

DRESS TO EXPRESS

*Eccentric.
Unique.
Inspiring.*

These are just a few of the words you could use to describe the decidedly innovative aesthetic of designer Marquis Engel, the young talent behind the menswear brand Popular Culture.

Popular Culture is not menswear as most might label men's clothing. And that's the point—it's a style created to catch the eye and evoke a reaction because it's different. It is literally designed to make you look.

Engel's favorite piece? An unconventional, patchwork denim jacket he created from twenty different pairs of recycled pants, a piece born of a lack of funds for expensive fabrics, and a desire—a need—to express himself through creation and innovation.

Not only that, but Engel's collection is also designed to make you think.

As a black gay man, Engel is out to redefine popular culture and its accepted notions of what it means to be masculine, using a man's ability to express himself through clothing—the motivation behind the brand name he debuted in the CMH Fashion Week in Columbus in 2013.

While it may seem like it's "just clothing," Engel firmly believes that clothing, as a means of self-expression, can instill confidence and self-esteem in the black gay male community.

"Black gay men are looked at as weak, but at the end of the day we are still men, and we fight back. It's not necessarily with our bodies, but it's with our expression, our words, the way we create," Engel says.

"We're masculine, and I long to define what it means to be a masculine, black gay man."

After all, he points out that many of the most hyper-masculine images available are those of Mr. T or powerful African kings who confidently adorn themselves in gaudy jewelry, vibrant colors and layers upon

layers of clothing. So why can't these eccentric, cutting-edge looks define masculinity for the black gay male community? It's a question that Engel has answered definitively with Popular Culture.

"The message is that black gay men are here, we are visible," declares Engel, "and we're men."

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