amounts of jewellery, conflict with the social norms of many male dress codes. However the reason they adorn themselves with such ostentatious jewellery is to exhibit their rise from oppression and living below the poverty line, as well as their success – gained primarily via voicing their frustrations through music, also known as hip-hop.



**Image 3**  
Unknown  
*Untitled*,  
circa. Early 1980's  
*Street Style*, Ted  
Polhemus.

This process of social liberation is very similar to the emergence of punk and drag queens. Punks often chose to alienate themselves from normative society. Coming from middle class families, in the 1970's, at a time when employment levels were low, punks in the UK, U.S.A. and Australia were forced to leave home at a young age and be responsible for their own standard of living.<sup>2</sup> Not conforming to society's expectations, punks avoided employment, lived in squat houses and were persistent in their efforts to keep themselves separated from the masses.

This was also achieved through their dress code and use of jewellery. Torn shirts, duct taped jackets and safety pins and chains as jewellery not only stood out, but instilled fear amongst conservative society, symbolising the punk's liberation from the struggles of a conventional lifestyle.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Traber, 31

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*



Lastly, investigating the sub-culture of the drag queen, sexuality becomes the primary reason for the existence of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) society. Here, unlike the punk, the process of being alienated from mainstream society may not be a choice. Homosexuals have been discriminated against and arguably forced to create their own community, as a way of self-protection and to enjoy a sense of belonging.

Drag queens dress as women, adorning themselves with striking pieces of costume jewellery and through satirical performance, blur the lines between masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, drag sub-culture within the GLBT community represents a voice and symbol of the oppressions associated with the historical and contemporary struggles of homosexuals - the drag queen becomes the protector, the super hero of the GLBT community.<sup>4</sup>



**Image 4**  
Norman Watson  
*Rau Paul*,  
date unknown  
*Drag*, Roger Watson

These sub-cultures and the everyman do contrast visually, which is evident through the different ways each of them use jewellery. However, after recognising the jewellery these groups of men *can* wear, the following question is, *why* they can wear it? This introduces a major similarity

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Simpson, 'Dragging it up and down: The glamorized male body', Peter McNeil & Vicki Karaminas (ed), *The Men's Fashion Reader*, Oxford: 2009, p. 232

between the everyman and hip-hop, punk and drag; the influence of a hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinities, as described by sociologist Patricia Sexton, are the combination of "male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body."<sup>5</sup> The social construction and understanding of these hegemonic masculinities are often defined and articulated through mass media and social institutions such as school, the workforce and sport. These mediums attempt to create a social norm and set benchmarks for men to meet and conform to, not only shaping the way men look physically, but also the way in which they perceive themselves and other men psychologically.<sup>6</sup> However, within the context of men wearing jewellery, a traditionally feminised object,<sup>7</sup> this masculine persona is challenged. Men and their use of jewellery raises the question: how can the everyman, hip-hop member, punk and drag queen adorn himself with a 'feminine' object, whilst continuing to meet the expectations of masculinity set by society?

Recognising the 'divide' between normative society and contrasting sub-cultures, my fashion jewellery collection, *Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere* (referred to as: *AF3SIN*) is intended as an option that is located between the traditional (the everyman) and the radical (hip-hop, punk and drag).

Much of my previous jewellery has been both concept driven and considered art, rather than placed within the context of fashion jewellery. The decision to work

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<sup>5</sup> Mike Donaldson, 'What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?', *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, 1993, p.2

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Katie Shillingford 'Just Dandies', *Dazed & Confused*, vol. 71, 2009, p.148

within the domain of fashion jewellery was a logical process, as it paralleled my research, whilst best defining where my jewellery is situated. Curator, critic and author Ralph Turner describes art jewellery as progressive in design, playing with size and mass, and of course being often concept driven<sup>8</sup>. Art jewellery is often *looked* at in galleries, museums or collections rather than worn. It is also comparatively not visible and operates culturally in a different way to fashion jewellery.

In contrast, fashion jewellery is primarily influenced by trends and the assumption that its role is to be worn.<sup>9</sup> This consequently makes this style of jewellery much more readily available to the masses and, more specifically, the male wearer. This notable consumption of fashion jewellery over art jewellery is due to the motivations behind their design; fashion jewellery is designed for a target audience, where as artist jewellers use this medium to express their own personal concepts and ideas, much like painters, sculptors and photographers.<sup>10</sup> Jewellery as a medium, be it art or fashion, is created for social consumption, whether it's the artist's concepts that are being consumed or the actual piece of jewellery bought to enhance the buyer's self and wardrobe. This divide permits fashion jewellery to lose its 'artistic integrity' as a result of its undeniable placement in the commercial

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<sup>8</sup> Ralph Turner, *Jewelry in Europe and America: new times, new thinking*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1996, p.7

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Cartlidge, *Twentieth-Century Jewelry*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985, p.8

<sup>10</sup> Liesbeth den Besten, Art Jewelry Forum Blog: Private passion: the art of collecting wearable art

URL: [www.artjewelryforum.org/blog/2010/04/17/gray-area-day-four/](http://www.artjewelryforum.org/blog/2010/04/17/gray-area-day-four/)  
Accessed 17/4/2010

world.<sup>11</sup> The fact that art jewellery is not created to please a consumer often means that many pieces will not be a part of any marketable trend.

In reference to my art jewellery origins, I believe the lines between the two are blurring. Fashion journalist and lecturer, Maia Adams, states “independent jewellery-makers... are pushing the boundaries of their creativity and the expectations of their peers” by introducing a “conceptual slant to their work.”<sup>12</sup> A major difference between these two forms of jewellery is the fact these fashion jewellers, including myself, are content to work within the bracket of trends, whilst defining and progressing them at the same time. With this new blurring of contexts come new processes of working. Independent (art) jewellers are confronted with ‘ethical’ issues associated with commercializing their concepts, for example, casting and mass-producing an originally handmade piece, being influenced to produce a collection seasonally, and the idea of ‘limited edition pieces’.

In introducing my collection *AF3SIN*, chapter two critically analyses the historical and cultural symbology that may be perceived by the viewer. Breaking down the collection via the three primary materials used in the production of *AF3SIN*: feather, rope and wood, an understanding of the power and cultural significance jewellery *could* have as a symbol is investigated. Through the exploration of not only material, but also colour use and construction, *AF3SIN*’s identity begins to unfold.

The understanding of *AF3SIN* develops as chapter three discusses my sources of inspirations and my intentions for this collection in the market. The use of the word

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> Maia Adams, *Fashion Jewellery: Catwalk and Couture*, London: Laurence King, 2010, p.7

'Nowhere' in the title of the collection is a reference to an imaginary place that exists only in my mind. *Nowhere* has been manifested through a collation of childhood stories, film and of course imagination, and is considered the 'place' of origin of *AF3SIN*. In contrast to chapter two, I discuss the personal meaning of my materials and the construction methods I have used, as well as what it represents – wearable signifiers that resonate a sense of freedom and imagination.

Acknowledging the previously discussed culture and sub-cultures, my intentions to transgress the social norms of the contemporary jewellery market make me aware that *AF3SIN* may not only offer a new collection, but also a new type of man – a new sub-culture. Pushing my muse, the everyman, into foreign territory. Territories that can be created, proven by the progressive sub-cultures: hip-hop, punk and drag.

## Chapter One:

### Decorating The Man.

There is no argument that a large percentage of western men *do* wear jewellery, however this chapter investigates not only the jewellery they wear, but also the difficulties men encounter wearing it.

This chapter explores mainstream western culture and the jewellery available for men. It discusses the inspiration of men's jewellery design and what the jewellery represents. I argue that the stereotypes of western masculinity are a primary influence on the jewellery available for men and what is acceptable and not acceptable to be worn by a male in mainstream society.

Following the discussion of the conventional male, I have specifically chosen three sub-cultures that are very much on the periphery of social convention. These have been chosen as examples amongst other sub-cultures to examine how those sub-cultures subvert the conventional norms. Hip-hop, punk and drag culture stem from oppressed beginnings, evolving from a societal plane of discrimination and hatred - no doubt an influential factor in their necessity to create a very recognisable clothing ensemble, or sub-cultural 'uniform' that clearly signifies who they are and what they represent. The fashion adopted by each sub-culture makes them recognisable, but also empowers the group or tribe. This overturns the dominant ideology, which traditionally oppressed those sub-cultures. The fashion, through its function as 'identifier' empowers the group and empowers the collective. This is the main reason for choosing hip-hop, punk and drag sub-cultures: their explicit use of

fashion forces them into the mainstream cultural space, from which they were previously excluded. Not only their clothes, but more importantly their jewellery is used in an overt, abundant way that aggressively conflicts with mainstream society – this makes these groups interesting to study. These sub-cultures are also examples of the power of jewellery to redefine an identity. In turn, this raises questions about mainstream notions of masculinity and the power of jewellery to subvert them.

Through investigating both the jewellery and the wearer in normative society and its sub-cultural alternatives, the aim is to recognise the large space between the jewellery offered to conservative culture (the everyman) and the radical alternatives (hip-hop, punk and drag). As a maker I recognise this ‘middle ground’ as the influential starting point to my collection, which is discussed in the following chapters. The collection itself will have the intention of pushing the everyman into new territory, perhaps risky territory, but possible territory – proven by the alternative fashion choices discussed in hip-hop, punk and drag.

### **The Everyman:**

My paper explores the notion of the contemporary everyman. I define the everyman as the ‘typical guy’ that would only be noticeable due to his own physical looks, no matter what age or race, rather than his dress sense. Much like this theatrical term suggests, the everyman is not a conspicuous visual character, he is

the everyday, recognisable person that most of us in western society can associate with.<sup>13</sup>

The contemporary everyman has evolved from an accumulation of historical shifts in the understanding and deconstruction of masculinity. Sociologist Talcott Parson's introduction of 'sex role theory' in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century invited theorists to think beyond the biological differences of the man and woman and to start considering their social behaviours, communications and hierarchies, the significance of this theory allowed for boundaries to be observed and, furthermore, pushed. An example would be men wearing jewellery beyond the norms of social behaviours, evident in the three sub-cultures with in this chapter.<sup>14</sup> However, early writings were predominantly focused on the 'family man' rather than the individual man, diluting any in-depth analysis of the 'sociological man' as he was looked at as part of a 'package', given roles primarily associated with child rearing, his communications and behaviours with his wife and supporting the family. It never focussed on the man, as a single entity.<sup>15</sup> However by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a solid understanding and perspective of the hegemonic male in western society, this being the role of "villainy"<sup>16</sup>, "focusing on sexual exploitation and violence".<sup>17</sup> This redefinition of 'white male as villain' coincided with the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970's. Amidst feminist theory and its often humiliating critique

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<sup>13</sup> Unknown, Merriam & Webster Dictionary: Everyman  
URL: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/everyman>  
Accessed 21/6/2010

<sup>14</sup> Tim Carrigan, Bob Connel & John Lee, 'Toward a new sociology of masculinity' in Rachel Adams & David Savran (ed), *The masculinity reader*, Massachusetts: Blackwell, pp. 101

<sup>15</sup> Carrigan, Connel & Lee, p. 99

<sup>16</sup> Carrigan, Connel & Lee, p. 100

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*



on the hegemonic male role many individual males were left feeling uncertain, unaware and apprehensive of what a man was meant to be?<sup>18</sup>

Prior to the contemporary everyman, that is, pre-2000 was the 'new man'. The 'new man' existed in the 1980's as a movement, which saw popular media and the advertising market promoting a new definition of 'man', to 'uncertain' men.<sup>19</sup> That is, men uncertain of their role in a post feminist culture. The success of this redefinition of masculinity in the 1980's and 1990's is still very much in question.<sup>20</sup>

What the 'new man' achieved was the initiation, even allowance, for the traditional male to reconsider his reflection in the mirror - to admire his physical masculinity, to consider himself an object of desire.<sup>21</sup>



**Image 5**  
Unknown  
*Calvin Klein Advert,*  
1980  
[www.advertisingarchives.co.uk](http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk)

How this was implemented was through extensive marketing campaigns (image 5) that allowed upper-middle class men into stores to buy traditionally feminine products such as skin care and hair-care products. The buff bodied boys on

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Peter McNeil & Vicki Karaminas, 'Introduction: The Field of Men's Fashion' in Peter McNeil & Vicki Karaminas (ed), *The Men's Fashion Reader*, London: Berg Publishing, 2009, p. 48

<sup>20</sup> Frank Mort, 'New Men and New Markets', in Peter McNeil & Vicki Karaminas (ed), *The Men's Fashion Reader*, London: Berg Publishing, 2009, p. 454

<sup>21</sup> Joanne Entwistle, 'From Catwalk to Catalogue: Male Fashion Models, Masculinity and Identity' in Peter McNeil & Vicki Karaminas (ed), *The Men's Fashion Reader*, London: Berg Publishing, 2009, p. 198

billboards told them what to buy, shifting ideals of masculinity. These models were setting a benchmark for the ideal male physique – muscular, slender, tanned and well groomed.<sup>22</sup> The combination of men entering a female dominated arena (the department store) and indulging in their new beauty regime promoted a new image of the ‘ideal man’ consequently shifting the contemporary male into a state of self-consciousness and narcissism.<sup>23</sup>

In 2011, the ‘new man’ has either died out or has been diluted into mainstream society, along with many other fleeting ‘movements’, for example, the metrosexual.<sup>24</sup> It could be suggested that we just no longer see the ‘new man’ as new, for society’s expectations have changed and he no longer subverts the norms, allowing him to blend in. However, the narcissism that came with the ‘new man’ has been embedded in the everyman. The everyman is happy to consume fashions, but thoughtlessly. He adheres to what media tells him to wear, not for trend sake, but to carefully follow normative behaviour, in fear of alienating himself from the everyman’s generic aesthetic. Where the ‘new man’ dressed to impress, the everyman dresses to embody a contemporary hegemonic masculinity.

The specific characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are clearly described by psychologists and gender theorists Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon. They have categorised the characteristics of masculinity via a list of “norms”<sup>25</sup>:

1. “No sissy stuff (that men should avoid feminine things)”

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Mort, p. 455

<sup>25</sup> Ronald F. Levant & Katherine Richmond, ‘A review of research on masculinity ideologies using the male norms inventory’, *The Journal of Men’s Studies*, vol. 15.2, 2007, p.131

2. "The sturdy oak (that men should not show weakness)"

3. "Give 'em hell (that men should seek adventure, even if violence is necessary)."<sup>26</sup>

Obviously, there are more characteristics involved in defining ideal western masculinity, however, the above are a selection of the most common expectations placed on the male according to David and Brannon. This accepted view of the male was derived prior to the "feminist deconstruction of gender roles."<sup>27</sup> From this the culturally accepted western hegemonic masculinity has been created, being "the dominance of white heterosexual men over women and racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, through attempts to define western men, not only does a stereotype evolve, but so does the process of social morphology, allowing the definition to become the social regulator - where men start to embody these definitions, consequently bringing them into existence.

In contemporary society, the everyman is a blend of characteristics of the 'new man' and the above 'four norms' of masculinity – which raises the question as to how could the everyman invest in cosmetics? The 'new man' was the significant consumer of such products, that have been considered traditionally 'feminine'<sup>29</sup>, but then David and Brannon's described male would view this as 'sissy stuff' and associate it with women and homosexuality.<sup>30</sup> The clash of characteristics in this one man, the everyman, is relieved with carefully constructed products that

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Levant & Richmond, p.130

<sup>28</sup> Levant & Richmond, p.131

<sup>29</sup> Entwistle, p. 198

<sup>30</sup> Levant & Richmond, p.131

continuously remind the consumer of their hegemonic masculinity and I believe men's fashion jewellery is a prime example of this.

In support of this theory I have defined four specific categories associated with men's fashion jewellery that parallel the three social norms categorised by David and Brannon. The purpose of this is to illustrate a direct relationship between the characteristics of masculinity and jewellery. The choice of ornament, colour and style were chosen as characteristics commonly associated with jewellery design.

1. Ornament:

The detail and/or decorative element of a piece of jewellery. 'Ornament' is the extra element which makes jewellery more ornamental than necessary, for example, if a ring were set with a gem, the ornamental aspect would be how it was set (such as bezel, pavé or channel setting etc) and how the gem was cut (cushion or princess cut, rather than the common cabachon).

2. Colour:

The colours involved in all the materials used on a piece of jewellery, including the naturally occurring colours of metals.

3. Style:

A characteristic or appearance referencing a known genre or genres.

These three categories, as well as David and Brannon's list, will be the basis of critiquing several contemporary jewellers that have production lines aimed at the male consumer.

*Tiffany & Co.*, a popular label that caters for the upper and aspiring middle classes, produces traditionally designed pieces as well as those of a contemporary, 'progressive' nature. Although a label targeting female customers, there is a small percentage of men's jewellery available and what is significant is the lack of ornamentation on these pieces (image 6).

**Image 6**  
Tiffany & Co.  
*Tiffany metropolis Ring,*  
Date unknown  
925 silver  
Tiffany & Co. Men's Online Catalogue,  
<http://au.tiffany.com/>



The texture of the metal is crisp and sterile, there is limited use of colour and tone and the setting is minimal. Straight, black lines circling the ring with no outstanding qualities, just rings on a ring. However the women's jewellery is fluid and organically lined, with smooth flowing contours, commonly detailed with a set stone.



**Image 7**  
Tiffany & Co.  
*Tiffany 1837 Ring,*  
Date unknown  
925 silver, diamonds  
Tiffany & Co. Men's Online Catalogue  
<http://au.tiffany.com/>



**Image 8**

Tiffany & Co.

*Flower Ring,*

Date Unknown

platinum, diamonds

Tiffany & Co. Women's Online Catalogue,

<http://au.tiffany.com/>

Stone settings are an interesting factor when male hegemonic sexuality is (questionably) symbolised, or embedded, within the design of men's jewellery. Stones and gems in men's jewellery are set internally into a ring, unlike most gem-decorated pieces in the women's collections. The comparison of both pieces creates a visual power struggle, a hierarchy, where the woman's ring is largely the dominant of the two, whilst the men's pieces avoid drawing attention to themselves, as if self-conscious.

Just like the fear of men being emasculated by wearing jewellery, jewellery design is emasculating itself in the hope of a male wearer. The un-ornamental elements of jewellery may be perceived timid in contrast to women's jewellery design, but singularly, on a male wearer, the unornamented piece of jewellery comes across as utilitarian, void of 'feminine' decoration, a 'blank expression' that sits comfortably on a 'man's' finger.

The second example of the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and men's jewellery is the exploration into men's jewellery and its lack of colour. In many contexts colour is understood as a visual representation of emotion, from the

esoteric belief that colour therapy can be used to manipulate and heal a person<sup>31</sup> to the everyday use of colour in design, where “colour plays such an important role in our lives... it has the ability to influence our feelings and emotions” as well as represent them.<sup>32</sup> David and Brannon explain expressing emotion is also an expression of weakness for a man, ‘the sturdy oak’.<sup>33</sup> The absence of colour in men’s jewellery highlights the lack of choice and consequently a lack of individual expression. Without the choice of colour within the everyman’s jewellery, an emotional detachment is created, as the process of choosing becomes easier and much less thought out, which parallels the ‘unthoughtful’ process of the everyman and his clothing. For popular Australian fashion label *Chronicles of Never* (image 9) even the metallic shine seems to be far too colourful for the everyman.



**Image 9**  
Chronicles of Never  
*Logo Pendant*,  
2007  
brushed 925 silver  
[www.fashionreview.com.au](http://www.fashionreview.com.au)

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<sup>31</sup> Faber Birren, *Colour Psychology and Colour Therapy: A Factual Study of the Influence of Colour on Human Life*, New York: Univeristy Books, 1961, p. 137

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Levant & Richmond, p.131

Polished silver is too shiny and bright, as is brass, so the use of metal blackener is a very common design choice when it comes to eradicating the appearance of metals. Not only does it dull the colour, but it promotes a worn, beaten look, putting emphasis on being worn hard and to the extreme – perhaps scratched up whilst adventuring through the outback, dirtied up in the muddy terrain whilst 4WD'ing. Unlike *Tiffany & Co.*, who continue to keep their colour use to a strict, composition, it seems this *Chronicles Of Never's* style of jewellery is using its textured colour as a form of implicative enhancement, referencing not only the emotionally repressed man, but also the 'rough and ready' nature said to be embodied by the majority of western males.

The necessity to visually represent hegemonic masculinities and the tough, aggressive nature characterised within, is significantly reliant upon the style of the jewellery. David and Brannon's 'given 'em hell' theory is that men do seek fun and adventure and that violence is considered a constant form of both<sup>34</sup>. Pairing this with the category of 'style' highlights the trend of weapons, such as knuckle dusters and slingshots, being subverted into wearable objects. There is no doubt that the jewellery below (images: 10 & 11) are made to be worn, nevertheless the aggression in style and the elements of weaponry of many pieces is undeniable. *TMOD's Men's Be Ring* and *Chronicles of Never Stair Ring* both project a warning due to their darkened, large, blunt and heavy presence – the warning is that they would 'pack a punch'.

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<sup>34</sup> Levant & Richmond, p.144





**Image 10**  
TMOD,  
*Mens Be Ring*,  
Date unknown  
silver plated  
[www.thegrandsocial.com.au](http://www.thegrandsocial.com.au)



**Image 11**  
Chronicles of Never,  
*Stair Ring*,  
2009  
blackened brass  
[www.fashionreview.com.au](http://www.fashionreview.com.au)

Furthermore, an additional example of style exemplifying the characteristics of David and Brannon's 'give 'em hell' category is Australian jeweller Matt Weston. Weston does not create pieces that could aid you in battle, but he does highlight the equilibrium between sexual representation in men's jewellery and the need to express violence and aggression (images: 12 & 13).



**Image 12**  
Matt Weston  
Untitled,  
Date unknown  
silver, leather  
[www.mattwestonjewellery.com](http://www.mattwestonjewellery.com)



**Image 13**  
Matt Weston  
Untitled,  
Date unknown  
silver, cord  
[www.mattwestonjewellery.com](http://www.mattwestonjewellery.com)

It may not be a conscious representation of such intense sexual genres such as bondage and S & M, but by using straps of leather and chains the connotations Weston evokes are quite explicit. Reminiscent of whips and chains to hit and restrain one's body, Weston has touched on the topic of sex and he has transgressed from generally intimate and emotional activities into aggressive, painful, rough and consequently 'masculine' actions.

What becomes apparent with the everyman is the need to find equilibrium between his jewellery and himself as the wearer. Even if the everyman is not the ideal hegemonic male, the jewellery he chooses to wear promotes the social characteristics expected of him. It sets a very clear line that I believe hardly ever

gets crossed. On the everyman's side, his jewellery exists within the design criteria of aggressive, colourless and bland, but in his eyes his jewellery is perceived as solid, safe and sound: it does not question the cultural norm. My jewellery aims to edge the everyman into new territory through the wearing of non-traditional materials and designs, which is discussed further in chapter 3.

### **The Decorated Man:**

Hip-hop, punk and drag as sub-cultures originate from a place of inequality or alienation of people that mainstream culture tends to observe in shock and curiosity. Hip-hop, punk and drag all share similar stories in their early beginnings, comprising of factors such as discrimination as well as violent environments, and for some exponents, a self-confessed hate for the 'conventional' middle-class white suburban lifestyle.<sup>35</sup>

Between the 1960's and 1980's, African American communities struggling to stay above the poverty line shaped a subculture and evolved their own style of music, both called hip-hop, to voice their frustrations with their standard of living, gang warfare and the authorities.<sup>36</sup> Also known as rap, this style of music has become a highly commodified, billion dollar industry. Along with the rise of hip-hop music, there was a parallel rise in the adornment of the hip-hop music artist, which was not only a visual reference to this success, but also a visual symbol of their cultural power. Not only jewellery, but also designer clothes became part of the hip-hop

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<sup>35</sup> Traber, p.30

<sup>36</sup> Robert J. Brym, *Sociology as a Life or Death Issue*, Belmont: Wadsworth, 2009, p.18

styling, further emphasising cultural success through the combination of high-end fashion and jewellery.

A socially accepted idea, the word bling is an ideophone that represents the sparkle and shine of a diamond or precious metal such as platinum and gold.<sup>37</sup> Large, gaudy, ostentatious pieces of jewellery, often created using highly polished metals and commonly encrusted in diamonds, are the stereotypical desired object of adornment within this culture. These two elements of hip-hop, the African American male and the bold, glamorous adornment shape the accepted image, or personification of the sub-culture that is hip-hop.

The punk sub-culture surfaced at a similar time as hip-hop, the mid-1970's. The most prominent punk 'scenes' were in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia.<sup>38</sup> Similar to hip-hop, punks shared not only a style of dress but a genre of music by the same name. The origins of an early punk varied, explains professor and theorist Dr. Daniel S. Traber. While the majority of punks were youths forced out of their lower middle class homes, to fend for themselves amongst their sub-culture's environment; squat houses and makeshift homes, often other punks were youths that romanticized about a 'free', anti-establishment style of living and chose to leave the comfort of their conservative lifestyle willingly.<sup>39</sup> They were the youths that inflicted a social alienation upon themselves. Either way the need to alienate themselves from mainstream society was the principal role of

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Dingemans, The Ideophone: Three misconceptions about ideophones  
URL: <http://ideophone.org/three-misconceptions-about-ideophones/>  
Accessed 16/1/2010

<sup>38</sup> Traber, p.30

<sup>39</sup> Traber, p.31

embodying the punk ethos. A common way punks would successfully isolate themselves from what they called the 'straights' (people considered a part of mainstream culture) was through their use of dress and accessorising.<sup>40</sup> Sociologist Dianna Crane describes the punk aesthetic succinctly: "They used razor-slashed t-shirts, sewn to simulate scars, t-shirts showing the Queen of England with a safety pin through her nose and mouth, bondage chains, and hair styles in garish colors."<sup>41</sup> Differing from hip-hop, the jewellery worn by punks were money-wise worth very little, made from steel chains, studs and strapped leather. It transgressed the traditional notion of jewellery as a status of wealth and socio-economic hierarchy.

Representing and boldly personifying the symbol of minority groups, such as homosexuals, drag queens are notorious for their gender-mixing style of dress (a man in a dress) and their theatrical use of jewellery. Audacious in appearance and larger than life, drag queens not only invest in the biggest wigs and longest gowns but also tend to show off their collections of costume jewellery.

Cross-dressing has existed since the documentation of earliest cultures<sup>42</sup>, evolving from ritualistic ceremonies such as the Hindu cult, Sakhibhava, to the Elizabethan theatre of the early seventeenth century and into gay clubs in many cities of the western world.<sup>43</sup> Cross-dressing was often required as a form of representation of a woman, where women were not culturally allowed, for example, the Elizabethan

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Diana Crane, 'Postmodernism and the Avant-Garde: Stylistic Change in Fashion Design', *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 4.3, 1997, p.135

<sup>42</sup> Louise Schwartzkoff, Entertainment: History is a drag  
URL: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/history-is-a-drag/2010/02/11/1265477646469.html>  
Accessed 19/2/2010

<sup>43</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p.5

theatre, World War I and World War II camps.<sup>44</sup> Today's drag queens (not to be mistaken with transvestites, who are typically heterosexual males who wear women's clothing for erotic purposes<sup>45</sup>) are a form of entertainment, where the drag queen does not want to be a woman, but performs a parody of the socio-cultural definitions of gender. However, the paradox is the continual reminder that the 'queen' is in actual fact a man, as drag queens cross back and forth over the line between stereotypical femininity and stereotypical masculinity.<sup>46</sup> The role of their jewellery may not play a dominant role aesthetically, but it is definitely part of the 'package' that creates a drag queen's aesthetic. Furthermore the drag queen is often, if not always, adorning himself with prime examples of traditional women's jewellery which brings to question the processes of how certain men have normalised such an abundant, overt use of jewellery within their subculture and beyond.

Hip-hop's oppressed beginnings play a major role in the physical appearance of men and their trends within this sub-culture. In this context physical appearance can be characterised as one of exaggerated masculinity, often encompassing large tattooed biceps, defined six packs, and to accompany this, the hip-hop man is armed with large phallic guns.<sup>47</sup> They describe themselves as rough, violent and emotionally redundant – focussing more on self-preservation and wealth, with no remorse or care of consequence.

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

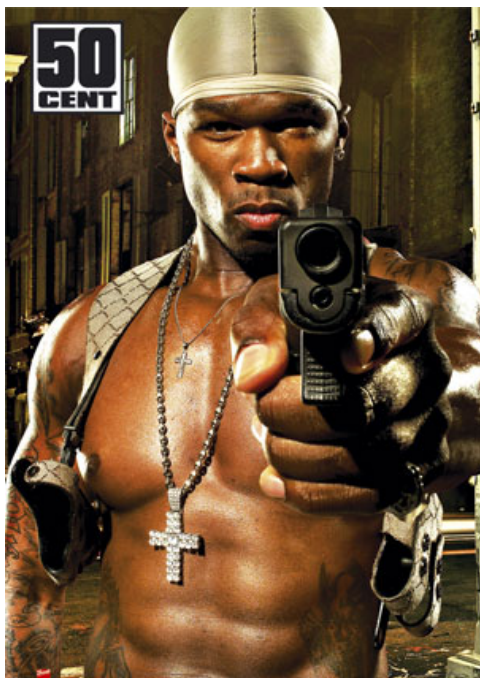
<sup>45</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p.4

<sup>46</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p.2

<sup>47</sup> Brym, p.26

“Whatcha think all the guns are for? All purpose war... I got the calico with the black talons loaded in the clip so I can rip through the ligaments. Put the fuckers in a bad predicament.”<sup>48</sup>

This thug-like description is commonly glamorised through their music, such as in Notorious B.I.G.’s lyrics above, furthermore reinforcing a hegemonic masculinity within their own sub-culture. Through this embodiment of violence, intimidation and criminal behaviour in hip-hop songs, combined with a muscular physique of many rappers, a clear socio-cultural image of the hip-hop man is manifested (image 14).



**Image 14**  
Sacha Waldman  
*50 CENT*,  
2003  
Image from *Get Rich or Die Trying*  
album sleeve.

Furthermore, the hip-hop man is commonly identified through their excessive adornment with bling, wearing necklaces as thick as bike chain, gold rings

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<sup>48</sup> The Notorious B.I.G., 'Warning', *Ready to Die*, Bad Boy Records, 1994, track 5

reminiscent of knuckle dusters that lay over 3 and 4 fingers, and grillz, (diamond encrusted platinum mouth guards) (image 15).



**Image 15**  
Iced Out Designs  
*Bottom Playa Grillz*,  
Date & materials unknown  
[www.iceadoutgear.com](http://www.iceadoutgear.com)

The physical appearance of the jewellery is heavy, strong and often representing tools of gang war. The violent connotations of this jewellery strengthens the image of hip-hop's hegemonic masculinity. In addition, this is shown through the visual heaviness of the jewellery together with the muscular physique of the wearer, emphasising the physical strength necessary to wear these pieces. What becomes apparent when you compare the wearer and his jewellery is that, what hip-hop males have done to themselves, they have done to their jewellery: buffed it up, made it chunky, assertive and 'masculine'. Furthermore, for the last thirty years bling has been reinforced as the status symbol of wealth, power and consequently, an image of success; a polar opposite to where the subculture began.



Bling successfully subverts the traditional feminine stereotypes of diamonds and high gloss metals into a symbol of masculine assertion. This subversion, in association with the wearer's thug persona enables men to remain masculine whilst adorning themselves with bling, stabilising the tension between the male wearer and the feminine object.

In its prime, early 1970's - 1980's, punk fashion was considered radical and avant-garde. Unrivalled by fashion designers conscious of the saleability of their clothes, punk clothing and jewellery adopted a 'DIY' (do it yourself) attitude due to their low socio-economic status.<sup>49</sup> Writing on, slicing up their tees, piercing safety pins through ears and wearing common hardware store chains around their neck joined



**Image 16**  
Jenny Lens  
*Punk Pioneers,*  
Circa 1980's  
[www.rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com)

by a padlock created an image of chaos, aggression and danger.

A lot of the punk personification relied on this aesthetic; their

clothes and jewellery alluded to the role of the dangerous rebel outsider, rather than the punk having to embody it and thus act upon it himself.<sup>50</sup> Emphasising the

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<sup>49</sup> Crane, p.135

<sup>50</sup> Traber, p.31

point, most documented violent acts by punk-culture have been a case of mistaken identity, or using punks as a scapegoat. Punks were generally anti-discriminatory (apart from off tangent punk-cultures such as 'nazi-punks').<sup>51</sup>

Punks could be considered free-spirited, anti-conformist with a protective layer of self-produced fashion to ward off the evils of 'normality', but through alienation, comes a sense of exoticism. Punks awakened the fetishised style, jewellery was made from everyday objects and many materials recognised within the S&M genre, for example duct tape, chains and in the extreme case, razor blades. Pain inflicting, mouth muffling, limb binding mechanisms worked for the punk as a shock tactic, reaffirming the clear line between them and their opposed society.<sup>52</sup> Retrospectively it challenged conventional notions of jewellery design, making designers rethink their materials.

Today it seems variations of punk jewellery are easy to come by, a diluted example of this would be Matt Weston's bracelets and necklaces (images: 12 & 13), but more specifically 'bong shops' such as *Off Ya Tree* on Sydney's well-known Oxford Street replicate, and sell, a 'pastiche' of the punk philosophy – fake relics for fake punks? The punk 'look' has become a commodity at the expense of a subculture that fought hard to avoid it. Instead, what was a symbol of "anti-bourgeois' society"<sup>53</sup> is now readily available for bourgeois society to purchase.

The final sub-culture I have examined is Drag. The flamboyant and glamorously dressed drag queen plays off gender stereotypes and exaggerates not only

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

masculinity but also femininity. What drew my attention to the drag sub-culture were the surprising parallels between the origins of hip-hop and the origins of the contemporary drag queen.<sup>54</sup> Although homosexuality has become more accepted in certain contexts (largely due to popular culture<sup>55</sup>) there is still a social line drawn between heterosexuals and homosexuals, for example the lack of equal rights and gay marriage as well as homophobic behaviour, including violence against gay men.<sup>56</sup> The consequence of this inequality leads many homosexual men to repress or disguise their sexuality in hope to avoid any negative social interactions. However, many gay men have naturally effeminate mannerisms and cannot meet the social standards of the hegemonic masculinities in western society. The gay club culture provides a refuge and a community for homosexuals offering acceptance and safety. This culture also introduces many gay men to the diverse subcultures within the club scene, one being the drag queen sub-culture.<sup>57</sup>

Drag queens (image 17) adopt a female persona and attire, often by wearing a dress, fake breasts, make up and wigs. In addition, they often have names that reference and parody femininity as well as homosexual oppression, for example Sydney drag queens Maxxi Shield (referencing a woman's menstrual pad) and Courtney Act (referencing being caught in a homosexual act). Whilst they perform as women, the viewer is constantly reminded that they are male as they present traits associated with stereotypical masculinity of assertion and dominance, as well

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<sup>54</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p.11

<sup>55</sup> Sydney's Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, Television series: *Will & Grace*, *Queer as Folk*, *Sex and the City*

<sup>56</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p.11

<sup>57</sup> Schacht & Underwood, p. 2

physical masculinity such as broad shoulders, Adam's apples and large toned arms. This visual paradox creates an ongoing cycle where the masculine qualities exaggerate the feminine qualities and vice versa, for example seeing large male hands grabbing humorously at his own fake 'female' breasts.



**Image 17**  
Photographer Unknown  
*Untitled,*  
2009,  
[www.2dayfm.com.au](http://www.2dayfm.com.au)

Apart from the complexities of gender role-playing, the drag queen's dress and adornment is almost always immaculate and beautiful. The use of costume jewellery compliments the theatrical elements of drag shows whilst also being a signifier that the jewels, wig and breasts are in fact not authentic. This costume does what biceps, guns and bling do to hip-hop artists: it turns them into 'heroes' and idols and often gains, if not demands, them respect from people within their sub-culture.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Simpson, p. 232

Hip-hop, punk and drag evolved very much from society's periphery, however the important factor that is of considerable influence to my practice is the freedom and confidence the men, their clothing and jewellery represent and embody.

**Conclusion:**

The everyman, hip-hop, punk and drag all revolve around one key thing: hegemonic masculinity. The difference however, is how mainstream culture and alternative sub-cultures approach and interact with social constructions and gender roles. The everyman embodies hegemonic ideals through the process of consumption – purchasing fashion jewellery that explicitly references and reiterates the definitions of masculinity. As opposed to the hip-hop, punk and drag followers, who physically mould their body structure and appearance to not only fit the 'social criteria' but also to push it to a far more exaggerated level. This level of hyper-masculinity, I believe, is a major factor in the process of adorning oneself with radical, flamboyant and excessive jewellery.

Finding a middle ground between the societal centre and its periphery is problematic. With the everyman there seems to be no desire to change and in contrast, the three sub-cultures have been instrumental in social change over the last fifty years. Recognising the gap in the jewellery market between the everyman and the three sub-cultures, I question both the validity of my collection and, without a hyper-masculine persona to promote my collection, the ease society may have with categorising *AF3SIN* as collection for women.

Through a combination of materials, design and concept, *AF3SIN* endeavours to create an intrigue for the everyman through: nostalgia, imagination and childhood freedom, with the intention of taking the everyman back to a place where he was temporarily free of the social expectations he had imposed upon him as a 'man'.

## Chapter 2:

### No Man's Land.

In this chapter, I intend to identify and explain the potential commercial 'gap' in the market where I locate my work.

The actual process of locating this gap in the jewellery market for men is the initial foundation to my jewellery collection, *AF3SIN*. This gap also becomes an intrinsic part of the body of work I am presenting. The title references an exploration into (quite literally) a 'no man's land' – between and outside of – the narratives within conservative, socially acceptable men's jewellery and the subversive sub-cultural alternatives.

As the collection title suggests, *Nowhere* becomes the primary source of inspiration. It is a made-up place with no real tangible location, and apparently free of cultural references, social histories and dogmatic traditions. It is a place for the everyman to be enticed to, liberated from the social constructs of masculinity – achieved by the collection moving way from conservative men's jewellery design.

*Nowhere* is investigated thoroughly in the following chapter, however it is important to understand that the concept of *Nowhere*, and the body of work in my collection, comes from a want to avoid overt social definitions, like the everyman, hip-hop artist, drag queen, homosexual and heterosexual we have explored previously. In short, it is these very definitions that I want to avoid in my work.

The primary thought process whilst designing and making these pieces was: to avoid socially constructed definitions, we must first avoid the cultural references of the society that created them in the first place. The question I asked myself all the way through the creation of my work was simply this: If I don't want to create jewellery for a cultural context, can I create a cultural context for my jewellery instead?

It is also worth exploring the use of the word 'Artefact' in my title. The use of the term 'artefact' directly implies a previous origin, a cultural history and the sense of these objects being 'discovered'<sup>59</sup>, rather than recently made. This consequently encourages a detachment from the object and its maker – a conscious decision that will be warranted further in this chapter. The pieces in *AF3SIN* individually, and as a whole, are intended to embody a false sense of historical authenticity.

However, artefacts cannot be created in a cultural vacuum. I therefore felt it important to explore and investigate a selection of symbols and historical references through a critique of the three primary materials used to create *AF3SIN*: feather, rope and wood. These three material choices will be investigated to understand, as well as acknowledge the cultural meanings they could historically represent and to highlight the possible chief influences on me as a maker.

### **The symbolism of feathers:**

Light and relatively fragile to the touch, feathers provide a rich juxtaposition in terms of the materials used in traditional men's jewellery. Compared to the

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<sup>59</sup> The Macquarie Dictionary, revised 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Sydney: Macquarie University, 2002



toughness of titanium, brass and silver, the feathers produce a delicate presence, however, as meek as its physicality might suggest, its symbolic heritage is one of the strongest.

Feathers first and foremost, are found upon a bird itself. Keeping birds warm, dry and able to fly, the feather is what makes a bird – not just in the sense of being a defining feature of the creature, but also when it comes to the mating of species, for example. Similarly to some wearers of jewellery, birds use their feathers as a means of attraction. More commonly, male birds puff out their chest, wings and tails to not only seem larger and dominant, but to also reveal an array of colours hidden under the topside of their feathers, that theoretically attracts a female mate.<sup>60</sup> What is interesting of course is that in the bird world, more often than not, the male is the beautiful, colourful, often ornate sex of the species and this is, as Charles Darwin writes, a process of species morphology. Animals, through a process of survival, evolve and attain the necessary physical characteristics to continue procreating and sustaining a species – scientifically known as sexual dichromatism.<sup>61</sup>

If we contrast this thought with points in the previous chapter, it could be argued that men do something similar. For example, the hip-hop star promotes his strength, vitality and sexuality through his muscular physique and often stereotypical macho persona.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Heinsohn, Scientific American: Why are male birds more colourful than female birds?  
URL: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=why-are-male-birds-more-c>  
Accessed: 18/09/2011

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

The symbolic use of feathers in ancient communities pre-dates history. A significant example is the North American Indians, who evolved from approximately 8000 BCE.<sup>62</sup> Adorning themselves with chest, arm and head wear, the North American Indians used feathers as a decorative material. The feather as a material still holds great spiritual worth<sup>63</sup> and along with beads, is a primary decorative material due to its symbolism. The North American Indians believe that the feather embodies the life energy of the animal, and the eagle being the most valued due to it often being so close to the heavens. The belief is the eagle feather imparts the power to protect a wearer, aid a warrior and hunter as well as pass on the eagles hunting stealth.<sup>64</sup> The dark tips of the eagle feather are similar to the black-green pheasant feathers used in the *AF3SIN* collection (image 18), as well as the layering effect used in the construction of the North American Indians headdress (Image 19).

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<sup>62</sup> Lois S. Dubin, *North American Indian jewelry and adornment: From prehistory to the present*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999, p.27

<sup>63</sup> Dubin, p.52

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*



**Image 18**  
Luke-John Matthew  
Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites  
in Nowhere  
(collection),  
2011*  
emerald pheasant  
feathers, silver



**Image 19**  
Unknown  
*Untitled,  
Date unknown  
North American Indian Jewelry and  
adornment: From prehistory to present,  
Lois S. Dubin.*

Although natural, the colour choices throughout my feather pieces may be a consequence of many heavily ingrained meanings and beliefs, the most prominent and iconic being the white feather. Christian religions consider three white feathers a symbol of charity, hope and faith, and the wearing of this symbol implied you embodied a 'virtual soul'.<sup>65</sup> In 1914, as the First World War began, white feathers were handed by women to assumed able bodied men not wearing a British Army uniform to mark out them out as cowards.<sup>66</sup>



**Image 20**  
Unknown,  
*Tern decorated hat,*  
1901  
*Feather fashions and bird*  
*preservation, R. W. Doughty*

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the use of feathers as a material and fashionable accessory was in high demand.<sup>67</sup> Throughout Europe and the United States of America, not only feathers but also entire birds were primarily used for headdresses and brooches (image 20). Initially a cheap material, the material costs came to be dictated by the level of 'exoticism' of the species of bird and its decorative feather. The level of demand both on full bird and feather saw species numbers plummet. Oceanic birds such as

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<sup>65</sup> Nicoletta F. Gullace, 'White feathers and wounded men: female patriotism and the memory of the Great War.' *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 36.2, 1997, p.177

<sup>66</sup> Gullace, p.178

<sup>67</sup> Robin W. Doughty, *Feather fashions and bird preservation: a study in nature protection*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975, p.14

terns and even pelicans were considered temporarily close to extinction.<sup>68</sup> What brought this trend to an abrupt end at the beginning of the twentieth century was the on-going concern of scientists, as they continuously published accounts of declining bird numbers throughout the world. Internationally, laws were soon put into place, strictly prohibiting hunting of specific species and farmed birds had to meet a cruelty-free standard, including most birds be 'clipped' of their feathers rather than killed and skinned.<sup>69</sup> The combination of the protection of the exotic birds, with the breeding of the considered 'common' birds saw a lack of interest, as what was left available was considered ordinary and everyday.<sup>70</sup>

Cruelty to animals and the use of their fur, feathers, skins etc. is a consistently discussed contemporary topic and this is an important influence on the selection of my feathers. Admittedly, the feathers chosen are primarily for aesthetic value – for example the pheasant feathers used were chosen for their crisp form and tonal change from charcoal to green depending on the angle you view them. However, the pheasant feathers I purchased are from recycled, left over trimmings from a factory in the U.S.A. Further, my experiments with peacock plumage were all free fallen feathers, collected and washed, but unused due to their fragile, thin and broken amount of down. However, my material choices cannot translate my avoidance of 'cruelty' to the viewer nor wearer – allowing a chance that the feather pieces in *AF3SIN* represent a history of cruelty to animals.

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<sup>68</sup> Doughty, p.84

<sup>69</sup> Doughty, p.77

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

The decisions and choices made, even though the feather is rich in cultural meaning and spiritual symbolism, were primarily aesthetic. It could be argued that my choices were subconsciously influenced by some or all of the above cultural histories of the feather, but colour choice, size and availability (of recycled feathers) were most important to making my pieces.

### The cultural significance of Rope:



**Image 21**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere*  
(collection),  
2011  
hand dyed natural thread and silver

A symbol of utility, the earliest man-made forms of rope date as far back as 15,000BC and one the earliest example of its innovative and integral use as a tool was from 3,500BC – during the construction of Egyptian monuments, including the pyramids.<sup>71</sup> As a tool, rope can carry, hold, pull and bind enormous weights – it is first and foremost a material known for its strength, a trait traditionally considered as masculine. What is important to note, is the rope

jewellery used within the collection *AF3SIN*, is stripped of its utilitarian significance

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<sup>71</sup> John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1995, p. 20

as it hangs loosely from neck and wrist. It subverts a traditional expectation – creating a limp, loose hanging visual, whilst creating a new use of the material (image 21).

Exploring rope as a material, it is simply an accumulation of thin, weak fibres, rolled, twisted or braided time and time again. Apart from nylon rope, the majority of rope is a mass of organic matter, which is rich in scent and texture that asserts a suggestion to the natural world. The decision to add colour to the rope was, similar to the feathers, simply a decision of aesthetics, however it also aids the separation from rope as industrial tool into rope as material and more specifically, a decorative material.

Colours are introduced in an explicit way with the use of bright hand-dyed, braided ropes in *AF3SIN*. The first example, which will be referred to as the 'rainbow rope'(image 21), is decorated with several bright and continually contrasting colours. The length is reminiscent of beaded plastic necklaces used in Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, easily thrown over the head, creating a casualness or flippancy where it can just be 'thrown on'. The 'rainbow rope' could easily be mistaken as a reference to the rainbow flag used to represent the diversity amongst the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities. As a socially defined 'gay' male, the possible connection to the iconic flag and the social constructions surrounding and ingrained in LGBT culture, is coincidental, but is acknowledged. Stereotypes, social assumptions and the theory that your sexual partner defines personality, characteristics and lifestyle is something I, nor my work, endeavours to promote.

Another variation of the dyed rope (image 22) shows a bi-coloured necklace that puts emphasis on the meeting point between the blue and purple. The point where the two colours meet, blend and create a subtle hybrid colour, resonating a hippie, esoteric aesthetic. The notion of tie-dye and the process of handmade are echoed. The handmade presence within the rope pieces is further highlighted by the method of making, crocheting - a process traditionally perceived as feminine practice in western culture.<sup>72</sup>



**Image 22**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in*  
*Nowhere (collection),*  
2011  
hand dyed natural thread and  
silver

A single strand of crochet, like these ropes, combined with the texture and dyed colour, hold a strong affiliation and aesthetic with hair work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> A popular trend in Britain, hair from the dead was braided, plaited and “artistically arranged”<sup>74</sup> in silver or gold settings and set under glass. This trend progressed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, much like the aesthetic of these dyed ropes, the plaited strands became the jewellery itself (image 23). The hair, taking the place of

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<sup>72</sup> Rosemary Betterton ‘Why is my art not as good as me?’ M. Merck and C. Townsend (ed) *The Art of Tracey Emin*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2002, p.33

<sup>73</sup> Roseann Ettinger, *Popular Jewellery: 1840 - 1940*, Pennsylvania: Schifer Publishing, 1990, p. 14

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*



chain, was cut and sized to necks and wrist and held together with gold clasps.<sup>75</sup>

Beautiful in design, but morbid in material, this trend of commemoration died out by the turn of the century.



**Image 23**  
Unknown  
*Hairwork Watch Chain,*  
circa 1865 – 1885  
*Popular Jewellery: 1840 – 1940,*  
Roseann Ettinger.

The use of braiding, crocheting and colour are purely an appreciation of texture and liveliness, but it is important to acknowledge the lack of it in the everyman's jewellery market. A prominent contrast to the darker toned conservative jewellery, these ropes boldly progress away from the traditional, into a new space, *Nowhere*.

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

### **The symbolism of wood:**

The necklaces and pendants created using found sticks as a material bring to question the worth of materials, more specifically their emotive worth. Obviously a stick found, is a stick free – but what more are you taking with you, other than a building material? As Jean Baudrillard theorises, natural woods originate from the earth, a material emphasising a life lived and lost, its age shown through its cracks, colours and width. There is an apparent sense of warmth, perhaps created by the close relationship it has with fire, and furthermore there is a sentimental aura.<sup>76</sup>

This idea of sentimentality is accentuated via the construction of the pendants (image 24). The stacked row of sticks, set in silver caps, possess a similar aesthetic to a wooden raft (image 25). This floating device is an iconic object symbolising boyhood, ‘escape’ and adventure, originating through stories such as Daniel Dafoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, 1799, and Mike Twain’s, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1885 and used today as a contemporary symbol of a ‘historical boyhood’, before the age of ‘computerised fun’.<sup>77</sup>

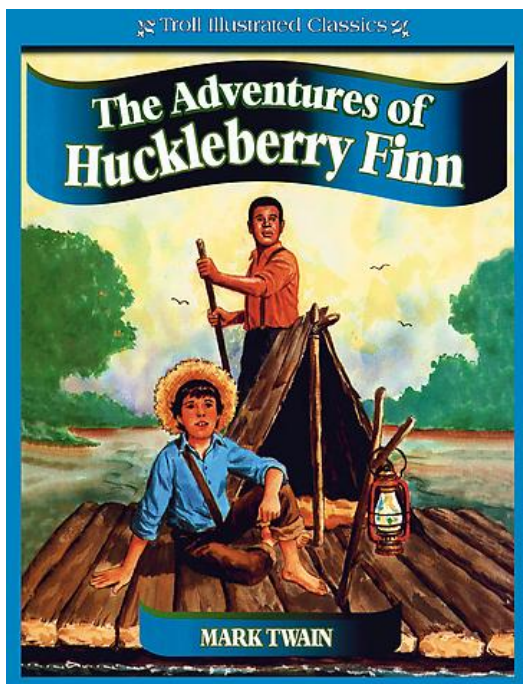
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<sup>76</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, London: Verso, 2005, p.38

<sup>77</sup> For example: Historian Steve Mintz text, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 2006.



**Image 24**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere (collection)*,  
2011  
red gum and silver



**Image 25**  
Raymond Burns (illustrator)  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (book cover)*,  
1996

Apart from symbology and nostalgia, the wood chosen are small, thin twigs. Brittle in strength, the stick pieces, much like the feathers, are fragile – creating a need for carefulness and care to be taken with wearing them: a giant leap from the thick, solid metallic constructions the everyman is used to wearing. The level of fragility introduced to the wearer consequently brings with it a level of awareness – allowing for either appreciation and a protective consciousness or disregard and avoidance. Either way, the use of the fragile material opens up dialogue between the male consumer and my collection.

The collation of the above symbologies highlights consistencies with the collection *AF3SIN*. Subconsciously influenced from a mass of cultural arenas, there is a real essence of make believe and boyhood. From the North American Indians headdress to the Huck Finn raft – there is a sense of dress up, costume and even perhaps the invitation of role-play. Not to imply this collection is categorised as ‘costume’ but a subconscious primary influence of this collection is my youth. It was a time when I lived apart from highly populated society, in the southern Sydney bushland – and I experienced freedom. Free from the restraints of socio-constructed expectations, even if only for a while, I was *myself*, not centrally focussed upon my masculinity – much like other males may have experienced growing up.

These pieces of jewellery represent a sense of liberation, freedom and imagination and their *only* intention is to offer a new alternative to self-representation through fashion. For the everyman it creates an opportunity to consciously build a relationship between himself and his choice of physical appearance without the use of visually assertive and radical fashions seen amongst punks, drag queens and hip-

hop artists. *AF3SIN* is inviting the wearer to accept himself, rather than accepting a mould to squeeze into.

There is an achievement within this collection that through being culturally aware and realising the abundance of cultural contexts that each piece *could* embody, the jewellery illustrates that its meaning is so vast that it is impossible to pin-point a real origin – hence the choice of the term ‘artefact’ within the title of the collection. *Artefacts from 3 Sites in Nowhere* turns to the wearer and asks them, *who am I?* Or better yet, *what do you want me to be?*

## Chapter 3.

### Knowing Nowhere.

Throughout this dissertation a fictional place I refer to as *Nowhere* has been specified as my chief place of inspiration. A destination primarily made up over my childhood years, through a collation of influences: fairytales, adventure stories, film and imagination – it becomes apparent that *Nowhere* is very much an internalised location. At the beginning of this chapter I will attempt to visually illustrate *Nowhere*, allowing the reader to get a glimpse of the world I have consistently drawn upon for ideas. Quite literally combining the stories that helped evolve *Nowhere*, I have chosen to collage images taken directly from the sources: book illustrations and movie stills, to construct an image of what *Nowhere* looks like.

After becoming familiar with *Nowhere*, there will be an investigation of the materials used to create the collection *AF3SIN*. Unlike chapter 2, that endeavoured to explore the cultural significance that the materials may contain on a societal level, I take the opportunity to discuss and explore the evolution and significance of my material choices and ideas on a personal level. What the materials, construction and finish of my jewellery pieces mean to me and why.

Merging the ideas of *Nowhere* as a make-believe place, with the ideas and significance behind my collection, I will discuss the intentions of *AF3SIN*. This will explore the potentials of taking objects from a fantasy realm and introducing it to reality. 'Bringing' artefacts from *Nowhere* to here, I will discuss the expectations of

the collection becoming a major building block to constructing a recognizable and new sub-culture.

**Welcome to Nowhere:**

First and foremost, *Nowhere* is a primitive island (image 26), this may come as no surprise as the primary sources of inspiration are:

1. Daniel Dafoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719.
2. Maurice Sendak's picture book *Where The Wild Things Are*, 1963.
3. Disney's 1953 animated adaption of J. M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan*.



**Image 26**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Nowhere Collage*,  
2011  
digital collage

A tropical island as far away from every other land as possible - *Nowhere* is an isolated place. Nowhere is also a place of comfort, due to the fact that as an island, its smaller size produces a safe, cosy, if not a snug feeling, much like a physical

fortress or cubby house I made as a child. Hidden from the rest of the real world, *Nowhere* allows for a sense of absolute freedom to manifest. There is no developed social hierarchy, laws and no currency. The *only* tangible thing of worth in *Nowhere* would be its natural surroundings and its significant beautiful aesthetic.

Rich in vegetation, *Nowhere* is covered in tropical rainforest. Large tree trunks become the walls to this island, their heaven-high canopies the roof. Underfoot, you start on the islands perimeter, working your way inland and you feel the softest of sands turn to the crunching of fallen debris as you enter the shade of the forest. This fallen debris is the only thing on offer as materials to make: tools, a place to live and of course, in my case, jewellery. An array of sticks, driftwood, vine and the fallen feathers from exotic birds above – *Nowhere* offers a plethora of natural materials.

### **Making it in Nowhere:**

Finding all of my wood in parks and on beaches, using strung natural fibres to create my 'ropes', attaining old feather-trimmings from a costume shop and recycling used silver - I was eager find my materials, rather than purchase them. *Nowhere* had become my working ethos, consistently considering what would be available there and how would it be constructed.

The use of sticks within my jewellery practice has been consistent over the years. Having always being influenced by *Nowhere*, even if subconsciously, my 'stick pieces' are influenced by the idea of construction in the primitive world. Appreciating the repetitious design of make-shift rafts, tree houses and log cabins –



my stick pieces have become micro versions of what I would construct if living in *Nowhere*. This influenced my choice of stick, young red gum, which to me impersonated larger logs and trunks through its colouration and consistently round form.



**Image 27**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Sticks & Stones*,  
2007  
red gum, copper, silk thread

An earlier piece *Sticks and Stones*, 2007 (image 27) was constructed with the idea of a 'sleeping tube', that could be rolled open, into a raft – much like the stick piece from *AF3SIN* (image 24). My fascination with wooden constructions is a combination of the aura of wood and its endless utilitarian uses. It resonates a sense of strength, comfort and very much references the tree houses I had over my childhood years. Consequently, wood holds a very protective meaning with me, something that is encapsulated within my wooden jewellery.



**Image 28**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere (collection)*,  
2011,  
hand dyed natural thread. and silver

Rope is used as a binding material, when it comes to wood constructions in *Nowhere*. In *Nowhere*, 'rope' is actually strong vine, however in reality I struggled to source such a thing. Instead I used a natural fibre thread that I either braided or crocheted into a thicker rope. The rope pieces (image 28) are primarily an appreciation of scent and texture. The natural presence embedded in

this material takes you to another place, for me *Nowhere*. The scent is strong and intoxicating, its deep, earthy and musky – perhaps not a conventionally sought after scent, but my rope jewellery act as vessels, echoing the natural world of *Nowhere*.

My choice to dye the rope was to draw attention to its visual texture. Much like the stick pieces, these necklaces are smaller examples of the fibrous vines, thick and strong enough to swing from, bind log cabins and to pulley up materials and food to your tree house high above. Rope, much like sticks and wood, is so utilitarian that its aesthetic value is often over looked. This notion influenced the construction of my rope jewellery. I intentionally made sure the rope was not tightly binding,

holding or tied around itself or another material – making it void of its traditional use. I endeavoured to promote its visual beauty, through simplicity, which in consequence has given it a new use – a tool of adornment that is loosely laid around the neck of the wearer.



**Image 29**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere (collection)*,  
2011  
silver and pheasant feather

Feather as a material contrasts with rope and stick, due to its lack of physical strength and mass, however the appreciative factor that drew me to the use of feathers is the visual strength they inherit. In context to *Nowhere*, feathers float down from above and for an unknown reason, you are never able to see the birds they fall from. Feathers, much like leaves from a tree, detach from a bird's body and yet as a

singular entity – it holds it own. The feather does not need to rely on the 'mass', its individual beauty asserts itself. For example image 29 shows three singular feathers bound to string.

To highlight the difference between the single feather and a mass, I have produced pendants where a mass of layered feathers are used (image 18). Set in silver, this

piece is weighted down, restricting the feathers movement as well giving strength as a whole. Extremely tactile, this piece is intriguing, implicative of a primeval tool, perhaps a paintbrush or a tool of pleasure? It exploits the exotic nature of feathers and the invisible, imaginary birds they come from in *Nowhere*.

Silver is a material that begins to bridge the gap between fantasy world and reality, this was not a strategic choice, but something I became aware of retrospectively. Materialistically and aesthetically, silver holds a worth across many cultural levels. Drag, hip-hop and punk jewellery are either made of silver or mimic the aesthetic qualities of silver. For example the use of polished steel chains and safety pins used in punk fashion are monetarily not worth much, but it is the visual signifier of worth that gives it a sense of material value. My use of silver is influenced by the reality that these pieces are to be bought and worn and that I too fall victim to the power of a culture that tells me silver is worth something. In reference to *Nowhere*, I have collected scrap silver and have made my own sheet and wire. The decision to do this, rather than the easy process of purchasing machine-processed silver, was to echo the 'make-do' survivalist environment that exists in *Nowhere*.



**Image 30**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Artefacts From 3 Sites in Nowhere*  
(collection),  
2011  
silver wire and 18ct gold solder

Recycling silver and rolling down your own sheet and drawing down wire allows for variations in width, texture and even splitting of the metal to occur (image 30). These markings produce a sense of age and history, to a place devoid of machines, very much like *Nowhere* – it not only rebels against the machine but more specifically, the digital age I grew up in. It is in contrast to previous work such as *Tooths*, 2007 (image 31) where I sourced a lost wax casting agency to produce the piece, rather than make it by hand.



**Image 31**  
Luke-John Matthew Arnold  
*Tooths*,  
2007  
925 silver, cotton thread

*Tooths*, although inspired by similar, if not the same, origins as this collection, resonated an irony that I have tried to avoid within this collection. The realistically carved wax tooth is primitive and cannibalistic in appearance, but the high sheen solid silver the wax tooth was cast into, promoted a satirical inauthenticity. It noticeably mimicked the natural world and very much upheld a machine made, manufactured appearance that echoed ‘souvenirs’ rather than artefacts from 3 sites in *Nowhere*.

Through avoiding manufacturing technologies, the process I have adopted here has not only allowed the collection to inherit a *place* of origin, but visually refers to a

person who has consciously constructed these pieces, for a reason and with a purpose.

### **Departing Nowhere:**

Creating a collection of jewellery that was made from a very internalised place, *Nowhere*, was a liberating experience. However, theoretically 'coming back to reality' with these 'artefacts' is the most important process of this body of work. It raises the questions of intention and expectation of the collection.

*AF3SIN* has drawn upon many fantastical, primeval and, most importantly, recognisable inspirations. *Nowhere* may exist in my head, but as identified previously in this chapter, it was shaped through the collation of storybooks, adventure tales and film adaptations. These well-known sources hold recognisable iconography, such as the natural environments these stories unfold within. This 'place' is where I accumulated my materials and consequently have created a consistent aesthetic throughout out my collection that reflect its imaginary origin. This strong visual is not intended to alienate the wearers of my jewellery, but to courageously standout, much like punk, drag and hip-hop jewellery did in their beginning. I want this collection to be worn by the everyman, consequently breaking the traditional boundaries of what he can and cannot wear, pushing the everyman into a new sub-grouping.

My intention is that my jewellery is a symbol of the break in boundaries, such as the restrictions of a society's definition of masculinity. I may have made this collection with the everyman as my muse, but I consider this collection as gender neutral. I do

not feel comfortable labelling *AF3SIN* as 'men's jewellery' as the reason for making it is to question, subvert and be free of these stereotypes. The jewellery will represent a liberated man, indulging in the beauty of the natural world, as well as himself – without the need of aggression nor any other traditional masculine stereotypes.

This is not a process of social emasculation, but a process of social reconstruction. All my jewellery needs now is a courageous wearer to step into the new territory of men's fashion jewellery, to lead the way for a sub-culture, a 'tribe' to inhabit a new place of understanding of what it is to be a man, allowing *Nowhere* to actually be somewhere.

## Conclusion.

Throughout this investigation about the jewellery men wear, questions have been raised about how most men go about this. By being influenced by social dress codes men adhere to the rules set by their own hegemonic masculinities or that of their sub-cultures. It is these rules that set the limitations to what jewellery they can wear. For some men, like the everyman, it is evident that he accepts what is on offer and in regards to fashion jewellery, despite it appearing—to be an un-ornamental, tasteless platter. How does one develop a jewellery market for a group of men who are seemingly ambivalent when it comes to jewellery? Furthermore, is this ‘tasteless platter’ the basis for such ambivalence?

Other men, such as hip-hop males, are conscious of the social stereotypes of the western man and choose to exaggerate traits to manifest an intimidating and fearless persona. By attending the gym five days a week, carrying a gun and producing albums that inform the listener of how dangerous and manly they are, the hip-hop male has created a protective aura around themselves – free to wear what they wish, how they wish. Punks inherit a similar aggression, choosing to echo acts of violence through their slashed clothes, intimidating chains and overall intimidating aesthetic.

Contrastingly, there are male drag queens who dress as women, including women’s jewellery, to ironically become the ‘alpha-male’ of their own culture. This consequently also earns them the right to wear what they want to wear and to therefore break other social codes.



None of these subcultures are promoting unconstructive strategies for men to wear jewellery, but they do represent the hardships and effort involved in bending and sometimes breaking social norms and dress regulations. Frankly, for most men it is an unrealistic process. The everyday male, the everyman, does not always have the luxury or desire to sculpt his body, produce music or perform a number on stage to define and thus create his own subculture or join an existing one, and furthermore does he want to?

In response to that question, the collection AF3SIN offers a new alternative. It is a collection driven by imagination and inspired by the notion of freedom from social stereotyping and its attached expectations put upon not only men, but everybody. Admittedly, the collection is dense in cultural and social symbols and signifiers, but this only highlights the never-ending mass of opinions and perspectives a person can have on a single object. Rather than being considered daunting, this observation should be liberating – understanding that the meanings are transient, fluid and always changing. This gives the wearer the power and freedom to instill their own meaning into any piece of AF3SIN.

Investigating my own personal responses to the materials used and the construction of the collection could be considered a contradiction to the above statement. However, I too understand that my meaning and relationship with the jewellery exists within me, much like the influential origins of the collection, Nowhere.

The fact Nowhere exists within my mind only extenuates the craving and need for a new space for men to exist in – both mentally and physically. This does not involve

men developing their muscles or dressing to shock society, but to develop their understanding of individuality and freedom of choice. These mental 'happy places' are our own aspirations to what we wish existed around us, in everyday life.

My strategy to making Nowhere a reality, was by bringing 'artefacts' here, to reality. Leaving the comfort of an imaginary tropical island, the collection is now offered to the everyman and anybody else willing to wear it. What western man is left with is an opportunity to re-develop not only the definitions of masculinity, but also his own understanding of it – allowing him to enjoy the liberations and freedom of visually expressing himself, without fear or judgment.

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