

I believe in a well-balanced fashion blog diet. But what I most look forward to reading — the decadent chocolate cupcake topped with neon pink frosting — is Style Bubble (stylebubble.typepad.com), the year-old fashion blog featuring the musings of Susanna Lau (a.k.a., Susie Bubble). Lau's taste is eclectic, mixing H&M with Phillip Lim and Hong Kong boutique finds. She is fiercely individual, refusing to let "what's in" dictate her wardrobe, preferring to follow her own fabulously quirky fashion instincts.

What separates Style Bubble from the rest of the fashion blog flock is Lau herself. The 23-year-old British-born Chinese brings a unique perspective to the fashion blogosphere: she is simply a fashion lover with a laptop, far from the fashion echelons, with a day job in digital media ads and a normal-sized paycheck.

Lau answers a few of *Audrey's* questions about Asians and fashion, albeit somewhat hesitantly. "I don't usually analyze things from such an 'Asian' slant," she says. "It even feels weird using that word since we call it 'Oriental' in the UK." While Chinese girls all over the world email her to say she is "doing Chinese girls proud," she stresses that it's not quite her cup of (British or Chinese) tea. "I don't really label myself as this 'Chinese' blogger. I'm just a blogger who happens to be Chinese."

Q: You were born in Hong Kong and visit often. What are some trends you see there that can be adapted in the West?

A: Not many, I'm afraid. The breadth of style in Hong Kong for a start is not exactly plentiful. You get people who dress in an avant garde way — lots of Comme des Garçons, Maison Martin Margiela, etc. — a look that is in the very minute minority in the West.

You get the cutesy teenaged looks that rely a lot on the Peter Pan syndrome that Hong Kong has in common with Japan. Style is actually surprisingly conformist in Hong Kong and you get street trends like loose knee-high boots with chunky knee socks or caped cardigans everywhere at one particular point in time, but none of that truly filters across to the West.

Q: You occasionally articulate unique insights about race and fashion, like how you sometimes avoid wearing red because it's so strongly associated with the Chinese; or how Asian people can get away with wearing more outrageous things. Do you think that race and fashion are connected?

A: I feel that fashion has nothing to do with race, but rather where you grew up, what you were exposed to and each individual's cultural integration. Crazy dressers are everywhere these days, and I don't even classify myself as *that* outrageous a dresser so it's a bit of a fallacy to connect race with fashion. I actually personally attribute the way I dress to spending my teenage years in London, rather than my racial background. The only connection I can make is that the body structure of Asians tend to be on the thin side, which means, as terrible as it is to admit, that they have the propensity to get away with certain styles.

Perhaps, there is also a cultural expectation too that is unspoken of. A Japanese girl wearing a crazy get-up won't surprise people as much as a Caucasian person wearing the same get-up — kind of like when the model Ilekeliene Stange wears Lolita-cutesy dresses with knee-high socks. We probably all carry images of Harajuku girls in our heads that it has sort of become commonplace imagery.

Q: How do you feel about designers who draw heavily on traditional Asian clothes or culture?

A: I'm personally not keen on traditional Asian clothes being used as an influence in high fashion. More often than not, it comes off looking costume-like. I prefer designers to look at Asian aesthetics and take subtle influences either from their use of materials or techniques — like Issey Miyake uses fabric techniques from Japan without making his designs look like a poor pastiche of Asian dress. I should have hated John Galliano's spring/summer '07 couture collection, but he took pastiche to a whole other level, and you kind of just have to respect the amount of craftsmanship that was involved. Besides, I actually see more of Christian Dior's 1947 New Look influence in the collection. The colors and patterns are so exaggerated and the shapes are so reminiscent of the old Dior that it actually takes away any Japan/chinoiserie that Galliano injected.

Q: Do you have any pet peeves about how Asians dress?

A: This obsession with brands and monograms is not just isolated to Asians, but, yes, for the most part, a majority of Asians I know are obsessed with showcasing of wealth. I think it actually stems from some kind of inner insecurity complex that a lot of Asians have when comparing themselves to their white counterparts — like they have to prove their equality by buying these logos. I may be reading too much into it! That is a major pet peeve of mine because it irks me that just because these people are brand-aware, i.e., spend their money on Gucci or LV, apparently that makes them experts on fashion and I sort of want to say fashion is so much more than that.

— Lisa Wong Macabasco



Fashion Blog Style Bubble Takes the Cake

