

# F I R E



## **HOT DEBATE!**

**Contemporary or Modern?  
Latest Trend on Site  
Contemporary Fashion  
Designers You Won't Missed  
Out!**

**EYTYS, The New Kid  
On the Block**

**IRIS VAN HERPEN  
Wear or Tear?**

# **Are We Going Back to Contemporary?**

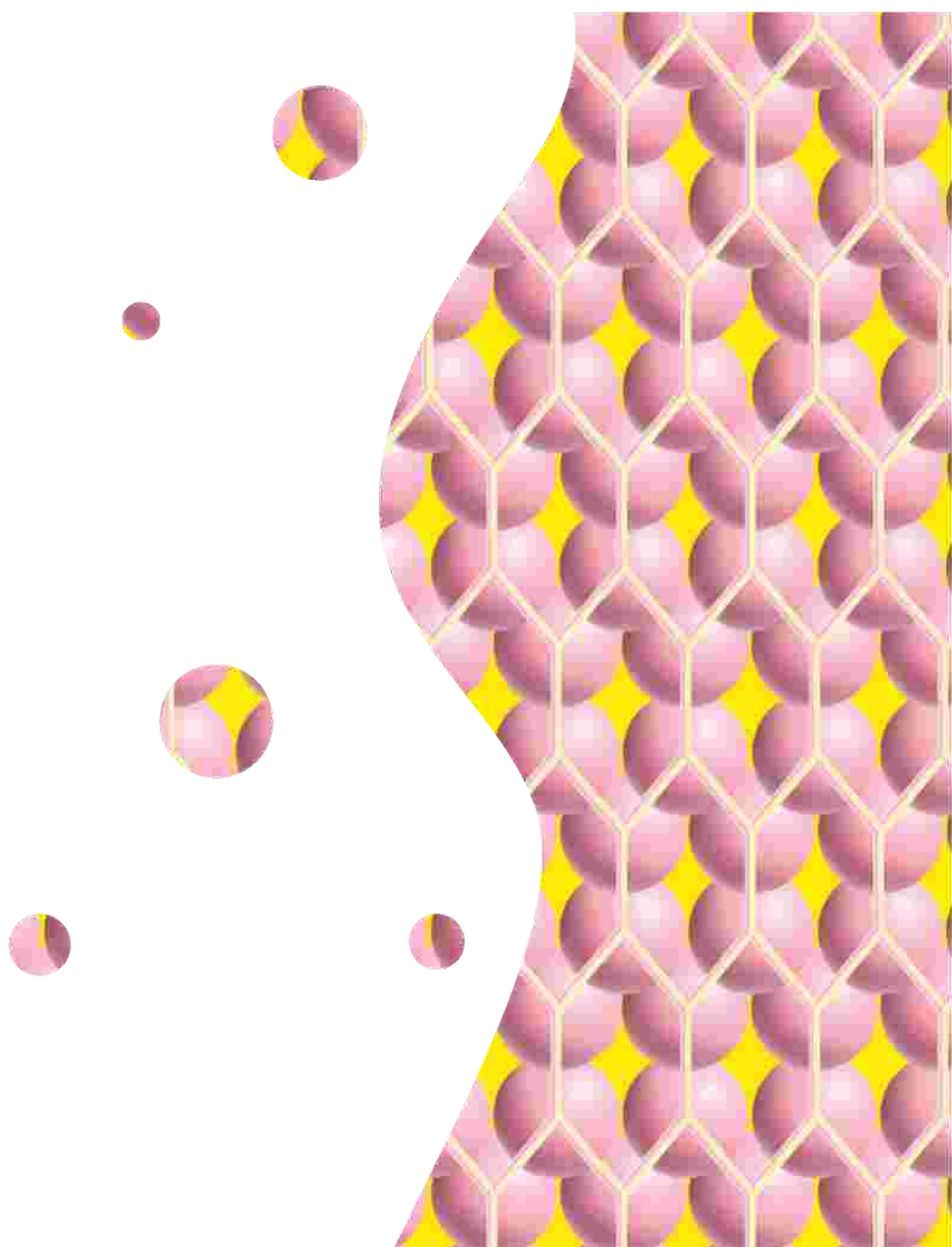
# editor's note

It wasn't always gray, but that's what I remember: the rags of an English winter, strewn across the sky; clouds and more clouds, endless, gloomy; rain hitting the sidewalk outside. I was a prisoner of the weather, and of myself: of day after day at the typewriter, with nothing to show for it; of my longing to be a writer, a real writer, though the truth — dark and cheerless as the English sky — was that I had no idea what that meant.



**“The trouble,” Robert Pirsig writes, “is that essays always have to sound like God talking for eternity, and that just isn’t the way it ever is. . . . It’s never anything other than just one person talking from one place in time and circumstance.”**

It’s 1988. I sit at the typewriter, rewriting the same sentence thirty, forty, fifty different ways. Unsure what to say, I search desperately for the right way to say it, as if my meaning will become clear once I find an artful-enough phrase. If anything is calculated to deaden the very mood I’m trying to express, this is it. Instead of trusting, in my writing, the same process that leads me each day to new understanding — that opens my eyes to the illusion of separateness, helps me appreciate the connectedness of all things — I build a wall around myself, each word another brick. “All writing,” Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, “comes by the grace of God.” How difficult it is for me to accept my humanness, my brokenness. And I am now unsure what else to come, this has been a copy and paste, and well, ciao everyone! Hope nobody realises this :D



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# when did contemporary art start?

Nobody really knows when the contemporary art era began. People say it was in 1989 when the Berlin Wall was demolished and the Tiananmen Square protests were happening. But others say it was in the 70s, when World War 2 ended or even in the 1910s.

The debate has been going on for years. If you research how art was categorized over the past decades, you'll notice that contemporary art is a term that began being used after the 1960s. Before then, it was all about modern art. The usage of that term has drastically faded.

George Baker, an art history professor at UCLA offered a possible explanation. "The fading not of modern art but of 'modernism' by the 1950s and 1960s," and, with the rise of contemporary art, "the emergence of a new pluralism in the 1970s and after."

In other words, modern art was considered a break from tradition and a development of a new one. After World War 2, modern art didn't have any appeal to artists. The idea of progress was distorted due to the effects of the war.

Germans favour 1945 as the start of the contemporary art era. Americans favour sometime around the 1960s. That makes defining the beginning of this era almost impossible.

Today, contemporary art comes in all mediums and sizes. It stretches from videos to objects to exhibits outside of museums. By the time we figure out when contemporary art began, the era might be already over.



Walk into almost any home today and you see a jumble of styles. The labels of contemporary and modern are applied almost interchangeably but do they mean the same thing? In a word, no! To get to the heart of the matter, we have to travel back to the origins of modernism — all the way back to almost a century before — the 1920s.

In Germany of the 1920s, an era of rapid change and exploding art, the leading style maker was the Bauhaus School of Arts and Crafts. The Bauhaus opposed the overly decorated styles of the century before, the Victorian period, and developed the modern style we know of today. Bauhaus architects and designers such as Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and van der Rohe, rebelled against the heavy carving.

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# con tem por ary vs modern

Fast forward to the second half of the 20th century and early 21st century, lifestyles began to change and the desire for comfort and relaxation grew paramount. The need for formal social gatherings in the home diminished. People wanted to lounge in their sofas and yadida

watch television, and throw impromptu, fun parties. Formal, engraved invitations were out, Evite was in. In response to people's needs, the contemporary styles wtv evolved. Colour schemes were simple; use of earth tone colours was common with a splash of bold color

A great example of contemporary styling is the Larry Laslo-designed bedroom showcased at the 2006 Kips Bay Show as shown in the photos below. The armchairs by the fireplace and the upholstered bed are Art Deco inspired; the leather chair is.



Contemporary style also eliminated the heavy ornamentation that came with traditional furniture but relaxed its style dictates. A designer can use a more varied colour scheme and also mingle furnishings from different eras. With the proliferation of furniture sources and the internet, adhering to one set period of style or geographic location doesn't have to be the norm. The ease of contemporary styling has made it a popular choice for most clients and designers.



In response to people's needs, the contemporary style evolved. Contemporary furniture became rounded, comfortable, and generally used light woods such as maple and oak. Colour schemes were simple; use of earth tone colours was common with a splash of bold colour in either the accessories or the artwork. Eclecticism is another feature of contemporary style. Furniture from different periods or different countries were mixed and thrown together into a room.

For example, Tuscan rustic was combined with American farmhouse; Louis Philippe mingled with shabby chic; and Asian style merged with mid-century furniture. Famous contemporary designers of this era included British David Hicks, California designer Michael Taylor, and New York designer Mark Hampton. A great example of contemporary styling is the Larry Laslo-designed bedroom showcased at the 2006 Kips Bay Show as shown in the photos below. The armchairs by the fireplace and the upholstered bed are Art Deco inspired; the leather chair is Georgian and the desk from the 1940s, all of which are enclosed in neoclassical detailed walls.

style. Those that want to mix and match and want comfort above all else will lean towards the contemporary style. Modernism is a much more formal, exacting approach. It requires an inhabitant to be organized as the style dictates an uncluttered space. There is very little use of colour or pattern so choices are limited. Simplify, simplify, simplify is a common mantra of modernism.



# WHY contemporary fashion is the biggest trend now?



Whether you're into fashion or not, the word "contemporary" gets thrown around a lot. So and so was a contemporary of Albert Einstein or someone's sofa is very "contemporary." It's a word about time that can actually mean right now or thousands of years ago. It can all get weird and confusing, but when it comes to fashion, understanding what contemporary means for you is actually quite useful.

## What is contemporary fashion?

With fashion, "contemporary" has that meaning of being modern and of the moment, but it also means more. Contemporary brands strive to be more accessible (emphasis on "more," as we're not talking about Zara here). Occasionally it also focuses on durability, reparability, and environmental impact, but that really depends on the designer.

In other words, the meaning of contemporary fashion isn't set in stone. But if you're a bit turned off by haute couture and high fashion, there's a good chance contemporary brands will have something that appeals to you. So who are the designers you should be paying attention to at the forefront of contemporary fashion?

## Designers who redefine fashion

When you're looking for designers who defined contemporary fashion, Alexander Wang certainly comes to mind. He's become a household name by bringing a high-fashion sensibility to new spaces like sportswear. In addition, collaboration with accessible retailers like H&M has allowed his work to become affordable to just about anyone. By bringing fashion outside of its bubble and making it available on many different budgets, he's really helped define contemporary fashion.

Other names like Phillip Lim, Nicolas Ghesquière, Jonathan Anderson, and many more are iconic as well, but Wang's story really encapsulates how the undercurrents of contemporary design are affecting fashion as a whole.



## Revivals, nostalgia, and innovation

These three words really capture what's at the core of most European contemporary design. It's a combination of throwbacks to other eras (it could be the 90s, 80s, 60s, etc. you see a lot of variety there) and something new thrown in. That could be new materials, production techniques, or simply taking the familiar design elements of a past era and reimagining them.

Looking at all of this together, it's pretty clear why contemporary design is so in vogue. It hits the nostalgia so many of us experience for times past, makes beautiful items more affordable and accessible than ever, and strives for the newness that drives most commerce these days anyways.

## Leather Everywhere

Leather has been a big material in contemporary fashion from its inception. Contemporary brands have both pushed for a return to basics: quality leather goods produced by hand, and the new with more eco-friendly vegan leather that doesn't feel like... well "fake" leather. Today, you can see real and vegan leather products side by side with the message from the industry being that both are valuable, authentic, and represent quality.

## Colours that matter

In a world where the Pantone colour of the year has become a genuine news item of interest, it's clear that the culture as a whole is focusing on colour more than ever. Contemporary fashion has been reflecting that, getting more daring whether you're talking about sneakers or luxury handbags. This all seems to reflect a society getting less conservative and more focused on individual expression, where standing out is more important than fitting in. While there is still an undercurrent of beige minimalism out there, it's rare to see a contemporary designer who hasn't played with colour at least somewhat over the past few seasons.



## how will contemporary brands cope with covid-19?

**How do we appear? How do we tell our story?**

The questions being posed to Siddhartha Shukla, chief brand officer at Theory, this summer will be familiar to many fashion brands strategizing their emergence into a post-Covid climate.

But for a New York-based brand famed for kitting out stylish professionals in high-end workwear that would see them commute, kick-ass and make it to cocktail hour in precision-cut comfort, the conundrum could hardly be tougher. If the last six months of selfies have shown us anything, it's that working from home doesn't exactly call for slick suiting, however effortless it may be.

"I see a lot of the younger [contemporary] brands with a sense of anxiety feeling the need to recast themselves or rewrite what they're doing." Rather than "overcorrect", Shukla believes "the frame should stay the same, but we need to look at the content differently." An ardent advocate of the symbolic value the clothes we choose hold in our lives, he adds: "You might be physically engaging with the world differently [but] that doesn't mean your desires have been reorganised completely."



Chapter one, called “Reinvention”, and full of deconstructed and directional separates, drops imminently and chapter two, called “Renewal”, and comprising lightweight, ribbed layers oozing louche appeal will land in the spring. True to Shukla’s word, both have the hallmarks of the Theory fans know and rely on, but re-nosed in an accessible way for current lifestyles.

“Normally we have lots of suiting, but here you’ll find a jacket paired with a really soft trouser,” he explains of Theory’s signature Etienne blazer and Treeca trousers. “Both of them have been done in 100 per cent technical knit so you could live in them all day – it’s literally like wearing a sweater head-to-toe but it’s technical so it keeps its structure.”



It will be, says Shukla, an interesting season for outerwear (of which there is plenty) “as individuals start to cross the thresholds of their homes [they’ve] spent so much time in”. As well as it being practical to stay warm, the category will, he continues, “offer a subconscious sense of protection” when travelling, working or adapting to socialising outside.

Cue Theory’s low-key approach to New York Fashion Week, the Manhattan Massive’s time to shine, yet this year – like its fellow fashion capitals – a predominantly digital affair. “In August, I thought a lot about what New York Fashion Week means and if it’s important for us to be a part of it,” Shukla, who marks seven years at the brand this month, explains. “I don’t think Theory is a brand that needs a podium in the same way other brands need and want that podium. It works for brands whose clothes are facilitated by the spectacle of the runway, but we’ve never been a brand who does that.”



Ultimately, Shukla believes ongoing relevance is rooted in quality. Theory designs and develops at the in-house atelier it shares with Helmut Lang and Uniqlo, also brands under the Fast Retailing umbrella. What he is eschewing: empty marketing. “A lot of digitally native brands coming up are excellent at storytelling and marketing, but the product isn’t quite there, which makes you wonder if the product is their product or their marketing is their product.”

While they have been approached by the booming rental sector to collaborate, Shukla says they’re not biting for now. “A core value of Theory is the idea of a style and a physical product that endures that people keep,” he says. Meanwhile investment into textile innovation and a traceability programme that has seen the brand ask its mills and suppliers to reformulate old fabrics.

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A partnership with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and its Justice Programme, which works to combat systemic racial inequality and oppression, has led to a diversity council in the company which will question “practices of hiring, retention and the balance of gender.” “We won’t get high marks in every regard, but we are introspective.”

If The Theory of Now is about the brand “discovering new freedoms”, as Shukla puts it, then it’s also about asking the right questions. “We don’t have all the answers, but we have been awakened by these events... and a company’s responsibility to not just have a point of view but a programme for how that point of view will be executed.”



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# fall couture 2017

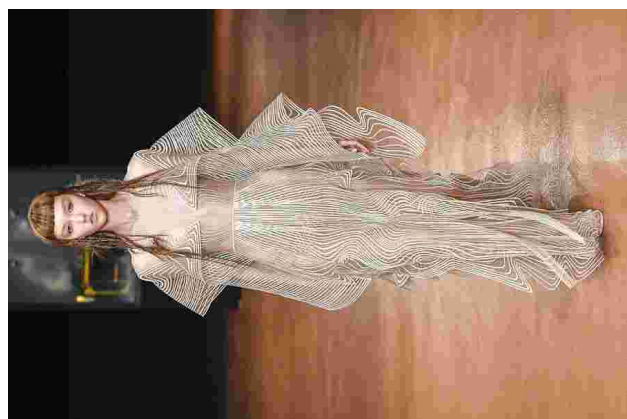
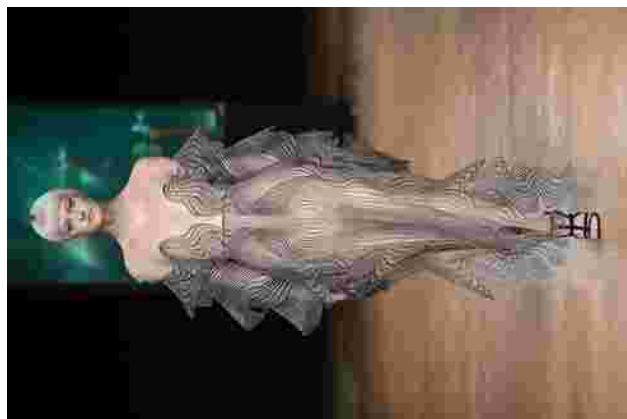
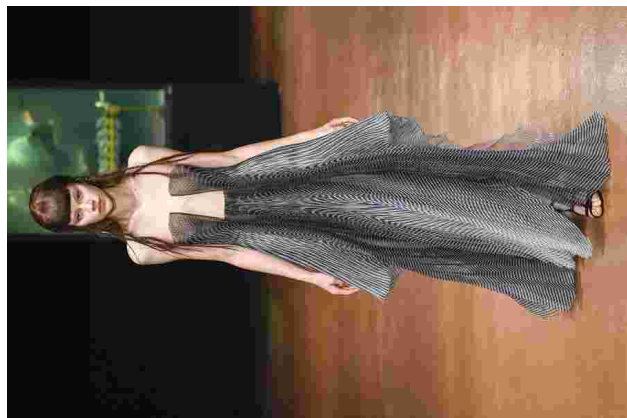
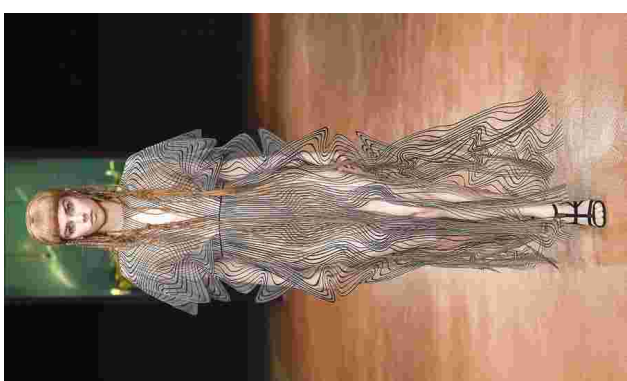
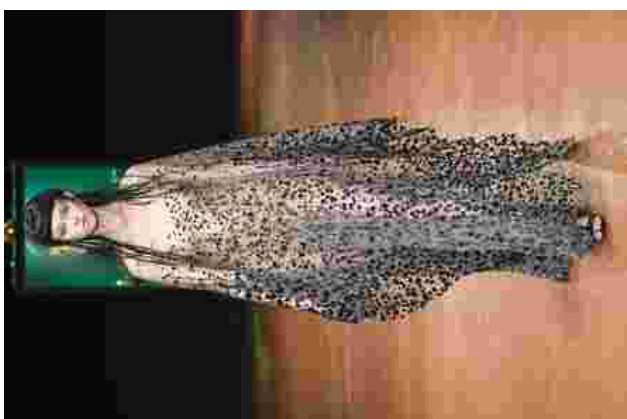
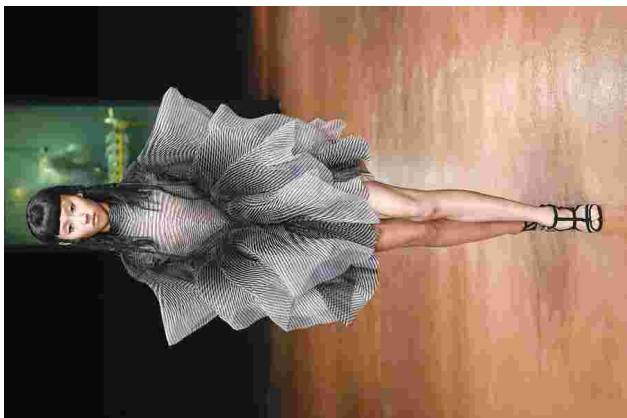
## iris van herpen

**a leap to the future**

Iris van Herpen is sui generis. Ten years after she began presenting her avant-garde fashion in Amsterdam—she moved her show to Paris at the invitation of the Fédération Française de la Couture in the Spring 2011 season—her technologically informed work remains so far ahead of what her designer peers are doing that she exists in a class all her own. Which other couturier is shearing metal into filament-thin geodesic rosettes and moulding them together into futuristic frocks? As those two closing pieces in that filament-thin wire glided by on 3-D-printed heels, a thought passed: Hollywood should appeal to Van Herpen to costume movies. In the wake of Wonder Woman's success, we're going to be seeing a lot more superheroines—it's about time—and wouldn't they look divine in the designer's cutting-edge creations? Wo-

nder Woman's backward-looking outfits were one of its few flaws.) Her Hollywood potential aside, the other 16 looks in this 10th anniversary collection shrunk the gap between science project and spectacular evening number, even when they required complicated laser cutting and heat bonding. Van Herpen's preoccupations this season were water and air, and the fluidity of both. So organza was printed with straight lines, then pleated to create wave patterns on robe-like gowns almost magisterial in the affect, while narrow columns of silver stretch fabric were laser-cut in moiré patterns to achieve a similar undulating look. And, yes, a bold starlet should by all means take one of these dresses for a spin on the red carpet.









# eytys ss20

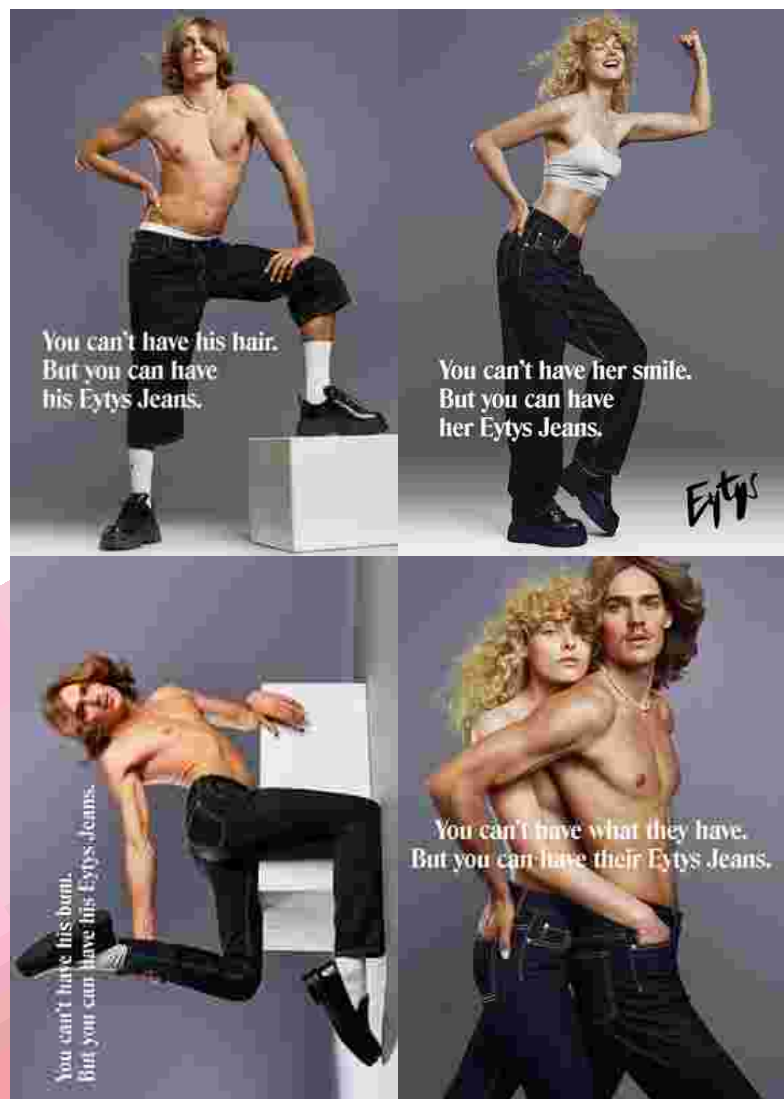
## consolidates as a fashion brand

"Club Omnivore", Eytys' SS20, is inspired by a fictitious tale of an inhabitant living in Eytys World, who effortlessly moves from college sweaters and Space Cowboy boots during the day to the motocross leather jacket and beach sandals at night. In addition, this new proposal includes glasses for the first time.

Despite the many novelties, the brand's newness is also supported by the classics: oversize trousers, sneakers and tops tight enough to highlight the width of the trousers and shoes.

Matching anoraks and shorts bring a sporty contrast to the overall offer, while large belts and hanging key rings give the garment additional visual appeal.

Eytys continues to evolve as a brand, this last week of fashion the firm has presented its new proposal ready-to-wear. A collection that channels the retro influence for which Eytys is known, while including a variety of references adapted to current trends.





"Fashion is part of the daily air and it changes all the time, with all the events. You can even see the approaching of a revolution in clothes. You can see and feel everything in clothes." —**Diana Vreeland**

"Don't be into trends. Don't make fashion own you, but you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress and the way to live." —**Gianni Versace**

"One is never over-dressed or under-dressed with a Little Black Dress." —**Karl Lagerfeld**

"What you wear is how you present yourself to the world, especially today, when human contacts are so quick. Fashion is instant language." —**Miuccia Prada**

"I like my money right where I can see it... hanging in my closet." —**Carrie Bradshaw**



quotes of the week



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