



Knot Without Reason

by Guy Arseneau

Hand Painted Ties

The Lion has his mane, the Peacock feathers and the Rooster a crown. Did Mankind get shortchanged in the gender accessories department? Certainly knot! Male members of the Homo sapiens club have invented what Mother Nature denied them an apparently useless but high profile power symbol that says in varying degrees of intensity, "I'm King of the Hill." Serving no practical function, often in the way, and many times uncomfortable, the necktie is nonetheless an indispensable item that functions as a corporate jockstrap in today's world.

Copyrighted © 2017-2020. No part of this article may be reproduced without the express written consent of the author.

Salmon Tie



For one New Hyde Park, New York man, neckties are not just a clothing accessory but a key to understanding the enigma of human nature. With over a thousand in his collection, Ed Kling is able to put a face on twentieth century history and a tie around its neck. "Ties did not spring up independently of the culture in which they were worn," Kling says. Citing America in the fifties as a prime example, Kling believes the conservative ties of the era reflected a belief in America's industrial and military supremacy. Conversely, periods of international upheaval and chaos are mirrored in the sartorial styles of the time. The Persian Gulf War and all of the uncertainty it entailed was exemplified, Kling says, by a sharp upsurge in loud ties whose day glow colors manifested a collective sense of anxiety.

Kling believes that ties satisfy the dual human desire for group identity and still leave room for individuality. "Major

corporations have unspoken rules which say in effect, that a white shirt and dark suit is the office uniform. A distinctive tie allows employees to maintain acceptance among their peers and still stand out in a crowd." This, he believes, also offers the collector a humanizing insight into the past. "Some of the ties I have are truly beautiful. Even if you wouldn't wear a particular one from my collection, when you look at them you're able to see how people thought about themselves and the world they lived in forty, fifty years ago. It's a perspective you just can't get out of a history book."

The high water mark for tie collectors continues to be the World War II era. Considered to be the rigneur for the time, hand painted ties were the order of the day. Some of the finest ties from the forties can sell for a significant amount of money. Ironically, many of the professional collectors of today are Japanese businessmen who roam the closets and



Hand Painted Ties



Hand Painted Ties

Copyrighted © 2017-2020. No part of this article may be reproduced without the express written consent of the author.



Deco Bow Ties



garages of American homes in search of forties neckties. Shipped to Japan, they are copied, mass produced and exported to a new generation of Americans whose knowledge of World War II comes from black and white newsreel footage.

The post war period from 1946-48 was the golden age of neckwear. With over six hundred manufacturers competing for the throats of men, competition among tie makers resulted in the bizarre and unusual becoming commonplace. Clothing makers looked beyond the backrooms of the garment centers and tapped into the talents of people in the art world, not the least of which was Salvador Dali, whose off-center art was integrated into the mainstream fashion of America's heartland. Some of Dali's designs were a bit much for the clothiers of the time. James Lehrer, a leading tie maker in the forties, said, "Bass fiddles with girls crawling

out of them and skeletons with pools of blood may be fine art, but they are not exactly the stuff of which ties are made."

The "peek-a-boo" was also a popular tie in the late forties. Deceptively conventional, it gave the avant garde an opportunity to flaunt the social mores of the day. Marketed by Van Heusen, the inner tie tail pictured scantily dressed young women in provocative poses. The ties, made in "small, medium and Wow," were a popular item among junior high school boys of all ages and have become highly desirable to collectors.

Though neckties are as indigenous to males as boxer shorts, women played a major role in their design, marketing and, of course, purchasing. Tina Lesser, Jacques Fath and Elsa Schiaparelli are just a few of the top women designers who dominated male fashion in the forties. The most influential trend setter was Countess Mara who set the stage for

*J.S. Bach and
Musical Ties*



*Cartoon
Character
Ties*



Deco Ties



Deco Ties



*Movie
Ties*



*Women
Ties*



*Jerry Garcia
Ties*



*Junk
Food
Tie*



*Beatles
Tie*



*11-Year
Old
Girl
Design*





Embroidered Tie

Pleated Tie



Tiemaster, Ed Kling



Azarak, Ed Kling's Bowtied Cat

future fashion designs when she dared to put her name on the outside of her ties.

The average length of a modern tie is about five feet. With over a thousand in his growing collection, Ed Kling has an assortment of neckwear which, extended end to end on top of each other, would be almost five times the height of New York City's Empire State Building. Incorporating the best and the worst of taste, his collection is a monument to Technicolor kitsch and excess. With an uncanny ability to spot trends, Kling knows a good tie deal when he sees one. A regular at New York's flea markets, the "tiemaster" has become a retro fashion setter. "People in my office take bets on the type of tie I'll be wearing to work each day," Kling states. Due to the volume of his ever-expanding collection, he has never worn the same tie twice.

At one time considered soul mates of Trekkies, clothing collectors used to be seen as lone wolf eccentrics. No more. Vintage clothing stores, tucked away in tourist designated pockets of "urban cool," flourish selling from the past. Does any of this surprise Ed Kling? Knot in the least. Sometimes it takes a people awhile to realize how valuable their links to the past really are," he says. If the haves and 'haveknots' make old fashioned ties commonplace, will Kling become disillusioned with antique clothing accessories? "No way. There's a whole world out there just waiting to discover the joy of spats," he says.

Guy Arseneau
www.guyarseneau.com



"That's all Folks!"

www.GuyArseneau.com