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FASHION'S
NEW GRAPHIC
CONTENT**

JUERGEN TELLER SHOOTS

Björk on a beach
Daisy in the desert
Beckham in a bag





LONG EXPOSURE

Art collector Dakis Joannou asked celebrated fashion and art photographer Juergen Teller to capture, contextualise and comment on five significant forces driving fashion in 2008. His trademark candour lays the industry bare
Photography Juergen Teller Writer Harriet Quick

MAIN STREET SEX

For many observers, the most important and influential fashion brand of last year was LA-based American Apparel, the largest clothing manufacturer in the US. Launched in 1998 by Dov Charney, a man famously as obsessed with sex as he is with fashion, American Apparel has become an accessible staple for boys and girls on both sides of the Atlantic. Teller's image of Daisy Lowe, legs akimbo, in a dusty field, in nothing more than American Apparel leggings (all doe-eyed and Lolita-like, in a fantastically playful 'come and get me' pose) nails the demographic which has made American Apparel its own. The label (notorious for its porny promo shots, a sort of homage to the raw sexy fashion photography developed by Teller and others two decades ago) reminds us all that youth and sex are still the real lifeblood of fashion.



Juergen Teller has, for the last decade or so, been purposefully sliding away from fashion photography and towards fine art photography. Others have made similar re-alignments, while others still have moved in the other direction, or at least danced, not always elegantly, between the two. Indeed, the professional traffic between the fashion and art worlds has been heavy of late.

Mutual distrust has turned into a mutual fascination, even celebration (a phenomenon that *Wallpaper** has investigated in depth). Teller, given his enormous influence on fashion imagery and the blurring of the lines between fashion and art photography, would instantly suggest himself if you were looking for someone to bring both worlds together, to make art of fashion.

Dakis Joannou, 68, a Greek construction magnate and one of the world's most committed contemporary art collectors, wants to do just that. In 1983, Joannou set up the DESTE Foundation in Athens, which supports contemporary art exhibitions around the world and now houses just some of Joannou's collection. 'I had in mind, when I set up the foundation, to find relations between art, design and fashion. It took me quite a few years to get round to it,' explains the convivial Joannou from his Belgravia bolt hole.

Joannou actually got round to it in 2007, and asked graphic art duo M/M (Paris) to be inaugural guest curators of the first of a five-year series of 'fashion capsules'. Each curator picks five pieces of fashion that somehow sum up a particular mood or momentum and perhaps speak of broader cultural shifts, then creates a series of works that uses these pieces as a subject. Each of the five fashion capsules will eventually have a permanent home at the DESTE Foundation.

'My collection is neither academic or historical but connected with life as it is today,' Joannou says. 'There are no rules – we do what we like. At first, I found it hard to find the premise for a fashion collection as, by nature, fashion comes and goes, and it can be hard to find an objective viewpoint, unlike art, where you search for real value. So it's more interesting to create subjective interpretations to express the moment.'

Teller's curatorial shift flowed neatly out of M/M's stint. 'I first met Dakis after photographing him for a magazine piece about the fashion capsule M/M curated,' explains Teller. 'We were having dinner and I asked him who the next curator would be and he said "You!" I said "Great!" then thought, "What have I taken on?"'

'I started racking my brains, thinking about new designers on the scene, talking to academics, but I ended up thinking that if I got five pieces, I'd just hang them on a mannequin! That would be boring. I realised I had to choose pieces that had some relevance to me and my interaction with the world of fashion.' He came up with five big ideas and themes and ran with them.

Joannou is clearly chuffed with the result. 'Juergen sees something below the surface of fashion and brings it up in a brilliant way – and his is a very different approach from M/M. My third curator will be Helmut Lang. By the fifth, I think we'll have a show with a real critical mass and five different, very personal, points of view.'



FASHION'S LOST AND FOUND

Yves Saint Laurent ◀▲

Teller wanted to look at some of those who have absented themselves from the fashion industry, of their own volition or otherwise. Teller had photographed Yves Saint Laurent (left) shortly before he died in 2008. 'He had to be propped up and he wore this expression and had an eyebrow that looked like a question mark above the frame of his glasses. Crazy.' Some of YSL's vibrant print pieces from the 1970s (above) enjoy a second life in a mini fashion shoot Teller produced in Greece in 2008, working with designer Duro Olowu.

Helmut Lang ▶

Teller's second missing designer was Helmut Lang, who, 'along with Jil Sander and Martin Margiela, was such a huge force in the 1990s. Where are they now?' And where indeed is the legacy of these subversive modernists? Teller had been in touch with Lang, who left his own label in 2005 after a deal with Prada, and requested from him a blue, rippling tulle and pleated dress from the last collection. He shot it on Joannou's strikingly beautiful daughter Maria (right). 'I like the pleating. It reminded me of Greek sculpture.' The image and dress will be set against Teller's backstage shots from Lang's shows, shot between 1995 and 2004, which he also incorporated into his radical campaigns – all big type, white space and little pictures.

EYE OPENER

Greek art collector Dakis Joannou's daughter, Maria, wearing a vintage Helmut Lang dress, is photographed in Athens, in 2008, by Juergen Teller





ART MEET FASHION ▲

As a photographer who has increasingly distanced himself from fashion and moved closer to the art world, it is inevitable that Teller would be fascinated with the increasing co-mingling and cross-fertilisation of art and fashion. And Teller highlights this fascination with a portrait of Amy Phelan, a woman of significant means and a committed art collector and patron, who might be more open than many to the idea that art and fashion can fulfil similar functions. Above her head is a Matthew Barney piece and on her arm a 'Richard Prince for Louis Vuitton' limited edition handbag, the last of Teller's product picks. 'She would buy the bag and also buy a Richard Prince piece,' suggests Teller.

OFF-BALANCE BRANDING ►

Another part of Teller's presentation is a pair of stilettos by Marc Jacobs. The askew heels, which fit right onto left and vice versa, turn a fashion classic into a fittingly off-kilter relic of a year in which staggering heights and prices became the standard in high-class cobbling. Accompanying the shoes is Teller's shot of Victoria Beckham concealed in a giant paper bag, legs dangling like a doll's over the paper rim. The shot, part of Marc Jacobs's 2008 advertising campaign, is as startling as it is poignant. In an age of celebrity obsessives, here is Beckham hidden in a bag, as a fashion product. The image sparked serious debate, notably in *The New York Times*. 'It took a long time to convince Victoria to relinquish her rights to photo approval,' says Teller. 'I told her, "You are one of the world's most recognisable fashion brands. The image laughs with you not at you."' The resulting shot helped to suggest that

Beckham was much more cognisant of the contradictions of celebrity than you might think. The visual language Teller has created for the Marc Jacobs campaigns is instantly identifiable. Each season, he shoots someone he and Jacobs find interesting, in pieces from Jacobs's new collection. The images are often improvised and the subjects appear more honestly happy, sad or vulnerable than is usual in fashion advertising. And if they do little to 'sell' the product, they're a perfect fit with Jacobs's knowing and humorous aesthetic. The first campaign shot was of Sonic Youth singer Kim Gordon at a gig in London's Shepherd's Bush. Ten years later, Jacobs, bought out by LVMH, has become a household name, with the campaign models watched like stars in an ongoing series. The latest hero, ironically, is photographer Ryan McGinley (W*109), whose work has the same impromptu sauce as Teller's.



THE ONE-OFF ▲

Exhibit five, Björk, is a creative force in her own right. Last year, Teller spotted a picture in the London's *Observer* of the Icelandic chanteuse on stage in London wearing a vibrant Bernhard Willhelm outfit, designed specifically for the tour, and a headdress made out of multicoloured pompoms and designed by a fashion student. Teller has long admired Björk's commitment to individualism, dynamic impact and aversion to the easy option. 'You can tell she really loves fashion but not in the obvious way,' he says of her alternative approach. 'And she has so much energy.' He went to Iceland to shoot her post-tour and exhausted, painted jetsam on a seaweed-strewn beach.

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