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THE BIRTH OF ALTER.MODERN

COOL FASCISMO



Nazi chic is sweeping Berlin's streets. Skinheads are so last season; Che Guevara is the new face of Nazism. Today's radical rights are ditching drab Doc Martins for colorful keffiyeh scarves and New Balance sneakers,

making modern fascists the most fashion-savvy to date.

Corporate logos have become sites of semantic warfare, subtly scripted with anti-Semitic messages. Helly Hansen's "HH" is now code for "Heil Hitler," and Lonsdale a nod to *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or NSDAP. This co-opting of mainstream clothing allows racists to allude to their political affiliations in public without risking arrest or fine. Berlin police officers have even been banned from wearing

ten popular upscale brands - including Ben Sherman, Fred Perry, Lonsdale, ACAB and PitBull - to avoid looking "too Nazi" on duty.

For those more forthcoming about their political leanings, the clothing of choice is Thor Steinar: a brand made "for the scene by the scene." After having their original logo banned in 2004 for appearing too similar to uniforms worn by the SS, Thor Steinar has started to use codes on its clothing to show Nazi affiliation. Numbers such as 18 (for Adolph Hitler's initials) are popular as references, as are eagles and Norwegian flags to symbolize "Nordic origin."

Germany's domestic intelligence agency estimates there are 40,000 Germans currently identifying as "extreme rightists" and the numbers are growing. Despite - or perhaps because of - its grave historical associations, contemporary cool coded clothing is being snapped up by German teens quicker than you can say *Sieg Heil!*

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