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AND RISE OF

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GORMAN

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PHENOMENON

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KING GIORGIO

MR. ARMANI ON FASHION'S FUTURE
(AND WHY HE'S NOT SLOWING DOWN)

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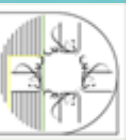
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VOGUE

May 2021



FILM APPRECIATION

MODEL LILA MOSS, WEARING A PRADA DRESS, JIL SANDER LEGGINGS, AND MARNI SANDALS, SEALS THE DEAL ON A GUCCI HANDBAG. PHOTOGRAPHED BY NIGEL SHAFRAN.

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Cover Look The Hill She Climbed



Vogue's May issue has two covers featuring the poet Amanda Gorman. ABOVE LEFT: Louis Vuitton blanket, a look celebrating men's artistic director Virgil Abloh's personal African heritage, and belt. Tory Burch sandals. Auvere ear cuffs, worn in hair. Khems Designs hair charms. ABOVE RIGHT: Dior Haute Couture dress and headband. Tory Burch sandals. To get these looks, try: Radiant Fluid Foundation Matte SPF 20 in Very Deep Beige, Eyebrow Pencil in Dark Brown, and Lipstick Cashmere in Pouty. All by Clé de Peau Beauté. Details, see In This Issue. **Photographer: Annie Leibovitz.** **Fashion Editor: Gabriella Karefa-Johnson.**

FASHION EDITOR: ALEX HARRINGTON. HAIR: BLAKE HENDERSON; MAKEUP: PHOEBE TAYLOR. PRODUCED BY DOBEDO REPRESENTS; SET DESIGN: STUART MCCAFFER. DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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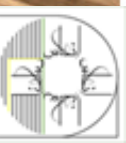
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Letter From the Editor



GREAT MINDS

THE POET AMANDA GORMAN (LEFT, IN LOUIS VUITTON) AND DESIGNER GIORGIO ARMANI, BOTH PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ (ARMANI VIA ZOOM). FOR GORMAN, FASHION EDITOR: GABRIELLA KAREFA-JOHNSON. FOR ARMANI, FASHION EDITOR: TONNE GOODMAN.

Onward and Upward

WHAT DO AMANDA GORMAN AND Giorgio Armani have in common? More than you might think. One is a 23-year-old poet from Los Angeles, one an 86-year-old style icon at the top of his fashion empire—but the gulf of decades between them collapses for me as I read their profiles this month. Both Amanda and Giorgio have presence; both radiate confidence, focus, and drive. They know what they want to achieve, and while Giorgio has a bit of a head start on this front, both leave little doubt that they will arrive where they are headed.

As photographed by Annie Leibovitz (herself no stranger to confidence), Amanda is self-possessed and stunningly beautiful under the California sun, and Giorgio is as chic and elegant as ever in Milan. The combination seems exactly right for our moment. There's a spirit of unity and community in the air, a feeling that old categories are becoming obsolete and preconceptions are being discarded. How relevant is age, anyway? In President Joe Biden we have the oldest leader in U.S. history, who has pushed through startlingly progressive relief legislation. We have a pandemic that has touched all of us and that may be finally loosening its grip (but not everywhere—Europe is tragically entering another lockdown as I write). Culture and the arts are coming back. Signs of reemergence

are all around us. Early 2021 feels like a time of hopeful impatience. Let the past go. Bring on the future.

And bring back the fashion. In this issue we embrace the (nearly) lost art of dressing up. In portfolios like “Epic Proportions” (page 84) and “Practical Magic” (page 128), we're celebrating a return to big, playful, colorful, confident clothing that is meant to be seen (and not just on Instagram). Surely Giorgio knows about dressing up. In his wonderfully candid interview with the writer Jason Horowitz, he speaks about how fashion must “help people feel better about themselves, to live better”—but also about the need to scale back, to make less, and do so more thoughtfully. I was reminded that, in February 2020, he was one of the first to understand the severity of the pandemic and canceled his show in Milan. He's handled this pandemic year with dignity and grace, donating to hospitals and supporting medical workers in Italy, and he's already looking to the future. “I want to work, to decide, to change things,” he says.

Amanda does too. Who else could have upstaged an entire gallery of politicians and celebrities on Inauguration Day than this extraordinary young woman in her canary-yellow coat and scarlet headband? Doreen St. Félix's thoughtful profile captures how hard Amanda worked for her moment—and how human she is, feeling pressure to deliver with her pair of books this fall. “How do you meet the last thing you've done?” she wonders aloud. I have no doubt that she will.

A. Mahifan.

GORMAN: HAIR: LACY REDWAY; MAKEUP: RAISA FLOWERS. SET DESIGN: MARY HOWARD STUDIO. DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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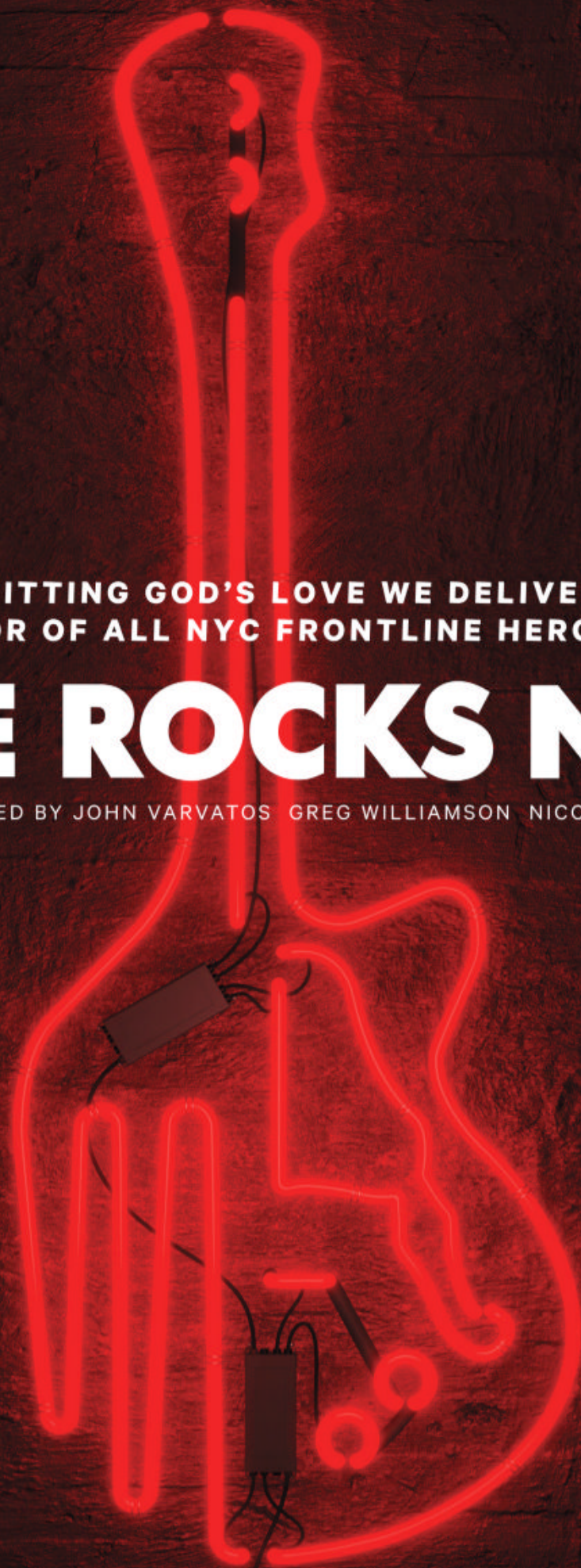
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Contributors



Jason Horowitz

As Rome bureau chief for *The New York Times*, Jason Horowitz began his pandemic reporting early, scuttling a ski vacation in February 2020 to cover Italy's first coronavirus outbreak. Yet a year of lockdowns in Rome with his wife, Claudia, their kids, Elena and Luca, and a new puppy, Agrippina, had its charms. "It was crowded and trying but also wonderful," Horowitz reflects. Recently the journalist spoke to designer Giorgio Armani ("Voice of Reason," page 106) about the fashion industry and COVID-19. A "giant who looms over Milan," Mr. Armani cut a fearsome figure, Horowitz admits, but their meeting was fruitful: "After a few minutes, he loosened up, laughed a few times, and was generous with his time and thoughts."



Tom Ford

No creative vision springs forth fully formed, and designer Tom Ford's notion of a glamour that marries minimalism with full-bodied sensuality was inspired, in part, by Halston. This month, the onetime "king of American fashion" is the subject of a Netflix limited series from Ryan Murphy, and to mark it, *Vogue's* International Editor at Large, Hamish Bowles, discussed the late designer's life and legacy ("Ultra," page 124) with Murphy and Ford—who in 2019 purchased Halston's former Manhattan town house. Ford first visited the house as a teenager, when he was linked with an associate of Andy Warhol's: "I walked in, and I remember just thinking, Oh, my God—this is exactly how I want to live." Now, he says, he can't help paying homage—Halston's sleek aesthetic "permeates everything."

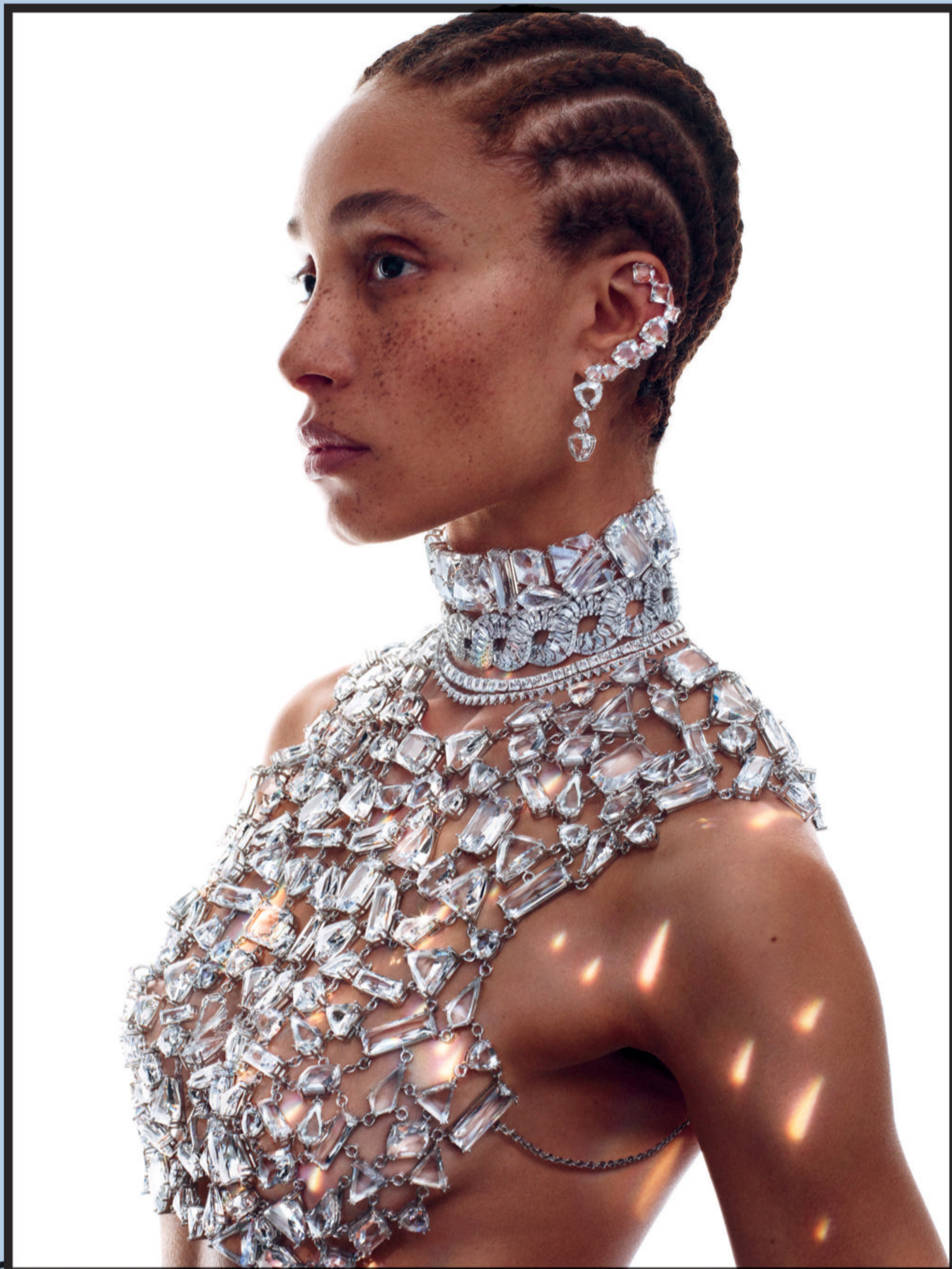


Doreen St. Félix

Like many people, Doreen St. Félix first encountered the 23-year-old poet Amanda Gorman on Inauguration Day. "The strangest image—of this small Black woman in bright primary colors—really shook my view," the *New Yorker* staff writer recalls. "I had so many older Black women in my life texting me, being like, 'Who is this person?' I ended up going down a rabbit hole." For this issue's cover story ("Supernova," page 96), St. Félix met up with Gorman (after multiple negative COVID-19 tests) in Los Angeles, where, among other things, the two discussed Oprah, the best sunscreens for dark complexions, and the political convictions of Gen Z. "She's part of this generation that, from a very young age, has seen maturation as being a part of their youth," St. Félix says of the 2017 National Youth Poet Laureate. "From 13 or 14, they're already starting careers. So she may be young, but in many ways she's a veteran."

COURTESY OF JASON HOROWITZ. TOM FORD: ANNIE LEIBOVITZ; DOREEN ST. FÉLIX: KATIE MCCURDY.

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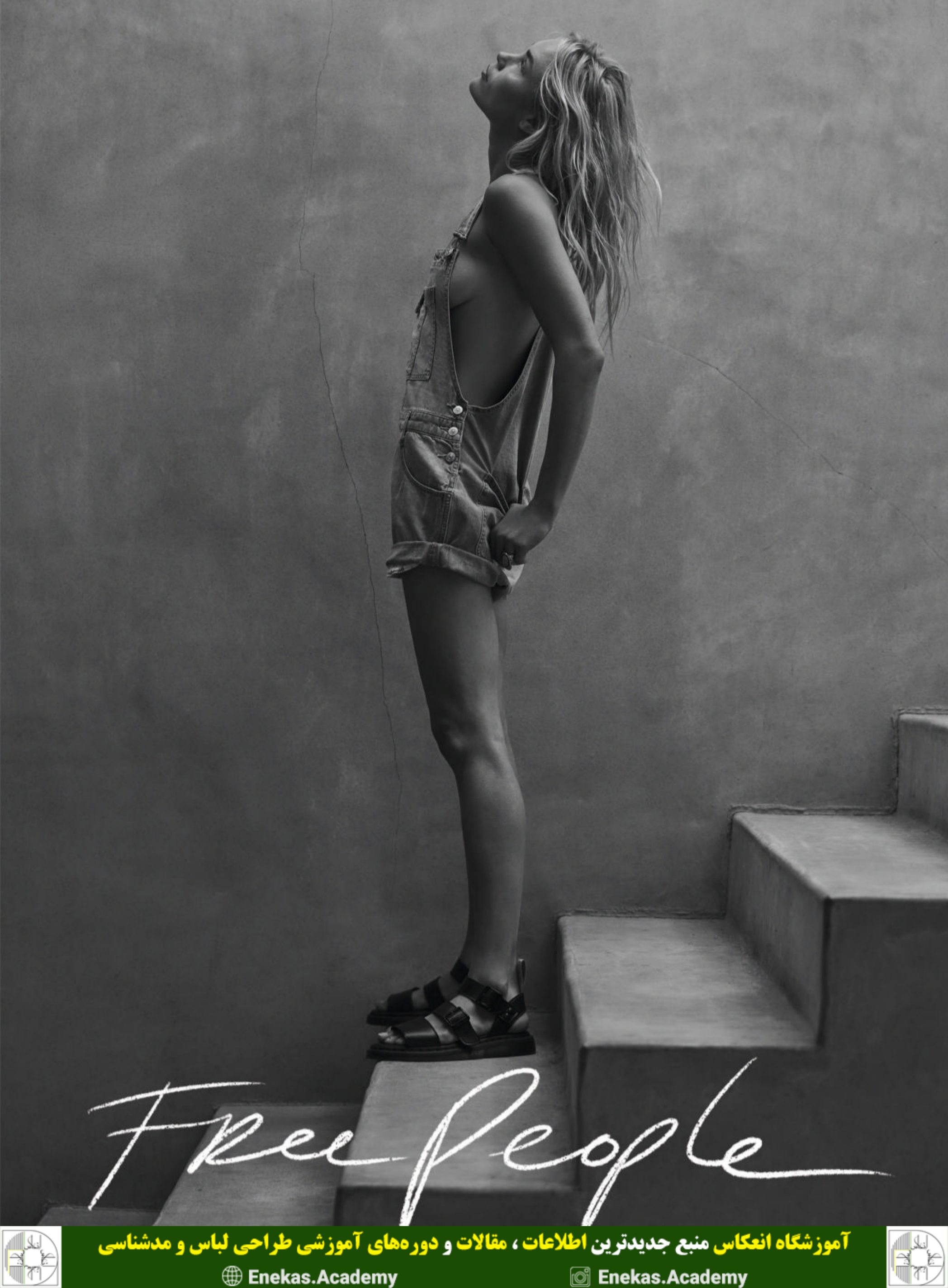


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Home Alone

How do you escape from one existence into another? In this excerpt from Dana Spiotta's novel *Wayward*, liberation first comes in the form of a tumbledown house.

One way to understand what had happened to her (what she had made happen, what she had insisted upon): It began with the house. It was the particular house, but it also was where the house was and where she discovered she wanted to be. It was a run-down, abandoned Arts and Crafts cottage in a neglected, once-vibrant neighborhood in the city of Syracuse.

The house sat high on a tiny lot on Highland Street, which ran atop a hill that bordered a long expanse of grass and trees. It looked like a small, sloping park, but it was actually a cemetery, the old graves clustered in the southwest corner. Unless you were squeamish about graves—Sam wasn't—the sloping green hill was quite pretty. Highland itself offered a wide view of downtown. You could see the steeples of churches, and you could see how the small city was in a valley surrounded by hills. You could even see the kidney shape of Onondaga Lake, although it was often partly obscured by low-hanging clouds. If you turned your head to the left, or if you looked out the side windows of the house, you could see Syracuse University up on another hill. You would locate it by the quilted low white bubble of the Carrier Dome (named for the nearly absent Carrier Corporation—all that remained were a handful of jobs, the dome, and Carrier Circle,

a treacherous traffic roundabout that Sam hated). Soon after you spotted the dome you would notice the various spired and turreted campus buildings.

The decision to leave her husband—the act of leaving, really—began the moment she made an offer on the house. It was a Sunday; Sam woke up at 5 a.m. She attributed this unnecessarily early waking to the approach of menopause. Her period still came each month, but odd things had started changing in her body, even her brain. One of which was suddenly becoming awake at 5 a.m. on a Sunday, her mind shaking off sleep with unnegotiable clarity, as if she had already drunk a cup of coffee. And just as with coffee, she felt alert, an adrenal burst, but she could also feel the fatigue underneath it all, the weariness. That morning the wood floor was cold against her bare feet, but she couldn't find her slippers. It was still dark. She tried not to wake her husband. She used her phone to illuminate the way to the bathroom. She peed, flushed, washed. She brushed her teeth without looking in the mirror. She pushed up the blinds to peek outside. The sky was gradually lightening with the >40

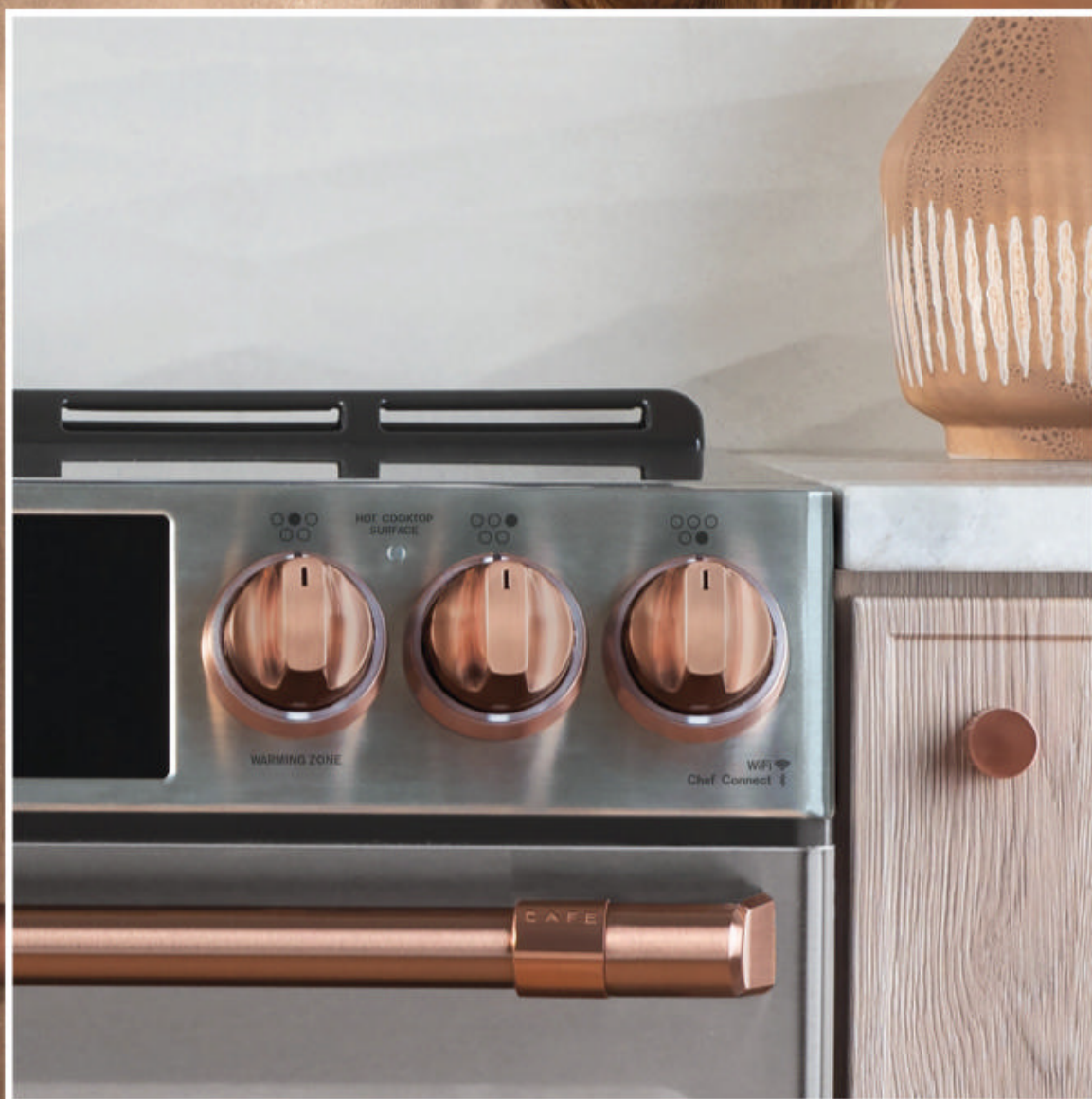
INNER LIFE

THE DECISION TO LEAVE HER HUSBAND—THE ACT OF LEAVING, REALLY—BEGAN THE MOMENT SHE MADE AN OFFER ON THE HOUSE.



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Up Front

Change of Address

dawn, and half a foot of snow had fallen overnight. The sunrise that was creeping up now cast a pink and gold glimmer, and a little crust of ice on top of the snow glittered from the sky and from the streetlamps. The trees, the roofs of the houses, even the salt-crusted cars looked beautiful.

Sam figured that she was the only person on earth who thought late-March snowstorms were wonderful, and this made her feel a bit proud of herself. Always she liked to imagine herself as subtly different from everyone else, enjoying the tension and mystique of being ordinary on the surface but with a radical, original interior life. For example, back when Sam used to shop the sales at the Talbots in DeWitt with the other suburban ladies of her class and age, she separated herself. Sure, Sam had discovered that the classic A-line or sheath dresses made of solid-colored ponte knits were so forgiving, so flattering (“flattering,” that tragic word) to a grotesque midlife misshapeness—a blurriness, a squareness, really. But despite shopping because of an “insider” email-blast notification of a super sale, Sam believed that she was different from the other women. Inside she was mocking the calibrated manipulations, mocking herself, noting the corporate branding and lifestyle implications of the preppy styles and colors. The classic plaids, the buttons on the sleeves, the ballerina flats evoking a tastefully understated sensibility. It even occurred to her that the other women could be having the same interior thoughts and that the idea of conformity—at least in modern America—was never consciously sought after. No one older than a teenager thought, *I want this because everyone else has it*. No, Sam knew that you were allowed to keep a vain and precious sense of agency. This was the very secret to consumerism working in a savvy, self-conscious culture. Her sense of resistance was as manufactured as her need to buy flattering clothing. Nevertheless (!), Sam also believed that her having such self-critical, self-reflexive thoughts as she shopped set her apart from the other women. Surely. So she still believed herself to be (however stealthily) an eccentric person, not suited to conventions of thought or sensibility.

Lately this desire to be contrary to convention had taken on a new urgency well beyond clothes or matters of taste. An unruly, even perverse inclination animated her. It had been looking for a place to land, for something to fasten on. So now (not before), this odd inner state pushed her toward a highly destabilizing wildness (a recklessness) that she couldn't suppress any longer.

She pulled on the same clothes she had worn the day before: stretched-out jeans and a black cowl-neck sweater. She no longer wanted to open her closet full of clothes. Why did she need so many, so much? In the last few months, things that used to captivate her no longer did.

She crept downstairs and made herself a coffee.

An unruly, even perverse inclination animated her. It had been looking for a place to land, for something to fasten on

It was Sam's habit to check out the real estate listings online. She had the bored-housewife pastime of attending open houses. She knew many of the other people there also had no intention to buy but had come to snoop into other people's lives or to calculate land values or to imagine a fantasy life brought on by the frame of fresh architecture. This last impulse made sense to her. She had even wanted, at one point, to study architecture (and history, and women's studies, and literature), but she had talked herself out of it and she had gotten married and then pregnant instead. She settled for becoming an architectural amateur.

Unusual old structures (Syracuse had many) excited her: They were a visible-but-secret code, the past rendered in materials that could be seen and touched. For example, the abandoned AME Zion Church on East Fayette Street. Its tiny perfect form sat on a sturdy, intact limestone foundation. Paint-peeled crumbling white brick rose into

a bell tower next to a large Gothic-pointed stained-glass window. But the building was lost in the concrete dead zone around I-81, grown over with box-maple saplings and covered with graffiti, the windows long boarded up. It belonged to the oldest Black congregation in Syracuse, built 100 years ago to replace a structure at another site that dated to the 1840s, when it had been a part of the

Underground Railroad. Now the church sat stranded and forgotten. Syracuse had so much history that it could neglect wide swathes of it. When Sam saw a building that no one else seemed to see anymore, she would stop her car, get out, walk around the perimeter, and even lay her hand on a brick as a form of communion and respect. Fascinating old buildings and houses, empty or still in use, called to her from all over the city. She sometimes drove out of her way just to glimpse one of her favorites. But open houses gave her the rare chance to go inside, which was a much more intimate experience. As soon as she crossed the threshold into a house's space, she could feel it shape who she was—or would be—in some deep way. Whenever she had a chance to walk inside one, she did, which always worked as an act of imagination, an act she loved. What would it feel like to live here, wake up here, argue with your husband here?

This open house intrigued her because it was cross-listed on an Instagram account for architecture nerds:

Unique Arts and Crafts bungalow designed by Ward Wellington Ward in 1913. For sale for \$38,000! Intrepid buyers only—needs complete rehab. Most original details intact. See link in bio for more #cheapoldhouses#saveoldstuff#bungalow #restoration#casementwindowsforthefin

She was the only fantasy lurker attending the open house at 110 Highland Street that Sunday morning.

The house was falling apart. The house was beautiful. >42



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Up Front

Change of Address

It had leaded-glass windows, built-in shelves, and hidden storage benches. Two of the benches were framed by wood-beamed closures (“the inglenook”) and sat at either end of (oh, what she longed for!) an elaborate tile-lined fireplace (“Mercer Moravian tiles”). Sam imagined sitting in the nook, gazing at the fire, reading a book. The tiles were dirty with layers of dust but still intact. She could pick out a narrative in the relief images. (“Saint George and the Dragon,” the agent said.) The clay finish was a rustic, uneven glaze, the colors pink, green, and white. She touched her fingertips to the tiles and felt an undeniable connection. Someone on some podcast had talked about “grounding.” It was when you walked outside with bare feet and let the earth connect with your body. It was supposed to right you, your circadian rhythms or something. Help you get over jet lag. Or maybe it was to mitigate the endocrine disruption of chronic toxic exposure. Or to counter EMF, the low level but constant electromagnetic waves from Wi-Fi and cellular towers. Or maybe all of that, grounding promoted as a systemic cure-all. Sam scoffed at the idea, even despised it as New Age crap, yet as her fingers touched the tiles, she felt grounded. There was no other word for it, as if a corrective current flowed from the house through the dusty tile and into her hand and, truly, her whole body. The tiles were set against patterned deep red brick topped by a mantel made of dark oak, also dirty but intact. Maybe it was Gustav Stickley or it was William Morris who wrote about the Arts and Crafts ideal, how the fireplace should be a work of everyday art. It looked handmade and warm, and its beauty was in its utility and simplicity: She was cold, she needed a fire. The hearth drew her in, invited her to sit. She now understood the fireplace as a form of secular worship. She imagined it would make her feel close to something elemental. (“Obviously, the chimney will have to be looked at.”) To keep her sanity over the long Syracuse winter, Sam needed this beautiful, old, heat-squandering open fire. At her house in the suburbs, they had a glass-fronted gas fireplace that gave off some regulated, efficient BTUs of heat and a low, exhausting fan hum. The gas flame had a cold blue at its center.

“This house is on the historic register as the Garrett House. It even has a Wikipedia page. Designed in 1913 by the architect Ward Wellington Ward.”

“Yes, I read that in the notice,” Sam said. “I’m familiar with him.”

“Oh, good. So you know his houses are very special. Garrett had it built in 1913. After he and his wife died, it fell into neglectful hands, but none of the original details are ruined. Clearly it needs some TLC: a heating system, electrical updates, new roof, mold abatement. Possibly

a chimney rebuild. Better drainage in the basement. Shore up the foundations. But it’s still a wonderful house, no?”

“Yes,” Sam said.

Later she drove to the big suburban Wegmans and bought some wild halibut, diced sweet potato, and triple-washed organic baby spinach for dinner. She also got her daughter’s favorite fruit, mango, and her husband’s favorite cereal, No-Grain Vanilla Granola, and several liter bottles of that German mineral water she liked. She took the groceries to their house. No one was home yet. And then, instead of cooking, she got in her car and drove back into the city. It was nearly six, and the sun was starting to go down. The sky was backlit, iridescent, spring bright, and as she drove she

watched the clouds close to the horizon glow pink and orange. She drove back to the city because she had to see the house in this dusk light, this ridiculous, almost garish light. She crested the hill. She pulled into the house’s tiny driveway. The roofline was steep, and the shitty asphalt tiles were coming undone. But. The front and side windows faced the sunset. The city in all directions gleamed, and it looked as if an ocean lay beyond the clouds, some giant lake or shore. Ward Wellington Ward, this architect, he must have known. He thought of the sky and the trees as he designed his house; he knew how much you need those early-spring sunsets in Syracuse, even if they glisten off a foot of snow.

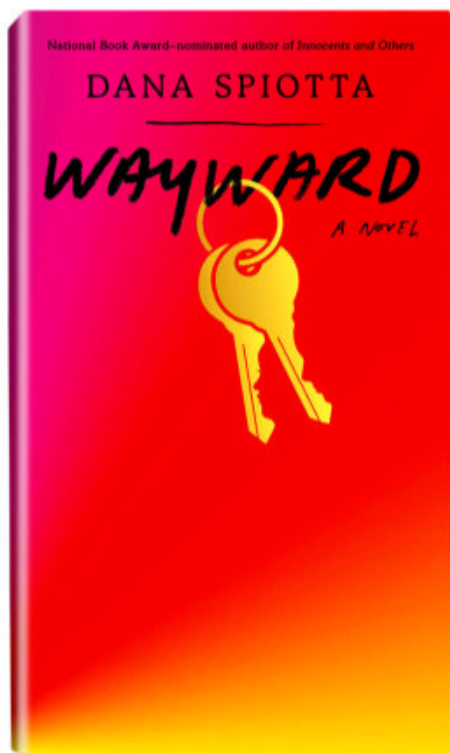
She retrieved the business card from her coat pocket and called the real estate agent. “I want it,” the words coming up from some reptilian (perhaps paleomammalian, limbic, sublimbic) area of her brain, some part of her she never knew existed. “I want to make an offer, I mean. Can we do that

today?” It felt easy. She signed the papers and wrote a check for the deposit. Inner life had spilled out and become outer life. She wrote an X in the box to waive the inspection. As is.

What drew her to the house was its nature: The house was a paradox, both rustic and elegant. It felt hand-constructed, personal. Yet it reeked of artifice, “Arts and Crafts” meant to evoke home and nostalgia through cozy appropriations of English cottages and, oddly enough, some idea of a country church. Also, the state of the house. Dirty, falling apart, empty for too long.

It was wrecked. It was hers.

She got in her car, and she looked back once more at the house, maybe to imprint its image in her heart, the way you might look at a departing loved one, and only then did she realize, as she drove, that she was leaving her husband. Matt. That she would go live in the broken-down house in the city, the unloved, forgotten house with the view of the unloved, forgotten city. Why? Because she alone could see the beauty. It was meant for her. She couldn’t—shouldn’t—resist. And saying yes to this version of her life would mean saying no to another version of her life. □



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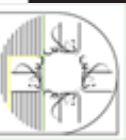


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POSTCARDS FROM HOME

CREATIVITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS



THE EDITORS OF
VOGUE

RIZZOLI
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In the spring of 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold, *Vogue* asked designers, photographers, artists, editors, and models (and a few celebrities) to reveal what their lives looked like under lockdown. The result was an extraordinary series of self-created images, interviews, and essays, now brought together in one volume. *Postcards From Home* marks a moment of profound change and serves as a stunning document of creativity thriving through crisis.

BY THE EDITORS OF *VOGUE* FOREWORD BY ANNA WINTOUR

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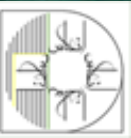


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BY FAR





Spices of Life

Sana Javeri Kadri, the founder of Diaspora Co., has imagined a more equitable, and more delicious, way to bring flavor to your kitchen. By Tamar Adler.

When I get in touch with Sana Javeri Kadri in late February, she's in Kashmir, in northern India. The 27-year-old founder of Diaspora Co. flew here from her home in Oakland to visit the spice farmers she works with—an annual sourcing trip. “But this time everybody thought I was completely crazy,” she tells me over Zoom. She's in a deep-maroon Frances Austen sweater with balloon sleeves, sitting cross-legged in the corner of her hotel room, which has good Wi-Fi (no small thing in Kashmir, which recently suffered the longest internet shutdown ever in a democracy). She appears impervious to our nine-and-a-half-hour time difference and a grueling schedule that has her traversing the length and width of India. “It was at a point where I knew that I needed to reassure our farm partners that I was here, and I wanted to hear about any obstacles they were facing, pandemic-related or otherwise,” she tells me. “Some things just have to happen in person.”

How often have you carefully considered the vintage and provenance of your turmeric, your black pepper? “I think the American consumer treats spices without interest because it seems like, *Well, they're just these powders that we supposedly have to put in our food.*” But most of our spices are too old and nearly flavorless—especially considering how flavorful they are at harvest. And much of the reason is tied up in the history of the global spice trade, born of colonialism and borne aloft by globalism. Diaspora Co.'s single-origin spices—which arrive in painstakingly designed glass jars, bearing each spice's harvest date alongside tasting notes, region of origin, and >50

MARKET TIME

“Some things just have to happen in person,” says Javeri Kadri, who travels annually from her home in Oakland to India to visit the spice farmers she works with. Photographed in Mumbai by Hashim Badani. Fashion Editor: Alexandra Gurvitch.

DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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variety—represent a new beginning, a reinvention of a spice route that rewards farmers directly for scrupulous farming, and rewards consumers with turmeric and black pepper (and more) that redefine the categories themselves. Diaspora Co.’s Pragati turmeric is so fragrant it’s almost intoxicating. The Aranya pepper smells like ripe fruit and tastes like smoke, chocolate, and mandarins.

Javeri Kadri was born and raised in Mumbai by two internationally acclaimed architects—her mother founded the Prix Versailles–winning firm SJK, and her father joined his family firm, IMK, which built notable buildings across postcolonial Mumbai. Her parents had studied in the U.S. in the ’80s. “And I always heard that America was the place my mother discovered feminism—where she made friends with lefties from all over the world. So it was definitely inculcated in me that I should aspire to go to school there.” Javeri Kadri spent two years on a high school program in Italy, then attended Southern California’s Pomona College, where she studied food and visual art.

It was at Pomona that she was introduced to Afrofuturism. “That was so inspiring,” she says. “What Afrofuturism did was create this ability to imagine futures that didn’t exist.” In particular she was gripped by the thought of a future not determined by colonialism. Then the turmeric-latte fad of 2016 hit. She was working at Bi-Rite, the San Francisco–based grocery store that revolutionized Bay Area grocery shopping with its nearly impeccable sourcing—and yet its information on spices remained opaque. “I was also realizing that the turmeric that we had in Mumbai was very different,” she says. In India, turmeric had been aromatic and intense; here, it was being touted as a healing superfood, mostly due to its high levels of curcumin. “But the turmeric in most turmeric lattes was yellow dirt,” she’s said. “It’s been on a shelf for years and has no curcumin in it.”

In early 2017, Javeri Kadri moved back to Mumbai—with a pressing curiosity about the spice-supply chain, and a bit of heartbreak. “I had just come out,” she says. “I was sad. I had been broken up with, and I moved home figuring I should research who was supplying all the turmeric for the turmeric trend.” Having taken up photography at 15, she envisioned her research as photojournalism. “I was thinking maybe I would do a story. But the more that I researched and the more farms I visited, the more I felt like, even if I just bought a little bit from one farmer and sold it to 10 people, it would make a difference.” She showed up without an appointment at the Indian Institute of Spices Research in Kerala, where heirloom seeds of all sorts of Indian plants are preserved, and learned that most turmeric farmers didn’t even know what variety they grew. She met Prabhu Kasaraneni, who practices a method called “zero-budget natural farming”—no chemical fertilizer, no pesticide, no inputs at all from off the farm. She bought 10 kilos of a variety called Pragati and returned to the U.S. with it and hired a graphic designer.

Javeri Kadri never planned to import spices full-time. “I was working two days as a line cook at Cosecha in the Bay Area,” she says, “just shoveling turmeric from my little stash in my basement into jars.” But a flurry of publicity in 2017, including an endorsement from cookbook author Julia Turshen, changed things. Javeri Kadri bought 350 kilos of turmeric and launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund the introduction of Baraka cardamom, a domesticated strain of naturally pest-resistant wild cardamom grown in the Kerala rain forest. In 2019, she added Aranya pepper and Guntur Sannam Chilies. In 2020, Diaspora was selling 10 spices. By the end of 2021, the company will carry 20, with a swag capsule collection made by South Asian fashion designers and an apron collaboration with NorBlack NorWhite on the horizon.

Javeri Kadri seems to work endlessly. On her annual trips to India, which she makes alone, she visits every single farmer with whom she collaborates. For some she provides daylong workshops and creates networks for farmers tentative about transitioning to organic or worried about scaling up. Zeinorin Angkang, a Sivathe chili farmer in the northeastern state of Manipur, tells me that Diaspora Co. created financial incentives for farming without pesticides. “Sana provides a much larger profit margin,” she says. “And she pays us all at once. She also embraces indigenous farming practices, like planting yam, soy, and rice among the chilies.” Javeri Kadri insists it’s all both essential and worth it. “The spice trade is such a ripe system for metaphors of decolonization and social change. It was literally a system built for oppression. And so what if we can completely reimagine it to be something different?”

And while the pandemic meant stasis for many companies, Diaspora Co. has been growing, now employing a team of 10. “We’re a 60 percent queer team, and it shows!”

she wrote me. Javeri Kadri also has a sideline in modeling, for brands such as Amour Vert, Allbirds, Frances Austen, and True & Co. “It’s a great confidence-building exercise. I mean, knowing that somebody like me—who

was always considered lumpy and dark growing up—can be in modeling is a very big thing.”

Still she sees enduring obstacles to entrepreneurs like her. “Ultimately, BIPOC folks still have a very, very steep hill to climb. I’ve been in the food industry for a decade, and I’m still not called an expert by food media.” Javeri Kadri admits to sometimes feeling trapped into diversity-washing white people’s work. “I know that we’re constantly, you know, buying and selling social capital. I’m well aware of that reality. That was a lot of 2020 for me: realizing that there are people for whom Diaspora can splash a woke label over what they’re doing. And that’s co-opting what we’re trying to do. I want people to be really excited about what we’re doing because it’s delicious and because it’s exciting, and not because of the social capital that they gain from us.” □



PINCH OF THIS, DASH OF THAT

By the end of this year, Diaspora Co. will offer some 20 single-origin, organically grown spices from India.



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Rest Assured

As pillow menus, sleep coaches, and six-figure mattresses proliferate at wellness-optimized hotels, could the best snooze of your life be in a bed that's not your own? asks Chloe Schama.

The premise, when I explain it to my kids, is confusing. *You're going to a hotel—to sleep?* For the past 12 months, my passport has languished in its drawer, and not a single ticket stub has made its way into my wallet; travel of any kind is a novelty. A night away, simply to knock myself out? Inscrutable to them, highly appealing to me.

And I wasn't hitting just any old sack but rather the "world's best bed"—at least according to Swedish mattress company Hästens, which has installed its \$200,000 Vividus model (Drake's a fan of the \$400K Grand Vividus) in its Ultimate Sleep Suite at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel. When I arrive, the lobby is predictably muted, devoid of pre-COVID bustle, but it hardly matters. The elevator whisks me to the 43rd floor, where a cross section of the mattress has been installed to better exhibit its contents: horsehair, cotton, wool, flax. I slip into the company's signature blue-and-white plaid pajamas while the Hästens Restore app, activated on my phone, issues a soundscape meant to emulate the Orinoco River.

If this kind of indulgence sounds like something out of a scene from *Gossip Girl* (Serena van der Woodsen lived at the Palace for a spell, after all), it's only just a sliver of the sleep-themed programs that are cropping up in hotels and resorts worldwide. Across town, the Equinox Hotel incorporates its proprietary "sleep system"—devised with a health-advisory panel—into each of its rooms. Sound-blocking walls, total-blackout window systems, and a magnesium-supplement-stocked minibar all set the tone for peaceful repose. (Its temperature-regulating sheets and shams are newly purchasable should you find yourself tempted to stuff them in your suitcase.) At the sand-swept Aman-giri resort in Canyon Point, Utah, a "Restorative Sleep Retreat" will take place this November, kicking off with a diagnosis of your natural sleep pattern and continuing with a program of lectures such as "Sleep Genetics" or "The Exhausted Executive"; meanwhile, at Blackberry Farm in Tennessee, a sleep-coaching program is currently under construction. And for those looking to burn their idle frequent-flier miles, the Cadogan Hotel in London

has retained a sleep-expert hypnotherapist, available for one-on-one consultations, for when it reopens this spring, while the *Royal Scotsman* train has partnered with the famed Bamford Haybarn Spa in the Cotswolds to offer an in-transit pressure-point massage service specifically geared to roll you toward better slumber.

But will people really travel just to sleep when we can move more freely through the world? "Sleep has been affected quite badly," Magdalena Rejman, a Hästens global product-and-sleep trainer, tells me of one of the many consequences of the COVID era. (According to research published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, the

prevalence of sleep problems has risen to 40 percent during the pandemic; up to 75 percent for people who have had the virus.) Rejman is part of the team behind Hästens's latest effort to provide the ultimate in sleep luxury: a 15-room sleep hotel in the Portuguese city of Coimbra. A collaboration with hotelier O Valor do Tempo, the oasis features customized pillows, access to a series of "Bed Talks" on topics such as neck position, and guided tours of the hotel's inspiration, the nearby Baroque Biblioteca Joanina, where a colony of bug-eating bats is unleashed every night to help preserve the centuries-old books. "The blessing in it all," Rejman says of the period of reflection afforded by the last year, "is that people are starting to look more closely at their own well-being." (Hästens's sales, she notes, are way up.)

So, how did I feel after my six-figure sleep? What can I say? I felt amazing. It's hard to fully

determine whether the refresh was from the quality of the Z's or the brief break from my static-yet-hectic pandemic household, but I'm not bothered by the ambiguity. When I checked out in the morning, there was slightly more life in the lobby: clusters of people shivering in sequined gowns, "Happy New Year" tiaras perched above their masked faces. They were filming a scene for an upcoming TV show, and as I watched the boom operators swing their mics, it felt a little like old New York, where such productions were commonplace. It felt a little like, after a good rest, a reset was right around the corner. □



STRIKE A REPOSE

With the prevalence of sleep problems rising to 40 percent, there is a growing demand for amenities such as sound-blocking walls and curated soundscapes.

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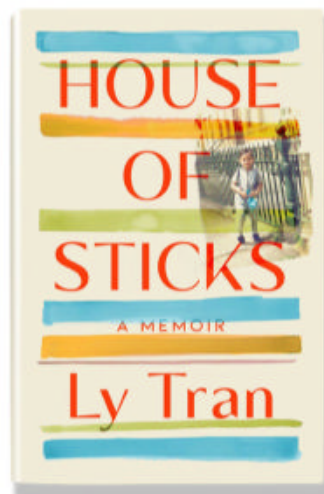
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Flight Reads

Spring books take inspiration from departures and arrivals.



Second Place, by Rachel Cusk (FSG)

The urge to find something to liven up the home front is all too understandable these days. M, the narrator of Rachel Cusk's *Second Place*, is a writer stuck at home in the English marshland and waiting out an unspecified catastrophe. Not so much a patron of the arts as an insinuator into them, M invites a famous painter to come and stay with her. L, the artist, shows up with a girlfriend whom he had failed to mention and little interest in taking inspiration from the company at hand. His aloofness leaves his host to grapple with her own bruised ego and the motivations that drove her to seek him out in the first place. As the novel's endnote makes plain, the story is a reworking of the misadventure that took place when American heiress Mabel Dodge Luhan invited D. H. Lawrence to stay with her. In Cusk's version, a tale of infatuation morphs into an anti-love story, a portrait of a woman forced to pull herself out from under weights of her own devising and set herself free, all the while stuck in place. —LAUREN MECHLING

Great Circle, by Maggie Shipstead (Knopf)

Never mind that a century separates Marian Graves and Hadley Baxter, the two headstrong protagonists of Maggie Shipstead's sweeping novel *Great Circle*. One is a tomboy determined to join the ranks of the first female pilots, the other a disgraced star of a *Twilight*-like franchise whose romantic entanglements have upended her career. The pair are both

orphans raised by uncles and united by an imperviousness to the sexism that casts a pall over their respective moments. Oh, and Hadley's next part is the lead in a biopic of Marian. The Marian portions rove from Montana to Manhattan to Scotland and Antarctica, and read like a carnival of early-20th-century American history, packed with bootleggers, treacherous boxcar rides, and tragic shipwrecks. The Hadley chapters, in turn, offer a delectable dissection of life as a celebrity, serving up an intelligent skewering of the Hollywood machine and allowing the book to take flight. —L.M.

The Last Thing He Told Me, by Laura Dave (Simon & Schuster)

Was this novel destined to become a prestige TV drama? Reading it, you get the sense that somewhere out there a producer's gears began to turn from the moment she sniffed out its alluring ingredients. The book is set mostly in northern California, where the protagonist, a furniture-maker-slash-artist called Hannah, has made a home with her software-engineer husband, Owen. The implosion of Owen's company leads to his vanishing and ignites a quest to figure out what's happened—not just where he's gone but why he's left behind a large duffel bag full of cash and a very light imprint on the world. *The Last Thing He Told Me* goes down like the series it will likely become—Julia Roberts has already signed on—light and bright, despite its edgy plot. —CHLOE SCHAMA

House of Sticks, by Ly Tran (Scribner)

A memoir that will break and warm your heart, *House of Sticks* is an immigrant tale of a Vietnamese family that settles in New York City in the early '90s with little to no knowledge about life in America, let alone how to take the subway or what to wear to Coney Island. Tran's family eked out a living, first by setting up a cummerbund-sewing operation in their Queens apartment and then, eventually, by buying a nail salon. Through her hard-scrabble youth and her battles with a controlling father—for years he denies her the glasses she clearly needs—Tran doesn't lean too heavily on what she lacks but rather reiterates the grit that got her through, recounting the delight she experiences when her life, even with its challenges, comes into focus. —c.s.

Sunshine Girl, by Julianna Margulies (Ballantine)

Margulies is so closely associated with the characters she played (on *ER* and *The Good Wife*) that it can be jarring to encounter her distinctive, personable voice as she describes her nomadic childhood bouncing between a hippie mother and a detached ad-exec father, waitressing at the “world's most glamorous” restaurant, and the fateful audition (involving a surprise call from George Clooney) that led to her role as Nurse Hathaway. A celebrity memoir with a humble core, this is more about the process of becoming a beloved actress than the spoils such recognition affords. —c.s.

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Past Perfect

A revival of centuries-old dress is catching on among China's fashionable Gen Z set. Social-media star Shiyin speaks to Meng-Yun Wang about Hanfu style.

On the streets of Shanghai, Shiyin can be seen wearing a traditional outfit from China's Ming period. Shiyin, a content creator, routinely shares recent fashion purchases and beauty tips on her widely followed social-media feeds—but it's her passion for Hanfu that really sets her apart.

Though "Chinese" clothing is often typified by the *qipao* (a close-fitting dress, also called the *cheongsam*), Hanfu—essentially, a type of dress from any era when the Han Chinese ruled—is seen in China as a more authentic form of historical clothing. Styles from the Tang (7th to 10th century), Song (10th to 13th), and Ming (13th to 17th) periods are the most popular: flowing robes in beautiful shades, embellished with intricate designs and embroidery.

The movement is being led by China's fashion-conscious youth, like Shiyin—who, after decades of aspiring to Western trends, are now looking closer to home for a sense of traditionalism. In recent years, the number of Hanfu enthusiasts has almost doubled (there are now more than six million, while the hashtag #Hanfu has seen more than 47.7 billion views on Douyin, China's TikTok equivalent). Among them you'll find a purist minority who abhor any historical inaccuracies, and

HISTORY REPEATING

Shiyin (CENTER) with friends Xuefei and Weiwei, all in variations of the *ma mian qun*—or "horse-face skirt"—a garment typical of Hanfu. Photographed by Peng Ke.

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IN WITH THE OLD

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Xuefei in a square-necked silk robe embroidered with rabbits; Shiying in a *jiaoling* robe—the name refers to its wraparound collar—and a Ming-dynasty hairstyle; a robe adorned with phoenixes stitched in gold thread.

a majority who are attracted to its fantastical elements. Designs—most often purchased online via Taobao and Tmall—can cost from 100 yuan (\$15.50) to more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,550) for pieces from specialist brands such as Ming Hua Tang.

How did your interest in Hanfu start?

Growing up in Canada, I watched Chinese period dramas—but I had no idea that Hanfu was a thing. When I moved back [to China] in 2016 I worked in gaming, and my roommate introduced me to Hanfu, and I started collecting.

Are a lot of people inspired to wear Hanfu—or learn more about it—after watching period dramas?

It definitely has an impact. When *The Imperial Doctress* came out in 2016, a lot of people were doing Ming-period styles, and last year's *Serenade of Peaceful Joy* sparked a big interest in designs from the Song period.

On your YouTube channel, you also talk about Western fashion brands. Is this content separate from Hanfu?

Not really. On my series *What Is Luxury?*, I started by discussing Chanel and Louis Vuitton, but now I'm discussing fabrics like cloud brocade (*yunjin*), shu brocade (*shujin*), and Su embroidery (*suxiu*). I want to show that products made in China are also “luxury”—the craftsmanship of these fabrics is on a par with Parisian couture.

How do you think the next generation will look back at China's cultural traditions?

There's definitely a trend of “China chic.” Everybody used to think buying Nike and Adidas was cool—maybe now they think that can be something like Hanfu. □

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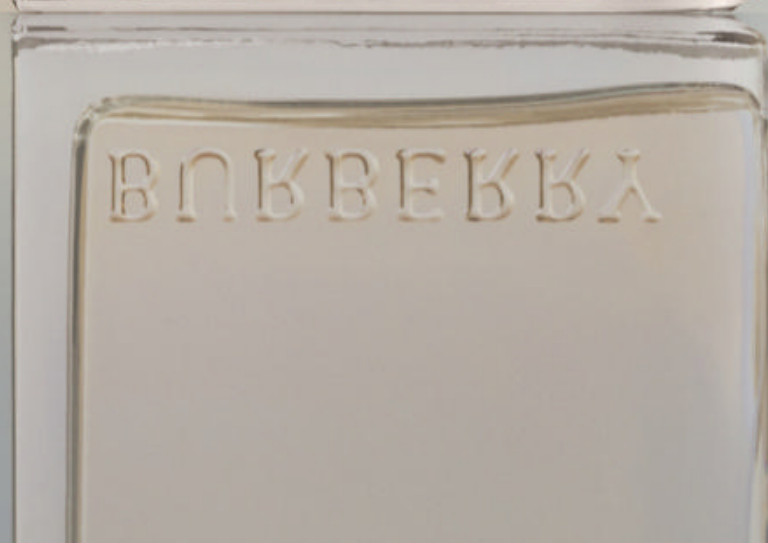
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Joy Division

Derrick Adams's art celebrates Black life at its most exultant and carefree. Dodie Kazanjian meets the hardest-working leisure-lover around.

Ideas pour from Derrick Adams, and what's surprising is how many of them work out. A couple of years ago, around the time that he was making his Floater paintings, depicting Black people lounging on swimming-pool inflatables, he thought, Why not start a creative persons' retreat where the only obligation would be to appreciate leisure? His eight-bedroom retreat opens next year in Baltimore, his hometown. Struck by *The Green Book*, the guide compiled by postal worker Victor Hugo Green beginning in 1936 to help Black travelers find safe amenities, Derrick initiated Sanctuary, a series of exhibitions located in and inspired by the cities covered by the guide. He wanted to emphasize the accomplishment of the book, not the racism that made it necessary.

Adams, 51, a genial, laid-back dynamo whose multidisciplinary art practice spans painting, sculpture, collage, sound installations, video, performance, and fashion, gained widespread acclaim with "Live and in Color," his 2014 show at New York's Tilton Gallery. The show recycled images from early sitcoms, game shows, and dramas in collages that were placed in what looked like a vintage television set. The Floater series came next, more than 100 works of Black subjects relaxing on inflatable swans, unicorns, and other fantasy fauna. "I wanted to occupy a different space from all the artists who were speaking on issues of race and trauma



FACIAL RECOGNITION

Adams's *Style Variation 37*, part of the first exhibition at Salon 94's new gallery.

and oppression," Adams says in a Zoom conversation last month. He's in his Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, studio, a 2,500-square-foot former auto-body shop; I'm in Rhode Island. "People couldn't exist if they lived in constant grief. My work is focused on the idea of how crucial it is for Black people to think of leisure as a radical act." The matchless independent curator Francesco Bonami, who has worked on projects with Adams, tells me, "He addresses important and tragic issues without preaching, but at the same time he serves guilt to the white viewer as an appetizer on a designer plate."

This month, Adams's "Style Variations" is one of two opening

exhibitions at Salon 94's palatial new venue on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Adams, says Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, Salon 94's founder, is "the right vantage point from which to start a new venture, post-COVID, new administration." Ten of his magisterial Beauty World paintings dominate the main gallery: larger-than-life mannequin heads, transformed by sculpture-like wigs and evocative makeup. Blocks of color combine with semi-abstract forms that channel Cubist painting and African sculpture.

That, of course, is not all Adams is doing. He is also working on a show for the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, inspired by Patrick Kelly, the young Black fashion designer who died in 1990. The latest version of Sanctuary, his *Green Book* work, opened in February at the Momentary, a contemporary arm of Crystal Bridges in Bentonville, Arkansas. And he's been collaborating with Dave Guy, trumpeter for the Roots, on a series of short films. "For Black men, joy isn't at the forefront," Guy tells me, "but Derrick brings it to his art and daily life. Who else could make a black unicorn look so cool? Only Derrick can, because he is one." Adams may be the hardest-working leisure lover on earth.

Musicians and other creative people were a big part of Adams's life when he was growing up in Baltimore. His parents both had administrative jobs with the state, but after the marriage broke up, his mother married the funk-and-jazz drummer Guy >64



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Davidson, who had a studio in the basement. His mother's first cousin is Def Jam's Russell Simmons, and as a teenager, Derrick often visited Russell and his brother Danny, a painter, in New York. In junior college he came across a book on Jacob Lawrence, and though he knew nothing about art history, the encounter had a profound effect on him. The book stated that Lawrence had taught at Pratt. "And I was like, I'm going to this school," Adams says.

At Pratt, he majored in art education. "I never felt art should be my main source of income," he explains. (While in school, he also worked in retail for Phat Farm, his cousin Russell's clothing line, where he learned that popular culture, commerce, and art were by no means incompatible.) He began teaching in elementary schools, and he's been teaching ever since—he's now on a tenure track at Brooklyn College. His best friend at Pratt was Mickalene Thomas, whom he still talks to every day. "At school, Derrick was an audacious creative leader," she says. "Everyone gravitated to him. We have the best laughs—that deep, belly-hurting laughter that makes you tear up slightly or tinkle." In 1996, he went straight from Pratt to Rush Arts Gallery, the nonprofit Chelsea art space started by his cousin Danny and his two brothers, where for the next four years he worked as the manager and showed Ed Clark, Frank Bowling, Howardena Pindell, and Senga Nengudi, as well as other then-unknown older artists, and introduced newcomers such as Wangechi Mutu, Mickalene Thomas, and Kehinde Wiley. Feeling the need to concentrate more exclusively on his own work, he entered the graduate visual-arts program at Columbia, where he found himself the only Black student. This is when he began to focus on what was missing in the critical conversation. "I felt that white students should be more aware of the

accomplishments of Black people as they're learning about all those oppressive structures that were imposed upon them. They should also know that during these same times, Black people were getting Ph.D.s and attending college." Adams was invited to join Dana Schutz and a small group of other Columbia grad students in a Brooklyn building they were converting into studio spaces.



SCREEN TIME

Adams, in front of *Fabrication Station #4*, part of his *Live and in Color* series.

"It was incredible stopping by his studio," Schutz remembers. "Each time he had a whole new body of work."

We're in Adams's Bed-Stuy studio again, via Zoom, where he and his partner, Michael Chuapoco (a furniture designer), have just finished their first weekly session with a yoga instructor. Adams is dressed, as usual, in black, loose-fitting clothes, often from the New York design team Public School. Over that, he's wearing what he calls a butcher apron and an antique gold coin from Bermuda on a chain around his neck. "He's hella stylish!" his friend Marcus Samuelsson, head chef of the Red Rooster in Harlem and

the just-opened outpost in Miami, tells me. Adams's work hangs permanently in both Roosters. "I really love fashion," Adams says, "and I'm inspired by designers." He's a firm believer in the proverb *De gustibus non est disputandum*—for him, taste has always been something not to be questioned. "I come from a neighborhood where people weren't criticized for what they had on," he says. "It was just, 'This is me.'"

The studio is full of commanding new paintings. A majestic woman in a white dress and a floppy white hat; one young boy embracing another; a car passing a giant billboard that reads, JUICE. "I'm feeling really confident," Adams says, "and I've decided I'm making the new work for a museum show—a four-week gallery show is not long enough." The work is "like driving through a Black neighborhood," he says. "It's a world more than a neighborhood—and everyone knows when they drive through a Black neighborhood."

The retreat that Adams plans to open a year from now is in a large Baltimore house that he's restoring. He's put in a pool, a greenhouse, a screening room, and studio spaces. Residents will be invited (you can't apply) for up to four weeks at a time, and there will never be more than 10 of them. It's not just for Black visual artists but also for Black writers, musicians, culinary people, "even entrepreneurs," he tells me. He got the idea for his Last Resort, as he's calling it, when he was invited to the Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida. "You can come and not do anything," he tells me. "Everything is very loose." He continues, "Artists create images that reflect certain ideals and conditions. A lot of my work is about leisure, and I thought, What if I make what I'm making art about—make it actual? Why don't I just make it so it's a real place? That will be my legacy." □

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Untamed Nature

Designer Daniel Del Core's debut speaks to our collective desire right now for a little fantasy, writes Mark Holgate—but its inspiration came from the unlikelyst of sources.

Daniel Del Core learned about the reality of fashion—as opposed to the fantasy—early on. In May 2017, to be exact: The German-born, Italian-based designer, whose label, Del Core, debuted in Milan this past February, was working at Gucci, creating red-carpet looks as part of Alessandro Michele's design team. And he had been dispatched to New York to fit Dakota Johnson's Met-gala dress—black, be-trained, and bedecked with ruffles. What he hadn't planned on was having to drive with Johnson to the gala to make sure she looked A-OK after getting out of the car. "We arrived, and the photographers went wild," Del Core recalls. "I was blown away. Then, when I turned around," he says, starting to laugh, "the car had disappeared, and I was standing

there like an idiot. [But] as I was walking back to the hotel I thought, Well—in the end, my job is for her. [Being there] made a difference. Dakota looked amazing."

Fashion has had plenty of reality checks lately, some of them very much needed. Yet increasingly there's a desire for it to return to finding joy and inspiring dreams in our transformed world, something that a new generation of designers—not only Del Core but the likes of Maximilian Davis and Charles de Vilmorin as well—has seized >68

MAXIMUM IMPACT

Behind the scenes of Del Core's spring 2021 show, staged at the Cittadella degli Archivi on the outskirts of Milan. Photographed by Nicolò Bagnati. Fashion Editor: Carlos Nazario.

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upon. Del Core's own dramatic entrance, a live runway show at Milan's historic Cittadella degli Archivi (everyone was rigorously COVID-tested), was ambitious and dazzling, with theatrical flourishes and couture techniques aplenty. It was also a reminder that sometimes designers just need to act on the strength of whatever weird and wonderful synaptic connections power their imagination.

In Del Core's case, those include nature (he has a thing for fungi), science (ditto mold), wanderlust, and science fiction, which is a bit of an obsession.

The day we Zoomed, he was wearing a sweater emblazoned with H. R. Giger's nightmarish Alien. ("I have a *Gremlins* one too!" Del Core says, grinning.) And that Manhattan evening on the first Monday in May also looms large. "It was what fashion should be," he says, "and what's missing a bit now: the fun, the glamour, the explosion of color."

Tick, tick, tick, then, for Del Core's first collection out of the gate. There was bold-shouldered—bold every which way, actually—and whittle-waisted tailoring with a distinct whiff of the '80s, in shades of amethyst, scarlet, and a rustlike hue he calls Terra di Siena. He deliberately opened with the pantsuits and short, sashed coats—"to prove myself," he says, "because as a red-carpet designer, you don't do a lot of tailoring; it had to be good"—though there wasn't exactly a lack of major evening moments either.

The floor-length red-and-black floral dress, for instance, an intarsia of four different laces that took 1,500 hours to hand-stitch; or the 800 hours that were needed for an emerald-and-white silk plissé number, an incredible confection of *flou* and fan pleats anchored to an inner corset. The dress's pattern was inspired, incidentally, by spore cultures.

"When it comes to a dress, there are certain constructions we don't see anymore—maybe they are too difficult to commercialize or whatever—but I think we *should* think about the past when we want to be modern," he says. "I mean, I am concerned about the sales; I'm concerned about where the brand is going"—and deciding to lead with the more commercial tailoring over the big-night dressing suggests he's as shrewd about the bottom line as he is comfortable in fashion's dreamy stratosphere—"yet it's also important to scream a bit, to say, 'Okay, we were in a bad situation; let's figure out how we get better and be positive, especially now.'"

WILDEST DREAMS

"It's important to scream a bit," says Del Core, pictured here in his work/living space in Milan.



Del Core arrived in Italy, age 16, from his small southern German hometown of Rottweil, and studied art and fashion before settling on the latter. His career since then has taken in periods at Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, and Zuhair Murad before he spent nearly seven years at Gucci.

His own label was meant to launch in 2020, but the pandemic put that on hold for a bit. Del Core lay low, gathered a team that's around his age (he's 33), and slowly started working out of his three-story work/living

space near Milan's Piazza San Babila—which, rather evocatively, local lore claims was once a brothel.

The enforced delay has also let Del Core really think about the kind of business he wants to build. Sustainable, for sure: He can wax lyrical about the collection's feathers, which trim everything from a chartreuse coat to the straps of the high-heeled sandals—the plumes are actually hand-frayed recycled polyester—as well as the need to not oversample collections, which wastes valuable resources. "If I want to have 40 looks for a show," he says, "there is no need to make 80." Yet he also sees sustainability more holistically, in terms of the need for an equitable workplace. "[Sustainability] is not just the materials; it's how you treat people," he says. "It's extremely important that people work only eight to nine hours a

day, and that they rest at the weekend; that the team, and the environment, is in a good mood."

He jokes that since he lives on-site, he doesn't have to travel far to rest up. He's been filling that home with furniture of his own design amid walnut flooring and stone surfaces ("I love the contrast that these textures create together," he says. "The wood creates a warm atmosphere, while the marble textures are cooler to the touch"), along with plants, photography books (he's a big Tim Walker fan), his collection of geological minerals, and souvenirs from his many far-flung trips hiking and surfing—not least the necklace he was given by the wife of a shaman after he spent a week with the mystic in the Peruvian Amazon, a trip he also treasures for the memory of trekking Pisco Mountain with his boyfriend and sleeping under canvas by a glacier. The ceaseless desire to be in nature, something he's had since growing up, is what he dreams about as much as fashion. "There's a long list!" he says when asked where he wants to go next. "I'm going to do a trip to a very, very deep jungle—or somewhere else no one can reach me for at least a week. For sure." □



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French Connection

Makeup artist Violette has built her career around the American obsession with “French girl” beauty. Now she’s democratizing the rarefied aesthetic with a new lifestyle brand. By Lindsey Tramuta.

In a recent dispatch of her popular newsletter titled “Why I Don’t Contour,” the 37-year-old French-born, Brooklyn-based makeup artist and influencer Violette laid bare her feelings on the face-fixing cosmetics craze. “French people don’t contour. We don’t buy it. We don’t understand it,” she wrote to her subscribers. “It’s like putting on a mask, and that’s not what we’re into.” She goes on to encourage her readers to treat themselves more gently, doing away with

the idea that there’s anything that needs fixing to begin with. “Maybe try some color, some red lipstick, eye shadow...take a few pictures, and fall in love with yourself again.”

As “French girl” aesthetics go, there’s the unassailable archetype—impossibly cool and deliberately unattainable—and then there’s the 2020s update: earnestly celebrating whatever you’ve got to work with. And that’s where Violette, who goes by her first name only, has carved out a singular space. Last month,

she expanded it with a multicategory vegan beauty brand, *Violette_fr*, that nods to her social-media success—a community of 300,000 that has helped rack up more than 24 million views on her *@Violette_fr* YouTube channel—and draws on 10 years >80

GLOW UP

Violette, pictured above with her daughter, Inès, has a 300K-follower-strong social-media presence that mixes polish with approachability. Photographed by Steven Pan.



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of research and feedback from friends, models who have become friends, and, of course, followers.

Within minutes of a Zoom call earlier this spring, it becomes clear why this particular French girl resonates with women in America—not to mention this particular American living in Paris. Violette beams onto the screen with a wide smile, surrounded by enviably good light and dressed in a flowy white blouse and jeans. Her eyes—lined in a deep blue pigment from her new collection—are dusted by her signature Birkin bangs. She is excitedly telling me about her new office in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and after years of standoffish first encounters with other Frenchwomen, I find her warmth and approachability disarming. Also refreshing: when Violette admits that she's not actually *that* into makeup. "No one should be dependent on a product to feel good. It should be an extension of our identities, like a wellness tool," she says emphatically. "What interests me is the ephemeral art you can create with makeup, not the trends." This kind of creative expression isn't about doing *nothing*, she insists, despite a pervasive "effortless beauty" narrative that surrounds her and her work, which she acknowledges is a loaded concept. And it's not about losing yourself in a convoluted process, either. "The way you wear your makeup should make you feel something. But I don't like when it's trying too hard."

As a fine-arts student at the prestigious École du Louvre in Paris, Violette stumbled into makeup, intrigued by the idea of using the face as a canvas. With no formal training and without assisting a more established artist—the most tried-and-true road to success—she decided to pursue a career in beauty. After a yearlong stint in New York at 19, knocking on the doors of modeling agencies and showing up to shoots with her own loose pigments, she moved back to Paris with a four-year goal: Make it work as a makeup artist on her own terms, or move on. Early jobs at French

Vogue helped her build a reputation for custom-mixed colors and modern textures, earning her industry support and exposure. In 2012, at just 27 years old, she was named international makeup designer for Dior Beauty, the youngest in the brand's history. When Violette returned to New York three years later, similarly determined to make it work in the U.S., she launched her YouTube channel, which features a confessional and upbeat tone and covers everything from the impact of pregnancy on skin and hair (Inès, her daughter with her photographer husband, Steven, was born in 2019) to the mood-boosting power of a red lip.

"She's a multihyphenate artist," says Glossier founder Emily Weiss. "She has a practical and playful approach to translating beauty into everyday life, which is often very hard for professionals to do"

"YouTube viewers are savvy, and they can tell immediately when a creator is faking it," Derek Blasberg, YouTube's head of fashion and beauty, explains of Violette's polished-to-a-point appeal. "She is the real deal, and that's why she has performed well on the platform." That, and the fact that she made it a priority to evolve her own channel into a network that showcases content from like-minded contributors, such as chef-activist Sophia Roe and British-Indian blogger Kavita Meera Mehta. "She's a multihyphenate artist, really, not just a makeup artist," says Glossier founder Emily Weiss, who became fast friends with Violette after they met in Cannes in 2012, during Weiss's erstwhile days as a blogger. "She has a practical and playful approach to translating beauty and makeup into everyday life, which is often very hard for professionals to do."

That's precisely why Estée Lauder hired Violette to be its global beauty director in 2017—and it's ultimately what she hopes to accomplish with her own brand, which spans makeup, skin care, fragrance, and hair, in practical formats with low-waste packaging. "What's the goal of trying to compete with Lauder?" Violette asks, noting her deliberately tight curation. "I wanted to create products people don't have."

The result is what she calls "street luxury"—top-shelf formulas at accessible prices. A unisex roll-on fragrance smells of musky vetiver, while an ingenious volumizing and oil-absorbing dry shampoo has a built-in brush applicator for on-the-go touch-ups. There's also a single, universal highlighter for all skin tones, six liquid eye paints in highly pigmented colors that are easily blended with fingertips, and the only red lip color you need—a creamy blue-toned crimson designed to mimic the color and finish of rose petals in Paris's Bagatelle gardens. But the stand-out offering just might be the Boum Boum Milk, a three-in-one toner, serum, and moisturizer with an innovative creamy spray-on texture that Violette formulated with clean-beauty chemist Luc Jugla. "It's my hero product," she says, walking me through how easily the hydrating Icelandic glacial water—and-fermented birch-sap emulsion mists onto the skin.

It can even be scrunched into hair for a languid look—that once-essential part of the romanticized Gallic construct that has, finally, started to break down. These days, what the Frenchwomen I see every day want is the freedom to embrace exactly who they are without ascribing to outdated, unrealistic expectations. They are drawn to brands and products that afford them the same opportunity—and that are easily obtainable: In addition to being available in the U.S. on Violettefr.com, the products will also line the shelves at select Parisian pharmacies this spring, something that should excite local French girls and tourists who aspire to shop like them. Adds Violette, "My dream is that everybody feels welcome here." □



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May 2021



RED ALERT

Adut Akech sweeps the room with a glance—and an artfully exaggerated silhouette—in a **Fendi** coat; [fendi.com](https://www.fendi.com). **Alexander McQueen** ear-hook set. **Hermès** bracelet. Photographed by Ethan James Green.

SPRING IN OUR STEP

As we emerge from a period of profound upheaval—hopefully, vaccinated and optimistic—what a wonder it is to consider fashion in its purest, wildest, and most life-affirming form. This is a moment to think big, to embrace swagger, to celebrate the artistry that allows us to dream and think forward to a time when the only drama we're interested in is that of great fashion: the shine, the scale, the big shapes and glitter. Designers are expressing their creativity against the backdrop of a more equitable world, and we're seeing the notion of dressing up with fresh eyes. Behold a very different season!

FASHION EDITOR: TONNE GOODMAN. HAIR: LUCAS WILSON; MAKEUP: DIANE KENDAL FOR ZARA BEAUTY. PRODUCED BY BLOCK PRODUCTIONS. DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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Epic Proportions

With trailing hemlines and pumped-up volume, larger-than-life looks make one thing clear: More is very much more.

Photographed by Ethan James Green.





GOOD SHAPE

Model Adut Akech lays it all on the line in a shapely **Valentino Haute Couture** dress and platform shoes; valentino.com. **Lorraine West Jewelry** earrings.

Fashion Editor: **Tonne Goodman**.



MEET YOUR MATCH

Model Imaan Hammam is suited and booted in an oversized **Bottega Veneta** double-breasted jacket (\$2,250), pants (\$1,300), and belt bag; bottegaveneta.com. **Alexander McQueen** boots.





MIX MESSAGES

Dressed up with acres of jet-black tulle, a restrained satin shirt is transformed into something utterly glamorous. **Chanel Haute Couture** blouse, skirt, and shoes; chanel.com.





TWO OF A KIND

In prettily patterned tops, skirts, and platform sneakers from **Marni** (marni.com), Akech and Hammam make an indubitably dashing duo. Both wear **Panconesi** earrings.





GO FIGURE

Hammam sticks to the straight and narrow in a Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello jumpsuit (\$2,490), flower choker, and belt; ysl.com. Hijab by Haute Hijab.



PRINTED MATTER

Hammam's cocoon-like shell isn't for hiding from the world—it's for making a (chic) scene. Prada coat and turtleneck (\$1,350); prada.com.





WINGS OF DESIRE

A dramatic **Schiaparelli** dress (styled with an earring and boots, also from Schiaparelli; schiaparelli.com) is one part sinuous, two parts sensational.



BOLD TYPE

The great rush of ruffles animating this **Alexander McQueen** top (\$1,980; alexandermcqueen.com)—particularly in our extended waist-up moment—feels gloriously apropos. **Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello** earring.

BEAUTY NOTE

Maximize your makeup with metallics. MAC Pro Pigment in Old Gold delivers a saturated wash of pure color in an easily blendable, long-lasting formula.



HANG LOOSE

Play the long game in these roomy and elegantly slouchy separates. Hammam wears a jacket and pants (\$990) from **The Row**; therow.com. **Hermès** bag. Akech wears a **Peter Do** blazer (\$2,150), vest (\$1,800), tank top (\$465), and pants (\$1,495); net-a-porter.com. **Salvatore Ferragamo** bag. Both wear sandals by **The Row**.



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HIDDEN AGENDA

Going incognito has never looked quite this sharp. Hammam wears a **Balenciaga** distressed coat, turtleneck (\$1,090), and earrings; [balenciaga.com](https://www.balenciaga.com).





VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE

The long and short of it? Opposites really do attract. **Vera Wang Collection** bow coat and tailored shorts; verawang.com. **Givenchy** gloves. **Louis Vuitton** shoes. In this story: hair, Lucas Wilson; makeup, Diane Kendal for Zara Beauty. Details, see In This Issue.





RAW MATERIAL

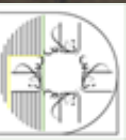
"I've learned that it's okay to be afraid. And what's more, it's okay to seek greatness," Gorman wrote in her journal the night after the inauguration.

THIS PAGE and OPPOSITE: Y/Project dress. Auvere ear cuffs, worn in hair. Khems Designs hair charms.

Fashion Editor:
Gabriella Karefa-Johnson.

Supernova

Poet, activist, optimist, style icon—Amanda Gorman has become so much more than a literary star. Doreen St. Félix on a phenomenon in the making. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.





SHE'LL RISE

America wants a cultural saint again. What does Gorman want? The time and the quiet to finish her picture book, *Change Sings: A Children's Anthem*, and a new collection, *The Hill We Climb and Other Poems*, both due in September. Studio 189 dress and skirt. Brother Vellies shoes.

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Deep in Amanda Gorman's closet sits a doll that may or may not have stolen the facts of her reluctant owner's life. A month after the 23-year-old poet eclipsed the transfer of power at President Biden's inauguration with an energizing performance of her song of a nation, "The Hill We Climb," she was thinking about an earlier, discomfiting booking—at the American Girl boutique at the Grove in Los Angeles. We were at a green space a stone's throw from Gorman's spot in L.A., a one-bedroom in an apartment building the color of sherbet. Reclining on blankets she spread over a manicured knoll, she tilted her head, birdlike, and groaned softly, "They might get angry at me for saying this."

The Mattel brand had invited Gorman to do a reading celebrating the arrival of Gabriela, the latest "Girl of the Year," to expectant young customers. This was New Year's Day, 2017, and Gorman was an 18-year-old freshman at Harvard, home on winter break, decompressing from the surprise of New England frost. At the time, Gorman had already been named Youth Poet Laureate of L.A. (the first one ever) and was a known and admired figure on the national spoken-word circuit. The night before the event, the American Girl team briefed her on the biography of the doll. It was like a horror movie—Peele-esque, we agreed after she told me the story. "Gabriela loves the arts and uses poetry to help find her voice so she can make a difference in her community," the website for the defunct toy reads. Gorman loves the arts and uses poetry to help find her voice so she can make a difference in her community. Gabriela is brown-skinned with curly hair. Amanda is brown-skinned with natural hair. "She was a Black girl with a speech impediment!" said Gorman (referring to her own speech impairment), playfully clawing at the beautiful hive of twists atop her head, adding that her twin sister's pet name is also, can you believe it, Gabby.

Gorman did the reading anyway. American Girl told me that the doll was not inspired by Gorman's life,

and sent me a photo of Gorman, mid-performance, costumed in Gabriela's exact outfit. "I felt like if I backed out of the event, I would have been failing the girls who would have this Black doll," Gorman said. The rest of the year, when advertisements for Gabriela crept into her view, or friends would text her excitedly that they had seen *her* doll, she would avert her gaze, thinking on the mad vinyl thing she had locked away out of sight at home.

Gorman, good-naturedly, doesn't want to make a big deal out of the experience, but years later, the notion that "a public figure's life" could be

**"It took so much labor,
not only on behalf
of me, but also of
my family and of my
village, to get here"**

mined without her consent still rangles, principally because this sort of heated adulation is now inextricable from her ascendant writing career. "I built up this narrative in my head that, you know, I had to be some type of," she paused, raising her hands from her lap to air-quote, "'role model.'"

It was the middle of a February day, and the weather, even for an L.A. winter, was shockingly warm, giving our meeting the conspiratorial feel of hooky. Midafternoon was the only time Gorman could steal away from her overstuffed schedule. Last week there had been a guest spot on the Hillary Clinton podcast, and next week there would be a panel with Oprah. It was Gorman who remembered to bring the blankets, and hers was embroidered with astrological signs. ("As a twin, I love being a Pisces, because it's the two fish," she said. She and her sister are best friends.) Her smallness is formidable. The next time we met, she brought her lunch—a veggie burger in Tupperware—and snacks for me:

artisanal popcorn, gummi bears, a caramel. A meal gave me occasion to glimpse her unmasked, under a face shield. Her profile sends you back to the golden age of the supermodel. Her laughter is a great ringing noise. As we took in the sun on our patch of lawn, Gorman reflected on the long journey of her short life: "It took so much labor, not only on behalf of me, but also of my family and of my village, to get here." A toddler in tie-dyed leggings waddled dangerously near to us. Gorman paused and leaned back faux-dramatically. The kid tittered. I had no way of knowing—apart from the telltale stretch of the two masks that covered most of Gorman's face—but it looked like she was grinning.

"Are you going to start the story with 'One day, I met Amanda Gorman in Los Angeles'?" she teased. The acute enjoyment she takes in words is palpable. Her speech quickens whenever she realizes that a sentence she is constructing amounts to an interesting assonance—which is often—as when she described the oratorical styles of Revs. Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King Jr: "The way they let their words roll and gain momentum is its own type of sound tradition." She takes it upon herself to fill silences, sometimes with words and other times with sound effects. "*Do do do do do dooooo*," she bounced as her mind worked on a response to a question about her relationship to Clinton, whom she's known personally for some years. "Such a grandma," she said affectionately. Other figures of the Democratic Party, whom she chatted with after the January ceremony, were described in similarly familial terms: Barack Obama, dadlike; Michelle Obama, the cool auntie. In the weeks after we met, Gorman, or radiations of Gorman, were everywhere: on a February cover of *Time*, posed in her yellow, and inside the magazine, holding a caged bird, invoking Maya Angelou, interviewed by Michelle Obama; performing virtually at "Ham4Progress Presents: The Joy in Our Voices," a Black History Month celebration from the people behind the *Hamilton* phenomenon; on an International Women's Day panel with Clinton,

She is protective of her writing. There's pressure.
She wondered aloud,
"How do you meet the last thing you've done?"





GRAND HORIZONS
Even before she wore that Prada coat to the Capitol Building, yellow was Gorman's favorite color. Aliette dress

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PROFILE IN COURAGE

"I hope we don't limit her to that poem," says poet Danez Smith of "The Hill We Climb." "I hope we don't think that she's always got to talk to everybody." Alexander McQueen dress

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Chrissy Teigen; in media headlines, nearly every time she tweeted her opinion on a current event; memorialized on vibrant murals in D.C. and Palm Springs that reminded me of Shepard Fairey's Obama posters.

After the inauguration, she completed a tour of the big talk shows, remotely, from her L.A. apartment. It was a scene. The Trump years and the pandemic had starved the circuit of joy, elegance, positivity, intelligence, hope. But when Gorman came onscreen it was as if DeGeneres, Corden, and Noah had sprung alive from a slumber. She matched the comedians' wit, the embodiment of spring in her teal. On his nighttime news digest, *Anderson Cooper 360*, Cooper asked Gorman to repeat the rhyming mantra she recites before she steps onstage: "I am the daughter of Black writers who are descended from Freedom Fighters who broke their chains and changed the world. They call me." Cooper visibly reddened at her recitation, his composure utterly destroyed. "Wow," he almost babbled. "You're awesome."

"I have yet to see her finish without a standing ovation," observed Aaron Kisner, a stage director who has worked with Gorman on a few of her public performances. The friends, colleagues, and family of Gorman's that I spoke to all unilaterally said that they weren't surprised by her success. If you book Amanda Gorman, her mother, Joan Wicks, told me, "you don't feel like you are taking a chance." The audience, for Gorman, is not an abstraction but a collaborator in her mode of rousing, outward-facing, and civic-minded poetical speech. She is something of a caring pedagogue, translating critical race theory for the benefit of eager Americans. Gorman works in the affirmative mode of reaction and response; I spent hours absorbing her poems, which is to say, viewing her performances of them on YouTube. For the dying climate, she has written "Earthrise." For the modern crisis of white-supremacist violence, in all its forms, she wrote "In This Place (An

American Lyric)," her most ambitious work, a poem she delivered at the inauguration of Tracy K. Smith as the poet laureate of the United States. In 2017, Gorman herself was named the first National Youth Poet Laureate.

Yellow is Gorman's color, and it had been before the iconic Prada coat. On Instagram, I find that some of her fans have knitted *amigurumi*, or Japanese crocheted dolls, in her likeness. When we first met, Gorman was wearing a coordinating sweatsuit by Clare V., white with big splashes of tie-dyed marigold. "I feel very Billie Eilish," she said, almost singing.

Gorman could not stir a moral panic if she tried. "God, I'm just the *most* squeaky-clean person," she told me. The importance of maintaining a wholesome image was impressed upon Gorman by her mother, a middle-school English teacher in Watts, the neighborhood where Amanda and Gabrielle were raised. The family is united in their vision of literary and social success. And success means touching as many readers as possible. Gorman prefers not to curse, or at least not on the record, but when I did in her company, out of habit, she commiserated with very deep nods. If some stimulus disturbs her cool so profoundly that she must reach for a four-letter word, she spells it out loud, always censoring the vowel, as in "s-h-asterisk-t." What Eilish and Gorman may have in common, I think, is immediately recognizable and conceptually enticing worldviews.

There is a want for cultural saints. A number of secular sects, overlapping around a shared value of multicultural liberalism, seek to draft Gorman to the mantle. And what does Gorman want? For the immediate future? The time and the quiet to finish two books—a picture book titled *Change Sings: A Children's Anthem* and a highly anticipated collection, *The Hill We Climb and Other Poems*—both due in September, both already best-sellers. Asked if she might share from either, Gorman hedged. The work is not finished yet. She has readers, but she is protective of her writing. There's pressure. She wondered aloud, "How do you meet the last thing you've done?"

The Biden Inaugural Committee informed Gorman that she had been chosen to be the ceremony's poet in late December. First she was flattered. She flung herself into research, diagramming the verse of speakers before her, like Angelou, her self-professed "spiritual grandmother," and Elizabeth Alexander, who read at the first inauguration of President Obama. And then she was concerned. Gorman hadn't really left her apartment since March, when she traveled back to L.A. from the Harvard campus (where she would graduate cum laude that spring). As the virus surged in her city, the thought of getting on a plane terrified her. The January 6 insurrection at the Capitol only augmented her fear. Gorman knows what to expect from certain crowds. The inauguration would be different, unpredictably so and on an incomprehensible scale.

Gorman described all this with some dissociative distance, as if, that day, she'd been a member of the at-home throng and not on the platform at the West Front. "Not that no one else could have done it," she told me. "But if they had taken another young poet and just been like, 'A five-minute poem, please, and by the way the Capitol was just almost burned down. See you later...'" She drifted off, her booming voice diminished to a whisper, and then returned. "That would have been traumatizing."

She asked her advisers. Oprah—who's been a fame doula to Gorman since they first met on John Krasinski's YouTube show *Some Good News* in May of last year—told her to look to the example of Angelou. ("Every time I text Oprah, I have a mini-heart attack," Gorman jokes, holding her iPhone at arm's length.) Wicks, who met with me over Zoom after a long day of teaching, encouraged her daughter to keep the appointment because she sees Gorman as a writer who is duty bound to serve democracy. "I did have Amanda practice," Wicks said and lifted her eyes to the ceiling for a few seconds, "how, in a second's notice, I could become a body shield." She described crouching over her child in the hotel room the night before.

Just five days before the inauguration, Gorman texted someone at Prada, back then the one fashion

house with which she had a connection, and they sent over the outfit and the headband. The red accessory had looked silly, placed at the fore of her head, so her mother suggested Gorman wear it like “a tiara, a crown.” Gorman did her makeup herself. It snowed lightly the morning of the inauguration. On the stage, Wicks warmed her daughter with blankets. She was shivering. And then, all of a sudden, she was not. “Her nerves don’t show up” in the moments leading to showtime, Kisner, the stage director, told me. “They’ve been processed and dealt with before she walks in the door.”

With all the commotion following the performance, it took Gorman an hour to get back into the hotel. On our patch of green space, as planes making their descent to LAX blared overhead, she pulled a journal from her tote. Clearing her throat, she read from the entry she wrote that night, redacting a few lines as she went: “I’ve learned that it’s okay to be afraid. And what’s more, it’s okay to seek greatness. That does not make me a black hole seeking attention. It makes me a supernova.”

In one’s memory of the reading, it is the delicate pair of hands, whirling like those of a conductor, that stand out. Gorman developed the movements as a guardrail of sorts, to remind her to slowly pronounce any consonants she has difficulty with. They flutter downward on “descended from slaves,” and tickle up, on “raised by a single mother.” “Skinny Black girl,” in the single autobiographical line, is the thrillingly out-of-place phrase, for me. All of a sudden, this galvanizing appeal, tailored to move the populace, constricts to the perspective of the individual. The “we” of the poem goes dormant, and we can see into the personal life of the speaker. “They are like essays,” she told me of the work she writes for big audiences. “They have a thesis, an introduction, and a conclusion.”

The argument put forth was this: “But while democracy can be periodically delayed, / it can never be permanently defeated.” To many, depleted of optimism, that pair of lines was a

purging of Trumpism. Her publisher, Viking, rushed to package the text of “The Hill We Climb” as a paperback keepsake. On the page, the verse reads differently, less urgently. The words require her crisp and enunciating powers to feel vivid. Wicks knows that Gorman’s chemical presence is the key. “You could have two poets,” she said, “and one can actually have more talent. But Amanda’s the one who is going to work the room.”

“It’s like they made *her* poetry,” said the poet Danez Smith of the ravenous media response to Gorman. Smith has seen Gorman perform and admired the “political heart and mind and attention to history

Gorman has said that she wants to be president. She notes that she has the unofficial endorsements of Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama

and community” evident in all her work. The first true piece of poetry criticism Gorman ever published, for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, was an exacting close reading of Smith’s “Homie,” in which Gorman identified the “fetishization of suffering and violence” rampant in the liberal imagination. Gorman has now been recruited into that cultural imagination. Does the nature of her introduction to a larger readership cast her as a satellite of the Biden administration? Does the poet who speaks from the corridors of power concede something? There is the classical idea of the poet as the gadfly, who lives outside society. Because Gorman is a public figure, all of these projections and strong feelings she engenders are a part of her work. “I wonder what the journey is for a political poet,” Smith said. CONTINUED ON PAGE 138



MEASURE OF A WOMAN

With her new prominence, Gorman says that her hope is to be "a stepping-stone for change." Dior Haute Couture dress and headband. Tory Burch sandals. In this story: hair, Lacy Redway; makeup, Raisa Flowers. Details, see In This Issue.





Voice of Reason

Still thriving after a five-decade career, Giorgio Armani, in a rare interview, speaks from the heart about an industry he loves—and how it needs to change. By Jason Horowitz. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

Giorgio Armani has been having the strangest dreams.

“I’m ready for the runway, and I don’t have the clothes,” Mr. Armani says in his office, surrounded by portraits of himself, during his first in-person interview since the coronavirus paralyzed both his industry and his hometown of Milan more than a year ago. In another, the 86-year-old says, he dreams he is the central character of a play and starts singing. And then there is the recurring nightmare—Mr. Armani perched on a cliff edge over a daunting precipice—that has haunted him throughout the pandemic.

“Bad dreams,” Mr. Armani says, his famous Arctic-blue eyes widening behind his round rimless glasses. “Nightmares.”

The fashion industry that Mr. Armani has dominated for decades is, perhaps not coincidentally, also in a precarious and pivotal position. The virus has devastated sales, shuttered businesses, and upended the industry and its culture, from broken supply chains to closed runways to influencers with nowhere to go. Even before the pandemic, a swirl of often competing new forces and priorities—fast fashion, sustainability, diversity, e-commerce, resale—had begun shaping the industry’s future. The virus, as it has done to so many facets of life, exposed or exacerbated all of those dynamics.

Now, as vaccines roll out and a glimmer of normalcy can be described in the distance, everyone wants to know what the future of fashion will look like.

“They say I have powers, that I can see into the future,” says Mr. Armani, clad in his familiar uniform of a fitted midnight-blue crewneck sweater, blue pants, and sneakers as snow white as his hair. “What will happen? I don’t know!”

But when you’re a multibillionaire mogul running an empire stretched across continents and touching seemingly every segment of fashion—haute

A STUDY IN ELEGANCE

Giorgio Armani in his office on Via Borgonuovo in Milan, photographed via Zoom. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

couture, runway, red carpet, mall denizens in Armani Exchange, plush furniture at Armani Casa, coffee-table books at Armani bookstores, restaurants, hotels, cafés, scents, chocolates, and on and on—you don't need to be a clairvoyant to see the future. You get to shape it yourself. The COVID crisis has revealed to Mr. Armani much that he says he wants to change, both in the industry and in the direction and management of his own company. The virus, he says, "made us open our eyes a bit."

More than anything, he became aware of an industry careening out of control, speeding at an unsustainable clip that blurred high, medium, and low fashion. The slamming of the brakes allowed him to appreciate just how much designers had been running on a gerbil wheel of production to meet myriad fashion seasons unknown to nature. "Fashion had gone in a ridiculous manner," he told me, lamenting exotic locales for capsule shows and cruise-ship catwalks that were of "such a vulgarity."

The year of lockdown also led Mr. Armani to look inward. He found the city claustrophobic and escaped to his vacation homes, thirsting for the sun and the countryside. Life suddenly seemed fragile, and his thoughts sometimes turned to Sergio Galeotti, his cofounder, companion, and great love, who also succumbed to a seemingly unstoppable virus in 1985. "It was AIDS," he tells me.

Mr. Armani, who studied to be a doctor while growing up in the town of Piacenza, took the coronavirus seriously from the beginning, as a threat to both his and his employees' health. He became the first major designer to shut down the catwalks during Milan Fashion Week in February 2020. "I said, 'I'm going to play it safe. I don't want to be the first to create a problem and give the papers something to talk about.'"

He donated millions of dollars to Italian hospitals, supported health care workers by using Armani's Italian production plants to make single-use medical overalls, and turned the gym of his corporate Armani village outside the center of Milan into the world's most fashionable waiting room for nasal swabs. (Before my own swab to meet with Mr. Armani, models, the head of Mr. Armani's couture division, and his personal assistant waited their turn around me.)

Despite all the precautions, he told me he felt vulnerable, given his age and recent bouts with severe illness, but "willing," he says, "to accept destiny." This applies to his company as well: Perhaps more than anything else in recent history, the pandemic has forced him to think of the future of Giorgio Armani.

For years, Mr. Armani has insisted on his company's independence, even as Gucci and Fendi and Pucci and other Italian luxury giants sold to the French conglomerates Kering and LVMH. Mr. Armani, so much a symbol of Italy that he recently contributed furnishings to the Italian president's palace, says that a French buyer is not in the cards. But, for the first time, he allows that the idea of Armani continuing as an independent company is "not

so strictly necessary," and says that "one could think of a liaison with an important Italian company"—and not necessarily a fashion company. He won't divulge more.

He also says that he planned to pass down much of the business to his family, naming his niece Roberta Armani and his chief lieutenant, Leo Dell'Orco. What is still missing, of course, is his replacement—someone "who says yes or no. There's still no boss."

Roberta Armani tells me that the future is something her uncle thinks about incessantly. "I'm sure he's made his plans, and whatever he has decided, we will be with him," she says, adding that she had no insight into his mention of a merger with another Italian giant. Though, she says, "it could be great, finally, to have an important Made in Italy joint venture in the fashion industry."

Italy's other fashion-industry billionaires commend a brand that has endured and expanded and represents, no matter where one goes, the top of the Italian food chain.

"This is a value for Italy, even more than for the industry," Remo Ruffini, the chairman and chief executive of Moncler, tells me. He admires "King Giorgio"—"I don't know what the brand Armani will do in the future, but the Armani style is in us all every day," he says.

Letting go is something Mr. Armani has flirted with many times before. He once said it would be "ridiculous" if he were still a top designer at 85. "I've already passed that!" he says with a sly grin, now pushing the goalposts to age 90. And while he may seem to be perpetually ruminating on a succession that he may never intend to actually

happen, in the meantime he is clearly in charge: quietly issuing orders, excoriating his competitors, making aides jump to fill a glass of water at the mere clearing of his throat.

Deference is something the workaholic has grown used to and fond of. What he doesn't like is the way his competitors and fashion colleagues talk about him as if he were so celestial as to be out of the game.

"Like I'm an honorary president," Mr. Armani says, puncturing his studied austerity with a burst of rare laughter. While he suspects such praise is designed to "marginalize" him from fashion's fray, he is no ribbon-cutting statesman, he insists. "I'm the prime minister," the leader who gets his hands dirty. "I want to work, to decide, to change things."

In terms of his own designs, he says, "I'm already doing it, in my own way." He tells me that the collection he presented days earlier at Milan's Fashion Week "is representative of a desire to evolve on an aesthetic level." The company describes it as more feminine, and soft, after a brutal year. His niece talks about how the eruption of colors in Armani Privé was a declaration of life after COVID. "It was like, *enough*," she says. "There is a need for some joy."

But those shifts, while sumptuous to behold under a frescoed ceiling in Mr. Armani's office palace, seem more responsive to the moment rather than reimagining fashion in the viral hereafter. Even Mr. Armani's preferred muse and brand ambassador, Cate Blanchett, who has

"My work has one single goal: giving women the inner strength that comes with being at ease, with who they are and what they are wearing"

popularized recycled red-carpet looks by digging deep into her own Armani crates, can't help, when asked how he is changing things, but talk about the ageless quality of his clothes.

"Mr. Armani's mix of traditionally masculine and feminine lines has long been a touchstone for me," she writes. "I've always aspired to the grace, simplicity, and timelessness that both he and his designs embody."

The Armani argument is essentially that when everything has gone mad, safe but top-notch design can be revolutionary—and empower a woman to do revolutionary things like, say, take down the British monarchy. When Meghan Markle needed to suit up for war with the House of Windsor, she chose a black silk Armani wrap dress printed with a white lotus flower.

"My work has one single goal: giving women the inner strength that comes with being at ease, with who they are and what they are wearing," Mr. Armani, who approved of the dress beforehand, tells me when I circle back after the Oprah interview. "I am flattered that one of my dresses was chosen for such an important occasion—it means my work truly speaks."

But is Mr. Armani willing to use all of his enormous influence to fix what he considers a broken industry—even if it means scaling back his own massive operation? He tells me that as I toured his sprawling headquarters, his COVID-emptied hotel, his commercial and couture showrooms, and ateliers buzzing with busy seamstresses, he was in a meeting directing his team to drastically reduce the number of summer looks for all markets worldwide.

"The first thing I said was 'The collections need to be reduced by almost a third.'" Sixty percent of the global fashion output, he says, ends up unsold and "discarded" to the black market or outlets. "I don't want to work for the outlets!"

After complaining for years that his warnings have gone unheeded, Mr. Armani insists that now, after COVID, it is different—and that some of the other major players in the industry are willing to follow his lead.

"Now they are taking a step back," he tells me. "I won't name names, but there is a big [label] that was explosive on the marketplace. Now it's starting to say, No—we cannot do everything, because the people aren't buying."

Mr. Armani has changed fashion before. After he and Galeotti started the company in 1975 with seed money earned from the sale of their Volkswagen Beetle, they provided a stylistic correction to the excesses of the era. They caught the rise of feminism with elegant, draped tailoring that made Mr. Armani the clothier of empowered working women and modern, more fashionable men, iconified by an Armani-clad Richard Gere in 1980's *American Gigolo*. Mr. Armani's greige and beige fabrics introduced an

entire muted color palette into the culture, and over an almost half-century of work, he has painted the world with them.

Mr. Armani, who is not bashful, tells me his innovations amounted to a "great change," but that they were also an "easy game because the style back then was almost ridiculous." In fact, his innovations have often been reactionary in nature. His response to '90s supermodels singing along with exploding jukeboxes in George Michael videos? Androgynous and anonymous models. Whenever things became too much, Armani was the anti-too much. Once again, he argues, the world has come back to him.

What COVID has shown, he tells me, is that people can dress well with little, that there is no need to go shopping every day. Fashion, he says, has to go back to its true function,

which is helping people look and live better. Fashion is what people wear, he says, not a spectacle.

All of this reminds me of my visit that morning to his office complex, and the old Nestlé grain silos converted into a gorgeous museum for his designs. A headless army of mannequins adorned in Armani grays and beiges fills the top floors, many of them coupled with designs from 20 or 30 years later, as if from the same collection. The point is obvious: Armani is immutable.

There is also a wing dedicated to the elegant gowns Mr. Armani began dressing famous actresses in for the Oscars and other red carpets in the 1980s, and these tell another story. For all his talk about getting back to basics, Mr. Armani played a central role in creating an all-consuming celebrity-fashion-industrial complex that many critics see as corrosive to the industry and a progenitor to the present influencer age that he loathes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 139



EARLY DAYS

Armani in 1967, when he designed menswear for Nino Cerruti. By 1980, his own label would be famous for outfitting working women and modern, more fashionable men.

HER STORY

In Barry Jenkins's *The Underground Railroad*, Thuso Mbedu is the lodestar.
Photographed by Micaiah Carter.

Thuso Mbedu is 29 but looks significantly younger. And yet, in her extraordinary performance as Cora, the central character in Barry Jenkins's adaptation of Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Underground Railroad*, she manages to look older as well. Premiering on Amazon Prime Video this month, the limited series follows a young enslaved woman who escapes a Georgia plantation, making use of a subterranean train—a literal underground railroad—to travel north. The show marries a haunted magical realism with dark chapters of American history, and requires much of its heroine. “They say still waters run deep,” says Jenkins of his lead, “and that’s how I think of her. There are episodes where she looks 18, and then there are episodes where she looks 57. It was almost superhuman, what this woman did.”

Mbedu grew up in the sleepy South African city of Pietermaritzburg. When she was four, her mother, a teacher, died, so it was her grandmother who raised her, and the family got by on the grandmother's modest pension. “My life wasn't as hard as others', but it wasn't easy,” says Mbedu, who is speaking to me from her home in Los Angeles. She suffered from skin allergies and resolved to become a dermatologist—an aspiration that pleased her grandmother since apartheid had prevented Mbedu's mother from becoming a geologist. But in high school, Mbedu discovered drama: “I was like, This thing can be used to heal and help people.” When her grandmother learned of her intention to study performing arts in college, she didn't speak to Mbedu for a month. After graduating, Mbedu landed the first part she auditioned for, and eventually she earned the lead role in the South African teen drama *Is'Thunzi*. Her grandmother, who made begrudging peace with her granddaughter's aspirations, passed away just as Mbedu's career was getting started.

In 2018, she auditioned for *The Underground Railroad*, later traveling to L.A. to meet with Jenkins. “Thuso aced it,” the director says simply. Extensive research followed: slave narratives from the Federal Writers' Project and audio files of formerly enslaved people. “We, as Africans, think that we know a lot about American history just from what we see in movies,” Mbedu says. Her research made her realize that enslaved people in America “were much closer to who we are as Africans than we think.” Mbedu has spent the months since the show wrapped hiking with friends (“Romantic involvement is a myth, a great legend in my life,” she says) and perfecting the art of falling: “It's my dream to do my own stunts.” She's also been reading books like *The Woman Who Would Be King*, about a female pharaoh in Ancient Egypt, and *Amazons of Black Sparta: The Women Warriors of Dahomey*—stories rich in history, strength, and triumph.—CARINA CHOCANO



PRODUCED BY BLOND PRODUCTIONS; SET DESIGN: LITTLE APPLE PROJECTS.

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TAKE A SHINE

Mbedu wears an Armani Privé dress. Hair, Nikki Nelms; makeup, Raisa Flowers. Details, see In This Issue.

Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

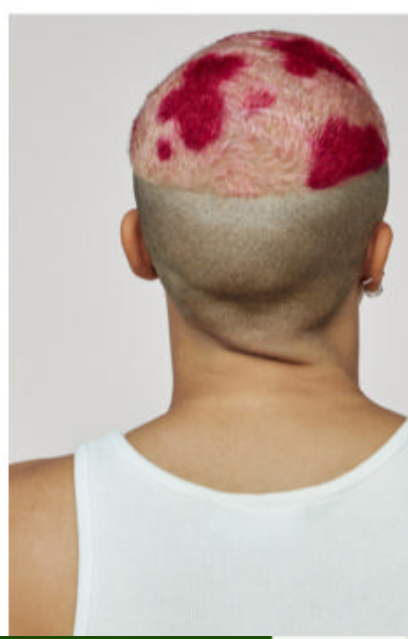
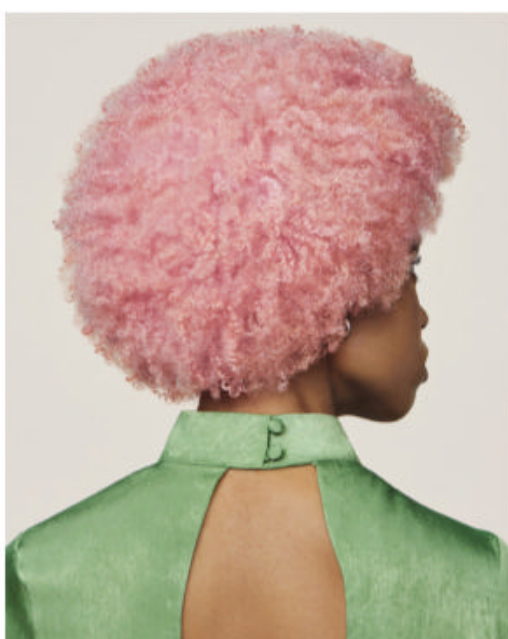
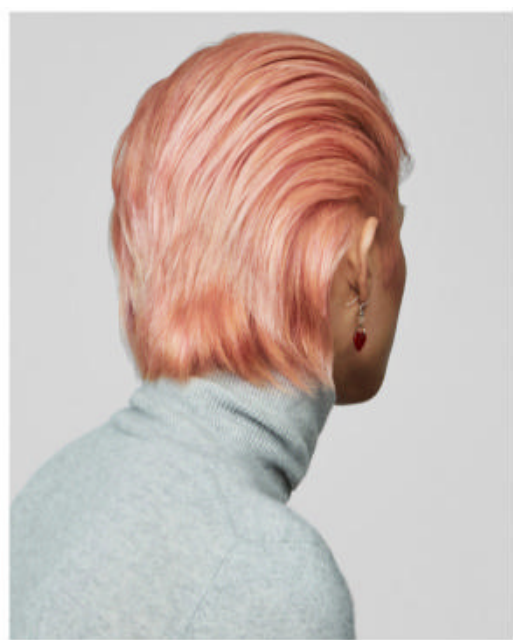


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When I was asked by this magazine if I wanted to dye my hair for a story, my husband and I had just finished eating our 331st consecutive dinner together since the pandemic began. During our meal of roast chicken (again), we'd earnestly discussed watching the grass grow in our yard. Would I like to dye my hair? Of course I would. The nature of my

will similarly be colored by stained fingertips and splattered linens, relics of the year when boxed dye and Zoom consultations were the closest we could get to a salon appointment.

But what about the post-COVID era? If the fall collections are any indication, our latter-day summer of love (and meals with friends, and hugs with septuagenarians, and sweaty nights in bars) will be tinted with the acid yellows and flame oranges that cropped up on models at Marni and Gabriela Hearst;

Tinted Love

Bleach London's Alex Brownsell is bringing her DIY, designer-approved hair-color technique Stateside with a flagship salon and a rainbow-filtered view of life after lockdown. By Molly Creeden.

life over the past year—which included giving birth to my first child and living under Los Angeles's recurring stay-at-home orders—had made me eager to exist in a world inching back to normalcy. And what better way to feel seen than with a packet of hair bleach and semipermanent dye?

I certainly wouldn't be the first woman in history to use hair color as a means of participating in a seismic cultural shift. Rebellious flappers mimicking Clara Bow and Theda Bara went jet black to mark the carefree excess of the postwar era, while the atomic blondes of the 1950s defied the dowdy-housewife persona, offering a prescient glimpse of the women's-empowerment movement on the horizon; in the '80s, neon hues gave punks the visual apparatus to reject Reaganism's push toward conservative family values. The COVID era

the bleach-white strands at Khaite; and the ravey wigs and saturated, single-processed dye jobs on the runway at Dolce & Gabbana—to say nothing of the TikTokers in my neighborhood, whose deep-aqua, shimmery-pink, and slime-green strands bounced along to choreography in front of the Hollywood sign even as the pandemic raged on. Anything for good content.

"Everybody's going for different shades of coppers, reds, and oranges—it's suddenly having a huge moment," explains colorist Alex Brownsell, the cofounder and creative director of Bleach London. Brownsell has just joined me on a Zoom call from the U.K., where she is waiting on final visa certifications before she can fly to Los Angeles to oversee the finishing touches on her U.S. flagship salon, opening this month. "By the time summer hits, it's going to be the color of the season," she says, noting the undeniable influence of Bella Hadid's Ginger Spice-inspired streaks, which went viral earlier this year.

As hair-color prognosticators go, Brownsell is CONTINUED ON PAGE 140

HEAD STRONG

Fluent in icy blues, acid yellows, and everything in between, Brownsell excels in creating lived-in hair color that speaks to the emotion—and the reality—of the moment.

HEART: LARISSA HOFFMAN. ALL OTHERS: COURTESY OF BLEACH LONDON.



A From prim purses with a proper attitude to anything-goes carryalls, this spring's best small bags are bursting with personality. Photographed by Nigel Shafran.

Life of Their Own





WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Model Lila Moss walks softly—and carries a savagely cool **Alexander McQueen** bucket bag, \$1,490; alexandermcqueen.com. **Celine by Hedi Slimane** bouclé jacket; celine.com. **Marni** top (\$490) and sandals; marni.com. **Jil Sander** leggings (worn throughout), \$1,650; jilsander.com. Fashion Editor: Alex Harrington.





HOLD YOUR FIRE

Inspired by a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie*, a **Salvatore Ferragamo** top-handle bag (\$2,500; ferragamo.com) serves up midcentury elegance with just a hint of drama. **Bottega Veneta** knit dress; bottegaveneta.com.





POUR ONE OUT

Moss makes quite a splash with her brushed-leather **Prada** handbag and dress; prada.com. **Rolex** watch. **Marni** sandals.





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MAIN EVENTS

Moss goes for the knockout blow in bags from **Celine by Hedi Slimane** (FAR LEFT, \$1,700; celine.com) and **Alexander McQueen** (\$1,490; alexandermcqueen.com). **Dolce & Gabbana** dress, \$2,395; dolcegabbana.com.





CURB APPEAL

In the wilds of East London, a sculptural option from **Bottega Veneta** (bottegabeneta.com) lets the imagination set sail. **Chanel** jacket; chanel.com.



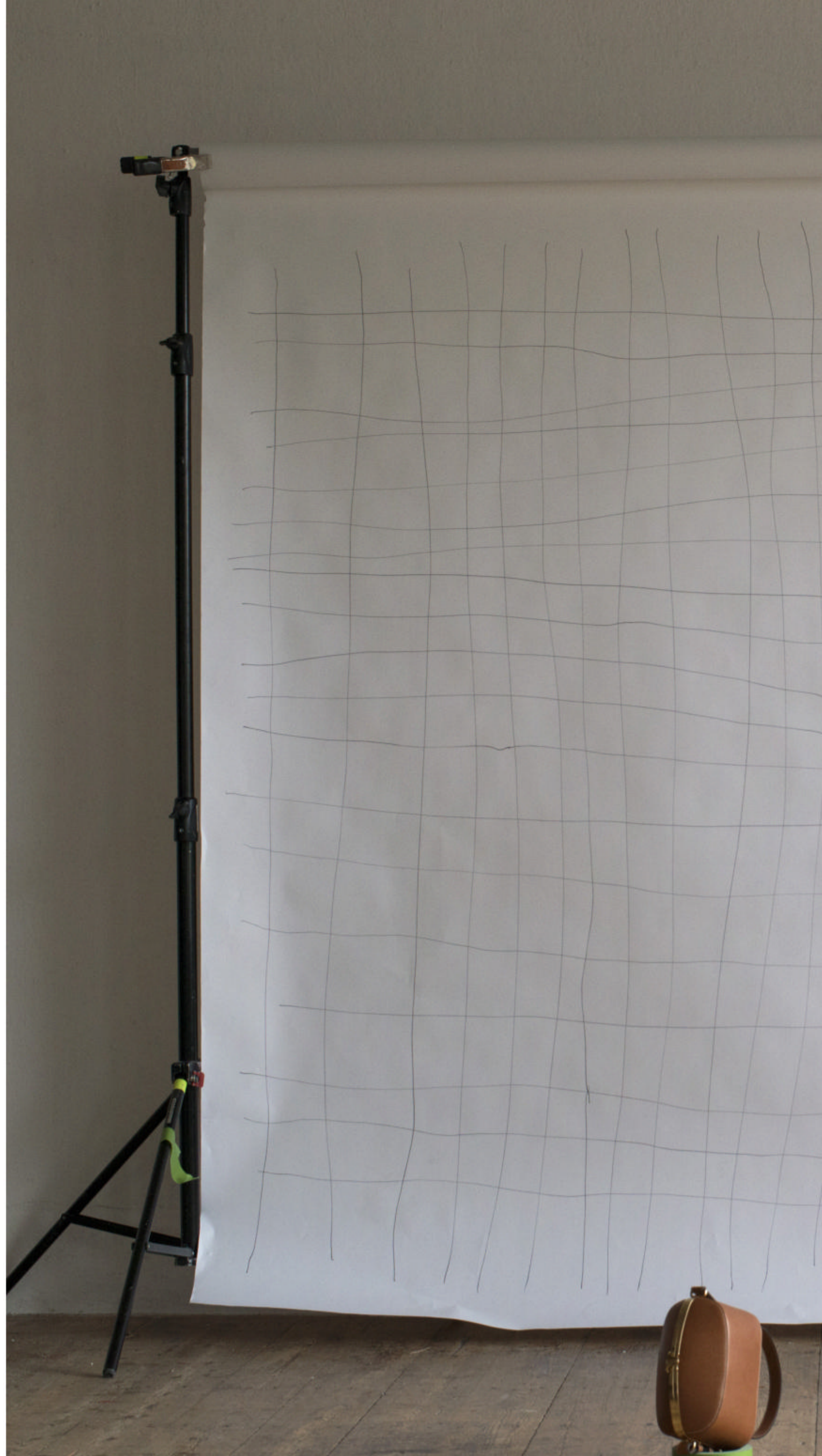


WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

A fiery-red handbag from **Chanel** offers more than its fair share of heat.
Chanel jacket and skirt; all at chanel.com.



FIELD GOALS
Moss gets a big kick out of styles from **Celine by Hedi Slimane** (on the floor; celine.com) and **Hermès** (hermes.com). **Louis Vuitton** cropped leather jacket; louisvuitton.com. **Chanel** tweed vest; chanel.com. In this story: hair, Blake Henderson; makeup, Phoebe Taylor. Details, see In This Issue.





PRODUCED BY DOBEDO REPRESENTS:
SET DESIGN, STUART MCCAFFER.

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A NEW SILHOUETTE

ABOVE: Halston in 1979. RIGHT: Ewan McGregor as the designer in Ryan Murphy's new Netflix series, which premieres in mid-May.

ULTRA

While his clothes were minimal, his life was anything but. Ryan Murphy—executive producer of the new limited series *Halston*—talks with Tom Ford and Hamish Bowles about the designer who defined the disco era.



HORST P. HORST, VOGUE 1979; ATSUSHI NISHIJIMA/NETFLIX





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“Halston, I think, used drugs and sex as a release from the pressure, from the worry of having the lights turned off,” says Murphy. “We made sure to dramatize that”

Roy Halston Frowick was a boy raised in Indiana who became a soaring fashion legend and an international household name that defined the heady Studio 54 era—until he burned out from drugs, poor business decisions, and, ultimately, AIDS. Ryan Murphy’s new Netflix series *Halston*, subtly directed by Daniel Minahan, casts a compelling Ewan McGregor as the complex designer. Hamish Bowles talks with Murphy and Tom Ford about Halston, those extraordinary years, and the crushing demands of design at the top.

Hamish Bowles: Ryan, what excited you about Halston and his story and made you feel this could be developed into a series?

Ryan Murphy: I grew up in Indiana—where Halston is from—surrounded

by cornfields and churches, and I always heard about two people who had gotten out and gone on to bigger, glamorous things: One was Florence Henderson, and one was Halston. He was always a big figure in my mind—a representation of somebody who had come from humble beginnings and had gone on to do something incredible with his life—and I was always moved by him.

HB: Tom, when did you first become aware of Halston and his work?

Tom Ford: Well, a little bit the same: When I was a kid, my grandmother always had *W*, which then was a gigantic newspaper thing, and so I was very aware, as a 15-year-old, of who Halston was. You couldn’t *not* be aware if you cared about design at that time—I mean, the Ultrasuede, the wrap dress he did, the luggage for Hartmann. You couldn’t miss it. I moved to New York in the summer

of 1979 and was lucky enough to just catch the end of that period.

RM: I have a book that has an amazing photograph, Tom, of you at Studio 54.

TF: Boy, I look horrible in that picture. That was some sort of 1920s party or something. My hair’s slicked back. I knew all those people—I can’t say we were best friends; I was an 18-year-old twinkie that was invited when somebody wanted extra cute boys around—but I did meet Halston a couple of times, and I went to his house once.

I was—to say “dating” is not quite right—with Fred Hughes, who worked with Andy [Warhol]. Fred was in his mid-30s, and I guess I was 18. But we would periodically date or sleep together or whatever you want to call it. And we went by Halston’s house to pick somebody up, and I walked in, and I remember just



GLAM SQUAD

FROM FAR LEFT: McGregor as Halston; the designer and his muses, photographed for *Vogue* in 1972; a 1978 portrait by the photographer Harry Benson; models Lisa Taylor and Patti Hansen, both wearing Halston, in 1976.



thinking, Oh, my God—this is exactly how I want to live.

So when that house came on the market a few years ago, a friend sent me a clipping. It had been redone by Gunter Sachs, who had bought it with Gianni Agnelli in 1990, [just before] Halston died. [Ford bought the house on East 63rd Street in 2019.] I'm redoing the top floor, mimicking Halston's office [in Olympic Tower on Fifth Avenue], which you did so perfectly in your sets, all red on red on red, and mirror and mirror and mirror. I know all of that intimately—the sofas and everything. I've been copying those Halston sofas and chairs since I was at Gucci; I've copied them in my own stores.

RM: We spent a lot of time on that because it's one of the things I admired about Halston—and about you: Your surroundings matter. You create a world, and people are invited to that world. You do that in your stores—I mean, one of the first things that I was obsessed with when I went into one of your stores for Gucci was your ability to curate an atmosphere that people want to be in. It's the details. Halston did that.

Are you going to do [the house] exactly like Halston did it?

TF: Yeah, more or less. We have all of the original Paul Rudolph–designed furniture. I don't want it to be a museum. It's a great house—I'm really lucky to have it, it's amazing that I have it, and I love it.

But back to your series: When I heard Ewan McGregor was cast, I have to say, I thought, Oh, my God, that's completely wrong. But he got it so right. It's incredibly convincing. **RM:** He was, to us, the only choice. The thing that Ewan got about Halston was that Halston had a vision in his mind of who he wanted to be in life. He was self-created.

TF: Don't you think everyone who is successful in that way invented themselves? I did. I'm sure you did, and Hamish, I know you did.

RM: One of the things that was repeatedly said to him was "You're from Indiana. Why are you speaking like that?" In his mind, it was not affect—it was natural. I think Ewan got that. Ewan really connected with the pain of Halston and the longing of Halston, and how confusing it is to have to be an artist and a

businessman at the same time. Other things as well—the power of a muse, for example.

TF: Oh, my God—your Elsa Peretti [actress Rebecca Dayan] is breathtaking, *breathtaking*. I thought that was one really great thing about the screenplay because I don't know that most serious films about fashion really capture that: You really do get a sense that, yes, it was Halston, but it was also his entourage of people, including Joe Eula and Joel Schumacher. That

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PRACTICAL MAGIC

Anoraks, denim, and other day-to-day basics meet the flash and dash of silver and sequins. Call it a glam slam. Photographed by Stefan Ruiz.



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SHINING EXAMPLES

Model Adut Akech flaunts a decidedly dazzling **Louis Vuitton** shift dress and puffer jacket; louisvuitton.com.

Jenny Bird necklace.

OPPOSITE: A shapely **Bottega Veneta** jacket (\$2,100) and pants (\$1,100; bottegaveneta.com) pair well with a shimmery, glittery top from **Valentino**; valentino.com.

Fashion Editor:
Camilla Nickerson.





FRINGE BENEFITS

Take street style to a dreamy new dimension by adding some ornament. Model Ariel Nicholson wears a **JW Anderson** embellished top (\$1,650), shorts (\$695), and body jewelry; jwanderson.com. **Champion** zip-up hoodie, \$70; champion.com.



MY BLUE HEAVEN

From its articulated bodice to its full, pleated skirt, the humble denim dress has never seemed quite this grown-up. Model Paloma Elsesser's iteration comes from **Alexander McQueen**; alexandermcqueen.com.





CHAIN REACTION

Model Imaan Hammam makes a persuasive case for elevated loungewear in an elaborately embellished **Givenchy** hoodie (\$2,320), dress, and necklace; givenchy.com.



SILVER BELLE

While its delicate straps evoke slinky staples of the boudoir, the high shine of this Balenciaga top all but demands a spotlight.

Balenciaga top and sweatpants with a tied detail (\$1,250); balenciaga.com.





EASY DOES IT

Model Ugbad Abdi keeps things simple—but no less smart—in a **Proenza Schouler** shirtdress (proenzaschouler.com) and **Ralph Lauren Collection** pants (\$690; ralphlauren.com). Hijab by **Haute Hijab**.



TRAINING DAY

With a **Miu Miu** jacket, shirt (\$1,510), shorts (\$790), and pants (\$1,050; all at miumiu.com), Abdi flits effortlessly between the sporty and the posh. **Rolex** watch. In this story: hair, Corvette Hunt and D'Angelo Alston; makeup, Dick Page. Details, see In This Issue.



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Dream Weavers

This spring heralds a return to texture—and that means all things knitted, stitched, and crocheted. From natty sweaters to tasseled accessories, last season's cozy fabrics get a warm-weather rework.





CERETTI AND AKECH: ANGELO PENNETTA, VOGUE, 2019.
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3. MARI GIUDICELLI SANDAL, \$580; MARIGIUDICELLI.COM.
4. MOLLY GODDARD CARDIGAN, \$780; MODAOPERANDI.COM.
5. MARIA FRERING NECKLACE, \$1,040; MARIAFRERING.COM.
6. MISSONI PANTS, \$1,380; MISSONI.COM.
7. GABRIELA HEARST SHOE, \$995; GABRIELAHEARST.COM.
8. BOTTEGA VENETA BAG; BOTTEGAVENETA.COM.
9. PROENZA SCHOULER DRESS, \$1,290; PROENZASCHOULER.COM.
10. KHAITE BRALETTE, \$560; KHAITE.COM.
11. TOD'S BAG; TODS.COM.
12. WALES BONNER SKIRT, \$625; NORDSTROM.COM.

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SUPERNOVA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 104

“I hope we don’t limit her to that poem. I hope we don’t think that she’s always got to talk to everybody.”

Following the inauguration, Gorman’s phone, blowing up with notifications, was too hot to touch. Her follower counts on social media ballooned by hundreds of thousands. In one of our conversations, she cautiously brought up a *Washington Post* article that had been written on her phenomenon, aware that she might sound self-involved. “Skip over the parts about me,” she said. “The great part is where they’re talking about how, historically, poets have been pop stars.” She listed Longfellow and Wheatley. To Gorman, the concentration of attention, and resources, on the form she loves is a net gain, although she is aware of the inevitable drawbacks of a consumerist and capitalistic dynamic.

You know how it is. A young woman is clear about what she cares about, makes compelling work, and the power brokers don’t know how to act. They venerate her voice to oblivion. The celebrity of Gorman and other comparable young figures, who become vaunted for their erudition and moral clarity and their bright elucidation of global pain, is a new, and complicated, kind of fame. The writer and performer Tavi Gevinson, who knows something about popularity and fetish, met Gorman in Milan at a weekend-long Prada event two years ago. She told me she’d felt relieved to have someone with whom she could talk books. In that overwhelming press cycle after the inauguration, Gorman became a magnet for the “escapist fantasy,” Gevinson said, of the fragile-but-intimidating young woman who saves the world. Gorman is becoming increasingly careful of situations that would make her seem like a token. “I don’t want it to be something that becomes a cage,” she said, “where to be a successful Black girl, you have to be Amanda Gorman and go to Harvard. I want someone to eventually disrupt the model I have established.”

Gorman wanted to show me her quarantine world. She joked that its circumference couldn’t be more than a mile-and-a-half long. We were to walk a winding trail that would take us through some manicured brush and

an ancient marsh, only to deliver us to one of the best views of L.A. anyone could find. Gorman was running a little late. She texted me her apologies along with a funny duck-face selfie; her face was covered in the white film of crappy drugstore sunscreen. The day before, she’d gotten a minor case of the dreaded face-mask sunburn, which got us talking about how annoying it is to find protection tailored to our skin.

When she met me near the trail, I told her that the selfie made me think of that episode of Donald Glover’s surrealish FX comedy *Atlanta*, the one where Antoine Smalls deadpans, “I’m a 35-year-old white man.” Giggling as I explained the episode’s plot, on whiteness and Blackness as inherent farce, she revealed to me that she hadn’t seen Glover’s series. Or much television, actually. It “was *The Munsters* and *The Honeymooners*,” she said, when she was growing up. If she wanted to watch something from the 21st century—Disney’s animated action comedy *Kim Possible*, say—she had to make an argument to her mom that the show had good politics.

The third time the television sizzled out in Gorman’s childhood home, Wicks decided not to fix it. The girls were livelier, more creative, when they found ways to entertain themselves. There were plays, homemade films, and botched science experiments. All the while Wicks was pursuing a doctorate in education at Loyola Marymount University. The family sometimes struggled financially. The twins were born prematurely; when she was a baby, Gorman’s head was too heavy for her body, and so she devised a way to push herself along, flat on her back, from the torso, like a belly-up flounder, which she demonstrated to me the day we hung out on the green. The twins both had difficulties with speech. Because Amanda also had an auditory-processing disorder, she could not pronounce the letter *r*. The family tried therapy, tongue depressors; Gorman exiled words that used the consonant. But there was always a surname, always the word *poetry*. Education, for Wicks, was paramount. The girls attended New Roads, a progressive learning institution in Southern California.

Growing up, Gabrielle, a talented filmmaker in her own right, was physically stronger than her sister.

Amanda was the writer, compulsively, from about age five, stealing time from her sleep to draft short fiction, inspired by *Anne of Green Gables*. “My mom had to give me a quarter so I’d sleep past 5 a.m.,” she told me on our hike. She applied for L.A. Youth Poet Laureate when she was 16. “I was like, ‘Well, I guess, I’m a poet.’” Her early performances were for live shows like WriteGirl, The Moth, and Urban Word and conferences like TED Talk and Vital Voices—the leadership organization for young women that once gave her a fellowship and counts Clinton as a founder. “Roar,” at The Moth, is a charming retelling of the time she auditioned for Broadway’s *The Lion King*. The poem is riddled with *r* words, and Gorman takes joy in the effort of pronunciation. Her delivery is rather like a comedian’s; to better illustrate a point about hyenas, she abruptly flips and does a walking handstand.

Gorman spent her college years balancing classes in English, sociology, and the writing workshop she founded, Lit Lounge, with speaking gigs and poetry performances that took her everywhere from the White House to Slovenia. For Gorman, who is grounded by the principles of Black feminism, writing and activism were always linked. At 16, she founded One Pen One Page, a youth literacy program. Now, after years of commissions and prestigious fellowships, she can afford to rent her apartment, not too far from the Loyola campus and its lush, middle-class environs. “I’m trying not to judge myself,” she said, chewing on the gummi bears she’d brought. “When you’re someone who’s lived a life where certain resources were scarce, you always feel like abundance is forbidden fruit.”

That day’s outfit: a cap-sleeve sport dress, sneakers, and a sweater, all by Nike. Putting on the crewneck as the pre-dusk chill set in, she yelled, heartily, “I’m not a BRAND AMBASSADOR or anything!” Gorman loves clothes, loves how they help her shape her image, but she is wary about being perceived as a model, especially after the timing of the announcement of a deal with IMG, which had been in the works long before the inauguration. “When I’m part of a campaign,” she told me, “the entity isn’t my body. It’s my voice.” Fashion brands are

clamoring to be associated with Gorman. One of the members of her team recently sent out a request that companies stop sending her flowers. The unending deliveries had filled Gorman's apartment, possibly triggering an allergic reaction severe enough to warrant a trip to urgent care.

Gorman gets recognized at doctors' offices and in the dog park, where she takes her 15-year-old mini poodle, Lulu. Maybe it's that beautiful hair, piled up high. The life of a poet is not typically one of recognition, or comfort, for that matter. There are a few ways to eke out a living. There's academia, where the jobs for poets are few and far between. There's copywriting or maybe touring if you're a prolific performer like Gorman. Note that she had been offered the unprecedented spot at the Super Bowl before the inauguration. The poem she read, "Chorus of the Captains," was an exultant ode to the essential worker. I asked if she felt ambivalent about writing for the NFL, following its treatment of activist Colin Kaepernick. For Nike, last year, she'd written a manifesto in celebration of the legacy of activist Black athletes. "It's always complicated," she said. "I said yes, not even for the money. I made so little money doing that shoot. I did it because of what I thought it would mean for poetry in the country, to have poetry performed, for the first time in history, at the Super Bowl."

She estimated that she's recently turned down \$17 million in offers. "I didn't really look at the details," she said of one massive offer from a brand, "because if you see something and it says a million dollars, you're going to rationalize why that makes sense." Companies have expectations, which might not always align with Gorman's goals. "I have to be conscious of taking commissions that speak to me," she said. Gorman described once getting feedback after turning in a poem. She'd included a line about Dreamers, and "some people" at the institution, one she didn't want to name, suggested she remove it. Instead, she arranged certain words so that the letters made an internal sound—"DACA."

We weren't quite hiking, more like dawdling, next to runners. A middle-aged white woman galloped toward us, shouting a greeting. We

turned to each other in silent, know-it-when-you-see-it understanding. We'd been the only Black people either of us had seen over the course of two days. Was that genuine friendliness or a warning? For the next runner, Gorman nudged me and bellowed a loud and preemptive *hello*.

The greenery might not have a more impressive docent than Gorman. She led me down a path of flora, defining the qualities of eucalyptus and holly berries better than the trail placards. "This is why Hollywood is called Hollywood." The area had once been the home of the Tongva people, Gorman noted, pre-colonization. We approached a large wooden replica of an Indigenous housing structure called a *kiiy*, where we sat for a few minutes.

Gorman *loves* Lin-Manuel Miranda, with whom she's messaged for a while. "The Hill We Climb" interpolates a rhyme from *Hamilton*. Miranda recorded a note of gratitude for Gorman, aired on a segment with her on *Good Morning America*, that made her swoon. I asked her what she thought of the critique, recently expressed in the novelist Ishmael Reed's play *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda*, that *Hamilton* is a damaging, revisionist work. "Ishmael," she said. "He's a little intense." If you want to be Gorman's friend, you've got to pass the application process. Have you read *Harry Potter*? Have you listened to *Hamilton*, or are you open to listening to *Hamilton*? Are you an intersectional feminist? Have you registered to vote?

Gorman has said that she wants to be president. She notes that she has the unofficial endorsements of Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama. That's why you won't find any "negativity" on her social media, to quote Wicks; any image, of her "at a party" or "in a bathing suit," that might be construed by future pundits as less than savory. Black women will know this form of adaptation. It's an accommodation to a scrutinizing eye, and it's now natural for Gorman. She finds satisfaction in being able to set boundaries.

When she's writing, Gorman told me, she usually looks for water. In a different timeline, she probably would have been a biologist of some sort. On our trail, we found mallards resting in the watery part of the marsh. There was a flimsy, wooden fence Gorman gamely jumped over. To get as close

as she wanted to the edge, she'd have to skid down a little hill. She held on to me for balance. "It's great in spring because they're all babies. And then they grow up and become rapists," she said matter-of-factly. "Thankfully, I'm not a female duck." We laughed at the dark joke.

We looped up and up, past a gated community, to the summit of the Loyola campus, where we could see beyond the mountains of the Central Valley, Playa Vista, Culver City, Century City, the ocean. When she was younger, accompanying her mother to class, Gorman used to slip outside the library and come sit atop the hill. "I like coming up here, and, in my head, I walk through L.A. and all the places I haven't seen in literally a year-and-a-half." She stared at the freeway. "I don't know if you watched *Kimmy Schmidt*. Do you know the premise? She's in a bunker, and then when she comes out, she's like, 'Oh, my God, everything's still here!' Because she thought everything had been bombed. That's kind of my mentality when I come up to the mountain. I'm like, 'Everything's still here!'" □

VOICE OF REASON

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Didn't he feel just a little bit, well....
"Guilty?" he asks.

He shakes his head. Perhaps less out of penance than marketing acumen, Mr. Armani has, over the last decade, shown support of initiatives to rein in some of the red carpets' extravagances. In 2011, Mr. Armani became the first luxury designer to accept Livia Firth's Green Carpet Challenge to highlight sustainable fashion, designing a dress for her (and the tuxedo of her then-husband, the actor Colin Firth) out of recycled plastics and fabrics. "If it's awful," Ms. Firth said Mr. Armani told her, "I'm not going to put my name on it."

But the dress was a hit. At an after-party, François-Henri Pinault, who runs the fashion giant Kering, and his wife, Salma Hayek, ran their fingers over her dress, marveling that it felt like silk. Ms. Firth thought Mr. Armani's corporate power put him in a position to be the industry leader on sustainability and fair-labor issues, and to apply pressure on others to follow suit—but she wondered if, after starting with a clear vision, Mr.



Armani had “bought into this kind of globalized expansion” and that “maybe it made him lose the heart of what he had set out to do.” He could revolutionize the industry, she said, simply by stopping the sale of mere product and “just going back to what was beautiful about Armani.”

Mr. Armani insists that is exactly what he is doing. But on the ground floor of Armani Silos, near a capsule collection of recycled Emporio Armani products, there is a large display of accessories—a market the company is aiming to capture more of.

It’s enough to make me wonder: Does Mr. Armani really want to slow down? Or is he just talking about slowing down so that he can complain about the un-Armani-like extravagances of his competitors, and in doing so exalt the Armani brand? Does he really want to sell less and focus more on high-end luxury—and, by example, force others to follow his lead—or does he want to keep expanding? Is he serious about seizing on our current crisis as an opportunity to save the industry, or is he really just making sure that the company survives, and thrives, after he is gone?

I’m reminded of Mr. Armani’s dreams of teetering on a cliff and wonder which way he wants to fall. I think of his earlier laments, free of any cloying Italian nostalgia, that seamstresses still sewed by hand in factories, and his looking forward to new machines that could do the work with even greater precision. I remember his prediction that selling online would, however “unfortunately,” replace the catwalks and showrooms because it is “extremely practical.” And I think of the last thing he told me in our interview, just before he walked out to his next meeting.

“So what is the future of fashion?” I asked him again. “Will there be a light at the end of this?”

“The light we desire is to recoup our position in the market,” Mr. Armani said. “Like it was before COVID—and maybe improve it.” □

TINTED LOVE

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the beauty industry’s Susan Miller. A master of transformative dye jobs, the 33-year-old has been steering the hair-color conversation since 2010, when she moved out of her kitchen

and started Bleach London with two chairs in the back of the original Dalston location of Sharmadean Reid’s Wah Nails. The British-born hairstylist—who trained as a colorist in her mother’s salon in the Midlands before graduating to editorial work and the glossy halls of Hershesons—is known for her potent colors and experimental, head-turning hair moments. Florence Welch’s auburn layers, Rita Ora’s pastel mermaid waves, and Georgia Jagger’s magenta blowouts have all come courtesy of Brownsell’s deft hand. A clubhouse for fashion mavens and subculture kids, Bleach became known as the place to go for experimentation—and inspiration. “It was quite wild, actually, a bit like a party,” Brownsell recalls of those early days. “You’re classically sold trying to look beautiful and pretty and sexy and elegant and young. And what I tried to create with Bleach was the opposite.”

Three stand-alone London salons followed, as well as a cult-favorite product line—16 curated color blends, plus toner and bleach kits, as well as color-care and styling aids, readily available in Europe only—that enabled novices and “hair chameleons” to experiment at home. At the center of it all was Brownsell’s unparalleled skill with pigments. “She’s an alchemist,” says Jagger, who has gone from loyal client to investor and co-owner of the brand. “I’d go to her apartment, and she’d have Ziploc bags with a highlighter or a bit of fabric, and she’d be color matching them.” It wasn’t long before fashion houses took note. Six years ago, Brownsell began working with Gucci on its campaigns, overseeing all of the hairstyling, color, and wigs to achieve the soft and raw looks dreamed up by creative director Alessandro Michele. After Hedi Slimane took over at Celine in 2018, he tapped Brownsell to create the kind of lived-in color that abets the effortless, romantic, e-boy vibe of his men’s collections. Distinguishing between a Gucci blonde (“cinematic and creamy”), a Celine blonde (“punk and not toned”), and a Vetements blonde (“hard silhouettes and solid shapes”) offers a glimpse at the nuance of Brownsell’s artistry, which is best described as precisely imprecise. “What I prefer is that everything looks a bit home done,” she says, “and that’s the thing about Bleach.

We’re doing it perfectly, but it doesn’t look like you just went to the salon.”

When COVID hit the U.K. last winter, Brownsell’s “home done” approach felt almost prophetic. During lockdown, Bleach accelerated a digital-consultation platform that had already been in the works, and saw massive interest in its free, one-on-one consultations with stylists who advise on color, products for hair type, and step-by-step application. “Every generation discovers dyeing their hair, and we’re just seeing teenagers discover that on their platforms,” Brownsell notes, explaining that for the TikTok generation, which has been in lockdown for a year, DIY dye jobs have become “one of those activities—like baking banana bread.” What’s different in this moment, she observes, is that first-timers—and old-timers—are much more willing to jump into the deep end: choosing more vivid tones or using two or more colors to create a look with bleach bits, root clashes, and ombré styles.

These are the customers Brownsell is hoping to attract when Bleach London arrives in West Hollywood and begins selling its products in the U.S. “We want to be the top people in America, like we are in the U.K., for performing allover bleach and still having healthy hair,” explains Jagger. The model is giving me a tour of the new 1,072-square-foot space on a busy block in Beverly Grove, conveniently situated next to Little House Confections and opposite Verve Coffee. Still a work in progress, it has been designed with a nod to Brownsell’s love of ASMR (sounds of scissors cutting, hair being painted, and swirling sink water will be piped in for ambience). The sleek, prismatic interior features reflective surfaces, frosted glass, and inflated chrome, explains Jagger, pointing to the floor where an epoxy swirl inspired by Gaetano Pesce furniture will soon merge with a black backsplash that has been carved from Mexican volcanic stone. The bathroom, with floor-to-ceiling citrus tiles, is optimal for selfies. Part showroom, part retail store, part full-service salon with just four chairs and workstations for stylists—including Brownsell, who will be taking clients for the first time in 10 years—the vibe is supposed to feel like “the opposite of posh and stuffy,

like you're at your friend's house and want to experiment," Brownsell tells me. "I'm interested in people who want to invest that time in their look," she continues of the styling options clients can expect from Bleach London, including its premier, 360-degree color experience: inspiration, cut, color, post-appointment toning sessions, and a prescription for an at-home routine. They will need to invest their money, too; the bespoke service will start at \$500. "You come into the salon if you want to buy the Birkin of bleaching," Brownsell says. "Otherwise, you can basically do it all yourself."

This revelation—that individuals are in fact capable of at-home hair color, and that amateur mistakes can actually be a good thing—isn't a disservice to Brownsell's business model but another testament to its necessity. She has no plans to discontinue the digital consultations she and her team have been giving all year once the pandemic is behind us, which is great news for those of us who will likely still have a hard time making it out of the house (and getting an appointment). "The great thing about doing your color yourself is that you'll be really happy with the result, because you'll just be proud that you did anything," she tells me over Zoom as I am dangling strands of my hair—sectioned, back-combed, and lathered with her Total Bleach Kit—toward the screen for her approval as the mixture lifts my natural brown and creates a canvas for a happy, golden-blonde color called Just Like Honey. "Go for it with your hands—just kind of mash it through," Brownsell directs in a simultaneously corrective, patient, serene, and interpersonal tone (Jagger calls her a "hairapist"). "Yeah, lovely. Uneven is good—although streaks are very in right now," she continues.

Two hours of prepping, bleaching, toning, and coloring later, it's time to wash out the dye. I unclip, rinse, brush out, and dry my hair—noticing one stark white streak amid the caramel-colored tones. "I forgot to do that part!" I exclaim, realizing that I'd clipped a lone section to the back of my head and neglected to incorporate it into the others. We both decide that the error actually looks good. "See, that's why it's nice to dye your hair yourself—because you can't get mistakes when you have it

done properly!" exclaims Brownsell. "Those are the colors we're trying to do. When I'm doing it for Vetements or Celine, I'm thinking, If somebody just had this in their hand, how would they put it on?" □

ULTRA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 127

depiction of the entourage and how important that is to Halston capturing the moment [when] it all just comes together: You captured that so well.

HB: This idea that a designer doesn't spring fully formed—is that something that you found to be true in your own career, Tom?

TF: Of course. In the beginning, when Halston does his first ready-to-wear collection and it's not a success—I mean, it takes you a while to figure out your voice and to figure out what you want to say. That's true, I think, with musicians, with actors, with certainly directors and producers, writers—it can sometimes take a while to figure out who you are and what you have to say.

Do you know we're all the same ages as when they all died? I mean, Halston was, I think, 57. Andy Warhol was 58; I'm about to turn 60. They didn't live so long. Halston was really famous for maybe 10 years, max, and that's kind of the way it works often with fashion designers. That moment you captured very well.

RM: We end with his death of AIDS [in 1990] and that idea of so many heroes and people being lost in that time—that informs a lot of my work.

TF: I don't know what your personal experience with it is, but that is something that this generation will never, ever understand. I mean, I knew one of the very first people who had AIDS in 1981—when it was called "gay cancer." [My husband,] Richard [Buckley,] and I—we've been together since '86—on our first few dates I would go uptown to visit my friend who was dying in the hospital. He would go to a different hospital to visit his friend that was dying. It was just so brutal. You'd sit at a party and look across the room, and the light would hit a friend in a certain way, and you just...you knew. And the next time you saw them, of course, there was a sore on their face...

Richard and I both had HIV tests at the time—they had not been around that long—and we both waited to see

the results, and I remember Richard calling me, crying with joy that he only had cancer. It was stage IV, and he was like, "Oh, my God. I only have stage IV cancer," which was better than having AIDS at that time. I kind of wish in a way that the current young generation could fully understand what that was. I don't think there'll ever be any way, because now you take a pill and it's very different.

RM: So much of it was about shame. The tragedy of Halston was that he died pretty much alone. He was with his family, but he felt sort of exiled not just from the fashion world but from the entire world. One of the most moving things we have in the finale is one of his last acts: He bought a Rolls-Royce convertible and he had a driver, and he just went up and down the Pacific Coast Highway—for the first time in his life being inspired and not having to translate that inspiration into a collection.

HB: What was it, Tom, about Halston's era, design-wise, that spoke to you—whether then or now?

TF: The thing I loved about that period was that it was minimalist, but it was tactile. If you pick up a Halston dress, they look very simple from the outside, but you could flip them inside out and they look exactly the same as they did from the front. They were so beautifully made. Everything at that moment in the sort of mid- to late '70s was streamlined, but it was glamorous. It was marble or it was glass or it was fur or it was velvet. You touched anything, it felt very sensual—very sexual, even, though it looked very clean. That aesthetic for me is still my aesthetic today. It made such an impact on me.

RM: Me as well. It was always sort of the world that I wanted to live in. I grew up with Colonial furniture from Sears, but I would look at Halston stuff. It's a way of being, and I've found that Halston was so interesting because his environment was so controlled while his creativity was so chaotic. I think the mixture of those two things is fascinating.

TF: Well: The drugs. Do you know that is something that still, to this day, really permeates the fashion industry? I had a drug-and-alcohol problem, and when I was at Gucci, when the brand was just cranking out cash and we were doing billions of dollars a year, people started catering to every

little thing I wanted. There was always cocaine on the desk, and everyone's telling you that you are amazing. A lot of fashion designers do not survive that. So [your] depiction of those kinds of temper tantrums and shortness with people, all of that—at least in my own personal experience—was very accurate. And of course it was accurate for Halston.

HB: Ryan, it's very unflinching, your approach. As I understand it, this is a project that's been in development for 25 years. Do you think you could have been as unflinching in the early days of the genesis of this?

RM: No, I don't. Television has changed a lot, particularly in the streaming world. I used to spend half my career fighting with standards-and-practices about "Why can't I show this? Why can't I do this?" It was always about sex, too—it was never about violence. But we never had a single note about any of the sexuality or the depiction of drug abuse—to me, they went hand in hand with the piece. So we were able to make something that was, I felt, really accurate.

TF: I felt the sex was very tame.

RM: You did?

TF: I mean, I'm sort of kidding, I'm sort of not kidding. I remember that balcony at Studio 54: You went up there to have sex. You've got that scene where Victor [Hugo, Halston's lover, played by Gian Franco Rodriguez] is having sex with a guy and Halston looks up and sees it: totally, totally, totally accurate.

RM: It was interesting when we were researching it because Halston, I think, used drugs and sex as a release from the pressure, from the creation, from the worry of having the lights turned off, and we made sure to dramatize that. Many creative people burn out from too much sex, too much drugs or alcohol, too much pressure. So we wanted to be careful to make that part of his creative experience. I was really interested in the fact that the one big love affair of his life was with Victor Hugo. He really did try and make a romantic go of that until Victor basically let him know that that wasn't going to happen. Once that happened, he just became an out-of-control personality where anything and everything was available to him. He really wasn't able to pull out of that.

HB: Tom, what else do you think we can learn from Halston—from the

arc of his career, from his talent, and maybe the mistakes?

TF: Remember: This country was founded by Puritans, and Americans have always been afraid of too much style. I lived for 30 years in Europe, and there is a totally different sensibility and a completely different sort of acceptance of style. That American sensibility—that pared-down, almost no jewelry, no ornament, no bows, no anything. . . . It's about catching the zeitgeist and finding the right time. That sensibility at that moment in time, worldwide, was the right thing. That, to me, is what he was able to capture.

RM: Has there ever been a particular period of your life that was most influenced by Halston?

TF: Probably the mid-'90s. I did these white, very simple dresses with cut-outs in different parts of the body. Elsa Peretti-esque hardware that was set on the body and revealed by the dress. But I mean, I went to architecture school—Mies van der Rohe was my God, in a way. The thing about Halston is you get to have the severity of that minimalism, but you get that tactile luxe that you didn't necessarily get with the '20s and '30s version of

In This Issue

UP FRONT: 38: Excerpted from *Wayward* by Dana Spiotta, copyright © 2021. Excerpted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

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worn in hair, \$550–\$650; auvere.com. Khems Designs "Artistically Designed for Adornment" by Subira Frazier hair jewels, \$7–\$8.50; khemsdesigns.etsy.com. Sandals, \$298; toryburch.com. Tailor: Irina Tshartaryan. On right: Dress and headband, priced upon request; (800) 929-DIOR for information.

Sandals, \$298; toryburch.com. Tailor: Irina Tshartaryan.

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On both: Sandals, \$760; therow.com. **94:** Coat (\$3,150) and earrings (\$4,890). **95:** Bow coat, \$6,200. Short, price upon request. Gloves, price upon request; givenchy.com. Shoes, \$1,480; louisvuitton.com. In this story: Tailor: Lucy Falck.

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97: Dress, price upon request; yproject.fr. Ear cuffs worn in hair, \$550–\$650; auvere.com. Khems Designs "Artistically Designed for Adornment" by Subira Frazier hair jewels, \$7–\$8.50; khemsdesigns.etsy.com. **98:** Dress (\$525) and skirt (\$625); studiooneeightynine.com. Shoes, \$685;

that minimalism. My urban aesthetic is very definitely still that kind of '70s, very glamorous, slick, lacquer, glass, luxurious minimalism.

RM: I feel the same—I never got away from that influence that I loved when I was 13, 14, 15.

TF: You don't. The first time you see beautiful things when you're growing up, I think that aesthetic stays with you. The very first time you see a beautiful house, a beautiful apartment that moves you, a beautiful woman or a beautiful man, that forms [you]—the same way that food you ate as a kid does. I mean, give me a Hostess Twinkie and I'm pretty happy, still to this day.

But back to influences: I mean, the Battle of Versailles! [The so-called Battle of Versailles, a glamorous fundraiser held in 1973 and organized by PR doyenne Eleanor Lambert and Versailles curator Gerald Van der Kemp, pitted Parisian haute couture designers against a quintet of American designers, including Halston, with a performance by Liza Minnelli and a *cabine* that featured 10 Black models.] Liza's performance, and at that moment of her career—it wasn't so

much the clothes, it's who's wearing the clothes and what they're doing in the clothes. I'm not taking anything away from the clothes—I'm just saying that when I have a show, I think very much about the theater of it. What is the music? How does it feel? How does it look? What world are you creating? That world that you created in that episode. . . . I liked that you had Joe Eula painting the Eiffel Tower because of course, famously—in the fashion world, everybody would know it—he had made it all the wrong size. I thought it was brilliant.

RM: One of the things I love the most about that sequence, and indeed the entire performance, was about the relationship between Halston and Liza. It's in her kindness and his kindness toward her, and sticking with someone through thick and thin. That was the heartbeat of the piece. Before we shot, Ewan met Liza and talked to her about Halston, and it was a very private conversation but a very emotional, heartfelt one. I'm glad that we get to bring that relationship forward because I think people forget about that and how both of them were such amazing powerhouses at that time.

People also forget this about Halston, but he was one of the first to demand African-American models in all of his shows, which at that point was really not done. He demanded it and nurtured many of those relationships with women like Pat Cleveland. He was so vanguard.

TF: Pat Cleveland used to twirl down the runway. I was lucky enough to photograph Pat myself, and I felt like I was taking cocaine again. I left after shooting her for three hours, and I just thought, Oh, my God—this is why everyone wanted to work with her. She has this amazing energy. Back then, fashion models smiled, and they looked joyful in the clothes. They didn't look miserable and depressed in their \$30,000 dresses.

RM: I think we worked really hard to show a full portrait of not just a fashion designer but what it's like to be an artist—and the temptations of that, and the temptations when the world tells you, *Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes*. And then, suddenly, a real hard *no*.

TF: Let's hope we never get that hard *no*, Ryan.

RM: Never a hard *no*.

TF: Never. □

brothervellies.com.

100–101: Dress, price upon request; alietteny.com.

102: Dress, \$14,500; alexandermcqueen.com. In this story: Tailor: Irina Tshartaryan.

HER STORY

110: Dress, price upon request; (212) 988-9191. In this story: Tailor: Susie's Custom Designs.

A LIFE OF THEIR OWN

114–115: Jacket, \$2,950. Sandals, \$790. **116:** Dress, \$2,990. **117:** Handbag (price upon request) and dress (\$3,100). Watch, \$8,950; rolex.com. Sandals, \$790; shopbop.com.

120: Bag, \$3,100.

Jacket, \$6,600. **121:** Handbag (\$7,400), jacket (\$9,250), and skirt

(\$2,600). Celine by Hedi Slimane belt, \$420; celine.com.

122–123: Celine by Hedi Slimane bag, \$3,450. Hermès bag, \$6,100. Jacket, \$3,100. Vest, \$2,700. In this story: Tailor: Michelle Warner.

PRACTICAL MAGIC

128: Top, \$3,900. **129:** Dress (price upon request) and

jacket (\$6,100). Necklace, \$295; jenny-bird.com.

130: Body jewelry, price upon request. **131:** Dress, \$2,690. **132:** Dress (\$8,985) and necklace (\$2,020). **133:** Top, \$3,690. **134:** Shirtdress, \$6,500. Hijab, \$25; hautehijab.com. **135:** Jacket, \$3,800. Watch, \$36,550; rolex.com. In this story: Tailor: Lucy Falck.

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136–137: 8. Bag, \$5,400. **11.** \$2,095.

FIRST LOOK

144: Dress, \$1,495; shoprodarte.com. In this story: Tailor: Susie's Custom Designs.

LAST LOOK

148: Flats, \$3,450; bergdorfgoodman.com.

ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE

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First Look



Seeing Spots

TO PLAY THE CONFIDENT, FIRE-WIELDING fairy Bloom in Netflix's fantasy hit *Fate: The Winx Saga*, Gainesville, Florida-born actress Abigail Cowen had to learn to be comfortable in her own skin. "I decided to let it go," she says of old hang-ups, which helped her find her footing in the series with an overarching message of self-acceptance. It was an evolution for Cowen, who was homeschooled in eighth grade after she was subjected to intense bullying for her red hair and freckles. But that experience ultimately contributed to a certain amount of character growth for the now 23-year-old—not to mention her ability to slip in and out of other characters: Cowen will next appear in *Redeeming Love*, a film adaptation of the 1991 best seller by Francine Rivers about human trafficking in 1850s California. "When you get older, you start

to realize that what you hated about yourself is actually what makes you special," she says, especially when that thing becomes an unlikely beauty trend. Makeup artist Erin Parsons added smatterings of idiosyncratic spots on cheeks at Jason Wu's spring collection, while intrepid TikTok users have been employing temporary filters and semipermanent henna dye for flecks that provide a sun-kissed effect, even in lockdown. Adds Parsons, who used Wu's new faux-freckle marker at his show, the effect "brings the vacation to us!" —FIORELLA VALDESOLO

ON FLECK

A NEW CROP OF FAUX-FRECKLE PENS AND PENCILS CREATES TEMPORARY AND SEMIPERMANENT SPOTS—A BEAUTY STATEMENT THAT COMES NATURALLY TO ACTRESS ABIGAIL COWEN, ABOVE, IN A RODARTE DRESS. FASHION EDITOR: TONNE GOODMAN.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICAH CARTER

HAIR: NIKKI NELMS; MAKEUP: RAISA FLOWERS; PRODUCED BY BLOND PRODUCTIONS; SET DESIGN: LITTLE APPLE PROJECTS; DETAILS: SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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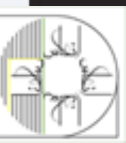
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Last Look



Jil Sander flats

Forget the mystery: For spring, Lucie and Luke Meier, the creative-director duo behind Jil Sander, crafted a pair of shoes that actually fly *over* the radar. These pointy black leather slip-on flats, covered in dozens of cut crystals, are impossible not to notice—and it's even more impossible to pull your eyes away. We've taken a shine to them because they manage to fulfill our current comfort-first needs (they're heel-less!) while also delivering a whopping dollop of joy.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVEED BAPTISTE

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#Perpetual



OYSTER PERPETUAL 41



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