



**10 ESSENTIALS**

## **10 Essentials: Mark McNairy**

The acclaimed American designer welcomes us into his NYC showroom to talk Ayn Rand, Southern soda, and baby wipes

BY REN MCKNIGHT | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CORRIE VIERREGGER

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As we walked into the building holding McNairy's showroom, he was on his way out for a smoke break. Even if the new 'do had kept us from recognizing him, the shoes were unmistakably his. McNairy, known for his tongue-in-cheek reinterpretations of American classics, has garnered no small amount of hype over the years. GQ has already called him "the most in-demand shoe designer on earth" and "the most talked-about cobbler in a century," so we'll go easy on the superlatives here, well-deserved

though they are. Other people have given him the moniker McNasty, in part due to his demeanor at trade shows. (Of the name, he says, "I grew up with it. McNasty, McFairy, McHairy... It's just standard for kids with "Mc" names. But then these guys [his team] made it stick.")

What we'll say now about McNairy is this: He's really not nasty at all if you get to know him a bit. He might even offer you a bottle of Cheerwine soda. He just doesn't have what he calls "the gift of gab," and he especially doesn't like to talk about his inspirations. "I've been in this business for a long time, and designers talking about their inspiration—it's bullshit," he says. "It's clothing, for God sakes. But I like to have fun, too, so that's reflected in the clothing." We couldn't agree more. In the clothes he puts out at the helm of Woolrich Woolen Mills and through his own line, Mark McNairy New Amsterdam, there is always a subtle rebellious twist to the classics. Just try putting on a pair of shoes like the ones above and not feel like you're sticking it to the man while wearing a three-piece suit.

Like his shoes, the list that follows is unique to him—click through for the McNastiest 10 Essentials of all.

Photo: Corrie Vierregger



### 1. Hanes Undershirts

"Hanes is from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and I'm from Greensboro, so I've been wearing them for as long as I can remember. I'm sure my mom dressed me in them when I was a kid, and then I just kept it going. I've tried switching to different kinds, and it's not the same. I love the fabric and the fit and the way they wear in."

Photo: Kohls.com



## 2. Cash Money

"Real men carry cash on them. I have debit and credit cards, but I don't feel right unless I have cash—I feel naked. It's a little bit different now because you can pay for almost anything with a debit card—McDonald's, taxi, whatever—but it's nice to have a little cash."

Photo: Getty Images





### 3. Bigboy Wipes

"It started when I had my daughter 17 years ago. I got addicted. When you have baby wipes in the house, it seems barbaric to use regular toilet paper. I don't think toilet paper will be around much longer. I had the idea to make wipes for adults, but they beat me to it. Now they're readily available in travel packs and it's like cash: I have a phobia of being caught without 'em. And I found out I'm not the only one. I've known Mordechai, Mister Mort, forever, but at Pitti this time I was in my booth and he came walking down with a pack in his front pocket. I'm like, 'Dude, what're you doing?' and he's like, 'I can't be without 'em.' He opened up his backpack and he had three or four different versions plus talcum powder. This is one that I found in Germany. It says limited edition packaging."

Photo: Corrie Vierregger





#### 4. J. Press O-ring Belts

"That's one of the first things I did for J. Press when I started there. The belt's made by Wiley Brothers, in Charlottesville, Virginia. J. Press had pretty much that same belt in a catalogue from the late '50s and early '60s, but when I started they didn't really have any casual belts. They're great with jeans, shorts, they're fine with a suit. These three belts are all you need."

Photo: Corrie Vierregger



#### 5. Mark McNairy New Amsterdam Boxer Shorts

"These started maybe 15 years ago. I wanted long boxer shorts, just above the knee, and you couldn't get 'em—they were all little short boxers. So with my old company McNairy Brothers I made some and gave 'em to my friends and they got addicted and every

Christmas that's what they want. These are also great because you can walk outside in them and nobody knows it's your underwear. If you forget to put the garbage cans out at night, in the morning you can just run outside and do it."

PHOTO: CORRIE VIERREGGER



#### 6. Cheerwine Soda

"I'm from North Carolina and I grew up drinking it, and I assumed you could get it anywhere, but when I moved to New York and looked for a Cheerwine in the deli I soon found out that it's not sold above the Mason-Dixon Line. So every time I would go to North Carolina to visit my parents I would bring back a 12-pack. But now, thanks to the Internet, you can order it and have it shipped to the house. They're starting to have it at a few select places in New York, but not very many. It's like people picking up on the Mexican Cokes that are made with all sugar."

Photo: Corrie Vierregger





**7. Mark McNairy New Amsterdam Knit Ties**

"I really got addicted to 'em when I started at J. Press. They had always been a big thing for J. Press, but the selection had become very limited, so I started expanding into more stripes and color variations. The two I'm talking about specifically are the solid black one and the navy and burgundy one—that's the only two ties you need. If you only had two ties, you could get by with those two."

Photo: Corrie Vierregger





#### 8. Custom Zippo Lighter

"I've had a lot of Zippo lighters, but this is one that Michael Williams gave me as a gift and it has 'Mr. McNairy' engraved on it. Unfortunately the German customs ripped the cotton out of it. That's the only way they would let me keep it—it was during the time where you couldn't fly with a lighter. I've gotta take the insides from another one and put it in there."

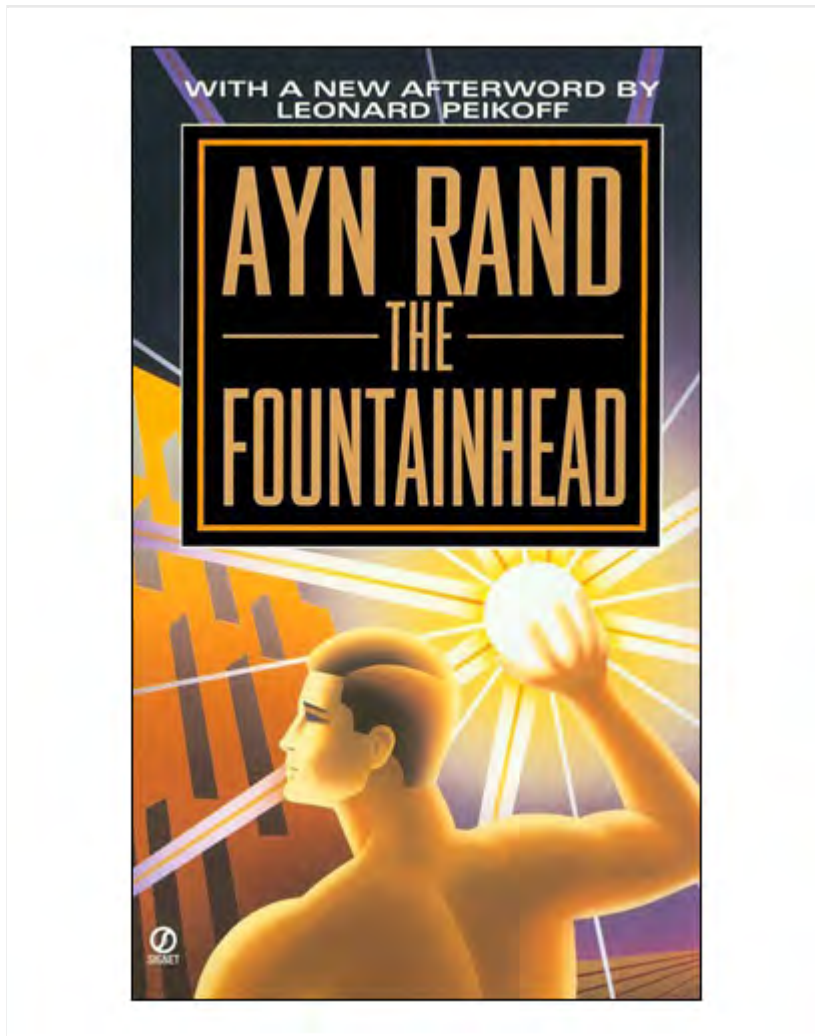
Photo: Corrie Vierregger



### 9. Pinky Ring

"I wanted one for a long time, then finally I showed a picture of Frank Sinatra—he had a square-ish one, as opposed to round—to my wife and asked her to make it for me. I wanted a diamond in it, so she made it that way and I had it engraved, but the engraving wasn't right—I wore it, but never felt comfortable—so then I took the diamond out and had it hand-engraved with my initials. And then it was perfect. But then I came up with this 'Fuck Off' idea, so I had it polished and smoothed again and had 'Fuck Off' engraved in it. This one's mine, but I sell them on my website, too, in silver."

Photo: Corrie Vierregger



### 10. *The Fountainhead*

"If you've never read Ayn Rand, read *The Fountainhead*. That's enough, in my opinion. It's a book that actually affected my life. The whole message I got from it was, 'Please yourself and you'll please others,' instead of trying to kiss ass and please others. Just please yourself—that's it."

Photo: Courtesy of Signet

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