



At once daring yet demure, the turban has endured for years as a symbol of creativity and style

Words CHRISTINE VAN DEEMTER

Turbans have long been associated in the West with a certain kind of style: a sense of daring, perhaps even a bit eccentric, definitely alluring. In the Arab world, of course, the appeal is disparate. Here, the turban is valued for its versatility and creativity, giving more head-covering options to those who choose to cover their hair.

In essence, a turban is a long piece of fabric wrapped around the head to create a "fitted" and sleek look. While its origins are murky, the head covering is thousands of years old, with the first iterations dating back to almost 5 000 years ago, in Mesopotamia. What started as a practical head covering evolved into a religious and spiritual one, with royalty and other leaders wearing it to denote power and honor. The turban was introduced to Europe in the 15th century, thanks to trade with the Ottoman empire, but only became popular in the 17th and 18th century, when it was worn predominately by aristocratic women. One of the most enduring images of a turban from this age is Johannes Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring painting.

It gradually fell out of favor, though, until the 1920s, when Western culture once more looked East for inspiration, and unwrapped the turban again. The head covering was worn by the young bohemians, aristocrats, and socialites of the era. Flappers adopted turbans as part of their recalcitrant wardrobe of raised hemlines, bobbed hair, and scandalous cigarettes. Over the next few decades, the turban reached its fashionable zenith, with

stars like Greta Garbo and Umm Kulthum embracing the head wrap. The Seventies then brought a looser, more insouciant vibe befitting the era.

Turbans never really left the fashion lexicon and have consistently graced 21st century runways – from Giorgio Armani's ready-to-wear 2011 show to Marc Jacobs' SS18 offering. Ready-made turbans come in all fabrics and colors – think Gucci's gold silk turban, Missoni's crochet-knit version, and a sequined version from Ingie Paris. Amal Clooney donned a sophisticated black turban and Dolce & Gabbana dress to meet the pope, while Lupita Nyong'o

regularly appears on the red carpet in a colorful version.

When Beyoncé released the video for her song "Die With You," fans were equally enamored with the notoriously private singer's home footage of her relationship with husband Jay-Z as with her headgear. Sandwiched between images of her engagement ring and romantic escapes was a striking visual of the pop star wearing a regal gold turban, coiled back and fastened with a single pearl. "I couldn't believe it when Beyoncé's stylist contacted me to ask for turbans," says the Tunisian designer behind the star's headgear, Donia Allegue. "My brand was only a year old at the time. I thought it was a joke!" Allegue's bespoke turbans are handmade by craftsmen in the south of France and can take up to six hours each to create. The Paris-based milliner launched her eponymous brand after discovering the French art of handcrafting while working at Christian Dior. "Beauty is an alchemy of senses and heritage. I wanted to create something new for women of the world; a fashion accessory that would celebrate femininity and beauty and unite women beyond borders." She settled upon reinventing and modernizing the turban, inspired by her Maghreb heritage. "My Tunisian childhood and life in Paris fueled my taste for newness and daring. So I dared to create a new, feminine vision of a historically masculine accessory."

There are many ways to wear a turban, she says. "Each woman can adapt the headpiece to her own vision: hair in, hair out, with or without makeup, with or without jewelry... it's a matter of taste and mood. A turban is the ultimate accessory of sophistication. It has a strong aura and charisma – that's what makes it so special."

Kuwaiti fashion influencer, model, and designer Ascia K AlShammiri is well-known for her forward-looking styling of her turbans with both high-end brands and athleisure looks. She also eloquently oscillates between the worlds of modesty and fashion, simultaneously showing young Muslim women that their faith doesn't preclude style, while expanding Western audiences' sometimes dismissive views of veiled women. To her, a turban means freedom of choice and expression – but it doesn't come without misconceptions. "There are always differing opinions. In the West, the fact that I choose to cover my hair denotes that I am somehow repressed. In our region, the fact that I wear a turban is somehow 'not good enough.' But the positive feedback far outweighs the negative on most days."

She recently worked with Halston on a line of turbans for the region, to meet the increasing demand, and regularly posts video tutorials showcasing the many ways she wears hers. Whatever your reason for wearing one, AlShammiri says, "Express yourself and cover what feels comfortable to you." □



LEFT DONIA ALLEGUE'S TURBAN ON THE COVER OF VOGUE THAILAND RIGHT ASCIA K ALSHAMMIRI BELOW RIGHT ACTOR FANIA MARINOFF IN VOGUE 1923



MARC JACOBS

GIORGIO ARMANI



“A turban is the ultimate accessory of SOPHISTICATION. It has a strong aura and charisma – that’s what makes it so SPECIAL”

Wrap it up

Turn heads with a ready-made turban



DONIA ALLEGUE

GUCCI

VALENTINO

INGIE PARIS



GUCCI

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