
VOGUE
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GABBY THOMAS
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SEÁN McGIRR
THE MAN WHO WOULD BE McQUEEN
WHEN SPORTS MET FASHION
THE STORY OF A PERFECT MARRIAGE

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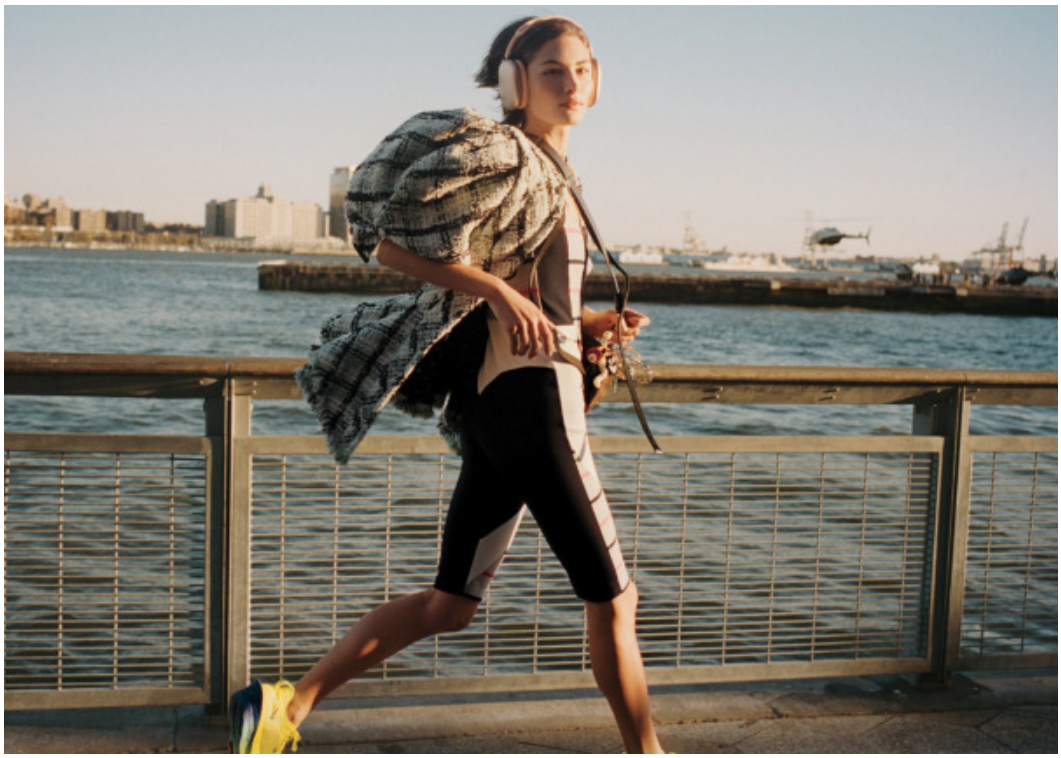

FLEX PACE
MODEL GRACE ELIZABETH COVERS THE WATERFRONT IN A JACKET, JUMPSUIT, AND BAG FROM LOUIS VUITTON AND NIKE SNEAKERS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANIEL ARNOLD.

Cover Look **Champions League**

WNBA star Angel Reese of the Chicago Sky (ABOVE LEFT in a Versace dress) and American Olympic champion sprinter Gabby Thomas (ABOVE RIGHT in a Sportmax top) have skills, speed, and singular style. Photographed by **Norman Jean Roy,** who worked with fashion editors **Julia Sarr-Jamois** for the Angel Reese shoot and **Yohana Lebasi** for the Gabby Thomas shoot. Details, see In This Issue.

FASHION EDITOR: JULIA SARR-JAMOIS. HAIR: JOEY GEORGE. MAKEUP: SUSIE SOBOL. PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. PROP STYLIST: PETER KLEIN. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

* The lights of Paris

Les lumières de Paris*
Francis Kurkdjian

Grand Soir

Letter From the Editor

BY DESIGN
LEFT: ZAC POSEN WITH JOY BRYANT, PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT FAIRER, *VOGUE*, 2003. ABOVE: McQUEEN'S NEW CREATIVE DIRECTOR, SEÁN McGIRR, PHOTOGRAPHED BY CAMPBELL ADDY.

Meeting the Moment

IT'S A LITTLE INCREDIBLE TO say, but I've known Zac Posen for more than two decades. And yet, somehow, for all of his many lives in fashion, I still think of him as a chic New York kid, bursting onto the scene with glamorous ideas about eveningwear. Of course, at 44, Zac is no longer a kid, and, in fact, he's moved to San Francisco, where he is now the creative director of Gap Inc. This is one of those turns in a designer's career that seem both wildly unlikely and absolutely perfect. As you can read this month in "From A to Zac," the profile written by Irina Aleksander, with portraits by Annie Leibovitz, Posen is imbuing Gap's accessible clothing with his inimitable creativity, romanticism, and good taste. (He weighs in on everything, all of Gap's brands, even making decor adjustments in the stores.) The new couture-inspired line he's designing, GapStudio, will arrive this spring, but he's already revealed his thinking on recent red carpets (which are Zac's terra firma). We've seen a shirtdress for Anne Hathaway, a hooded dress for Cynthia Erivo, and a sculptural gown made out of denim for Da'Vine Joy Randolph. "I love sleeping beauties," Posen says about the Gap renaissance he's spearheading. "For me it's like, *What an opportunity!*"

I can hear him saying that, with his playful high-spiritedness. I'll always remember how he graciously withdrew from consideration for the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund at the start of his career, when he received independent financial backing for his fledgling label. Other young designers, he believed, needed the Fashion Fund more than he did. That's the way Zac thinks, with a generosity of spirit. One of the best words to describe him is a simple one: *nice*. Zac is nice to everyone, not just the shiny people who are inevitably in his orbit. He and his fiancé, Harrison Ball, a New York ballet dancer Zac met through his love of dance, seem so happy getting to know their new Californian city, planning their lives together. "I didn't see this coming," Zac recently said to me about this new chapter. Bravo to Gap for choosing him.

There's another great designer profile in this month's issue, of Alexander McQueen creative director Seán McGirr. Hayley Maitland, an editor at British *Vogue*, spent months trailing McGirr, and the result, "McGirr's McQueen," with a portfolio by Campbell Addy, styled by IB Kamara, is a detailed portrait of a highly ambitious designer who has well and truly leaped into the deep end. It takes real confidence to fill a design position left by Sarah Burton and, of course, by Lee Alexander McQueen himself, and strike out in his own direction. But McGirr has done just that, overcoming some bad luck in the process (near-hurricane conditions soaked his first Paris show). His family background, his Celtic spirit, his love of indie music and nightlife, his headlong work ethic have all formed his point of view. I love to see a designer at a major house with such an authentic sense of self—and McGirr has chosen all the right people to work with, including the incredible set designer Tom Scutt, who made his second (and far drier) Paris show so arresting. I say this for both Seán and Zac: There's so much more to come.

Anna Wintour.

BRYANT AND POSEN: PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT FAIRER, *VOGUE*, NOVEMBER 2003. McGIRR: FASHION EDITOR: IB KAMARA. PRODUCED BY RAGI DHOLAKIA PRODUCTIONS. SET DESIGN: IBBY NJOYA. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

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SNOW GOOSE
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Contributors

The Giver

For "Man on Wire" (page 84), writer Wendell Steavenson met Adrien Brody in London, where, last fall, the actor was leading the world-premiere production of *The Fear of 13,* a play by Lindsey Ferrentino. Their conversation ranged from that show—based on a 2015 documentary about Nick Yarris, a man wrongfully imprisoned for decades—to Brody's work in *The Brutalist,* director Brady Corbet's epic, Golden Globe–nominated new film. Accompanying Steavenson's incisive portrait of a restless artist? Striking images by photographer and filmmaker Anton Corbijn, styled by Edward Bowleg III.

The Wheel Deal

If you think the pictures in "Go Time!" (page 62) are fun—teeming as they are with dogs, children, bicycles, and skateboards (that's model Grace Valentine above, ready to shred in a cape and jeans from Chanel, an FP Movement tee, and Coach shoes)—just know that the shoot itself was doubly so. "I loved working with Daniel," says fashion editor Julia Sarr-Jamois, referring to master street photographer Daniel Arnold. "He shot a big cast, but he brought such a sense of calm to the chaos." Add to the cool mood the fact that so many models were working with family (Liya Kebede with her daughter, Raee; Candice Swanepoel with her two young sons; Amelia Gray with her sister, Delilah Belle) and it's clear that, as Sarr-Jamois puts it, "everyone feels like themselves."

American Pastoral

When photographer Stefan Ruiz made the trip out to Kent, Connecticut, to capture the riotously colorful home of artist Sam McKinniss for "Through the Looking Glass" (page 88), written by *Vogue* senior editor Chloe Schama, he was totally enchanted by what he found. (See McKinniss—and one of his charming cow paintings—at near left, posed with his partner, writer Michael Londres.) "Sam McKinniss's house is great.… I could have photographed for a whole other day," Ruiz says. "The combination of the house's details and Sam's apparent natural sense of interior design was like a sensory overload, from the furniture and paintings to the wallpaper." At the same time, Ruiz admired how quiet and simple the rhythms of McKinniss's life were in the country. "I was impressed by his discipline, in terms of how he organized his day for painting," Ruiz notes. "He said that he gets up early, deals with emails for an hour or two, and then paints well into the afternoon."

BRODY: PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANTON CORBIJN. FASHION EDITOR: EDWARD BOWLEG III. PRODUCED BY NORTH SIX.
VALENTINE: PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANIEL ARNOLD. FASHION EDITOR: JULIA SARR-JAMOIS. PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. PROP STYLIST: PETER KLEIN. MCKINNISS AND LONDRES: PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEFAN RUIZ. SITTINGS EDITOR: MICHAEL REYNOLDS. PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.


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HIGH AND MIGHTY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Giuseppe Zanotti Design pumps from 2012; Prada's sandal from 2005; and Manolo Blahnik's heels from 2003.

IN STEP

Margaux Anbouba plays footsie with the final frontier of vintage shopping: shoes.

In 2012, Miuccia Prada sent a pair of Mary Janes down the runway so sweetly perverse that they sent a chill up my 21-year-old spine. While the design of the shoe itself—shiny black leather, with a heel arched like a back—was both elegant and exquisite, it was the final touch that thrilled me: The toe box appeared to be dipped in red latex.

Late last year, when I traveled to Milan for Prada's spring 2025 show to cover the beauty backstage, my eyes began to wander during the encore walk, and *ecco:* My dream shoes—last seen on the fall 2012 ready-to-wear runway—were reborn. In fact, five different designs from the house (aside from my beloved Mary Janes, there were geek-chic sandals, pointy-toe heels, zippy kitten heels from 2008, and platform penny loafers from spring '99) were given what Prada called the Re-Edition treatment in a show that paid tribute to Mrs. Prada's idiosyncratic yet always spot-on style. Sadly, not all of them made it from the runway to real life—including my Mary Janes—which meant that, 12 years after I first put eyes on them, I would have to hunt down some of the originals if I wanted to have a pair of my own.

Wearing vintage—whether the so-called true vintage that's more than 20 years old or a more recently minted find, maybe from resale sites like The RealReal—is clearly back on our collective mind. The vintage market has been growing by leaps and bounds in the last year, with reasons like sustainability and simply owning something unique being driving forces. Since buying a Lilli Ann coat from a store in Fort Worth, Texas, at age 15, I've amassed a closet (okay—two closets and three storage units) filled with carefully cataloged pieces. Each wrapped in pastel pink garment bags, the items include bespoke debutante dresses made to do the Texas dip in the 1950s, dozens of body-conscious Mugler originals from the '90s, and yards of silky lingerie by >34

ALL PHOTOGRAPHED BY RAYMOND MEIER FOR *VOGUE*. BLUE HEELS: MARCH 2012. SANDALS: MARCH 2005. LIME GREEN HEELS: MARCH 2003.

Vanity Fair's Little Gold Men podcast takes you inside the world of film and television, from standing ovations at Sundance to the Best Picture award at the Oscars. With special guest appearances from stars, creators, and critics, our expert hosts dive into the power, prestige, and glamour of Hollywood, as only *Vanity Fair* can.

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Christian Dior. Vintage underwear? Of course—it looked just right under vintage garments (though the very notion startled my former editor Chioma Nnadi when I mentioned it to her). For me, wearing vintage has always been about a sense of individuality—and, yes, the satisfaction of saying "thanks, it's vintage." (Translation: *No, you can't buy this at any old store.*)

Heading to lunch in a YSL Rive Gauche dress and another woman's brassiere? Sure—hence my trousseau of conical bras, slip skirts, and garters—but I've long been skeptical of walking a single step in somebody else's shoes. There's a certain ick factor involved—theoretically, at least: A lingerie set, after all, can be sanitized in ultrahot water. Shoes, somehow, feel even more personal—after all, they literally mold to the shape of the foot of the person who wears them. Still, if I ever wanted to reunite with my dream Mary Janes, it was time to take a deep, cleansing breath and get over all of this.

"Shoes are the vintage category that gets the most physical wear and tear," cautions Brit Blanco-Bird, the cofounder of the appointment-only vintage store Treasures of NYC—and who, tragically, hasn't seen my beloved Mary Janes—as I start my hunt. Because shoes literally hit the pavement, they're exposed to the elements in a way a dress or a handbag simply isn't. That's why finding vintage shoes in the like-new condition of so many dresses is unlikely.

TAKE TWO
Prada's Re-Edition series of so-called new vintage shoes gives new life to earlier-issued sandals and kitten heels. Photographed by Fujio Emura.

Undeterred, I plow ahead—but wait, no, I'm distracted: There's a pair of turquoise Giuseppe Zanotti butterfly heels that I *swear* I once saw on *Sex and the City* that make their way home with me, even though they look quite worse for wear. I reach out to Spasia Dimitrievska, the founder of online shop Fivedotsvintage, for some advice (after sorting out first that, no, she doesn't have my Pradas either—ugh). "The first thing I do is check to see what can be fixed," she says. "I always change the heel cap—that's the most obvious sign that a shoe has been worn—and a good cobbler can fix small scratches. There's a lot that can be salvaged."

I send my newly beloved butterfly heels to midtown Manhattan's Leather Spa—they recently repaired the Loewe Hammock bag that my 18-pound cat believed was his own vacation-style hammock—and they return patched, polished, and primed. (I also have my local cobbler replace the insole with something much more cushiony, and for a mere $17 I now feel like I'm floating on air, not tottering over West Village cobblestones in 20-year-old shoes.)

Dimitrievska cites slingbacks as one of the most in-demand styles from her shop, so I order two pairs rated "Excellent Condition" from The RealReal to see what the fuss is about—baby pink pointy-toes from Dolce & Gabbana and a pair of black Chanels with a big pilgrim-like buckle. I'm drawn to both because of their sexy-prim designs, and find myself clacking around the office with glee.

I've also long been obsessed with practical, chunky-heeled oxford pumps from the 1940s, and hunt down a pair—only to place my foot inside and realize instantly that something was inexplicably wrong. Are these shoes haunted by the spirit of the plucky, practical gal who clomped around in them, ration tickets in hand—or is the arch simply in the wrong place for my foot? Either way: Back to the purveyor they go.

Were shoes simply made differently in earlier decades—or is this fit issue the same kind of thing one still navigates with sample sales and online binges? "The manufacturing of heels hasn't changed much," says Brynn Jones Saban, the owner of Los Angeles's Aralda Vintage, "though modern-day heels can sometimes offer more comfort." (Comfort, of course, being relative, with one person's torture implement another person's treasure.) Also worth noting: The pairs of Chanel, Fendi, Dior, and the like that have survived for decades in immaculate condition were perhaps considered special-occasion shoes at the time they were first purchased—not meant for, say, me to be running around Park Slope on a Tuesday.

As for my quest: Jones Saban recently sold a pair of Pradas (that and Ghesquière-era Balenciaga are her most desired gets) to a friend but, alas, doesn't have the ones I'm looking for. And so, with my Prada search still at nada, I venture on to the vintage wild-wild-West site Poshmark, only to find my holy grails listed *in my size, under $300,* and with the rare, desirable label of *NWOT*—shopper slang for "new without tags." If it all feels just too good to be true, I quickly realize it is: The seller hasn't been active for over a year, and when I reach out with a quick "Is this still available?" message, it's unanswered. A Poshmark spokesperson, meanwhile, tells me that only items selling for $500 or more are sent through the store's authentication process, and that there's not much that can be done about dormant sellers.

Still, I log on to Poshmark each morning, hoping against hope for a sign. My follow-up messages become more and more desperate, ending with a still-unanswered "I'll give you double! Please!" Radio silence.

Will I ever know if this dreamy shoe fits? Hope springs eternal. In the meantime, I have five other pairs of new-to-me vintage shoes to wear while I continue to hunt. □


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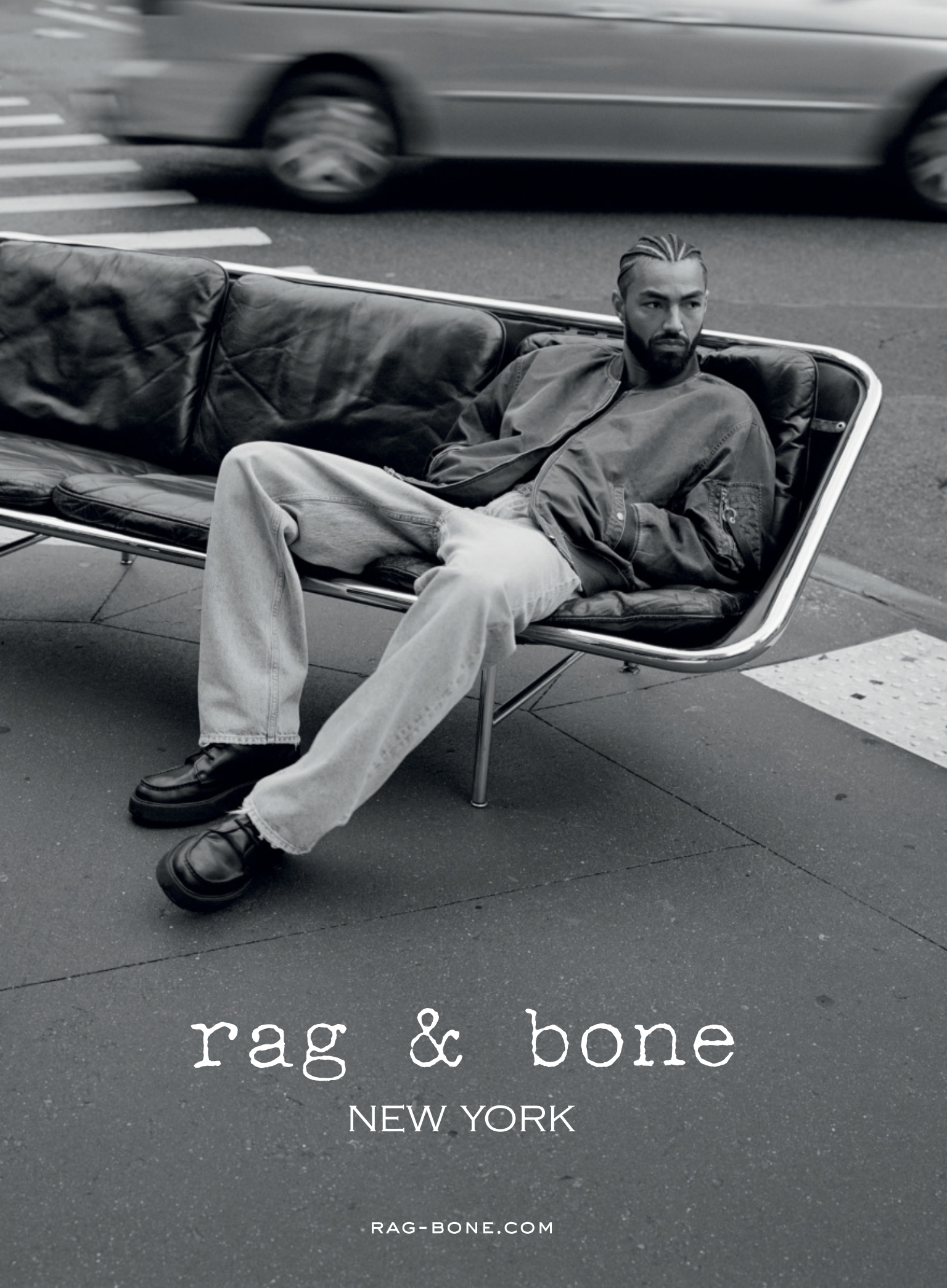
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MIRACLE DRIP

NAD+ infusions have become increasingly popular, promising to magically turn back the clock. But are they too good to be true? Mattie Kahn investigates.

I will be transparent," says the designer Azeeza Khan. "The first time I heard about NAD+ was because Hailey Bieber was doing it." The model was filmed sampling an intravenous drip laced with nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (or NAD+) for an episode of *The Kardashians.* (Her pal Kendall Jenner was partaking too.)

Khan insists she isn't one to crib longevity tips from famous 20-somethings, but her interest was piqued. NAD+ is a common coenzyme that has become a target for algorithm-conscious wellness warriors and credentialed researchers alike. Evangelists believe it has the potential to disrupt stubborn realities of the aging process, from the loss of muscle mass to flagging energy stores.

From the depths of Calabasas to the medi-spas of Madison Avenue, celebrities and civilians alike have been loading up on NAD+ with Ozempic-like zeal. Bieber seems to have converted her husband, who can be seen hooked up to an NAD+ IV drip in his documentary *Seasons.* Jennifer Aniston has pronounced the molecule "fascinating." Emily Oberg, founder of the label Sporty & Rich, administers her own doses at home, claiming improvements in her mood and stamina (and counting on a harder-to-measure cellular glow-up as she ages). Mara Raden—the clinical director of Raden Wellness, where Khan gets her NAD+ fix in Chicago—says her patients describe its effects as pure "brainpower." >43

THE SUBSTANCE

Both celebrities and civilians are flocking to NAD+, hoping to stem the signs of aging.

ILAN RUBIN/TRUNK ARCHIVE.

Sounds like a silver bullet (or snake oil, depending on your perspective), but there is theoretical science behind it. Michael Sagner, MD, founder and executive director of the nonprofit European Society of Preventive Medicine, explains that NAD+ is found in every cell in the human body, assisting with the most basic and essential functions: regulating energy production, cell metabolism, and the arbitration of cell survival. Sirtuins—a family of proteins that deals with inflammation and oxidative stress in cells—especially require NAD+ to work.

Shin-ichiro Imai, MD, a professor at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, tells me that his lab has been focused on sirtuins for well over a decade. With MIT professor Leonard Guarente, Imai published a landmark paper in 2000 that helped establish the link between NAD+, sirtuins, and aging. "We found that the production of NAD+ declines as we age," Imai says. And because energy decreases as we age too, it occurred to Imai and his peers that it might be worth investigating whether boosting NAD+ could offset the normal aging process. Imai homed in on the smaller molecules that cells use to produce NAD+, which can more easily penetrate cell walls. In 2016 he published another paper, illustrating that increasing one of those building blocks with a simple supplement could have a "multitude" of antiaging effects in mice. (Guarente was so bullish on the results that he later cofounded the supplement emporium Elysium Health, which now sells NAD+ precursors for human consumption.)

> "In very plain words, intramuscular and IV NAD+ intake is silly"

Scientists and doctors who study neurological disorders are particularly interested in what increasing NAD+ levels might do for their patients. Charalampos Tzoulis, MD, professor of neurology and neurogenetics at the University of Bergen and Haukeland University Hospital in Norway, runs a center that tests new treatments for diseases like Parkinson's. After administering a megadose of one of the NAD+ precursors, Tzoulis and his team were able to show, among a small sample of patients with Parkinson's, increased NAD+ levels in the brain, a durable metabolic response, and a "small, but significant" clinical improvement in symptoms. "And it was safe," Tzoulis continues. "With no side effects." He has since enrolled 400 patients in a more extensive follow-up trial, with results expected in June. If it works, he adds, "that will be big." As Tzoulis cautions, though, dozens of promising interventions have failed in the past. Neurological disorders, aging in general—they're thorny processes to disrupt.

Tzoulis isn't surprised that those with no neurodegenerative conditions—from Aniston to Oberg to the average Happier Grocery shopper—have latched on to the research. "These diseases are associated with aging," he says. "So people think, If NAD+ can help fight neurodegenerative disease, could I take it to prevent neurodegeneration?" With characteristic Norwegian bluntness, Tzoulis says scientists don't have an answer. Yet. If his current trial demonstrates that NAD+ is a viable treatment option for Parkinson's patients, he'll move on to researching whether it can help prevent the disease. After that, he'll investigate whether the general smoothie-imbibing population stands to benefit from supplementation. Still, he's clear on his priorities. He and his team did not get into the NAD+ game for the Goop crowd. "We were not looking at wellness. We were not looking at wrinkles," he states.

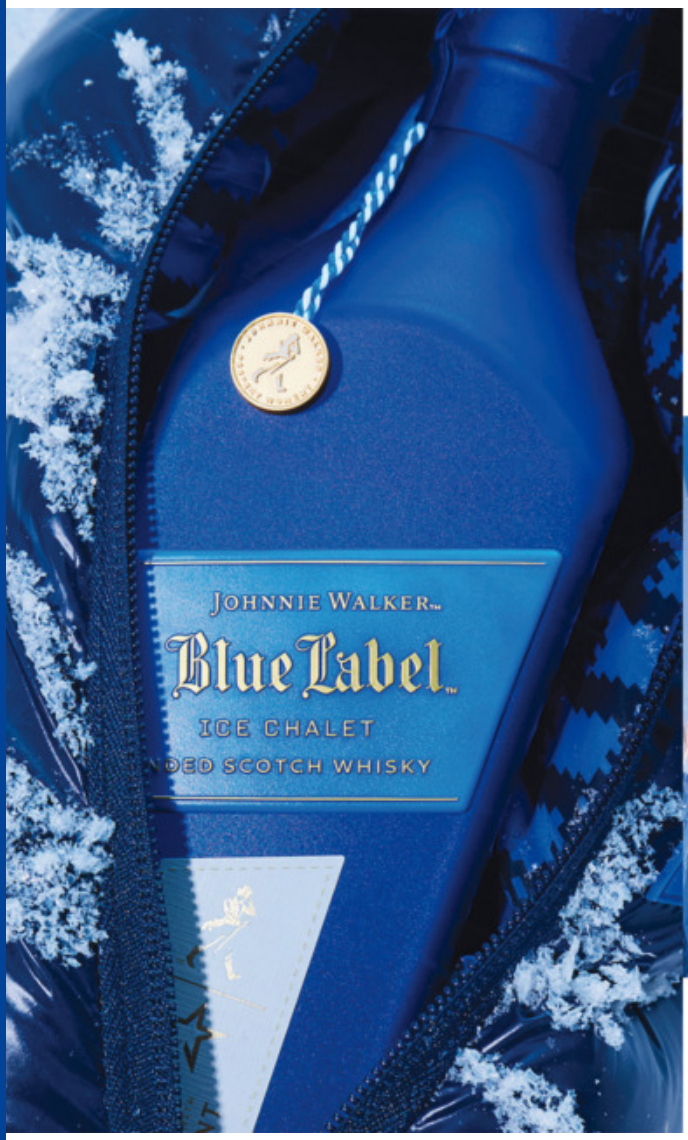
The same cannot be said for the spas at five-star hotels and members clubs that are now hawking IVs and branded injections, ranging between $900 and $1,300 a session. It's too bad, per just about every doctor and researcher I speak to, that they don't work. "IV drips are unnecessary and biologically do not make much sense, as there is no transporter to get the NAD+ molecule into the cells," Sagner says. When fans tout their wondrous rewards, Eric Verdin, president and CEO of the Buck Institute for Research on Aging, suspects that their reactions are owed to "a strong placebo effect." Tzoulis puts it in nonscientific terms: "In very plain words, intramuscular and IV NAD+ intake is silly."

Still, there are several less-suspect delivery mechanisms. Researchers have identified foods like edamame and avocado rich in NAD+ precursors, though it doesn't seem that people can offset NAD+ decline by eating enough bento boxes. Exercise can raise NAD+ levels. Also promising, according to those marketing supplements, are inexpensive pills formulated with NAD+ precursors. Those molecules are small enough to enter cells, where a series of chemical transformations turns them into NAD+. (Guarente's Elysium offers two versions, and companies like Thorne and Renue sell their own products too.) The Food and Drug Administration hasn't approved a single one, and the supplement marketplace remains unregulated.

In the meantime, Verdin—who has no supplements of his own to push—is patiently watching several ongoing clinical trials to see whether the research will validate the NAD+ mania. It cheers him to think even further ahead. He analogizes the decline in NAD+ over time to a basin filled with water that seems to be draining. "Is the problem that water isn't coming in, or is it that there's a leak?" he poses. "I think it makes a lot more sense to see where the leak is and how we can plug it." Could that kind of discovery make septuagenarian runners reach personal bests? Help DNA repair itself well into old age? Make our hair glossier? Skin smoother? Nails stronger? Is NAD+ better than Botox? Might I agree with influencers and celebrities about the virtues of a *supplement*? The scientists are too sober to indulge me now. But I'm willing to wait. After all, in a decade or two, maybe I'll be able to take a cheap little pill and roll back the clock. □

SKI SIP STYLE

WHEN IT COMES TO APRÈS-SKI, IT'S ALL ABOUT INDULGING IN LIFE'S BEST LUXURIES.



There's nothing like the energy of a day on the slopes—transitioning seamlessly from the thrill of skiing to the stylish warmth of après-ski. This winter, elevate your mountain retreat with the ultimate essentials, featuring a collaboration between Johnnie Walker and luxury skiwear brand Perfect Moment. From what to wear to what to sip, here's your guide to reimagined alpine indulgence.

SET THE SCENE

Après-ski is more than just unwinding; it's about dialing up the energy as the mountains glow during the blue hour. The Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ice Chalet bottle, wrapped in a reversible puffer-inspired bag by Perfect Moment, combines flair with functionality. Whether you're toasting at The Vintage Room at St. Regis Deer Valley in Park City, Utah, or enjoying the lively scene at Lincoln Bar's sundeck in Mammoth, California, or soaking in the dynamic atmosphere at Snow Lodge in Aspen, Colorado, the Blue Label Ice Chalet sets the tone for a night filled with style and celebration.

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Two icons collide in the Johnnie Walker x Perfect Moment capsule collection, where the timeless Blue Label square bottle meets Perfect Moment's bold star logo and houndstooth pattern. Curated by Perfect Moment ambassador Priyanka Chopra Jonas, this collection merges high-performance fabrics with vibrant blue hour-inspired hues, creating alpine fashion that blends effortless sophistication with wearability.

SIP ON SOMETHING SPECIAL

Every luxury moment deserves a luxury beverage. The Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ice Chalet, crafted by master blender Emma Walker, is a rare blend with notes of apple, clove, and smoky warmth. Enjoyed in a Blue Label Ice Chalet Manhattan or served simply over an ice rock, this scotch transforms any mountain get-together into an extraordinary occasion.

MAKE LASTING MEMORIES

The time after a day on the slopes is about exceptional flavors and lively experiences. The Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ice Chalet bottle pairs perfectly with standout dishes like the St. Regis Deer Valley's exclusive Blue Burger, turning every gathering into a vibrant culinary and social experience. From chic rooftop venues to cozy fireside dinners, these elevated moments make every high-altitude retreat truly remarkable. Cheers to style, connection, and the ultimate après-ski season.

APRÈS-SKI REDEFINED WITH
JOHNNIE WALKER X PERFECT MOMENT

EXPRESS YOURSELF
Toossi, the winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for drama for *English*, at the Persian restaurant Sofreh in Brooklyn. Photographed by Jonathan George.

TESTING GROUND

Sanaz Toossi brings *English,* her play about the trials of learning a new language, to Broadway.

Sanaz Toossi doesn't know quite how to feel when we speak in early November. On the one hand, the 33-year-old playwright's fleet and heartfelt drama *English*—about a group of people (parents, students, young professionals) preparing to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL, in Iran in 2008—will open on Broadway in January. Acclaimed during its 2022 run at the Linda Gross Theater in Manhattan, the piece, which snatched up the Pulitzer Prize in 2023, will once again be directed by Knud Adams, and star Marjan Neshat, Tala Ashe, Hadi Tabbal, Pooya Mohseni, and Ava Lalezarzadeh, all of them making their Broadway debuts.

"I hate when we use the word *family* in theater, but I do make an exception for them," Toossi tells me of that group. Funny, contemplative, and rather glamorous, she tells me that her cast is "just the most beautiful, generous, extraordinary group of artists that I've ever worked with." Neshat says that after the curtain came down on their final performance off-Broadway, "we all sat in our dressing room and wept for hours. We were so connected to that play."

Still, the presidential election—not yet a week behind us—has unnerved Toossi a little. Years ago an early version of *English* served as part of her graduate thesis at New York University, hewed from her outrage at Donald Trump's Islamophobic visa restrictions when he first took office. (The daughter of Iranian immigrants, Toossi grew up speaking Farsi at home in Orange County, California, and visiting Iran in the summer.) That the play should be heading to Broadway just as Trump returns to the White House is, in a word, bewildering to her. "I don't know what it means that those of us onstage and behind the scenes get to be experiencing what I think is a big career achievement, while the very people we're representing are being villainized and dehumanized," Toossi says. "I don't know how to talk about that." Indeed, having recently moved into a new apartment in Brooklyn, she is grateful, at the moment, for a task as pleasantly anodyne as unpacking boxes. "No mental engagement has been really soothing," she says, laughing dryly. "I'm really enjoying it."

But make no mistake: There is nothing ponderous or overtly political about *English.* The show is much sweeter, funnier, and plainly more *human* than that, taking as its principal subject the mortifying ordeal of trying to make yourself understood in a foreign language. Toossi cannot bear the idea that "people would come see our play and pat themselves on the back" because of where it's set. "I promise you, I'm not going to teach you anything," she says. "See our play because it's a good time."

Both Adams and Neshat recall the thrill of their first off-Broadway preview. "It felt like inviting 200 people into your living room," Adams says, "but from the first scene, they were just dying of laughter, hooked into the story immediately." Adds Neshat: "I think we all walked offstage thinking, Not only do we have a play, but I think they're experiencing the play that we wanted to put forward."

Now that they know the show works—with a flurry of well-regarded regional productions in the intervening years to prove it—the group's challenge, as they ready their move to 42nd Street, is to maintain, over the course of its three-month run, that magic *something* that made *English* sing in 2022. "The first time we did this play, we closed our eyes, held hands, and we just leapt," Toossi says. Up and over they go again.—**MARLEY MARIUS**

HAIR AND MAKEUP: KAREN SLOAN. FACE TIME BEAUTY.

THE NEW YORKER

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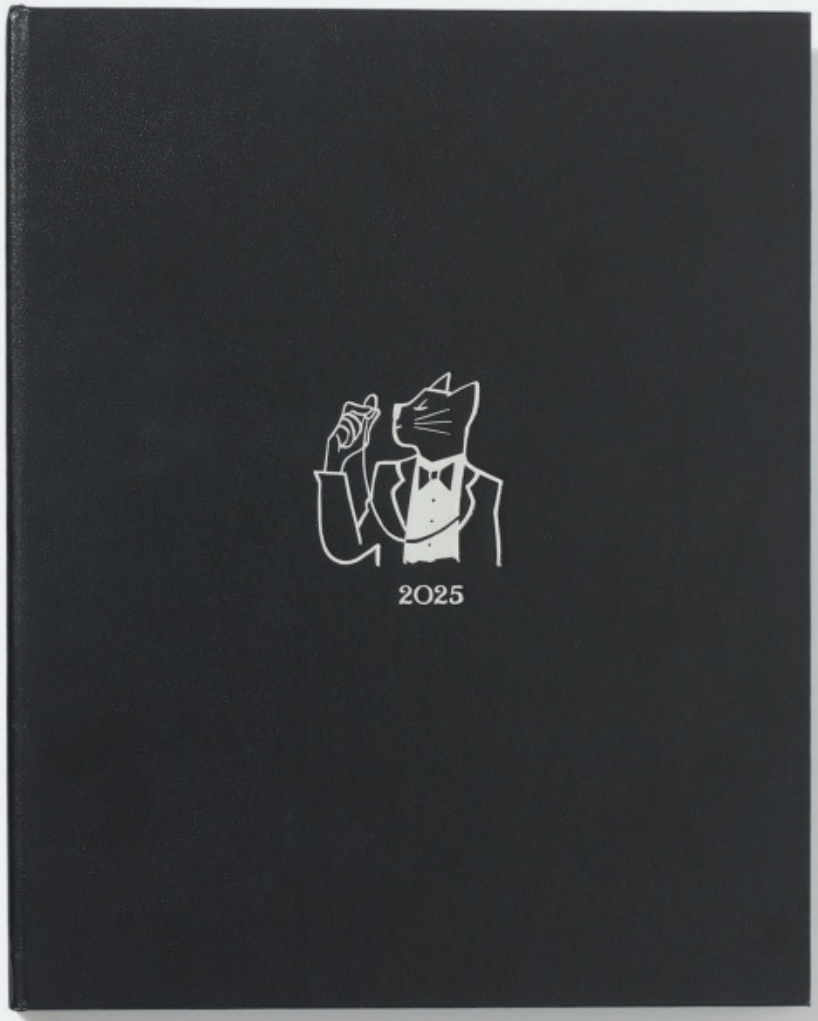

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MIND THE GAP
The launch of GapStudio reconnects Posen (FAR LEFT) with designing for every aspect of life—from laid-back denim on actor Callina Liang (soon to be seen in the film *Presence*) to high-glam red on *The Morning Show*'s Nicole Beharie. All wearing GapStudio (here and throughout); gap.com.
Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

From A to Zac

Zac Posen's arrival at Gap was a surprise to many, yet the former wunderkind of New York fashion is loving every minute of his new life. Irina Aleksander meets him as he goes big—and gets ready to dress America. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

Zac Posen and his design team are finishing a custom dress for an actress. He has done this countless times before under his namesake line, which was shuttered in 2019. The difference today is that he is doing it via Zoom from a corner office at Gap Inc.'s corporate mother ship in San Francisco. And there is some question about whether the gown, made of Gap's lightweight T-shirt material, will provide the actress with enough support.

"She doesn't need boning, I don't think," Posen tells his team in New York, "but she does like being controlled and smooth. She has to be able to wear a bra."

Outside, ships and helicopters glide across the turquoise expanse of San Francisco Bay. "It's like the craziest screen saver ever," Posen says. "The weather changes so dramatically. I'll be in meetings, and it's like Wagner outside. Or Chopin. It's trippy." Since starting the job as the creative director of Gap Inc. and chief creative officer of Old Navy a year ago, Posen has relocated to the city part-time. When I saw him in New York the previous week, he had flown in late on a Sunday, dressed Cynthia Erivo in a hooded black velvet gown—inspired by the Gap hoodie—for the CFDA awards Monday night, and caught a 5 a.m. flight back the next morning to get in a full day at the office. "I'm basically on the plane every other week," he says. "It's like teleporting: I close my eyes and hope for Wi-Fi."

Posen's job, which Gap Inc. CEO Richard Dickson invented for him, is not very clearly defined. Posen chimes in on design, retail, and advertising across the company's stable of brands: Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy, Athleta. But the only collection he's actually designing is GapStudio, a new line arriving in March intended as an elevated take on Gap classics. The 53-piece collection includes tailored sailor pants, trenches in denim and khaki, logo sweatshirts, and new colorways of the so-called Anne Hathaway dress, named after the shirtdress Posen created for the actress to wear to a Bvlgari event last year. "Because it was Zac, I knew it wasn't going to be just a shirtdress," Hathaway tells me. Inspired by Gap's shirting, the dress had off-shoulder cap sleeves, a hip-high slit, and an exposed sheer corset. "He himself is so glamorous, but in a way that feels very innate and casual," she says, "and that's how the dress made me feel: very light and very glamorous."

Today, Posen looks the part of senior management in a double-breasted houndstooth suit by Banana Republic ("It's really important to live and breathe your products," he says). But at 44, he still has the exuberant energy of a kid on Sunday morning. His curls are in a perpetual, endearing bed head. He smiles big and often, with dimples punctuating his cheeks, and reacts to ideas for upcoming collections as if sampling new foods. When Posen likes something, such as a new print or a reusable bag, he declares it "yummy." When he doesn't, such as a certain shade of orange, he calls it "yucky." A color called sulfur gives him "the heebie-jeebies," as does wasteful packaging. When he talks about the construction of a garment, he will often remind everyone that he was a "Lego kid," meaning a child of the 1980s, and, like Oprah, he loves a full-circle moment.

Posen also loves to play. On a marble coffee table in the adjoining room is a stack of Gap fabrics—denim, khaki, jersey—which Posen hopes to drape on a mannequin today. But for now, he still has a bunch of meetings to get through. He has now rolled his swivel chair to the giant monitor, peering into the screen to count the cowls on a red sequined gown, which Jennifer Hudson's stylists partnered with him to create. The T-shirt dress, meanwhile, is for Demi Moore, who appeared in an iconic 1990 Gap ad. When Moore wears the dress in December, that will be—that's right—another full-circle moment. "She likes to hide a heel," Posen tells his team. "Give her a little train, and we'll chop it off if she wants."

For skeptics wondering what Posen, the savant of ball gowns, is doing at a retailer that built its business on everyday basics, it's interesting that the earliest fruits of his tenure have been custom eveningwear. Posen sees GapStudio almost like a couture house. Yes, it involves custom pieces, but the bigger idea is to drive people into the stores. "If Louis Vuitton can have ball gowns that they don't produce on a red carpet in order to sell luggage," he says, "why can't Gap have a T-shirt gown on the red carpet? But we'll actually produce it." And at an accessible price point. Eight days after Hathaway wore her shirtdress, Gap made a version of it available for $158. It sold out within hours. "It was a real viral moment," Posen says. "I can get you the stats." ("He cannot," a Gap representative tells me, explaining that the company does not divulge those numbers.)

According to Dickson, such moments helped remind people that Gap still exists. Since the company's 1990s heyday, a combination of too many stores, too much merchandise, and a lack of cohesive vision had sent sales on a steady decline, and the company's valuation from about $40 billion in 2000 to $7.75 billion in 2023, the year Dickson joined the company. He needed to capture attention quickly and improve morale. Posen's creations for Hathaway, Erivo, and Da'Vine Joy Randolph at last year's Met Gala did just that. "Those sparkles turned heads," Dickson tells me, snapping his fingers. "The lights were now on at the Gap." Though the cleanup began long before Posen's

THE SCARLET AND THE BLACK

Posen cut his teeth on red-carpet dressing—and he sees a place for it at Gap too. FROM LEFT: Julia Schlaepfer (starring in the *Yellowstone* prequel, *1923*) and Laysla De Oliveira (of *Lioness*). In this story: hair, Edward Lampley; makeup, James Kaliardos.

LOVE ALL THE WAY
Posen and fiancé Harrison Ball at home in New York (though these days they're spending plenty of time in San Francisco). Details, see In This Issue.

arrival, Gap Inc. has now seen sales grow for four consecutive quarters, and its stock is up 16 percent.

Posen, for his part, saw himself in Gap's plight. "I love sleeping beauties," he says, adding, "America loves heralding and shooting down. And I've definitely been a dove, a pigeon, a unicorn, and a dragon. So for me it's like, *What an opportunity!*"

Back in 2019, after Posen's company closed, he found himself in a professional abyss. He wondered how he would support himself. Posen went to Los Angeles, flirting with the idea of working in Hollywood. He tried Paris, where he interviewed for jobs at French houses. Eventually, he returned to New York, supporting himself with private commissions including bridal dresses, a piece for Drake's 2023 tour, and costumes for Ryan Murphy's *Feud: Capote vs. The Swans.* He and Dickson connected in the fall of 2023. Dickson was previously the president of Mattel, where he shepherded the *Barbie* blockbuster. "I've been a Willy Wonka at Mattel," Posen recalls Dickson saying, "and I need to find my Willy for Gap."

The company's San Francisco headquarters has thousands of employees. Since I am also a child of the '80s, the offices reminded me of The Sims, with its busy collective of perpetually smiling people, a "Gapeteria," and a chief of technology named Sven. Posen bounds about its 15 floors, darting between meetings. To bypass the elevator bays, he'll often just take the stairs. "I would be terrified to see my steps," he says. He has joked that the company should get him a fireman's pole so he can scoot down to his office.

The company's language of corporate acronyms are a challenge for Posen's dyslexia. His calendar is filled with SLT (senior leadership team) and LRP (long-range planning) meetings and reviews of P2Ms (product to market). For the first time in history, the company is redesigning stores for its brands all at once, and Posen goes over playlists, floor plans, and window displays. The day I visit marks the reopening of a Gap store in New York's Flatiron district, and Posen proudly tells me that the paint on the walls was purchased with his personal Farrow & Ball discount. When he visited the new Banana Republic flagship in San Francisco, he inquired why the decor included a bowl of green apples and had it swapped out for an asparagus fern.

In the afternoon we settle into Posen's office, where he unlaces his boots. "The shoes are coming off," he says. "You don't care, right?" It makes sense that Posen, who is highly tactile, would need to design barefoot. By this point in our time together, he had insisted on fixing the collar of my shirt, tried on a woman's blazer worn by Gap Inc.'s VP of store development (who tells me that Posen inspected the fabric of her pants the previous week), unbuckled his pants to check the weave of a Gap tag, snapped a leaf off a plant to add to a mood board for summer, and studied the brand labels on denim worn by three separate Gap employees.

Posen slips a pincushion onto his forearm. He takes the corner of a denim sheet, pins it onto a mannequin just below the ribs, and tells me how, two weeks after meeting with Dickson, he flew west to appear before the company's board. Their questions were what one might expect: What happened to his company? After making his name in eveningwear, why did he want to make jeans and T-shirts? Did he understand the complexities of a $15 billion business?

Posen had once led the way for a generation of designers that emerged in post-9/11 New York. His first show, which took place weeks after the towers fell, was made possible in part because the city's factories emptied out, allowing his designs to be made. What followed was 20 years of ups and downs as he struggled to keep his business afloat, ultimately succumbing to the same forces plaguing many midsize fashion brands: a flawed wholesale model, the excesses of runway collections, and a lack of solid financial partnership to guide him through it all. The house's intellectual property (including Posen's name) has since been sold off to a licensing firm.

And yet during that time, Posen had amassed an enormous amount of experience. It is worth listing for the sheer scope of it: He has collaborated with Target, MAC cosmetics, Magnum Ice Cream, David's Bridal, two diamond companies, Kenmark Eyewear, Barbie, the Muppets, and brands in mainland China and South America; he's also been the creative director of womenswear at Brooks Brothers, designed uniforms for Delta Airlines and for the waiters at Carbone, created two diffusion lines, written a cookbook, and spent six years as a judge on *Project Runway.* "People might interpret all that as ego or attention-seeking, and in fact it was 95 percent survival mode," Posen says, explaining that it was part of his extensive effort to keep his company going. "But it definitely prepared me."

Among those whom Dickson called when considering Posen was Domenico De Sole, the chairman of Tom Ford International, who had underwritten, along with Ford, Posen's second runway show in 2002. De Sole, who'd been a member of Gap's board until 2017, thought Posen would be a great fit. "Zac is a very creative person," De Sole tells me, "but he's also a thoughtful person. He understands marketing and business."

In his office, Posen has now pinned the denim fabric around the hips, folding each corner like origami. He takes white poplin, which at this moment looks no more interesting than a bedsheet, drapes it over one shoulder, and rips it straight across, leaving a heap of discarded fabric on the carpeted floor.

What appealed to Posen about the job was the opportunity to be integrated into so many people's lives. He was impressed to learn, for example, that Old Navy was the second-largest apparel brand in the US, with $8.2 billion in sales and an exponential potential for growth. And he would now have the solid, experienced partners he'd always looked for. Earlier I watched him show summer sketches to Dickson and Mark Breitbard, Gap's CEO. There was a

chambray "Gaptan" (a Gap caftan), as well as pieces in knit pointelle, sheer mesh, and macramé. Dickson didn't like the mesh, but Breitbard encouraged Posen not to self-edit, a rare thing for a designer to hear. "Sample, play," Breitbard said. "Let's try it."

I wondered if Posen feels a new kind of freedom with the resources of a major company behind him. "I mean, this is the big leagues," he says, but he pushes back on the idea that he's under any less pressure. "It's a public company, which is a whole different level of intensity. That means you're in touch with the market, the weather, the world beyond." He means literally: the weather. On one of his first days on the job, Posen found himself in the boardroom looking at global weather patterns and how they might affect the price of linen in two years.

Dickson tells me that Gap has different challenges than a brand like Barbie. "Barbie had haters," he says, "so you had people who actually didn't like you. Here, you have people who like you, but just weren't engaged anymore." Meanwhile, its role in the market has been encroached upon not just by fast-fashion giants like Uniqlo and H&M but even by luxury brands such as The Row, which looked more Gap than Gap itself when it presented baggy jeans, long-sleeve tees, and denim shirting in recent collections. Dickson's hope is to reclaim some of that space. "How do you do it?" Posen asks, before answering his own question. "You go back to what you do best."

> "How do you do it?" Posen asks, about the task ahead of him, before answering his own question. "You go back to what you do best"

Every detail of GapStudio, from the brand patches to be sewn into the garments (leather, embossed, "yum") to the stock of a hangtag and cotton string (black, waxed) and shopping bags (heavyweight, debossed), has been the result of meticulous deliberation. At one point I watched Posen's design director, Thomas Vasseur, whom Posen met at Azzedine Alaïa's studio in 2000, confer with Posen about whether a gift box should come with a high-quality ribbon. "When you receive a product, of course I'm thinking waste," Vasseur began, "but I'm also thinking…"

"…experience," Posen said, finishing his thought. "Of course." Later, Posen tells me, "It's not luxury, but it's, you know, yummy."

As we've been talking, the sheets of fabric on the mannequin have transformed into a fishtail denim skirt and a raglan-seam top that recalled the '90s. Posen thought he might send a photo of it to Uma Thurman, a close friend, or maybe it would become part of a future collection. "And that's a really great way of creating, right?" he says. "That just became something very hands-on and artisanal. Our customers deserve that experience. It shouldn't be price prohibitive—I just don't believe in that."

In the early evening, we leave the office and head to Posen's home in Telegraph Hill, a northeast corner of the city known for the wild parrots that live in its trees. We drive past Chinatown, where chef Kathy Fang, daughter of the legendary House of Nanking founders, has become Posen's food guide, and Vacation, a vintage store where Posen finds inspiration in Gap designs from prior decades. (When I stopped by the previous day, the owner, Kristin Klein, told me she was saving all vintage Gap and Banana Republic pieces for Posen. "He gets first dibs," she said.)

"This is the hill that keeps my ass up," Posen says as we turn onto a steep road leading to his home. At the door we are greeted by Posen's fiancé, Harrison Ball, a former New York City Ballet dancer.

When Posen got the job, the couple had one week to find a place to live. Ball found their home on Zillow. A creaky four-story rental with steep stairs and clear views of the bay, it was built in 1852 by a ship captain. They've been working with designer Ken Fulk to make it theirs, updating an upstairs sitting room with red velvet Banana Republic sofas and a painting by Posen's father. The couple's dogs, Tsuki and Bizet, circle underfoot as Posen slumps in Ball's arms in the kitchen. "What a week," he says.

While Posen walks the dogs, Ball tells me how they met. They first saw each other in 2019 at Lincoln Center when Posen designed costumes for the ballet. Ball had just been hit by a car, so he wasn't dancing, and Posen's company was in its final days. ("He was masking a lot of pain," Ball says.) A few months later, Ball was performing as Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake.* He asked a mutual friend to invite Posen to rehearsals. Ball imagined wooing Posen, but instead Posen came onstage afterward and gave Ball a correction. "Granted, I later saw a tape of that performance, and he was right," Ball says.

As the pandemic hit the city, Ball fled to an island in the Bahamas where his father has a home. Posen holed up in Bridgehampton with the Schnabels, the family of his close childhood friend Lola. Ball and Posen began exchanging messages. But then the cell tower on the island was struck by lightning, wiping out the internet. Months went by without the two communicating.

In the fall of 2020, with pandemic restrictions easing, Ball and Posen met for coffee back in New York. Ball had planned to visit for three days and ended up staying a month. During a day trip to Woodstock, Ball asked Posen what he was looking for. Posen said he wanted to have a family. Ball was 27 then. He had been dancing since the age of four and was experiencing freedom for the first time. He encouraged Posen to do the same—to go and live and date people.

They didn't see each other again until early the next year. When Ball returned to New York, Posen sent a car to pick him up from the airport. But Ball panicked. He asked the driver to turn around, and flew to North Carolina instead to see family. "I could feel CONTINUED ON PAGE 106

PRODUCED BY AL STUDIO. PRODUCTION COORDINATION BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS INC. SET DESIGN: MARY HOWARD. SPECIAL THANKS TO HOOK STUDIOS AND HOOK PROPS.

Everywhere You Look

A paradigm shift is taking place in fashion, with the old markers—exclusivity, luxury, aspiration—now being joined by widely welcomed notions of ingenuity, affordability, and accessibility. From Clare Waight Keller taking the reins at Uniqlo and Zac Posen ushering in a new era at Gap to the come-up of labels like Toteme and The Frankie Shop—and visionary designers collaborating with big brands—chic clothes are becoming more attainable to more and more people. The clothing you see here—a mix of classic Americana, young designer conceptualism, and athletic flourishes—ranges from $7 to the (still-substantial) $1,000. Call it the democratization of fashion. Photographed by Inez & Vinoodh.

TIE BREAK

Model Vittoria Ceretti wears an **All-In** top ($375; all-in-studio.com) and **All-In x Guess U.S.A.** skirt. OPPOSITE: Model Anok Yai wears an **Arc'teryx** windbreaker ($700; arcteryx.com), **Willy Chavarria x Adidas** jacket ($200; adidas.com) and **Wales Bonner** sweater ($570; walesbonner.com for similar styles).

Fashion Editor: Camilla Nickerson.

IT'S A CINCH
Suffice it to say that model Loli Bahia is open to a slightly subversive take on suiting. **A.P.C.** jacket ($630; apc-us.com), **COS** shirt ($135; cos.com) and **The Frankie Shop** pleated skirt ($240; the frankieshop.com).

STITCH IN TIME
Model Devyn Garcia is in full-on bombshell mode, wearing a custom denim dress from **GapStudio,** an **R13** shirt ($595; r13.com), and a **Frame** skirt ($268; frame-store.com).

BLUE ANGEL
There is something unmistakably Faye Dunaway–in–*Network* about model Angelina Kendall's long, loose layers, beginning with that natty pinstriped **Coach** jacket ($450; coach.com for similar styles) and carrying on through her belted **Proenza Schouler White Label** coat and **Polo Ralph Lauren** dress ($398; ralphlauren.com).

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CROWNING GLORY
Model Amelia Gray wears a **La Perla** slip dress. In this story: hair, Mustafa Yanaz; makeup, Fulvia Farolfi. Details, see In This Issue.

ON THE RUN
Model Grace Elizabeth makes haste in a flurry of great prints. Jacket, jumpsuit, and bag from **Louis Vuitton**; select Louis Vuitton boutiques. **Nike** sneakers; nike.com. **Apple** AirPods Max.
Fashion Editor: Julia Sarr-Jamois.

Go Time!

Whether you're commuting via train, bike, skateboard, or feet on pavement, breezy layers, jolly prints, and sensible-chic shoes get you where you're going in style. Photographed by Daniel Arnold.

DOG DAYS

FROM LEFT: Model Grace Burns wears a **Michael Kors Collection** coat; michaelkors.com. **Simone Rocha x Crocs** shoes; simonerocha.com. **Jil Sander by Lucie and Luke Meier** bag. Model Lila Moss wears a **Miu Miu** coat, sneakers, and chain belts; miumiu.com. Model Stella Jones wears a **Coach** jacket; coach.com for similar styles. **Dolce & Gabbana** dress; select Dolce & Gabbana boutiques.


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PEDAL PUSHER

ABOVE: Model Paloma Elsesser spins her wheels in a **JW Anderson** top; jwanderson.com for similar styles. **Hermès** bag; Hermès boutiques. **Rolex** watch. OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: Model Liya Kebede wears **Bottega Veneta**; bottegaveneta.com. **Cartier** earrings; Cartier boutiques. Raee Kebede wears a **Coach** T-shirt; coach.com for similar styles. **Hermès** jumpsuit; Hermès boutiques. **Chloé** bag.

TRAINING DAY

FROM LEFT: Model Delilah Belle sits pretty in a **Burberry** dress and jacket; us.burberry.com. **Apple** AirPods. Her sister, model Amelia Gray, wears a jacket and dress from **Prada** (prada.com)—and the kind of don't-mess-with-me glare that any subway habitué knows well. At her side, a **Prada** bag and **Beats** Solo 4 headphones.

GANG'S ALL HERE

ABOVE: Model Candice Swanepoel keeps her brood in order in a **Gucci** coat, top, jeans, and scarf; gucci.com. **Birkenstock** shoes. Her sons, Anacan (CENTER) and Ariel, both wear **Brooks Brothers**; brooksbrothers.com. Anacan carries a **Coach** backpack. OPPOSITE: Model Grace Valentine grabs air in a **Chanel** cape and jeans; select Chanel boutiques. **Coach** shoes.

BEAUTY NOTE

CeraVe's new hair-care line includes Gentle Hydrating Shampoo and Conditioner formulated to help maintain a healthy scalp barrier (and flowing locks).

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PROP STYLIST: PETER KLEIN.

COMING THROUGH!
Model Divine Mugisha (LEFT) wears a dress and mask from **Balenciaga**; balenciaga.com. Pink **Hermès** bag; Hermès boutiques. **Proenza Schouler** black mesh bag; proenzaschouler.com. **All-In** brown bag (ON THE GROUND); all-in-studio.com. Model Alex Consani wears a **Loewe** dress; loewe.com for similar styles. In this story: hair, Joey George; makeup, Susie Sobol. Details, see In This Issue.

WHEN SPORTS MET FASHION...

Athletes as muses? The stadium as runway? The arena as front row? Fashion and sport needed no introduction, but lately they've become obsessed. Maya Singer reports. Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

GOLD STANDARD

"It's always been both: basketball *and* fashion," says WNBA star—and emerging fashion icon—Angel Reese, in a Stella McCartney dress. OPPOSITE: Loewe coat. Fashion Editor: Julia Sarr-Jamois.

I've been sports-pilled. I'm not sure when it started, but I can tell you when I knew: The Olympics were winding down, I was watching rhythmic gymnastics, and it struck me with a pang that in a matter of days there would be no more of this, this pageant of human effort and excellence. No more synchronized diving. No more twirling shot-putters or pole-vaulters flying backward through the air. Farewell to the impassive, agile grapplers, and to the whiplash pleasure of a badminton rally. Or—*wait*—I interrupted myself. Tennis! Tennis has rallies! How many days until the US Open? Could I make it until then?

I guess everyone's been sports-pilled. Because, wow, the Open was a *scene*—Taylor Swift, Kendall Jenner, movie stars, and influencers everywhere. Maybe they'd all gotten really into *Challengers.* Or maybe this was part and parcel of a turn in the zeitgeist, which is what I suspect. Because around the same time, the spring 2025 fashion season was underway, and it was like you couldn't throw a stone without hitting a sports star. Gymnasts, sprinters, basketball players, footballers, boxers perching their muscular butts on seats at Michael Kors, Tommy Hilfiger, Carolina Herrera, Burberry, Bottega Veneta. And more. I even spotted dapper fencer Miles Chamley-Watson at Fendi. So this isn't just about tennis. But—returning for a moment to the US Open—consider the destiny of the two men who played the final. Not long after concluding their showdown at Arthur Ashe, both flew to Milan, where Jannik Sinner sat front row at Gucci, and Taylor Fritz walked the runway at Boss. Meanwhile, up in the stands, Taylor Swift was watching that Fritz-Sinner match with her NFL-star boyfriend Travis Kelce and his Kansas City Chiefs teammate Patrick Mahomes, who'd turned up camera-ready in, respectively, Gucci and Prada.

"If I'm in the city during Fashion Week, I'm not *not* going," declares top-ranked player Frances Tiafoe, who, straight after dazzling Open-goers, made a beeline for IB Kamara's Off-White show. It was held on a basketball court. Women's US Open champ Aryna Sabalenka and Olympic gymnast Suni Lee were there too.

I reel off this very non-comprehensive list of recent sports-fashion mash-ups because, bluntly, as trends go, it's weird. Since time immemorial, there has been Sport, and there has been Fashion. At an apparel level, the two do habitually converse—Coco Chanel launched her business making tennis dresses, and today's athleisure has antecedents in Claire McCardell's bodysuits and Y2K-era Prada Sport. They call it "sportswear" for a reason. And it is likewise true that there have always been individual athletes with loads of style. But as cultures, as worlds, the runway and the stadium kept their distance, with rare exceptions (David Beckham, the Williams sisters) proving the rule. Now the stadium *is* the runway: The "tunnel 'fit," the pregame looks athletes wear ambling from team bus to locker room, has turned NFL and NBA players into tastemakers, with stylists pulling items straight from Paris shows and millions following fan accounts like @leaguefits.

"I have a team of stylists—there are three of them that work together," explains Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum. "My biggest nonnegotiable is, I'm six feet nine, I've got a 32-inch waist, and I want to be comfortable—I spent enough time, especially when I was younger, wearing clothes that didn't fit. So now we have a tailor in New York and a tailor in LA, and when my stylists find a pair of pants, they go straight to a tailor who has my measurements." Other pieces are custom-made. His wardrobe, he says, has basically taken over his house. In the locker room, he and his teammates chat about their tunnel looks. "We notice, we compliment each other.... If somebody looks good, it'll be like, 'Yo, I see you, I see the vision.'"

Tatum contends that there was always plenty of style in the tunnel, and social media merely made the

CHICAGO FIRE

Reese, wearing a Jacquemus suit, begins her sophomore season with the Chicago Sky in May.


UNAPOLOGETIC

COURT ACE

Last year's US Open semifinalist Frances Tiafoe makes a point of attending New York Fashion Week. "If I'm in the city I'm not *not* going." Dunhill coat. Levi's jeans. Dolce & Gabbana hat.

Fashion Editor: Mobolaji Dawodu.

'fits visible. Perhaps. But not everything social media makes visible goes viral, and not everything that goes viral gets fashion's stamp of approval. Fashion chooses its muses with care. Designers respond to a certain type of admiration—to whatever feels paradigmatically *now*. That's how you wind up with Prada dressing Caitlin Clark for the WNBA Draft. And that's how I—lifelong non-sports fan—wind up tuning into basketball games and following Clark's rival Angel Reese on Instagram. It's not just because I enjoy tracking her evolution from upstart Bayou Barbie to Met Gala jet-setter. I've seen versions of that Cinderella story before. There's something about Angel Reese, or about what Angel Reese represents, that means more to me.

On a brisk New York morning, I catch up with Reese as she's passing through the city, and sit in on a training session. Her sophomore season with the Chicago Sky is some months off, and this is her time to work on technique. Again and again, she tosses the ball into the basket, with a near metronomic rhythm. From the free throw line. From the side, off one leg. Catching the ball on the go and sliding into position: bend and stretch, eyes on the target, a light touch, ball whirling upward, swish. Then again.

"It's always been both: basketball *and* fashion," Reese says. Basketball runs in the family, she explains; both her mother and grandmother played. And when she was growing up in Baltimore, the sport was just *around.* "But I was a fashion girlie from young too. Like—let me find this picture my mom sent," she goes on, digging through her bag for a snapshot of herself, age five, adorable in a pink dress and tiara, almond eyes gleaming. "I was always in my mom's closet, putting on her stuff. I liked to carry a purse. Hair done. I wanted to look put together. I still do." That desire to look finished applies on and off the court: Reese earned her Bayou Barbie nickname at Louisiana State thanks to her penchant for glamming up for games.

"I used to watch *America's Next Top Model* with Tyra and practice my walk in the living room," Reese recalls. Later, in college, she put that sashay to use in the LSU tunnel, with her teammates joining her in serving fierce pregame looks. Once on the court, she led them to a national championship before deciding to go pro—an announcement she made not on ESPN but rather via this very title. One day, she says, she'd like to model in a *real* fashion show; maybe Paris Fashion Week, that's still on her to-do list. In the meantime, however: eyes on the target, a light touch, swish. Again and again and again. I record her with my phone, a minute or so of rote grace and precision, then zoom in on her eyes, all steely focus under unblinking false eyelashes.

STRING THEORY

On court, Tiafoe favors clothes that match his playing style: "Loud colors, bold colors, stuff that pops." Tom Ford suit and shirt.

When I was growing up in the '90s, I didn't know fashion, but I knew sport, and I knew Nike, because they had people who looked like me in their ads," says Off-White creative director IB Kamara, who hails from Sierra Leone. "It's very democratic in that way. And very global. You can be a kid anywhere in the world and be a fan of a team like AC Milan, and that jersey will mean something to you." Off-White recently capped a three-year partnership with AC Milan by launching a capsule collection celebrating the storied football club's 125th anniversary. A similar collaboration with the WNBA's New York Liberty debuted last fall, and likewise comprises merch for both players and fans, as well as a charitable component.

All of which is very much in keeping with Virgil Abloh's vision for the brand. I recall a conversation I once had with Abloh, about a project he was working on with Nike, via Off-White—making uniforms for a soccer team of West African refugee kids in Paris. This was sometime early in 2017, and Abloh made a point about sports being a pastime and a passion we share across borders. That sometimes means a seed takes root in surprising soil: After civil war broke out in Sierra Leone, Kamara fled to Gambia…where, among other interests, he cultivated a childhood fixation on Serena Williams. "People don't know this about me! I love her, I love tennis, I love watching it," Kamara enthuses. "It's so expressive. There's so much personal style."

Many Sierra Leoneans fled that brutal war, among them Alphina Kamara (no relation) and Constant Tiafoe. They found shelter in

FINAL CURVE
Sprinter Gabby Thomas came home from the Paris Olympics with gold medals and a following. "I had style. Now I have fashion," she says. Bottega Veneta dress and earrings.
Fashion Editor: Yohana Lebasi.

the United States, where their twin sons Franklin and Frances Tiafoe were born in 1998. Constant helped construct the USTA's Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Maryland, then signed on as the maintenance manager for the facility, a regional training hub for young tennis talent. "He worked constantly—he even slept at the club—and me and my brother, we'd stay with him." So that's how Frances Tiafoe stumbled on to the court; he lived there, basically. At 17, he won the USTA Junior National Championship.

Right from the get-go, Tiafoe was known for his passionate playing style. "And I wanted clothes to match, you know? Loud colors, bold colors, stuff that pops," Tiafoe says. His favorite ensemble is probably the borderline psychedelic one his sponsor Nike designed for him to wear at the 2023 Australian Open. Suffice to say, his mental mood board is not collaged with vintage images of men in starchy tennis whites. "My influences originally—I'd say, I liked to look at awards shows, the BET Awards, and for real, the Met Gala. I liked to see these mega-mega celebrities when they were really turned out," he says. "You know, going for it."

If the Met Gala seems a far-flung source of inspiration for Tiafoe, consider that he sees himself as not just an athlete, but an entertainer. "Don't get me wrong, I'm battling as hard as I can for every point. But what we do, what we put our bodies through, at the end of the day it's in the service of entertaining people." And fashion, Tiafoe believes, is part of the show. Offstage, he still tends to favor the baggy silhouettes of his youth, when he was taking most of his style cues from basketball. "Well, yeah, growing up, we all were, of course."

Clothes matter in the NBA. *A lot.* How that came to be is a rather convoluted tale—but, in its abbreviated version, a very good lesson in the way formal limitations can enhance creative thinking.

At the start of the 2005–2006 season, then NBA commissioner David Stern instituted a dress code for players: "business" attire when participating in any team or league activities. This included, importantly, the walk through the tunnel from team bus to locker room. As Tatum explains, many players decried the dress code as racially motivated, because it specifically prohibited sports jerseys, "head-gear of any kind," and visible "chains, pendants, or medallions." You may as well have drawn a giant X over a photo of Allen Iverson, with his signature bling, baggy clothes, and flat-brimmed caps and durags. "I thought he was stylish," says Tatum, who looked up to Iverson as a child and paid attention to what he and other top players wore to games. "A lot of those guys, they came from the inner city, and that was how they expressed themselves—that hip-hop influence." As a kid in St. Louis, Tatum was all about that look. "Air Force 1s, everything oversize—like that." A far cry from an aesthetic he now describes as "sort of, luxury 'business casual.'"

"Love a cardigan, love a suit, a matching set, a collared shirt, a button-up," Tatum elaborates.

What happened, basically, is that NBA players—once stuck with the dress code—embraced it. Stars like LeBron James, Dwyane Wade, and Russell Westbrook studied up on designers and the finer points of tailoring. The looks got sharper and splashier. Bit by bit, "the tunnel" became a promenade of dandies the likes of which hadn't been seen since Beau Brummell strode the cobblestones of Mayfair. After Stern retired in 2014, the code was relaxed, allowing for progressively zanier 'fits. Meanwhile, young athletes like Tiafoe, Tatum, and Reese were imbibing an avalanche of fashion content (every NBA team plays 82 regular season games) and witnessing the utility of style as a personal branding tool.

NFL players were paying attention too. They wanted their own tunnel. Or some of them did, anyway—Odell Beckham Jr., Cam Newton, a handful of others. Then more. "It's very new," says Kyle Smith, the NFL's recently appointed in-house fashion editor. "When I started working as a stylist for the NFL Network in 2019, nobody talked about what the players were wearing. Because mostly they were wearing, you know, whatever. Sometimes there'd be a flashy suit, and that would surprise people." Today, the NFL is actively boosting its swagged-out fashion scene, launching its own style-focused Instagram—one of several new initiatives led by Smith—and broadcasting pregame interviews to showcase the 'fits of clotheshorse stars like Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow.

FINISH LINES

"I'm just starting to get a sense of what I like," says Thomas. Proenza Schouler dress.

"As an agent, one thing you always impress on your clients is that there is inherent value in being seen and being respected outside your sport," explains Tom Chapman, a partner at mega-agency WME Sports, which represents Tiafoe, among many others. "So how do you do that? If you want to build a persona that lasts past what—let's face it—can be a very short career, fashion can help. So players are investing more and more into their look. And the NBA and the NFL, to their credit, they've done a great job giving them a platform, and it's been good for everyone.

"So now we're asking ourselves," Chapman continues, "golf, tennis, other sports—how do they catch up with that? What do their tunnels look like?"

Smith was not, until a few years ago, a football fan. Sports in general, not his thing. He started his career assisting the celebrity stylist Karla Welch. It wasn't until he happened to get a job dressing football players—which was, at first, "just a job"—that he began to think, Oh—this is interesting. He was struck by how extraordinarily hard these men worked. "And, like, 90 percent of them, you'd never recognize their faces, because they're wearing helmets during the game, they're just part of the team," Smith notes. "I don't know, it was refreshing."

Likewise, designer Willy Chavarria had an ambivalent relationship to sport. "It interested me aesthetically," he says. "I've always been obsessed with the way people dress to assimilate into different groups to express their identities—and team sports are such an example of that. Yankees, Lakers, whatever. In Chicano culture that's a staple, an oversize football jersey. Doesn't matter if you've ever watched a game."

Cheeky versions of those jerseys showed up in Chavarria's spring 2025 RTW show, which paid homage to America's Chicano community. (Indeed, the name of the collection was América.) More sportiness was to be found in the debut of the Adidas Originals x Willy Chavarria collaboration that closed the show, with Olympian Noah Lyles serving as one of the models. The aesthetics of sport still interest Chavarria; now, the athletes interest him too.

"The thing about athletes, they're not famous for nothing. You know? We're so bombarded with that now, people where you're like—who are you? Where did you come from? With social media, these 'celebrities' just kind of appear. Whereas," Chavarria notes, "when you see someone who can swim faster than anyone else in the whole world, it's like—wow, you're incredible."

> "You can be a vessel, a shield; you can make armor," says Ambush designer Yoon Ahn. "You empower them. That's what fashion can do for sport"

Eyes on the target, light touch, swish. Repeat. I've watched that training video of Reese a bunch of times; there's something hypnotic about it. What it doesn't capture is the stuff that happens later, when Reese is tiring out and her shots start going awry. Then she gets exasperated, and she could call it quits, but she keeps shooting. Marshaling some inner reserve of—what? I'm not sure. And finds her rhythm again.

As Chavarria points out, we've been living through a rather strange epoch, fame-wise. For the past decade, maybe longer, the normal order of operations has been inverted: First you get followers on social media; then, once you've proven your influence, you branch into some other craft or calling. Be a model, an artist, a fashion designer, an entrepreneur. Run for office if you like. There was always a certain "fake it till you make it" aspect to this, but that was precisely the allure—the most successful influencers seemed to have discovered a cheat code for navigating a fast-evolving, culturally and economically disruptive technology. Bring on the filters.

Now we're somewhere else. Awash in pseudoscience, misinformation, bots, deepfakes, AI-generated content garbage. Maybe I'm only speaking for myself here, but I long for the real. And when I watch eight Olympic sprinters set off at the women's 200-meter final, and see Gabby Thomas streak away from the pack, I am in no doubt that that is what I am witnessing.

"There's so much truth in what we do," Thomas agrees, when I catch up with her last fall. She's just returned from a long run, but she looks like she just returned from the spa—dewy-skinned, refreshed, no filter necessary. "On the track, I can't cheat four years of hard work and commitment—otherwise I wouldn't be there," she continues, going on to note that any Olympic-caliber athlete has spent countless unpublicized hours mastering their sport. "You show up every day, and you work. And win or lose, the emotions that come—you can't fake that, either."

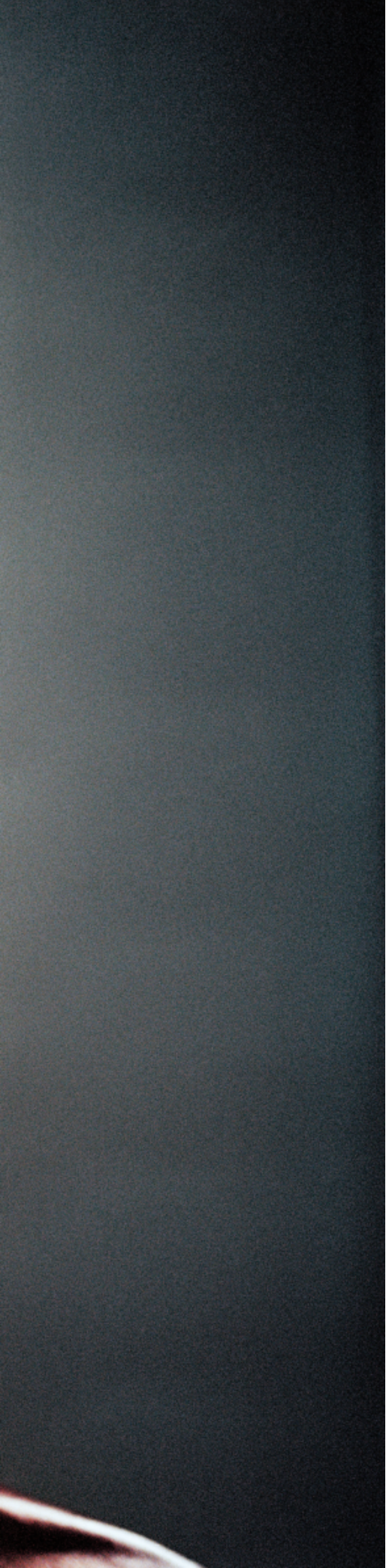
Since returning from Paris with three gold medals, Thomas has taken in fashion shows and basketball games, done some modeling, and presented the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund award last year. If Gabby Thomas is turning into an influencer, I, for one, am prepared to be influenced. She's smart, charismatic, and seems to be having some well-deserved fun in the interval between the hard work she put in to earn her fame as a sprinter, and the hard work to come in the medical field where her ultimate ambitions lie. (Thomas studied neurobiology and global health at Harvard and has a master's degree in epidemiology.) Fashion, she says, is one of the things she's enjoying right now.

"I've been so in athlete-world, I feel like I'm just starting to get a sense of what I like," CONTINUED ON PAGE 106

PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. SET COORDINATOR: JOJO ROY.

SKY'S THE LIMIT

Thomas wears a Dior jumpsuit and earrings. In this story: For Reese: hair, Lacy Redway; makeup, Susie Sobol. For Thomas: hair, Mideyah Parker; makeup, Janessa Paré. For Tiafoe: grooming, Valissa Yoe. Details, see In This Issue.



MAN ON WIRE

ADRIEN BRODY IS DRAWN TO HIGH-RISK ROLES AND FILMS THAT PUSH HIM TO EXTREMES. NOTHING HE'S DONE COMPARES TO *THE BRUTALIST*. BY WENDELL STEAVENSON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANTON CORBIJN.

Adrien Brody was just 29 when he won the best-actor Oscar for *The Pianist,* Roman Polanski's haunting film set in the Warsaw Ghetto. He was the youngest ever recipient, a record that still stands. The immersive effort of preparing for the role, moving out of his New York apartment, avoiding friends, and starving himself to understand loss and isolation, left him depressed and exhausted. He did not work for a year afterward. The next role he took was a developmentally disabled murderous boy in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village,* a gothic tale of monsters in the woods; hardly leading-man material.

"I accepted that role without my agents even reading the script," Brody told me with a wry expression. "Night didn't want anyone to read it, so I honored his request." Brody had come up working with directors like Spike Lee, Ken Loach, Barry Levinson, Steven Soderbergh, and Terrence Malick, and he wanted more of the same: interesting roles, collaborations with great artists. "I didn't want to say: Okay, now I'm only looking for an overtly heroic character. I wanted to have a creative journey. But that is the problem."

It's a choice that has led to a career that can look, at superficial glance, like a slide after an early peak. But the optics are misleading. To date, Brody has made almost 60 movies playing a multiverse of characters, from punk rocker to ventriloquist to bull fighter to Roman general; he's played Arthur Miller, Houdini, and a wonderfully whimsical Salvador Dalí in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris.* He has defied genre and typecasting, headlining big action movies like Peter Jackson's *King Kong* and the *Predators* reboot; done sci-fi, thrillers, and horror; and become a recurring member of Wes Anderson's film troupe. Some of his movies are critically acclaimed; plenty have bombed, but his performances are never less than wholly committed.

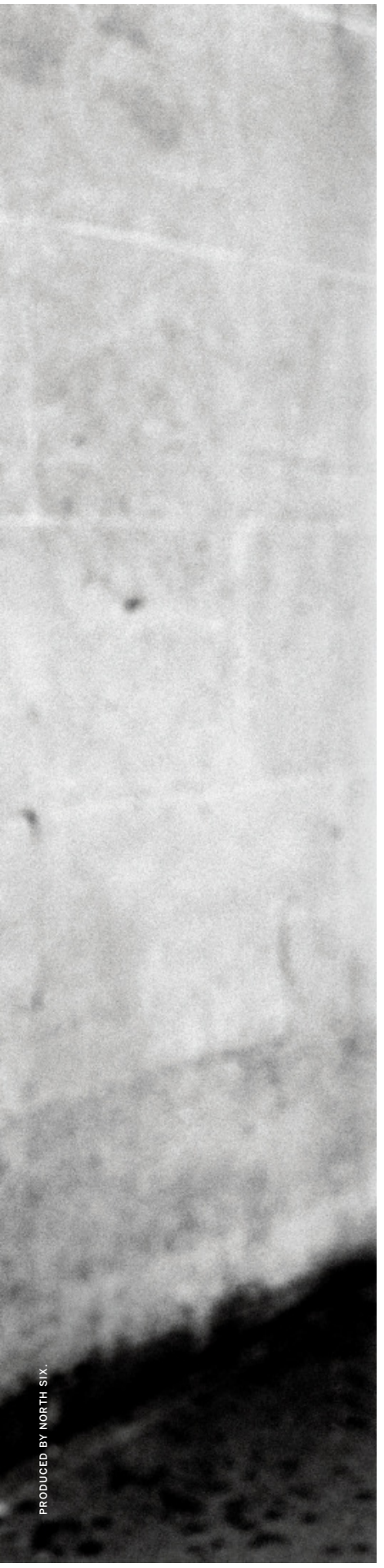
Brody is sanguine about the business of show business. In conversation he was open about the strange alchemy of moviemaking, and about the interplay of fame, publicity, and marketability. He told me that before winning an Academy Award, actors tend to be judged on their performance; afterward they are more likely to be held responsible on how well the movie did as a whole, critically and commercially.

"That is an actor's dilemma," he said. "But an actor's journey should

WORK ETHIC

Brody is constantly acting, painting, making music. "It all connects," he says. Gucci trench coat.

Fashion Editor: Edward Bowleg III.



PRODUCED BY NORTH SIX.

be a much more creative process, full of experimentation, full of risk."

This year Brody, now 51, finds himself again at the center of awards attention for his performance as László Tóth, a fictional Jewish Hungarian architect trying to rebuild his life in America after the Second World War, in Brady Corbet's monumental masterpiece *The Brutalist*. It's a very different movie from *The Pianist*, but in some ways, with its postwar setting and themes of art and loss, an inadvertent sequel, and for Brody, perhaps, an expiation. "It's taken me two decades to find something of this caliber, and for that I'm grateful."

I met Brody last October in London, where he was starring in *The Fear of 13*, a play by Lindsey Ferrentino that portrays the real-life Nick Yarris, who spent 22 years on death row in Pennsylvania before being exonerated through DNA evidence. It was the first time Brody had done theater since he was a teenager; the reviews were glowing, and he was enjoying the freedom of reinterpreting his performance night to night.

The play was staged at the Donmar Warehouse, a famously intimate venue for new and experimental productions, only 250 seats, and it ran an hour and 45 minutes without an intermission. Brody held the stage as magnetically as he holds the screen, deftly rendering Yarris's different phases and facets: wisecracking street-tough, philosophical inmate, man in love, abused child. He told me that Yarris himself comes often to see the performance and that he has wept in catharsis. "He shared with me how I have personally lifted away so much pain and suffering by helping to tell his story."

Brody and I sat in a small room in the Donmar's offices. His face, with its great scimitar nose, eyebrows drawn upward like an opening bridge, and watercolor eyes, is a particularly distinctive canvas on which he projects his chameleon craft. "The way he looks is like nobody else," Wes Anderson told me in a voice note. "There's something of the old movie star from another time in him." Brody has walked the runway for Prada and has a debonair penchant for wearing large glittering brooches on his tuxedo lapel on red carpets. But on the rainy Tuesday afternoon we met, the man in front of me, leaning forward in earnest good cheer, friendly, articulate, laughing at his digressions, looked comfortably ordinary. He wore nondescript sneakers, jeans, a checked flannel shirt, and he took off a black New York Yankees cap as he sat down.

"I'm not really sleeping," he admitted. "I wake up with dialogue from the play constantly in my thoughts."

Brody was born in Queens, the only child of Elliot Brody, a public school history teacher who taught himself to paint like an Old Master ("he would make an amazing art forger," Brody told one interviewer), and Sylvia Plachy, a renowned photographer, whose elegiac black-and-white images have appeared in *The Village Voice* and *The New Yorker*, and are in the permanent collection at MoMA. He grew up with a mixed Catholic-Jewish Mitteleuropa ancestry and in an intellectual milieu; as a child he loved magic, performing as the Amazing Adrien, got seriously into hip-hop, and attended LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, applying to study fine art and then switching to drama.

"He was a kid from Queens who really embraced the culture of the streets," his partner of five years, Marchesa designer Georgina Chapman, told me, when I met her in her atelier in the West Village in Manhattan. "Yet he also carries a very European elegance, which gives this wonderful complexity."

Brody credits his parents with imbuing him with the values that have underpinned his artistic choices. "Being raised the son of a photographer, in New York City, seeing all these complex and beautiful aspects of the city, being with wonderful writers and around all these great creative people," he said. "So much of my ability to be tenacious and to believe in myself came from my parents respecting my uniqueness and creative pursuits as something valid." CONTINUED ON PAGE 107

LEADING MAN

Brady Corbet's film *The Brutalist* has put Brody at the center of awards season. Tom Ford turtleneck and coat. Hair, Rudi Lewis; grooming, Aoibhin Killeen. Details, see In This Issue.

Through the Looking Glass

Sam McKinniss's Connecticut home is a magical, maximalist mash-up, tying together riotous color, throwback Americana, and the artist's uncanny visions of popular culture. By Chloe Schama. Photographed by Stefan Ruiz.

SUNNY DAYS
Light streams into the downstairs "apartment," a guest room and parlor in one. OPPOSITE, TOP: McKinniss's *Sam's Sweater,* 2014, oil on canvas; BELOW: McKinniss's *Cow (study),* 2022, oil on canvas.
Sittings Editor: Michael Reynolds.

COLOR THEORY

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: McKinniss's painting *Charlie Fox,* set off by wallpaper from Rifle Paper Co.; the exterior of the house; the bedroom, with a Dorothy Draper–esque checkerboard rug; McKinniss in front of his painting *Monica Geller, Ross Geller, Chandler Bing, Phoebe Buffay, Joey Tribbiani, and Rachel Green,* 2024, oil on linen; *Fiona Apple,* 2024, oil on linen.

The first thing to know about the artist Sam McKinniss is that he loves a fake. Or maybe it's more precise to say that the 39-year-old painter, who has made his name by turning ubiquitous images from pop culture into lush canvases, loves the disquiet caused by something that seems about five degrees off. His oil paintings of celebrities are instantly recognizable—subtly seared into our subconscious by a thousand impressions—and also disarming, evoking the way we relate to those images with empathy, scorn, affection, disdain.

And then there is his house in Kent, Connecticut—an artistic project of a different order but with a metacommentary of its own. With its long, low profile and rough-hewn beams, the house seems as if it might have had a former life as a 17th-century cabin, pipe smoke suffusing its wooden panels and subtle rippling in the window panes. It's early fall when I visit and the trees have dropped their leaves; cords of chopped wood are piled chest-high out front, ready for winter. It's easy to imagine a lesser member of the *Mayflower* staking out a homestead on the site.

"It was built in 1969," McKinniss tells me, opening the door, dapper but casual in Brooks Brothers slacks with a white oxford shirt, red Charvet slippers, and a black Pringle cardigan draped over his shoulders. The home, which he shares with his partner, Michael Londres, is a maximalist concoction of McKinniss's own making, a riot of color and pattern, from the canvases (his own, his friends', artists he admires), to the exuberant wallpaper, to the cut chrysanthemums. The house, says David Kordansky, whose gallery shows McKinniss's work, reflects Sam as a person: "It is the mash-up of pop against a backdrop of something mundane, ubiquitous," says Kordansky. "It really is this amalgamation of ornate boredom."

Born in Minnesota, the third of four kids, McKinniss was raised

SAM MCKINNISS. *CHARLIE FOX.* 2022. OIL ON LINEN.

in Hartford County, Connecticut, where his father was a local reverend. "Watching him every Sunday, I learned a lot about rhetoric and public speaking," McKinniss says, "and about composure." He took art classes in high school—seeking out extracurricular sketching sessions with live models—and earned a scholarship to the Hartford Art School. After graduating, he followed a boyfriend to Boston, where he worked retail jobs he

GREEN SCREEN

The emerald color of the living room was inspired by George Washington's Mount Vernon. A porcelain canine friend, named Molly, stands sentry at the fireplace. OPPOSITE: A nook in the kitchen, decorated with photogravure prints by Carsten Höller.

disliked and one great job at the storied Brattle Book Shop. He was selling a few paintings a year at that point, mostly through word of mouth and mostly images of his friends, modeled after the work of Nan Goldin and Jack Pierson, artists known for gritty yet celebratory depictions of queer life.

McKinniss moved to New York in 2011 to enroll at NYU, "and try to be charming and do my best to get lucky," he says. His classmate the artist Lily Stockman, whose studio was next to his, describes a "cool charisma and intellectual confidence that immediately established him as a leader in the group." McKinniss, Stockman says, "suffered no fools and had no problem being disputatious. He loved banter, debate, and good argument. He loathed laziness, sloppiness, and people eating while walking on the street. Sam has beautiful manners."

McKinniss went out a lot in those years, to the GHE20G0TH1K parties organized in Brooklyn warehouses and downtown clubs, and he started dating a DJ. Meanwhile he was developing a devoted following, showing his paintings at Team Gallery in New York and then at Jasmin T. Tsou's Tribeca space, JTT. "Sam has been able to focus on this one particular human behavior," says Tsou, "which is essentially to project our desires through a parasocial process onto a celebrity. There's certain imagery that sticks with you, and you don't really realize how much until Sam paints it." At the same time he started painting canvases in the mode of the 19th-century French artist Henri Fantin-Latour. "His flower paintings were so anodyne that the punk kids were outraged, which of course Sam delighted in," says Stockman. "He has truly catholic taste—to Sam a gay Fragonard is the same as a TMZ shot of Lindsay Lohan in her car."

In 2015, McKinniss turned 30, and it became a lot "less appealing to stay out doing drugs all night long," he says. He had only ever lived in "dumps," but after a series of well-received solo shows, he felt financially stable enough to take on a floor-through apartment in Greenpoint in 2019. (He had also become, for a while, suddenly famous for painting the cover of Lorde's 2017 album, *Melodrama*. "We have a mutual friend," he says of Lorde.) The Greenpoint apartment was the nicest place he had ever lived, but the glow quickly faded when the claustrophobia of the pandemic closed in. He began buying up home goods and antique furniture to pass the time, until he realized he'd better find somewhere to put it all. Friends helped him find the house in Kent in 2021; buddies from high school, Joshua and Jesse Kellam of Kellam Carpentry, put it in working order.

Today there is no lingering evidence of any disruptive transformations. In the foyer a William Morris print covers the walls, while around the corner two dozen baseball hats hang on pegs in a precise configuration. McKinniss shows me a tucked-away laundry room painted CONTINUED ON PAGE 108

SHEER FORCE
Actor Raffey Cassidy, seen in the film *The Brutalist*, wears an embroidered tulle halter-neck dress from McQueen; alexandermcqueen.com (here and throughout).
Fashion Editor: IB Kamara.

McGIRR'S McQUEEN

A year ago, Seán McGirr came out of nowhere to lead Alexander McQueen, one of fashion's most storied and emotionally charged houses. Hayley Maitland meets the genial young Irishman writing McQueen's next chapter. Photographed by Campbell Addy.

TALL ORDER
Producer and singer-songwriter Florence Sinclair wears a winsome lace blouse and a silvery drop earring modeled after an English rose—a house signature.

There's been nothing but rain all week in Paris—it's rained until every plane tree in the Tuileries shed its leaves—but on the night Seán McGirr presents his spring 2025 collection for Alexander McQueen across the Seine from the Louvre, the city is bathed in a golden September light. Perhaps that's helping the 36-year-old Dubliner—plucked from the JW Anderson studio less than a year ago—look so composed as he takes François-Henri Pinault, chairman and CEO of the Kering group, which owns McQueen, through rail after rail of heritage designs and explains, in his gentle Irish lilt, how he's contorted them: Jermyn Street tuxedos with curlicue lapels; communion dresses in provocative, translucent crepe; rugby tops made camp with Etonian frills.

Then again, perhaps McGirr's air of calm is merely relative. With less than 20 minutes until showtime in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, the paparazzi calls accompanying each VIP arrival echo around the neoclassical courtyard. Backstage, McQueen staffers with pincushion armbands are moving so quickly that the tape measures thrown over their shoulders trail behind them like streamers; models in bathrobes stand to attention; and, in a corner of the room, embroiderers are trimming the silver threads of the banshee headdress that will close the show.

Even amid the tumult, this last detail is arresting—at once a tribute to London's nocturnal rebels and a nod to Alexander "Lee" McQueen's own banshees from his fall 1994 presentation—his second-ever runway show—at the Café de Paris nightclub in Leicester Square. Tonight, though, there are more security personnel guarding the École's towering wrought-iron gates than there were showgoers three decades ago. I step outside just as Salma Hayek arrives, the paparazzi flashes making a disco ball of her sequin dress in the gloaming—and when I return, McGirr has slipped away backstage to steel himself for the industry's judgment.

In the months I shadowed the designer over the past year—between his debut in March and his pivotal sophomore collection in September—it was only in the immediate lead-up to the latter show that he betrayed the pressure he was under. "I came in this morning and at 7 a.m. called my right hand and said, 'We need to break everything down and build it all back up,'" he'd told me, with his usual buoyance, less than 72 hours earlier. We were perched on a nondescript couch on the third floor of McQueen's Saint-Germain temporary studio, surrounded by model boards and button trays. Even though McGirr, a self-confessed "Fashion Week smoker," had likely had more Marlboro Golds than hours of sleep in the preceding days, he was full of enthusiasm about everything—from the Birdee heels he'd designed with a mohawk of leather feathers to a newly developed cobweb lace inspired by Louise Bourgeois. He has classic Irish coloring—fair skin, dark hair, and Atlantic blue eyes—and gives the impression of being forever in motion. Today he's dressed in a tie-dyed McQueen T-shirt with an upside-down skull embroidered dead in the middle of the chest, skinny jeans, and sneakers. "I've been busy wearing a lot of McQueen," he says. "It's important to see how the fit is, and to improve things as well: Sometimes things don't turn out how you thought." His elfin features are punctuated by a dimple in his right cheek that emerges when he smiles, which he does freely and often.

If he's disarmingly warm, though, he's also exacting. On the floors below us, the ateliers are, under his instruction, knitting skull masks from ivory cashmere and hand-shredding yards of organza to give the impression of shearling. The team had just finished three days of fittings when McGirr decided, overnight, to refit everything—not for the sake of throwing a spanner in the works, he assures me, but simply to make sure that every last T-bar detail worked as intended. It's a process drilled into him by Louise Wilson, the legendary human crucible for design genius at Central Saint Martins. (Among Wilson's other protégés: Christopher Kane, Jonathan Saunders, Simone Rocha—and, yes, Lee McQueen, who was in her first graduating class, in 1992; McGirr was in her last before she died, in 2014.)

"In tutorials, she'd be like, 'No, it's not right.… It's not right yet'—but in the most profane language imaginable, like a football hooligan," McGirr recalls. It was the greatest test of endurance he's ever been through. "She'd be like: 'Fucking do the job. Just *do it*.' It's very practical."

When Kering announced, in 2023, that Sarah Burton would step away from McQueen, many wondered whether any designer from outside of the storied house could really do the job. If the fashion industry likes to speak of codes, McQueen's is a uniquely difficult one for a creative director to crack. February 2025 may mark 15 years since Lee's death, but his emotional hold on the culture at large is ongoing: His Highland Rape and The Hunger shows still linger in the minds of Gen X editors as '90s fashion at its most electrifying; meanwhile, millennials who would struggle to tell a 2.55 from a Lady Dior waited up to six hours in thousand-strong queues to see "Savage Beauty" at The Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, and Gen Z TikTokers are making McQueen's 2003 skull scarves their entire personality (despite some not yet being born when Karen Elson sashayed down the runway with one tied to her pirate breeches).

Of course, Lee McQueen's is a hard story to forget, his contradictions endlessly mythologized: Here was a Savile Row apprentice who used the pattern-cutting he'd learned making English drape suits to invent the infamous Bumster trouser; who yearned for extreme reactions to his designs ("I'd rather people left my shows and vomited," he once said. "I want heart

TURNING HEADS
McGirr, now a year into his tenure at McQueen.

attacks. I want ambulances.") but also launched a range of prom dresses with Target; whose East End origins and Celtic heritage fueled collections that ripped classism and empire to shreds, yet whose legacy is irrevocably bound up with British blue bloods like Isabella Blow or Stella Tennant.

McGirr, who is as pledged to the cult of Lee as anyone—he's recently been studying Blow's 1989 wedding at Gloucester Cathedral, and Tennant remains his favorite model of all time—hopes to restore some of the playful aggression the house had in its infancy. "There's a sort of intellectual kinkiness, which I quite like," he told me shortly after he had landed the job. "It's not overtly *sexy* at all—and I think that's really modern." During his frequent visits to the house's King's Cross archives this year, he bypassed more commercial noughties collections to focus on Lee's earliest drawings. "There's this confidence in his line drawing that is like *wow*—it's razor sharp, almost architectural." At the same time, McGirr notes, "there's also a new generation that couldn't get into McQueen—you know what I mean?" I do. While the house under Burton gracefully matured and refined its proposition, McGirr wants his McQueen to be about youthful energy and what he calls "the animal within."

None of which is to say that he doesn't have a "deep, deep respect" for Burton, Lee's right hand from the time of her own degree at Saint Martins, and the ways she made the house her own during her 13-year stint as creative director. If Lee claimed to have stitched expletives into the linings of the Prince of Wales's Anderson & Sheppard suits—and pubic hair into the hats of the Queen's Beefeaters—Burton unfurled nine feet of satin gazar on the steps of Westminster Abbey as Miss Catherine Middleton married into the House of Windsor in 2011. And while Lee's mood boards featured the Marquis de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom* and Hans Bellmer's dismembered dolls, Burton's inspirations were the Taatit rugs of the Shetland Islands and the blue flax fields of Northern Ireland. For McGirr the challenge is to build on the execution perfected by the latter while capturing the energy and edginess of the former. "McQueen is all about tensions," he says: between attraction and repulsion, refinement and brutality—and, yes, the avant-garde and the commercially viable. As Lee himself said, when the press eviscerated him for his debut Givenchy collection: "It's fucking hard to be both at the same time." Backstage in Paris, I'm wondering if it's even possible, as the banshee headpiece is reunited with its dress on a mannequin—when a McQueen publicist in a Motorola headset appears at my elbow.

"We're about to begin," she whispers. "Please, take your seat."

CHAIN OF COMMAND
Model Sacha Quenby, in the scintillating closing dress from McQueen's spring collection.

Thirty-three years since its founder began cutting up fabrics in a pokey South London flat, the house of McQueen's headquarters now inhabit a six-story, 30,000-square-foot building in London's Clerkenwell. When I first visit, on an overcast July day less than three months before the spring show, McGirr—having moved his workspace down from the corporate level to be closer to his design team—is sprawled on the blond pine floor, inspecting a range of materials for resort 2025's sunglasses. (McGirr's approach to design in general, he says, is very "on the floor"—there's not a safety pin brooch that goes into production without his fingerprints

on the sample.) He likes a kind of monarch butterfly print—"Very McQueen, no?" he says, holding it up for me to inspect—less so the malachite, which he finds too Gucci. He's "not *opposed* to a pair of flame sunglasses," he adds, with his dimpled grin. He'd seen them on a research trip to LA, where he became enamored with the opiumcore scene and the brazen style of some Playboi Carti fans on Melrose.

If youth is a creative touchstone for McGirr, it's also worth noting how much he respects experience. "McQueen is so much about the atelier," he insists, and while he's brought in some of his own designers and cutters, much of the team that worked under Burton is still in place, some of them remaining from Lee's days. His aim is to use their technical mastery to bring a frisson of daring back to British fashion. "I think of McQueen as a lab for experimentation, for creativity. I say it to my design team: Play around—push ideas until they're strong and feel like they go somewhere else."

It's McGirr's realization, through engaging with Lee's ideas and work, that you could "say something through clothes, and that was really important"—that led him to move from Dublin to England after finishing high school in 2007, enrolling to study menswear at the London College of Fashion—though the hedonism of the city quickly proved more of a revelation than his courses. His student apartment was just across from the Camden music venue Koko in the days when Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty were often found beneath its giant disco ball—influences easily apparent on his mood boards. To make ends meet, he worked nights as a bartender-slash-promoter for a gay bar on Soho's Wardour Street, where he would spot the likes of Kate Moss and Allegra Versace being trailed by paparazzi. ("I was like, 'Oh my God!'")

It's during this period, too, that he really began to embrace his sexuality. "It sucks for all gay kids to come out, especially if you don't really fit in in school," he says, although he's quick to note that his parents have always

THRILLS AND FRILLS
A mélange of frolicsome textures—heavy-duty gold embroidery, shredded tulle, silk faille, heritage lace—takes flight.

AIR APPARENT
Model Sara Caballero wears a washed-silk chiffon dress, adroitly draped and finished with delicate lace trim.

STREET SMARTS
Actor Samuel Adewunmi, last seen in the series *Queenie,* wears a double-breasted jacket, tuxedo trousers, and leather sneakers.


PRODUCED BY: RAGI DHOLAKIA PRODUCTIONS.
SET DESIGN: IBBY NJOYA.

been extremely supportive. Now, though? "I'm so happy to be gay," he tells me. "I thank God every day—I love what gay people did before me, and the sacrifices they made, and I'm always super engaged with all these prolific gay artists—Kenneth Anger, Derek Jarman, Susan Sontag, Peter Hujar. I feel like it's my obligation to represent gay people, speak for them, and support them."

While McGirr worked in the West End—he's never, he tells me, had enough money to not be worried about it—he preferred the club scene in McQueen's native East End, and it's through nights at Boombox and Ponystep that he first heard of Wilson and became fixated on studying with her. After landing an interview and surviving her predictably brutal questioning, he heard her calling after him down the hallway as he made his exit: "'Oi, Irish boy! There's a scholarship that you should apply for now, because I know you fucking students: You're so lazy, and you miss out on these things.' That was her way of being like, 'I'm going to give you a scholarship so you can afford to study.'"

That scholarship kept him going financially. When he graduated from Saint Martins in 2014, he did so with a collection of jeans he had scrawled on with a ballpoint pen, inspired by Piccadilly hustlers and River Phoenix's character in *My Own Private Idaho.* Candy Nippon, a Tokyo boutique, bought the collection in full.

If there's a through line to McGirr's life over the next decade, it's living in the epicenter of cities and making a study of their youth culture. When Uniqlo hired him out of school, he moved into a tiny apartment in Tokyo's Shibuya, browsing Tsutaya's bookshelves until 2 a.m. and marveling at Harajuku's kawaii scene. Two and a half years later, he relocated to Paris to work more closely with Christophe Lemaire on his Uniqlo capsules, living in a shoebox apartment near the Palais-Royal, spending his free hours CONTINUED ON PAGE 109

BLUE SKY THINKING

FROM FAR LEFT: Sinclair, model Celina Ralph, gallerist Oyinkansola Dada, and Quenby mix it up in McGirr's twisty subversions of traditional English tailoring. In this story: hair, Cyndia Harvey; makeup, Bea Sweet. Details, see In This Issue.

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Scandi Style

The dog days of winter are the perfect moment to lean into warm, cozy chic that packs a bright punch.

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1. EXTREME CASHMERE TURTLENECK, $430; MYTHERESA.COM. **2.** ACNE STUDIOS SCARF, $350; ACNESTUDIOS.COM. **3.** TOTEME COAT, $930; TOTEME.COM. **4.** PANDORA EARRINGS, $150; PANDORA.NET. **5.** SOPHIE BILLE BRAHE PLATEAU DIAMANT RING; SOPHIEBILLEBRAHE.COM. **6.** CECILIE BAHNSEN SKIRT, $1,000; FARFETCH.COM. **7.** SVENSKT TENN STOOL, $1,910; SVENSKTTENN.COM. **8.** LITTLE LIFFNER BAG, $325; LITTLELIFFNER.COM. **9.** ATP ATELIER SHOES, $495; ATPATELIER.COM. **10.** MARIMEKKO DINNER PLATE, $55; MARIMEKKO.COM. **11.** GANNI DRESS, $475; GANNI.COM. **12.** BY MALENE BIRGER HAT, $250; BYMALENEBIRGER.COM. **13.** H&M BOOTS, $75; HM.COM. **14.** HAY VASE, $275; HAY.COM.

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FROM A TO ZAC

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that something was about to change in my life," Ball tells me. A week later Posen cleared out two closets and Ball moved in. A year later, in 2022, they got engaged. They had gone to Omen in SoHo for dinner and walked back uptown all the way to East 73rd Street. There had been a shooting on the subway that day, and there was an eerie energy in the city. At home, Ball turned on NY1 and lay on the couch when Posen proposed, handing him a custom ring by Taffin.

That same year, Ball was promoted to principal dancer. Posen came to every show. Ball was dancing the role of the Poet in *La Sonnambula* when he decided he wanted to retire. A sesamoid bone in his foot was crushed, and arthritis was tormenting his body. He and Posen began to spend more time with Posen's family in rural Pennsylvania. "And then his mother got diagnosed with cancer, stage IV," Ball says.

When Posen returns from his walk, he seems nervous. "Everyone gets really scared when I talk, because I *really* talk," Ball says.

As we walk to dinner, Posen picks up the story. When Ball told Posen to go and live, he went to LA, where he stayed with Alice + Olivia founder Stacey Bendet Eisner and her husband, Eric, at the sprawling Malibu estate owned by Eric's father, Michael Eisner. "I was like Maria von Trapp," Posen says.

He developed scripts for several TV networks, including one about a fashion designer, and thought about making a career pivot toward directing and producing. But then the new year came, his mother became ill, and he kept thinking about Ball. "It was time to go back to New York," he says.

Shortly after getting together, Ball and Posen rented a car and drove across the country, staying at Best Westerns and Hampton Inns along the way. As we sit down to dinner at an upscale Italian restaurant in Jackson Square, I'm having trouble picturing Posen at a Best Western. "Really?" he says. Posen reminds me that he has a grounded side: He likes to garden, cook. "I have a polarity of mister tuxedo, which is fine," he says, "but I'm actually happiest barefoot digging in the ground. And in jeans."

"Listen, his parents are normal," Ball adds. "He grew up going to Q-Mart in Quakertown, Pennsylvania." Ball traces Posen's more glamorous turn to his having attended Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn, and having a friend circle that included Schnabel and Claire Danes. "When you're a teenager and you happen to find that door, you want to know what's in that room," Ball explains.

Though Posen grew up in SoHo, the son of an artist and a lawyer, he's quick to say that there was no trust fund. He didn't exactly plan on becoming the ball gown guy. It's true that while at Central Saint Martins he was assigned a T-shirt project and made a dress instead—"My own kind of reverse punk-ism," he says—but he'd also made plenty of distressed T-shirts and deconstructed jeans. Gowns were ultimately a strategic decision. Fast fashion was coming in to take on sportswear and accessible luxury. Eveningwear made sense. "There was an opportunity to really own it," he says.

The previous night, Ball had christened a new TV room by watching Posen on *Project Runway* for the first time. "People may look at that and think he sold out for TV," Ball says, and turns to Posen. "But you were just trying to help your company survive."

Ball is fiercely protective of Posen, who likens himself to a child star: raised in the traditional fashion system, listening to those he thought he could trust, and losing his way in the process. "You were a kid," says Ball, who moved to New York as a teen. "The fact that Zac survived as long as he did is amazing, and he came out of it not a drug addict, not an alcoholic; he's not a loose cannon." Dickson told me that this was part of Posen's appeal: That he had known and understood failure. Ball likens it to a pilot in the Bahamas who once crashed a puddle jumper into the ocean. Nobody would fly with him. "But my dad was like, 'That's exactly who I want to fly with because he crashed and survived,'" Ball says.

Posen's mother, Susan, played a big role in Posen's decision to take the job. Last Christmas Eve, Posen was with her in the hospital, negotiating with Dickson by phone. She was asking Posen the terms of his contract just before her vitals crashed and she briefly lost consciousness. Susan had been the CEO of her son's company until 2010; what ultimately transpired weighed heavily on her. Posen hoped that by landing at a major American brand, he would alleviate some of her worries. "I really needed her to feel that I was okay," Posen says. (Susan continues to undergo treatment.)

Ball believes that Posen ultimately ended up with the perfect job for him. He is now gaining more experience than he ever would strictly as a designer—Gap Inc.'s annual sales are in the realm of Chanel's—and Posen has some big ideas. Could Gap, which was founded in 1969 as a records and jeans shop, have a record label? Could Banana Republic become a hospitality brand, with its own line of hotels? This reminds me of something Jenna Lyons, the former president of J.Crew, had told me when discussing Posen's new position. "I would have had so much baggage," said Lyons, "but he doesn't have that same notion of what you can and cannot do, or what will and will not work."

At dinner, Posen is monitoring a text thread with his SLT that is still buzzing at 8 p.m. Everyone is excited about the new Flatiron store, where sales are up 60 percent. In general, the news has been good: Third quarter sales at the company are up 2 percent, which is enough for Dickson, who's focused on steady, incremental growth. Still, the stakes are high, both for Gap's legacy and for Posen's career. But Posen has more perspective now. "I still care deeply, but I won't do high drama," he says. "It's exhausting and it's silly." He's focused on the work, and on passing the lessons he's learned on to the next generation of designers, hoping to establish a mentorship program at the company. The reality is that he's part of something larger now that isn't really about Posen at all. "It was there before me, and it will be there after," he says.

It sounds like the great humbling of Zac Posen. "When you've had your name taken from you, it's pretty humbling," he says. Plus, his priorities have expanded. He and Ball would like to have children—they've agreed on two—and they're still getting to know their new city. Back in New York their evenings were spent at the ballet, the philharmonic, the opera. But here, out West, Ball will often pick up Posen from work with their dogs in tow, and they'll drive to Muir Beach, or Petaluma, or Point Reyes, where they'll shuck oysters on the beach, make a bonfire, and jump into the freezing cold water. Posen seems introspective when he tells me, "You're on this planet for a real short amount of time. You're probably not going to be remembered, sorry to say. Life kind of recycles itself. We're not that different from a leaf, disintegrating in all its humility. So you might as well try during that time to give back, ignite imagination, build confidence, affect somebody's life in some capacity." □

WHEN SPORTS MET FASHION...

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Thomas says. "Not that I don't have my own style. I do, but then I put on something like that white Carolina Herrera dress that I wore to the show, and it's like, *Oh, oh-kaay*. Since then I've been doing more 'pretty' looks. And more polished. Same with the hair and makeup, I'm growing with that too." Listening to Thomas talk, I'm reminded of a comment Chavarria made about her Olympic teammate Lyles—a fashion fanatic who, at one point, was angling to get a track-and-field "tunnel" going.

"At the end of the day, even if he likes going on a red carpet, you know his priorities are elsewhere," said Chavarria. "Which is cool."

"I will never take my daughter to watch robots play tennis." So swears Alexis Ohanian, husband of Serena Williams, a cofounder of Reddit, and, under the auspices of his venture capital firm Seven Seven Six, creator of the women's-only track invitational Athlos, which he launched with Thomas's help in September. Ohanian and I had been chatting about his investments into women's sports—there are several; he plans more—and found ourselves in conceptual territory. Sport, we theorized, was the anti-virtual. Not merely because, as the philosopher Avishai Margalit wrote, "watching excellence in sports is watching humans in their fullest expression"—gratifying, at a moment when AI seems ever more humanlike—but also because a sporting event is one of the few occasions left where we watch in real time and gather together in physical space, be it stadium, sports bar, or friend's sofa. And where else—as several people pointed out to me in the course of reporting this story—do Americans estranged from each other manage to find common ground? "Share a beer, share a cheer," is how Ohanian put the ethos. Which is, at least, a step in the right direction.

"The thing with sports is it's constant. You go to any bar anywhere in America—anywhere in the world—there are sports on," notes WME Sports agent Chapman. "It's not like the cinema or music; that's selective, that's taste. Sports is just kind of *there.* In theory, it's for everybody."

If you want to be cynical, you could say that the fashion industry is glomming on to sports, and its stars, because that's the last means of communicating to a wide audience. Designers see Reese, they see Tatum, they see dollar signs. Sure. But isn't the cynical explanation also the Pollyanna one? Why *wouldn't* the fashion industry want to be in business with people who represent the values of hard work and authenticity? Who give us, at a moment when many of us find this rather difficult, something to believe in?

"I feel like we got to represent the best of America," Thomas says to me, reflecting on her Olympics experience. "Focused on what brings us together—our dedication, our resilience, our passion for what we do. I felt pride, pride for my country."

And on the flip side, as someone who loves fashion, I believe it has more to offer athletes than help with their personal brands. Consider the frilled and bow-bedecked looks Naomi Osaka wore when she made her comeback at last year's US Open. According to Yoon Ahn, the Ambush designer who collaborated with Osaka and Nike to create the head-turning ensembles, brainstorming began two years ago, not long after Osaka gave birth. She talked to Ahn about motherhood, about wanting to connect to her Japanese roots, about the pressures of professional tennis. "I wanted to give her an outfit that got her away from the pressure," Ahn explains, "and made her feel like a little girl again walking out on to the court.

"You can be a vessel, you can be a shield; you can make armor," Ahn goes on. "You empower them. That's what fashion can do for sport." □

MAN ON WIRE

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One of the movies he is most proud of, for example, is *Detachment,* which he made in 2011 with the director Tony Kaye (best known for *American History X* with Edward Norton), over his agents' objections. He played a substitute teacher in a Queens public school—almost a paean to his father. "A tiny little movie about the failings of the education system," he said, "but it spoke to me."

His dedication to the integrity of his craft runs like a plumb line through his career.

"I like a challenge," Brody told me. "I'm very open to pushing myself past things that feel a bit intimidating and require a deep dive. You really have no option once you're in it but to just work hard." No matter the material, "I have the same level of commitment and immersion. I'm eating worms and being thrown down glacial rivers and putting on real braces and living in solitude and eating less or hiding." Anderson concurred: "Adrien doesn't always like the part, but when he settles in and this is what he's going to do, he gives it everything."

Brody's characters teem with contradictions and inner hinterlands; patience gives way to explosive anger, smiles curve inward; his brow furrows articulately as any monologue. He can change his voice—language, accent, cadence, modulation—as easily as his hairstyle for a role. There's often a tension between a movie star and the character they play; Brody obliterates the distinction.

"He's incredibly raw emotionally, but he's not pretentious," Chapman says. "He doesn't bring his ego into play, and I think this is what allows him to inhabit a role in such a pure way."

Brody has admitted that he is, at heart, an introvert, an observer. "Anything that comes into his life gets held," Chapman told me. "It's painful, good and bad; but he's able to draw on this enormous universe inside him." It is not easy to work at that kind of level of fierce concentration. "It does exhaust him," says Chapman, "because he gives so much. He's very sensitive, he has a very thin veil emotionally with the world."

At one point, about 10 years ago, Brody put his acting on pause. "To be honest, I wasn't finding material that spoke to me." Disillusioned, he rediscovered painting.

"Painting reemerged as something that gave me a creative autonomy that I don't have making a movie. It gave me fulfillment."

"His new work is getting better and better," said Chapman, who admits there are many Brody canvases on their walls. "It's something he loves." He has an art studio at the house in upstate New York where he lives with Chapman, her two children, her ailing mother, four cats, two donkeys, three horses, and a small white shaggy-haired dog called Ziggy. Chapman and Brody met on a trip to Puerto Rico, invited by mutual friends; it turned out they shared the same birthday, April 14. "So the first evening we had a joint birthday party," said Chapman, "blowing out candles together, and weirdly we even had almost matching outfits, we were wearing the same print." Life at home is low-key: hiking, cooking. "If he's in the midst of inhabiting a role, he's up in the office, reading, covered in cats," said Chapman. In between working, Brody will disappear into his studio, totally absorbed, "into the wee hours."

He paints large, vibrant canvases, often social commentary shot through with humor. His first collection, "Hot dogs, Hamburgers and Handguns," skewering big food and the culture of violence, debuted at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2015. He also makes music.

"It all connects," Brody said. "I've discovered that they're all collage-like interpretations. Acting, painting, even the style in which I produce music, is by layering dissonant and various elements. Some clash and some work."

A string of lauded TV roles—as a trilby-wearing mafioso in *Peaky Blinders,* a shrewd venture capitalist in *Succession,* and, most recently, the legendary basketball coach Pat Riley in *Winning Time*—restored his profile and his confidence. In 2021 he starred in the movie *Clean,* which he cowrote and produced, a gritty revenge drama set in the wintry, rundown outskirts of a nameless town. He also scored the film, writing its musical themes and working on the sound design, "breaking glass and laughter, the guy coughing and the siren." He loved being involved in the whole process. "So crazy and rewarding and wonderful, it's like—" he smacked his hands together, "you're doing a sketch and all of a sudden you've got this oil painting."

In the role of László Tóth in *The Brutalist,* Brody has arrived at the apotheosis of his career, drawing together threads of autobiography, professional experience, and persistence. He understood the backstory from his research interviewing Holocaust survivors for *The Pianist;*

Brody's mother fled the 1956 Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising with her family, an immigrant journey echoing Tóth's in *The Brutalist.* In Corbet, Brody knew he'd met a filmmaker of obsessive vision. "It's one of these things when subject matter, performer, character were so incredibly aligned," Corbet told me, "that it's sort of self-evident."

Corbet, a former actor, won the best-director award in 2015 at the Venice Film Festival with his debut feature, *The Childhood of a Leader,* and the respect of independent filmmaking peers with his commentary on fame and its emotional manipulation and costs in *Vox Lux,* starring Natalie Portman as a damaged and damaging pop star. "Very rarely you meet someone like Brady," said Brody, "who presents something that is not only so compelling and relevant but who knows how to lift up the entire state of independent filmmaking."

Corbet shot *The Brutalist* in VistaVision, a large-format process, not much used since the 1950s, and it has a run time of over three hours with an intermission. "I want to keep pushing the medium as far forward as I possibly can," he told me. He wrote the script with his wife and screenwriting partner, Mona Fastvold, and makes it a point to work with people he both likes and admires. He told me that Brody, like most of the cast—notably Felicity Jones and Guy Pearce and Joe Alwyn—had remained committed through several years of COVID and financing delays. Having Brody's participation was crucial. "Just straight up, the movie would not have gotten made without Adrien," Corbet said.

The Brutalist is cathedral grand and as delicately emotionally sprung as a watch mechanism. It is a Fitzcarraldo fable of artistic endeavor, a universal immigrant tale, and a searing indictment of capitalism. Tóth is human and complicated, stubborn, closed, addicted; he suffers the devastation of war and the promise and betrayal of the American dream. Brody's performance is a mesmerizing kaleidoscope that conveys all of this.

Jones plays opposite Brody as Tóth's wife, Erzsébet, in an indelible portrait of a woman physically broken by war who remains resolutely unbroken in spirit. They had to act scenes in Hungarian, a feat Jones likened to patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time. "We never left character when we were doing those scenes," she said. "We completely immersed ourselves in those moments, and for the duration we were filming we really became those people."

The movie was shot, ironically, in Budapest, with the surrounding countryside standing in for Pennsylvania, on a tight budget of under $10 million. Brody's mother, Sylvia Plachy, visited, took pictures, and imbued the set with her past. "I think we both felt an obligation to make Sylvia quite proud," Corbet told me. For Brody it was a way to honor the experience and sacrifice of his mother and grandparents. "The foundation, before I was even born, of coming to America and my ancestral struggle and loss," he said. "That has afforded me opportunities that are not taken for granted."

The Brutalist premiered at the Venice Film Festival in September. Brody had seen a rough cut; Chapman was viewing it for the first time. "We were both blown away," she told me. "I was genuinely lost for words." The film received a standing ovation, and Corbet was awarded the Silver Lion for his directing. It's clear from talking to Corbet and Brody that the sheer relief of having achieved what they had set out to do outweighed the accolades. "I don't feel particularly affected by opinions," Corbet told me. "I am definitely not going to always be making movies that everyone connects with."

Similarly, accepting that the highs and lows of a movie career don't often correlate with commercial success has afforded Brody equanimity, and even grace. He's not overly excited by the coming awards season. "I've been down the road," he told me, as he headed out to prepare for that evening's theater performance. "If you're lucky you can still find yourself loving what you do and finding ways to grow and learn and collaborate and strive. I'm not worried if I am going to have another great role. Sometimes work comes and sometimes work may not come. I'll find ways to stay creative, and that is very comforting. And the rest: You take the good and the bad." □

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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a cheery tomato-soup red, where a strange soffit, lined with exterior siding, emerges from the ceiling. The man who built the house, Roger Gonzales, "used to tell people that this was its original corner," McKinniss says, "and the rest of it was all an addition." An assortment of brass candlesticks appear timeworn; McKinniss tells me he buys them online for $5 apiece. The windows *are* antique glass, but they were purchased secondhand. The high-gloss walls of his living room are a lacquered green—inspired by a parlor at Mount Vernon. The color seems both Colonial homage and how the Emerald City might appear if you were watching *The Wizard of Oz* while just a little high.

"I wanted the house to look like Dorothy Draper," McKinniss tells me, whose crisp colors—acid green, flamingo pink—paired with classical details defined a certain kind of midcentury baroque. Draper's design for the Greenbrier resort—the famous 14,000-acre West Virginia property, where each room feels like a Kodachrome ad—was a reference, as was the movie *Holiday Inn* (1942). "I wanted to do the house in what Hollywood used to call the American Colonial Revival style, but put back in New England," he says. We step into a sunny sitting room with a ceiling the color of lemon curd, the walls covered in a graphic floral from the Swedish wallpaper company Sandberg—a warmly enveloping pastiche. It would be hard to be gloomy in a room like this. "What I really wanted was a proper home out of town," McKinniss says.

On first glance, McKinniss's studio, housed in the renovated barn just 100 paces from his front door, offers a more austere aesthetic: The drywall behind his paintings is optic white, save for the halo of colored slashes where McKinniss has wiped his excess paint. The track lighting is fluorescent. Functional storage lines the walls. But in another way, it's of a piece: McKinniss's canvases, like his house, radiate a deep awareness of how visual culture alters the way we perceive the world. New paintings are inspired by the cover of Fiona Apple's 1996 album, *Tidal;* an image of the characters from *Friends;* a picture of the diver Greg Louganis, upside down with his arms outstretched in a Christ-like configuration at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. These images have all been rendered on canvases that will ship out the following day, bound for the David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles, where a solo show titled "The Perfect Tense" opens in January.

The new paintings are in the same mode as his earlier work, McKinniss says, "which you could describe as entertainment as usual." But he also wants there to be evocations of loss and mourning. "I was trying to make a show that developed the idea of a private experience of grief that could then be experienced in the public domain," McKinniss says, "so a lot of the notes that I'm trying to hit have to do with a demise or imminent danger." (Apple has gone through mental health struggles; the *Friends* image is haunted by the death of Matthew Perry; Louganis later found himself ensnared in controversy when he revealed that he had kept his HIV status secret.)

In his rural idyll, McKinniss might be moving into a more contemplative mood than that of his 20s and 30s. He is at work by 9 a.m., breaking for lunch with Michael—"the gentlest, most decent person you'll ever meet"—reading voraciously (on his nightstand are works by the art critic Dave Hickey, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Kazuo Ishiguro), going for long walks. But he still surrounds himself with vivacious friends. (And he knows everyone—at one point I offhandedly

mention the children's artist Richard Scarry; Scarry's granddaughter is, of course, an acquaintance.) The weekend before my visit, some 40 people swirled through the house, playing the grand piano in the living room, eating the gingerbread and apple cakes that Michael had baked. McKinniss makes time to visit the city too, where he and Michael keep an apartment in Tudor City.

Have the rhythms of his new life changed him? He explains the story behind his more recent large cow paintings. The canvases emerged from an urge, he says, to just "take pleasure in art" after a period when he was overstretched with gallery obligations. They are less like his previous work, and more like "a fantasy of what I thought painting would've been," he says, "a fantasy version of an artist in New England." McKinniss was at that time new to Kent, and intended to befriend his local dairy farmer, to "trot onto their property with a portable easel." Instead he finds himself painting cows from images he prints from the internet. Nature rendered in pixels and transformed again, the uncannily familiar, made strange and new. "The first one I did literally was a thumbnail image of a dairy cow," he says. "From Wikipedia." □

McGIRR'S McQUEEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 103

photographing young kids and skaters on Rue Léon Cladel. (Until 2023, McGirr identified as both designer and photographer, winning a prize for his pictures and publishing a book of them.) From there, Antwerp beckoned when he landed a job at Dries Van Noten (his first collection was the label's frothy collaboration with Christian Lacroix) before returning to London—first as head of menswear at JW Anderson, then as head of womenswear too.

The atmosphere in McGirr's McQueen studio is markedly democratic. While he has his own office, which is filled with military chairs from the 1940s, he's rarely in it, preferring to be with the team while casting, designing, fitting. McGirr can, over the course of a single conversation, reference Caravaggio's *Madonna dei Pellegrini,* the contemporary programming at Tokyo's SCAI The Bathhouse, and photographer Philip-Lorca diCorcia's distinctly American ennui. It's one of the reasons why Pinault felt instinctively that he would be right for the job. "Seán exemplifies a new generation of creativity in British fashion," he says. "His vibrant energy and passion for couture and tailoring—and his rich background in art and music—resonate perfectly with the spirit of McQueen." And yet McGirr sees art and fashion as distinct entities. Art, he says, comes from a singular person, while fashion is generally produced by a team—in McQueen's current iteration, one that extends from Clerkenwell to tailors in Italy, fabric makers in the North of England, merchandisers in Korea, and far beyond. "I'm not making clothes for a museum," McGirr tells me more than once. "It's really important that people wear things." Given the turbulent state of the world lately, he hopes his designs can be a form of modern armor: "It's almost like a way of surviving, wearing McQueen."

There's still plenty of room for lightness in McGirr's universe, though. Today everyone in the atelier is invited to weigh in on whether a zebra-print fabric is too "Patsy Stone" (the tragicomic fashionista from the *Absolutely Fabulous* series) and whether an abstracted houndstooth is too "Tati," referring to the checked pattern of a French chain store. Much, admittedly, is still in flux: The walls are lined with mood boards pinned with images of Siouxsie Sioux and Plum Sykes, but I soon learn that the collection's direction has shifted again, while McQueen's factories wait to get started on production. If the concept of the banshee has begun to crystallize in McGirr's mind, there's nothing yet to see in terms of clothes—just rail after rail of vintage clothes for research, from an olive green leather trench to a cream rayon cape embellished with sequin lightning bolts that Ziggy Stardust might have worn. As McGirr will admit to me later on, "You need a bit of time to understand who you are within the framework of this kind of brand, which has never really had a new creative director."

I try to figure out how much time he's actually had. It's July, and in the months since McGirr's appointment was announced, he's produced a 52-look fall collection, attempted to meet the scores and scores of people working underneath him, overseen a 31-look resort offering, started the spring collection—and weathered two PR storms.

The internet met the news of his arrival in October 2023 with a tiled, monochrome image of McGirr next to Kering's five other creative leads: Anthony Vaccarello at Saint Laurent, Demna at Balenciaga, Sabato De Sarno at Gucci, Norbert Stumpfl at Brioni, and Matthieu Blazy at Bottega Veneta. In terms of gender and racial identity, as the social media chorus quickly pointed out, one of these things was very much like the others. McGirr replies thoughtfully and sensitively when I mention it. "It's a really important conversation to have," he says, adding that it's always been critical to him to have a team that's "super diverse"—not just in terms of race and gender, but age and nationality as well.

What he doesn't say is that, even now, it still takes preternatural grit, talent, and determination to rise from a suburban Dublin community to the head of a Kering house with a reported annual turnover of more than 800 million euros (as of 2022). "He's working-class, you know," says fellow London designer Charles Jeffrey, who's known McGirr since he served as his fit model at Saint Martins, their friendship solidified over nights dancing at Vogue Fabrics in Dalston. "There's not that many of us that have these voices in the industry."

And then there's the response to McGirr's debut, concocted in less than a month and presented in the disused train depot of Les Olympiades on an oddly wintry evening in March. McGirr had been studying Lee's spring 1995 The Birds collection—particularly its translucent cling film dress—and experimenting with compression and distortion through sculptural knitwear, sharply angular silhouettes, and shoes inspired by horses and goats. While much of the mixed reaction among the editors and influencers was coolly measured—none of which impacted the virality of McGirr's Hoof boots—far too much of the Instagram commentary veered into cyberbullying cloaked in the guise of fashion criticism. In the '90s, Lee McQueen was known to place gilded skeletons amid the press seats at his shows as a reminder of his disdain for their occasional reproaches; one wonders how he might have responded to a 290-part thread weighing in on his draping skills, as McGirr had to endure. ("Can you imagine," he asks me at one point, sounding both amused and appalled, "if I had Instagram?")

On my way to Clerkenwell, I had wondered whether McGirr might have become jaded since I last glimpsed him, back in Paris's Chinatown in March, being pointedly asked by reporters what he thought Lee would make of his debut collection, but no. McGirr's pleasure in dressing—whether others or himself—remains intact. If it's become de rigueur for the millennial directors of major fashion houses to adopt a uniform of the Uniqlo crewneck/Levi's 501s variety, McGirr still chooses a look every day for the sheer joy of it; say, skinny jeans from Kapital in Tokyo, a vintage tweed blazer from Stefano Pilati's time at Saint Laurent, and diamond pavé earrings from Antwerp's Diamantkwartier ("*the* place for a bit of bling," he says). He gushes, too, about the 2024 Met Gala, when he and Lana Del Rey spent the previous night choreographing their red carpet moves in her suite at the Plaza, ordering M&M-topped sundaes from room service at 2 a.m. in a nod to *Home Alone.* "It's very stressful, obviously, but I managed to also have fun," McGirr says. "That's important."

Among the McQueen old guard to have rallied around McGirr back on home shores: milliner Philip Treacy. The two bonded at Treacy's studios, with

Treacy reminding McGirr that McQueen spent much of his life being undermined. "*Now,* obviously, Lee and Isabella are such heroes—and they always were, in their own right—but [Philip] told me that in the '90s, people didn't understand them. He was like, 'People hated Lee,'" McGirr says. "[Lee and Isabella] were rebellious—but without being arrogant. That's important."

McGirr is in no way arrogant, but he is resolute. As Jeffrey says, he's always been charming, fun-loving, and jolly—but it would be a mistake to confuse his kindness with weakness. There's a kind of Celtic fire in him, Jeffrey adds, and "if people turn around or say *no*, it's just like, *Well, I'll fucking show you.*"

In the years when Alexander McQueen reigned over Cool Britannia, Seán McGirr was coming of age beside the Irish Sea in the Dublin neighborhood of Bayside—a '60s suburb with a medieval Kilbarrack graveyard—with his bedroom walls lined with tickets from emo concerts. His mother, Eileen, a fertility nurse, can trace her eldest's obsession with design back to the hours and hours he spent building amazing structures out of Legos as a three-year-old, while his mechanic father, Brendan, remembers McGirr whiling away rainy Saturdays hanging around his Dublin garage.

McGirr returns to Bayside when he can, where he and his family "stay up until 1 or 2 a.m. pouring our hearts out to each other," McGirr says, adding that they can quickly disabuse him of any notions of grandeur he may have acquired: "When they saw me on the carpet with Lana at The Met, they were like, 'Who the fuck do you think you are?' I was like, 'I'm sorry! I just made a dress! I'm no one!'"

"I guess I have this sort of Celtic kinship with McQueen," he tells me over lunch in the geranium-filled courtyard of La Famiglia, an old-school Italian restaurant off the King's Road, in August. "We both, weirdly, have tartans," he adds—although McQueen's, he says, "is way more chic." On weekends in the '90s and '00s, McGirr and his family would travel "deep, deep, deep in the countryside" to the 100-odd-person village of Lahardane near Ireland's west coast, where one of Seán's maternal uncles had a pub. From the age of 10, he collected empties there and heard the punters recount the folklore that McQueen was riffing on.

Despite all of that, McGirr says, "For me, McQueen is about London—there's an attitude in the city that's very visceral, but very refined at the same time." (While his banshees might have their roots in Gaelic folklore, they're more likely to appear outside Trisha's, an underground Soho dive, at 5 a.m.) It's why, even though the job has his "one-hundred-million-and-twenty-percent dedication at all times," he's still out and about as much as possible, making frequent excursions across the city by bicycle: to the exhibition of Francis Bacon's paintings at the National Portrait Gallery; to a gig by the art-rock band Still House Plants south of the Thames; and, yes, to the occasional "queer rave in some back-ass place." ("Sometimes," he adds, "you need a good stomp.") We've just been to see the glass hammers and wish trees of Tate Modern's Yoko Ono retrospective—Yoko being, McGirr feels, "very McQueen in her fearlessness."

Still, he's under no illusions about the fact that business is everything in fashion now. "It's not like 10, 15 years ago, when you had certain designers who would show collections that were really cool and really good, but maybe didn't sell," he says. "Now everything is based on monetary success. Do I think that's a shame? Kind of—but it's important to acknowledge it and understand the times we're living in."

The first time McGirr saw the label Alexander McQueen was in the department store Brown Thomas, on the soles of Lee's 2006 Puma collaboration. It's also around this time that his paternal grandmother, Maureen, a department store window dresser, gave him a 1950s sewing machine, and that he learned about someone named Hedi Slimane—quickly deciding to snatch his school uniform to match Slimane's signature skinny Dior Homme silhouettes.

Today you can feel the legacy of teenage Lee and Hedi fandom in McGirr's aesthetic, and in his muses—none of whom McQueen pays to wear its clothes, an abnormality in our transactional age. He's pleased that Beyoncé (among many others) was "really, really obsessed" with the voluminous shearling coats in his first collection and that Charli XCX spent much of her Brat Girl Summer in his Hoof boots ("She's really like *the* girl, actually, Charli")—but he's far more effusive when telling me about Florence Sinclair (photographed for this story), a British Caribbean musician with 10,000 Instagram followers and a sound that reminds him of Lou Reed. (As for whether he plans

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to continue nurturing McQueen's affiliation with the royals: "Yeah, they haven't reached out to me yet," he jokes, although he thinks "the kids are quite cool"—and that six-year-old Prince Louis, of the three, has the most "McQueen energy.")

McGirr lives in a two-bedroom '60s apartment in the emotional nexus of London where Soho revelers and Piccadilly tourists brush up against the toffs of St. James's private men's clubs. He still does his own grocery shopping, still has his grandmother Maureen as his iPhone background—although he's delighted to now have the luxury of a spare room for when his family comes to visit, even if said spare room is largely filled with his collection of '80s Armani suits.

He is, by his own admission, "a bit of a workaholic—that's just what I like to do." Most days he's awake before 7, reviewing the voice notes he sent to himself the day before over a full pot of slow-drip coffee before lifting weights or practicing yoga and heading to the office on foot. There's a touch of woo-woo to him: He's into Reiki, cold baths, and analysis (Jungian, not Freudian). "I don't know if everything in the whole world relates back to your relationship with your mother," he says—though sex, he quickly adds, "is really important."

I find myself wondering whether any of this has proved a lifeline since last October. We're in a taxi now, speeding back toward the center of London, past the gilt statue of the Victoria Memorial and the Regency curve of Piccadilly Circus. I steel myself to ask, as we approach his stop: How, exactly, has he coped with the trolls? His response is measured, but moving. "Obviously I'm a human with a conscience—so if someone says something that's a bit mean, it might hurt my feelings, but at the same time…it's noise. You're always going to have noise." We say our goodbyes, and he's swallowed by the ground traffic of Soho. The question—particularly for young designers—seems to be: Can you still hear your own voice in spite of that noise?

As we take our seats in Paris at McQueen's September show, we are greeted by a statement of intent directly beneath our feet: an installation conceived with Tony-winning designer Tom Scutt that gives the illusion that McGirr has drilled clean through the Beaux Arts tiles of the Palais des Études and installed his own steel-plate runway among the debris. "The impetus Seán described for me was about his time in London, walking through Soho at 3 a.m.," explains Scutt, the mastermind behind *Cabaret*'s set and costumes. "We talked a lot about that—what it's like to live in the center of town, and this liminal dream space that opens up between night and day and becomes a portal into another world." When the two visited the École together, it struck them both: "There's something quintessentially McQueen about the idea of ripping up the floor of an institution and releasing this sort of spirit," Scutt says.

More than one showgoer is still gazing downward at the trompe l'oeil effect when the lights dim, and the pulse of Cyrus Goberville's soundtrack sounds a warning, before McGirr's banshees materialize through the vapors that shiver above the metallic catwalk. There, one after another, are the architectural lines of McQueen's sketches transfigured into distinctive collars; leather charms of the English roses that Burton so loved; the Bumster reimagined with a panel of gossamer silk; georgette dresses adorned with black hawthorn branches in a nod to Lana Del Rey's Met Gala look—and then, transfixing the room, the iridescent banshee dress. The applause, as the models make their final lap, reverberates around the glass-ceilinged atrium, and when McGirr materializes for the customary bow, his eyes are bloodshot.

I'd planned to congratulate him properly backstage in the aftermath, but what awaits us, when we join the models toasting one another among the Corinthian columns, is pandemonium. Daphne Guinness—in a blazer from McGirr's first McQueen collection scattered with glinting jet stone—picks her way through the TikTokers and ring lights to breathlessly invite McGirr to dissect her collection of Victoriana, just as Lee did in the noughties. Cardi B, swaddled in furs, insists that "it was beautiful, it was dark, it was edgy" (and also that she will be needing 14 of those dresses with the collars). Then McGirr has Mr. Pinault to thank and talking points to rehash about his mood boards for various newspapers.

I'm watching all of this, faintly amused, when I realize McGirr's mother, dressed in her own clothes, is doing the same thing across the echoing marble room. I find my way to her and ask what, exactly, she makes of this rapture. "Well, McGirr for McQueen," she says, pausing and smiling in spite of herself.

"You have to admit: It's got a nice ring to it." □

WHEN SPORTS MET FASHION...

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Last Look

Ralph Lauren Collection bag

Ralph Lauren's well-tended stable of accessories has a knockdown new addition: a style inspired by the designer's beloved classic cars. The Ralph Tote is all swoon-worthy curves—from the ample calfskin leather body, seen here in a plummy bordeaux, to the hand-carved burl wood and metal handle (based on a vintage steering wheel). Whether you're gearing up for work or merely idling at the farmers market, it's an heirloom in the making that's safe—and chic—at any speed.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHRIS BROOKS

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