

distinctive and thus more memorable. In the end, style is fundamentally democratic. It assumes every person has the potential to create a unique identity and express it through grooming and a few well-chosen clothes. Yet style is also aristocratic. It sets apart those who have it from those whose dress is merely utilitarian. It announces to the world that the wearer has assumed command of herself.

As the speed of all our transactions increases, we need fast ways of transmitting information about ourselves *without losing authenticity*; we have less and less time to make our mark in other, more leisurely ways of knowing. Style, like a perfectly fitting book jacket, evokes the substance within by way of the surface. It makes an authentic visual impression, is a memorable mark of identity in a world that otherwise strips people of identity. There was a time when style was a luxury. Today it is a necessity.

### Works Cited

DeJean, Joan. *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour*. New York: Free Press, 2005. Print.

Hollander, Anne. *Seeing through Clothes*. New York: Viking, 1978. Print.

### Discussion Questions

1. Explain the difference to Hara Estroff between fashion and style. How much attention did you pay to fashion or trends when selecting most items in your closet? What is your particular "visual vocabulary" saying about you?
2. Discuss Gergen's ideas about masks in relation to Estroff's understandings of fashion and style. How might he find her distinction between them relevant? Do you think he would consider attention paid to style and/or fashion to be healthy? Explain.
3. Why does Estroff find style to be both optimistic and subversive? How do these concepts support the ideas presented in the reading "The Importance of Getting Your Appearance in Order"?