

Helmut Lang Bondage bomber jacket, spring 2004: courtesy of Petros Toufexis for David Casavant Archive. Yohji Yamamoto winter 1996 Prisoner pants: courtesy of Etienne Bolduc for My Clothing Archive. Jean-Paul Gaultier, *Mona Lisa* Tattoo top, spring 1995: courtesy of Kyle Julian Skye for Middleman Store. Vivienne Westwood Safety Pin necklace: courtesy of Johnny Valencia of Pechuga Vintage.

Style

A Newbie's Guide to Collecting Archival Fashion

From Hedi to Issey to Yohji and beyond, here's the expert advice you need to hunt for your favorite designer's greatest hits, from the vintage dealers who know how to separate the droolworthy grails from the diffusion line.



By Gerald Ortiz

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SAVE

There's *vintage,* and then there's *archive*—the latter is what you wear when you have time, specific tastes, and, most likely, a deep-bordering-on-obsessive love for the work of a great designer. If you're looking to get more serious than setting a couple eBay alerts, then maybe it's time you go collector mode. To get you started, we talked to four vintage dealers who specialize in knowing how to separate the droolworthy grails from the diffusion line.

Archival designs from some of the industry's most venerated names are more popular than ever. Social media is awash in dudes dressed in head-to-toe Maison Margiela or Raf Simons, who fill their closets from Japanese auction sites and IYKYK Instagram accounts. Celebrities are in on the action, too—rolling up to red carpets and sitting courtside in museum-grade archival grails. But here's the twist: collecting high-octane pieces from a designer's canon isn't just for millionaires or the well-connected.

What it *does* require is a little bit of homework, and knowing where to go to find what you're hunting for. In the hopes of dialing down the intimidation for newcomers, I talked to 10 collectors—most of whom run their own shops—about their favorite label's greatest hits, what to be on the lookout for, and what to avoid. After that, it's on you to take the plunge, and probably rent some extra storage space.

GUCCI BY TOM FORD

Expert: Izaake Zuckerman, The Society Archive

What to buy: “It’s fun to live in Ford’s moment of time at Gucci because of how sexy you will look and feel in any of the pieces from that era. The collections from A/W 1995 and 1996 collections, and S/S 1999 are my personal favorites. For women, anything black/ sheer. The cuts are modern, sexy, and elegant—and very true to the Tom Ford for Gucci era. For men I would step in with suiting. That was the first Tom Ford for Gucci piece I ever bought: a pinstripe double-breasted suit. And the sunglasses all have great shapes with the class “G” logo.

Pro tip: “Some of the grails from that era go for thousands of dollars. But at an entry level, expect to spend from $200 to $500, at least. And you can easily identify Tom Ford’s pieces by the Gucci tag that was used from that era, which is easy to look up.”

HEDI SLIMANE

Expert: Fernando Rangel, Silver League

What to buy: “For someone who is getting into older pieces by Hedi Slimane, his work at Dior during the early aughts is the most enduring and collectible. Any of his Dior black leather jackets from his fall collections, a drapey scoop-neck tee, an embellished wool coat. The A/W 2003 Luster jeans are also a must-have from the time period. And, of course, a pair of black combat boots. A lot of people tend to overlook his accessories from this time, too—the long scarves, skinny ties, sunglasses, leather belts, etc.”

Pro tip: “If you look for a while you can probably find some worthwhile pieces for $100-200. If you don't have the patience or desire to hunt, you're looking at $400 and up.”

HELMUT LANG

Expert: Michael Kardamakis, ENDYMA

What to buy: “People always go for the obvious: the ’99 astro biker jacket or the 2003 bomber jacket with straps. Lang’s jeans are fantastic, and if you find one in the right fabric, [the brand made] the perfect denim jacket. The tank tops are super clean and a bit sexy. And nothing beats a Helmut Lang white shirt. Also, the suits look like boxes online, but they’re a hidden gem. You put one on and you realize that it has beautiful definition in the shoulder.”

Pro tip: “When in doubt, size up.”

ISSEY MIYAKE

Expert: Zeke Hemme, Constant Practice

Designers: Issey Miyake, Naoki Takizawa

What to buy: “Mid-’90s to the aughts is what the majority of people tend to go for. This was Naoki’s era of designing the menswear line. Any of the Naoki-era pieces are a continuation of Issey’s original design ethos, brought into the 21st century. The biggest ticket item to date is still the A/W 1996 cargo bomber jacket that Robin Williams wore, which has sold for around $10,000.

Pro tip: “There are alot of AW 1996 bomber fakes now, and a few other lesser known pieces. They have a shittier look to them when you compare it to the actual garment. Also, if the price is too good to be true, then it probably *is* too good to be true.”

JEAN PAUL GAULTIER

Expert: Kyle Julian-Skye, Middleman Store

What to buy: “Gaultier’s a bit all over the place because he just did so much. The mid-’90s stuff, the ‘Mad Max’ collection—that’s the really golden shit. Dystopian, cyberpunk, badass, sexy-looking, dangerous. The Constructivist collection from the ’80s is one you don’t really see out in the wild, but there are about a half dozen pieces from that collection that are in The Met. They’ll run you at least a thousand dollars. The stuff from the early 2000s from his diffusion line, JPG by Jean Paul Gautlier, is very popular because it’s very wearable. That’s where you get the bondage-y, parachute-y stuff. Across it all, the mesh stuff is so popular, and so famous. You say ‘Gaultier’ to anyone and that’s what they picture. It’s easy to find, and you can always sell it back for your money if you don’t like it.”
Pro tip: “Check the provenance of the seller. If it’s someone with a long history of selling Gaultier, it’s probably real. If it’s someone with one listing on eBay, and they’re selling other pieces that are commonly faked, it’s probably suspect.”

MAISON MARGIELA

Expert: Hugh Mo, Artifact New York

Key designers: Martin Margiela, John Galliano, Mathieu Blazy

What to buy: “The women's runway work from 1989 to 2002 is extremely limited on the secondhand market and collectors compete viciously to acquire new pieces to add to collections. Menswear has some highlights from the time that [Margiela] started the line in 1998, but the A/W 2002 collection is where the highest price points are found on the secondary market. There are a number of artisanal pieces made in the later 2000's that are extremely rare

and low production, from when Mathieu Blazy of Bottega Veneta was at the house leading the artisanal department of Maison Margiela."

Pro tip: "Watch runway shows, buy books, and look at sold listings on any marketplace. Be forthcoming to other Margiela collectors in the community about what you are looking for and curious to learn more about. Most are very nice and are happy to talk. ""

Expect to spend: $300-$800

PRADA

Expert: Lucas Fracher, Luke's

What to buy: "To start, it's the America's Cup [sneakers], because those are the most iconic thing and the lowest-hanging fruit. I wear shirts a bit louder, so for me, the Linea Rossa stuff is a good starting place. I like the technical ski stuff, too, if you can find the right pieces. Prada more than other designer brands utilized technical fabrics like Gore-Tex so you can have the best of both worlds: a Prada ski jacket in Gore-Tex that can replace a couple of different jackets in your rotation.

Generally, the nylon stuff is pretty understated—there aren't a ton of triangles on it, just the little Prada red [line]. It's just well-cut, nice nylon clothing that's a bit technical, but also has European sensibilities in a way that an Arc'teryx or another gorpcore brand doesn't. And I love Prada trousers."

Pro tip: "On the older stuff, the interior tags look bootleg compared to modern [tags], but they're not. It's worth your time to educate yourself about what the tags look like. Go to a No Austerity's [Instagram] page or one of those pages that specializes in tags. Or take the time to go to places you know have good vintage Prada and check it out in person."

RAF SIMONS

Expert: David Casavant, David Casavant Archive

What to buy: “Raf Simons’s pieces only goes up in value, [particularly because] many of the old pieces are hand-made in some way or hand-painted, and there were very limited quantities made of older pieces. Pieces from 1995 to 2005 are the most sought after. The old hoodies, bomber jackets and t-shirts are the most iconic—[Raf] was the first to do oversized hoodies and bombers in high fashion. He also made so many non-wearable collectibles that aren’t just clothes: glow sticks to sleeping bags. They’re like art pieces, and can sometimes be easy to find for not a lot of money.
Pro tip: “There is a lot [of Raf clothing] for less than $100, the most between $100 to $1,000, and the most rare and iconic pieces will be in the thousands to tens of thousands. There are definitely fakes, unfortunately. A lot are pretty obvious. It helps if the piece has some signs of aging and wear, as that is part of the process for Raf clothes and only makes them better. If something seems too new but is supposed to be from the early 2000’s, that is suspicious.”

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

Expert: Johnny Valencia, Pechuga Vintage

What to buy: “There’s a reason why I refer her to as “your favorite’s fave”. I think investing in Vivienne

Westwood pieces is almost analogous to collecting art, if you make the right buy it could

absolutely pay off in the future. The most coveted pieces to collect are the ’70s labels (the punk and pirate years), the ’90s Gold Label (up until around 1997/1998 for womenswear), and 1991-2014 for menswear. And there’s a few key pieces from 2014 - 2016 that stand out. I’m absolutely biased towards the late ’80s/early ’90s menswear, for sure. If you’re collecting denim, go for 1991. The printed, more elaborate pieces come a bit later—1993, to be specific.

While Westwood's corsets and iconic orb logo [pieces] have rightfully garnered attention, Westwood has crafted plenty of essential pieces for men that often fly under the radar. From impeccably tailored coats to stylish and versatile Oxfords, Westwood has covered it all.

Pro tip: “For someone that is fairly new to Westwood, I suggest picking up a book and exploring what eras of Westwood they gravitate towards, given her breadth of work, there’s surely something that will appeal to all senses. And general rule of thumb, when you’re purchasing something from a store or from a person, aim to use Buyer’s Protection within your method of payment. In the event you get a fake, you can contest it and get your money back.”

YOHJI YAMAMOTO

Expert: Etienne Bolduc, My Clothing Archive

What to buy: “The ’90s and early-2000s pieces are usually easy to find and coveted. You can get a pretty good deal in terms of quality and price. There’s not a lot of ’80s pieces out there—those are more collector pieces. But because Yohji pieces are made in Japan, they’re amazing quality, they’re always in style. I have a lot of pieces from the ’80s that look brand new.

The entry level stuff would be pants—wool pants, something very simple. They’re really good quality and they fit nicely. From there, the leather jackets,

the floral shirts, graphic t-shirts. Stuff that Drake's worn, basically. Oh, and all the suiting is a bit slept on. You might spend less on a shirt, for example, but you get more for your money from a blazer versus a shirt."

Pro tip: "If it's letter sizing, it's from the '90s. If it's number sizing, it's from the 2000s. I've built Yohji-identification software that you can use to find out more specifics."

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