INVISIBLE MEN
AN ANTHOLOGY FROM THE WESTMINSTER MENSWEAR ARCHIVE

A-Cold-Wall* · Adidas · Aitor Throup · Alexander McQueen · Austin Reed · Belstaff · Bernhard Willhelm · Blades · BodyMap · Burberry · Burton · C.P. Company · Christian Dior · Comme Des Garçons · Craig Green · Dege & Skinner · Gieves · H&M · Harrods · Helmut Lang · Irvine Sellars · Issey Miyake · Jean-Paul Gaultier · Jeremy Scott · John Stephen · Junior Gaultier · Junya Watanabe · Left Hand · Levi’s · Lewis Leathers · Liam Hodges · Mackintosh · Martin Margiela · Massimo Osti · Meadham Kirchhoff · Michiko Koshino · Mr Fish · Nigel Cabourn · Paul Smith · Peter Saville · Prada · Sibling · Stella McCartney · Stone Island · Umbro · Undercover · Vexed Generation · Vivienne Westwood · Vollebak · Zegna Sport

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Fashion today is doing something that has never been done before: it is going for information and inspiration to the street and to the sports field. Perhaps it is the workman in his boiler suit, the garage mechanic, the welder on the building site, or the footballer who can provide the ‘look’ for our present-day needs.

Cecil Beaton, Introduction to *Fashion: An Anthology* by Cecil Beaton, 1971

Invisible Men displays over 180 garments exclusively drawn from the Westminster Menswear Archive. It covers the last 120 years of mostly British menswear organised into twelve thematic sections. It explores the design language of menswear by presenting designer garments alongside military, functional and utilitarian outfits.

The replication of archetypal functional garments intended for specific industrial, technical or military use dominates menswear design. The exhibition illustrates how designers have disrupted these conventions through minimal, yet significant modifications to produce outcomes that both replicate and subvert their source material. The endless reproduction, appropriation and interpretation has meant that the original meaning and function has faded through each reiteration.

Through this approach, the language of menswear has developed an almost fetishistic appreciation of the working man in all his heroic iterations. Designs constantly reference the clothing of seafarers, soldiers, athletes, firefighters, road workers, and explorers.

This design strategy has largely allowed men and what they wear to avoid scrutiny. These garments have remained largely invisible within fashion exhibitions in favour of presenting menswear primarily as the story of the dandy or the peacock male.

*This exhibition aims to shine a light on these invisible men.*
Capes

At its most minimal, a cloak is simply a piece of cloth wrapped around the body. Its form is one of the earliest garments.

The cloak, and its shorter iteration the cape, has become synonymous with the idea of concealment, disguise and invisibility. ‘Cloak and dagger’ hints at espionage and secrecy, while in military terminology a cloaking device refers to the ability to avoid detection by making objects appear invisible.

The cloak acts as an external barrier and garment that hides the body. In recent years, cloaks have made a resurgence within menswear due to their appeal as a mystical, genderless, ancient garment that transcends the whims of fashion.

Speedway Cape - Belstaff. 1950-1959
British Army Cape - Maker unknown. 1966-1992
Zeltbahn Cape - Stone Island. 1982
Inverness Cape - Hobson & Son. 1984
Unknown Pleasures cape - Undercover. 2009
British Military Foul Weather Cape - Maker unknown. 1917-1945
Gold Kaftan - Mr Fish. 1970-1971
Police Cape - Maker unknown. 1950-1959
Hammock Cape - C.P. Company. 2000
Male by Paul Cape - John Stephen. 1967
Plash-Palatka Cape - Maker unknown. 1960-1991
Denim Poncho with Jacquard Patches - Liam Hodges. 2015
Priest’s Chasuble - Maker unknown. 1930-1950
Zeltbahn Cape - Stone Island. 1982
Overalls

Overalls are an all-in-one outer garment designed to protect a worker’s ordinary clothing. They are also known as coveralls, jumpsuits or boiler suits. Typically worn for trades traditionally identified as masculine and involving heavy and dirty manual labour, overalls are still the daily uniform for millions of workers.

The ubiquitous nature of the overall means that they exist almost as a non-garment, unconsidered and unnoticed. They cover up what is worn underneath, allowing the wearer to hide their inner clothed identities.

The adoption of the overall by menswear designers illustrates the minimal yet significant distance between men’s practical work wear and high-fashion interpretations.

Boilersuit - Pezwear. 1950-1955
Number Print Overalls - Comme des Garçons. 2001
USMC M-426A Summer Flying Suit - Berk-Ray Corp. 1942
Tyvek Disposable Overalls - DuPont. 2016
Patchwork Overall - Liam Hodges. 2016
Cotton Overalls - Issey Miyake. 1980-1989
Hooded Beekeeper Overalls - Bee Pro Gear. 2018
Aviation Immersion Suit - Maker unknown. 2017
Tyvek Overalls - Amy Determann. 2017
Denim Overalls - Prada Linea Rossa. 2000
CBRN Under Coveralls - Remploy Frontline. 2000
Aviakit Motorcycle Racing Suit - Lewis Leathers. 1965-1979
Jersey Jumpsuit - BodyMap. 1986
Number Print Overalls - *Comme des Garçons*. 2001
As ubiquitous and as functional as a pair of jeans, for nearly 200 years the black tailored jacket has been a staple of the male wardrobe. Through variations of fabric, finish and cut, the black tailored jacket demonstrates menswear’s obsession with subtle differences that to the untrained eye are almost imperceptible.

The rise of black as the colour of choice for men’s suits in Europe in the 1800s mirrored the development of the craft of tailoring and new avenues of male employment. Empire, business and government generated new professions filled by men clad in tailored black wool.

In contemporary menswear, the black tailored jacket has retained its historic associations with respectability and formality even as designers have deconstructed it.

Suit Jacket - Montague Burton. 1930-1939
Mylar Blazer - Calvin Klein. 2010
Double Breasted Velvet Jacket - Blades. 1968-1970
Fusion of Two Jackets - Maison Martin Margiela with H&M. 2012
Suit Jacket with Blue Lapels - Paul Smith. 2008
Black Velvet Jacket - Austin Reed Cue. 1967-1975
Black Dinner Jacket - Vivienne Westwood. 1990-1995
Ruched Panelled Jacket - Jean-Paul Gaultier. 1989
Velvet Smoking Jacket - Harrods. 1928
Black Leather Jacket - Comme des Garçons Homme Plus. 2000
Black Double Breasted Jacket - Montague Burton. 1936-1940
Flocked Jacket - Carol Christian Poell. 2002
Mylar Blazer - Calvin Klein. 2010
Proletariat

As the fourth industrial revolution advances, the opportunity for many men to demonstrate their masculinity through work that is physical, dirty or dangerous has diminished. This has led to designers drawing on the clothing of heroic workers, such as soldiers, firefighters and seafarers and the clothes of the road worker, ditch digger and labourer.

Covered with dirt and detritus, these designer garments are also layered with an idealised notion of a masculine ‘authenticity’ signified by the adoption of working clothes. They are stained and worn but not through the hard labour of the wearer. Paradoxically, and at great expense, the fashionable wearer presents a masculine ideal based on clothing with a history of working-class utility.

Academia Correction Workshop Coat - *A-COLD-WALL*.*. 2017
Tarpaulin Parka - *Liam Hodges*. 2013
Shopkeeper’s Coat - *Lordship Brand*. 1940-1959
Collarless Shirt - *Banner*. 1890-1900
Suede Farming Breeches - *Maker unknown*. 1850-1900
Boot Print Waistcoat and Trousers - *Comme des Garçons Homme Plus*. 1995
Paint Stripe Army Parka - *Helmut Lang*. 1997
Leather Boots - *Helmut Lang*. 2003
Coverstitch Jacket - *Carol Christian Poell*. 2006
Academia Correction Workshop Coat - A-COLD-WALL*. 2017
Camouflage

Camouflage is the use of any combination of materials, colouration, or illumination for concealment, either by making objects hard to see (crypsis) or by disguising them as something else (mimesis). A third approach, motion dazzle, confuses the observer with a striking pattern, making the object visible but briefly harder to locate.

Military camouflage developed rapidly after the First World War and artists were commissioned to create designs. Technically known as disruptive pattern material (DPM), different national military forces have their own patterns and colours.

The close relationship between camouflage and the military has meant it has strong associations with masculinity. In western fashion, it has become one of the ways that men can wear striking colour and pattern without threatening traditional constructions of male identity.

Hand Painted Canvas Jacket - Craig Green. 2014
NWU Type 1 Camouflage Uniform - Bethel Industries Inc. 2010
Velvet Tasselled Jacket - Irvine Sellars. 1967
Camouflage Smock, Trousers and Pith Helmet - Adam Marc James. 2014
Leopard Print Jacket, T-Shirt and Jeans - Junior Gaultier. 1989
Embroidered Jacket - Sibling. 2017
Huntsman Suit - Vostok Service. 2016
Snow Camouflage Ghillie Suit - Mil-Tec. 2016
Alpenflage Camouflage M70 Uniform - Maker unknown. 1957-1993
Body Armour Vest - Bernhard Willhelm. 2014
Frogskin Camouflage Coverall - Maker Unknown. 1968
Raso Gommato Camouflage Jacket - Stone Island. 2013
Neon Jacket, Trousers and Trainers - Adidas Originals X Jeremy Scott. 2013
Velvet Tasselled Jacket - Irvine Sellars. 1967
Armour

One of the significant functions of utilitarian menswear is to protect its wearer. As military weapons and industrial dangers have advanced, the technology of armour and protective clothing has developed to defend the body against their threats.

The connection with hazard and risk of these garments also gives them and their wearer status, even a projection of bravery. Many menswear designs consciously reference this symbolic value.

Bulletproof fabrics, Hi-Viz, ballistic weaves and metal plating have been adopted as a motif of contemporary menswear. This allows the wearer to imagine themselves as the heroic warrior of their daily existence, while their actual day-to-day activities may be banal and risk-free.

Hi-Viz Railway Workers Waistcoat - *Burberry*. 2018
Fire Proximity Suit - *Globe*. 2010
Taser Training Suit - *KIT Design Technical Wear*. 2004
Astro Moto Jacket - *Helmut Lang*. 2017
Hi-Viz Vest - *Stone Island*. 1990
British Police Tactical Taser Vest - *Yaffy*. 2014
Beekeeper Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Reversible Metallic Coat - *Stone Island*. 2003
Taser Training Suit - KIT Design Technical Wear. 2004
The development of the flight jacket followed advances in aircraft design during and after the First World War. In the United States, the evolution of American military aircraft led to a range of jackets known by their reference codes. These started with the A-1 in 1925 while the iconic MA-1 appeared in the 1950s.

The introduction of the fighter jet in the 1940s meant that traditional leather flight jackets became impractical. They were bulky, got wet and froze at the higher altitudes flown by the new planes. The design response was a lightweight synthetic jacket. The most well-known of these, the MA-1 flight jacket, quickly became both essential kit and a desirable civilian garment.

In 1963, Alpha Industries started manufacturing the MA-1 to US military specification and they began wholesaling them to a broader audience in 1984. Skinheads, clubbers, and gay men rapidly adopted the design as the ubiquitous garment of choice.

Clint Eastwood Jacket - *Vivienne Westwood.* 1984
Fitted MA1 Jacket - *Junior Gaultier.* 1988
Transparent Trousers - *Meadham Kirchhoff.* 2014
RAF MK31 Life Preserver Jacket - *Beaufort.* 1998
Hand Painted Coat - *Liam Hodges.* 2013
Multi-Pocket Vest - *Stone Island.* 2005
USAF CWU-I/P Flight Coveralls - *M.C.S.A MFG. Division.* 1963
Leather Gilet Jacket - *C.P. Company.* 1982
USAF N-3B Cold Weather Parka - *Southern Athletic Co., Inc.* 1965
RAF MK31 Life Preserver Jacket - Beaufort. 1998
Urban Protection

In 1997 Moreno Ferrari, the newly appointed designer at Italian brand C.P. Company, asked himself what challenges the modern man faced, and how he could design garments to make the wearer’s daily life better.

As a result, he developed the Urban Protection range that incorporates complex, mostly hidden functionality into each garment. Superficially, the outerwear pieces look identical, but on closer investigation, each garment reveals that it performs a function for a specific purpose.

A jacket detects pollutants in the air and sends alerts via an LED screen; another has an integral personal safety device, while another has hidden electronics to embed music into the garment. Ferrari’s approach prioritised utility, which meant that this collection transcended seasonal trends.

Prototype Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 1997
Metropolis Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Life Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 1999
Munch Coat - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Glove Coat - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Rest Folding Rucksack Stool - *C.P. Company*. 2000
REM Jacket and Messenger Bag. - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Solo Waistcoat - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Yo Coat with Sony Discman - *C.P. Company*. 1999
Jacket with Detachable Legs - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Light Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Zip Up Cardigan - *C.P. Company*. 2000
LED Jacket - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Sportswear

Men’s physicality has been on display through sport and military training for thousands of years, linking it to ritual, warfare and entertainment. Now a standard form of male dress, sportswear is designed both for the performance of particular sports and for the performativity of masculinities.

Distinctively British sporting style dates to at least the mid-1700s and has strong associations with class as the wealthy could afford the time and money for specialist clothing. Significant factors in the widespread adoption of sportswear include increasing leisure time for working people, cheaper mass manufactured clothing, branding and technological innovation by sportswear businesses.

Wearing specific clothing for watching sport has been equally important, especially as sportswear has shifted to leisurewear and streetwear.

Jersey Sweatshirt and Trousers - Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. 1983
Arsenal Style Teamwear Shirt - Umbro. 1960-1970
Hand Knitted Cricket Jumper - Gieves. 1940-1949
Wool Cricket Trousers - Umbro. 1950-1959
Cotton Drill Top - Palace x Umbro. 2012
Supporters Scarf Jumper - Maison Martin Margiela with H&M. 2012
White Cotton Shirt - Mr Fish. 1966-1974
England Football Team Tracksuit - Umbro. 1990
Sports Jacket and Cap - Bodger & Co Ltd. 1922
Tela Stella Sweatshirt and Sailor Trousers - Stone Island. 1982
Royal Marines Sports Top - Conlowe Ltd. 1957
White Shorts - Harrods. 1945
Ramsey Jacket and Trousers - Aitor Throup X Umbro. 2011
Printed Biker Jacket and Lycra Shorts - BodyMap. 1984-1985
Jersey Sweatshirt and Trousers - Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. 1983
Technology

Technology, the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, has a long history in the development of menswear.

Wearable technology dates to the early 1700s with the creation of the portable ornamental watch. They were worn as pendants or attached to clothing and became fashionable among the nobility.

Three hundred years later, the desire to incorporate the latest technological advances into fashionable clothing continues, albeit with mixed results. The millennium saw many designers inspired to produce garments that integrated electronics and portable consumer devices. These quickly became outdated with the rapid pace of improvements in mobile technology.

Thermosensitive Ice Suit - *Stone Island*. 1989
Everest Parka - *Nigel Cabourn*. 2004
Graphene Jacket - *Vollebak*. 2019
Transformables Shoulderpack - *C.P. Company*. 2000
Senior TT Competition Overcoat - *Belstaff*. 1957-1960
I-Jacket - *Zegna Sport*. 2006
Memory Trenchcoat - *Maison Margiela*. 2002
Everest Parka - Nigel Cabourn. 2004
Alexander McQueen

Alexander McQueen spent five years as an apprentice on Savile Row, learning the art of tailoring. Firstly, at Anderson & Sheppard, where he learnt to cut jackets, then later at Gieves & Hawkes where he was trained in the cut of trousers. His knowledge of the cut and construction of traditional menswear, and his ability to subvert this became central to the McQueen silhouette and aesthetic.

As early as his 1996 collection The Hunger, McQueen's runway shows featured menswear alongside his womenswear. However, it has until now been almost invisible; no examples were presented in the V&A's Savage Beauty exhibition, which meant the connection between his menswear training in tailoring and its application and subversion into his cut and vision for womenswear remained unexplored.

Sleeveless Drill Top - *Alexander McQueen*. 1995-2004
Tyre Print Trousers - *Alexander McQueen*. 1997
Spray Painted Frockcoat - *Alexander McQueen*. 1997
Glen Plaid Suit  - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Asymmetric Herringbone Jacket - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Dogtooth Transparent Panel Jacket - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Zipped Overalls - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Slash Back Coat - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Halter Neck Priest Vestment  - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Antiqued Lace Overlayer Vest - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Skirted Trousers  - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Three-piece Suit - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Sleeved Waistcoat - *Alexander McQueen*. 1999
Cable Knit Overcoat - *Alexander McQueen*. 1999
Spray Painted Jacket - *Alexander McQueen*. 1999
Three-piece Suit - *Alexander McQueen*. 1998
Ceremonial

Garments that relate to ritual, ceremony and formality draw on a historical lineage of menswear that has seemingly remained unchanged for many decades. Religious vestments, military uniforms and formal tailoring all feature aspects of the ceremonial and are frequently designed to display power and status.

Many of these forms of dress entail exacting standards with rules about exactly how and when they are worn. They also frequently demonstrate considerable craft and skill in their production with elaborate decoration requiring labour-intensive hand stitching.

The references to archaic silhouettes, cut and detailing in these styles directly connect contemporary menswear to the past, often with romantic effect.

Wool Tailcoat - Burberry’s. 1924
England Anthem Jacket - Umbro. 2010
Grenadier Guards Drummer Tunic - Kashket & Partners Ltd. 1989
Knights Templar Sir Knight Frock Coat - Maker unknown. 1890-1900
Matador Jacket - Jean-Paul Gaultier. 1988
Red Wool Great Coat - Nicholas Yip. 2017
Trumpeters Tunic - Maker unknown. 1980-2010
Rockers Jacket - Excelled. 1980-1989
Green Howards Officers Mess Uniform - Maker unknown. 1850-1900
Life Guards Officer’s Frockcoat - Dege & Sons Ltd. 1994
Union Jack Flag Jacket - Melanddi. 1981
White Tie Scarlet Hunt Tailcoat - Maker unknown. 1914
Double-Layer Patchwork Parka - Craig Green. 2018
Hand Painted Canvas Jacket - Craig Green. 2014
Westminster Menswear Archive

The Archive was founded in 2016 with the generous support of the Quintin Hogg Trust. The collection conserves, documents, exhibits, and interprets menswear as a resource tool to inform contemporary design practice and to further the understanding of menswear as a distinct design discipline.

Its primary purpose is as a teaching collection for students to support their design practice and to create new knowledge around menswear, its history, materiality, and social meaning. Additionally, industry users include a significant number of major British and international menswear brands.

The Archive currently consists of over 1700 artefacts and spans the last 120 years. It features a significant number of garments designed and made in the United Kingdom or those that have influenced the development of British menswear and style. The archive includes pieces from Alexander McQueen, Craig Green, Stone Island, Ralph Lauren, Tommy Nutter, Liam Hodges, Carol Christian Poell, C.P. Company, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Calvin Klein, Meadham Kirchhoff, Kim Jones, Aitor Throup, Vivienne Westwood, Mr Fish, Irvine Sellars, Umbro, adidas, Nanamica, Belstaff, Barbour, Burberry, Maison Margiela, Jeremy Scott, Vexed Generation, Aquascutum, Levi’s, BodyMap, Jeremy Scott, Berghaus, Penfield, Griffin, and Comme des Garçons.

Additionally, the archive holds an extensive range of utilitarian and uniform garments. These include uniforms of armed services from around the world, civil uniforms from police, fire services, the General Post Office and British Rail.

You can make an appointment to visit the Archive by contacting us via email at mensweararchive@westminster.ac.uk

www.mensweararchive.com

The Westminster Menswear Archive and the exhibition *Invisible Men: An Anthology from the Westminster Menswear Archive* have been made possible by the generous support of the Quentin Hogg Trust.
GPO Duffel Coat - Maker Unknown. 1960-1965
Invisible Men: An Anthology from the Westminster Menswear Archive

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Professor Andrew Groves
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www.invisiblemenexhibition.com

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