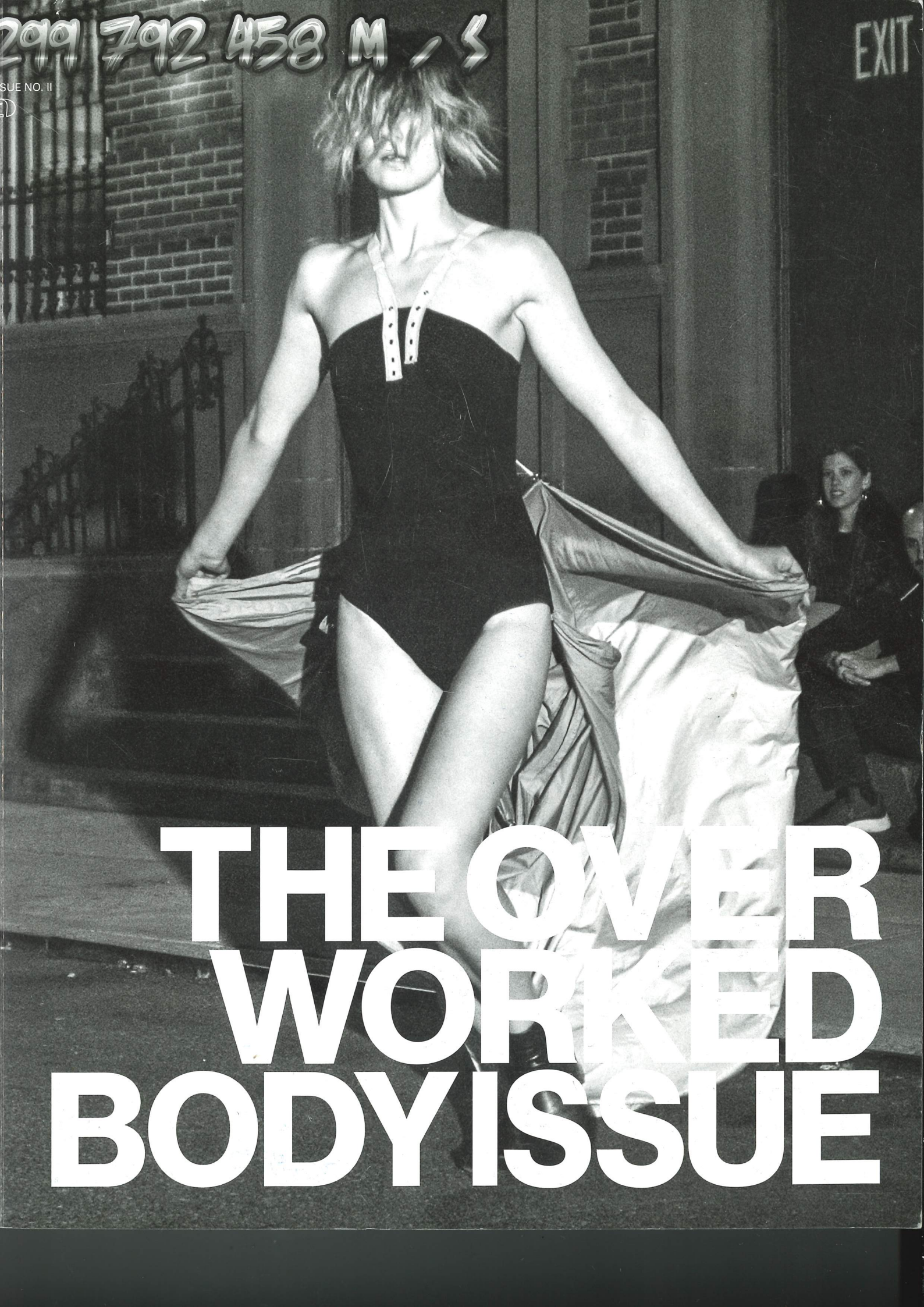
SUE NO. II



THE OVER WORKED BODY ISSUE

FOREWORD

BY MATTHEW LINDE

How to define a recent history of fashion?

This issue of *299 792 458 m/s* extends from the exhibition "The Overworked Body: An Anthology of 2000s Dress", opened in September 2017, spread across two Lower East Side locations; the non-profit project space *Ludlow38* funded by *Goethe-Institute* and the trans-atlantic enterprise *Mathew Gallery*.

The title of the exhibition alludes to Cecil Beaton's 1971 exhibition "Fashion: An Anthology" at the *Victoria & Albert Museum* in London. Heralded as an important curatorial landmark for fashion, it was the first instance in which fashionable modern dress received a museological moment. This new undertaking of 'fashionable modern dress' demonstrated a dilemma for the field as it required a different curatorial position from the usual custodians of historical dress, who had dealt with and analyzed these artifacts from either anthropological or sociological perspectives. "Fashion" as an artistic expression of modernity demanded an alternate treatment. With this interest in the creative act of 'now fashion', the bon vivant Beaton took on the task of "curating". For this purpose he used the format of an anthology - selecting as his whim dictated the most vivacious examples of fashionable clothing. This approach has set the tone for many fashion exhibitions since, most notably those produced by Diana Vreeland who in 1973 was appointed Special Consultant to the Costume Department at *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Vreeland, who had been the editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, was often criticized for her ahistorical groupings, which one might say was a betrayal of the curator's "fiduciary" duty to historical accuracy. In a more positive light one could argue her ability was to decipher fashion's ineffable élan regardless of trivial concerns such as the what, why and when of the objects. "The Overworked Body" hijacked Beaton's and Vreeland's approach to the point of ad nauseam. Unlike Beaton's 1971 exhibition, which had clearly delineated chronology, charting the past decades of the century, this exhibition presented a period of fashion that is overloaded and "overworked".

Fashion during the 2000s could be described as a period of hybrid subcultural styles remixing former selves, championing the principle of individual expression. The decade also saw the industry of fast-fashion massively expand its market, proliferating the presence of smart-casual wear. As such, fashion during this time embodied the conflicting roles of both globalization and homogeneity alongside pastiche and pluralism. However, what makes fashion from the aughts so debatable to define is its proximity to the present. It is only through the machine of history that fashion finds its protagonists.

While "The Overworked Body" exists as a historical exhibition, insofar that all the works are from 2000-2009, it also became an exercise to challenge how we periodize fashion. If periodization is the process of aestheticizing time, as, for example, the 1970s are emblematic of the flower-child, could the exhibition exploit the retrospective ambiguity of the 2000s to explore the inherent slippery nature of periods? In an effort to obstruct our tendency to assign a specific style to a specific period, "The Overworked Body" circumvented tracing subcultural styles, for example, a neo-rave section, a hip-hop corner, a Paris Hilton homage etc. Nor did it survey luxury labels of the time who did quantitatively well in press and sales. Different to "survey" or "overview," an anthology describes a selection by choice. In this sense, the exhibition did not offer an explication of historicity but instead aimed to enact the spirit of a fashion history yet to be understood. From graduate collections at acclaimed schools such as Central Saint Martins and the Antwerp Academy to designers' first collaborations with multinational companies such as Target and H&M; the exhibition packed the two modestly-sized galleries, presenting of over 50 participants. Underscored throughout were the fringe voices, or critical designers of the decade. Included were a mix of practitioners; from the excessive like *Viktor&Rolf*; the insurgent like *The Organization of Returning Fashion Interest*; the scholarly such as *Anke Loh*; the carnivalesque like *Walter van Beirendonck*; the multi-disciplinary like *BLESS*.

Weaving in between the closely placed mannequins, audiences encountered a dense aggregation, from an up-close and personal view, the designer outfits on display. Vague groupings of fashion localities were made across Vienna, Arnhem, Tokyo, Antwerp and New York. Archival "support material" such as publications, films, magazines and other printed matter were also included. Bernadette Corporation's *Made in USA* magazine was presented alongside early issues of Purple and the later issues of Dutch. Monitors showed video footage of exploratory runway presentations by designers such as *A.F. Vandevorst, Adeline André and Carol Christian Poell.* Look books and show invitations by *Bernhard Willhelm* and *Shelley Fox* were also on view, all as a means to exemplify the porous and expanded nature of fashion practice. As if to combat the boredom of a mainstreamed industry, the anthological function of the exhibition was to assemble designers who continued to reconfigure the codification of dress in niche ways. Some embodied this in one-off creations (e.g. *Andrea Ayala Closa*); others expressed market-reflexive strategies (e.g. *Imitation of Christ, KEUPR/van BENTM*); while other "progressive" designers, as critic Ulrich Lehmann writes in his 2005 reviews, generously reprinted in this magazine, examine the semiotic relationship between generics and functionality (eg. *Lutz, Ann-Sofie Back, Wendy & Jim*).

Considering this anthology's mélange of looks, fashion here is not so caught up in singular "styles" but as the idea of speed itself. Fashion performs modernism – a force dedicated to futurity yet also eternally fugitive. Its ongoing sartorial rotation attests a system locked in stasis. As such, the overworked body could offer a possible metaphor. And just as Walter Benjamin remarked on the "new velocities" of 19th Century technological life, so too can we identify a gearshift in the 2000s with the emergence of digitization and the internet and its globalizing acceleration upon fashion. Perhaps then fashion periods would be better framed through its technological edifices.

In her essay for this issue, Laura Gardner writes about fashion as a semiology constructed vis-à-vis its technological apparatus. Gardner compares our current Y2K digitized moment to the upheaval of the early 20th Century photographic media and its effects on fashion-language, arguing a periodization of fashion as pre- and post-internet.

Francesca Granata discusses the capitulation of grotesque fashion, a concept she borrows from Mikhail Bakhtin, into the 2000s mainstream. Here the maligned dereliction of previous "avant-garde" fashions, that Caroline Evans also writes extensively in her 2003 book *Fashion at the Edge*, are normalized through the new pervasive logics of celebrity.

Examining Walter Benjamin's ruminations on the pace of 1930's life via the two design disciplines of fashion and architecture, Philipp Ekardt discusses the temporality of fashion and its symbiotic relationship to modernity. Jumping into the 2000s, Helmut Lang and his two SoHo stores are evaluated in regards to the present's futurity.

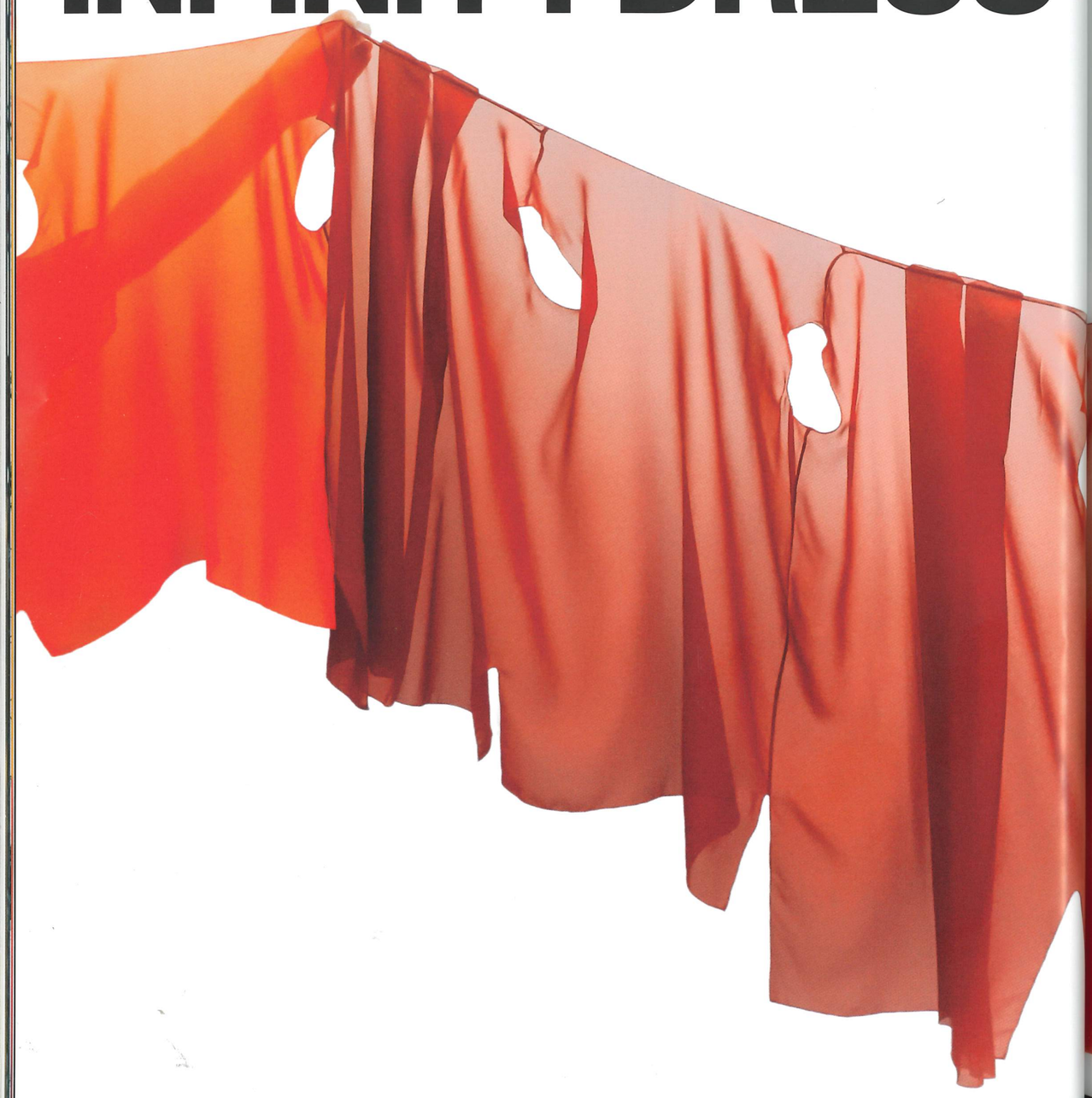
As a fashion machine itself, this magazine is also in the business of reconstituting past gestures into a rationalized future. And despite appearing as an analogue object it will marry the contemporaneous digital processes to spread its seed. The fashion stories herein will soon enough exhale the démodé, but not before it drifts into future overworked bodies.

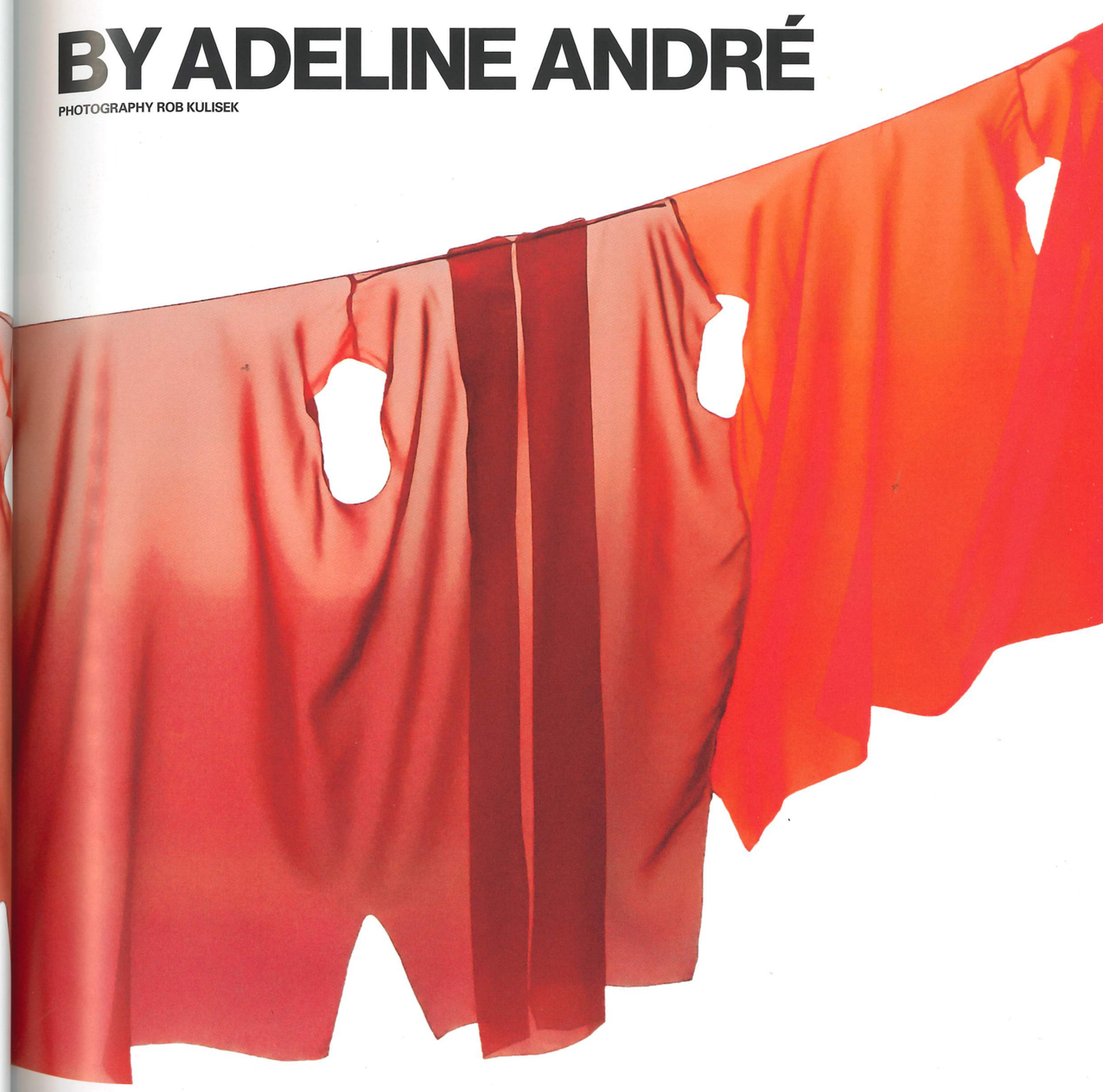
Matthew Linde is a PhD Candidate at the School of Fashion & Textiles, RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. His practice-based research addresses the boutique as a performative site, seeking to expand curatorial and communicative approaches for fashion practice. He is an independent fashion curator and organized The Overworked Body: An Anthology of 2000s Dress.

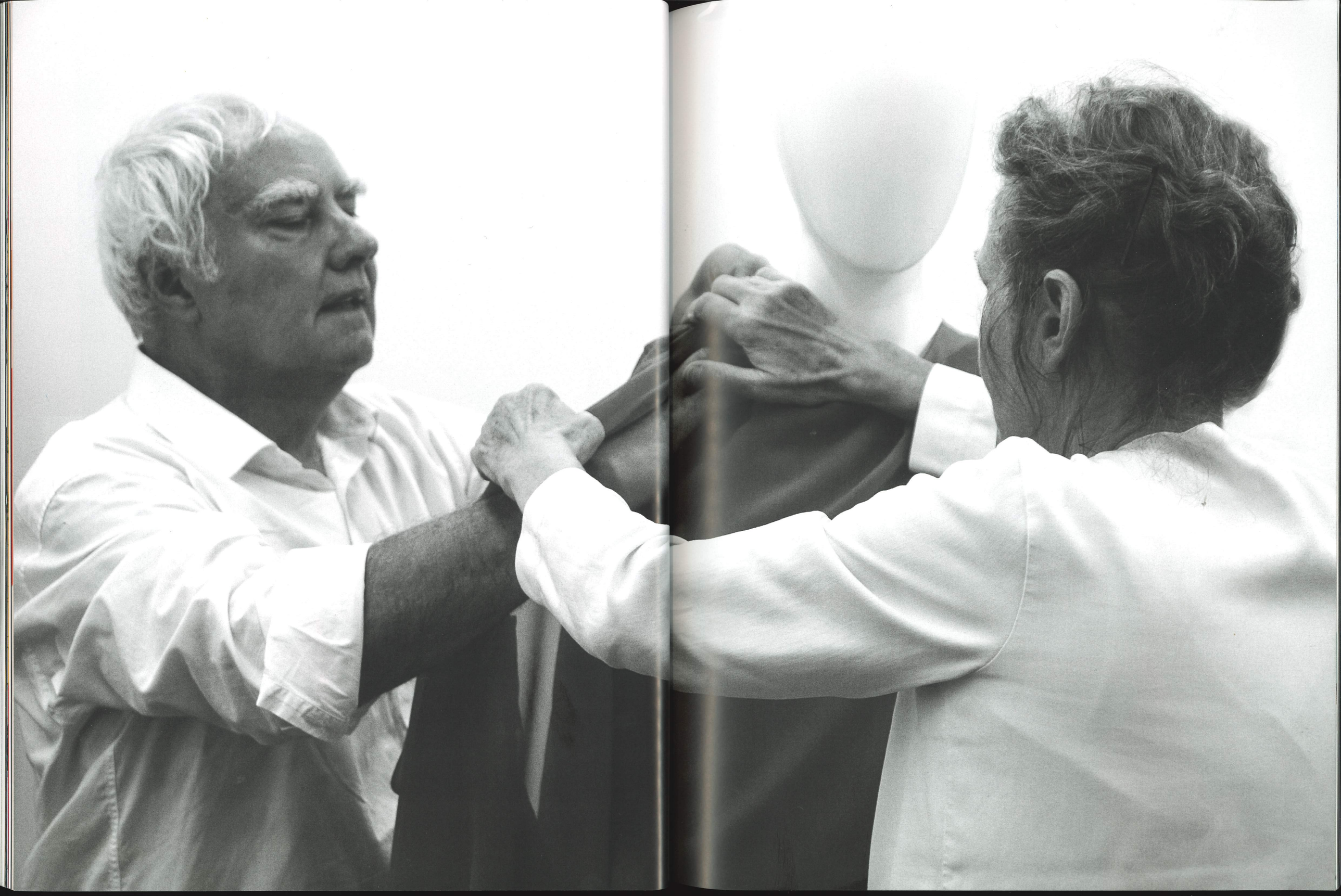
THE TWENTY ONE ARMHOLE INFINITY DRESS

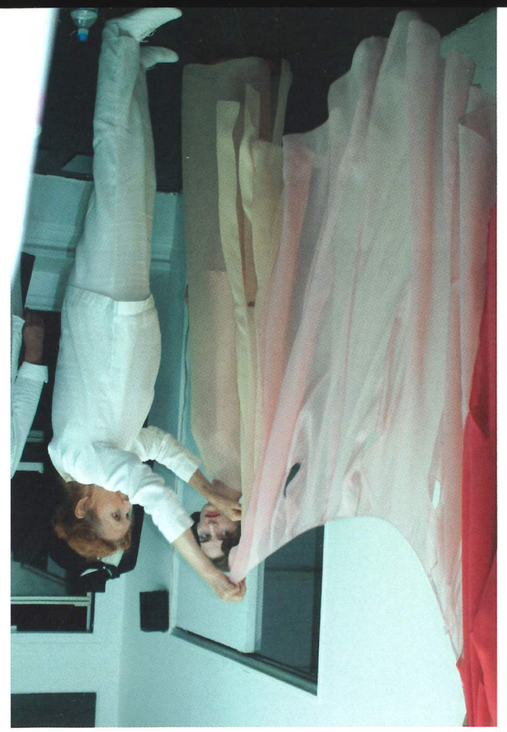
BY ADELINE ANDRÉ

PHOTOGRAPHY ROB KULISEK









YVES SAINT LAURENT

BY STEFANO PILATI

PHOTOGRAPHY ROB KULISEK
STYLING DAVID LIESKE
HAIR AND MAKE-UP ANN KOHLHAGEN/ARTLIST PARIS
MODELS THEA WESTREICH WAGNER AND ETHAN WAGNER

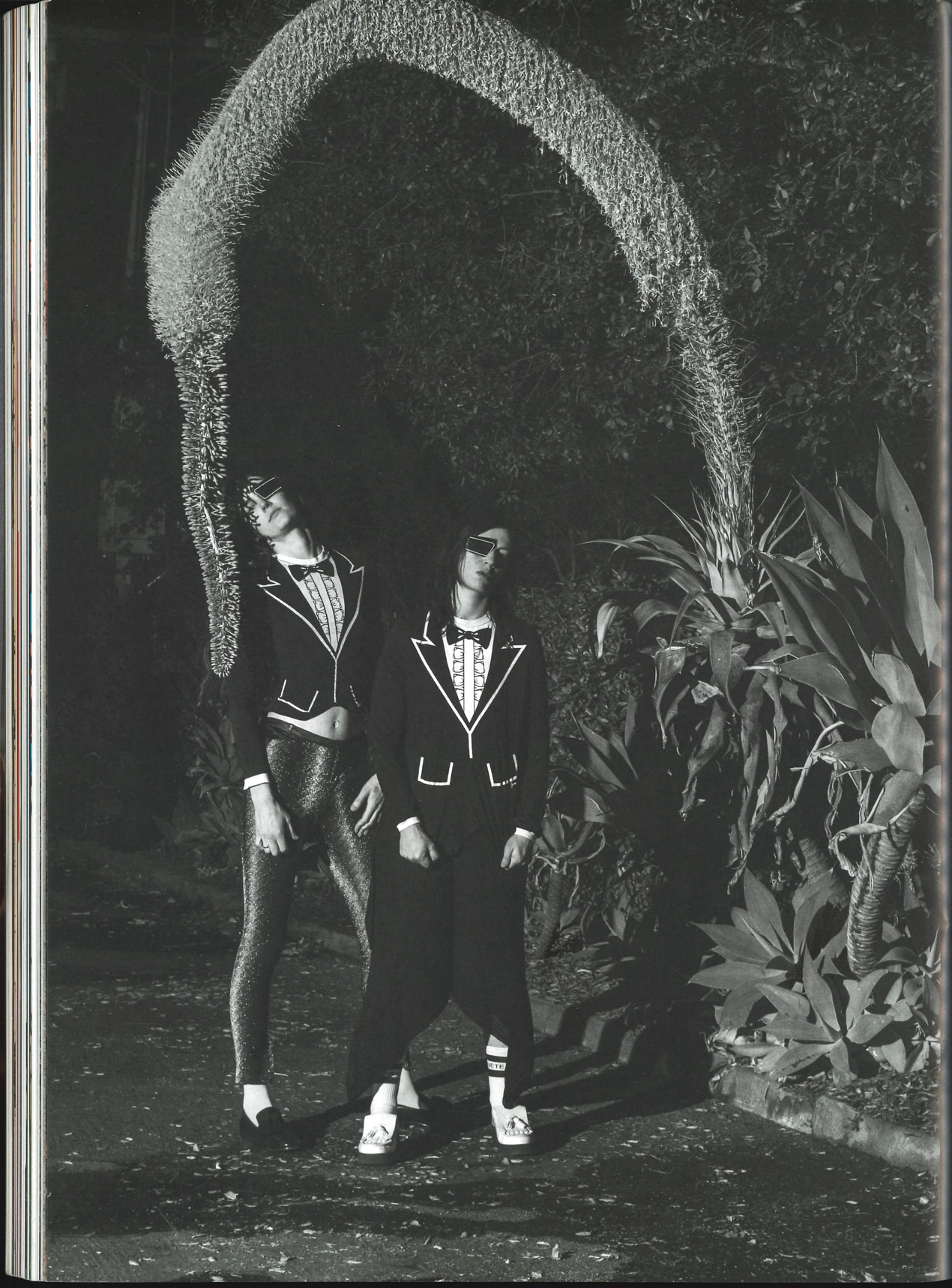
LEATHER EARRINGS JEREMY SCOTT

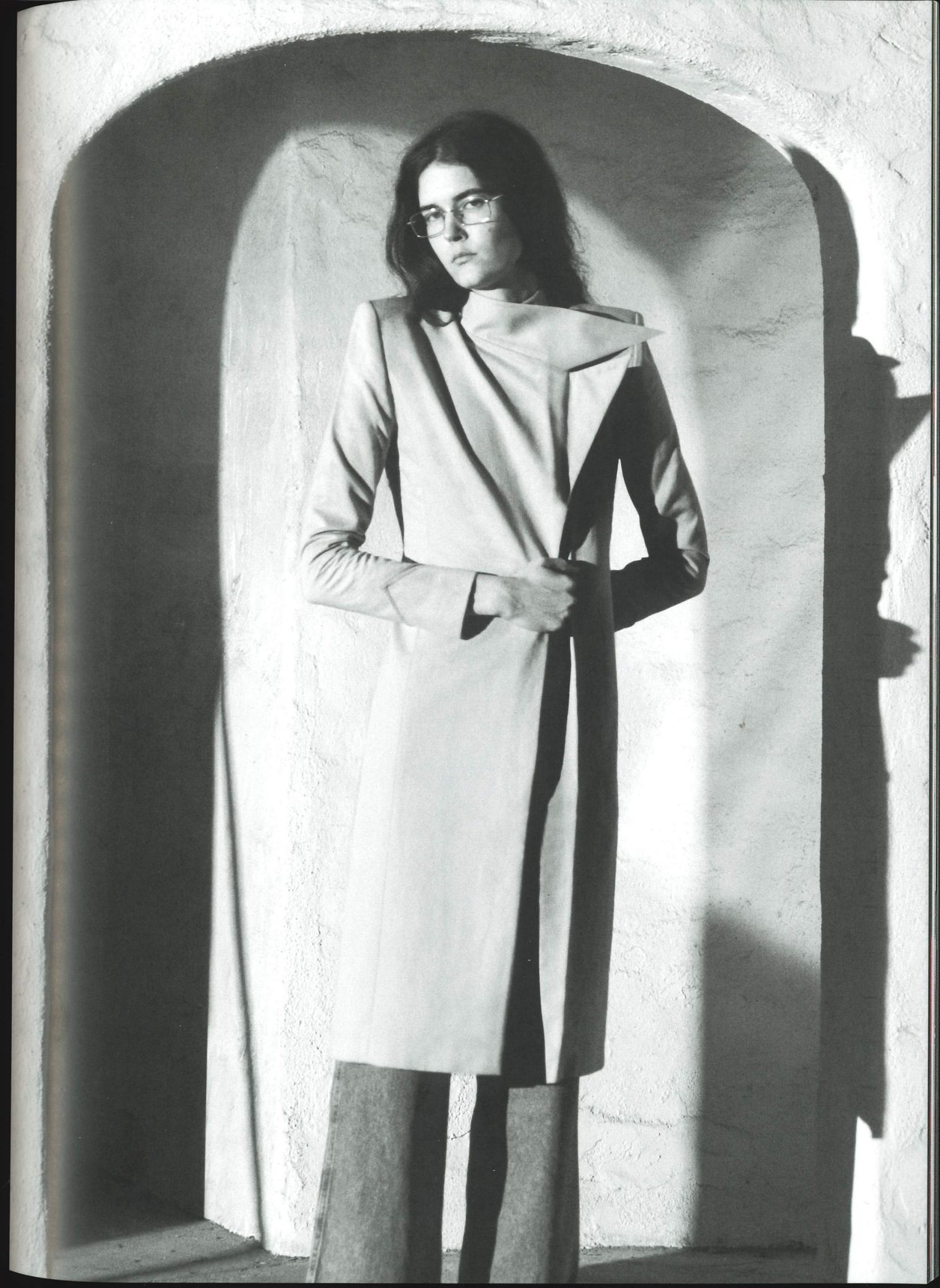
2000-2003 JEREMY SCOTT

PHOTOGRAPHY ROB KULISEK
STYLING DAVID LIESKE
MODEL ELIZA DOUGLAS/TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY

FELT CAP JEREMY SCOTT LEATHER EARRING JEREMY SCOTT
WOOL COAT JEREMY SCOTT TRIANGLE CLUTCH JEREMY SCOTT
STRAIGHT LEG JEANS ECKHAUS LATTA HIGH HEELS CELINE

FOLLOWING PAGES
KNIT DRESS JEREMY SCOTT OVERKNEE BOOTS VERO CUOIO





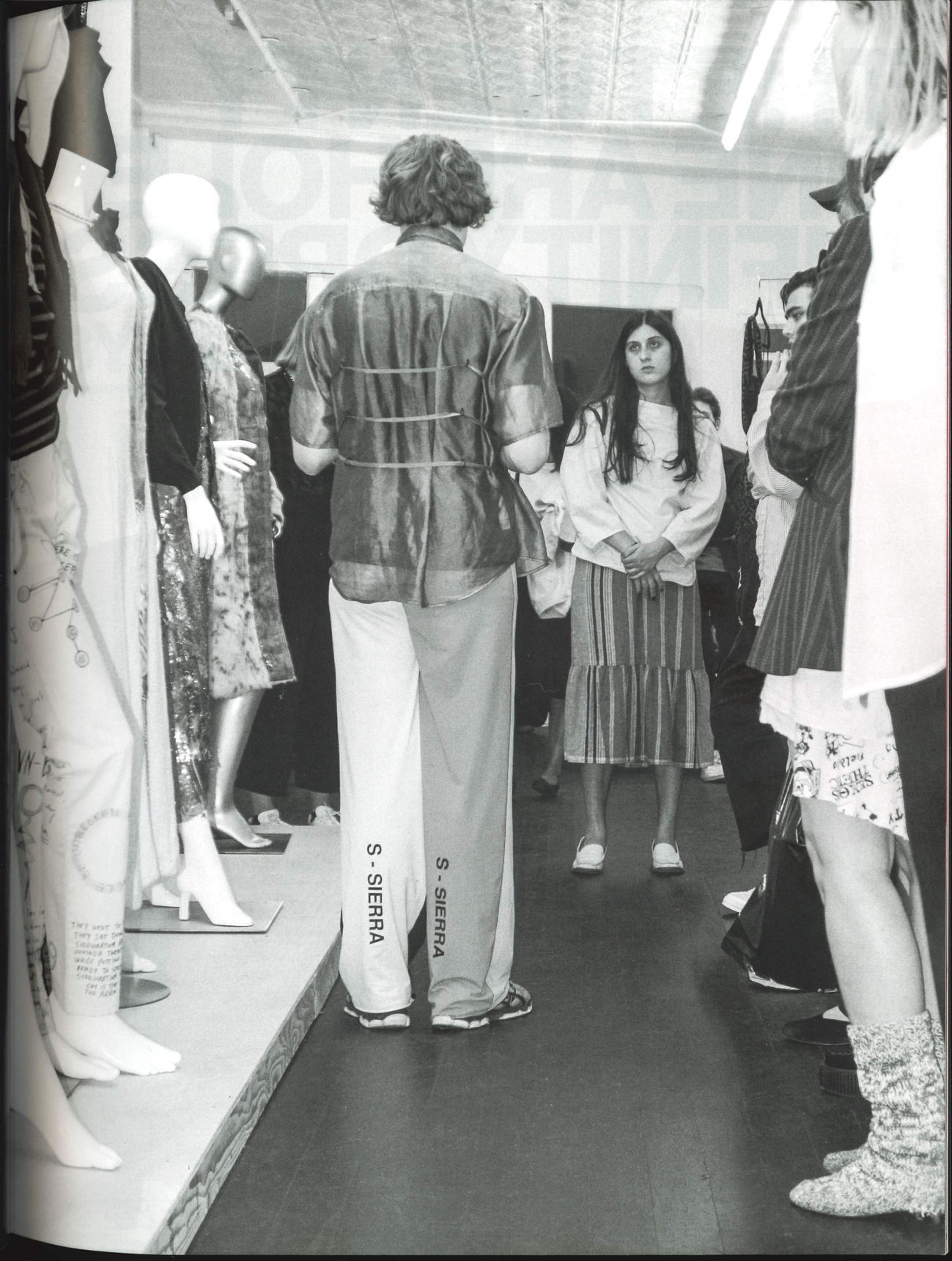
HOODED SWEATSHIRT ELIZA'S OWN SEASHELL SWIMSUIT JEREMY SCOTT
PLATEAU HEELS VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

FOLLOWING PAGES
POLO SHIRT ECKHAUS LATTA BUSTIER SWIMSUIT JEREMY SCOTT
VELVET PANTS ECKHAUS LATTA PLATEAU BOOTS YOHJI YAMAMOTO
SEASHELL SWIMSUIT JEREMY SCOTT PLEATED SKIRT ISSEY MIYAKE
HIGH HEELS CELINE

INDEX

299 792 458 M/S IS PUBLISHED BY WESTREICH/WAGNER DISTRIBUTED BY BUCHHANDLUNG WALTHER KÖNIG EDITED AND PRODUCED BY KULISEK/LIESKE CO-EDITED BY MATTHEW LINDE
FASHION EDITOR AVENA GALLAGHER DESIGNED BY CLAIRE SMIGHT AND ROB ENGVALL
PRINTED AT WYNDHAM GRANGE UK WITH SUPPORT FROM GOETHE INSTITUTE NYC AND MATHEW GALLERY NYC

THANK YOU GEORG BLOCHMANN DAVID CASAVANT THAN HUSSEIN CLARK SAIM DEMARICAN EILIDH DUFFY ISABELLE GRAW KYLE HAGLER HUMBERTO PETIT STEVEN PRANICA ANNA RUBIN JEREMY SCOTT STUDIO MANUEL RAEDER JOE VAN OVERBEEK



THE OVERWORKED BODY AN ANTHOLOGY OF 2000'S DRESS

BY MATTHEW LINDE

EXHIBITION SEPTEMBER 10–OCTOBER 15, 2017
MATHEW GALLERY, NYC
MINI/GOETHE-INSTITUT CURATORIAL RESIDENCIES LUDLOW 38

WORKS BY 20471120, A.F. VANDEVORST, ADELINE ANDRÉ, ALEXANDER MCQUEEN FOR TARGET, ANDREA AYALA CLOSA, ANDREW GROVES, ANKE LOH, ANN-SOFIE BACK, ANNALISA DUNN, ARKADIUS, AS FOUR, BENJAMIN CHO, BERNADETTE CORPORATION, BERNHARD WILLHELM, BLESS, CAROL CHRISTIAN POELL, CHRISTOPHE COPPENS, COMME DES GARÇONS, COSMIC WONDER, DOROTHÉE PERRET, DUTCH MAGAZINE, FINAL HOME, HELMUT LANG, HIDEKI SEO, HOUSE OF HOLLAND, HUSSEIN CHALAYAN, IMITATION OF CHRIST, ISAAC MIZRAHI FOR TARGET, ISSEY MIYAKE, JEAN PAUL GAULTIER, JUNYA WATANABE, KEUPR/VAN BENTM, KIM JONES, KOJI ARAI, KOSTAS MURKUDIS, LUTZ HUELLE, MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA, MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA AND MARINA FAUST, MIGUEL ADROVER, NUMBER (N)INE, ORGANIZATION FOR RETURNING FASHION INTEREST, PROENZA SCHOULER FOR TARGET, PURPLE FASHION, RODARTE FOR TARGET, SHELLEY FOX, SOPHIA KOKOSALAKI, STEPHEN JONES, SUSAN CIANCIOLO, TAO, TELFAR, UNDERCOVER, VICTORIA BARTLETT (PREVIOUSLY VPL), VIKTOR & ROLF, VIKTOR & ROLF FOR H&M, WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK, WENDY & JIM, YOHJI YAMAMOTO, AND ___FABRICS INTERSEASON

PHOTOGRAPHY YAIR OELBAUM AND ROB KULISEK
MINI/GOETHE-INSTITUT CURATORIAL RESIDENT SAIM DEMIRCAN
INSTALLATION BY BRENT GARBOWSKI
ASSISTANTS EILIDH DUFFY AND ANABEL HOGEFELD
GALLERY ASSISTANTS AMELIE MEYER AND HIJI NAM
WINDOW DISPLAY BY WHITNEY CLAFLIN
WIGS BY ISSAC DAVIDSON (WIGBAR)
CONSULANT AVENA GALLAGHER
PR CYNTHIA LEUNG

EXHIBITION GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY GOLDSMITH, FUSION SPECIALITES, AND WIGBAR

SPECIAL THANKS TO LENDERS SHAHAN ASSADOURIAN, DAVID CASAVANT, DOT COMME, LAURA GARDANER, MATTHEW HIGGS, LAILA SAKINI, AND HUGH EGAN WESTLAND

STEPHEN JONES

BLESS

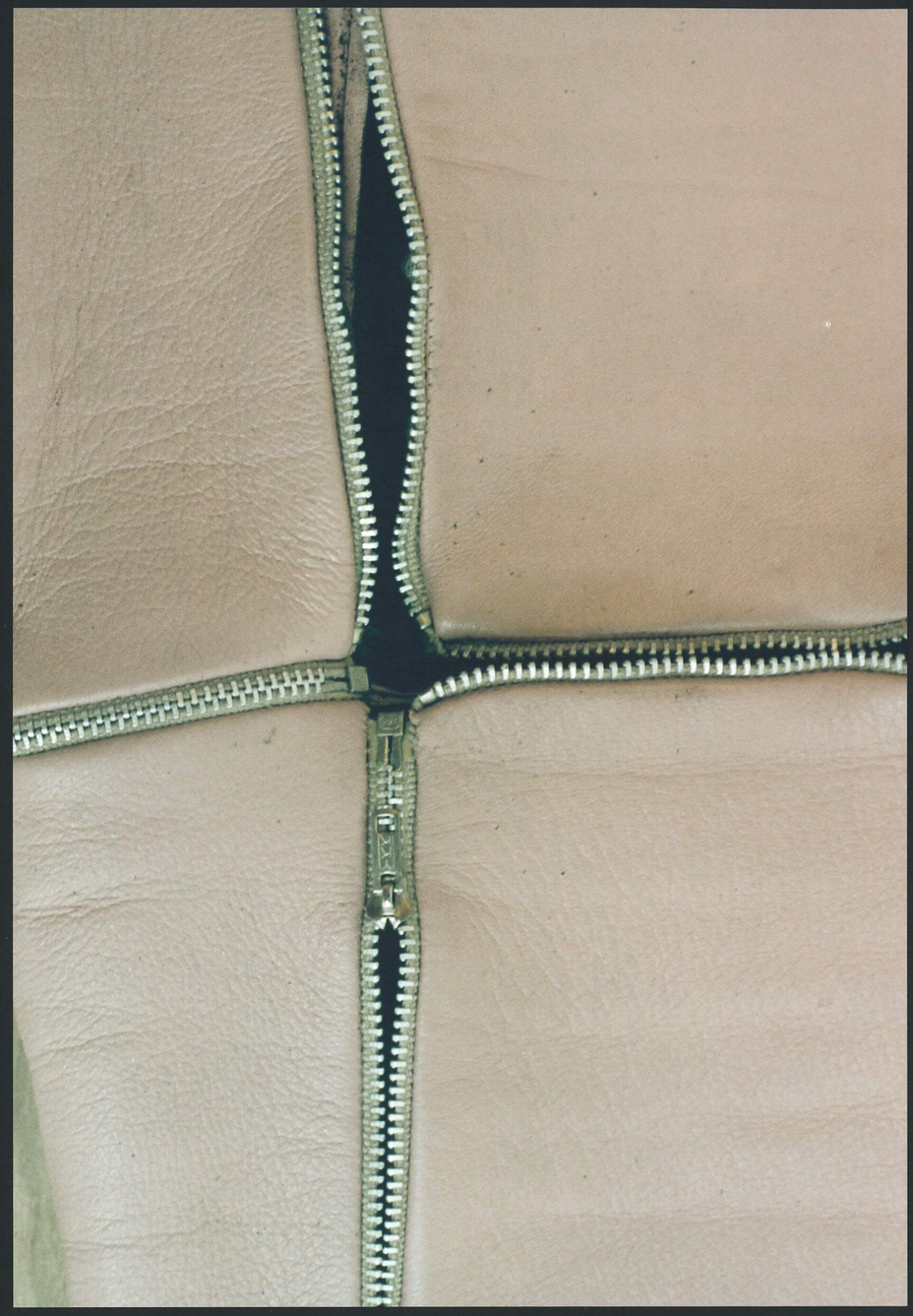
SHELLEY FOX

20471120

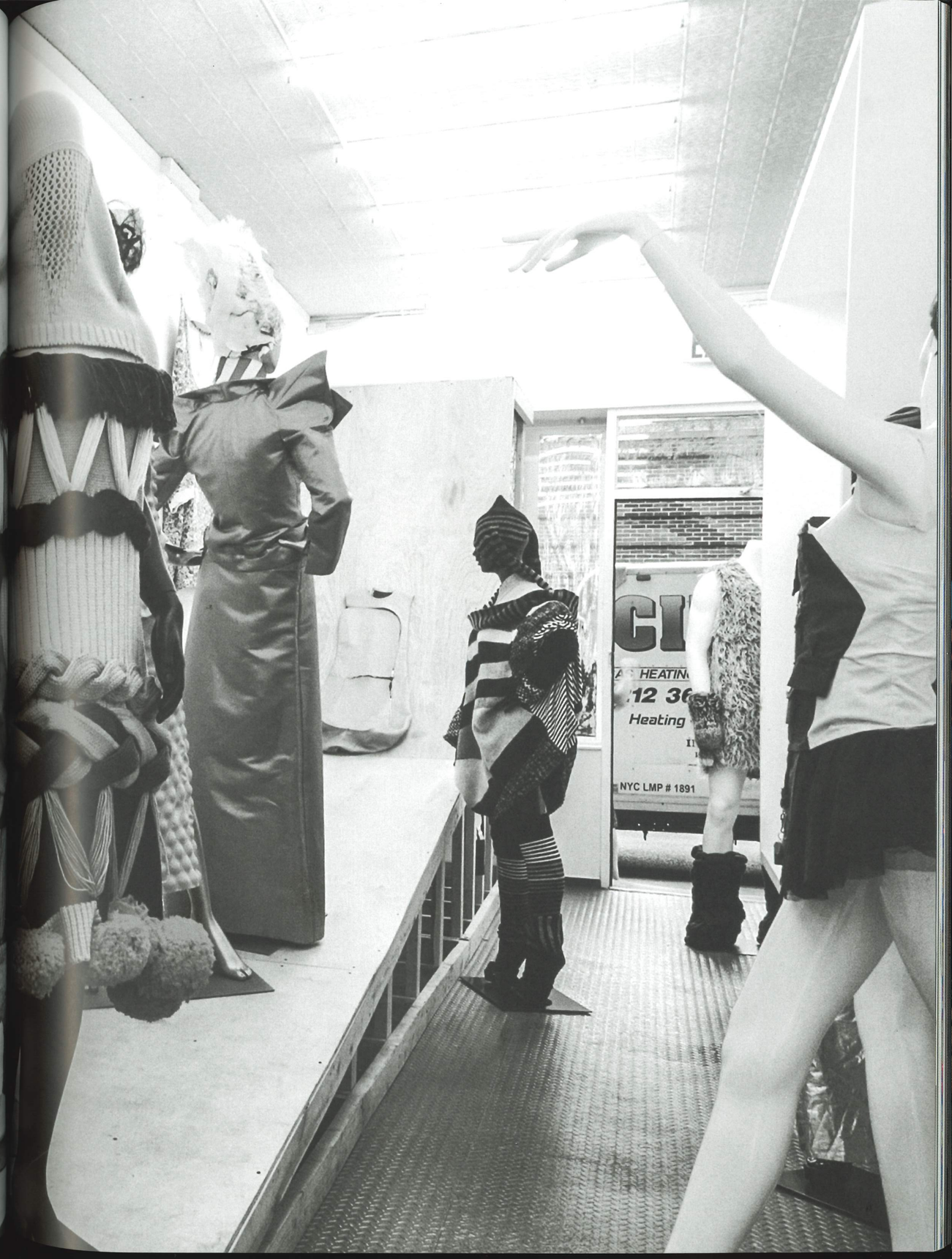
HELMUT LANG

WENDY & JIM

299 792 458 m/s 108



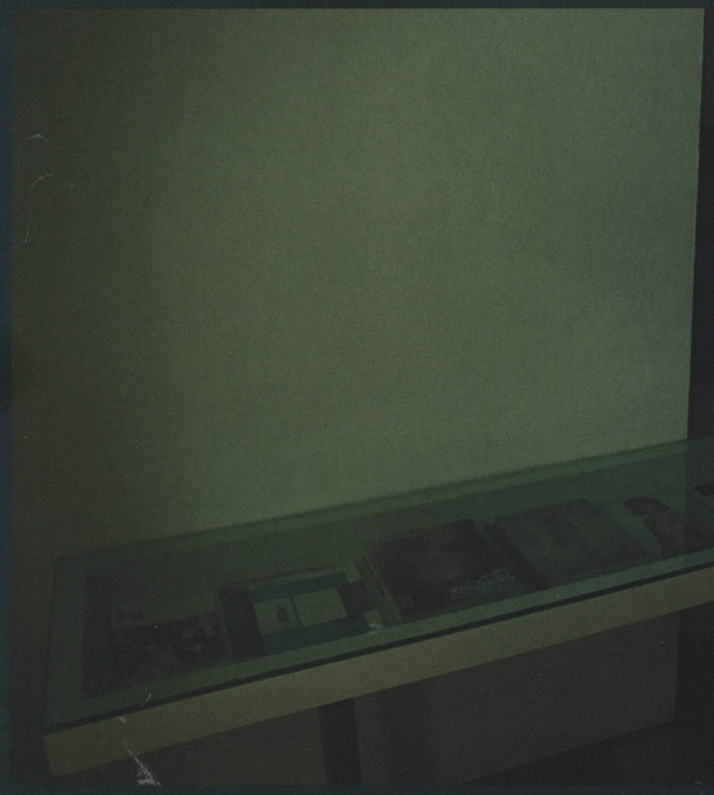

FASHION NEWS

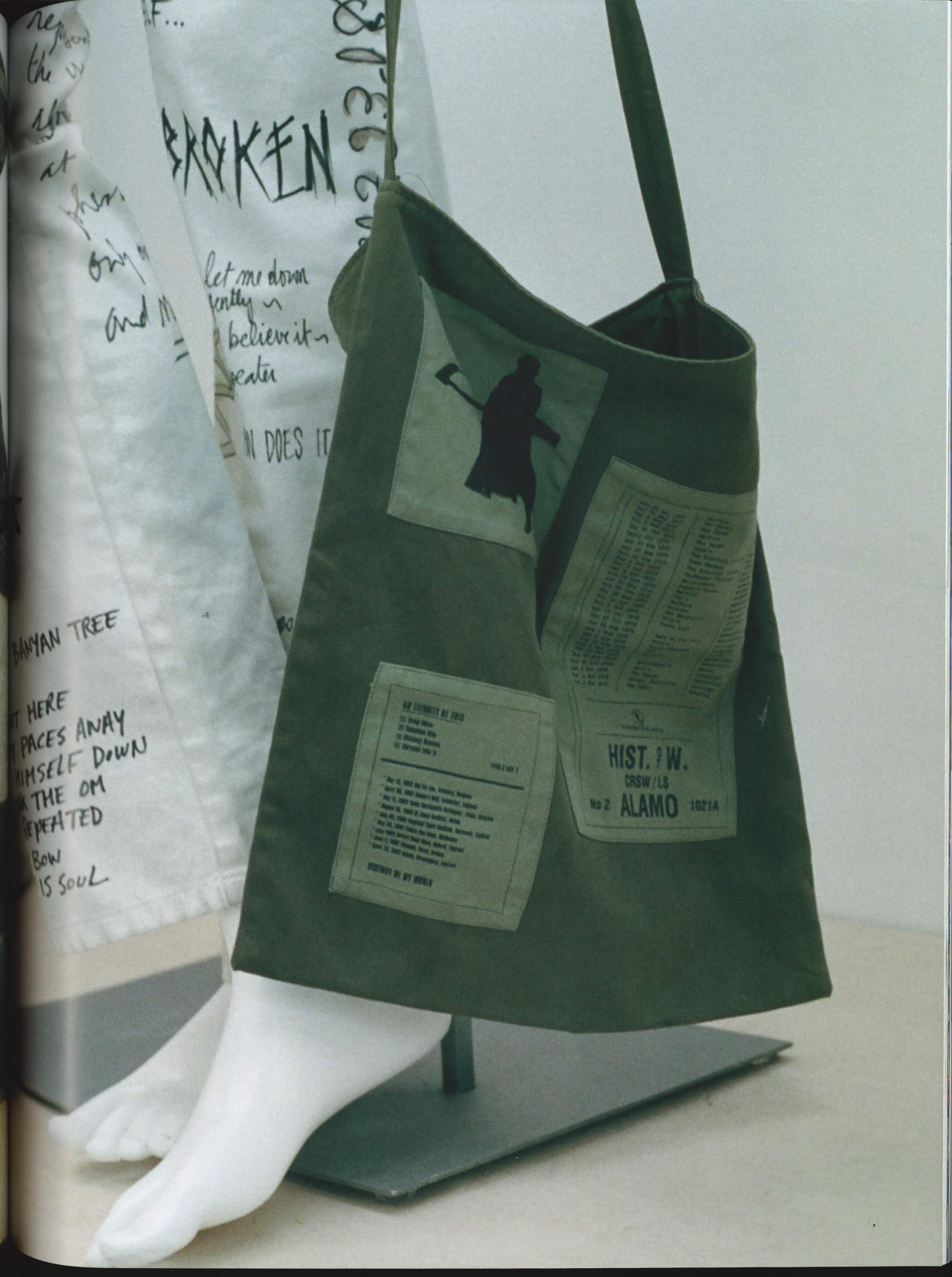

HEATIN
12 36
Heating
NYC LMP # 1891

FINAL HOME

ANKE LOH

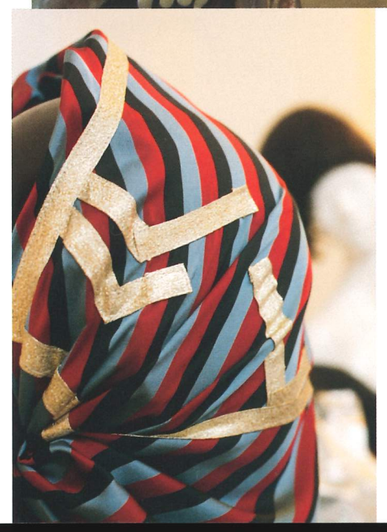
ANDREW GROVES




BROKEN
let me down
believe it
BANYAN TREE
HIST. & W.
CRSW/LS
No 2 ALAMO 1021A


HARDER
HARDER
MIUCCIA
PRADA


ANN-SOFIE BACK
S M L
$ SILK
$ POLYESTER
$ LINEN
$ VISCOSE
$ COTTON
$ ACRYLIC
$ NYLON
$ WOOL
DRY CLEAN ONLY



ORFI

ANDREA AYALA CLOSA


AXIS
TAKE ME TO THE OTHER SIDE
ACID
NO REALITY
Joy Division
Live in concert
Joy Division
Saturday September
Austin City Limits


AXIS
ACID
DAY DREAM NATION
THERE IS NO REALITY EXCEPT THE ONE CONTAINED WITHIN US
STAR FX
BROKEN


EXIT

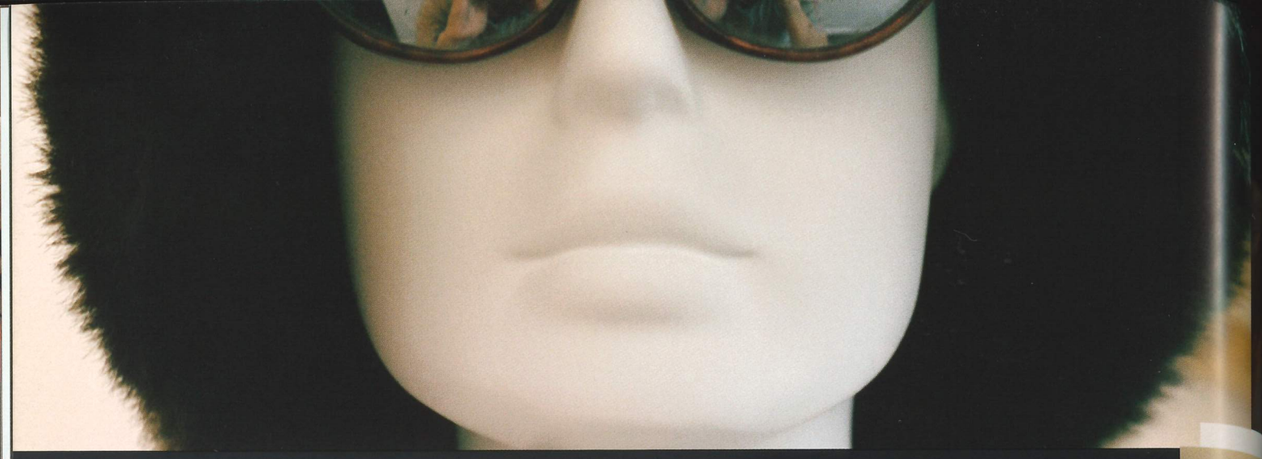
BENJAMIN CHO

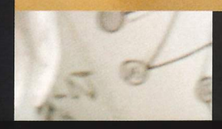

LVZ

JUNYA WATANABE

LUTZ HUELLE

WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK





THE OVER WORKED BODY

PHOTOGRAPHY ROB KULISEK
STYLING AVENA GALLAGHER
MAKE-UP INGEBORG
HAIR SHINYA NAKAGAWA
MODEL ANNA CLEVELAND/NEXT
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT JUSTIN LEVERITT
STYLING ASSISTANT JOE VAN OVERBEEK

TROMPE L'OEIL SKIRT JEAN PAUL GAULTIER HOMME
TROMPE L'OEIL VEST AND JACKET JEAN PAUL GAULTIER FEMME
HEELED SOCKBOOTS A.F. VANDEVORST

BODY SUIT AND SHOULDER BAGS AS FOUR

BRAIDED DRESS BENJAMIN CHO
CARPET SHAWL BENJAMIN CHO

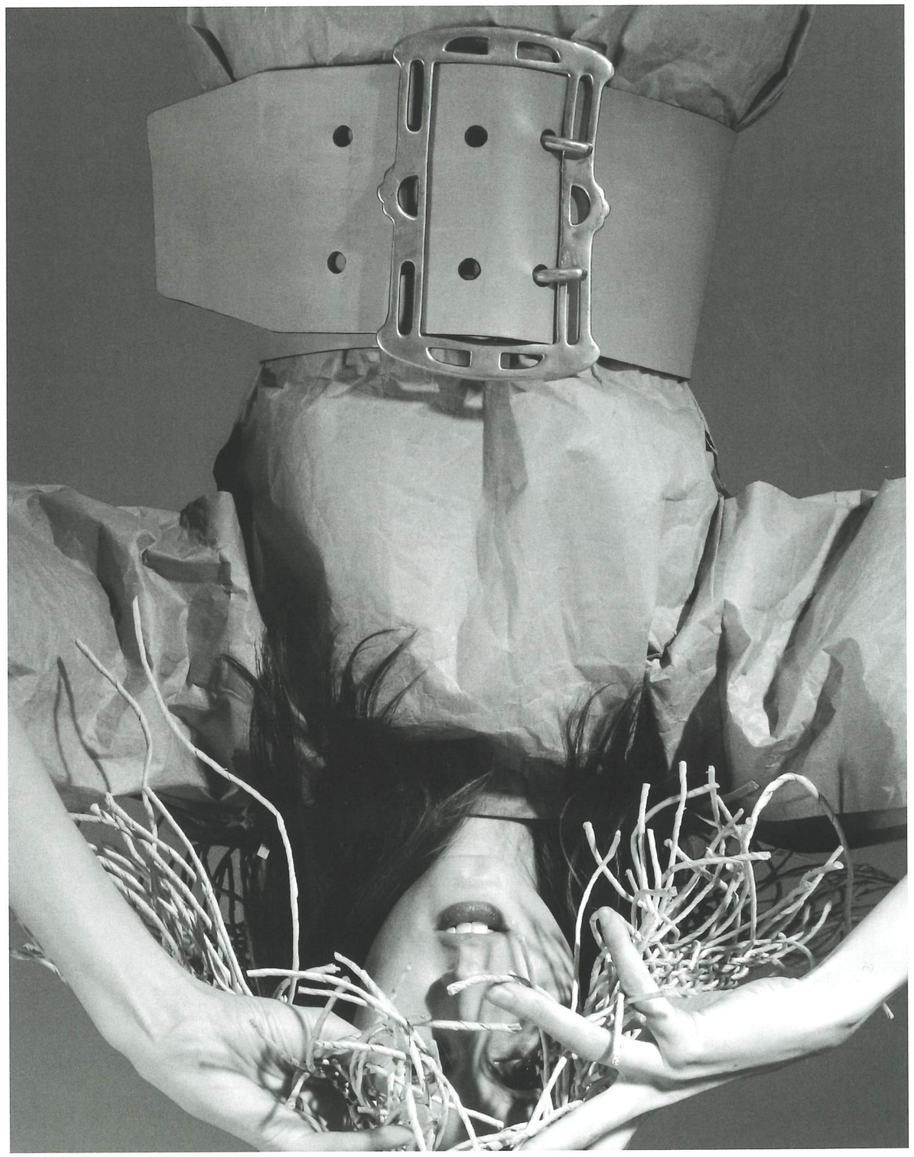
CHECKERED SUIT COMME DES GARÇONS HOMME PLUS

PRINTED SILK SKIRT KOSTAS MURKUDIS PRINTED SILK BRA KOSTAS MURKUDIS
FEATHER SKIRT WORN AS HEADPIECE ANN-SOFIE BACK
PRINTED LINGERIE KOSTAS MURKUDIS FAUX FUR HAT COMME DES GARÇONS
ANKLE BOOT ANN-SOFIE BACK PRINTED SILK DRESS KOSTAS MURKUDIS

FAT KNIT HAMMOCK BLESS RHINESTONE FINGER GLOVES BLESS
CUSTOMIZED PUMPS ANN-SOFIE BACK

MULTI-FRAME SUNGLASSES ANN-SOFIE BACK
COIN PURSE EARRING LUAR
DISTRESSED DENIM JACKET JUNYA WATANABE PATCHWORK SKIRT
JUNYA WATANABE DENIM BAG AND BOOTS STYLIST'S OWN

299 792 458 m/s 180



FINAL HOME: TOM OTTERNESS SHOT A DOG

BY DENA YAGO

MODELS MATT AND WHITNEY/MIDLAND
PHOTOGRAPHED AT SILVER TOWERS
PLAYGROUND BY TOM OTTERNESS
ADDITIONAL FASHION ECKHAUS LATTA
J.W. ANDERSON FOR UNIQLO
RAF SIMONS TELFAR

SUSAN HELMUT CIANCIOLO LANG

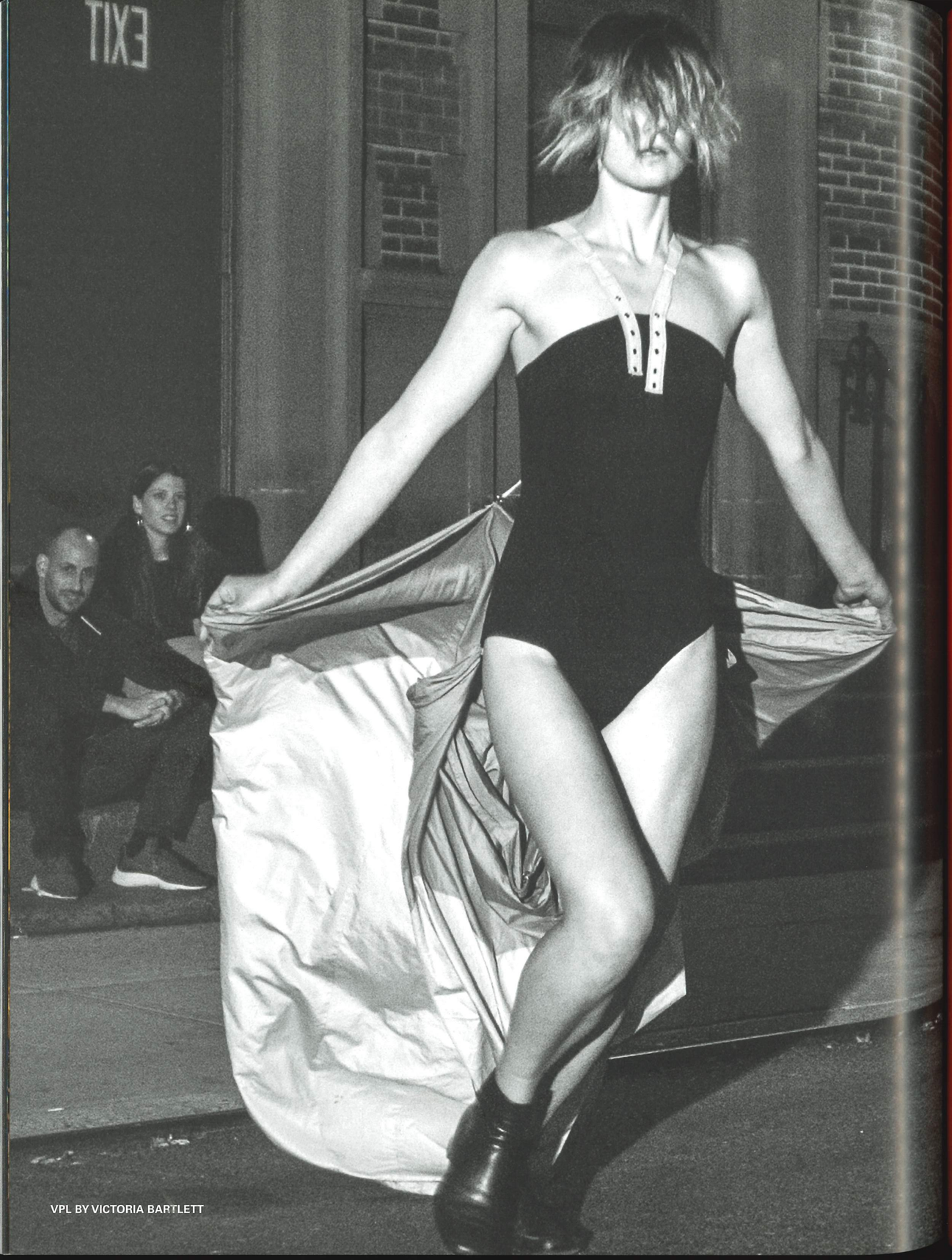
BY JACK PIERSON

STYLING AVENA GALLAGHER
MODELS ADOT GAK/D1 AND MOHAMMED/ST. CLAIRE
CASTING NICOLA KAST
MAKEUP ASAMI MATSUDA
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT TOMMY GHA

L'ETAT ET MOI

BY DAVID LIESKE

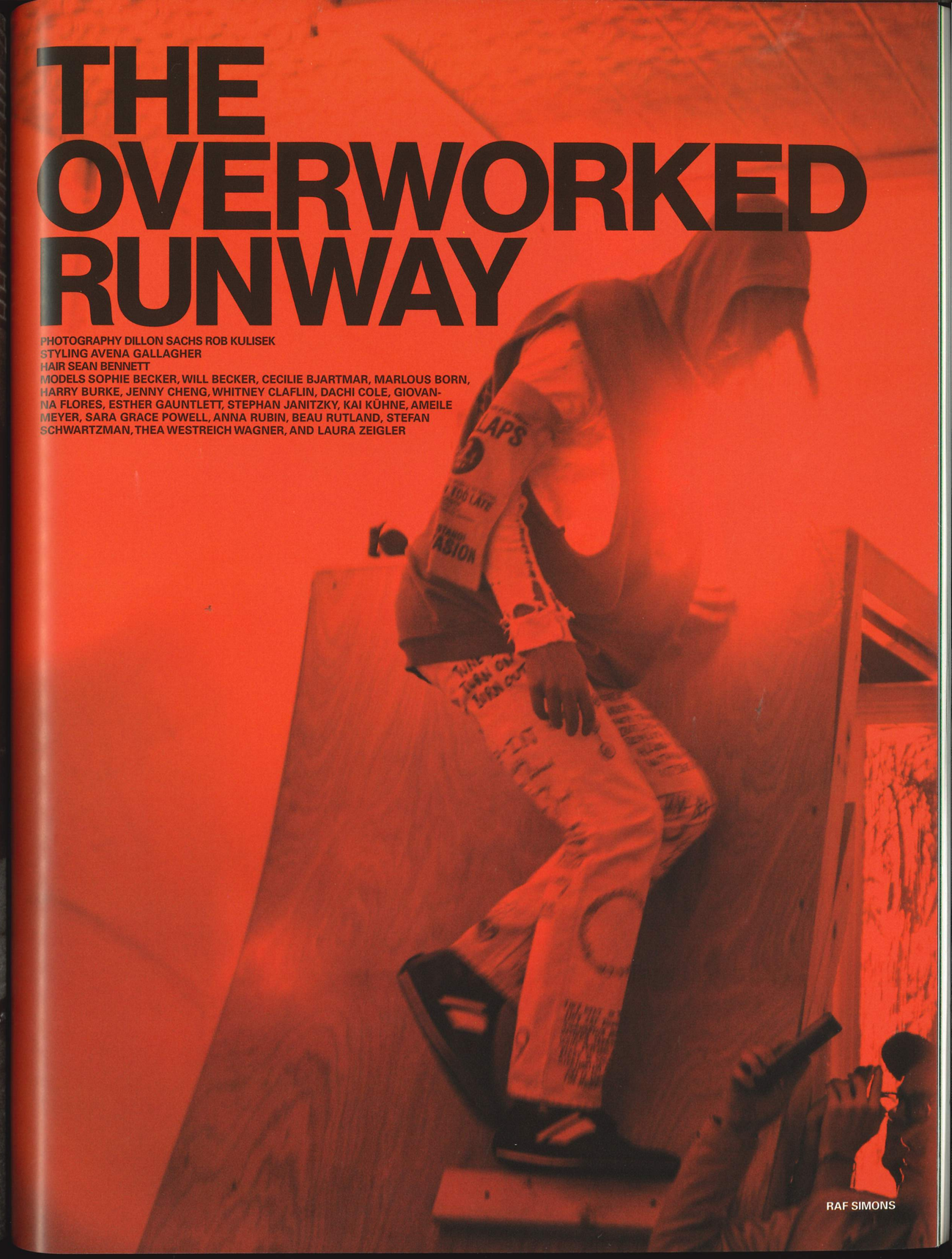
MAKE-UP RACHEL KRTUCHOFF
MODEL MORGAN CONNELLEE/MIDLAND



VPL BY VICTORIA BARTLETT

THE OVERWORKED RUNWAY

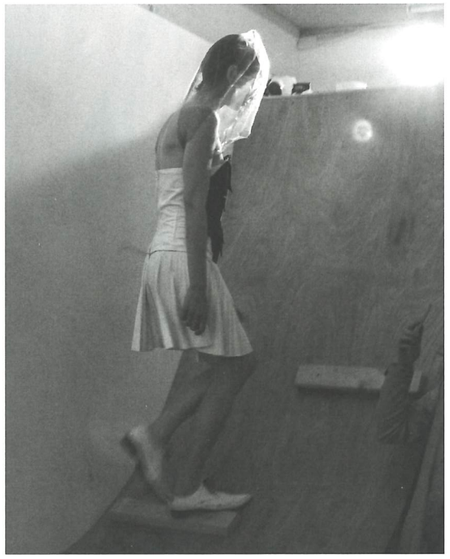
PHOTOGRAPHY DILLON SACHS ROB KULISEK
STYLING AVENA GALLAGHER
HAIR SEAN BENNETT
MODELS SOPHIE BECKER, WILL BECKER, CECILIE BJARTMAR, MARLOUS BORN, HARRY BURKE, JENNY CHENG, WHITNEY CLAFLIN, DACHI COLE, GIOVANNA FLORES, ESTHER GAUNTLETT, STEPHAN JANITZKY, KAI KÜHNE, AMEILE MEYER, SARA GRACE POWELL, ANNA RUBIN, BEAU RUTLAND, STEFAN SCHWARTZMAN, THEA WESTREICH WAGNER, AND LAURA ZEIGLER



RAF SIMONS

AS FOUR

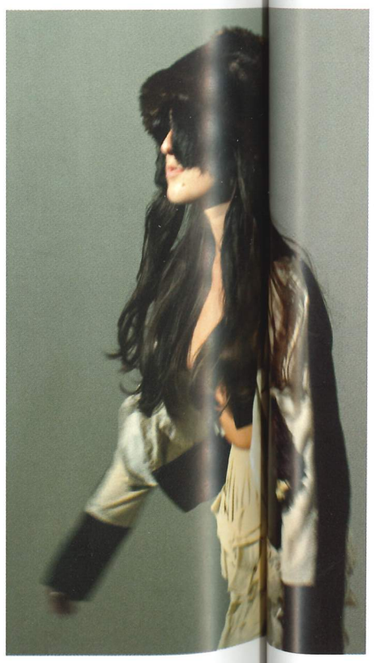
ISSEY MIYAKE

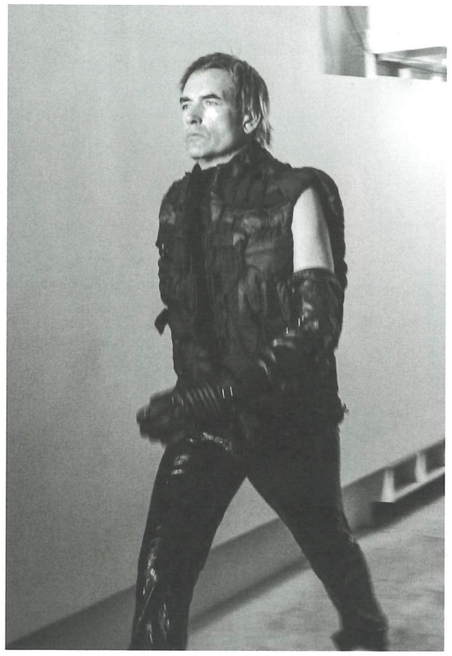


A.F. VANDERVORST

ANN-SOFIE BACK

COMME DES GARÇONS





MARTIN MARGIELA RAF SIMONS

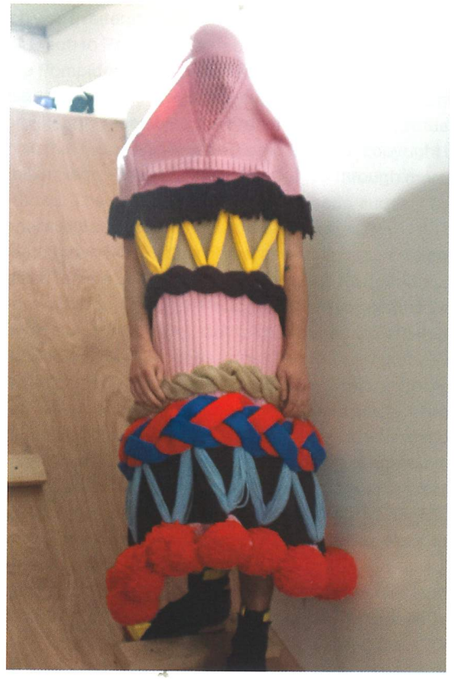
ANDREA AYALA CLOSA

A.F. VANDEVORST

ANN-SOFIE BACK

HELMUT LANG

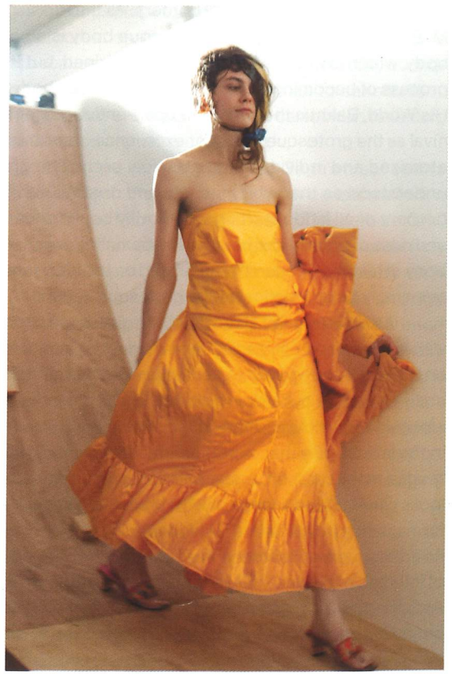
BLESS



WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK

WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK

JUNYA WATANABE



MAINSTREAMING GROTESQUE FASHION IN THE '00S

BY FRANCESCA GRANATA

The grotesque is a phenomenon of reversal, and of unsettling ruptures of borders, in particular bodily borders. As the Russian scholar Mikhail M. Bakhtin makes clear the grotesque body is an open, unfinished body, which is never sealed or fully contained, but it is always in the process of becoming and engendering another body. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin theorizes the open-ended, collective body of carnival as the grotesque body par excellence in contrast to the "sealed" atomized and individualized classical body. The grotesque can be understood as that which upsets and destabilizes boundaries and borders of all kinds starting with bodily boundaries, to gender ones and rules of priority and beauty. The beautiful, polished and reassuring body of fashion—generally articulated on the ideal female form—would seemingly be antithetical to the grotesque canon.

As I have argued elsewhere[1], the grotesque became increasingly visible in fashion from the 1980s onward—a change that was predicated on the problematization of bodily borders brought about by the AIDS crisis as well as by feminism's questioning of stable gender identities alongside restrictive ideals of feminine beauty. It was only beginning in the late 2000s that experimental fashion, and particularly its grotesque manifestation, took centre stage through Lady Gaga, whose looks cannibalized a range of work from experimental fashion and performance art practitioners. (This centrality of experimental fashion and its grotesque manifestation was further corroborated by the explosion of interest in the work of Alexander McQueen upon his death in 2010.) At times, the pop phenomenon wore some of the most experimental ensembles produced by designers such as Rei Kawakubo's Comme des Garçons or McQueen; in other instances, she conspicuously made reference to experimental works, especially those of the fashion designer, performance artist, and club figure Leigh Bowery and the Belgian designer Walter van Beirendonck[2].

Lady Gaga's fame is very much dependent on the fashions articulated in her on-stage and off-stage performances and videos. It is in great part her ensembles that have made her a compelling figure, rather than her music, which, by comparison, seems stylistically conservative. Indeed, it was only in 2009, when she started actively collaborating with Nick Knight (a fashion photographer and founder of SHOWstudio) and Nicola Formichetti (then a stylist and creative director for Dazed and Confused) that the singer achieved greater fame. And it is through her collaborations with these fashion insiders—already at the forefront of British experimental fashion—that Gaga claimed the spotlight. Notably, her pop dominance and cultural relevance began to wane in 2013, around the same time these collaborative synergies ended. It is through her fashion, rather than her music, that her most experimental and thought-provoking work can be found.

Lady Gaga's outlandish costuming can find a lineage in pop stars—particularly Björk, more than Madonna, to whom Gaga is often equated. However, the Icelandic musician, who has often collaborated with experimental fashion designers including Bernhard Willhelm and Alexander McQueen, could not scale the charts to the same extent that Gaga did, in part because her experiments in fashion were matched by those in music. Notably, Björk's collaboration with Willhelm for her album Volta was immortalized in the pages of Dazed and Confused for its October 2007 issue, while Nicola Formichetti was the magazine's creative director. In a more spectacular and American showbiz move, Gaga blew up the references to reproduction and eggs that were coyly embodied in Björk's much maligned "swan" dress, worn to the 2001 Academy Awards. Gaga made her entrance at the 2011 Grammy awards fully enveloped in an egg-shaped pod designed by the Cypriot/British experimental designer Hussein Chalayan, and wearing prosthetic make-up in a Thierry Mugler-designed latex costume. This outfit is perhaps emblematic of Gaga's piling on and cannibalizing references to the grotesque as previously articulated in visual culture through experimental fashion and art, particularly performance art.

Births and embryos were called into being through Chalayan's egg, which was a reiteration of a similar construction the designer completed for Place to Passage, a video on border-crossing screened at the Centre Pompidou. References to bodily modifications and alternative standards of beauty were enacted through prosthetic make-up, which very literally resembled the French artist Orlan's actual bulges (so much so that the artist eventually sued Gaga for copyright infringement). Unlike Gaga, Orlan achieved her bulges through more permanent methods. The French artist hacked plastic surgery by having implants normally used to enhance cheekbones grafted onto her forehead, creating two horn-like protuberances. In her commentary on standardized female beauty and "technologies" for self-improvement and self-optimization, Orlan's art follows a trajectory of feminist art and figures such as Hannah Wilke, but it also relates to British designer Georgina Godley's and Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo's feminist experimentations with bumps and bulges. Gaga's references to Orlan's "carnal art," however, may have been further mediated via the French artist's collaboration with Walter Van Beirendonck, where models for his Autumn/Winter 1998-1999 collection wore bulges achieved through prosthetic make-up[3]. Van Beirendonck returned to explore prosthesis in his collections produced in the 2000s, and in particular his Spring/Summer 2008 menswear SexClown collection, where elaborate facial masks were at times paired with corsetry.

The relation between prosthesis, augmented bodies, and fashion is central to many of Lady Gaga's looks and performances. It is most successfully articulated in her "Bad Romance" video from 2009—the first video on which Formichetti worked. A number of her ensembles, in fact, point to the porous line between fashion and bodily augmentation and how clothing, particularly shoes and undergarments, often constitute technologies of bodily modification, albeit older and much lower-tech ones than plastic surgery. In the video, which was released at Alexander McQueen's 2010 show, a series of facial masks making references to medical devices such as braces or neck casts are worn by the back-up dancers, while the singer herself wears a series of structured garments by McQueen and Haus of Gaga and progressively extreme footwear designed by McQueen, which culminates in the by now famous Armadillo shoes. Sporting staggering ten-inch heels, the shoes resemble platform pointe shoes with heels; from a technical viewpoint, they are reminiscent of Leigh Bowery's practice of wearing high-heeled shoes in men's boots.

The abundance of prosthesis alongside very constructed garments in Gaga's looks and performances question not only bodily boundaries, but the dividing lines between body and dress, as well as dress and medical devices and technologies. While the Orlan-inspired facial bumps place various techniques of beautification from make-up to cosmetic surgery on a continuum, the Armadillo heels and facial masks call into question the division between medical prosthesis and dress. However, Gaga's exploration of these themes with Knight and McQueen has a more thought-provoking precedent. It is reminiscent of the photographer's and designer's earlier collaboration with the athlete-turned-model Aimee Mullins in 1998, which led to a more sustained exploration of bodily borders. Mullins's wearing of below the knee prosthesis on a semi-permanent basis, as she is a below-the-knee double amputee, prompted McQueen to design functional prosthesis/boots which questioned and problematized categories of body and clothes, medical devices and dress, and the functional and aesthetics[4].

As Jack Halberstam argues in Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal, despite the pop star's anthem "Born this Way," Gaga's male alter-ego Joe Calderone, which first appeared at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2011, pointed to the social construction of gender alongside the artificialities of a host of identity categories and bodily norms[5]. Significantly, in an early interview in Vanity Fair, the singer mentioned Paris Is Burning —the 1990 documentary on Harlem's ball culture and an important work in gender studies and queer theory—as one of her influences. Gaga often contradicted the very ideas her fashionings point to, and more sustained and poignant explorations can be found in work of the experimental fashion and performance art that predated her. Yet as Halberstam points out, her work was relevant to a cultural moment where such artificialities and constructions took centre stage.

Although explorations of bodily borders and the grotesque canon abound in Lady Gaga's work, the most famous one remains her donning a meat dress, originally to attend the 2010 VMA awards. Again, this dress is an almost direct quotation of an earlier exploration of the same trope by another artist, in this case the Canadian artist Janas Sterbak in her 1987 piece "Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic," which, like Orlan's work, was rooted in feminist art of the 1980s. The meat dress also had precedents in the work of Milan-based Austrian designer Carol Christian Poell, who manipulated leather to give the impression of raw flesh—something particularly evident in his 2005 collection. An epitome of the grotesque, raw meat destabilizes bodily borders and, according to Bakhtin, is intimately related to dress. In Rabelais, Bakhtin writes: "The word habiller means to 'dress' or 'clothe,' but it can also mean to 'dress' the meat of a slaughtered animal. Thus, when the guest speaks of the 'the calf I dressed this very morning,' he means in the first place himself, dressed for the occasion, but also the calf that was dismembered, dressed and consumed. [....] The dividing line between man's consuming body and the consumed animal's body is once more erased."[6]

Kristeva discussed raw flesh, central to Judeo-Christian dietary prohibitions, as "a propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together.[7] And it is because of this destabilizing effect on bodily boundaries of inside and outside and its implicit reference to cannibalism, pollution, and contagion that even in Lady Gaga's cartoonish rendition, the pairing of flesh and body remains unsettling.

Interestingly, it was the very conflation of Gaga's meat outfits with her less disciplined flesh that caused the most consternation in the press—reminding us, as Mary Russo writes in The Female Grotesque, that there are risks involved in women aligning themselves with the grotesque, as women's bodies are already marked by such associations. And although one cannot equate Gaga's off and on stage performances of transgression to daily embodiment of difference experienced by bodies that deviate from the norm, the two eventually overlapped. During her 2012 tour, Lady Gaga visibly gained weight; it was a photograph of her onstage performance in Amsterdam depicting the performer—overweight according to the standards of female pop stardom—and donning a (this time faux) meat corset that caused a flurry of criticism in the press.[8] The image conflated one too many references to bodies out-of-bounds. The negative responses to the performance and to this look in particular render obvious the power of norms and the way bodies are constantly policed, particularly those of female celebrities.

That a relatively slight weight gain incited such a level of scrutiny in the press and across social media, on par with some of her most extreme looks, points to the policing of female bodies and the celebrity female bodies where fatness remains one of the most problematic and "revolting" transgressions. The "fat" body and particularly the "fat" female body is, in fact, an undisciplined one. Not only does it

defy contemporary beauty standards, but it also reads as a failure to successfully perform the daily and incessant work on the body that one is required to undertake in neoliberal society in order to be a good subject. As Linda Nead discussed in The Female Nude, and much of the Fat Studies literature has since explored in depth: "Within this [contemporary Western aesthetic] 'fat' is excess, surplus matter. It is a false boundary, something that is additional to the true frame of the body and needs to be stripped away."[9]

However, Gaga employed fashion, a potentially regulatory discourse, as a response to the criticism.[10] A few days after the September, 2012 concert in Amsterdam that prompted the bulk of criticism over her weight gain, Gaga wore a cartoonish pink and blue dress from Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons's 2012 flat collection. Reminiscent of the Japanese designer's on going experimentation with pattern cutting and body shapes of her "Body Meets Dress" collection, the dress was made of felt, with the seam allowance left uncut. It created an oversized shape irrespective of the wearer's size, and—especially as worn by Gaga, covering her entire body down to the ankles—was reminiscent of a fat suit.[11] The singer employed experimental fashion as a tongue-in-cheek response to the press's negative commentary and used humour to upend the criticism in what was one of her most successful performances.

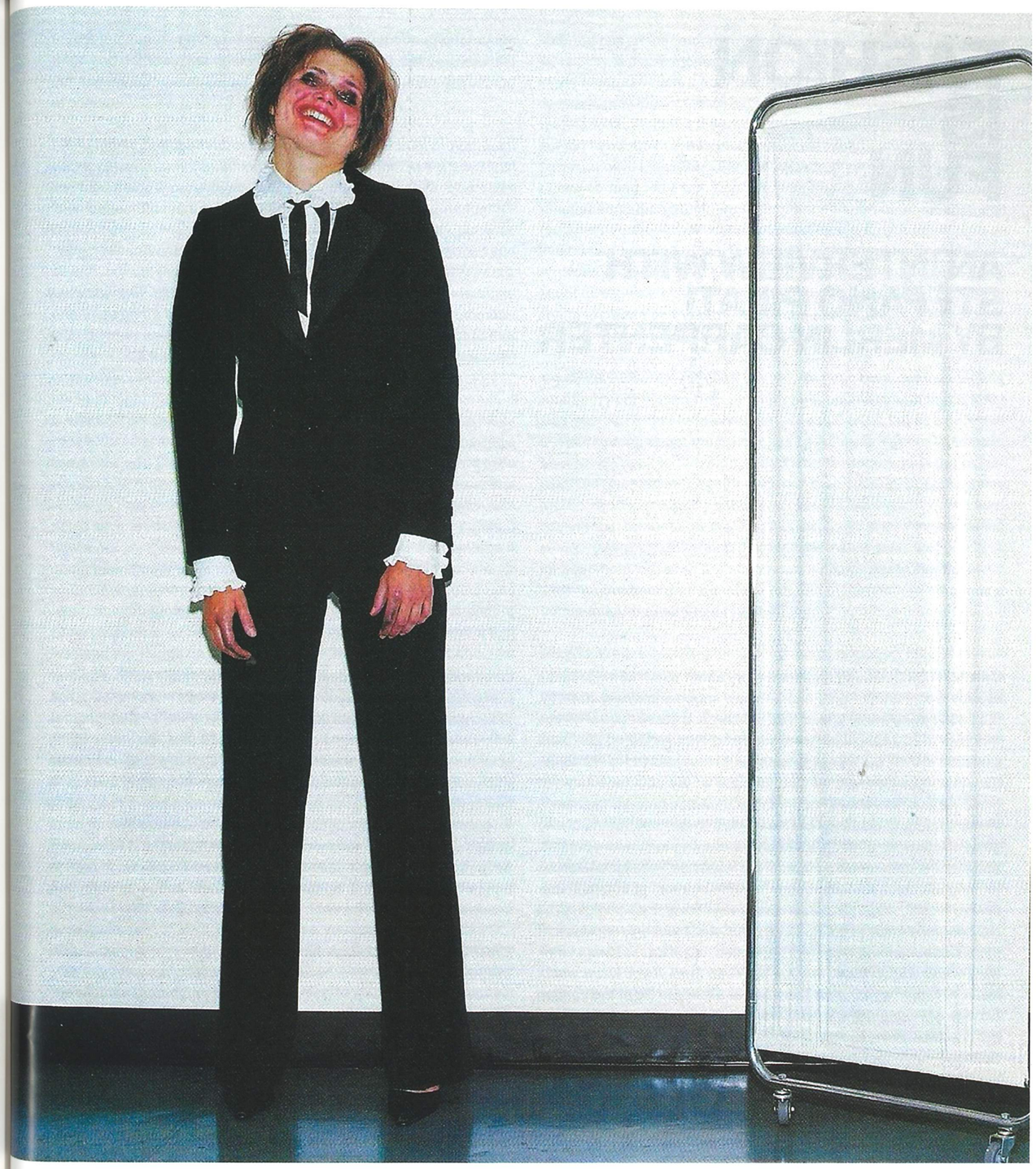
By performing fatness or "fat drag" via a fat suit at a time in which she was accused precisely of being "fat," Gaga problematized and denaturalized identities categories and questioned the boundaries between reality and performance. Gaga's performance, in a fashion familiar from Judith Butler's writing, complicated ideas of origins and stable identities and pointed to the artificiality and construction of the body by rendering a parodic version of her own weight gain with a gargantuan garment that further built her body.

In her Comme des Garçons look, Gaga took up the call by cultural theorist Kathleen LeBesco to enact a potentially disruptive performance of "fat drag" achieved through the fat suit. Her performance, much like the work of Bowery, falls in the realm of camp, or "fat camp," which plays with excess and parodic artificiality. If only temporarily, Gaga re-appropriated the association of women, excess—in this case excessive flesh—and the grotesque to make a carnivalesque critique that challenges regulatory norms.

What are we to make of this temporary mainstreaming of the grotesque in fashion (albeit achieved by the Lady Gaga team through a sometimes predatory cannibalization of recent image culture)? Why did graphic, humorous, and potentially disturbing imagery exploring bodily norms and borders and, by extension, gender and social norms, enter the mainstream in the new millennium?

One could argue that it could be most clearly attributed to the narrowing of the boundaries between fashion, performance and other visual disciplines that occurred since the 1980s. This narrowing was, in turn, related to general shifts in models of subjectivity, as bodies become more porous and fixed subject positions came under threat most clearly as they related to gender categories, performance and performativity started to occupy centre stage. The changes were originally precipitated by feminism and the AIDS crisis, both of which problematized stable gender identities and sexualities. They granted fashion, or, at least experimental fashion—a discipline defined by constantly unstable and permuting subject positions—an increasingly central role within cultural expressions.

[1]Francesca Granata, Experimental Fashion: Performance Art, Carnival and the Grotesque Body, London: IB Tauris, 2017.
[2]See, for instance, Horacio Silvia, "The World According to Gaga," T, (March 3, 2010).
[3]Pascale Renaux, "Artifice—An Interview with Orlan and Walter Van Beirendonck", in Walter Van Beirendonck & Wild and Lethal Trash, Believe, (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beunigen, 1998).
[4]On the collaboration between Mullins, McQueen and Knight, see Vivian Sobchack, "A Leg to Stand on: Prosthetics Metaphor and Materiality," and Marquard Smith, "The Vulnerable Articulate: Hames Gillingham, Aimee Mullins, and Matthew Barney," Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
[5]J. Jack Haberstam, Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal, Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.
[6]Bakhtin, Rabelais 225
[7]Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 96.
[8]For an example of such criticism, see "Looking meatier! Lady Gaga shows off her new fuller figure after 'gaining 30lbs' in her favorite carnivorous creation." The Daily Mail, September 19, 20120.
[9]Nead, The Female Nude, 10.
[10]Susannah Frankel, "Ready To Wear: Editors take not...this look is flat rather than fat," The Independent, October 15, 2012.
[11]Kathleen LeBesco, "Situating fat suits: Blackface, drag, and the politics of performance," Women and Performance: a journal of Feminist Theory. Vol. 15, 2, 2005: 231-242.



SANITORIUM (BY ALEX CAYLEY)
DUTCH NO.38 APRIL 2002 "PRAISE" ISSUE

FASHION IS FUN

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEFANO PILATI BY MERLIN CARPENTER

CARPENTER Obviously I knew the story about YSL, that it was taken over by Gucci under Tom Ford with new shops and a new strategy. But I was having a little look at YSL menswear a year or two after you took over in 2004 and was I quite surprised. I liked some trousers and stuff around then. But then in Autumn 2007 I really started to see something in it. If you looked at the clothes together, you could see they had these various references happening at the same time, sometimes in the same piece of clothing. I got the sense that there was a kind of play going on, between different ideas and references to different periods. And then the color would go against the reference. For example forties tailoring with tight jacket and baggy trousers in seventies colors, a nineties-style camouflage sweater in olive green or oversized or undersized eighties jackets next to cream sweatpants. And I suddenly realized that there was something there that interested me. Because I like it when things have a lot in them, but you can read them, if you know what I mean. And then a year after that I was at a talk you did at the London College of Fashion, and then at the end of the talk somebody in the audience was asking about layers of references, which you responded to. So those two experiences confirmed my interest in your work. So maybe you could respond to that, if it is an adequate response to what you are doing.

PILATI I guess it's exact, in the sense that it is correct. There are definitely references in my work. I appreciate that you caught the subtlety of them and I guess the subtlety of them is a reflection of the fact that somehow, in everything I do, I spent all my life going against references, because I am deeply convinced that as much as they're part of your natural growth either in intellectual or I would say educational terms, they are also what can fix you. References come to your mind as fast as ideas and when you start to analyze your idea, because you're obviously connected to it, you start to analyze it not because you want to be conceptual or intellectual, necessarily, especially not in a domain like fashion, but because you want to see if it might make sense or not. When you start to analyze your initial idea, you realize that it comes from references. This is the moment when I'm like „Oh, am I making something that has been done already"? You start this constant debate with yourself. And this is a back and forth between creating something new or doing something that has already been done and reinterpreting it. I guess this is the most difficult part of my job – I guess also for more or less everybody. So the most important thing for me is to keep my integrity in terms of spontaneity about what I do. Sometimes I oblige myself to not analyze it, at least at first glance, and try to enjoy this impulse as deeply as I can when an idea comes up.

CARPENTER Even though it might in a way be a reference to something else or something quite recently done in another way.

PILATI I guess it is also the only way to discover your personality. I am a fashion person, so even if I wasn't a fashion designer I would have been instinctive in my choices of what to wear and what I wouldn't wear and what I would like to find. In the past I worked for other people, so I used my ideas in the service of others.[1] But what is happening now is that I am responsible for what I am doing. And I guess it is my role that is pushing me to analyze what I am doing and live through all these feelings and thoughts. It is what is expected, but it is also what you expect from yourself.

CARPENTER Ok, so there is this spontaneous aspect where you wouldn't go into what those references would be. As someone looking at it from the outside I was thinking that the references could be so different and not connected to each other so that they would add up to something that didn't look like a reference, even though you might want to look into it and see the references, and you might be able to unpick them and get them out again, you probably could, but you wouldn't get it at once, it would be at first glance something unknown or kind of opaque.

PILATI Yeah. Besides the fact that I have studied the work of Yves Saint Laurent, it is not only something that I picked up from his work, but I got just from being around myself with this attitude to my references and how to deal with them and live with them. Also with the knowledge that I have of artists, limited as it is. I enjoy reading about affinities between Velázquez and Bacon or Picasso and how much was influenced and all that, but still these artists kept their personality completely intact. Let's say they justify my struggle to not judge too much when some references are a bit more evident than others. So I guess that the only way to really be satisfied with yourself is when you appreciate that there is a balance between these things, you find a balance between or within your creations. Does that make sense?

CARPENTER Yes. You talk about the idea of an artist keeping his or her personality intact. I see this as being about more or less having a line, following a line of development, which is the key to being able to do anything, to not get scared. So the obvious question arising from that is that you are in the clothes business and there are many things that could deviate you from this line. And if you want to reverse direction in your work or do things that seem superficial or like backward steps, it could be a slightly more scary thing than if an artist would do that. An artist would just do an exhibition that might be considered rubbish - so what. But you have a large organization. It must be a little harder to allow yourself to go slightly against yourself and trust yourself in that way and mix things up and have several things going on at once, for example. You sometimes have a collection – you see that quite strongly in the menswear – where there are several different looks. I'm thinking for example of the season with the green felt biker style jacket in Fall 2008. There were several different directions going on at once in that collection. So the question is, if it isn't quite a tense situation to balance these two things: allowing that to happen, and having to explain it and promote it.

PILATI It's tense, of course. But at the same time... I never studied in my life. Having learned a method is my academic skill, if you want. The method is what allows me to put things together and make them a reality. There's not really a tension, it's more like an obvious and necessary element of the creative process. You can't just go "whatever". At one point you have to make sense somehow, you have to inscribe your work or your ideas in a context. Then the surface of this context, the width or the length of this context is up to you, how much bigger or small or focused or large you want to take it. Definitely circumstances here, especially in menswear, put me into a situation where I kept it pretty large for a long time. I am now getting more and more focused in what I am doing. In women's wear as well. But at first I had to try – for commercial reasons, because a) I am by nature a bit greedy and b) because the market is greedy and c) the market is getting larger and larger – I had to try to appeal to everybody, to please everybody, but on top of that there is also the heritage of the brand. That was not just something that happened in the blink of an eye. It was forty years of fashion history. You realize that there is so much involved in the imagination of the people that you don't really know about. You do fashion, because you want to seduce people... I felt for a long time, a bit less now, but still a bit, as if I was on a stage, trying to play different roles and seeing what the reaction of the public was and trying to please the left side of the audience and then the front side of the audience and then the one on the balcony and then the one who was backstage, and physically, but also mentally, intellectually and personally, I felt many, many times like I was a court jester, trying to make everybody laugh. And now, growing with these experiences and also aging, and hopefully getting wiser, I try to be more comfortable with my personality. So I say, maybe I shouldn't care so much about pleasing everybody but better focus on what I really like. I've been able to do that and to realize that I have nothing too much to prove to myself in the sense that I have always been a fashionable person and a stylish person, somebody who liked fashion and somebody, who uses dressing up to present himself in a certain way, that I don't necessarily need to be a fashion designer to prove to people that I am like that. The struggle to accept all this is not as easy as to say it. As much as you are always moving around trying to please everybody there is also a strength you have to build, like pushing everybody away from you.

CARPENTER From my point of view, it's been cool looking at these menswear collections over several years, each one with things that I was interested in or thinking about, not as an artist, but as a potential buyer, thinking about the price, shall I get this, is it going to sell out, should I go back to the shop, in that kind of mode. I think the menswear did get gradually tighter, and then the Fall 2009 collection was incredibly focused, really hitting you over the head, and it wasn't necessarily that similar to the previous menswear. So something happened where you were pushing much harder. I see that as some sort of artistic improvement, because it is so focused it allows you to see the same material, but much more immediately. But is that also linked to being commercial, to allow it to go further?

PILATI: Well, something more pragmatic happened. I found myself having to deal with a very fragmented clientele, linked to the brand's heritage and the founder; it was considered transgressive and at the same time conservative, it was considered very fashion, but at the same time very formally elegant. This is what I had to face up to, in the light of my instinct and my understanding of the market, especially in menswear. Also my life has changed since I became a fashion designer, I got this job and I started living in Paris. My daily life changed, in that I had to face many different situations and some of them required a protocol in what you wear. What I do is a projection of what my life is or what I feel or what I would like to wear. I always started a show in the past with suits and then I started to go a bit more casual, then more eccentric and then more formal again towards the evening wear section. That was, again, trying to appeal to everybody, but also to show what was happening to me in my daily life, for example in terms of a dress code, no matter how free you appear to be in the fashion industry, seen from the outside. Now I've decided to protect myself a bit more. To do all that was taking a lot of energy, a lot out of me, pushing maybe too far. Maybe now I've decided to be a bit more reserved. I don't have to prove to myself or to anyone else that I am able to mix casual wear with formal wear and to create this new formal chic. I am also more intrigued by the technical aspect of the clothes. And so that is pushing me to be more focused by fact, in the sense that there are certain skills that are put into the collections, into the clothes.

CARPENTER Which is enough.

PILATI Yes, which is enough. I want to maintain it as it is. I don't want to add anything else to it. Maybe that's now part of my self-confidence. It's still part of me and I traced that path already. So I feel it is good to move somewhere else, that's part of evolution. But again there is a method. There is no evolution, if there is not a previous method that has been

integrated. I still think that to make that happen you can't be completely irrational in what you're doing.

CARPENTER In the earlier menswear shows you seemed to have some weird pieces in the middle of the collections, now in the last few shows this weird middle part has burst out and infected everything else, the suits that used to be at either end. So it's more integrated.

PILATI Yes, I start to like that. But now I really organize my work. There is a certain segment of the YSL customers that has been taken into account, by building what I call a formal collection, and this has allowed me to focus on the fashion show. What I show on the runway is the real message of the season, which is whatever I want to say, whatever I am feeling, whatever I want to wear.

CARPENTER So there is always a parallel collection of formal, commercial suits?

PILATI Yes. It's going to be the second season now. But that doesn't mean that I am not going to show suits on the runway, but let's say that if I want to show only feather coats, I can. I can stop worrying that a corporate guy will never be my client, because he's the one who maybe has the money to buy the clothes.

CARPENTER That process of integration and powering up seemed to happen with the women's clothes two years earlier in Fall 2007. I don't see the process you just described – the removal of a layer of thought or conceptual control or separation – as leading to a lessening of the conceptual element in the work, actually I think it allows that element to be more clearly visible. Related to that is also the issue of color, because some of these more extreme collections are mostly grey or black and that also allows you to see the design more clearly. It can seem more vivid to have 10 grey suits or dresses come towards you than colored ones, and it can communicate more. And I think that when you use color it sometimes is also quite referential. I look at the color and it seems to be signifying the word of the color. I am thinking of that green biker jacket again. It doesn't really register as green, it's just shouting the word green, in a funny way. It might as well be black, whereas the grey clothes actually just sort of allow it... that's not really a question.

PILATI Your question is about my use of color. There is something I need to say once and for all, I feel really pushed to do colors because people seem amused when a fashion designer or a collection is colorful and I eventually decided that I don't give a fuck if they get amused. I am somebody who is able to put colors together and dress up very colorfully, but it took years of education and research. In the past, in the seventies, in the eighties, in the early sixties – I guess in the sixties it was a bit easier because it was more monochrome, even in the fifties the silhouette was all green for example, nobody dared to match different colors – but in the seventies and eighties, there were real disasters. You saw people who were really, really bad, colorful, and they became like a joke wandering around towns or in clubs and we were all amused about that. I take colors much more seriously. I put them together in a nice way or in a harmonic way or to be daring, like contrasting colors that make sense in a chromatic way. You need to be knowledgeable, you need to be really skilled, and it takes time. You're not going to teach people how to put colors together every six months or in the eight minutes of a fashion show. I sometimes use colors as punctuation in a dark or grey or non-color palette. It's the more poetic aspect that I give the collection, when I consider them floating in the universe of fashion, whatever a collection is, and whatever sense it makes to ask Stefano Pilati to do another bloody fashion show, I use them as a punctuation in the romantic sense of a different sound in a melody. Generally I am very much against a show-off attitude, and colors always tend to scream that.

CARPENTER You often use elements of what might have been called "deconstruction" at one time, for example Comme des Garcons from the eighties, but also things like destroyed fabrics or distressing. It seems that you and possibly other designers of your generation have a very different relationship to the idea of a deconstructed item of clothing than the original developments that happened in the early nineties or in the eighties, profoundly different to Margiela or something. It's just another reference, but it can add in... less overtly.

PILATI I guess that the very early nineties and the eighties were defined by deconstructive clothes. It was more like an evolution of fashion itself in the sense that we came from the seventies when everything was highly constructed. And I guess it was a way to evolve into something new, while today it is more that we use the constructed fabrics as a denial of the formal. It's more like everything wants to looked used. When everything wants to look used that's basically saying there's no new anymore, and therefore is new. And this is what has interested certain of my colleagues, if I can speak on behalf of other people, or simply myself. The other aspect of deconstructed clothes is about construction and manufacturing. In my case, I started working in this house under my predecessor[2] and the first reference that we were all into was this unpackably constructed, structured, heavy kind of clothing, because we were referencing the unpackable posture developed in the brand's heritage. Even though they definitely had a sort of appeal, now I don't find them real and I don't find them contemporary. So that's why I went against that feel with a direction toward something that looked structured, but wasn't structured.

CARPENTER I like some ideas that you have talked about elsewhere. One fascinates me particularly, when you say that more than being a great designer, you are interested in supporting the fashion industry.[3] I take this in the widest sense, meaning you want to improve the level of the debate, improving things for the public and for your fellow designers. I understand that to be beyond supporting just the brand, though maybe the three letters YSL represent something of importance to many. So that's a whole other level of responsibility and I think what characterizes your work is feeling responsible for other people, taking all these things on board. Maybe you found personal freedom to do quite extreme things, but this is intended to work within a wider context. You are in this quite fixed role of somebody who is the Creative Director of a brand, yet you have this other long-term view which you have also described as slowly building a brick wall, using quite difficult gestures to build up a different level of communication.[4] Which I understand perfectly, I totally understand what you are getting at. It's about a wider thing, about a collective sense of producing a better debate and better conditions for a debate, not just for yourself. How does that fit with YSL being a brand, within Gucci Group, within the François Pinault empire? You are not expected to build up long-term collective identities of an abstract nature, are you?

PILATI I might not be expected to, but still I take these things on. Don't forget I am deeply grateful to fashion. And I can consider myself as fashion designer thanks to all the people who helped me be where I am today. When I say „all the people" I don't only mean Miuccia or Tom or Mr. Armani. I am also talking about workers who were my colleagues or

people who were in the stock department, literally everybody. Because I grew up more in factories than in design studios, hands on, I could really see how much my work was related to somebody else living and surviving. I worked for a fabric company and they bought this printing machine that was an enormous investment and it was in a moment where printers were going down and so I had to make up my mind and feel the responsibility. I felt the pressure, but nobody was giving it to me, I felt it, because I was part of it. So I thought „Well, I am a creative person, let's make it work", and in fact it worked, because I made Armani a client of many of other firms and they all started to buy my prints. I am talking about something that happened 15 years ago. I was younger, but that is now part of me, now I integrated that system. And when I found myself working for a design studio I could see from the other side what it could mean to ask for somebody or to employ somebody or to choose something instead of something else. That is definitely an element of responsibility that I integrated into my way of being. Plus I am grateful for doing what I like and having a quality of life that is pretty average, interesting. Thirdly there is the history of the brand. Normally I don't compare myself with anybody, but Yves Saint Laurent is someone who I can remember and he is part of my referential universe. And as much as I hate references, going back to your first question, I like the idea that I can be a reference one day.

CARPENTER I am using you as a reference to think about two ideas. Firstly you are doing your own work, you concentrate on yourself, almost your own body in the menswear, but as a model for other people and as a collective or transformative project – the ability that fashion can have to be communicative, educational, functional and sociological. So that's one area that I am using as an example, that somebody is trying something so programmatic from such a famous and established position. Even though it's about just being a designer and having fun, it's also about being serious, serious in relation to things general and not just serious about fashion. The second way I am using your work since 2004 as a model relates to the idea of assembling a show, creating an artificial situation, tying things down into a resolved presentation. There are a lot of references in there, mixed up ideas, which merge into each other, but then build it up into something which is very tight. And for a moment, it looks beautiful, artificial, abstract and conceptual, all at the same time, but it's actually not, it's been built up through layers. That might seem limited, but it's quite interesting. Because you can still trace back in it the ideas and the references, that means you can't get rid of them again. It's not a flash in the pan thing ...one second and famous for six months. It kind of sticks around, because the abstraction achieved is a real one.

PILATI The moment you decide to work against your limits, you can be focused in one moment. There is something that you said that is very important when thinking about fashion. We do something that is six months ahead of other people. So already this responsibility, this element, pushes you to last at least for the next six months. And so the moment that you start to think that you are showing something that is six months ahead, it becomes a vision. It doesn't necessarily become the reality, and the reality maybe just belongs to you for that moment or to the audience that is privileged to see it. What is a bit difficult now is that the accessibility that people have to fashion destroys it a bit. That's why the vision of a designer or the vision of a brand gets more and more fragile. I truly believe that it is very difficult to be a fashion designer today, because it seems that anybody can be one. I guess as an artist as well.

CARPENTER There are a lot of artists around.

PILATI Thank God I am a creative person so that I can move ahead any time I want, to destabilize the people around me.

[1] Stefano Pilati previously worked for Nino Cerruti, Giorgio Armani, Miuccia Prada and under Tom Ford at Yves Saint Laurent.
[2] Tom Ford.
[3] NET-A-PORTER.COM.
[4] Lynn Hirschberg, The Tastemaker, THE NEW YORK TIMES Magazine 29/8/08.
The interview was originally published in Texte Zur Kunst Issue No. 78 / June 2010 "FASHION"

TIME IN STORE ARCHITECTURE/FASHION BENJAMIN/LANG

BY PHILIPP EKARDT

I. ARCHITECTURE/ FASHION/TIME

In a note that forms part of a convolute on fashion, one of the many groupings of fragments that make up Walter Benjamin's only posthumously published, unfinished Arcades Project, Benjamin, with a characteristic sense for polarization, matched with a subtlety of presentation that renders the articulated conflict detectable only to the closest scrutiny, squares two elements: architecture and fashion.

"The impression of the outmoded can only emerge where the most up-to-date is touched upon. If the beginnings of the modern art of building partly lie in the arcades, the effect of being outdated, which they exude on today's man, is as telling as the impression of antiquatedness which a father makes on his son." (B 3,6)

The combination is emblematic in that it combines (commentary on) two types of design whose products each respond to different sorts of temporal pressure in their aesthetic reception and real social, medial and economic processing. The realm of fashion is invoked here, apart from serving as the overall thematic framework for this passage, through the term 'outmoded' (*altmodisch*).

Fashion is – at least at first sight – produced in view of a temporal economy of shorter durations; of the stylistic negotiation and negation of what has come a month, a season, or a year ago, as well as in a bet on the not too distant future. What is presented in and as fashion is as much a suggestion for the current day as it is a pitch to what will be, and what, importantly, will eventually also be revised, reevaluated, and rejected, after having been praised, celebrated, or 'liked'. In this sense fashion always already designs all tomorrows bodies, rather than – as the rather cumbersome rhetoric of the current moment that still dominates preconceived ideas about the subject matter would have it – targeting the 'now', or what is 'in', 'du jour,' etc.

In this, the strategies of fashion contrast with models envisaged in tool-oriented theories, which ascribe the production and delimitation, in other words the production of potentialities and future realizations to the moment of the sketch (which could, of course, also be the moment of draping). These models locate the production of futurity either in the provisional assemblage of physical support (a desk, a chair), the executing arm and hand, the sheet, and the pen (or, alternatively, in the combination of mannequin, textile samples or yet uncut fabric, pins for provisional fixation). Not so, fashion. Fashion introjects this negotiation of future temporalities that other approaches would strive to locate in the design-process into the finished product which exists as a future-tilted anachronism. As a matter of fact, fashion's frequently remarked upon stylistic weirdness is often the effect of coming tastes and sensibilities whose anticipatory conjuring warps the present. It is not the result of a no less frequently assumed 'eccentricity' of the fashion crowd.[1] A style, a cut, a dress, a color, a way of moving, a gesture, a new combination of items, etc.; in fashion all of these are actualized circumstances, real-life embedded manifestations of anticipated aesthetic options, and the peculiar friction they cause in the present partly results from these rifted temporalities that become real, amidst the stream of current fashion phenomena, rather than being projected into a separate 'visionary' zone of aesthetic avant-gardes. The strange actuality and reality, i.e. the non-symbolic nature of this particular articulation of time through fashion has more or less recently regained its salience through the overall implementation of digital technologies, and their rerouting, reorganization and remediation of those aspects of fashion whose plasticity lends themselves to the (small) screen of the smartphone display (for example, the abbreviation of a look into a grammable impression, its fitness for presentation in a clip of brief duration). In all of these registers, the digital has warped and restructured the mediation and production of fashion: the near-instantaneousness with which a look can be broadcast; the speed at which it can be appropriated; and, concurrently, the ever-growing backstock of latent information that lies in state of phantom-like availability.

Architecture, by contrast, is built to last. At least in comparison with the subject of fashion that Benjamin's above quoted note suggests. Even if historico-anthropological speculation, dating at least to Rousseau and Semper, suggests impermanent origins of architectural activity (a fortunate constellation of branches on adjacent trees which form a primal hut (Rousseau), repurposed blankets and textiles that will eventually become proto-houses (Semper), and even if a number of contemporary architectural and urbanist projects address questions of limited duration and durability (think flexibility, de-growth, shrinking cities, re-adaptive building, and the entire panorama of concerns post-superstructures), architecture's major temporal mode is that of duration. There would be a way of understanding a number of classical modernist design aesthetics, such as Giedion's advocacy for Le Corbusier's *nouvel architecture* (a central point of orientation for Benjamin), with its central epistemic/aesthetic manoeuvre of deducing architectural forms through a recourse to the technological/infrastructural constructional support of buildings as a response to the insight that – qua its dedication to a long term existence – architecture should position itself beyond a regime of stylistic transformations, or need for stylistic specification (as futile as these attempts may have turned out). And even if – as is clear to anyone who walks through the streets of any given city – architectural form-giving is of course subject to empirical going 'out of date', it is still clear that principally, a hypothetical 'new' architectural style is inaugurated to last. This is where it differs from fashion; whose futurity not only incorporates coming forms into an existing object, but also presents a form that is persistently revisable, vanishing, and material for a future exitus. In this sense fashion is built to flip, contrasting architectural logic.

Given this contradiction, it is telling that Benjamin speaks of the impression of the 'outmoded', of the *démodé*, which the arcades provoke in the city dweller and shopper of the 1930s. They don't just look old, or merely outlived in terms of function: in a strange displacement of registers, Benjamin instead insists that they have gone out of style, as a dress would. And, in another volte face, he says that this aesthetic processing is the true indicator of having touched on a genuine contemporaneity: the impression of the outmoded, here developed in the medium of architecture, only occurs where current stakes are concerned.

Fashion is then marked as media for the incorporation and articulation, also the marking, of time and temporality, of implementing a speculative futurity in a dress that stands in the now; in a building whose shape is meant to withstand the pressure of stylistic changes, where the impression of the démodé insists on current concerns.

II. (TWO STORES THAT NO LONGER EXIST)

The Helmut Lang Boutique in Soho, designed by architects Gluckmann Tang, which opened in 1997, and its neighbor across Prince Street, the 2001 Helmut Lang Parfumerie, arguably belong among the iconic fashion architectures of the 2000s. One of the qualities of Lang's garments lay in harnessing functional elements (bandages, zippers, clips, etc.) into the construction of restrained ornaments, an estranged functionalism. He also repurposed them in the construction of intimate contact zones, where parachute-like bands or strings, as metal buckles could on the inside of a jacket, rub up to a t-shirt, or a bare torso and establish a characteristic proximity to the body – touch if you will – as well as the possibility of shaping new silhouettes, outlines, volumes from within. For example, the shape of a jacket could be tweaked by pulling the construction of bands on its inside, tighter or looser. An almost technological dimension was thus located within the zones of garment usually reserved for the private movements of the body. The result was a minimalism, in retrospect, as cutting edge as it was weird that spoke to questions of construction and privacy, to functionalism and sexuality, without succumbing to the appeal the uniform as worker apparel. Though formal similarities between the strap and rubber constructions that girded chests and legs of Lang's wearers and a certain repertoire of bondage tools were duly noted, Shayne Oliver's recent returns to the legacy of Lang's designs reinforce that Lang's original work was sexy, but not sexuality-centered (cf. the frequent presentation of male and female outfits on the same runway). Rather, and this is may seem only at first sight puzzling, given that Lang counts as one of the true successors to the material-oriented, high-end discreteness of the legacy of fellow Viennese Adolf Loos: Lang's designs redefined intimacy for a new historical moment.[2]

In this context it also seems important to remember that Lang was the first designer to show a collection online, at a point when a digital public sphere was still in its nascent stages and not yet as corporately administered, partitioned and readied for the extraction of value as it is now. What was then intended as a tactic for bypassing the rules of exclusivity and press access imposed by corporate structures also cast a light on the future digital exposure and accessibility to which the clothed body would soon be subjected. In this regard, Lang's advocacy for intimacy, the establishment of a zone and aesthetic layer that was not accessible to view, while not shunning the technological dimension either, is prescient.

Lang's two stores operated similarly. Each greeted the customer with a series of white, polished fronts – in the boutique these concealed the clothing racks; in the parfumerie they served as a massive counter, from where the sales personnel could produce items of Lang's cosmetics line that were, bar for a minimal number of exemplars, hidden from view. Although reflective in its surfaces, the whiteness of the store's interior had nothing clinical about it. The effect was reinforced through a combination with dark black, but recognizably wooden elements (columns and benches); as well as an inventory of select objects that provided strange moments of texturing: a gigantic mirrored discoball, placed on the floor, a group of three black wooden eagles and Jenny Holzer's characteristic chyrons, displaying her linguistic truisms. At the dawn of the internet explosion, these spaces, like Lang's garments, produced a strongly marked look – they were, indeed, hard to overlook in their austerity, garnished with the slightest whiff of romanticism. Yet they also offered protection without escapism; the technological, no longer 'functional' in the modern sense, had been accounted for, displaced and relegated (for a last time?) to a zone that was distinctly not public, even intimate.

[1] This is not to deny that this eccentricity doesn't have a place within the formal and social ecology of fashion, although the cliché deserves to be as rigorously criticized as the all too easy appeals to bohemianism or to the figure of the dandy which readily inscribe the circumstances of aesthetic production in a situation of precarity, often also propagating a thinly veiled myth of geniality.

[2] Remember his appropriation of Jenny Holzer's slogan 'I smell you on my skin' for the campaign of his first perfume.

FASHION AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE PARALLEL PERIODS OF EARLY 20TH CENTURY MODERNITY AND Y2K

BY LAURA GARDNER

'Fashion is a constantly evolving series of uniforms. A year ago, the Balenciaga bag emerged at the Paris shows, carried by a handful of influential stylists, as the talisman of the season. The message of that battered-looking hippy satchel was a quieter, more personal, less mass-market sense of style.'

—'The Trends That Just Blew In' by Kate Betts for The New York Times, February 2002.

'The toque tipped forward over the forehead, a style we owe to the Manet exhibition, demonstrates quite simply our new readiness to confront the end of the previous century.'

— German fashion journalist Helen Grund, Vom Wesen der Mode, 1935, cited in Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project (published posthumously in 1982).

It's impossible to imagine, today, a garment that performs any fashionable function without correspondence with digital media. Fashion is a mediatised phenomenon, forged through technological platforms that convert 'real clothing'[1] into fashion, and in doing so, fashion media expresses its temporality. The decade of the 2000s was a cultural period in flux, witness to major shifts in terms of creation, consumption and experience of fashion in a nascent internet era. A creative economy coming to terms with radical technological change, the Y2K decade caused fashion to fragment and diversify its field. This rapid change led to an upheaval of the fashion system in such a way that parallels to the turbulent and developing moment of cultural modernity; both periods altered the experience of fashion through its changing technological underpinnings. In early 20th Century modernity, fashion was re-evaluated as a result of the photographic media, likewise in the information age, expressly 2000 onward; fashion was augmented by the internet, shifting its attention from analogue to digitally-oriented practices. This move would effectively re-prioritise Roland Barthes' delineation of the three garments of fashion: the 'written-garment', the 'image-garment' and the 'real garment'.[2] Barthes' explication of the fashion system via these three constituent garments predicates on the idea of the fashion magazine as 'a machine that makes fashion', suggesting that in the visual and textual description of clothing on the pages of magazines, fashion becomes': i.e, mediatised fashion is contingent on the technology of the platforms on which it occurs. And, importantly, this dialectic of becoming creates the authentic experience of fashion. This situation is amplified in the digital era in terms of major developments in technological platforms that fashion is now circulated on.

FASHION AND MODERNITY

'In the modern city the new and different sounds the dissonance of reaction to what went before; that moment of dissonance is key to twentieth century style. The colliding dynamism, the thirst for change and the heightened sensation that characterize the city societies particularly of modern industrial capitalism go to make up this 'modernity', and the hysteria and exaggeration of fashion well express it.'

—Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned in Dreams, 1985

The dynamic between technology and the symbolic architecture of fashion – between medium and message – is a crucial relationship that emerges in the cultural modernity and modernisation of fashion as a consumer and urban phenomenon from the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century.[3] Fashionable dress in the modern era emerges, as Elizabeth Wilson proposes, as a 'continuously changing phantasmagoria of styles',[4] and fashion becomes as diverse in character as it is temporally volatile.

During this time, the industry underwent rapid change with the widespread use of post-industrial technology. Alongside the introduction of designer salon presentations, the proliferation of ready-to-wear clothing and department stores, fashion media too underwent significant upheaval. The professionalisation of the field of fashion journalism occurred alongside the increasing availability of fashion magazines and their market categories (from niche to popular), the modernisation of magazine printing and transport, and the development of the cultural experience of fashion as a leisure habit of the emerging bourgeoisie.

This hallmark period of the fashion magazine innovated new writing and image-making practices, developing fashion in relation to other spheres of culture. The ubiquity of the fashion photograph shifted the visual content of serial publications from illustrations to photographic stories. Later, in the early twentieth century, the photograph facilitated collaborations between fashion editors and artists such as Man Ray and Edward Steichen. Author Kate Best Nelson explains that 'by the late 1930s both Vogue and Harper's Bazaar were increasingly using photography to establish their respective artistic credentials and fashionable modernity.'[5] These developments forge a crucial link between fashion and its media platforms. Fashion in this flourishing period is increasingly manifested as word and image – categories that Barthes would later delineate in his semiology of fashion – and these descriptive mediums become essential to the overall character of fashion. On a discursive level, early modern fashion theorists related fashion (mode) with the cultural and technological idea of modernity, a bond that has endured in the symbolic construction of fashion. Fashion journalists and contributors were instrumental in the development and situation of fashion discourse at the time, as early writers of dress drew from fashion media to construct their theories. Theorists and critics such as Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé and Walter Benjamin equated fashion – via fashion media – with the temporality of modernity, or, as Baudelaire writes in 'The Painter of Modern Life': 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.'[6] The section on fashion in Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project contains generous references to excerpts from contemporaneous fashion journalism, such as the writings of German fashion journalist Helen Hessel. Writing in the short period of 1925 of 1935, Hessel's pieces in fashion feuilletons of Die Dame and Frankfurter Zeitung are emblematic of the emerging profession of fashion journalism. Hessel, like other early fashion journalists located fashion in a broader cultural experience, formalising the industry into a modern, seasonally consumed system.

These discourses – between theory, image, journalism and garment – established fashion as emblematic of culture in flux, and as a materialisation of the dynamics between past, present and future. The early thinkers on dress, motivated by fashion media to construct their philosophies of fashion, established the dialectic between fashion and temporality: the concept of fashion as being stable only in its intrinsic changing from season to season. As such, the history of fashion as a dynamic, modern phenomenon is inextricably linked to developments in and professionalisation of fashion media. What then does this mean for fashion in recent memory, at a similar point of inflection at the turn of the century, coming to terms with the universal effects of technology?

FASHION IN THE 2000S

Can fashion be periodised as pre- and post-internet? Among major cultural, economic and geopolitical shifts, fashion – as both industry and discourse – in the Y2K decade was forced to recalibrate itself under the new experiences of digital media. As in the turn of 19th Century's modernity, fashion's 'becoming', and the dynamics between Barthes' three constituent garments, were radically altered as a result of evolving media structures. The rationalisation of digital technology across disciplines, coupled with the setting in of globalisation and major geopolitical events such as September 11th, resulted in a de-differentiation of practices, imperatives and aesthetics across the production and consumption of fashion.

In the 1980s and until 2000, fashion had been preoccupied with the deconstruction of its traditions, reflecting a period of 'postfashion'[7] in which designers, such as like Gaultier, Kawakubo, Lang, McQueen and Margiela, re-configured the codification of dress in a way that was deeply invested in material and embodied fashion and its artefact. Many of these perceived avant-garde designers explored a kind of anti-fashion, or, according to Barbara Vinken: a démodé,[8] both in terms of their presentation and representation of garment collections. As the end of the century neared, the

field of fashion culturally diversified beyond merely the aesthetic gestures of postmodernity. Garment collections, as well as editorial projects equally invested in art, fashion and critical discourse, such as Purple magazine, Self Service and tank, emerged to cater to culturally niche and sophisticated audiences, functioning as platforms and promotion for the designers in their social networks.[9] As modernity in fashion was once forced to come to terms with the proliferation of ready-to-wear operations paralleling the haute couture system; the 2000s witnessed the infiltration of mass-market fashion, a phenomenon that presents major challenges for small scale, or art-aligned tendency in fashion design that flourished in the 1990s. In result, boundaries between niche cultures, mainstream luxury, and high street fashion, initially complicated by access to technology, are finally dissolved.

Several avant-garde designers first explored digital media and its possibilities for democratic fashion as anti-fashion moves. In 1998, to the frustration of editors and industry accustomed to the conventions of fashion week shows, Helmut Lang became the first designer to launch a collection on his website as a live web broadcast.[10] In February 2000, Maison Martin Margiela launched a website, with a series of designs which exploit the analogue quality of digital media – for instance, presenting an FTP index archive of collections. These early forays in internet technology presented a kind of 'new analogue' by exploiting the aesthetics of the 'default', and revelling in the newness of web by showing its crudity. Nick Night's SHOWStudio.com also launched in the same month as Maison Martin Margiela and both were followed shortly thereafter by Condé Nast's *Style.com* which went live (after the crash of the dot-com bubble in March) later in 2000.[11] The rest of the industry followed suit, in a conversion to digital that would have major implications on practice in fashion, from its material production to its instantiation in print.

The onset of the 2000s and digital technology moved fashion from its preoccupation with the material signification of dress[12] towards concerns relating to the potentiality of fashion in the digital medium. At first, high fashion brands struggled to balance the exclusivity of luxury fashion with the democratising effects of network technology, however have, by now, fully integrated digital and network technology into the substance of their brands. This transition from analogue to digital saw designers formerly preoccupied with the material artefact of fashion, now exploring its symbolic nature in terms of transmission. As a result, a paradigm shift from the paradox of the material garment, to the garment as a digital representation would alter the creative economy of fashion and its symbolic construction.[13]

FASHION AND DIGITALITY

Fashion is a creative system that follows the logic of representation. Its seasonal mediation on pages – and webpages – is a process through which the experience of fashion is constructed, and as such, embedded in fashion are the characteristics of the media on which it is conceived and disseminated. As the photograph and availability of printed media changed the way fashion practices operated in the period of modernity, dialectically, the digital era of the Y2K decade brought a paradigm shift to fashion, generating major aesthetic and cultural change. The development of fashion and fashion discourse within these broader temporal contexts of digitality coheres – via the production and circulation of fashion media – a new kind of fashion practice and discourse within both these moments. In the recent period of the 2000s, fashion has recalibrated the image-garment and written-garment in relation to real clothing, shifting fashion's focus from materialising the political and symbolic quality of the physical garment, to incorporating new modes of presentation and representation in an age of digital media. Further, as these shifts demonstrate fashion as inextricably linked to technology and technological platforms, what then might this mean for the periodisation of fashion and fashion discourse from 2000, as it once did in modernity?

[1]Barthes, R. (1967). The Fashion System. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Evans, C., & Breward, Christopher. (2005). Fashion and modernity. Oxford, New York: Berg.
[4] Wilson, E. (2003). Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity. Revised edition, London: I.B.Tauris.
[5] Nelson Best, K. (2017). The History of Fashion Journalism. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
[6] Baudelaire, C & Mayne, J. (1964). The painter of modern life and other essays. Oxford: Phaidon.
[7] Vinken, B. (2005). Fashion zeitgeist: Trends and cycles in the fashion system (English ed.). Oxford; New York: Berg.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Referring here to community-based projects, such as BLESS, Wendy & Jim, Bernadette Corporation, Organization for Returning Fashion Interest (ORFI) and Susan Cianciolo among many others.
[10] Greeven, A. (2000). 'Will fashion and the Internet Click?', Harper's Bazaar, 198.
[11] Online retailer Net-a-Porter.com also launched that same year.
[12] Maison Martin Margiela's 'semi couture' dress, a re-making of the dressmaker's dummy, presented for their spring/summer 1997 collection, is an enduring example of this kind of practice.
[13] Comme des Garçons' Fall 2012 collection, which exploited the digital image with 'grammable' 2-dimensional garment forms, is an example of digitally-oriented practice in fashion.

BURNED ENVELOPE FOR "NERVOUS"
SHELLEY FOX SPRING SUMMER 1999
READY TO WEAR COLLECTION INVITATION

REVIEWS

BY ULIRCH LEHMANN

A.F. VANDEVORST

The married couple An Vandevorst (born 1968) and Filip Arikcx (born 1971) are part of the generation of Belgian designers coming after the much heralded Antwerp Six, who had ushered in notion of deconstructivist fashion more than a decade ago, and who continue teaching and employing graduates from the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where in 1991, Vandevorst and Arikcx completed their studies. Subsequent Vandevorst became Dries van Noten's assistant while Arikcx trained at Dirk Bikkembergs. They showed their first collection as A. F. Vandevorst in Paris in 1998 where they have since presented their women's collections. From 2000, for one year, they designed both men's and women's wear for the Milan-based avant-garde tanner Ruffo Research, and have recently started working for the Italian label Allegri. The trademark that A. F. Vandevorst chose for their work is the red outline of a cross, a deliberate reference to the work of German artist Joseph Beuys, whose 'social sculptures' and drawings prominently featured the cross as a universal symbol of aid to human development. Beuys also pioneered the notion of the 'extended concept of art' into the social realm, and by the same token A. F. Vandevorst's work extends the idea of fashion from the artifice of catwalk and shop into meditations on the actual use of clothing. Vandevorst herself said in 1998: 'This is the most important thing for us; to see fashion not as something that is superficial but to probe as deep as possible.' Probing into the depth of a garment here means both research into the fabric as well as the investigation of the idea of clothing. In such context, going back to the fold, for instance, takes on the double meaning of focusing on the property of a textile that creates volume and extends the shape of the body, as well as an intended or involuntary return to social cohesion from which a progressive dress can be liberating. A. F. Vandevorst's designs often invoke the dialectical relationship between constraint and liberation through the progressive cut of clothing. When garments featured lace-up fastenings or are corseted (as in their autumn/winter 1998/99 collection) they are not adapting an eroticised idiom from costume history but present a conceptual device that shows the spine, the part of the body that Beuys regarded as most significant - both formally and metaphorically. Notwithstanding their emphasis on innovative cutting, A. F. Vandevorst favour clothing that is habitable and into which a retreat is possible, instead of creating sartorial features that seem attached to the wearer. This extended concept of fashion, away from formal creation into the conceptual and haptic meaning of a garment, provides their designs both with intellectual as well as sensuous depth.

ANN-SOFIE BACK

The mundane occupies an ambiguous position within fashion design. Couture and progressive prêt-à-porter define themselves through exclusivity - in material as well as aesthetic terms. In such a context the everyday is only evoked as ironic, when the look of downmarket clothing, banal styling, and deliberate bad taste in hair and make-up are celebrated knowingly for a limited audience who delight in cultural or historic references to quotidian fashions. The actual wearers of everyday clothing are left outside such self-penned subversive forms of consumption, as the shaping of their identity through fashion is not determined by cultural or social distance but by conformity and material expedience. However, the rituals of everyday dressing have begun to interest a new generation of designers who acknowledge the iconic character of certain cuts and materials that continue to be worn by aspirational consumers. In her autumn/winter 2003 collection Swedish designer Ann-Sofie Back used polyester, fake fur and sequins as references to mass market clothing that, though styled as exclusive, on close inspection its manufacture betrays decidedly mundane origins and cheap production. A season later, Back turned the concept of the everyday into a conceptual exercise where the look of the transvestite was celebrated not in its coinage of glamorous showmanship but in the desire to cross-dress as a housewife or office worker in order to blend in with the appearance of normative social structures. For the autumn/winter 2005 show Back revelled again in faux-pas and failure, where a flowery motif reveals itself upon closer inspection as a smudged trace of make-up on a garment and fake fur accessories are incorporated into a see-through PVC coat. Transparency, for Back, is a recurrent theme that allows her to contravene the prevalent notion of erotic attraction by revealing missmatched bras in shiny material or negative imprints of underwear on outer garments. Fashion fantasies are thus reversed. Instead of the consumer dreaming to enter the glamorous world of couture through aspirational purchases, conspicuous consumption or over-elaborate styling, we find the designer attempting to escape the exclusivity of the fashion establishment by evoking awkwardness and utmost mundanity. Born in 1971, Back grew up in Stenhamra, a humdrum Stockholm suburb. After receiving a BA in fashion from Beckman's School of Design, she left for London, graduating in 1998 from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design with an MA. Since 2001 she has shown in Paris five women's ready-to-wear collections, but in 2004 she returned to London to display her collections. Her twin escape from the need to conform to Sweden's pragmatically styled tradition in design and the crowded Paris fashion scene is telling. Back intends to work from within the progressive - therefore by definition exclusive - part of the fashion industry yet explores the conceptual contretemps of the oddly shaped and cheap looking garment in order to visualise the 'Other' of fashion's underbelly. That she manages to incorporate this concept into clothes of surprising elegance indicates the imprint that everyday garments have left on the collective sartorial memory, where the mundane forms the necessary basis of all efforts to improve one's appearance.

BLESS

From its beginning, in the latter half of the 19th century, the fashion industry was not only comprised of the latest dress or accessory presented in exclusive environments but also defined through its reverse, the discarded clothing that is adapted to the need of the impoverished customer at the street stall or flea market, and retailored or restyled to survive another cycle of avant-garde, vogue, middle-of-the-road acceptance and being passé. One consequence of the profusion of existing fashions over the last 150 years or so is rendering the need for brand new products irrelevant. If every type of clothing is simultaneously available irrespective of season, if every conceivable form of dress has been experimented with, if every possible gender configuration and appearance has been toyed with, then the solution must propose reusing material to preserve traces, material memories and signs, and to make them potent for new objects. This process extends beyond mere recycling, since the objects are put into an entirely new context where contemporary needs are meet by the collective remembrance contained in existing materials, images or systems. The Bless design team from Berlin and Paris has embraced an extended notion of fashion as a collaborative effort where the reaction to existing designs, places and conventions creates conceptual bases, and material forms for their work. Desiree Heiss (born 1971), a graduate from Vienna's Academy of Applied Arts, started working in 1996 with Ines Kaag (born 1970), who studied design at Fachhochschule Fur Kunst & Design, Hanover. From their 1997 debut as Bless they joined forces with other designers like Martin Margiela, Kostas Murkudis and Jean Colonna producing accessorised objects for their collections. They worked within spaces like the Hotel Costes K in Paris, various art fairs, European museums and private apartments, presenting their retail experience as contemporary installations. They solicit donations from Companies like Levi's, Adidas and Mandarina Duck to create patchwork scarves and jump suits from deleted production lines. Bess operates deliberately at the margins of what constitutes the modern fashion industry, with the obvious desire to defy any commoditisation of their work. This, in turn, allows them to transgress boundaries and to bring discarded fabrics, cuts or ensembles back into the fold of contemporary fashion and reactivate their original meaning through simple reuse or ironical subversion.

Bless are not mere tyros or iconoclasts shouting at the walls of an established industry, market or scene; they realise that fashion today is too diffuse and fragmented to support concerted opposition. It is only the memory of all possible clothes, and the situation and spaces when and where they are worn, which can serve as the basis for progressive development today.

SUSAN CIANCIOLO

The materiality of fashion not only determines the look and feel of a garment but indicates also the social environment into which the clothes become integrated. A thrift-shop aesthetic, for instance, as in the work of New York designer Susan Cianciolo, who evokes the notion of second-hand clothing through 'found garments', seemingly erratic knits, patchwork collages or random embroidery of artfully naïve images, locates hand-made clothes in an alternative bohemia. The designs appear as haphazard combinations of DIY-couture and calculated artwork. Their decorations are skillfully prepared yet presented as throwaway gestures that ignore the edifying dictate of high fashion. The clothes purport the aesthetic of customising, of personalising existing fashion structures in order to find emotive individual expression, yet their detail is decreed by the designer and presents a level of artistic commitment that runs counter to naïve intuition. Cianciolo wants to incorporate chance into the design process but strongly mediates random aspects through her art, which is aestheticising chance material encounters through particular working processes and patterns of presentation. This, in turn, moves her clothes, accessories and modes of display out of subculture into the mainstream of exclusive New York department stores and glossy fashion magazines. Here, the deliberately heterogeneous materiality of vintage and new fabrics, of deconstructed and hand-knitted sleeves or of tailor's dummies and easel, takes on the character of strenuous opposition that distracts from the often-quiet poetry of Cianciolo's motifs.

The structural and economic demands of the fashion industry pocket alternative gestures like Cianciolo's and vulgarise them, in the space of a season, to become a style. Even the effort to render original designs as vulgar and rough in finish as possible does not prevent such commodifications. The most progressive material collage of used cloth and eccentric stitching can be turned by the market into a harmless stylistic motif. Therefore, the only veritable confrontation seems to be dispensing with fashion rituals altogether and showing new work in the guise of an art retrospective; a strategy which Cianciolo pursued over the last couple of years after stopping the seasonal rhythm of her collections in 2002. Born in Rhode Island in 1969, Cianciolo studied

art there, at the Rhode Island School of Design, and then graduated from Parsons School of Design in 1992. She worked as an assistant for the X-Girl label founded by Kim Gordon, the bass player for Sonic Youth, thereby finding an early congenial place for an alternative design philosophy. A year later in 1993, she set out her first RUN-collection that has seen eleven incarnations to date, with venues ranging from art galleries and clubs to car parks and street corners. These presentations, which oscillate between catwalk and performance, static display and filmic documentation, each have a distinct conceptual base. Run 3, produced in 1996, for instance, featured her pro-abortion film Anti-Pink. The following year Run 5 paired models and life-size dolls in a white room with visitors passing through the prostrate figures while listening to a portable stereo, while 1998's Run 6 showed film work by feminist artist Rita Ackermann. Through its concept and visualisation the Run-retrospective of 2003/04 indicates a refusal to match the expectation of the fashion industry but, at the same time, comes perilously close to succumbing to canonisation by the art market. Displayed in Milan, Osaka and Eindhoven galleries, it draws an ironic final stroke under the last decade of collections, as if Cianciolo's designs are now removed from the fashion context and are to be collected as artworks. However, the distinct haptic and visual sensibility of her designs requires an appreciation that seems impossible in the neutral environment of aesthetic experience. The clothes and accessories need to be worn to gain meaning for themselves and their materiality to be formed through intimacy with the human body.

KOSTAS MURKUDIS

Cinema and clothing share the potential to show fictional journeys in time. They can both evoke, through their combination of moving parts or objects, travels that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries and connect the contemporary with a distant past or fantastic future. Also, fashion designers have recognised that continuous movement, the advantage of the motion picture over the photograph or drawing, is instrumental for the proper representation of clothes. Fashion needs to be animated to fulfil its potential not simply as commodity, but as cultural artefact. Yet such animation does not have to be seen literally in flowing fabrics or stream-lined sportswear. It can exist, too, in the heterogeneous design elements of a garment itself. Kostas Murkudis' second collection, 'Kyoto Blondie' (autumn/winter 1997/98), demonstrates that the combination of traditional Japanese patterns and Western popular music draws dramatic meaning from an imaginary journey in space and time, and how this confrontation of different cultural signs animates the designs themselves. Even within the mundane act of putting on the outfit, the wearer travels through it from one location to another. Similarly, as in examples from Murkudis' spring/summer 2001 women's wear collection, the design can arrest in time the act of removing an item of clothing to reveal another. A dress is paired with a coat that is left draped over one shoulder and stitched in place so that the symbolic move from exterior to interior, as signified by removing one's overcoat, is left in ambivalent stasis. The fusion of disparate elements that is habitually regarded as stylistic eclecticism or deconstructive gesture thus becomes, in Murkudis' work, a collection of moving images that travel across an imaginary map of the human figure. Born in 1959 in Dresden to Greek parents, Murkudis studied at the Bette-Verein in Berlin, and then in 1985 joined Helmut Lang's design team, with whom he worked until 1993. Subsequently, from 2000 for three years, he was responsible for the Italian label New York Industries while showing in Paris his own men's and women's wear collections. His exposure to a wide range of creative approaches and working methods within the industry has allowed him to make the combination of various materials and mnemonic traces his idiom. The starkness of his designs recalls cinematic narratives where dialogue and meditative close-up are more important than blurred action or sweeping panoramas. The attention to detail that marks the artisanal basis of progressive fashion design is analogous to intimate filmic moments when psychological tensions are inscribed on the human face and figure. As film represents the meaning of material in motion, cinematic narratives that use such movement appeal to the designer for their instantly recognisable dramatic and visual conventions that allow the clothes to act as characterisations and assume symbolic meaning while maintaining an intense storyline that can be recognised by the wearer.

CAROL CHRISTIAN POELL

Often we find in man, an inherent need to escape from social conventions, spatial confines or a psychological state. For some, the need might be the result of a physiological necessity, for others a deep-seated desire to take flight. Yet escaping - even for the briefest period of time - is a highly metaphoric act for establishing one's identity. This need to escape finds a particularly pertinent expression in men's apparel, as fashion has encased, constricted and codified man in sombre, stiff fabrics since the Great Masculine Renunciation, when he dispensed with the decorative costume after the French Revolution. But an escape from this system of dressing cannot simply be one of dispensing with clothes. It requires a radical approach. Thus Carol Christian Poell states, 'When I started in the designer rag trade, I stopped dressing altogether. Now I just cover myself up.' Born in Vienna in 1966, Poell trained there as a master tailor, before moving on to a brief stint at the Domus Academy, Milan, where he now has his Studio. His roots lie in the arcane tradition of bespoke tailoring, acutely aware of the way in which artisanal expertise has become lost within mass production. Poell's first collection, in 1995, consisted of a mere handful of designs and his recent output is still approximately 4,000 pieces per season, 500 of which are suits, mostly hand-finished or indeed constructed individually in his studio. The greatest majority of his work is ostensibly for men. But Poell also designs for women, in allowing gender-crossing cuts to be used for trousers and jackets. Tearing at the seams of established production processes, Poell's escape routes do not simply lead away from fashion. Although they often direct us to a place situated outside the fashion industry, he insists, for creative as well as analytical reasons, on the potency of dress for man's figure. Thus any possible flight must lead us deeper into the folds of the cloth itself. The surface of clothes is probed and often penetrated with the expertise of the scientifically qualified artisan. Poell's childhood memories of smell from a tannery and of helping his stepfather, a tailor, cutting cloth direct his work below the sartorial surface into the very fabric of a design or object. Thread made from household rubber bands, pigskin trousers dyed in ox blood, shoes without seams, bodyplasts or cemented jersey shirts activate the surface through haptic olfactory or audible traits. The wearer is made consciously and continuously aware of the cloth and, through its unorthodox look or feel, offered an alternative physical state allows for escape from immediate social and sartorial surroundings. Accordingly, Poell's collections are presented as performance pieces, instead of on a catwalk, which employ similar metaphors of escaping. His spring/summer 1998 collection, 'Improper', saw models descending and ascending ladders to an underground cave. Three years later, he confined them to cages in an abandoned animal shelter, and for the spring/summer 2002 collection they rather romantically abseiled from the window of his studio onto the Milanese courtyard below. Finally the most effective escape is, of course, death. Thus for his collection 'Best Before 16/10/00', held at the Turin Art Fair, Poell had seven bodies, covered entirely in extended pairs of trousers, placed in a dark room on stretchers with the smell of the local morgue penetrating from concealed bags, while his presentation for spring/summer 2004 saw bodies floating down a Milanese canal at sunset. Yet there is little obvious drama played out in such performances, as the escape is quietly planned and reconfigured over time, with perhaps the knowledge of its ultimate impossibility. It is the search for an escape route, itself, that constitutes here the most potent flight (of fancy) for the designer.

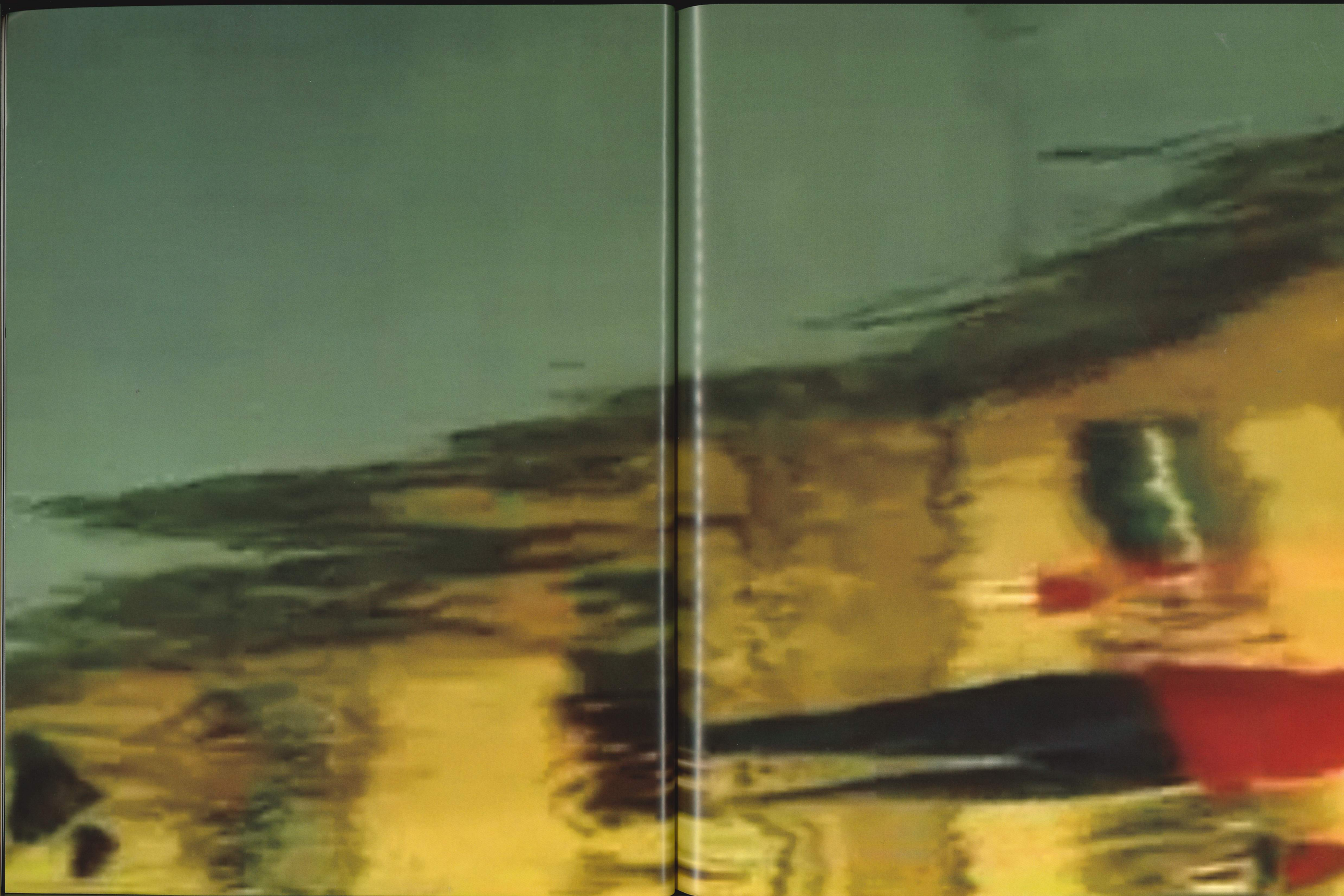
RAF SIMONS

Arrested development is usually associated with deficiency. To remain fixated on one particular developmental stage is regarded as synonymous with ignoring change and the need to progress. Yet in fashion the idea of preserving youthfulness, or presenting each season an eternally perfect body without the lines or markings of age, is accepted as a given. But what if clothes depict and celebrate continuous adolescence? What if each collection by a singular designer actively remembered the youth culture of his teens? Does one find here the fault-line of the fashion scene that craves inspiration by youth and subcultures but requires their 'mature' and qualified translation into sophisticated and rather expensive designs rather than any direct and open adoption? The Belgian designer Raf Simons (born 1968) has celebrated the appearance of adolescence since his first collection in 1995. A graduate in industrial design and self-trained as a fashion designer, Simons has presented all variants of boyish clothing, from outfits based on English school uniforms and Californian surfers to the dress codes of New Wave musicians and the sportswear of urban skateboarders. Like the protagonist in Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, he has created an extended and infinitely variable narrative from memories of the music and clothes of his youth, coupled with the artisanal expertise of a couturier. For 'Closer', his autumn/winter 2004 collection, Simons used, for example, the archive of Peter Saville, a graphic designer who during the Eighties and early Nineties created the internationally recognised appearance of Manchester's music culture. Again, 'lost time' of teenage years, when flowing fashion for clothes (and for music) implied improvisation and recycling rather than shopping for expensive commodities, is brought into the realm of contemporary ready -to-wear. But here the inspiration from 'the street' or clubs is not an admission of a creative impasse. It is an appeal for innocence and purity, for a time in one's life when cynicism still remains a mere pose and has not yet become an ingrained character trait, and consuming fashion is about a narcissistic pleasure of one's own body rather than chasing social status through cultivated appearances. Simons' carefully tailored and expertly finished menswear seems to contradict its stylistic origin in alternative subcultures but, in fact, allows for the recognition of sartorial inventions that are not simply based on customizing existing fashions but on radically changing them. His repeated references to the aesthetics of (post-) Punk, show Simons's focus on structural challenges to the lines and proportion of men's fashion through the deconstruction of garments. Simons' significance lies in the openness with which the parallel between adolescence and subculture is exposed in the context of high fashion. While recapturing youth is impossible, its memory becomes all the more poetic and evocative, permitting the remembrance of a past that one carefully crafts for oneself on the understanding that it has never appeared in this fashion.

WENDY & JIM

Much of modern life is structured in zones. There are time zones that, with the advent of modern travel, standardized the erstwhile use of individual solar time. There are geo-political zones, establishing boundaries of influence and creating spaces for isolation and migration. There are war zones, demarcating physical or ideological conflicts. And there are erogenous zones, structuring the body along cultural shifters of concealment and revelation. In fashion the latter is, of course, most resonant with the idea of dress codes establishing cultural divides between the politically and morally acceptable and the visualisation of new design ideas. In late modernism such zones have become increasingly ambiguous. Contemporary means of communication render time zones immaterial and allow for constant professional and personal contact, irrespective of established working hours or sleep patterns. Geo-political zones are becoming destabilised, and theatres of war are literally suspended in mid-air while shifting to geographically diffuse forms of terror. Cultural and sartorial traditions are replaced by the lowest - read: most economical - global denominators. The zones of the body, too, that have been dramatically revealed or concealed within the constant flux of fashion are redefined by diffusing silhouettes and rendering sexual signifiers obsolete. The gestures of tightening clothing across one body part while exposing another to establish codified signs of attraction are replaced now by clothing that turns the human figure top to bottom or reverses it back to front, ignoring, for example, the habitual use of shoulders or hips to attach panels of garments. The above is significant for the work of Austrians Helga Schania (born 1973) in St. Pölten, and Herman Fankhauser (born 1964) in Zell, Tirol, who met studying at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. They started collaborating in 1997 and, a few years later, registered the label Wendy & Jim, while working with Levi's, Bless, and Comme des Garçons. A recent collection is entitled 'Grauzone' - grey zone - to underscore the ambivalence of existing sartorial structures, in regard to gender, social status and, most importantly, modes of design. Wendy & Jim's work over the past four years has dissolved hard boundaries in fashion: the generic out or inside of a garment, the size that is nominally appropriate to a respective wearer, the function in covering the whole body or, alternatively, the requisite of adding separate pieces of clothing. But this does not render designs arbitrary or imprecise. In Wendy & Jim's work carefully constructed and hand-finished shapes are combined to generate a deliberate and dissolute sense of freedom, where a grey area is created to propagate neglected or subversive sartorial ideas. Accordingly, they translate 'Grauzone' also as 'grey scale' to indicate its function as a neutral template against which existing fashions around them can be colour proofed. While sweaters seem to double up as trousers and reversed jackets cover the nether regions of the body, they are in fact neither recycled nor re-tailored but independently created to simulate the effect of understated subversion. In a similar vein, bomber jackets sport all-over denim prints to mark the calculated adoption of mundane high-street fashion for progressive ready-to-wear. The use of tents in their last presentation-cum-installation shows the migratory character of work that is not rooted simply in one sartorial tradition but exists in a transitory state between different zones of cultural influence. Wendy & Jim thereby move as much between the fashion industry and alternative forms of dress as they traverse across various zones of the human body.

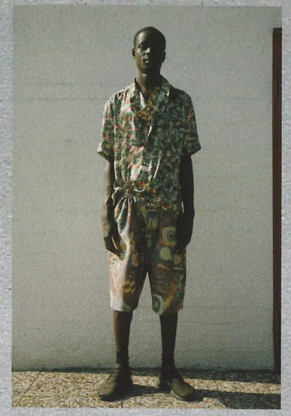
VHS STILL, "MAINSTREAM DOWNSTREAM"
CAROL CHRISTIAN POELL MALE SS04

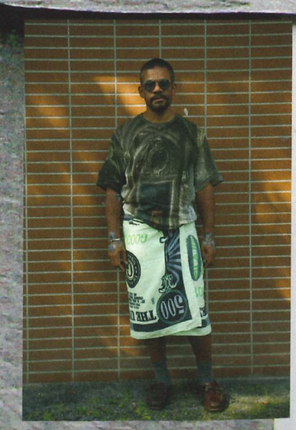


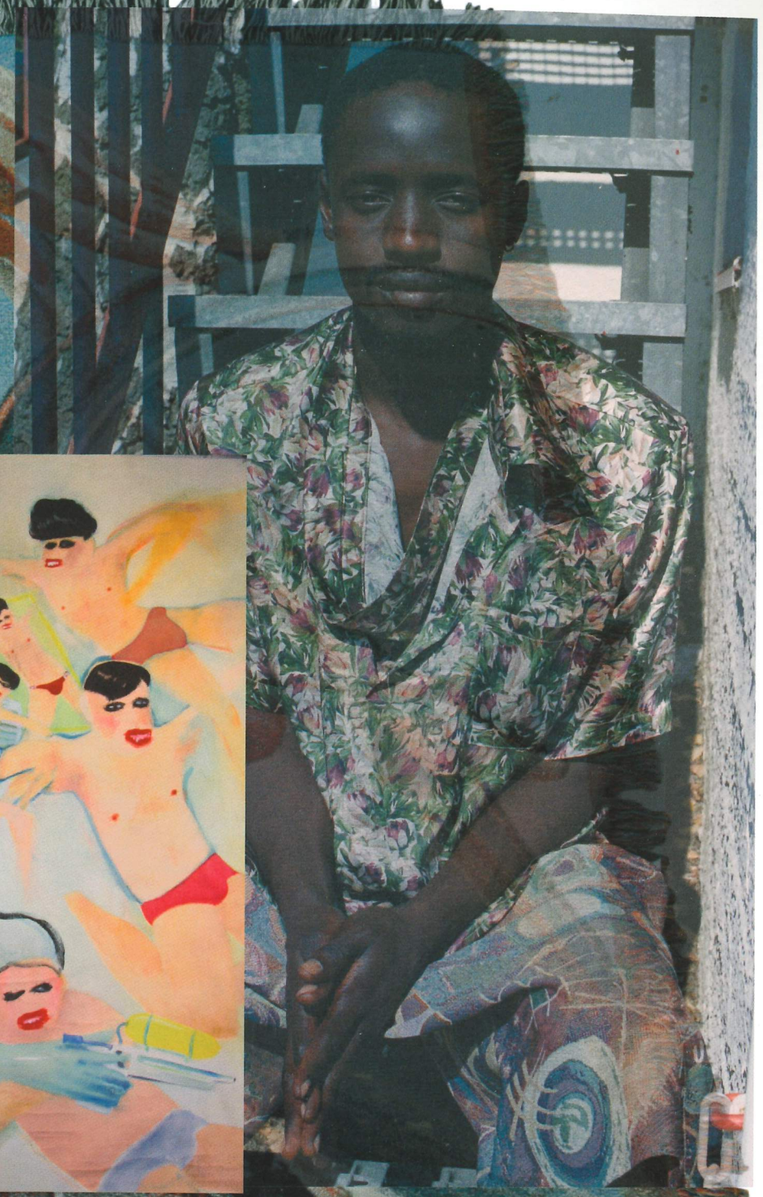
BLESS N° 61

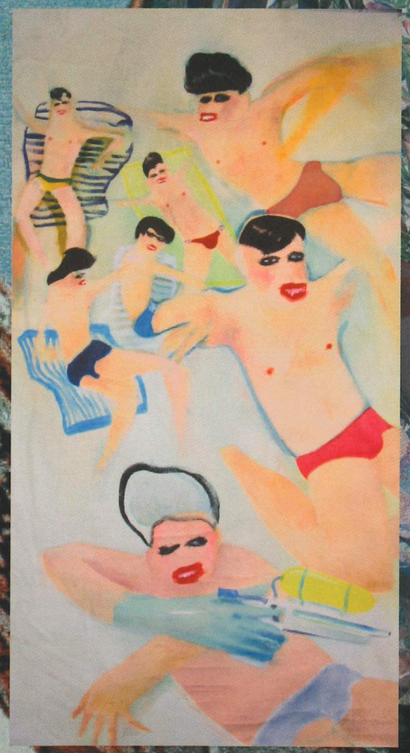
Swimming together







BLESS N°61 Swimmingtogether

Models:
Amina Bamieh, Anna Schetelich, April von Stauffenberg, Bakary Jobe, Bert Houbrechts, Elisa Bürkle, Hannah Cheney, Hanna Fiegenbaum, Hiroyuki Sugihara, Jao Yuchen, Jean-Christophe Ydier, Laura Snijders, Lilli Heinemann, Manuel Raeder, Marc Brandenburg, Nora-Nele Heinevetter, Olivia Lauren Ray, Sonja Cvitkovic, Verena Michels

Collection supported by: Amina Bamieh, Andreas Liehmann, Bert Houbrechts, Elisa Bürkle, Jean-Christophe Ydier, Verena Michels

This season was supported by the following interns:
Ashleigh Spooner, Diane Gaignoux, Fan Wang, Gergo Magashegyi, Jasmine Febbraro, Josiane Martinho, Laura Snijders, Maria Rojas, Mia-Lova Korr, Mirela Ionica, Romain Froelicher, Tina Schwitzgebel, Yu Chen Jao, Yusho Kobayashi

Special thanks to the following producers:
Asuka Hamada, Ghazala Wadood, Herr Sliwinski, Hofstetter Pelz und Design GmbH, Jesse Finkelstein at POAM, Karla Friedrich at Kainko, Laura Hughes, Mamoon Rashid at TecnoMax International, Osamu Arai, Nina Paffrath, Kaoru Arai, Lana Grossa, Eduard Deml GmbH, Susanne Zmudzinski & Frau Wanda at 110%ig, Yuni Hong

Very special thanks to:
Andrea Huyoff, Ayumi Hashimoto, Beate Huss, Berliner Bäder Betriebe, Giovanni Di Stefano, Hannah Cheney, Hideki Iida, Hiroco Motoyanagi, Jennefer Hoffman, Jacob Valdemar and VALD agency, Lilli Heinemann, Manami Someya, Migle Kazlauskaite, Nora-Nele Heinevetter & TROPEZ, Norma Kiskan, Studio Manuel Raeder, TextilFAB, Tomoko Takamatsu

Concept and graphic design of the BLESS N° 61 lookbook:
Studio Manuel Raeder
Photography: Bert Houbrechts, BLESS, Kristin Loschert, Ink Agop, Marc Brandenburg
Video: Ink Agop

Sales contacts:
General / Jean-Christophe Ydier
+33 1 48016743 /
jean-christophe@blessparis.com
Japan / Diptrics
+81 334090089
sales@diptrics.com
Additionnal sales support worldwide / VALD agency
+45 27 51 54 00 /
info@valdagency.com

Press contacts:
General press & picture requests / Amina Bamieh
+33 1 48016743 /
press@blessparis.com
Japan / Diptrics
+81 334090089
info@diptrics.com

BLESS HOME BERLIN
Oderbergerstrasse 60
10435 Berlin
+49.30.27 59 65 66
shop@blessberlin.com

BLESS SHOP PARIS
14, rue Portefoin
75003 Paris France
+33.1.48 01 67 43
shop@blessparis.com