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The art of satisfying both sexes: 5 Toronto sources for gender-neutral fashion

BY JENNIFER CHENG

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IMAGE: FUTUREISTHEFUTURE.COM/

The Toronto fashion scene is joining the ranks of Paris and London in mastering the art of satisfying both sexes. So what do women and men like? “Lots of black and leather accents,” says Cameron Wilson, former model and owner of unisex clothing boutique Untitled & Co.

While some consumers see gender-neutral fashion as a novelty, the trend towards androgyny and “unisex” clothing – a term coined in the 1960s – is anything but. Popularized by the allure of Hollywood’s Bad Boys (think Marlon Brando in a tight T-shirt in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and James Dean rocking denim jeans in *Rebel Without a Cause*), unisex clothing challenges the one-size-fits-all mentality.

“Gender-neutral fashion looks outside the idea of gender being a binary. It takes a more critical eye towards gender and sexuality,” says Natalia Manzocco, founder of gender-neutral clothing store Future Is The Future. Here, five places in Toronto where you won’t be told that you’re on the wrong side of the store.

Future Is The Future

One of the newcomers to Toronto’s gender-neutral clothing scene, this online boutique opened its first pop-up store at Elephant in the Attic in Dundas West on March 5. Future Is The Future is full of flashy and flamboyant metallic looks (basic pieces are \$20-25; the priciest item comes in at \$80).

Manzocco’s vintage wares fit a wide range of body types and fashion sensibilities. On display: varsity jackets, snuggly sweaters, dapper menswear, 80s tuxedo dress shoes and blazers. The handmade accessories by local designers are the only items in the store sorted by gender.

[Future Is The Future](#), 1596 Dundas St. W., 647-854-3351

Muttonhead

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Located in Roncesvalles Village, Muttonhead is filling a gap in the market by peddling Canadian-made unisex athletic-inspired designs (\$40-\$140; outerwear \$200).

“I didn’t want to wear a pink jacket to go snowboarding,” says owner Meg Sinclair, who started the brand with her sister Mel Sinclair and co-designer Paige Greene in 2009. Its best-sellers are hoodies (\$128) and crewnecks (\$126) in grey and neutral tones.

Soon children will be able to get in on the action. Muttonhead will launch a unisex kids line in late March.

[Muttonhead](#), 337 Roncesvalles Ave., 647-341-4415

Untitled & Co.

Cameron Wilson likes to play around with the idea of nostalgic culture clash at Untitled & Co. This is the place to find fun, interesting streetwear for \$58 to \$125. Clients (generally ages 15-35) and celebrities (Diplo, Perez Hilton) alike love the digitally printed sweatshirts – the most popular one reads “Woke Up Like This,” courtesy of Beyoncé’s “Flawless” track – but he felt that it wasn’t representative of his full vision for the brand. So when he moved from Queen West (he’s returning there to open a second location this May) to his current location in Yorkville, he decided to focus on unisex clothing.

“It’s a more modern way to shop and dress,” Wilson says. “If I am going to wear something, my girlfriend is going to wear it.”

His most recent purchase? A Bart Simpson shirt in XL from the women’s section at Forever 21.

[Untitled & Co.](#), 98 Scollard St., 647- 521-3114

American Apparel

While American Apparel’s advertising campaigns are questionable – women in gender-neutral shirts are pictured nearly naked with breasts exposed and no pants, men are fully clothed – the brand has got one thing right: unisex clothing (\$30-\$265). The stock, arranged in a non-gender-specific section, includes tanks, deep V-necks, hoodies, billionaire pants and sports jackets. Most popular: the classic baseball tee (\$30) and jersey version (\$62). American Apparel offers more gender-neutral pieces than many clothing chains in Toronto – even if they are mostly overpriced cotton basics.

[American Apparel](#), various Toronto locations

Latre Art + Style

Artist and restaurateur-turned-shop owner Brian Vu has stocked Latre Art + Style in the Junction with reclaimed unisex pieces made right in the boutique’s basement studio, such as denim jackets (fashioned from jeans and pieces of HBC blankets) and oversized vests (kaleidoscopic Mexican textiles). Inspired by the quality and functionality of military clothing, shoppers will find and linger over vintage army gear (particularly the khaki-green vests made of reclaimed tents from WWII).

Vu also supports local and international talent, showcasing Clean Undies apparel, African artifacts and vintage Native American jewellery. Almost everything in the shop-cum-gallery is *sui generis* and feels like it is from a different time and place.

[Latre Art +Style](#), 2988 Dundas St. W., 647-349-3503

“Big cities set trends; they don’t follow trends,” Vu says. “Toronto is getting better, but most of the time, it’s still all about what the cool kid is wearing.”

Jennifer Cheng is a news editor at Post City Magazines. You can follow Jenn's writing on life, food, architecture and design, arts and culture via Twitter @ [jennifercheng](#) or get in touch with her at jennifercheng@postcity.com.

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