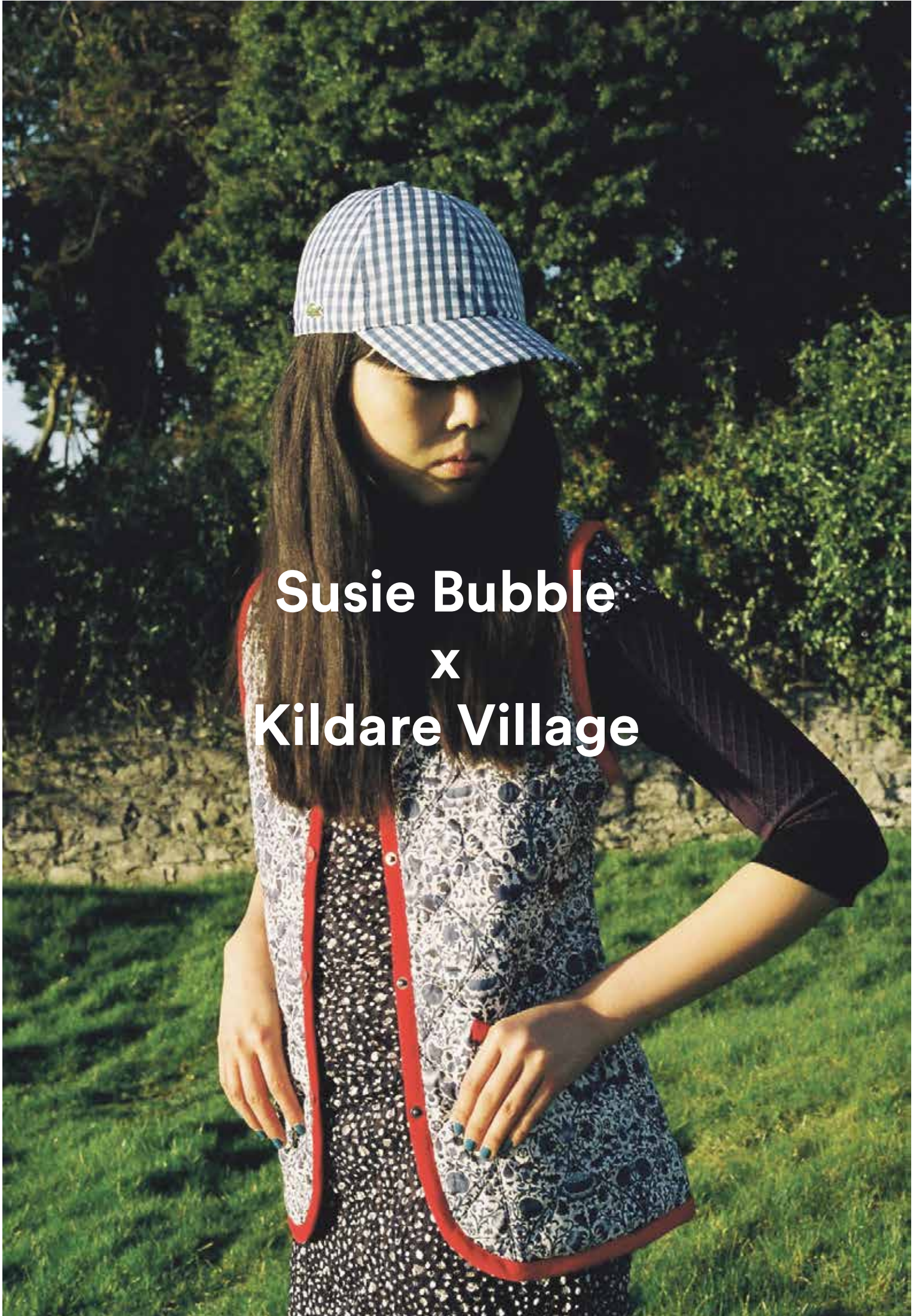


thread



the way there
#7



**Susie Bubble
x
Kildare Village**

www.kildarevillage.com

Editor's Note



So often the chase is more exciting than the catch; preparing, planning, arguing, attempting, making mistakes and marveling as things start to come together successfully. We themed this issue of Thread to look at process, The Way There, the epic journey we undertake in creating an issue. From a personal perspective the achievement comes not from the end result but from the many tiny and great connections, collaborations and coincidences that come our way. We are always learning and therefore we are always pushing to go somewhere new.

We speak with photographers, designers, curators and friends about how the process of production or creativity works for them.

The beginning to end journey is never the same and the places that are discovered and the transitional spaces inhabited on The Way There are just as important as the final destination. There is an inevitable crash or anti-climax when something is finished; the kicks are found along the way.

It's also hard to know when something is finished, lingering longer than we should trying to push features and pull strings, but life has a great way of giving us deadlines. Our seventh issue is brought to you by each of our contributors, their time, talent and openness to welcome us into their amazing and individual worlds.

Aisling Farinella
— Editor

the way there

#7

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model: devon at distinct
image: rich gilligan

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danielle romeril

where

Image: JOE MCGIVERN

envoy of belfast



Highly considered and perfectly curated Envoy of Belfast is a store for women who appreciate the details. Curating brands as exciting as Engineered Garments, Dries Van Noten, Mansur Gavriel and Paul Harnden to name a few, the store is a lesson in contemporary refinement.

Inspired by the brands she loves to wear and worked with as a buyer at The Bureau, Ruth Spence established Envoy of Belfast in 2007. By sharing her love for the labels that she is passionate about, Ruth has established Envoy of Belfast as a space for products that exhibit the human touch. Envoy is a real lesson in confident women's wear buying where the emphasis is on beautiful well made pieces that you can enjoy well beyond a season.

Ruth continuously travels far and wide to source product some of which may only be available in very select stores worldwide, Envoy being one. This attention to detail is reflected in the store itself, where pieces are beautifully presented in a welcoming atmosphere. A fine example of how women's wear has evolved, Envoy of Belfast is where you'll find well-made clothing held in high esteem for women who appreciate craft, design and beauty.

wear

concrete collar x cos

Ciana Marsh and Becky Wallace are two architectural graduates from UCD who combine a love of urban landscapes and buildings with a passion for fashion expressed through their blog [Concrete Collar](#). The pair style, model, photograph and write the blog jointly and bring their unique vision to the disciplines of fashion and architecture, identifying their cross pollination. Their most recent collaboration is with Cos at the Serpentine Gallery in London following on the Swedish fashion company's partnership with the gallery for their Park Nights programme in the recently unveiled Serpentine Pavilion.

This year's unusual organic structure resting on quarry stones by Chilean architect Smiljan Radic, was an imaginative response to Oscar Wilde's famous story [The Selfish Giant](#). Marsh and Wallace visited it on opening day with a selection of Cos SS14 and AW14 in tow and selected each piece to reflect the structure's moth like skin and lantern like appearance at night. Their shoot focuses on materials, structure and volume. Cos also specially released two pairs of shoes to mark their continued partnership with the gallery.

The Concrete Collar blog tells the story of the American architectural photographer Julius Shulman who was the first to use people as props inside buildings. His famous photo taken in 1960 in a Los Angeles house called Case Study House #22 became one of the most reproduced architectural photographs in the world. More than 50 years on, the house was used again this year by Cos to showcase its SS14 collection. "It had us longing to hop on the next flight to LA" sigh the girls.



image: CONCRETE COLLAR

where

scout



image: LE BAS

Hearts fell heavy when a favourite Powerscourt haunt formerly known as Bow was shuttered, but our woes were premature. When the lease on the co-op ended Wendy Crawford decided she needed more space to fully realise her indie dream and expand her product range. As fate would have it the right unit became available in Dublin's Essex Street, where Scout was born. MoMuse now resides at Bow's former home, housing Margaret O'Rourke's curated jewellery collections.

Scout's concept is familiar to Bow lovers; Wendy handpicks a charming collection of useful and beautiful objects for the wardrobe and home in a relaxed space. The emphasis is on quality, design, functionality and durability, always favouring good pieces that will work hard and stand the test of time to frivolous throw-away items. The result of quality vintage finds scouted on Paris buying trips; considered Irish and international labels, such as Manley, Electronic Sheep, Armor Lux, YMC and Grenson; unique interior pieces, like Danish designed Tina Ratzer wool blankets, Cork based La Bougie candles and Matoloki cushions from Co Meath; is a whole much greater than the sum of its select parts.

As she progresses with realising her vision for Scout Wendy tells us we can expect a greater homeware and interiors offering. And the male of the species? They can uncross their fingers in hopes of a menswear collection — that too is in the pipeline.

wear

the tweed project



Image: THE TWEED PROJECT

After waiting for someone to create pieces of Irish linen and tweed that they would like to wear, Triona Lillis and Aoibheann McNamara could wait no more and so, embracing their DIY spirit and passion for Irish fabric and craft, they created The Tweed Project.

Based in Galway and launched at Drop Everything festival on the beautiful Inishbofin in May, this is a small label with a lot of soul. The Irish landscape, tradition and contemporary design coalesce to create a fresh collection of beautiful linen and tweed pieces that are made to last a lifetime. By applying modern tailoring to linen shirts, tweed trousers and skirts you get a minimal silhouette that realises these native fabrics to stunning effect.

Adhering to the philosophy of The Slow Fashion movement, fabric, time and craft take priority over trends and speedy production. Each piece is made to order and to last a lifetime. Operating from a small atelier in Galway the collection is hand made from specially selected cuts of premium Donegal handmade tweed and Irish linen. Each garment is made with love and given full attention which is a luxury afforded by size that few designers get to enjoy.

The Tweed Project design and handmade contemporary clothing from Irish fabrics that could as easily be seen on the streets of Tokyo or Paris as in a snug in Galway. Given our textile heritage perhaps The Tweed Project has bigger significance than its size would suggest and is certainly testament to, if you want something done well, do it yourself.

dance



Image: LIAM MURPHY

together disco

"I just wanted to bring good people together and create an energy." Sounds simple enough, right? But have you ever organised the best party in town and hoped to hell that people would actually turn up?

No small risk for Ryan Skelton in deciding to set about doing just that. Trying to spawn what is widely accepted as one of the best nights in Dublin is not easy. It's not something you can simply declare or force to occur, it takes an immaculate taste in music and those that spin it, in order to create that elusive vibe that Ryan felt was missing in the city.

Together Disco is the kind of event where you happily lose your shit, dancing side-by-side with total strangers, or as Ryan describes, it's about "creating a party vibe that everyone can be a part of". The inclusivity and togetherness is what makes it.

Were you to stumble on a night of this calibre in a foreign city, you'd be telling the world and its followers about what a fucking awesome night you had. Just don't let this pass you by.

listen

cloud castle lake



Image: DORJE DE BURGH

In February 2014 Dublin band Cloud Castle Lake made an unlikely appearance in the pages of Vogue, after a unique gig in the Tate Modern's cavernous Turbine Hall soundtracking Simone Rocha's AW14 show. The band's guitarist Brendan Jenkinson explains how that gig led to their much-anticipated debut Dandelion EP, due for release in September on Max Rocha's Happy Valley label: "The Tate gig was an amazing opportunity and it came at just the right time. Max asked us if we'd like to do the soundtrack for Simone's show and we started talking about doing an EP and it just led on from there."

Max Rocha started Happy Valley after stints learning the ropes in London at acclaimed British indies Domino and Bella Union. He sees the label as a launchpad for Cloud Castle Lake's talents. Meanwhile Brendan explains how the band managed to refine four years of music-making into four songs: "I'm really into DIY approaches; when we started doing this EP it was my ambition for us to do everything — record it, mix it, right up to sending it off to get mastered — and it was so difficult!"

Brendan says the Tate gig was a turning point in the creative process. "It was so cool 'cause coming back from London was when we realised how we could practically do the EP. It was great — it was such a beginning point. I can recall coming back and having all the ideas of how to do it. There was a lot of energy and a lot of hope!"

read

where we are



Image: MIKE O'TOOLE

What does modern Ireland look like? There might conceivably be as many answers to that question as there are vantage points, all individual and local. From my attic window, modern Ireland looks like the sky; from the car, when I am driving, a blur; from Dame Street, when it is busy, a mess. I imagine other people see other things.

Where We Are is a project by Studio Aad that shows different perspectives on modern Ireland through photography. It consists of twelve books, each by a different photographer, and each a record of an experience: Rich Gilligan's Rituals is a collection of moments unique to Dublin, from pigeon fanciers in Ballymun to Halloween bonfires and ice cream cones at the Pope's Cross; Mike O'Toole's The Shrinking Horizons of Childhood is a sustained reflection on the disconnect between kids and nature; Ciaran Og Arnold's No Day or Night explores the problematic relationship between Ballinasloe and the people who live there; and Lorcan Finnegan's Granny Fashion is about just that: granny fashion.

To study a photograph requires vigilance of the distortions effected by the artist and the viewer. It is a negotiation of frames. This effort is indispensable if we are to use photography as a means to see beyond what George Eliot called our "personal lot," which is necessarily narrow and small because we can only be in one place at a time. The pleasure of Where We Are is that it not only permits us to be where we are not, but in allowing us to see through the eyes of others, it provides a worthwhile exercise in empathy.

readlove
is a
stranger

Image: DARRAGH SHANAHAN

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the subjects of the photographs in Love is a Stranger. What, for instance, could be less interesting than overhead electrical wires? Yet it is precisely this banality that renders the photographs compelling. One gets the sense that they must serve some larger aesthetic or ideological purpose — they have to. That images of electrical wires should not only appear in the book but recur throughout without any particular reason must surely have some greater meaning.

Conjectures such as these arise also at other circumstances, a classic example being that moment when one finds oneself in love. To be in love is a peculiar state of irrationality where one sees winks of potential meaning everywhere, where text messages and emails withhold their 'real' content and therefore must be archived obsessively and analysed to

exhaustion, and where every casual incident holds either glints of positive promise or the breathless certainty that all chance of future happiness has come to an end.

It seems to me that at the heart of Darragh Shanahan's book is the idea that engaging with photography is an act of love, that to study a photograph for its meaning is not very much different to behaviour that engenders itself in people who are in love. They are both symptomatic of the stubborn human impulse to look for a connection in things that are disparate, to uncover a master plan that lies beneath the arbitrary, even in the nagging absence of evidence that any such thing exists.

Love is a Stranger has been shortlisted for the Kassel International Photobook Dummy Award 2014. It was shot on location in black and white film and is produced in a limited edition of 100 copies.

All images: NIALL O'BRIEN

niall

Niall O'Brien is a storyteller. He lives to entertain and include his audience be it with film, photography or just in having a chat. We met for one of those chats over breakfast at the Ace Hotel in Shoreditch, where Niall entertained me with tales of growing up in Dublin, travelling across America and wrestling James Bond to the ground. His journey to this point has been pretty crazy but he just takes it all in his stride and is hungry for more.

Niall grew up in Dublin where skateboarding was his first obsession, eventually leading him into the world of film and photography. When I ask him how it all started he says, "My mam. She was like you have to study something." Influenced by an older skate kid, Niall started out initially doing animation in Ballyfermot. "I don't know how I got in, but I got in and I lasted three months." Choosing to hang out in a skate shop with his buddies instead of going to class turned out to be a good move. "I started taking pictures of my mates skating, people were like 'hey this is cool' and then I got some stuff published." After this Niall decided to do a foundation course, "I did an applied Leaving Cert for my dyslexia and I couldn't go straight into college, so I did a foundation course. I got a portfolio, got straight into Dun Laoghaire with my portfolio and just turned into the biggest fucking geek ever. I mean I loved it so much. I went from bunking off school all the time to breaking in through the cleaners' entrance of the college, just so I could sneak into the lab to process my film before anyone else." I could tell this hunger has never waivered; the way he talks about his work you can tell it is an obsession. It's like the more he does the more he wants to learn about, to know about and to succeed in. "My number one thing is learning. I'm never content, the day you're fucking content you should give the fuck up."

After college, Niall took the natural next step and headed to London where he met photographer Josh Olins, who was just starting out in his career. "I was fresh off the boat and he was like you've got to talk to this Scottish guy, Kenny (Burns of D+V Management). Kenny clicked with me for some reason and I got to work with loads of their photographers." One of the agency's producers called Niall one day to see if he could assist Sam Taylor Wood. "I remember first talking to Sam because I was working with Miles Aldridge who's super methodical, everything is perfect, every light reading is perfect and he'd shout at you if you named a piece of lighting equipment wrong; militant, but very good for me. I rang up Sam and was like, 'Oh hey how's it going I'm working with you and I've got to do an equipment list for this shoot, what do you want to do?' She was like, 'well we're shooting my friend Ozzie and the last time I shot him on this black backdrop so this time I'm going to shoot him on a

white backdrop so just get whatever you need.' This was when I first learned being technical was secondary to a good idea." Laughing as he remembers their first conversation fondly, Niall continues, "So I got there and the shoot was cancelled actually and it ended up being me and Sam hanging out in her studio all day. We just clicked and then she'd always book me." This led to a four year working relationship with Sam and delving into a world that was miles away from the halls of Dun Laoghaire and streets of Dublin city. "It was fun. We'd stay in Elton John's house and we'd go to dinner with the most ridiculous people you could imagine. I was at Elton John's wedding. I was one of ten people at the ceremony in the room exchanging rings, I was there half behind a plant. But with her it was like that you know. I'd be at a party at one in the morning wrestling Daniel Craig to the ground, mess fighting with Daniel Craig. They're all super nice people so it's like I didn't care."

Going it alone is a terrifying prospect for any photographer but particularly when you're leaving the comfort of a full time role with a very successful boss. I asked Niall if he ever had doubts in those early days when he had no work coming in and was drawing the dole for the first time in his life. He told me, quite poignantly, that when he was a teenager "I had nothing, I didn't want anything, I just wanted to skate and play music... I was a fucking messer. I would disappear for five days straight and not tell my mam where I was. I was living at home, not doing heavy drugs, but partying a lot you know, all the time skating and even sleeping in Stephen's Green some summer nights. I'd wake up covered in alcohol and buy a new t-shirt and start again. I mean we were messy; me and my mates were fucking messy. Then suddenly you realise you have something and I'd never had anything, so you fucking hold onto it and you also have to believe in it." Luckily it didn't take too long for people to take note and hanging in there paid off. With his exhibition *Good Rats* running for six years now, though Niall sees this as "kind of embarrassing" I would argue it's proof of his talent and how timelessly beautiful those images are. He's shot campaigns for McQ, Wrangler, stories for *Another*, *Another Man*, and Japanese *Vogue*, shot *Primal Scream* across America and is legendary stylist, Katy England's, go-to photographer. Not bad for a skate kid.

Niall has an incredible rapport with people; this intensity is apparent in his work. He has the ability to allow the viewer to see right inside to the soul of his subject, something that is missing in the ubiquity of photography today. So how does he do it? "I think it's because I'm intrigued, I just want to learn. I love asking questions about people and learning. Be they good, bad or indifferent, I'm a people watcher; I could sit here and watch people go by all day





long." He also puts it down to the way he edits his images, "If I can see a split second of unawares, where they've forgotten or have gone somewhere else, where they're not aware of the camera being in front of them. I'll pick that (image) because that's what's the most interesting to me." It all comes back to him telling a story through his work." I like to have the camera there to capture what I've been experiencing, to then put on a wall or put in a book or in a magazine so somebody else can do what I just did. So they can actually have some level of experience of being there. To look at a picture where a group of kids are standing around and I'm in that circle taking a picture," Niall explains, as he mimics taking a picture to illustrate his point. "Then suddenly you can kind of be there in a weird way. I think that's really nice because to gain access into people's lives, in this day and age especially, is quite hard."

The extremities Niall goes to, to allow his audience access to such a broad range of characters is unparalleled. On a fashion story for Another Magazine, Niall embarked on a road trip across Arizona with stylist Katy England shooting a character called Wild Cat Will. "I slept in the same room as Will so from the minute he woke up I was shooting him... just documenting you know. There's a moment in the series where he was sitting eating a pizza on the side of a bed and he looks deflated. Me and Katy had had a disagreement because I was taking pictures all the time, documenting Will's every moment. Katy felt that every time I took pictures she had to change his clothes. Will was in the middle just like 'this trip isn't fun anymore' and I took the picture. For me that was the moment of exasperation, he wasn't thinking about me, or the fashion, he was thinking about the trip. He's there, he's now living it, it's reality. It's just 100 percent pure reality."

There have been all sorts of weird and wondrous characters over the years and when I ask him who has stuck out the most, he has a little ponder and a sip of his coffee. "Shane McGowan was the one that sticks out the most; that was the big one. I shot it with an old Kodak Retina camera in his apartment for Mongrel magazine. I hung out with him three days in a row. I would turn up at his house and reintroduce myself. I'd spend the whole day with him. I'd watch William Burroughs' Naked Lunch with him. He's a genius, he's a fucking genius, he's a philosopher. When he started talking I was like this guy's fucked up and he's hammered and whatever he's saying to me is mental. But then if you actually listen to what he's saying he's so clear in what he's thinking and what he's got to say. He was explaining to me about drunken Buddhism or something and he wanted to explain about this man travelling down the river of life and he was like give me a pen and a piece of paper, so I gave him

my diary and he drew this little man surfing down a river. And I was like oh my god this is amazing. I was like 'I've never asked for an autograph in my life but can you sign my diary?' And he laughs," Niall mimicking Shane McGowan's infamous hiss laugh, "he signs it 'Shaney McLordfitz Bastard of Carny Commons' and I had taken this picture of him, this one picture that was completely backlit and he was drawing in the diary with a guitar behind him". Niall shows me the picture, which is the screensaver on his phone. "He's one person I didn't keep in touch with that I should have. There are a lot of people I haven't kept in touch with; I'm probably a bit bad at that I guess. I don't know whether that's because I've had my fill. I guess I'm bad in general," Niall says with a sudden sadness and retrospect.

Film comes first for Niall, photography over took it for a while but he naturally found his way back again. Niall is not your typical photographer who dabbles a bit in moving image, "I had no intention of doing it like all the fashion photographers who pick up a camera and go 'yeah I can make a film...' no you can't, I knew how film worked, it's a completely different medium". Now signed to the prestigious Academy Films, Niall's journey to this point stems from another hero of his, Jonathan Glazer. He begins telling me how he had just packed up and moved to New York when, "I get a call from this Irish girl Elizabeth Doonan saying 'I work with Jonathan Glazer and he wants to meet you about this project' and I was like what the fuck?! I'm a massive Glazer fan, like massive. So I go and meet Glazer who's making this film. He wanted a photographer who'd just take the reins and go off and do this weird Fitzcarraldo type documentary about this fucking mental film that he's about to make, Under The Skin. I'd just moved to New York but thought, do you know what fuck it, and I moved back. It was two months I was up on set and I just lived in Glasgow for two months." I could tell from Niall's energy that those two months were life changing in terms of learning and the experience of working with Glazer. "Me and John got on really well. I just loved talking to him, he's amazing. I go on set; I can't keep my eyes off John just the intensity and the focus, nothing else matters other than this thing that he's making you know. Suddenly I was inspired again." Glazer went on to become a mentor for Niall, though Niall does play this fact down hugely. Glazer advised him to go with Academy when he was getting offers from other agencies. Within two weeks of signing with them he landed two major TV commercials and his reel just keeps growing and growing.



Self-assured but grounded Niall O'Brien knows what he wants from life. "I cleared more goals than I ever anticipated when I moved to London. My number one goal was to become a photographer, just to have a career as a photographer and I'd be happy. I feel like I've done way more than that. Every time you clear something you just push harder and harder." When it comes to film he feels he's not there yet, he's still finding his way. "I question myself on everything I've done to date." But this attitude is to be expected from a man who thinks being content equals time to give up. His film The Job was shortlisted at Cannes Film Festival. He managed to make a film for a British train company into something so beautiful it moves many to tears.

Visiting his past over breakfast proved one thing, Niall O'Brien knows what he wants. He may say he's not there with film yet but it won't be long until he is right where he wants to be, winning awards and making a huge impact on the industry. He's a storyteller and it's this strength that makes his work pretty special, "I want to make films. I love telling stories, that's the end of."



deven

Model: DEVON at Distinct Model Management Fashion: JOANNE HYNES SS14 collection – vintage denim: STYLIST’S OWN Super 8 footage stills: RICH GILLIGAN

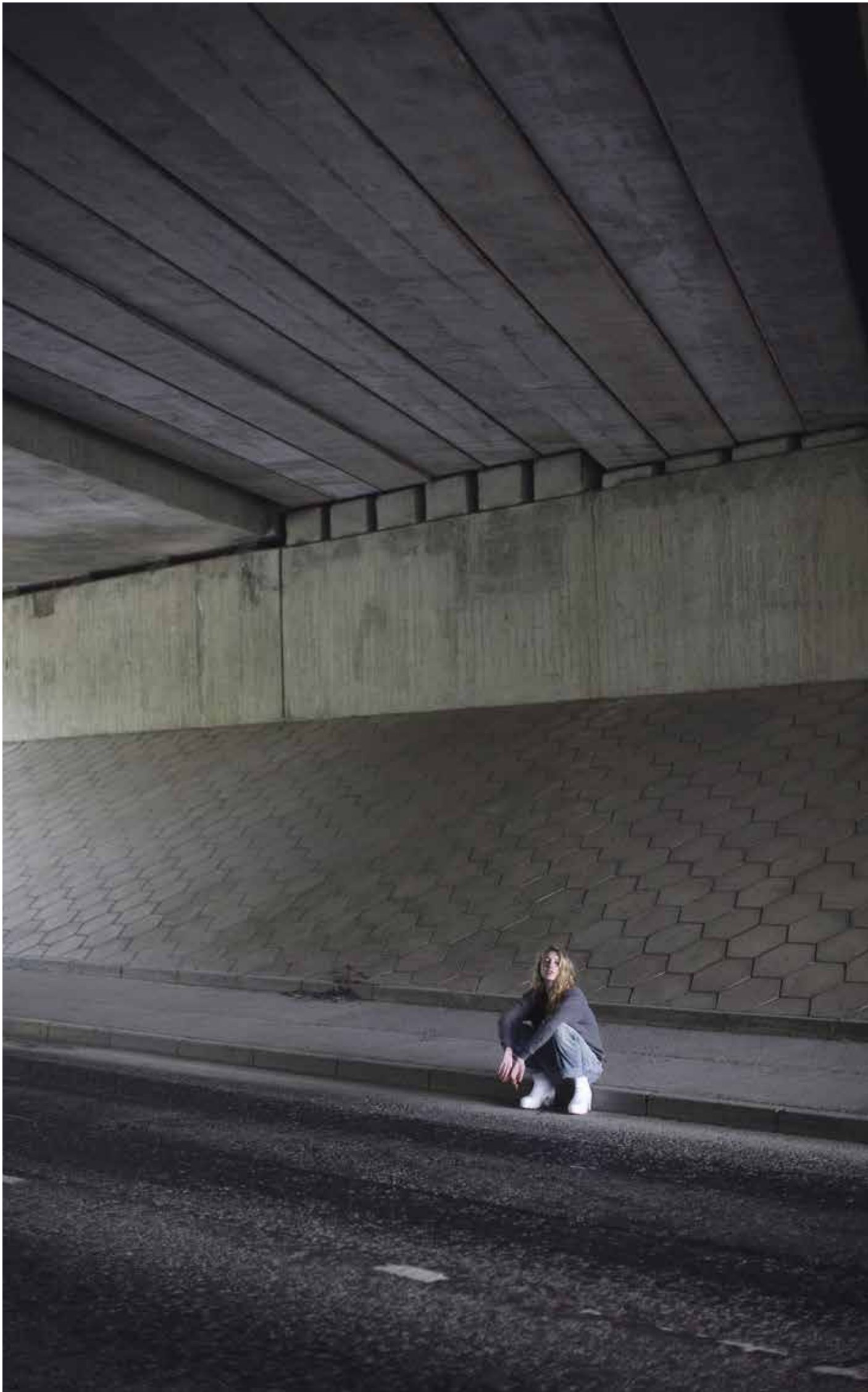




















Model: MOFFY at STORM Beauty: THERESA DAVIES

m



f

o

f



y









All images: SEAN JACKSON Styling: KIERAN KILGALLON Models: MOLLY & PEARL Fashion: DANIELLE ROMERIL

danielle

Danielle Romeril is Ireland's latest rising fashion star, consolidating the importance of Irish talent on the international scene right now. Her designs are informed by the world which inspires her, delving into street culture, coming of age experience and girl gangs. Picked up by boutiques across the world including Joyce in Hong Kong, Havana in Dublin & Ikram in the States, Romeril's aesthetic is grounded, original and always exciting. In her second season as part of NEWGEN, awarded by the British Fashion Council and Topshop, she will present her first on-schedule presentation at LFW this September.

For this interview we were privileged to bring in jewelry designer Merle O'Grady, Danielle's friend since back in the day and a fellow professional who has shared all of the ups and downs of the fashion industry, to bring you a real insight into the process of her work and the path she has taken to get where she is.

M: So Dani, I can vividly remember your first ever creation — It was in our transition year Fashion class and we were making our outfits for Homelands '99 in Mosney, copying pictures we'd seen of outfits from clubs in Ibiza.

D: But having had no previous experience of proper clubbing really, because we were only 15, we thought what happened in *Mixmag* happened in Ireland — which it didn't! We showed up thinking we'd blend right in with our homemade outfits. We really didn't. I was even dubbed Rainbow Brite by everyone in the queue.

M: Honestly though I think it was good for us, because we were admiring what was happening in another culture that wasn't really established in our own country yet. But we knew we wanted to do something different and that we wanted to create our own look.

D: We were partaking in a youth culture movement in our own rave-tastic, neon way!

M: So from there, tell me a bit about your relationship with creativity, because after school you went down the academic route first of all...

D: I was quite interested in doing something creative, but I was a bit scared to follow that instinct and it was the unsafe option, I guess, coming from more of an academic family where people were engineers or lawyers.

So I went to UCD and I studied Politics, Psychology and History of Art, and I just couldn't get over how bored I was there. That campus is not very conducive to making friends and the arts faculty is so anonymous with the huge numbers of students, nothing was really clicking. It just wasn't working for me. So I took a year out and went and did a portfolio course in Sallynoggin and then applied to art colleges.

From there I went to Limerick and I suppose I was quite influenced by you, because you went there and had been doing great and spoke very well of the place. Even back at school you would have been more savvy to a lot of things, like you knew about fashion designers and you'd be telling me about John Galliano and I didn't have a clue who he was. I guess through a lot of admiration for you and learning a lot from you, that's what really sparked my interest in fashion. And you learn an enormous amount in college and I was also very fortunate to be in a strong year. You will always rise to the median of any group you're in, so the stronger your class the better you're going to be.

M: And it's great that 2nd year didn't put you off, I mean I nearly quit at Christmas in 2nd year.

D: I have to say for some reason, it just never occurred to me to quit. I guess I also had the insight from you having already done it and saying that 2nd year is the worst year. For people who don't know Limerick, 2nd year Fashion is when they break you. I remember going in and crying every single Monday and

Wednesday morning because that was when we got our brief for what we had to have done for the next deadline. And I just couldn't see a way of having it done. It was just so, so overwhelming.

M: And the selling point was that 'this is what it's like in the real fashion business' and I've never come across anything like it since! But something I massively admire about you is your time management. You work incredibly hard but you also value your life outside of work as well.

D: Well I do except for about two months of the year! I went on to do a Masters at the Royal College of Art in London where they teach you to ask for help and lean on others and realise that, basically loads of people are way better at certain things than you are. Other really important things I learned there were firstly, sometimes mistakes can make for great end results. And secondly, it's really self-indulgent to allow yourself to get sucked in to panic-mode because that's not going to help you in the long term. You have to be like 'Okay this is a fuck-up. Now how can we solve it'.

M: How did you find working in between your degree and your Masters? Did you find that it took a while to get back into the swing of designing for yourself after working at Amanda Wakeley in between?

D: I think I was very, very hungry to do something really creative again. That studio wasn't conducive to creativity. It was more office-based, there was no passion there, no leadership from the creative director in any meaningful terms. I'd interned in places like Sharon Wauchob and Sinha-Stanic where it was a passion, so Amanda Wakeley just felt like a very different thing. When the opportunity came up to do my Masters I kind of leapt at it.

M: So did you learn more from your internships really, about how you wanted your own business to run eventually?

D: I think you learn a huge amount about how businesses run and how fashion runs

from internships, and the smaller the studio the more you're going to have a view of the overall picture. But I did learn a lot by being on a design team at a big house, like how to structure collections into fabric groups and how to deal with the fabric mills and factories — all things that have stood to me in the long run.

M: Because they're the things that would have been really daunting to someone who hadn't had that experience before their Masters.

D: Yeah that was really useful. And it's funny, when I went back in to do my Masters I didn't feel it infected my work in any way. And usually you are quite affected by the place you've just been. When I finished at RCA and I went to Italy to Alberta Ferretti I felt that that had a bigger impact on my design aesthetic, both for good and bad. I feel like it softened my aesthetic and allowed me to appreciate a femininity that I probably didn't appreciate before.

I was too busy trying to make everything really tough and cool! But at the same time when I set up my own business I was kind of infected with the thoughts of that studio, and their concerns for wearability, for their demographic.

M: So the point at which you decided to set up your own label — what was going through your mind?

D: Basically I came back from Italy and instead of returning to London I ended up coming back to Dublin and I was doing some freelance stuff, some teaching and various bits and bobs. I remember meeting a friend of mine who works at Margiela now and she was asking me 'Okay, who do you want to work for now?' And I honestly couldn't answer. I'd had some amazing interviews at McQueen and some really great places, but I didn't honestly have an answer for her. My parents are self-employed so my Dad was looking at me doing freelance work and not having a set path for myself and he was just waiting for me to realise, 'Yeah I'm doing my own thing.'



M: Which is the opposite of a lot of parents!

D: Yeah I was really blessed I guess, so I gingerly made steps towards doing it. Although I think I was quite shy about telling anybody I was doing it. Which was probably a little bit characteristic of me anyway, because it's a really, really, really scary thing. And I also think it's kind of an arrogant thing to set up your own label because it's a notoriously competitive industry and notoriously hard to make money.

M: And it's, hands up, saying to the world, 'I'm different to everybody else out there!'

D: Yeah, 'I have a unique selling point!' And it was never, ever something I wanted to do. But I guess I was in this position where I didn't know who I wanted to work for, I knew I still wanted to design, and I wanted to have a level of control over my work. I started it with a collection that I thought was going to be a pre-collection and it didn't quite get done on time. So then I was done really far in advance for fashion week so I just sent it to the British Fashion Council and they said yes — come and exhibit at Somerset House. And that was it, I picked up a stockist, and it sort of snowballed from there.

I really do think a label is a team endeavour though. Obviously I work with some great people in the studio. Audra who's my sample machinist who is super-talented, and people can't forget those people's skills because without her knowledge and finesse, my stuff is just never going to appeal to the best retailers in the world. And the raw idea doesn't sell clothes because my clothes need to retail at a certain price, so they have to be beyond beautiful. There's Hannah who works with me on patterns who I've known since I interned with her at Sharon Wauchob. She's great and has such a great attitude. And there's Edel who is my assistant — and she basically runs the show and is the boss of the studio, let's not pretend! I turn to Edel

and go 'Right — so what are we doing today??' and she complements so many of the things that I'm not great at and is a great ideas bouncer.

And I guess the last link in the chain, but the person who's been there since the beginning, would be Kieran (Kilgallon). We studied together and he's a very dear old friend and just a great board to bounce ideas off. He's very good at saying he's not into something without being rude or insulting which is the KEY element to criticism! He's divorced enough from the process to be able to give a viewpoint on it and, in fairness, he came on and styled my collections at the beginning when I'm not sure they were always his favourite thing. I feel we have grown together as a team and a duo and hopefully we'll go on and create great work together in the future.

M: And I think by you and him being close for so many years, it's that perfect mix of him knowing you and having his fresh perspective on everything. And it's just pure trust between the two of you and that's invaluable, that's rare.

D: Very rare, we always have regular meetings coming up to the end of a collection which will usually be over beer and a burger, where we just float ideas around. We're very lucky we have that relationship and long may it last. He's just such an invaluable member of the team with an expertise level that's beyond the usual set-up.

M: So I want to chat to you about how you've found making a living from being creative. The design process that was once natural and just based on gut instincts now has all these amazing stockists to consider. Going from the first collection you released under your own label to now, selling in countries around the world, do you feel that external pressure when you're designing now?

D: The biggest pressure I feel from my stockists is continuity. Stores want the same thing that they had last season that sold really well at exactly the same

price-point, but are totally different this season. But for your own self-validation and excitement, you need to do something fresh every season. But there are certain stores who just want that dress, that sold really well for them already. I guess it's a challenge. How I put the commercial spin on my work is when I have about 70 or 80 percent of the collection done I go 'Okay, what would I want to wear to meet my mates from this collection' and that's how I slot in the pieces that I think are wearable everyday.

M: And that's a really positive way of doing it — it's still coming from you, it's just thinking of yourself in particular scenarios. So you don't feel drowned out by demographic and particular demands on you?

D: I think the best work you do is when you don't pay attention to all that other store noise that hits you. But at the same time I'm not oblivious to it. For AW14 I was picked up by Joyce in Hong Kong and Ikram in the States. I'm now currently designing SS15 and am a bit concerned that if I don't carry through that kind of softer, slightly sophisticated feminine thing from the previous collection (although it was juxtaposed with some really trippy lenticular printed plastics and really fun stuff!), that those buyers may feel that I'm no longer filling that void on their shop floor. That is definitely a concern but I know that you don't do good work trying to adhere to somebody else's buying list.

M: So what's your creative process with knowing that something is finally done?

D: I don't know, it's a good instinct I guess. As a designer I've learned to simplify my work and that's often the key. I have to say, most of it's about process...when you start off with something, you might really like the sketch but you continue to sketch and then two or three weeks later it may not feel so great anymore. Being a good designer is knowing when your work is shit. Lots of designers talk about the edit

being the quintessential thing. I guess the scale of my sample room and the team that I have, I can't make up 70 samples and show 30, I'm just not in that position. So I have to make that judgement call at sketch level and then, as the collection evolves, I say 'That's really working let's re-imagine it in another capacity'. Nothing's perfect at the beginning; that's the nature of process.

M: And I guess what people don't always consider is the timescale of when you start an idea and when it ends up being something you actually like is normally quite long! Deadlines can be a real saving grace when it comes to designs you're struggling with.

D: I have to say I kind of love fashion for that. I'm not sure how I would cope with four seasons a year, but two seasons are great! There are some times though, for instance the short Spring Summer season, that I feel under huge pressure. But I do think that a lot of creative people really flourish when boundaries are put on them. For instance in the RCA I won the Sophie Hallette & Swarovski Project — I would never have used lace and crystal in a million bloody years, it was so far from what I was interested in. But forcing yourself to do something so out of your comfort zone is often when you come up with your best work. That's why collaborative projects are so good because each designer has to find the common ground. I guess the challenge with designers who are their own masters is stretching yourself on a regular enough basis to come up with good work. You know, if I'm the queen of digital print I have to do amazingly different things with it every single season or else I have to stop using it.

M: Do you feel like your brand has a signature that you need to maintain every season yet?

D: It's something that I have a lot of anxiety about to be honest. My brand and my signature. Everybody wants you to be able to sum up your creative outlet in two sentences. I guess I'm quite

interested in surface details and textures and keeping the silhouettes more simplified and utilitarian. But I can't say in five years I'm still going to be interested in that.

M: Are you going to go body-con?!

D: Okay maybe not that!

M: But, you can never say never. The whole idea with creativity is coming up with something new and something that excites people. And that changes with every day, month, year.

D: Yeah, it's a reaction to the zeitgeist. There's an amazing Cocteau quote 'Art produces ugly things which frequently become beautiful with time. Fashion, on the other hand, produces beautiful things which always become ugly with time'. And that's the whole point of fashion. That it's relevant to the time we're living in. It's a reflection of that time and place in our culture in our part of the world. So yeah, you can never say never in fashion. You don't want to be tied down to anything because that's the antithesis of creativity, being forced to stay stagnant and still.

M: Exactly. 'Evolve or die' is one of my favourite mottos to work by.

D: I'm reminded of Louise Wilson of Central Saint Martins, who recently passed away. I never had the pleasure of studying under her and I only met her for the first time about a month ago at the Irish Embassy in London when the President was over visiting, but I remember reading an article where Mary Katrantzou was talking about her experience with Louise. One of the first things Louise ever said to Mary was 'Impress me'. That's what you need to say to yourself all the time — 'Impress them'. That's the greatest call to arms for a creative person. Do better than you've ever done before.



Portrait: NEIL GAVIN All other images: ALEN MACWEEENEY

alen

Dublin born model Laragh McCann shares with Thread her meeting of legendary photographer Alen MacWeeney and how they began to work together. Each inspired by the other, photographer and muse, Laragh took the opportunity to interview Alen about his work and process. In a career spanning more than 50 years, Alen has published work with The New Yorker, Vogue and LIFE magazine. His books are carefully created treasures and his portraits of Irish travellers in the 60s continue to inspire.

One Sunday in October of last year, my roommate and I were doing our first tour of all the galleries and museums around Central Park in New York (where I live). There was an exhibition of Balthus paintings showing in the MET. Balthus's signature style is slightly strange and colourful paintings of girls and cats, which carry a lot of controversy. If you aren't familiar with it, I recommend checking it out.

Featured in the exhibition was a piece of writing by his last muse Anna Wahli (they worked every Wednesday in his living room for seven years from when she was eight years old). She described what it was like to work with Balthus — his obsession with detail, the constant repetition, the importance she felt in being there. I remember feeling affected and curious. I have been modelling for so many years — most jobs are very organised and done in a day.

A couple of weeks later through a recommendation from a friend, I met photographer Alen MacWeeney. By total coincidence, Alen arranged that we meet in the MET, to get introduced before starting work together (this was unusual — meeting beyond a casting is rare). He wanted to show me an exhibition that he was inspired by. Of course, this was the Balthus exhibit.

We got into a routine of working together each weekend over the winter in his makeshift studio on Park Avenue. On breaks we'd chat about Ireland, New York, and look over the pictures thinking

what needed to be better. The work was demanding. I had to be 'real' in whatever I was doing — he could detect a pose in a second. I would have to be zoned-in for hours at a time — searching and searching for a moment. I would never know exactly what he was looking for. He would constantly be changing things around, the chair, the pillow, telling me to change the angle of my wrist, paying attention to the mood of the colours and the light and the energy projected. Sometimes, thoughts of murder crossed my mind.

The process in itself was an education. It shook me out of being 'efficient'. I learned how unclear, how subtle and instinctual and frustrating the artistic process can be. How it takes a lot of patience, work and openness to get something that you truly feel you own and you created.

Where most of my other work had morphed into one large strategic game, this was a mystery. It was refreshing and valuable to work with and learn from someone who simply cared about their work, and was willing to give it time.

In terms of fashion and art, "It's the time you have wasted on your rose that makes it so important" — The Little Prince.

How did you start photography?
How did I start what?

Photography?
I took pictures with my friend in school. We'd never seen anything like it; it was such an excitement! It was much more difficult than we understood, which is why I found it so compelling.

In what way?
It was technically very difficult to do, to produce a good negative; there was a long process involved. And that process conjoined with a huge sense of discovery.

How did you start professionally?
I left school early and started to work first developing film in jam pots for a man in Harcourt Street. Then I got a job at the Irish Times. I was 16 when I went

out on my first assignments for them. But that was a very mundane activity that I wasn't expecting. Photographing the annual general meeting of the Bank of Ireland or the Rotary Club or some nonsense. I decided to get in contact with Orson Welles who happened to be in Dublin at that time. I took his picture and from that he commissioned me to do something else. So I went on in that kind of vein, I photographed more portraits of actors and poets and other people.

How did you get from Ireland to New York?

Well at that time I had a little studio on Fitzwilliam Square in Dublin and various books of other photographers were becoming available in Ireland. One of them was Richard Avedon's Observations. I felt I needed to learn more so I wrote to him with great difficulty after many months of trial and error. From that I got an interview with him in Paris which then led to New York and I began to work with him.

That must have been a huge change! What was that like?

Well there was quality of glamour about the whole thing that was fresh and new to me. It was very hard work and very exciting. Avedon was an incredibly intelligent, engaging personality. He worked every single picture, whether it was going to be a small square on a page or a full page in Harper's Bazaar he gave fully to each one. He was also a tremendously talented organiser of people. He could take 15 or 20 people and every single person thought he was just talking and only interested in them.

That's a skill!

There were all kinds of pretentious people, hair stylists and editors, but none of them really fazed Avedon at all, he could cope with all kinds of people.

How would you describe your photography?

The issue of how intimate a picture is matters a lot to me. And so I'll do whatever I think is necessary to make it easier for the subject. For

me, photography is kind of a live conversation. I think it has to be kept that way. If you try recapturing a moment it doesn't work, it's like telling a joke twice!

What interested you about the travellers?

The travellers became a subject of discovery for me. I was seeing something I couldn't have ever imagined. I was into a society I didn't really know existed and I didn't know how it functioned. And now I do know.

So they allowed you to evolve through them...

Yes. They taught me a lot. They thought me about Irish music and storytelling and what really stirs people. I got to really see how people were affected by things. This project, like most things that have happened in my life, happened by chance and I think chance is a very good companion. Because if you have the faith that something will turn up, it usually does.

It's true! Once you are open to possibilities things seem to fall into place. You still live in New York now, how would you compare it to Ireland?

Whenever I go back to Ireland, I think the people are so untidy; that's only because they are! Like island people, their hair is all over the place, they have a wildness about them! In America the disillusionment of business is more prevalent — it's as though everybody's in a mall. Everything is for sale and everybody has a price. People sort of reposition themselves as being marketable by themselves for different areas of society. The marketability of something becomes a quantity that's more important than how beautiful it is. There is the quality of business about everything, and it exists everywhere, but I was never conscious of it in Ireland before, you know if somebody was a poet or something they would just hang around and live off everybody else.

Which photographers inspire you?

Robert Frank I would put probably as one of the best photographers that I've ever known in my existence. He was an intuitive photographer; he just









was intuitive. 'You don't take pictures because you got film in the camera you take pictures because you have eyes and you've something to say', that was a remark he made which would be good for any photographer to remember. There's a beautiful photograph he did of an old businessman on the stern of the ship leaving New York harbour. He's this old wizened faced guy and he's got a paper top hat. He's just looking melancholy down at the water and the city just receding. I mean it says so much, no way of explaining. A huge value of photographs is that they reveal things that words can't express.

How do you think photography has evolved since when you started?

So the digital issue pushes the punishment closer to the crime. You get the result immediately; everything is visible — little effort, quick result. Compared to writing, compared to a painter, or a sculptor or even worse an architect! That's ideal but it's also very difficult to make a good picture. And 'what is a good picture' then becomes more of a question.

I think nowadays people are so much more aware of photography and themselves in it that it's harder to get surprises.

They're very aware of everything that's going on, because now everybody takes photographs all the time. But they regard professional photographs in the same way that they regard their own photographs, which is something that exists for about a second on the screen of an i-Phone, and then it's no more, it doesn't have any life! Whereas photographs that I was involved in had the existence of art, they have an existence of longevity, they have a meaning, and they are significant.

So what advice would you give to people starting out?

I think people have to create their own magazines and their own books and be happier with smaller, deeper sights. Not thinking 'who's your agent going to be' and this and that. Just

say okay take my own neighborhood, I'll make a little book about my neighborhood, or about the building I'm living in or about my friends. Or all the single fathers. Whatever. Just choose something and commit yourself to it.

So it should be personal?

Yes it first has to have some sort of personal significance to have value and to be unique. And I think it should be worthwhile to mention that if you don't get recognition instantly that can be a blessing in disguise. Freedom or premature recognition can be the kiss of death creatively, because it takes away the urgent necessity to discover more and to truly understand the value of work. I was taking a picture of Willem de Kooning one time about 15 years ago and he said "art is never produced from a position of comfort" and I thought that that was a really excellent, profound statement.

Do you have plans to go back to Ireland anytime soon? Every time I go back I notice the light.

Oh it's absolutely magical. The light in Ireland is a quality that's very special whether it's rainy or not. It has really good light for photography. But it's also unpredictable, you can't plan on anything as far as the weather goes! I plan to go back soon. It was so brilliant this last summer. It just glowed the whole countryside. There isn't any place in the world like it.

All Images: ROB BENSON

hel sin ki

I ended up in Helsinki the way a lot of foreign men do, following a Finnish girl home. Though we broke up two years later, I stayed in Finland for a third, during which time this project came together.

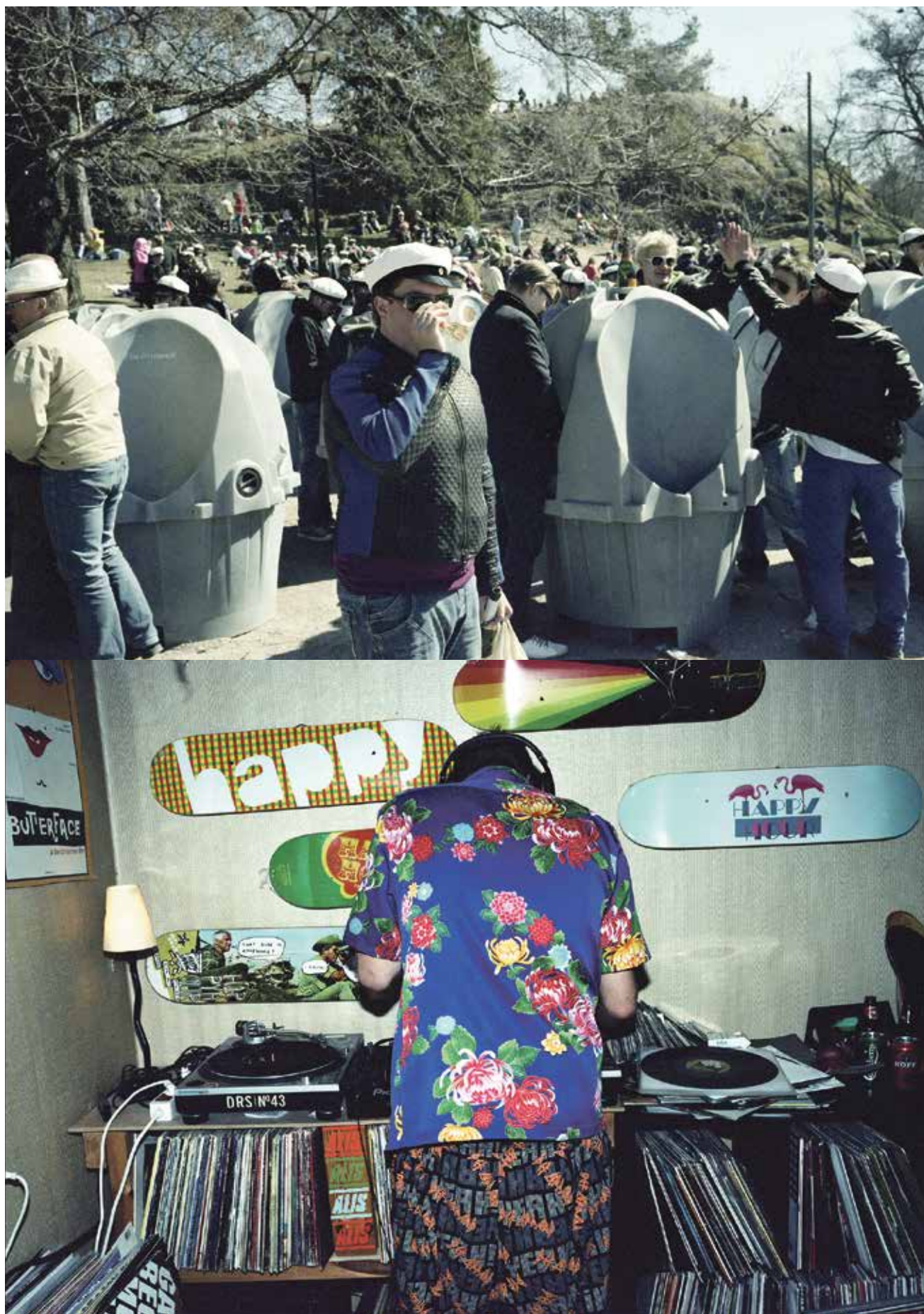
I really enjoyed my time in the city. The lack of crime and violence on the streets, the beautiful public parks and the fact that so few of its residents drive make it a safe and peaceful place to live. Most importantly the people are very friendly.

Like the Irish, the Finns have a love of alcohol as social lubricant. After making my first Finnish friend I made another, and then another. By the time I left I had a lot of friends, and felt part of the community.

Finnish is a difficult language to learn, and I never managed. After three months without anyone understanding my most basic Finnish phrase, I gave up. Happily the Finns had no problem speaking English. I was in a strange bubble where I could interact pretty freely with people, but overheard conversations meant nothing to me, and didn't pose a distraction. This put me into the right frame of mind for the project, and along with my mostly-integrated position in the community gave me the right mix of comfort and distance to shoot the people and the city.









j u l i



Top: CARVEN

a n a



Grey leather top & trousers: LUCAS NASCIMENTO



Leather dress: VIKTOR & ROLF



Grey leather coat: LUCAS NASCIMENTO — vest: AMERICAN APPAREL — jeans: LEVI'S VINTAGE



Wool top & silk trousers: KENZO

S

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Photographer: ANDREW NUDING Model & styling: SUSIE BUBBLE



Rollneck: KAREN MILLEN — navy leather jacket & brown leather skirt: both GERARD DAREL — navy rain coat: LK Bennett —
burgundy shoes: CHURCHES — gingham sunglasses: D&G at DAVID CLULOW —
all at KILDARE VILLAGE

S

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On a trip to Dublin to showcase the summer collections and eclectic range of brands available at Kildare Village, Thread met up with Suise to discuss all things fashion.

Susie Bubble is a web sensation. Armed with taste and talent, Susie rode the crest of the blogging wave and created Style Bubble, one of the most respected fashion blogs in the world. We spoke to her about her inspirations and the industry.

Born Suzi Lau, Bubble first dabbled in fashion through the lens of Camden subcultures, "I went through so many phases – a Harajuku girl phase, a grungy phase, a goth phase, a manga phase..." which are all demonstrated with her chameleon-like ability to adopt trends and address her influences sartorially. "All those things were sort of influential in my outlook on style, which tends to be quite eclectic anyway. I'm not really one genre or another." For Bubble, fashion was an outlet for her creativity. Feeling somewhat less academically driven than her schoolmates as a teenager, she felt that fashion was something she was naturally gifted at. "It might sound very strange, because people see fashion as this very elitist, judgemental world, but for me it was a form of creative expression, something that I felt I was good at." Bubble's enthusiasm for all things sartorial even resulted in pilgrimages abroad, confessing,

"I did some really sad things... When I was sixteen, I made a pilgrimage to Antwerp, got myself a Eurostar ticket and just went, because I loved the Antwerp Six. When I went to Dries Van Noten's flagship store, I just spent five minutes pressed against the window."

The relationship between place and fashion is clearly something that inspires and influences Bubble, and her globetrotter lifestyle is testament to her fashion philosophy, "I go to Bangkok and find something amazing there, and all in all, I think that fashion has become a much smaller world. You can connect with many many different places without trying too hard. That's kind of how I see fashion going, that we're not confined by our geography, that we're not confined by whether we're in a fashion capital or not. You guys in Dublin will have your own scene, Manchester will have their scene, Kiev will have their scene, despite a revolution. I met some designers in Kiev, and they still managed to put together a collection despite revolution on their doorstep, and not being able to import fabric because of the colours, but they presented their collection in Paris. I think there are no limits really, to what people can do, and how determined people are to make it in fashion.

Fashion has become that much more alluring as a world, and that might mean the rate of success has become slimmer,

but for people who are purists, you end up with new discoveries. It's totally a sweet shop. For me it's never been a better time, although in the industry, people will say 'Shows today are so boring, I remember a Yohji show in the 80s...', and it's like, that was great, but times have changed. You need to look beyond your Yohjis and your Commes, because there are people doing amazing things, they just don't show at Paris Fashion Week."

Studying history at University College London before moving into her blogging and fashion journalism career may not have been the obvious choice for a future fashion maven, but it did prove to be instrumental in her approach, "I'm very interested in fashion as a reflection of our times, of our culture, of our society. In terms of costume, I do like referencing lots of Rococo era, 18th century, and Victorian dress. Those are my main specialist eras of dress, in terms of knowing all the technicalities, the different layers of the pommelling, and the garments. I'm generally one of those people who is quite curious about where things come from, period. I will go back and look things up, even if it's not to inform people, but for my own benefit." Despite a passion for the past, Bubble is pretty choosy about her vintage, "I don't really want to flick through racks and racks of 1970s polyester like I did when I was younger...I would really love something from Yves Saint Laurent's

Opera collection in 1974. I love that whole era of Yves Saint Laurent — the flamboyance and modernity of it at the time."

Sitting with Susie, and watching her wax lyrical about young designers and the importance of fashion as art is incredibly enlivening. She is not a cold, calculated player in the often cut-throat fashion industry, and this is reflected in her own approach to collecting (and of course, wearing!) fashion, "You see that the editors buy stuff full price, but some of them basically sell it straight away on e-Bay, and they turn it over so fast and just move on to next season, where I'm a keeper. I want to keep it and never let it go! If I buy something, and I love it, I just know that I'm going to love it ten years down the line, or 20 years down the line."

That's a lesson for all of us — cherishing fashion, investing in its provenance, and learning about the stories of garments should be as important an aspect of the process as drinking in and appreciating the aesthetics. Susie is a prime example of how the blogosphere can change attitudes to fashion, by usurping the consumerist glossies, and adding an academic, educational slant to fashion. As for what Susie will do next, keep your eyes open as she moves into print, defiantly proving the maxim that blogs are inherently unprofessional absolutely wrong. It's going to be one hell of a tome.



Burgandy coat: CHURCHES — sheer embellished pants: REISS — knitted tee: HOBBS —
brown leather bag: ANYA HINDMARCH — flower detail sunglasses: PRADA at DAVID CLULOW —
all at KILDARE VILLAGE

Models: PHOEBE and LAURYN at MORGAN THE AGENCY and DAMIEN at FRASER MODELS — Hair: DAVID CASHMAN —
Make-up: CHANEL artist CHRISTINE LUNCIGNANO using PERFECTION LUMIERE VELVET — Photographer's Assistant: DAVID SEXTON —
Stylist's Assistant: JULIE GAVIN —Set Designer: CIARA O'DONAVAN — Set Assistant: Naomi McConnell — Location: ST SALVAGE —
special thanks also to STAGS HEAD PROPS, GERI DOHERTY/ SOPHIE WEBB COSTUME PROPS



Phoebe; Denim skirt: Victoria Beckham, BT2 — waistcoat: HARLEQUIN — blanket: STABLE.IE /
Damien; Jeans: STONE ISLAND, HARVEY NICHOLS; blanket: STABLE.IE /
Lauryn; Dungarees: SUPERDRY, BT2 — waistcoat: HARLEQUIN — blanket: STABLE.IE — earrings: KENNETH JAY LANE, BROWN THOMAS



Phoebe; Vintage Levi's jeans & jacket: FRESH — brooches selection: RHINESTONES, BROWN THOMAS, FRESH, JENNY VANDER, BUFFALO



Lauryn; Dress (underneath): HARLEQUIN — dress (over): PREEN BY THORNTON BREGAZZI, BROWN THOMAS —
trainers: OXFAM



Phoebe; Dress & jacket: JOANNE HYNES — backpack: GREAT OUTDOORS — trainers: OXFAM —
brooches selection: AS BEFORE /
Lauryn; Dress: JOANNE HYNES — backpack: STYLIST'S OWN — trainers: OXFAM —
brooches selection: AS BEFORE



Lauryn; Dress (underneath): HARLEQUIN — dress (over): DRIES VAN NOTEN, BROWN THOMAS — shoes: MODEL'S OWN — watch: ANSLEY / Phoebe; blouse & dress: DRIES VAN NOTEN, BROWN THOMAS — hat (set in background): MARTHA LYNN MILLINERY, BROWN THOMAS



Phoebe; Vintage dress: HARLEQUIN — dress (underneath): ALEXANDER MCQUEEN, BROWN THOMAS — jumper: WILDFOX, BT2; shoes: OXFAM /
Lauryn; Fur coat: MISS DAISY BLUE — jumper: HARLEQUIN — blanket: STABLE.IE — top: OXFAM — leggings & socks: STYLIST'S OWN

Model: LOUISE at MORGAN THE AGENCY Special thanks: ZARA COX



Vintage leather coat, snake skin skirt: HARLEQUIN



Cashmere sweater: LENNON COURTNEY — Vintage dress worn as skirt: JENNY VANDER — St. Bridget cross worn as brooch: STYLIST'S OWN



Cashmere sweater and cross: AS BEFORE



Plastic lace top and skirt: SIMONE ROCHA at HAVANA — Shoes: COS



Frill cotton top: ISABEL MARANT at COSTUME — Taupe skirt: COS



Model: STEPHEN at DISTINCT MODEL MANAGEMENT



Polka dot combo shirt: ROUGH & TUMBLE at THE BUREAU, BELFAST – Print fleece hoodie, Denim jacket: AMERICAN APPAREL –
Recycled cotton jeans: LEVI'S MADE AND CRAFTED at INDIGO & CLOTH



Oxford shirt, utility vest, jersey pants: **ENGINEERED GARMENTS** at **THE BUREAU BELFAST** —
Sandals: **BIRKENSTOCK** — Irish linen market bag: **31 CHAPEL LANE** at **SCOUT**



Ripstop jacket, Batik print trousers: **ENGINEERED GARMENTS** at **THE BUREAU BELFAST** —
Socks: Muji — Sandals: **BIRKENSTOCK** — Embroidered leather bracelet: **MARIA RUDMAN** at **ENVOY OF BELFAST**



Melange shirt: COS — Athletic sweatshirt, Jersey shorts: SATURDAYS at INDIGO & CLOTH — Sandals: AS BEFORE

spot

light

oriole cullen

1

With her limpid green eyes, luxuriant hair and graceful manner, Oriole Cullen seems straight out of a pre-Raphaelite painting. As a senior curator of contemporary fashion at the V&A in London for the past two years, the 37 year old Dubliner works in one of the world's biggest and most famous fashion and textile departments in an institution employing some 700 people.

Fashion curation has really taken off in recent years and she is one of 20 curators in the V&A. "There is a huge appreciation for it — it has changed dramatically since I started because it is more open and accessible. People see curation as just putting on exhibitions, but the word curator comes from care, to take care of, to look after and for us we have over 100,000 objects in dress and textiles. At any one time maybe two of us are working on exhibitions and the rest are on very different jobs around the collection," she explains.



Portrait: Amber Rowland

An authority on 18th century dress, she writes and lectures widely on various aspects of historical and contemporary fashion such as the popularity of white or evening wear and her latest book, Pop Patterns, is on Andy Warhol's influence on design. She works closely with contemporary fashion designers and with so much talent in London at the moment finds it a very exciting time with a lot more international recognition for their work.

The Fashion in Motion programme at the museum which she oversees highlights the work of three specially selected young designers in live catwalk events over three days at a summer seated show to an audience of 1600 people per day. "We have about one hundred people on the day working on it and we have only 24 hours to get in and out. It is a great way for the museum to engage with young designers", she says. Recent choices included Meadham Kirchoff, Kansai Yamamoto and Jenny Packham.

From Killiney, Cullen was schooled in Rathdown and went on to study art history and English at UCD. It was there that an art history lecturer taught her how to narrow down the dates of 18th century portraits through dress, whetting her interest in that period. That led to an MA in fashion history at the Courtauld Institute in London where she was one of six in a class taught by the

esteemed fashion historian, Professor Aileen Ribeiro.

"The more people are interested in fashion the more things will be saved. A lot of designers are now conscious of their archives because they know that there is worth in them and a lot of big companies are starting archives — a huge number of galleries are also engaged." She points out that the V&A first appointed a curator of fashion "as opposed to dress and textiles" in 1957 though the collections were started in 1850. Its exhibition on street style in 1992 was the first time any institution such as the V&A engaged with street style and contemporary fashion on a significant level.

The next major exhibition at the V&A will be the celebrated *Savage Beauty* on the work of Alexander McQueen which opens next March. One called *Disobedient Objects* opening in July focuses on the role of objects in movements of social change. Cullen is also pondering one on colour — "it's in the ether at the moment and people used to always ask what the colour of the season was", she says citing the British Colour Council, the *Colour Me Beautiful* phenomenon and the future predictions at *Premiere Vision*, as sources.

As we leave, she points out that fashion curation as a career now generates more possibilities than ever. "When I started I knew

nothing and I worked for a long time before I would say I was a fashion curator.

"There is a lot to be learnt on the job and the field has really opened up in recent years and there are now so many avenues. I was lucky to work with specialists, people who spent a lifetime studying 18th century clothes — and you learn from those above you, but also from others below. What I really like and find interesting is that mix of the contemporary and historical."

spot

light

azienkobo

2

The Japanese have a fantastically rich culture that has always captivated me. Their dedication to the artisan life allows for an attention to detail seen rarely in Europe or the US. It is that attention and craftsmanship that fascinates most of Western society.

The West fascinates Japan too, in part due to Allied powers controlling Japan until 1952 following the end of World War II. American culture and vintage clothing quickly became an attraction to the Japanese, credited to off-duty GIs and films such as James Dean's Rebel Without a Cause. American jeans sold for top dollar and this high demand combined with the culture's obsession and search for perfection caused jean production to take off in Japan, mostly in the town of Kojima located in the Okayama Prefecture.



Image: GARRETT PITCHER

Kojima had always been a hotbed for textile production so it only made sense to produce the first pair of jeans in Kojima at Kurabo Mills, one of the world's longest operating mills now running over 110 years. In 1972, after eight tries, Kurabo finally managed to produce Japan's first ever selvedge denim aptly titled the KD-8, for Kurabo Denim 8. This denim was constructed on the Model G automatic selvage loom, a technical marvel of its time that laid the foundation for what is now the Toyota Motor Group.

Japanese denim is known for its premium construction and possesses a wealth of modern day artisans that have tried their best to uphold beautiful techniques and traditions. It is hard to talk about indigo or denim without prefacing its importance within the fashion industry. Levi's arguably made the fashion industry what it is today. Denim brought fashion into popular culture and it has been at the heart of it ever since. Given its influence Time magazine named the 501 jean the fashion item of the last century with about 450 million pairs of denim jeans sold in the US alone every year.

Weaving too has been improved to meet demand. The heart of weaving in Japan is located in the Nishijin district, Kyoto. Here in an old teahouse sits a third generation business whose name Aizenkobo translates simply as 'the workshop that loves

dyeing.' It was here I met with Kenichi Utsuki and his proud wife Hisako, who also designs many of the clothing items they sell in their shop.

As the kimono industry declined through the years Aizenkobo switched to specializing in indigo where it enjoys widespread acclaim. The workshop's expertise is so renowned throughout the region and country that Kenichi is often called on to give lectures on natural indigo dyeing at universities around the world. What makes Aizenkobo so rare and specialised is that they use the natural fermenting pure Japanese indigo dye and produce their indigo dyed textiles in the traditional way.

Their dye vats are in operation year-round in their wish to keep the old traditions alive. Using the same basic ingredients of indigo plant leaves, wheat husk powder, limestone powder, lye ash, and sake the family work throughout the day. It is in effect a living product that must be attended to regularly or else the solution is ruined and lost. Hisako reminded us more than once that she couldn't take a holiday before pointing to her husband's blue hands as if to say why.

It is one of the charms of this industry that the more you learn, the more you realise there is more you don't know. Fashion is cyclical; its very definition being the latest or most popular product. For something

that created an industry, denim to me is synonymous with fashion. You cannot talk about fashion without talking about denim. You cannot talk about denim without talking about indigo. Hanami festivals celebrate the beauty of the cherry blossom but few appreciate the indigo and history derived from the Tade plant in Japan.

inde

pendent

Honor Fitzsimons SS14 imges: KYRSTIN HEALY Katie Jones AW14 images: KEVIN MASON



katie &
honor

Katie Jones and Honor Fitzsimons used to Skype and knit all the time when they were studying Fashion Design with Knitwear at Central Saint Martins. These days with Katie's label in London and Honor's studio in Dublin it's a little trickier to coordinate, but for a special conversation with Thread we linked the two designers up and reflected on their different paths, influences, convergences, divergences and the joys of reinterpreting a traditional craft.

How did you start knitting?

KJ: I was taught when I was young by my granny. Then in sixth form we had to do a project and I was intrigued to pick it up again. The project was based on Peter Blake and I knitted a bright pink jumper with an Elvis head on the back. I fell in love with knitwear and didn't stop.

HF: I came at it from a different point of view. You couldn't get fabrics in Ireland and knitting my own fabric gave me more independence, rather than being restricted by what Hickeys had.

What happened after Saint Martins?

KJ: It's been mad. I graduated in 2013 and didn't know quite what I was going to do. I ended up doing a Spring Summer collection [for Brighton Fashion Week] about a week after I graduated because I didn't like my graduate collection. I wanted something in my portfolio that I could talk about with some confidence.

HF: I thought she was mad, I thought she was addicted to work.

KJ: When I was working on the BA and MA I worked for Mark Fast and Alice Lee. Being in knitwear's great — one of the joys is a lot of designers still produce their knit, if it's a small run, in London. So you can do work that's relevant to your craft. But when you've made the same dress 30 times you crave creativity. The sustainable fashion

stuff came off the back of how I could produce pieces to sell, with as much finished detail and my design aesthetic without taking three weeks.

HF: I got a place on the MA but there was a bit of a mix up as the college was moving from Charring Cross Road to King's Cross and I got a contract freelancing in Paris instead. Then I decided to come home. I'd travelled a lot and I just wanted to come home and regroup. There seemed to be a scene surging up and I decided to give it a go, trying out making a collection for retail.

After that I was involved in Brown Thomas CREATE. They're really supportive, I gained a lot of contacts and I got great advice from Shelly Corkery. It's fantastic to get inside the mind of a buyer: It's great to create work that is totally 'wow' — but you can't — I want to see my work on people and I want them to have it for 15 years.

A lot of what I do is personal and related to what's going on... because I had travelled so much and moved house I think 20 times in five years to be home and have my own house in Dublin is just so nice. I've based my Autumn Winter collection on the textures in my house.

So what's next?

KJ: I'll be showing with Estethica in September. Spring Summer is a knitter's nightmare but I'm going to be using a lot of crochet. There's a lot of inspiration

from my nan and her massive doily collection! It's all based on my hometown of Brighton. Like Honor I always hark back to something personal.

HF: Spring Summer can be a tricky one. I'd like to develop a light handknit for the season and I'd like to export and show outside of Ireland.

Your designs are so different. What do you share in your ethos?

HF: I guess we're bringing the next generation of knitwear to fashion. What Katie is doing, regenerating old Aran jumpers into neon-crochet-wonderworks, and what I'm doing, there is definitely a glance towards the traditional Aran knit. My grandmother's family knit Aran jumpers for cash in Donegal and now I'm knitting jumpers for my bread and butter. I'm creating a kind of Aran 2.0. I guess our aesthetic is divergent we both have a basis of...

KJ: Tradition. And skill. Both Honor and myself are passionate about the skill and how you can make something considered crafty and 'old hat' into something modern. We've quite similar mindsets — then our work comes out and it's so different.

‘The butterfly is a flying flower,
The flower a tethered butterfly.’

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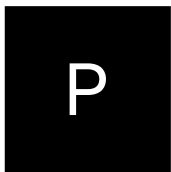
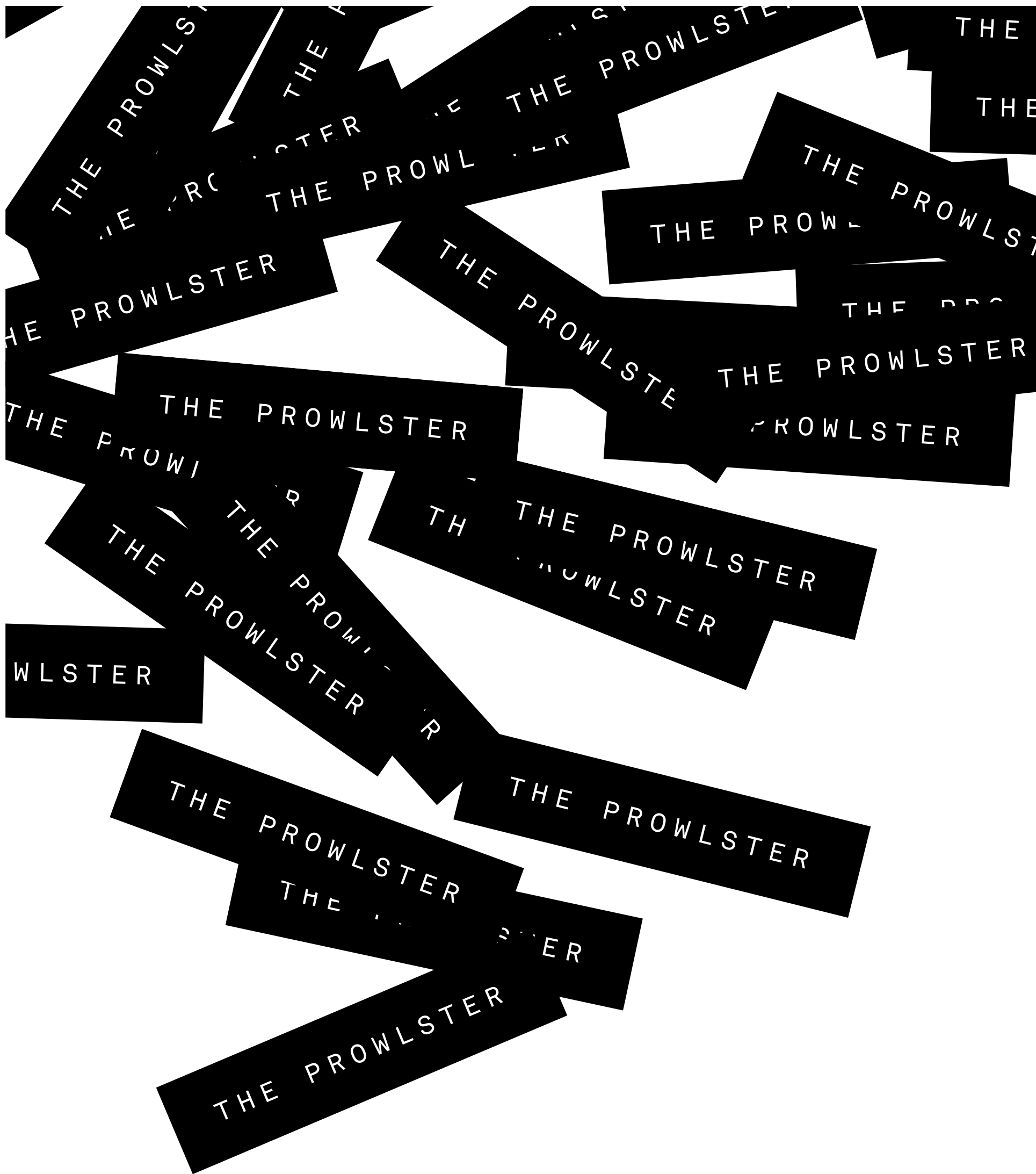
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