

Hats and Scarves

A beaver, a boater, a bowler, or kolpik; a box or a cocktail, panama or turban; hats and scarves hide us and reveal us, protect us from the wind and hint at our journey. We play with hats, toss them and lose them, we pull them down so cool or push them back with a laugh. Their names denote cultural traditions. With hats you can wear a brimless beret or fez or kippah, or a wide brimmed Long Island “shade” or a cowboy’s “boss of the plains” or conical Vietnamese “non la.” Scarves are often grouped by their fabric: thick knitted wool, sheer cashmere, common linen and imperial silk. A scarf’s nationality may also be hiding utility: a French mofler or Ashanti head wrap, an English snood or Roman sudarium (we know it as a bandana or kerchief or babushka), even an pilot’s silken white scarf was worn to catch the windblown oil.

A Top Hat decked out in satin for statesmen and/or funerals and old film stars, a lace veil spun with time-worn motifs for marriage and penance. You get a groove in a fedora, seduction in a foulard; shoulders back, a bounce and flow to your step. You wear them just so, cocked and tucked this way, with vim and vigor. Some hats and scarves mark identity and authority, of belonging to, or segregating from, the crowd. Hats flock together at the train station, outside of temple, in the ball park, the hats hint at similar stories, similar interests and rivalries.

Scarves open us to our sensual selves; run pashmina silk slowly through your fingers. Plain spun cotton scarves, a tichel, a hijab, signal modesty and humility to our fellows and to our god. Ikkat, or intricately woven and dyed cotton scarves, such as Akan Kenta silk-cotton mixes or Peruvian Alpaca wool, divulge a history and shout out personality, an opportunity. Thick Norwegian merino wool is good for cold winter scarves that wrap us up in tight bundles, as are Russian ushankas, hats with ears.

Armor that hat to make a helmet; embroider your scarf to make art. Nefertiti’s crown unites the two kingdoms, Pericles’s helmet projects the power of the polis, while a phalanx of helmets separates humanity. But finding one daisy woven into the webbing of a battalion of Desert Storm helmets and you subvert that power and separation; turn your G.I. Normandy helmet over to make soup for your buddies. Find a Tibetan khata or white linen scarf, that signals authority and intent, and you’ve found a secret. Use a rough linen square babushka to carry a baby or gather firewood points you towards home.

Remember your favorite hat as a kid? A Cub’s cap you wore everywhere but church; or your grandma’s old feather-and-lace Sunday hat for dress-up -- you paraded round the yard with baby doll’s bonnet in tow. Remember the *yo-ho!* pirate headband, or was it a winter sock cap years later, grubby and threadbare, you wore to your first rock concert?

This series of graphite drawings portrays a small variety of the common hats and scarves that cover our lives. They are as everyday as our faces, and as varied. It seems to me that, with the exception of a suited eight-year old marched up to church or a uniformed eighteen-year old marched up the parade ground, we as individuals have a remarkable freedom choosing what hat and scarf to wear. There is such a pervasive bond between our cultural ~ spiritual ~ expressive identities and our hats and scarves. And maybe, as Lady Gaga remarked one cold March night last year, “You are the Hat!”

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