

Minerva,
"Good times... and great classic hits!"
Adele Warner
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Everything we know as current has already had its moment. Reshot through the lens of a lofi digi-cam, sold back to use as a new 'core'. A concussive hall of mirrors, where yesterday is endlessly reflected but never quite recovered. It all still feels new though; like a curated classics playlist of lost futures, stitched together with references that don't point anywhere, and that we don't remember. Our collective imagination seems to have stalled, replaced by a kind of cultural déjà vu.

We yearn for the 'better times', but they're not a memory - they're synthetic. Fabricated wholes from half-remembered aesthetics. Our scrolling is soundtracked by 2000s indie hits, we watch movies that reboot the same franchises, wear clothes that reference subcultures we never lived through. We don't revive the past so much as repurpose it, strip it for parts, flatten it into vibes. *"I wish I was 16 in 2016"* jessica comments on a TikTok about the Striped-Tee-Shirt-Low-Dr-Martens-The-Neighborhood-Boxed-Water-Tumblr era. It's wistful, yes, but also disorienting - those who came after us are longing for a version of a past you lived, because the present feels like it's slipping out of their hands.

"Is this a recession indicator?"

But behind all this imitation is a subtle grief. We're not just longing for the past - we're mourning the loss of a future that once felt possible. A future that, at one point, had a shape. The aesthetics we look back on now feel cohesive and digestible. In hindsight, they offer something the present can't - clarity. We turn to them not because they were better, but because we made it through them. The inability to classify the present as representative of a certain 'style' is terrifying, but in 10 years we will know exactly how to reference 2025.

It's a strange kind of paralysis. If culture once moved in waves - avant-gardes clashing with the mainstream, pushing things forward - we now drift in a sea of remixes, and recycled moods. There's no rupture, no clear break from what came before. Innovation feels impossible because everything already exists as a style template, ready to be worn again.

"My culture is not your costume" - the costume in question is '2005 Cookie Monster pants, Monroe piercing core'.

What's missing is risk. The sense that something might emerge that hasn't already been seen, styled, rebranded, and sold to us at a 360% markup. Culture now feels like a beautifully designed loop - evocative, clever, endlessly referential, but going nowhere new.

Maybe that's why nostalgia feels so heavy today. It's not just about aesthetics, it's about longing for a time that, in hindsight, feels stable, ordered, and culturally coherent. In contrast, the present feels so fragmented, and impossible to aestheticise without irony. We turn to the past not just for comfort, but for structure and reassurance that even if we don't know where we are going, one day we will be able to reminisce on the now. Finding meaning in the present will not be done through chasing originality, but in asking why originality feels so distant. In turning nostalgia into reflection, pastiche into critique. In seeing the loop for what it is, and resisting its seduction.

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