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# UNDOMESTIC GODDESS

SERVING UP LIFE, WITHOUT THE SUGAR COATING

## The rise of trashion Is 'sexy but stupid' this decade's hottest trend so far?

“It’s hard to make the tabloids for doing something smart.” This astute observation from singer Pink is perhaps truer today than in 2006 when her single *Stupid Girls* raced towards the top of the charts. An incisive look at celebrity culture, the song’s video lampooned singers like Christina Aguilera and Jessica Simpson who seem to enjoy slathering their bodies over soap-sudded cars wearing itsy bitsy bikinis – an extreme caricature of what is deemed ‘sexy’.

I understood it; it was giving the masses what they wanted in order to turn a dollar or two million. It was young women playing the game; writhing against men in airplane toilets to secure their financial future. It was acting stupid to double the sexy. I accepted it. In these very pages I have acknowledged how a well-placed giggle or subtle touch on an arm can gently manoeuvre someone in a certain direction. The Christinas of the world were just taking that to the extreme in order to reap the juicy benefits; money, fame, the best seats at expensive restaurants, that Emilio Pucci dress I saw in *Stylist* magazine a few weeks ago and just couldn’t afford.

The airhead act then spread from the upper echelons of celebrity to the glamour girls and WAGs of Britain. Jordan and Jodie Marsh began to compete for who could say the most gormless thing while being papped wearing the least amount of clothes (I’d say Jodie won with her three-belt ensemble).

It was hard to know how to react to these women. Smart females are supposed to despise women who pretend to be stupid because they ‘let the side down’ but it’s hard to feel smug when these so-called stupid women are signing seven-figure endorsement deals, peddling their own perfume *and* writing bestselling books, not to mention their wardrobes full of Chanel (and, yes, my Pucci dress in every colour).

My choices then were threefold: I could go with the *Daily Mail* response (these promiscuous witches are meant to be role models – this country’s gone to the dogs!), the post-feminist response (you go, girl! If you’ve got it, flaunt it!) and the sensible aunt response (those poor girls, what is going to happen to them when they lose their looks?).

I tentatively chose the third option until I saw something more pernicious taking place. ‘Vapid vogue’, or ‘trashion’ as the girls in the office call it, slowly became du jour not only on our screens and magazines but on our streets as well. The

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checkout girl at my local Tesco would scan my vegetables with her glittery nails, lashes caked in mascara, hair extensions down to her navel. And then I would notice the girl on the bus *speaking* in text-speak. “That’s TMI, babe,” she would giggle vacuously. “OMG, I’m at my stop. I’ll TTYL.”

Trashion spread from mere appearance to language and culture itself. It became clear that whether you are stupid or just choose to appear that way, stupidity had become very ‘now’. Or rather, it had become passé to disapprove of stupidity, which amounts to the same thing. Where women once fiercely endeavoured to prove their intelligence, it seems one now has to dumb down to remain relevant. The schoolyard mentality of the ‘cool kids’ skipping class and failing exams has somehow permeated our ‘grownup’ psyche. If we’re speaking the Queen’s English, then we must be out of touch. Take the Asian Woman magazine offices where we tease each other

if we’re not au fait with the latest acronyms (fyi, fomo is our fave atm). Colloquialisms have become the preserve of not just the uneducated but also the *cool*. In fact, where ditzzy women were once ridiculed, it seems they have now become endearing, be it *X-Factor*’s Stacey Solomon or *TOWIE*’s Amy Childs. Stupid is no longer just sexy, but somehow also *sweet*. But how can we explain this sudden shift? Surely Christina and Jessica can’t be blamed for our languishing culture and language too?

I suspect there are two culprits at play. The first and most obvious is the advent of social networking and electronic communication. When one is forced to communicate in 140 characters, it is prudent to use ‘TTYL’ instead of ‘talk to you later’ or chastise someone for sharing ‘TMI’ instead of ‘too much information’. These colloquialisms then naturally enter the vernacular, even taking root in an office full of journalists where words are supposed to be sacred.

The second likely reason is the current financial climate. In the 80s, the age of beamers and yuppies, it was cool to be ostentatiously wealthy. Don Johnson with his flashy suits epitomised the zeitgeist. Now we associate these things with the public’s enemy number one; the ‘bastard bankers’ who hung a whole country out to dry. These days, it’s not okay to drive a Porsche, and if you *are*, then you damn well better have a localised accent. We don’t mind the Essex-born wheeler dealer who accrued his wealth through backroom deals but the trader with the tailored suit? Well, he can burn in hell. The temple of trashion permits wealth but only if you favour diamante over diamonds and velour over Vera.

Personally, I would always choose ‘smart’ over ‘sexy and stupid’, but it seems the tide has turned against this way of thinking. The rise of trashion has manifested into a living, breathing phenomenon that has spread its tentacles over every part of popular culture, dragging us firmly into the Age of Stupid.

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