

## Style

Tailor-made  
for the roleVanessa Friedman  
Fashion

Is anyone else struck by how much Edward Snowden, in the few pictures that have surfaced and are used again and again, looks like a whistleblower of myth? White, clammy-looking skin that seems like it hasn't seen the sun in weeks, either because he has been hiding underground, sleeping in the Moscow airport, or holed-up with his computer (or all of the above); rimless glasses; colourless eyes; stubble; grey, nondescript clothes that throw no light on to the face; mussed hair that sticks up every which way – these are the clichés of the trade, but they also happen to describe his appearance in the image that has been passed round almost ad infinitum. The only other, presumably earlier pic available online – Snowden without glasses and beard, looking even more translucent and pointy – is no better (he looks kind of like an unhealthy *Twilight*-type).

In other words, if he didn't exist, Hollywood would probably have invented him. In fact, they did: cross Ralph Fiennes in *The Constant Gardener* (the slightly spiky, mussed hair, the colourless eyes and pasty skin) with Russell Crowe in *The Insider* (that skin again, plus frameless glasses), add some Matt Damon in *The Informant!* for good measure, and you get Snowden. Of course, Hollywood has created this

image, and we simply now expect it. So why think about it in the first place?

Is this a ridiculous subject to discuss when issues of national security, privacy, and geopolitical relations are at stake? Who cares about appearance when someone is exposing government secrets that threaten already tenuous international relations, and said person is on the run and an arrest warrant has been issued and a passport revoked? We all should.

Credibility, for anyone exposing a wrong done by a major institution, especially anyone doing so in the court of public opinion, is crucial. And like it or not, one of the ways we judge credibility is by image. People decide whether they see someone as the Lone Truth-teller or the Traitor by how someone looks. So, even if such details seem unimportant, they matter. They have certainly affected how people react to Snowden.

Indeed, I would argue that some of the weirder conspiracy theories surrounding the whistleblower at the moment – Naomi Wolf's theory that he is actually a tool of the "police state"; an idea floated by Jon Rappoport on infowars.com that he is a secret CIA agent deployed to discredit the National Security Agency – have arisen in part because he looks so tailor-made for the role.



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I mean, we have an image of a whistleblower in our heads – and then there he is, fully formed, in a Chinese hotel café, with not two but all three of the physical traits! How could anyone help but be suspicious?

After all, in support of her thinking, Wolf writes, "I gather that [Snowden] arranged for a talented film-maker to shoot the [Guardian] Greenwald interview," and, "He is not struggling for words, or thinking hard, as even bright, articulate whistleblowers under stress will do... To me this reads as someone who has learnt his talking points – again, the way that political campaigns train surrogates to transmit talking points." He was scripted!

Snowden certainly resembles a fictional whistleblower more than his notorious predecessor and current champion, Julian Assange, whose former long blonde locks called to mind the hair of a Bond nemesis. He's even closer than Bradley Manning, the army private who leaked documents to WikiLeaks and was court-martialled. If Snowden had been, say, a guy in a well-cut suit with well-groomed hair, I expect he might have sparked a series of different reactions and emotions from observers; he might have been ascribed different motivations. After all, he would have looked... respectable, like part of the

establishment. Which could work for or against him.

This is, of course, is basic courtroom manipulation; the reason why defendants wear jackets and ties when they sit for trial. So maybe this is actually a double bluff: for Snowden to don such garb would be too obvious a plea for public sympathy, whereas to look like a cinematic whistleblower is, in fact, to do exactly what everyone assumes you wouldn't do – which is ultimately more convincing.

Whatever the real answer, it does make me wonder how he will look when he finally resurfaces, be it in Ecuador or another location. Will he appear ever more dishevelled, or cleaned up for public viewing? It all depends, I suppose, on which buttons he (and his advisers) are trying to press.

These days even Assange, currently living in the Ecuadorian embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden, has buzzed his hair and put on a shirt and tie for press conferences about Snowden, and now resembles an overgrown boy scout. Visual clichés are clichés because we all buy into them. The complicated business of telling secrets is no exception.

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They came in swarms to Westminster, some clad in traditional beehive suits and veils, others dressed as striped militant worker bees. Dame Vivienne Westwood and Katharine Hammett were also there, milling among the crowds in combat queen bee mode.

Such was the scene, anyway, in April at the March of the Beekeepers: a protest in Parliament Square calling on the UK government to vote in favour of a European Union ban on neonicotinoid insecticides, blamed by ecologists and scientists for the rapid decline of bee colonies across Europe and North America. But the movement is far from over. Indeed, something similar is being re-enacted at boutiques throughout the summer as ready-to-wear designers also put the bumblebee on the global agenda.

Consider Azzedine Alaïa's honeycomb pleating on skirts and dresses; Alexander McQueen's resin bustiers and cuffs crawling with imitation bees; Marios Schwab's hexagonal patterns; and Sonia Rykiel's printed bumblebee motifs.

"At the moment, bees are very much in the 'design psyche'," says Yelena Ford, lead strategist for the international brand consultants Wolff Olins, which put beehives on the roof of its London offices four years ago. "There seems to be something mutually reaffirming as honeycombs and bees are used as inspiration across a wide variety of disciplines."

Sarah Burton, creative director at Alexander McQueen, says: "We wanted to express lightness, for the clothes to almost hover [like bees] over the women who wear them." She has put apian references on just about everything – from pencil skirts and sharply-executed jackets cut from honeycomb jacquards and mesh; Plexiglas belts (£650), neckpieces (£860), and cuffs (£460) embellished with topaz

## Hive mentality

The honeybee is creating a buzz this summer, both as a style statement and as a fashionable cause to champion, writes *Lucie Muir*



Left: Alexander McQueen; right: Marios Schwab, both S/S'13  
Catwalking

crystal bees; to the beekeeping headdresses the models (all 32 of them) wore during the runway show last September. "The collection is a study of femininity. It's about sensuality and skin but not nudity."

Jeweller Delfina Delettrez's current collection includes rings featuring bees crawling on honeycomb (£269, pictured below right) and gold-plated bracelets (£225) made with chains of glossy enamelled bees. Delettrez, part of the Fendi dynasty, says: "I relate to bees, they are very matriarchal just like my family."

"The bracelets are meant to look as if they have been rolled around the wrist, almost as if the hand has been ripped from the inside of a hive and honey is dripping off it," she adds, admitting when she is not creating fine jewellery, she is often engrossed watching documentaries on honeybees and other insects.

In an attempt to make each piece as natural-looking as possible, Delettrez omits safety fastenings and locks. She also uses orange resins and gold-coloured enamel to represent globules of sticky nectar.

London-based designer Marios Schwab prefers to spread honeycomb graphics around the body by way of lace-work dresses and cashmere knits. "I like the geometric structure of the honeycomb – the way it connects and reconnects," says Schwab. "I wanted to make continuous patterns with it, starting with small scale and increasing to even bigger shapes. It ended up being quite tricky and mathematical but, ultimately, an enjoyable process."

The plight of the honeybee is something Schwab also holds close to his heart. On the Greek island of Astypalea where he grew up, his

family still tend their own beehives. "They are extremely resourceful little creatures and I think fashion has made a conscious decision to help them," says Schwab.

But will this bee-moment pass like other trends, or is it indicative of some greater connection?

"I think this will have longevity because pure shapes, such as hexagons, offer endless possibilities," says Ford from Wolff Olins. Indeed, Wolff Olins has started its own Honey Club with the aim of building the biggest bee-friendly network in the world, and its creative staff often look to the bees at work as a source of design inspiration.

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Carmen Busquets, founder of luxury shopping site CoutureLab.com, agrees. "The honeycomb pattern will always be beyond trends," she says. "It was used in the 1950s by Cristóbal Balenciaga and in the 1980s by Sybilla and, of course, now by Alaïa, who has mastered this texture in all kinds of shapes to dramatic effect."

"Bees are the femmes fatales of the eco system," says Marios Schwab.

www.ft.com/stylestockists



Clockwise from left: dress, £275, Sonia Rykiel; ring, £269, Delfina Delettrez; bag, £2,595, McQueen

Power dressing  
Roberto Bolle

Italian dancer Roberto Bolle, 38, holds guest artist status with the Royal Ballet and La Scala Theatre Ballet and is a principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre.

## Suit by Dolce &amp; Gabbana

As an athlete, it can be difficult to find a well-fitting suit. I've tried many different designers but Dolce & Gabbana fit me best because they are really tailored – wider in the shoulder and nipped in at the waist. I like slim-fit clothes that skim my body – never anything baggy or second-skin tight.  
www.dolcegabbana.com

## Shirt by Dolce &amp; Gabbana

I like slim fit shirts with some stretch in the material. Because what I wear on stage is very fitted, when I'm offstage, I want to feel free.

## Tie by Dolce &amp; Gabbana

I find long slim ties very elegant. The more I've worn them, the more I like them. It's something a lot of people notice now and appreciate.

## Tie clip by Ralph Lauren

I bought this at an old antique market four years ago. For a man, it's difficult to stand out in a suit, so you have to play with the details. It's the small things that distinguish you.  
www.ralphlauren.com

## Cufflinks by Pomellato

It's very much a family tradition; my mother and my sister both wear Pomellato jewellery. I was given these cufflinks more than 15 years ago. For formal events, I always wear cufflinks. I like the versatility and ability to mix and match.  
www.pomellato.com

## Shoes by Dolce &amp; Gabbana

As a dancer, my feet are vital to how I perform. Offstage, it's difficult for me to find comfortable shoes because I have a wider foot. Sneakers are my preference most of the time but for dressier occasions these shoes fit well.

## Watch by Baume &amp; Mercier

This was a birthday present I received 10 years ago from my father. It's vintage from the 1950s. A watch is my one beautiful accessory.  
www.baume-et-mercier.com

## Sunglasses by Bulgari

They're comfortable, lightweight and not over-the-top big but big enough to shade my eyes from prying paparazzi – especially in Italy.  
www.bulgari.com



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