

How Montreal's creative culture redefined my understanding of style

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Photo by Tracy Valentine

I've always believed that the cities we live in shape the way we dress, but it wasn't until I spoke with Montreal content creator and model, Tracy Valentine Mulumba, that I finally understood just how deeply environment and community can influence personal style.

Tracy describes her style as "street chic," a blend of masculine silhouettes and feminine, a combination of streetwear elements and more luxe, elevated pieces. Listening to her talk about how her style has evolved, especially as she immersed herself in Montreal's fashion scene, has made me realize how intentional and expressive dressing can be. What stood out most was her love for independent designers. She told me that seeing clothes made by someone from start to finish has changed how she values fashion. For Tracy, independent designers are artists, and wearing their pieces feels like wearing art.

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As she walked me through her favourite Montreal designers, I felt like I was getting a mini tour of the city. Brands like [You and Zmi](#), known for their draped feminine tops, and [Damini by Damini](#), who focuses on one-of-one creations and small, limited drops that feel exclusive and deeply personal. She also mentioned [Atelier Details](#), a designer specializing in raw denim thick and unique enough that you simply won't find it anywhere else. The more Tracy shared, the more I understood why Montreal is often called a hub for emerging talent.

But it's not just designers shaping the city's look – its community. Montreal, she explained, has a strong thrift and curated vintage culture. People mix second-hand finds with independent designs and everyday pieces, creating outfits that feel personal and full of character. Layering is also essential, not just for style but out of necessity, because of Montreal's long winters. Tracy mentioned a local creator known for experimenting with unexpected combinations and textures, using layering as a form of self-expression, which shows how boldly people in Montreal's creative scene experiment with style.

Weather and lifestyle also play a big role in Tracy's day-to-day dressing. She loves colour, especially in colder months, because it energizes and motivates her. And with her fast-paced lifestyle, she swears by functional bags, quality coats and thoughtful accessories, details that elevates even the simplest outfit.

Talking to Tracy didn't just teach me about Montreal style, it reminded me that fashion is a form of storytelling, identity and community all at once.

Canadian fashion is more diverse than many people realize. Take time to discover local designers, visit a vintage shop or follow a Canadian creator who inspires you. Supporting local artists helps showcase the creativity that exists in every corner of the country.

How do you think your city or community influences the way you dress?