

Not Without My Chador



eric lafforgue

It is a challenge for Iranian women to be fashionable due to the extremely strict dress code enforced by the religious authorities. The Islamic Sharia law was imposed during the 1979 revolution. Since then, women have been forced to cover their hair, neck and arms and to wear long loose-fitting clothes to “maintain their modesty.” Women are encouraged to wear black but the younger generation enjoys breaking the rules. Accessories – mainly Western style ones – are playing a big role in their outfits.



They are wearing Louis Vuitton scarves as women in Iran have been required to wear headscarves at all times in public since the Iranian Revolution. Those who do not follow this rule can be detained by the morality police, fined or even imprisoned. Young women challenge the religious rule by wearing their chador pushed to the back of their head to show off their hair!



To show off their style, women dye their hair, pushing the limits of the law. Applying excessive hair gel was also on the 2010 list of illegal practices. But nobody follows this law. The marketing team of L'Oréal has to find a way to promote its shampoos without showing actual hair in their ads!



A woman during the Tasua ceremony in Khorramabad that celebrates Imam Hussain, who is worshipped by Shia believers in Iran. Women cover their faces on this day but very few women otherwise do it on a daily basis in Iran. However, many still do it in the Persian gulf where it remains a tradition.



Women must wear a "manteau" (they use the French word) when they leave their home as it is supposed to hide their feminine curves. In the summer, when temperatures rise above 40°C, the layers of clothes are hardly bearable.



An increasing number of veils and chadors adorned with brand logos can be seen, like this Apple one.



In urban areas, women wear brightly colored scarves that they push to the back of their head to show off their hair.

Heads are cut in half on mannequins. The religious authorities wanted to cut the heads off completely, but shoppers and vendors protested. This is quite a compromise!



The hypocrisy of the regime: a shop sells austere fabric next to another one selling sexy bra tops in a bazaar.



Minorities are the only ones breaking the rules in their daily lives and wearing colorful clothes without fear of the police.

Left: Women in traditional Gilaki outfits in Shiraz.

Center: A Kurdish woman in Palangan village.

Right: A woman from Abyaneh wearing a traditional floral chador.



Iranian woman taking a picture with a phone with a fake Louis Vuitton cover. The main luxury brands are not yet in Iran, though some have recently opened new stores like Roberto Cavalli. But counterfeit products made in China are everywhere.



Plastic surgery is common in Iran. It is not taboo at all to walk in the streets with a band aid on the nose or even to speak about it. Most women get a nose job before their wedding. Many are now fond of botox and breast augmentation surgery. Women told me that since they can only show very little when dressing in the Iranian way, everything has to be perfect, including their nose.



Young Iranian women and even men have started plucking their eyebrows much to the chagrin of the Islamic authorities.



Iranians consider eyes to be the most beautiful feature of the face. They are called the mirrors of the heart.

In the past, eyebrows were supposed to be really thick until a woman got married and then finally had them shaped. But nowadays, more and more women have the same eyebrows, that are tattooed in a straight line and give them a very gothic and serious expression.

This is a trend that is influenced by TV shows and pop stars.

Threading is also popular to remove any unwanted facial hair.



In religious areas like the Khomeini mausoleum, some guards examine women's faces and if they decide that they are wearing too much make-up, they do not allow them to enter the holy place.



Recently, more than 70,000 policemen were sent to crack down on "Western cultural invasion." But they cannot look everywhere!



Accessories have become a very popular way to show style. The iPhone is in vogue even if it costs a fortune compared to an average Iranian salary. Women love posting selfies on Instagram as the app is not totally censored by the government – some local politicians use it for propaganda purposes.



Sunbeds are very popular among young adults. The tan gives a healthy appearance, but this too is unacceptable. The authorities claim that it "poses a cultural problem" and consider it to be "a blind imitation of the vulgar culture of the West."



Perfumes are an intrinsic part of a woman's identity in Iran. Men must not touch women, so when a female customer wants to test a fragrance, the seller will use a long syringe to dispense it.

Eric Lafforgue
www.ericlafforgue.com
lafforgue@mac.com
+33633053451