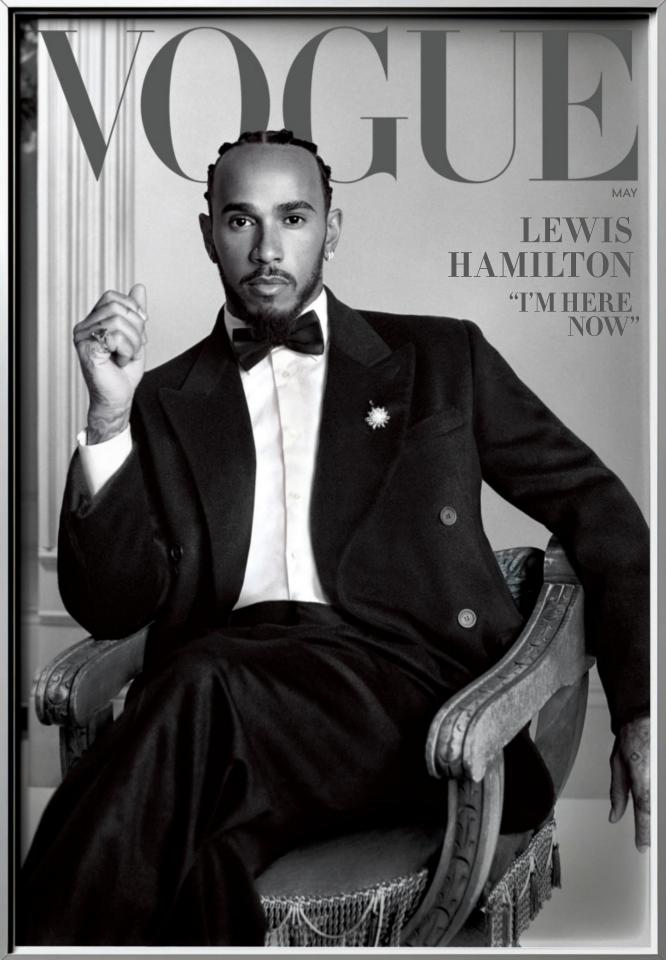
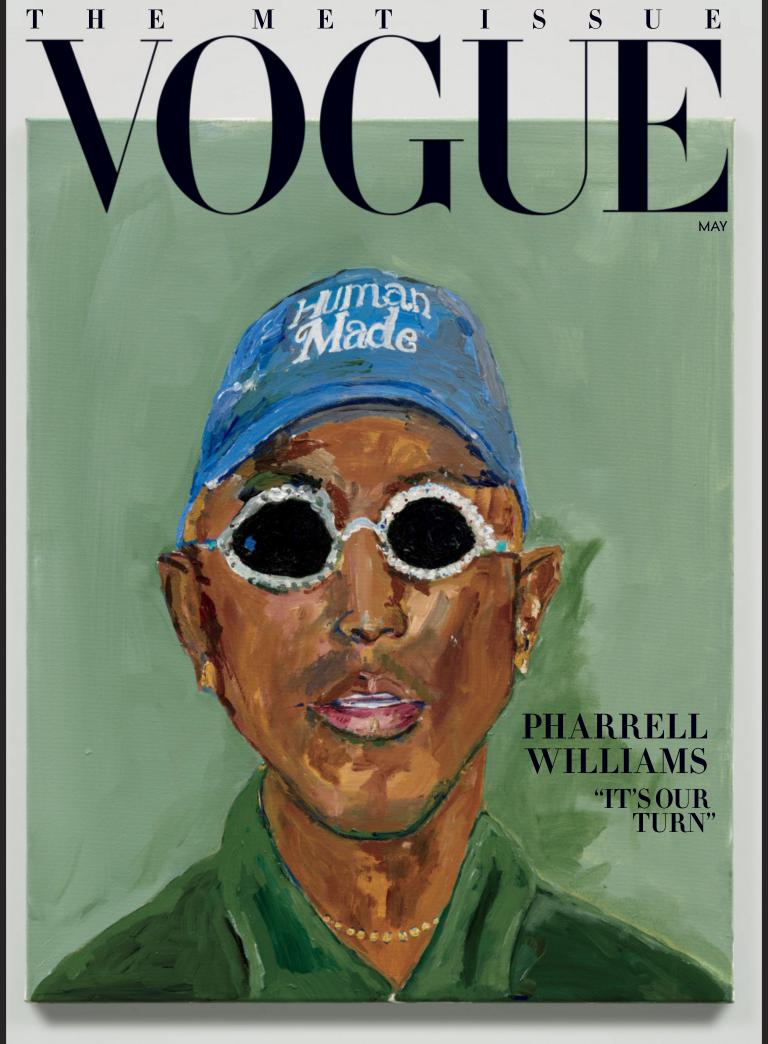


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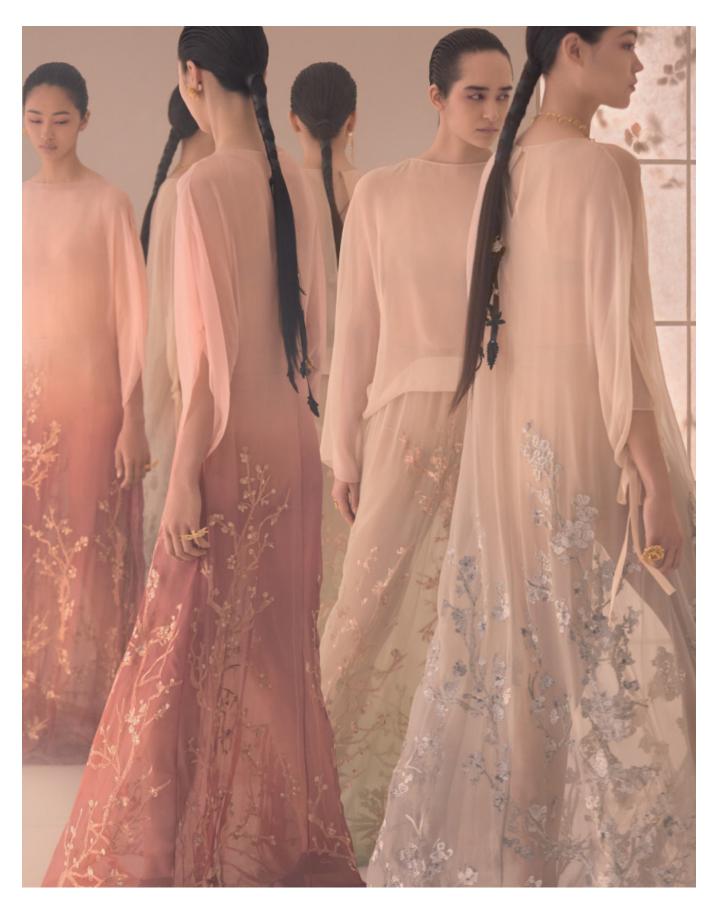
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LIU SHISHI'S CHOICE

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OGUE

May 2025



TOP BILLING

MODEL MATY FALL ON THE TAPE DECK IN A 3. PARADIS COAT, LABRUM LONDON SUIT, AND G.H. BASS SHOES. PHOTOGRAPHED BY MALICK BODIAN.

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Home Is Where the Art Is

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benefits of saffron in cosmetics

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Cover Looks Culture Kings

The four co-chairs of this year's Met Gala (and our four cover stars) offer a glimpse into The Met's "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style" exhibit. See In This Issue for details.



Portrait by Henry Taylor





Colman Domingo Portrait by lké Udé



Lewis Hamilton Photographed by Malick Bodian



FASHION EDITOR: LAW ROACH, HAIR, SONDREA "DRE" DEMRY-SANDERS; MAKEUP, KEITA MOORE PRODUCED BY ROSCO PRODUCTION. SET DESIGN: JULIA WAGNER. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

May 2025



TRIPLE THREAT

FROM LEFT: TEYANA TAYLOR, JANELLE MONÁE, AND RYAN DESTINY ALL WEAR MARNI. TAYLOR IN LE SILLA HEELS.
MONÁE AND DESTINY IN JIMMY CHOO PUMPS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY TYLER MITCHELL.

Superfine & Dandy

A manysplendored cast celebrates the new exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, which tells the story of Black dandyism as a sartorial forceand a tool for moving the social and political needle. Jeremy O. Harris walks us through itand writes about a lifetime of looking sharp

"It's Our Turn" Met Gala co-chair Pharrell Williams. the creative director of Louis Vuitton Men's, talks to Chioma Nnadi about The Met's landmark exhibition "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style" and what it means for Black resiliency, possibility, and power

Made in Harlem A\$AP Rocky loves fashion, the

neighborhood he's from, his kids, his grandmother, Rihanna, staying up late, making music, vintage luggage—the list goes on. Leah Faye Cooper meets the ever joyful Met Gala co-chair

158 All in the **Details**

Met Gala co-chair Colman Domingo has arrived at his leading-man moment. becoming a

vibrant red-carpet presence in the process. But, as he tells Marley Marius, it starts with the little things

164 "I'm Here Now" Met Gala co-chair Lewis Hamilton has revolutionized the culture of Formula 1. He reflects on what it means for a Black man to dress up, show up, and make no apologies. As told to Leah Faye Cooper

166

Power Play On Broadway, Denzel Washington and Jake Gyllenhaal star in an Othello for the ages. They talk to Maya Singer about its themes of faith, love, battle, and betrayal

170 Kind of Blue

With a sumptuous palette of cobalt, indigo, navy, and turquoise bonding some of the season's finest eveningwearfrom fantastically

patterned jackets to dresses that follow the body like water—a blue mood has never seemed quite so appealing

180 The Get

Because a proper night out is all about the details—from bejeweled shoes and exquisite timepieces to whatever opulent flight of fancy you can conjure

186 Last Look

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Hermès, the endless line

SUIT: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, ALFRED Z. SOLOMON-JANET A. SLOANE ENDOWMENT FUND, 2023. PHOTO © TYLER MITCHELL 2025.

Letter From the Editor



Tailor Made

IT WAS HIS FAVORITE PHOTOGRAPH of himself, taken by Arthur Elgort, 1988: André Leon Talley, in a wash of sunlight, striding up Fifth Avenue in a gray panel-checked suit by the tailor Morty Sills. He has his hands in his pockets; the jacket is neatly buttoned; his face is in profile; and the rest of the street is sunk into shadow as if André is a star on a stage, which of course he was, wherever he went. That was what made André so incredible: his instinct for self-presentation. He understood that, especially as a Black man, what you wore told a story about you, about your history, about self-respect. And so, for André, getting dressed was an act of autobiography, and also mischief and fantasy, and so much else at once. The suit fits him beautifully, by the way. No wonder The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute has included it in the exhibition "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style."

As the show's curators, Monica L. Miller and Andrew Bolton, have been busy preparing "Superfine," we at *Vogue* have been hard at work on a parallel effort: a tribute to the exhibition and a celebration of its themes of menswear, identity and history, the Black dandy in



STREET STYLE
ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY,
PHOTOGRAPHED
BY ARTHUR ELGORT,
1988. TALLEY'S
MORTY SILLS SUIT
WILL APPEAR IN
"SUPERFINE:
TAILORING BLACK
STYLE" AT THE
METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF
ART'S COSTUME
INSTITUTE

fashion, and his many expressions and forms. We've featured the Gala's four co-chairs on covers this month—Pharrell Williams (painted by Henry Taylor), A\$AP Rocky, Colman Domingo, and Lewis Hamilton—and we gathered a host of Black artists, actors, models, athletes, and more for a bravura shoot with Tyler Mitchell, one of many photographers, fashion editors, and writers of color who lent their creativity to the issue. (Denzel Washington is in the issue, too; André boasted to me that he looked just like him in the Elgort.)

I have thought of André so many times—happy and bittersweet memories mixed together. I thought of how even when he was doing something one might have found slightly over the top—playing tennis in full Vuitton, for instance—it was, for André, an act of supreme confidence, of total self-possession. André knew who he was, and I know how much he would have adored "Superfine," every aspect of it: the planning, the press conferences, this issue, the exhibition catalog, how many outfits he would have planned for the parties to come—and not just for him but for me, for everyone in my family, his friends, my friends, muses, fashionable acquaintances, anyone at hand.

André was a dandy among dandies and he radiated joy. The brilliant playwright Jeremy O. Harris, something of a dandy himself, wrote an essay in this issue about his upbringing and what dressing up means to him. Jeremy writes, so eloquently, that to be a Black dandy is "to dress as though you know you're loved and therefore have no use for shame." André never had an ounce of shame. I'll be thinking of him on the night of the Met Gala, an evening made for him—and one I can scarcely believe he will miss.

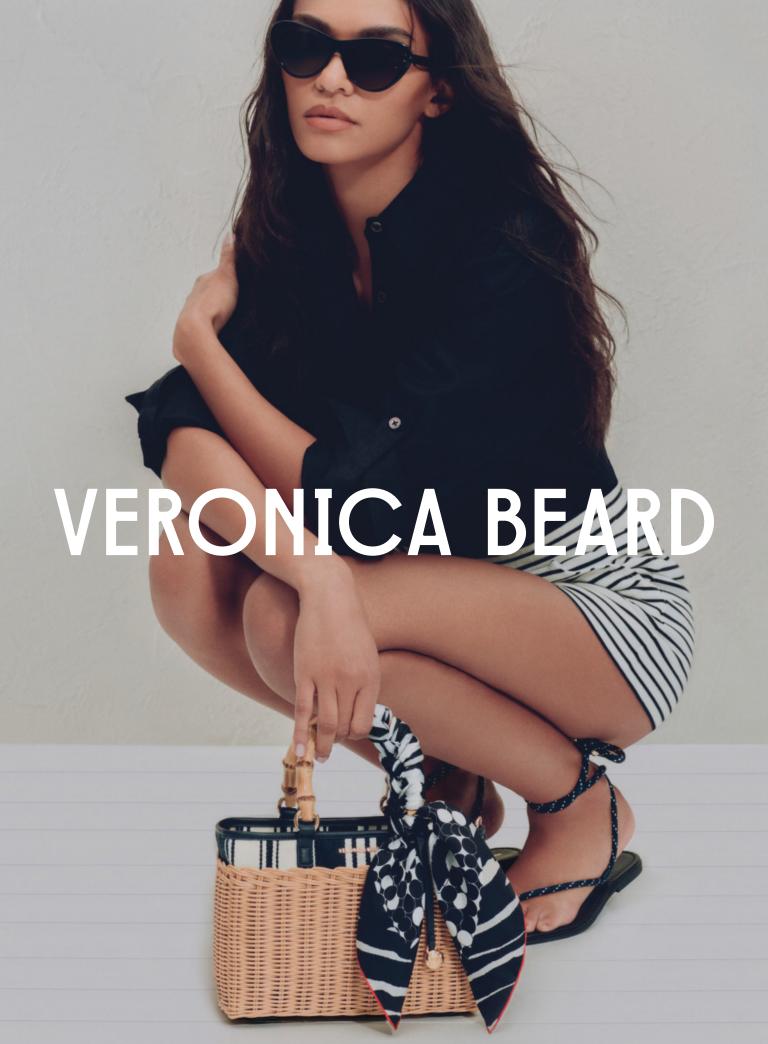
Almahitar.





DIOR







Contributors



The Curtain-Raiser

For this issue, Jeremy O. Harris whose striking talents as a playwright and screenwriter are nicely matched by his flair for dressing up-wrote an essay about his relationship to dandyism, the organizing aesthetic of the exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute this spring, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style." Harris's text runs alongside "Superfine & Dandy" (page 122), May's centerpiece fashion portfolio, celebrating contemporary suiting at its most dashing—and featuring many more major creatives, from actors and musicians to designers.



Making History

The people assembled to shoot and style "Superfine & Dandy" were no less impressive than the stars invited to appear in it. While Tyler Mitchell (ABOVE) was the photographer, Law Roach—known for his work with Zendaya and Celine Dion on red carpets the world over—was the fashion editor, gathering trunks upon trunks' worth of clothes. (Mitchell and Roach were also behind one of this issue's four cover stories, "Made in Harlem," starring A\$AP Rocky, on page 152.) Of working with Roach and that amazing cast of characters, Mitchell says: "It's not just a dream realized; it's a historic moment. It's the kind of work we all strive toward. Collaborating with Law was incredible, and I feel deeply connected to the images we created, as well as the laughter—and occasional sighs—we shared on set. I'm immensely grateful to the entire team who brought this vision to life."



Setting the Scenes

Another key creative partnership in this issue was the one between photographer Malick Bodian and IB Kamara, the creative director of Off-White and editor in chief of Dazed. Together, Kamara (FAR LEFT) and Bodian (NEAR LEFT) worked on the fashion portfolio "Kind of Blue" (page 170), with its vivid shades of indigo, navy, and turquoise—and a dynamic group of models including Bodian himselfand on Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton's cover portraits. (See "I'm Here Now," on page 164.) For Kamara, the projects were not just a pleasure—he and Bodian have worked together often, including on Vogue's November 2022 Michaela Coel cover—but an honor, too: "I always love working with Malick because we understand each other's visions intuitively," he says. "It felt special to be working on this particular issue of Vogue because the theme of this year's Met means a lot to us."



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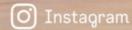
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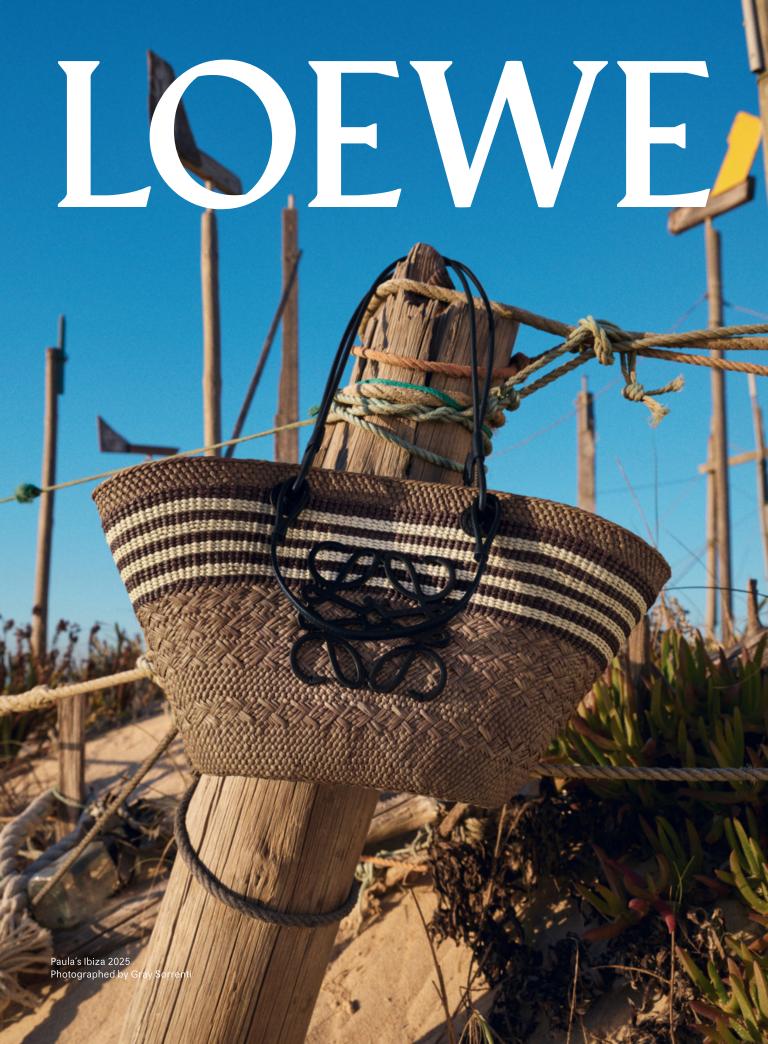


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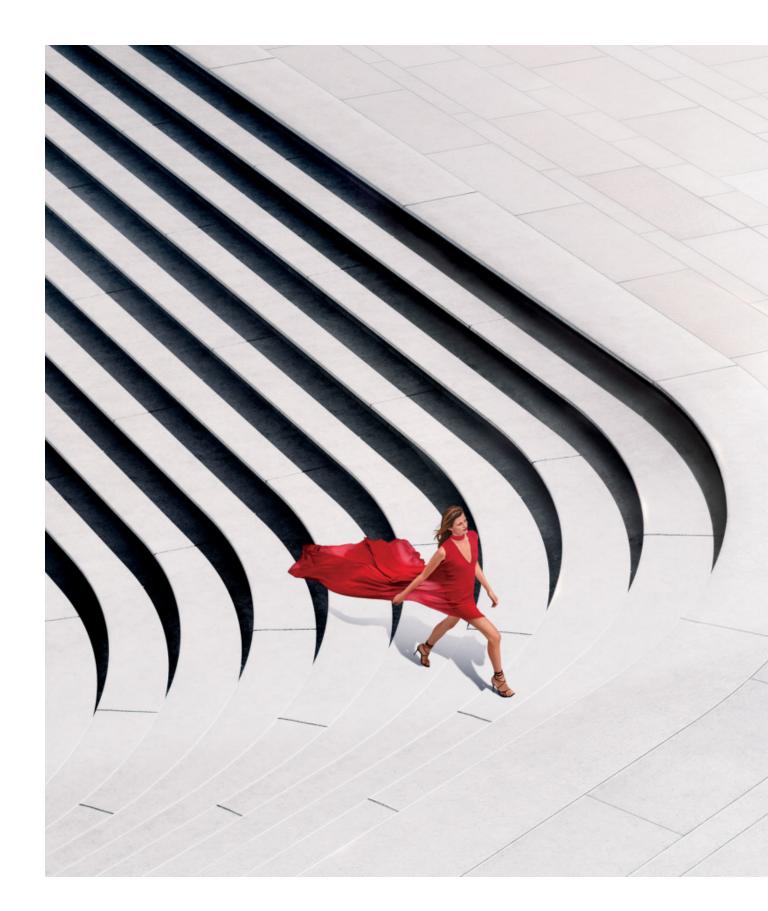
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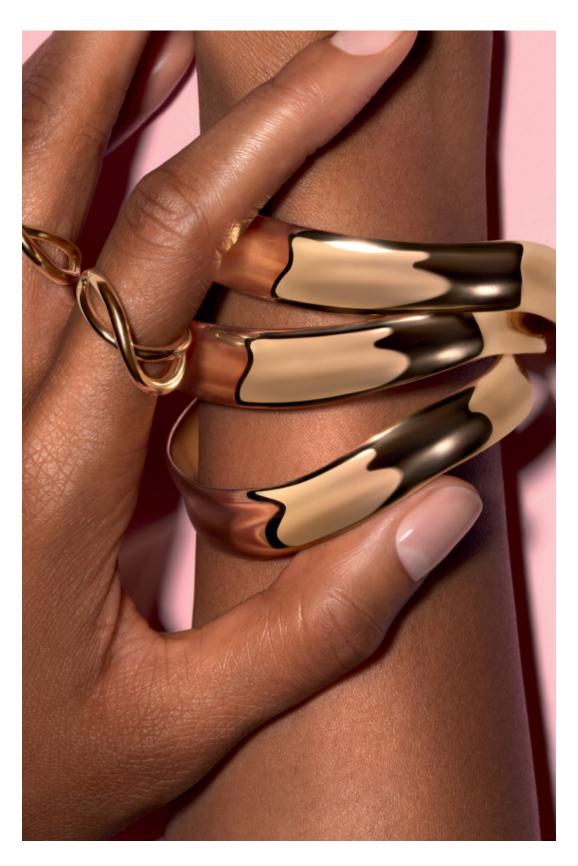




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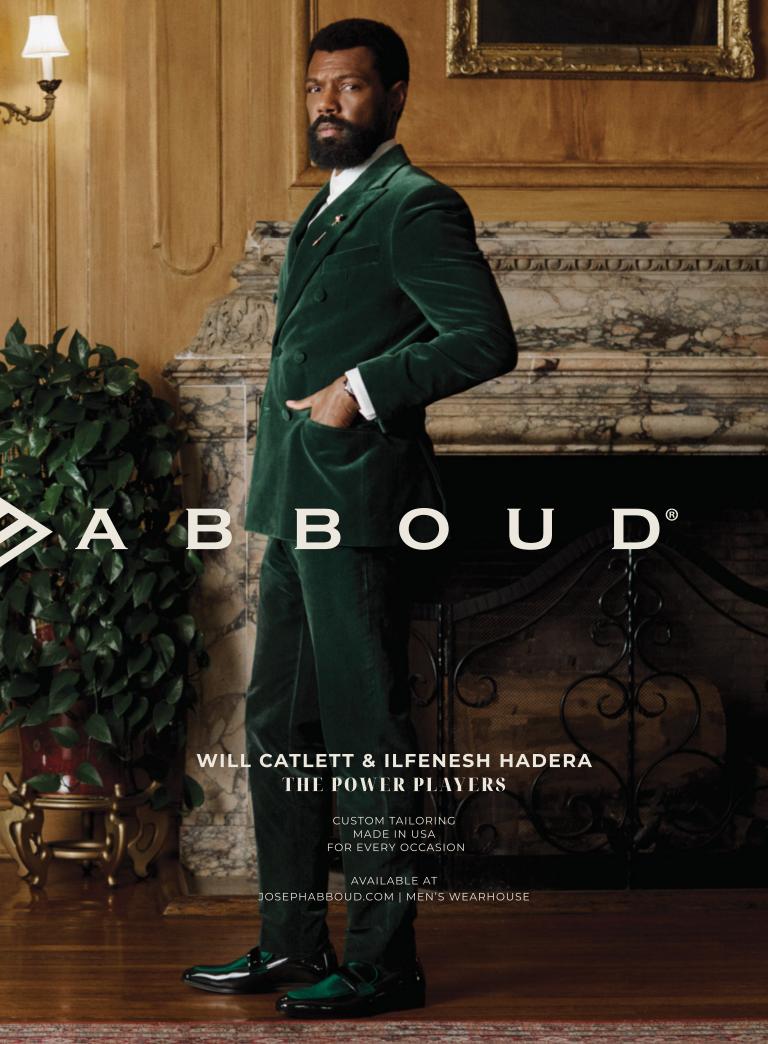
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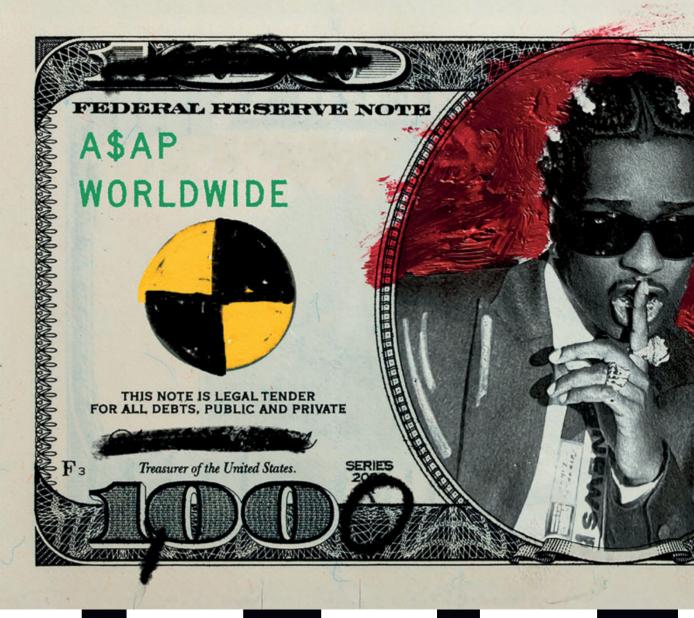














SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC/ART RESOURCE, NY. ® WILLIAM H. JOHNSON (1901–1970).

Up Front



The Dressmaker

Growing up, Tina Knowles counted her nephew Johnny among her best friends. As he found a place for himself in the world by making clothing, he showed Tina—and her daughters—a way to leave it a bit more beautiful.

y oldest sister, Selena, was 27 when I was born in 1954, and she and her husband, John, had eight kids by the time she was 30. My nieces and nephews were closer in age to me than my siblings, and they were my very best friends. The music of all that life in Selena's house enveloped me, excited me, held me. The sounds of her five daughters and three sons: Deanne, Linda, Leslie, Elouise, Elena, Tommie, and of course Ronnie and Johnny. Don't try to keep track of all of them—even Selena couldn't.

My nephew Johnny was four years older than me, and he was my very best friend. If you ask me what my earliest memory is of him, you might as well ask me about how I knew I needed air to breathe or water to drink. Johnny was just *there*. Once a week, Ronnie and I would have to have at least one real fistfight, always squaring off. But Johnny cut in.

"It was funny, Tenie," said Johnny, using my nickname, trying to get me to see the humor. And maybe it was funny, I thought, but only because Johnny said so. Johnny was the boss, and we all knew it. Even at just nine years old, he ran everything. As powerful as Johnny was in the family, he could be instantly fragile in Galveston, >94

SEATED

WILLIAM H. JOHNSON, PORTRAIT OF FLETCHER, 1939, OIL ON BURLAP.

Fernando Garcia at The Langham, New York, Fifth Avenue Your Story Our Legacy EST 1865 | LONDON THE LANGHAM HOTELS & RESORTS langhamhotels.com/yourstory

Up Front A Distinct Destiny

Texas, where we were all growing up. Johnny was obviously gay, and I had never known him to hide that light. Selena filled him with such love and had him so confident that he never hid who he was. But he would be called things, and strangers would sometimes eavesdrop on our conversations and grimace. They would shoot him a look, menacing and judgmental, and I would give it back.

Johnny would listen to my stories, my explanation for how I skinned my knee or how I got sick trying to see if breathing underwater would turn me into a real mermaid. He'd shake his head. "Lucille Ball," he called me—even that young, the "Lu" sung high as he laughed at my latest predicament. In Johnny, all that energy I had, all those big feelings, found a focus. It was my honor to be his protector. To give him the flower that he tucked behind his ear.

hen I told Johnny about my troubles at school, he seemed to get it on a deeper level than the rest of the family. Not just because he knew what the teachers at Catholic school were capable of—he understood what it was to be constantly shown that, outside our family, you don't fit in.

After I turned six, we all readied for Johnny to turn 10. Double digits. There was something about him turning 10 that made my brothers anxious for him. He was as

confident as he'd always been, and no one in our family had urged him to "act" less gay. But my brothers knew the world of boys in middle school and were afraid of what might happen to Johnny.

They had found their social standing in sports. So with the best of intentions, my three brothers and Tommie and Ronnie decided they were going to make Johnny play basketball. He went along with it, going to the court at Holy Rosary, with me tagging along.

I sat cross-legged on the edge, watching. He was trying, running around in his natural way, not putting on some butch act. When he would shoot the ball, he'd groan a loud *oooh*, sounding somewhere between Lena Horne and himself. He used humor to hold on to his dignity.

"Man up, Johnny," one of my brothers said. "Man up!" "Get the ball and shoot it," Ronnie said. They had never talked to him like this, but this was their language on the court. That was the culture, and they had convinced themselves that Johnny had to learn it too.

Johnny looked down for a second, and quietly said, more to himself than the boys, "I don't like this at all." That was it. I jumped up like I was saving someone from a train, as dramatic as could be.

Johnny and I went home to my mother, and I immediately started in on how they made Johnny play when he didn't want to. "They were making fun of him."

"Were they, Johnny?" she asked.

"No," he said. "Not really. I just don't like basketball." My mom took a beat. "Here. Come." She waved her hand toward her sewing table and let him take her chair. This was her "fixer" mode, the quick, efficient movements she made when taking on a project. "Johnny, if you make clothes for people? They will adore you. They're not going to make fun of you." She also knew what bullies at school could do, and she knew he needed armor. She took his hands and guided him along the path of a stitch. "I know you have an imagination," she said. "You make clothes for them? They will do anything for you."

She taught him how to sew, and Selena provided a daily master class. Sewing was the gateway to so many things, allowing him to create the clothes he had in his head. He made the most exquisite pieces from a young age, and entered the 1960s wearing the wildest fashions, making them first for the family and then for others who would stop us on the street and ask, "Where'd you buy that?" And yes, his skills did make people adore him. The coolest guys came to him to make clothes for them, paying him in cash, but also with their protection.

> Nobody ever called him names, and he would enter his teen years safe, which is all we wanted for him.

> When he was 18, Johnny started going to a club called the Kon Tiki. He took me to a drag show there, both of our first times, and I was all in. Johnny befriended the drag queens, started making them costumes, and became the go-to person to really put a look together. Showstopper

By then, Johnny had

beauty with the detail work that Selena taught him.

earned enough that when Selena's upstairs neighbors moved out, he took over the rent on the second floor of the duplex. The two floors shared stairs, and you could be in Selena's and enjoy the parade of Johnny's visitors. Selena's husband, Johnny's dad, would scratch his head watching people coming and going. The drag queens would descend transformed, looking beautiful in full makeup and wigs, wearing the gowns that Johnny made for them.

"Tenie, you know, them boys went up there," he said, "but they ain't never come down. Just those girls."

I started helping Johnny do hair and makeup up there too. 'Cause more often than not, I would look at one



ON THE TOWN TINA KNOWLES (LEFT), MOTHER OF BEYONCÉ AND SOLANGE. AND HER NEPHEW JOHNNY.

of his clients and think, I could do this really good. I'd have a vision, and Johnny and I would style the wigs together. I loved that moment in the mirror when somebody's transformation happened. You've made them look extraordinary, but somehow also brought out their true essence.

As I readied for my senior year, I began to count the months to when I would graduate and leave Galveston. I didn't know where I was going, but now that I knew Johnny had his people to draw from and grow with, I needed to find mine.

Editor's note: In 1990, Tina's nine-year-old daughter Beyoncé began to sing with a group called Girls Thyme. That group eventually became Destiny's Child.

We were so busy traveling and touring with Destiny's Child that it was easy for Johnny to hide that he was getting sicker. He began having episodes where he acted erratic, which made him withdraw more from family. Then he was hospitalized, and Selena found out. Johnny was her heart and best friend. She called me immediately and I caught the next flight to be with him. The diagnosis was AIDS-related dementia, which was causing a sort of delirium and paranoia.

Johnny got medication, which helped him get a little better, but not for very long. He started to lose motor control. We got him into a long-term care facility, not quite a nursing home but close. The staff was lovely, but very clear that this would be Johnny's

home until he went into hospice.

When the family wasn't in some city with Destiny's Child, I would bring Johnny home with me on the weekends to spend time with Solange and Beyoncé. Saturday mornings, my daughters would put on the house music he used to play as he helped raise them. Now they played it to him, dancing around as he bobbed his head to Robin S

singing "Show Me Love" or Crystal Waters going "la da dee, la do daa."

Solange was 11 and would clown for him, pulling out all the stops to make him laugh. She would get him his "funny cigarettes," and they would sit out on the little patio where I let Johnny smoke weed because it eased his nausea. I had always lectured the girls about Johnny's funny cigarettes and how I didn't want him smoking around them, but we were focused on more important things now. Watching Johnny decline was very hard on Solange. She feels things so deeply, internalizing pain until it reappears later as art or words.

I was at an airport when I got the call. Johnny needed to move to hospice. It was getting to be his time, they said. I visited him often, staying overnight sometimes. Johnny liked me to get him into a wheelchair so I could take him outside. We loved the sun, and it

would relieve the chill he felt down in the bones. We could have been sitting high up on the plank in the pecan tree, a landmark of our shared childhood. I have a picture of him with me outside near the end. Those moments outside were an escape.

Johnny took his last breath on July 29, 1998. He was 48. We had his memorial the following Saturday at Wynn Funeral Home in Galveston. Beyoncé and Kelly [Rowland] sang with the other girls from Destiny's Child. They had just been touring with Boyz II Men and now they were here crying. I don't know how they got through "Amazing Grace," but they did.

ears later, in the summer of 2022, I was in the Hamptons at Beyonce's home. She and Jay were hosting a *Renaissance* album drop party, and Blue and Rumi—then 10 and 5—had decorated the place. This album was her tribute to the house music Johnny had schooled my daughters in. I hadn't yet heard the song "HEATED," and as we all danced, Jay suddenly said to me, "Listen to this."

Then I heard the next line, Beyoncé singing on the record: "Uncle Johnny made my dress." I started to cry and smile at the same time, knowing this was what Johnny wanted. To be loved and celebrated. We raised a toast and danced on it. "Here's to Johnny."

When we went on the Renaissance World Tour, fans all over the world would turn to sing the line to me, and every

My mother took his

hands and guided him

along the path of a

stitch. "You make clothes

for them? They will do

anything for you"

time, my hand went to my heart. I wished Johnny were there to dance with me. But I would always see people in the crowd who reminded me of him, and I would do everything I could to get to them. I drove security crazy: "Bring him! Yes, that one!" I would send the cameras their way. "Make sure you get them! Oh, they're fabulous." I collected pictures of so many Johnnys.

Beyoncé closed the show with a photo of me and Johnny huge across the stage. It shows me out one night, looking at him with adoring but skeptical eyes, readying for the next thing out of his mouth. Beyoncé had asked me to give her a picture of Johnny and me for *Renaissance*'s album art, last-minute of course. That photograph was right on top of a pile when I opened a box, Johnny picking just the right one for us to admire him. When the photo of us was up there on the stage in stadiums across the world, all the young people who felt kinship with our beloved Johnny erupted in cheers.

"Yessss, Lucy," I heard, Johnny's voice so close in my ear, loud over the house music he and my daughters loved. "They know what time it is!"

—

Adapted from *Matriarch* by Tina Knowles, to be published on April 22, 2025, by One World, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

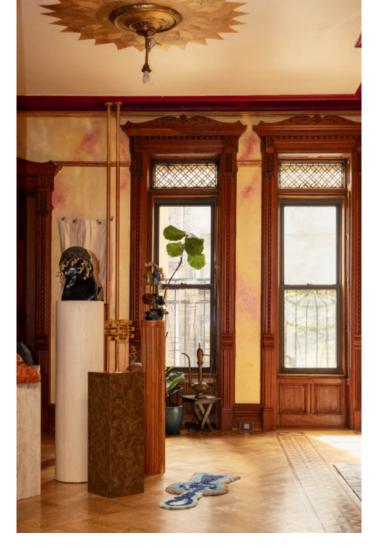
HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Thessaly La Force visits the fantastical world of L'Enchanteur.

n a magnificently preserved brownstone in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, a portrait of Soull and Dynasty Ogun's mother, Elthire Josephine, sits above a fireplace. The twins—who use the brownstone as the showroom, atelier, and gallery for their lifestyle brand, L'Enchanteur—have lovingly recreated this image of their mother, who died four years ago, in their jewelry. "It was taken when she was getting her immunization forms when she became a US citizen," Soull says with a smile.

Such seemingly minor biographical details are what animate L'Enchanteur, which was born in 2012 after Soull and Dynasty merged their independent labels—Alkhemi9 and BRZÉ, respectively. Since then, the identical twins have steadily become a force in artistic and fashion circles. The artist Mickalene Thomas is a longtime friend and collaborator of theirs, as is Lena Waithe. Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu, and Lenny Kravitz have all worn pieces by L'Enchanteur. Last year the brand was awarded the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund, and this year L'Enchanteur will contribute to The Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute's spring exhibition, "Superfine:





Tailoring Black Style." "Journeying through their work allows you to unapologetically and authentically become the fairy-tale version of yourself," Thomas has said, "which, in our complex world, is enlightened."

Their mythical aesthetic—where ancient-looking symbols and talismans merge with the Black immigrant culture

of Brooklyn in unexpected or surprising ways—was evident on a recent afternoon visit to the brownstone, whose walls and ceilings have been hand-painted by a friend of the owner (the Ogun sisters rent the home from a retired police officer), and where they have surrounded themselves with Nigerian antiques and totems (their father is Yoruba, their mother from Dominica); Mesoamerican artifacts; artworks by friends; and furniture, textiles, and objects of their own design.

On a nearby wall hung a silver-flecked textile made by Dynasty, inspired by a childhood accident in which she >98

BROOKLYN BORN

Dynasty (FAR LEFT) and Soull Ogun, in the town house that serves as their showroom, atelier, and gallery. Photographed by Miranda Barnes. Sittings Editor: Alexandra Michler Kopelman.

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CULTURE CLUB

The house is filled with an assortment of Nigerian antiques and totems, artworks by friends, furniture, and textiles.

burned her skin in a bathtub of scalding water. Soull had displayed a series of jewelry pieces she calls astral beings: sculptures made with mother-of-pearl and black onyx checkerboards. Next to them were two of her crowns, or gold headpieces. One was composed of gold nameplates of famous Brooklynites, from Barbra Streisand to Lil' Kim; the other was made to look like a roller set from a beauty parlor.

There is a long tradition of artists working in the decorative arts, points out their gallerist Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, of Salon 94 Design, who recently sold work of theirs to the Brooklyn Museum. "Alexander Calder made jewelry with wires and pounding gold," says Greenberg Rohatyn. "He made crowns for his grandchildren that they wore when they put on plays. He made jewelry for his friends. He eventually had incredible jewelry exhibitions in museums and galleries." She compares the Ogun sisters to the German artist Karl Fritsch, whose sculptural rings are often made from old jewelry. "They love to collect objects from relatives, neighbors, their local jeweler, and they are able to recombine these pieces into their own language," says Greenberg Rohatyn.

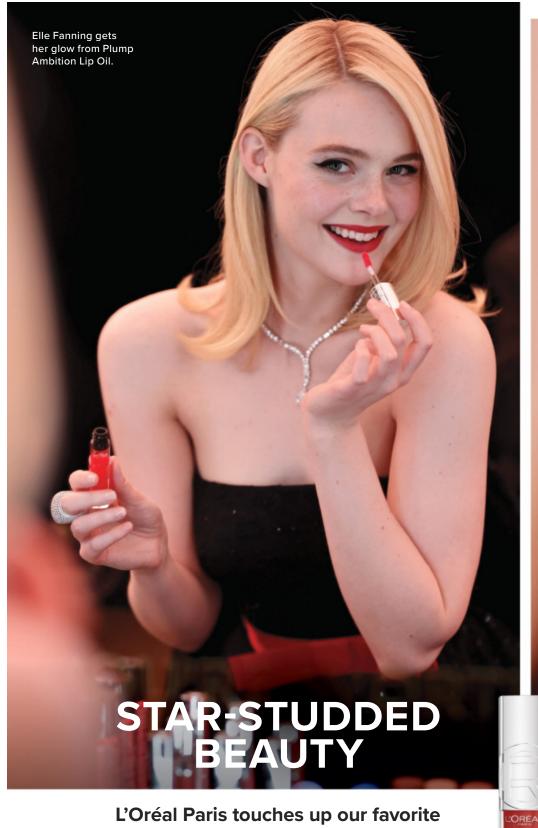
Soull and Dynasty have been developing this language almost since the day they were born in 1984, growing up in a loving household where their parents prized science and the arts, and attempted to shield them from the consumerism that dominates American childhood. "The things we lacked made us make stuff," explains Soull. "We

invented games. We really wanted to be on *Wheel of Fortune*, so we made [our own] Wheel of Fortune. We sold lemonade and Kool-Aid in the summer to buy Monopoly." They were the last of six children, and twins ran in the extended family. "Even though our father had these children, he was like, I'm supposed to get twins," Soull says. In their creative pursuits, they are largely autodidacts: Soull has taught herself metallurgy, casting, and carving; Dynasty knows patternmaking and sewing.

The duo have an ease, often finishing each other's sentences. In their 20s, they discovered that they often had the same dreams. They begin their days texting one another, and both practice morning meditation, before getting to work. Both are also queer. "I'm definitely queer because queer means odd," says Dynasty. "What I mean: I'm Dynasty. But I love women. I date women." They don't have children, but L'Enchanteur is their baby.

On the day I arrived, the basement atelier was orderly but overwhelming, filled with long chains made of interlocking keys, gold face and nose pieces, bolo tie hardware, tennis bracelets, amulets, bangles, pearl-embellished gold spectacles, Moroccan booties, and gold rings. It all gives an impression of teeming abundance, but the sisters believe everything they create eventually finds its way to the right person. "We obviously make a lot of custom pieces," says Dynasty. "When someone connects with a piece we've made—even if we've never met them before—we say it has chosen them."

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L'Oréal Paris touches up our favorite celebrities at Vanity Fair's Oscars Party.

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Elle Fanning shows off a perfect pout after touching up with Plump Ambition Lip Oil. Kendall Jenner strikes a pose after accentuating her lashes with Panorama Mascara. The Touch Up Bar's glimmering display of iconic products beckoned stars like Heidi Klum and Reneé Rapp.





Not to brag, but Vanity Fair's annual post-Oscars bash is always the hottest ticket of the night.

It's also, incidentally, one of the most talked about red carpets of the entire year—which means that everyone from A-listers to up-and-comers definitely feels the pressure to look their absolute best. No small feat considering that the festivities don't kick off until after Best Picture—and most

stars perform a quick outfit change before hitting the event.

Luckily, L'Oréal Paris' Touch Up Bar was on hand to make the transition from the awards show to the after-party all the chicer. Perched on the edge of the Vanity Fair Oscar Party's red carpet with a selection of L'Oréal Paris brand favorites—the first-ever Touch Up Bar ensured no star walked the step-and-repeat with a hair out of place or a lip left unglossed.



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Elle Fanning, who sported a bold red lip to match the sash of her strapless gown, was especially thrilled to see Plump Ambition Lip Oil on the Touch Up Bar's counter. Infused with hyaluronic acid and tripeptides for a glass-like shine, it lent the star the perfect volumizing glint before she hit the carpet for a few spins.

Ahead of her turn on the carpet, Kendall Jenner made a quick stop for a swipe of Panorama Mascara—a true camera flash necessity thanks to its ability to create voluminous, fanned-out lashes that help eyes appear 1.4x larger.

For Heidi Klum, the Touch Up Bar by L'Oréal Paris provided the chance to double-check that her half-up hairstyle was still intact.



(Above) Heidi Klum holds it all in place with Elnett Hairspray's Extra Strong Hold. (left) Kendall Jenner achieves a last-minute lift with Panorama Mascara.

Thanks to Elnett Hairspray's Extra Strong Hold, which features just six ingredients and a humidityresistant formula that helps prevent frizz without stickiness, the model was able to give it a last-minute spritz. The most glamorous red carpet on the biggest night of the year? No problem at all.







SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

The warming, healing saffron may have cosmetic benefits too.

n the islands of Crete and Santorini, millennia-old frescoes depict girls and monkeys harvesting flowers: saffron crocuses, whose scarlet stigmas, when plucked and dried, become the precious spice. Saffron was used by the Greeks and other early civilizations as a flavoring, a dye, a medicinal cure-all, and a purifier. The Chinese believed it fended off bad chi; in ancient Rome, it was scattered in the streets to cover up the odors of daily life. Today, it's beauty and wellness types who are increasingly embracing the ancient ingredient. See Matiere Premiere's heady, concentrated Crystal Saffron Eau de Parfum and Les Eaux Primordiales's Saffron Superfluide. "It's very metallic—cold and hot at the same time," Les Eaux Primordiales's founder, Arnaud Poulain, says of the note; "it gives power to the fragrance." As Antonin Khalifé, the perfumer son behind the family-owned house Henry Jacques, puts it, saffron imparts an "elegant volatility" to the brand's

Rose Très Rose essence. That these scents strike me as sophisticated and seductive is unsurprising considering saffron is said to be an aphrodisiac.

Saffron is more than a smell, though—it's a problem-solver with range. Upon coming across a recipe for a traditional Ayurvedic skin elixir that incorporates saffron, Michelle Ranavat decided to develop an oilbased serum that remains her eponymous brand's hero product. Each 30-ml bottle is packed with roughly 45 flowers' worth of saffron, which the biochemist Krupa Koestline of KKT Innovation Labs explains is rich in natural pigments called carotenoids (defenders against skin-damaging free radicals) and reduces inflammation. "I think of it as vitamin C's smarter sister," says Ranavat. Saffron can also improve one's mood, I learned, after a French pharmacist recommended

FLOWER POWER

The crocus holds within it one of the most valuable substances on earth.

Pileje Melioran tablets, designed with a saffron extract for "emotional overload," to a friend of mine during Paris Fashion Week. Lyma (known for its laser) just released a retooled supplement featuring another saffron extract that, in clinical studies, helped subjects combat anxiety, depression, and sleeplessness—no wonder that, as a child, Ranavat drank milk brewed with saffron to wind down after school.

While these pills and potions are all about how the spice might enhance your life, they also bring back memories of a different vehicle for saffron. During the post-pandemic haze, I attended a dinner party originally scheduled for mid-March of 2020, a Persian feast of the sort our host had grown up eating with his family. Among the myriad offerings was tahdig—a molded mound of saffron rice with a crispy, golden-brown exterior. I'm certain I had a second helping as I sat in that candlelit dining room filled with dear friends, and that was healing too.—KATE GUADAGNINO







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Navigating Menopause is Tricky

These Three Habits Have Helped

Hot flashes, night sweats, and mood swings are a drag. But going through menopause makes me more in tune with my body—and that has been empowering.

It also helps to know I'm not alone. Nearly a billion women are in some stage of menopause right now, and many of us are talking about it. For me, shared stories and resources, like these three tips, keep me cool when menopausal symptoms heat up.

Make time for exercise

I get it. You're busy. But regular exercise is one of the best things I've done to counter the negative aspects of menopause. Cardio helps reduce stress and may

combat weight gain, while strength training lowers the risk of osteoporosis. Some do find their perspiration becomes more pungent during menopause, a possible side effect of hormonal

fluctuations. But using Secret
Whole Body Deodorant Dry
Feel Stick can help keep body
odor at bay, as well as enable
you to stay dry everywhere. This
product is the only aluminumfree formula that's safe to use
anywhere you might need it:
swiped under your breasts,
massaged into your feet—or
applied to your pits and privates.

Create a bedtime routine

Night sweats and anxiety at 3 a.m. are common menopausal complaints. I've found a calming bedtime ritual sets the tone for better sleep. I begin with a warm bath or steamy shower. Then I apply powerful Secret Clinical Strength Antiperspirant Deodorant Invisible Solid to help me stay dry and prevent the sheets from getting soaked. This powerful product provides three times the sweat and odor protection of ordinary antiperspirants through all types of sweat—stress, heat, activity—and it keeps working for up to 72 hours (though I'd be happy with seven uninterrupted hours of sleep). Finally, I turn the thermostat to 64 degrees, place my phone face down, and open a good book.

Take it easy

When it comes to combating menopause-related anxiety and mood swings, I have found there is value in slowing down. I've started taking long walks, meditating, and sitting outside in the sun. Getting outside and connecting with nature has been shown to lower stress hormones. I've also started taking hot yoga. I spritz on the weightless Secret Clinical Strength Dry Spray before class for extra protection. An hour later, I walk out feeling centered, confident, and grateful for my menopausal body.



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FACE TO FACE

Henry Taylor's portraits are alive on the canvas and wonderfully unpredictable much like the artist himself. By Dodie Kazanjian.

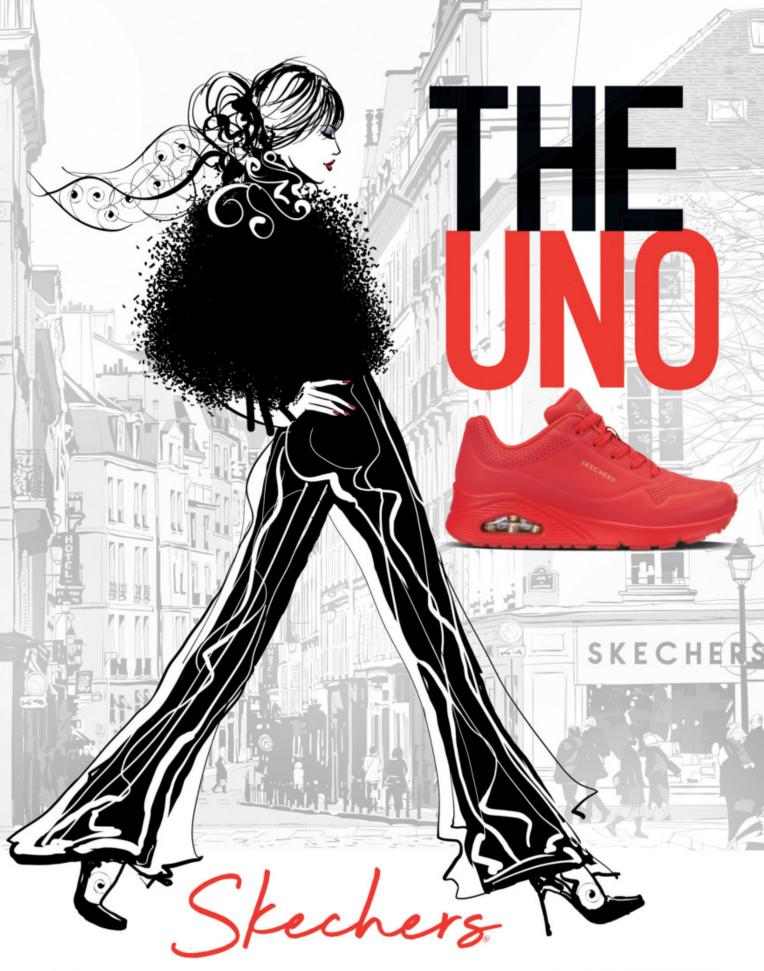
or his debut show at Louis Vuitton two years ago in Paris, Pharrell Williams embroidered miniature versions of Henry Taylor portraits on his suits and accessories. "Henry is a genius," Williams said at the time. So when Vogue decided to put a painting of Williams on one of its covers this month, we asked Taylor, an artist with a singular, ineffable cool, to do it. (This marks the fifth time in the past eight years Vogue has commissioned an artist to do a painting for a cover.) There was no time for a portrait sitting, but Taylor can paint from memory, and he'd met the designer in Paris, at Williams's first Louis Vuitton show.

"I'm talking truth today," Taylor tells me when we meet on Zoom to discuss the process. He's in his studio on Pico Boulevard in Downtown Los Angeles. It's noon there, and he's just finished his avocado-toast breakfast and is smoking a joint. "I'm a Rasta, man. I woke up playing Bob Marley." Taylor has a hipness to him. "He knows himself," says Williams. He just gets it."

I ask Taylor why he included the words "Human Made" on Williams's baseball cap in the Vogue cover portrait. "That's what we need today, more hu-man-i-ty and," he says, pausing and then continuing with a big grin, "less in-san-i-ty." He's hugely playful, and sings or growls the words. "Like Edgar Allan Poe said, 'I became insane with long intervals of sanity.' Sometimes people wait till the weekend to get crazy, and you might want to get crazy on a Monday instead of a Sunday, but you can't because on Sunday you're supposed to go to church. Yes, but >110

A LEG UP

"What we need today," says Taylor, who painted this issue's cover portrait of Pharrell Williams, "is more humanity and less insanity.







POWER COUPLE

LEFT: Henry Taylor, Michelle, 2023, acrylic on canvas. RIGHT: Henry Taylor, Cicely and Miles Visit the Obamas, 2017, acrylic on canvas.

Taylor has an

extraordinary ability to

capture the essence

of his subject, and his

subjects are everybody

then you've got Saturday." What about Saturday? I ask. "That's when you em-bellish!" Taylor is happy to share his rhythmic non sequiturs with whomever he's talking to. His paintings are much the same—figurative, alive on the canvas, and totally unpredictable.

Born in 1958 in Ventura, California, Taylor is the youngest of eight children, which earned him the right to nickname himself Henry the Eighth. In the '70s, he wanted to

be a fashion designer. "All my brothers had style, and my father did too. But my mama had badass style. When she walked into the church, they'd say, 'Oooo-o-o, look at Cora.'" Taylor himself is stylish in a very unassuming way. His father, a house painter, was identified on Taylor's birth certificate as an artist, and Taylor graduated from the California Institute of the Arts

while simultaneously working at a public psychiatric hospital. He's now represented by the powerhouse gallery Hauser & Wirth, and he's had shows everywhere, most recently, a major retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York. In one way or another, much of his output is portraiture.

He has an extraordinary ability to capture the essence of his subject, and his subjects are everybody—family, friends, homeless people, people he sees at parties, sports figures.

Taylor had never painted Williams before this cover. "I don't normally do commissions," Taylor says. "What was the other one? Barack Obama asked me to make a painting for Michelle's birthday. He didn't ask for a portrait, but I did one." His Michelle, 2023, was shown in the recent "Flight into Egypt" show at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. While thinking about his portrait of Williams, he decided to "keep it simple and soulful"—words he had recently read in an obituary for Roberta Flack. "Sometimes simple is best, and that's what I ended up doing," he says.

"What I connected with was the fact that he grew up

close to a beach. I grew up close to the beach. He grew up skateboarding—I didn't skateboard that much, but all my friends did, and a lot of my friends surfed, and I kneeboarded a little. I thought about that, but I didn't want to overthink it."

Taylor proceeds to tell me he was "thinking about the masses" as he made this portrait. Like Vogue's many mil-

lions of readers? I ask. He ignores that: "Not all the masses wear glasses, but I put him in a pair." Taylor did three or four paintings of Williams—he can't quite remember how many—before he landed on the one that is a cover of this month's issue. He shows me a different, small canvas, completely filled with a face in semi-profile. "I ended up scratching that. It was a little bit too neb-u-lous!" He continues: "I like to be lost. First, I want to get all the way out there. Then, it's like cleaning your closet. You pull all the junk out, and it's all on the floor, and then you got to rearrange it. You know what I mean?"

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GETAWAYS

Adventure in unlikely places.

here are too few novels that turn our current political climate into comedy. Jess Walter's So Far Gone (Harper) is an amusing counterexample: the story of the charming, curmudgeonly Rhys Kinnick, who responds to the increasingly MAGA leanings of his son-in-law by removing himself from society and resolving to live, Thoreaulike, in the cinder-block house in rural Washington that once belonged to Rhys's grandfather. The plan goes awry when his two grandchildren show up, unannounced, on his doorstep, ferried there by a neighbor. The children's mother has disappeared,

and the novel becomes a romp through various political subcultures, peppered with lovable hardboiled characters, as Rhys attempts to find her. So Far Gone feels like a 21st-century variation on classics of detective fiction and entirely original at the same time.

In 2022, Honor Jones wrote a personal essay for The Atlantic that went quickly viral. Parenting had

not robbed her of her inner spark, she wrote, but rather showed her an entirely new constellation of joy that also awakened her to the dearth of it in her marriage. Sleep (Riverhead) resembles a fictionalized postscript. A divorcée who lives in Brooklyn with her two children is navigating co-parenting; a complex relationship with her parents; a newly awakened erotic life, catalyzed by an outer-borough boyfriend; and a tenuous connection to her ex-husband, who has moved on to a younger woman. It's a testament to Jones's voice that this rather familiar setup feels fresh and literary in her telling;

she's as effective at capturing memories of a seemingly halcyon childhood undermined by sinister events as she is the emotional landscape of the early-middle-age motherhood.—CHLOE SCHAMA

Darrow Farr's debut novel, The Bombshell (Pamela Dorman Books), is an escapist, Hollywoodready excursion to Corsica in the early 1990s that begins with its hyperconfident 17-year-old heroine Séverine—daughter of a politician and a wealthy American mother—taking the virginity of a local boy on the beach. It's summer, her bac exam and then university looms, but Séverine is restless and longs for notoriety. Her wish is granted when she's kidnapped by a youth-led Corsican nationalist sect and held for political ransom. As a prisoner she reads Fanon and Marx and becomes Patty Hearst-style radicalized (and falls in love with the group's militant leader, Bruno). Plausibility is less important to The Bombshell than pace and action, and Séverine's remorselessness becomes an object of narrative fascination. Youthful idealism is fun, but what happens when the

bill comes due? The final pages provide a touching answer you

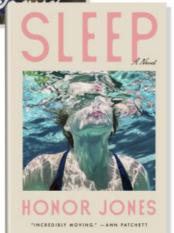
don't quite expect.

As a subject for a new biography, the post-Impressionist French artist Paul Gauguin is something of a curious choice, given the recent dimming of his reputation. It is his Polynesian paintings, legendary though they are, that have attracted opprobrium—nude Tahitian women and girls (as young as 13) situated in landscapes of otherworldly color. Gauguin, who left his wife and children and relocated from Paris to Tahiti in 1891 in search of an unspoiled paradise, was surely a libidinous

colonizer...not to mention a bad friend (Vincent van Gogh severed his ear after the two painters spent a disastrous season together in Arles, France; Gauguin subsequently fled the scene). But the writer Sue Prideaux has rehabilitation on her mind in Wild Thing (W.W. Norton), and she performs it with verve and style. This is a fascinating and galloping biography that recounts Gauguin's life as a wonder of adventure, of oceans

> crossed and recrossed, of intermittent wealth and financial ruin, and of only fleeting artistic fame. Gauguin was a born outsider, ruled by a rebelliousness that drove him to live beyond the boundaries of polite society, to argue for female liberation and against French colonial injustice, and to establish himself, at the end of his life, in a thatched-roof home on the Marquesas Islands, penniless but in possession of something profound: a hard-won freedom of vision; a total command of his art.—TAYLOR ANTRIM





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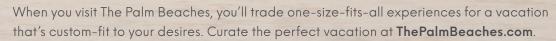
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WALKING AHEAD

In a moving new memoir, Prabal Gurung confronts some hard truths.

arly in his career in New York, designer Prabal Gurung got to thinking about his ambitions. "Start a brand," began the list. "Get in a few stores. ■ Dress Oprah. Michelle Obama. Gloria Steinem. Get in Vogue. Apply for CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund. Win CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund. Go to the Met Gala. Become the creative director of Chanel. Start a foundation."

Gurung, who's known for his celebratory dressing influenced by his South Asian identity as well as for his social activism and philanthropy, has achieved pretty much everything he wished for (even if Chanel might need to stay on that wish list a while longer). His new memoir, Walk Like a Girl (the title a defiant facing-down of the slurs he endured during his childhood in Kathmandu, and then later at school in New Delhi), chronicles all of it—from the experience of being an immigrant in America to reckoning with his new homeland's culture, mores, and politics and the complicated emotional terrain of his past. It's a story that manages to be both optimistic and empathetic sometimes quite generously so, even to some of those who didn't treat him very well—without sugarcoating anything. "My thing has always been to have difficult conversations," Gurung says, "but to have them gracefully."

"I can be in Nepal, or here in New York, and people will come up to me and say, 'Oh, you make it look so easy,'" Gurung says of his career, "but that's only because I'm not





out there saying, 'This is hard.' I put up a good front that's how I was raised—but then I thought: Am I fooling people? Shouldn't I just talk about it?"

Walk Like a Girl (which Viking will publish in May) doesn't shy away from portraying the truths about what it's really like to be an independent designer these days—at one point, he succeeded in getting himself out of a million dollars in debt. In the near seven years it took to write, Gurung wanted to leave absolutely nothing out. Most harrowingly, that meant discussing the sexual abuse he suffered at school in Nepal when he was 11 years old. As he began writing about it, he thought about how "I can't be the victim of it, nor can I be captured by what happened in my past," he says. "Most of all, I owed it to that little kid who somehow had the strength to get through it all."

His family didn't know what had happened until he'd completed the book and told them. (When he finished writing, he says, he "cried and cried and cried.") Throughout the memoir, they serve as emotional ballast and moral compass, sometimes humorously so-his brother, Pravesh Gurung, and sister, Kumudini Shrestha, both older, understood him long before he did himself; and his mother, Durga Rana, who raised the family single-handedly while running her own business, remains a beacon in his life.

Working on Walk Like a Girl also made Gurung reflect on just how much support he has had from the fashion community since he came to America. "Sometimes people think of the industry as superficial, but one of the reasons I'm still here is because of friendship and loyalty," he says. "How we support and root for each other—that's not a story that's been often told. You need people who believe in you, believe in your dreams."—MARK HOLGATE

HALF THE WORLD AWAY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Gurung (in stripes) with his mother and siblings in Nepal; dancing like Madonna (but dressed like James Dean); stepping out of a pool in Kathmandu.









AND CHLOE MALLE.
FOLLOW WHEREVER YOU GET
YOUR PODCASTS.









A many-splendored cast celebrates the new exhibition at The story of Black dandyism as a joyous sartorial force—and Jeremy O. Harris walks us through it—and writes about a



Superfine

Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, which tells the a crucial tool for moving the social and political needle. lifetime of looking sharp. Photographed by Tyler Mitchell.



& Dandy





TRUE ORIGINALS

FROM LEFT: Vintage collector Lana Turner wears a
Duro Olowu jacket and dress.
Filmmaker Spike Lee (as seen on previous spread) in a
Christopher John Rogers coat (christopherjohnrogers.com) and Theophilio suit (theophilio.com). Model and actor Daryl Dismond wears an Orange
Culture suit; modaoperandi.com. Designer Dapper Dan (as seen on previous spread) in a Dolce & Gabbana Alta
Sartoria suit; Dolce & Gabbana boutiques for requests.
Fashion Editor: Law Roach.





"You're looking sharp, little man!" said the photographer as I sat down. I remember smiling bright and wide and holding on to my mother. "My mama picked it out!" I said of the suit and bow tie. The air in the room shifted. Everyone in the JCPenney photo studio looked at my mother, who was 21 and beaming, even though she was taking this family portrait alone. The nervous, pitying glances faded away. Looking "sharp" was a way to communicate to people that I was taken care of.

When I was asked to consider how I came to be a dandy—the type of man who flaunts his elevated wares much to the awe and fright of many around him—I called my mother, the person who has known me the longest. We looked over family photos and began the arduous task of dissecting every outfit I've ever worn. The first thing we noticed was a shift as I moved from a baby to the terrible twos. I went from being a smiling chubby infant to a smiling toddler in suits and ties. I asked my mother, Why—in a photo of me at age three that has been on display in my

FUNNY GIRL

"I think with a lot of African people, your traditional outfits get made," says actor **Ayo Edebiri**, soon to appear in Luca Guadagnino's *After the Hunt*. "As a child, I thought it was torture, but now I have very precious memories of family and friends pinning clothes on me—it's a really intimate, beautiful thing." Chanel dress; select Chanel boutiques. Seymoure gloves. Balmain shoes. Chanel High Jewelry earrings.

BEAUTY NOTE

Small tools, big impact: Sized to fit in your pocket, Balmain Hair All Purpose Spa Brush Mini blends nylon and boar bristles for smooth, brushed-out styles. grandmother's home for as long as I can remember—was I wearing a bow tie? She paused and considered before telling me the story of that day at JCPenney, a memory that brought my own into focus: memories that recur over and over throughout my life of people taking stock of me and my wares, and rewriting their narratives in real time. A dandy, at his or her core, is a rewriter of narratives—the narratives carved into a society's understanding about the communities from which the dandy has emerged.

Wandering through The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute show "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," which is dedicated to the Black dandy through history, I see that the narrative being rewritten from the 18th century to now is painfully the same. It's about care, self- or otherwise. From the lavish fabrics and silver collars placed upon the enslaved young boys to signify their owners' status, to the men who rewrote the "tracksuit" from a sweat-stained garment for physical labor into an outfit that invites an enviable strut and telegraphs wealth and ease.

Even as a child I was rewriting—doing what the boys I saw in *Life* photographs at the HBCUs, the historically Black colleges and universities, were doing, their shoes as white as the day they bought them. The story my clothes had to tell as I walked the halls of my private school in Virginia (a school founded in 1968 as Black children were beginning to integrate wealthy public school districts) was that home was safe, my family and I were good—because I was dressed not just well but ornately. It takes time and safety to adorn oneself, and my mother provided me with both. This was the message of my immaculately tended-to cornrows, the new-seeming Tommy Hilfiger khakis I wore with a vintage Hermès belt. I was telling my classmates that even though I had a single mother I could take care of myself.

The most photographed American of the 19th century, Frederick Douglass, owned a cane upon which he had a craftsman carve the events of his life. It was a story that began in slavery, then took a turn when Douglass slipped on the uniform of a sailor, a disguise that allowed him to escape slavery and tell a new story: that he was a free man. This was in 1838. In 1841 he took his first daguerreotype, in a suit, yet another uniform that radically rewrote for the American public the account of who he was. Slavery itself rewritten.

My own dandyism is a rewrite of that foundational story too. I've often felt frustrated by this.... *How boring!* That my life as a dandy must be seen in defiance to the history we constantly have to mine, the ills done to my ancestors. And yet some have looked at my dress and my peacocking as though I were an affront to those who came before me, who built the buildings I flaunted within. When I look at Douglass's daguerreotypes, his mouth curled into an almost smile, when I look at W.E.B. Du Bois's laundry receipts that catalog his many suits, I think of that overused phrase "I am my ancestors' wildest dreams." I remember I am not their dream, I am their reality.

"Stuntin' is a habit, get like me" are the Yung Joc lines that play in my head when I think of my first Met Gala, in 2019. The theme was "Camp," and I wore a pink Gucci suit with a long bejeweled pinkie fingernail. In my memory





To me, to be a Black dandy is to dress as though you know you're loved and therefore have no use for shame

were the pimps I'd seen on BET late-night when my uncle thought I was asleep. I was there because of *Slave Play*, which had been staged the year before and would open on Broadway that fall. I wasn't thinking of being a dandy—but a dandy I was, not running away from those negative, late-night TV stereotypes but directly toward them. (This troubles my own ideas of the dandy in ways I now find delicious.) I think of the season where Hood by Air embraced "sagging" pants, a style I was told not to imitate for fear people would associate me with Black men who had been to jail. Or Telfar's reimagining of Canal Street bootleggers as craftspeople, just as important as their Italian counterparts. That is dandyism, too, defiantly stuntin' as a habit. Daring you to get like them. Free from the binds of history because they are so thrillingly in the present.

I think of other Black dandies and the stories they tell that are at odds with those that shaped me—those touched differently by colonialism and slavery. I think of the textiles worn by Ghanaian dandies, how these men seem to be both poking fun at Savile Row and the styles of their parents and grandparents. I think of so many Black dandies from the diaspora who remix and poke fun at Black American style—because our culture has been one of the most successful colonial exports of the American empire. This has put the American Black dandy in a peculiar, paternalistic position. It's a quiet delight to consider: in a new global society new narratives being written.

"You're looking sharp, little man!" I still run back to this. I still fret over how I came to be a Black dandy and what a Black dandy means to me. I'm a mama's boy. I've always wanted to make mama proud. She was the person who first inspired my dandyism by brushing my hair. Fitting me just right with the best suit. And an even better tie. She was from a tribe of tall women, six feet and above, and she told me to walk with my back straight and not to fear the gaze of any man or woman. So, to me, to be a Black dandy is to dress as though you know you're loved and therefore have no use for shame. Shame is the enemy of all exuberance. Shame comes from fear, and fear is the enemy of style. \square

CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY

FROM LEFT: Actor **Myha'la**, star of HBO's *Industry*, in a Sergio Hudson suit and Gigi Burris Millinery hat. Musician **Jon Batiste** in a Dunhill suit and Rolex watch. Actor and singer **Jeremy Pope**, a star of Ryan Murphy's new FX series *The Beauty*, in a Dunhill suit and Bylgari watch.







GOOD SPORTS

FROM LEFT:
Skateboarder
Tyshawn Jones,
basketball player A'ja
Wilson, and football
player Justin Jefferson
in Willy Chavarria
suits; willychavarria
com for similar
styles. Jones wears
an Audemars
Piguet watch and
Graff ring. Wilson
wears a Boucheron
ring. Jefferson
wears Christian
Louboutin shoes.









WELL SUITED

"If I absolutely have to put on a dress, then I put on a dress—but something about a suit just feels so powerful," says singer-actor **Teyana Taylor** (LEFT), whom you can soon see in Tyler Perry's *Straw*, here with **Janelle Monáe** (who will appear in Alesbea Harris's film with Janeile Monae (who will appear in Aleshea Harris's film adaptation of her play Is God Is). Both in Marni; marni.com. Taylor wears Le Silla shoes. Monáe wears Jimmy Choo shoes; jimmychoo.com.

BEAUTY NOTE
Good design stands the test
of time. CoverGirl's Outlast Forever Velvet Pigment creates a red lip that won't transfer or flake.







BLACK BEAUTY Models Achol Ayor (FAR LEFT, STANDING) and Ajus Samuel (ON STEPLADDER) wear Celine Homme by Hedi Slimane. Model Layla Etengan (ON FLOOR) wears a Maison Margiela jacket. Model Rejoice Chuol (THIRD FROM LEFT) in The Row. Model Victoria Fawole (THIRD FROM RIGHT) wears a Thom Browne jacket. Models Yar Aguer (IN PROFILE) and Agel
Akol (AT REAR, STANDING)
in Maison Margiela. Model Laura Reyes (FAR RIGHT, STANDING) wears Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello. Bailey 1922 hats.





BLOOM TIME

Model Adut Akech is all in on the power of suits, which make her feel, she says, "boss lady, badass, and just very chic and fun—at the same time." Marine Serre coat; marineserre.com. Ralph Lauren Collection shirt and pants; ralphlauren.com. Esenshel hat; Esenshel, New York. David Yurman ring; davidyurman.com.



CREATIVE CLASS

ABOVE: Fashion editor **Law Roach** in Walter Van Beirendonck. OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: For **Janicza Bravo**— director and producer of the BBC series *The Listeners*—"dandyism is flair, it's wit, and a kind of ease and comfortability with oneself." Bravo wears Thom Browne: thombrowne .com. Model **Alton Mason** in a Valentino suit; Valentino boutiques. Seymoure gloves and Christian Louboutin shoes. Artist **Ferrari Sheppard** in a Brunello Cucinelli suit and Eton shirt (etonshirts.com).











THE IMPORTANCE

OF BEING IDLE FROM LEFT: Rapper Akeem Ali wears an MM6 Maison Margiela coat, Ozwald Boateng suit, and Jean Schlumberger by Tiffany & Co. brooch. Actor and model Keith Powersnext set to appear in John Burr's film *The Gates* wears a Brunello Cucinelli jacket, Amiri shirt and trousers, and Omega watch. Actor **Danielle** Deadwyler-star of R.T. Thorne's postapocalyptic thriller 40 Acres—wears Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello. Artist Honor Titus wears a Giuliva Heritage jacket and Bode pants. "For us to find a medium—whether it be fashion, language, art, sport—where we can express ourselves and express our dynamism and our excitement," Titus says, "that's always truly divine and always welcome."







"It's Our Turn"

Pharrell Williams, Louis Vuitton Men's creative director, talks to Chioma Nnadi about the exhibition "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style" and what it means for Black resiliency, possibility, and power. Portrait by Henry Taylor.

There's

music in the air at Louis Vuitton's menswear HQ in Paris. Swelling piano chords float along office hallways, buoying along a soulful, unmistakable falsetto—a voice that's launched a thousand hits. "I stay in a flow state," says Pharrell Williams from his light-filled executive suite turned recording studio, pausing mid-song to swivel away from his piano keyboard. "It's like when you get in a place of absolute disconnection with the exception of what you're focused on in your brain. It opens up a whole other world, and that world becomes a dimension unto itself."

In the two-plus years since Williams was appointed Louis Vuitton's creative director of menswear—only the second Black man to hold the position, after Virgil Abloh—he's been mapping a new frontier for the storied French house, one filled with music, culture, and entertainment. Williams's contract was announced on Valentine's Day, auspicious timing that inspired his agenda-setting For Lovers debut collection in June 2023. Staged on the landmark Pont Neuf at sunset, backed by a gospel choir, and megastars in attendance—Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Rihanna, Zendaya, you name it—the show easily ranked as one of the biggest cultural moments the French capital has seen in a decade. Williams's office is filled with subdued Paris light, and his views onto that historic bridge, the oldest standing over the Seine, are impressive.

Right now he's working on producing tracks for John Legend's new album, and later this afternoon he'll be over in the design studio at the other side of the office. "I spend my day zooming back and forth on that," he says, motioning toward an LV-monogrammed skateboard propped up by the door (surrounded by his kids' micro-scooters). The children, with his wife, Helen Lasichanh—Rocket, 16, and his 8-year-old triplet siblings—are, he admits, learning French considerably faster than he is since the move from Miami. "I'd say I'm at 33 percent comprehension," he says with a sigh.

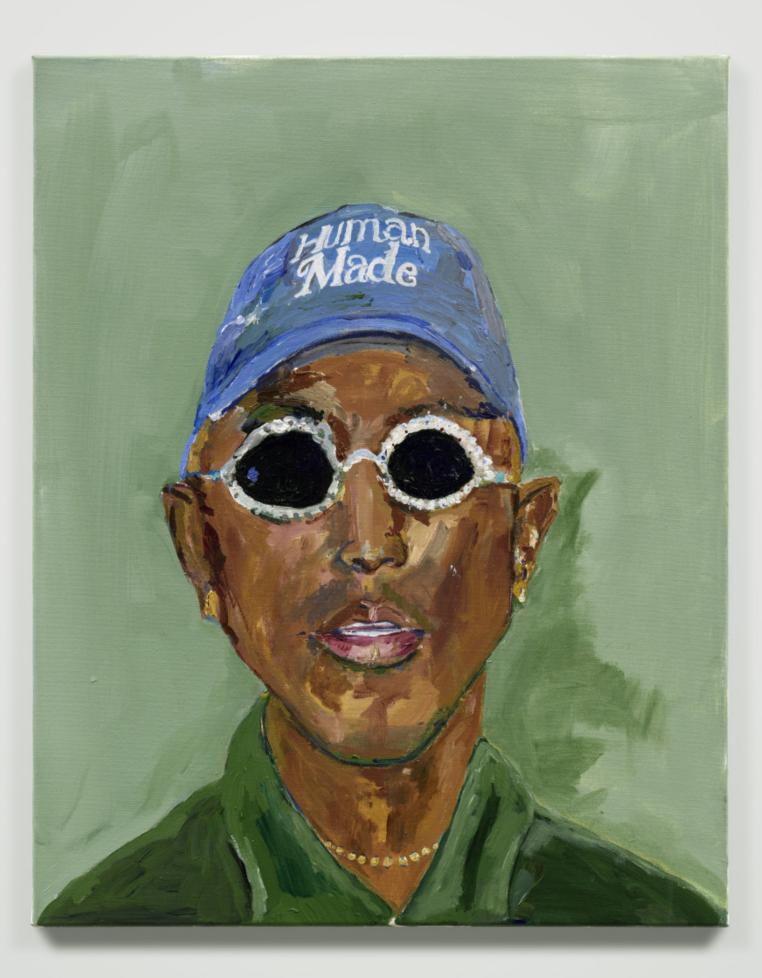
Nevertheless, Parisians have embraced him: Earlier today, Williams met with President Emmanuel Macron at the Élysée. His outfit for the occasion—a navy blue logo Vuitton sweatshirt with tricolor embroidery, flared jeans, rose gold aviator specs, and his yet-to-be-released chunky-soled "jellyfish" Adidas sneakers—speaks to an intuitive personal style: easy American swagger laced with Gallic savoir faire. "When I'm moving in those spaces, I always kind of like to bend the rules a little bit," he says. "I'm not looking for attention, but I don't necessarily want to blend in."

Such, of course, is the spirit of this year's Costume Institute exhibition, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," and Williams serves as a cohost for the opening Met Gala. "I see dandyism as a set of rules and standards," he says, "that reflect a certain sophistication and well-traveled taste. For Black people to hit that mark or exceed it, and be consistent with it, is a matter of pride. And consistency garners respect."

For a generation of music-and-fashion obsessives, Williams, 52, is revered as the original hip-hop eccentric: highly expressive, unapologetically audacious, unafraid to flout menswear conventions, especially the hypermasculine tropes ascribed to rap music. In the early aughts, he presaged hypebeast culture with Billionaire Boys Club, the streetwear label he cofounded with his friend Nigo. He also rocked Birkin bags, flaunted prized pieces from Phoebe Philo's collections for Celine, and casually layered strands of pearls over classic Chanel tweeds. "At that time, you had to be really comfortable in who you were as a guy to walk into a Chanel store full of womenswear and find something for you," says CONTINUED ON PAGE 182

ORIGINAL ECCENTRIC

Williams serves as cohost of the Met Gala celebrating "Superfine" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. Henry Taylor, *Untitled*, 2025, acrylic on canvas.





Made in Harlem

A\$AP Rocky loves fashion, the neighborhood he's from, his kids, his grandmother, Rihanna, staying up late, making music, vintage luggage, the list goes on.... Leah Faye Cooper meets the ever joyful Met Gala co-chair. Photographed by Tyler Mitchell.

It's

past 1 a.m. on a Tuesday in downtown Manhattan, and A\$AP Rocky, in a white long-sleeve tee and relaxed jeans—his khaki Saint Laurent trench and Chanel trapper hat slung across a chair—is contemplating his next pool shot. These late weeknight hours are usually reserved for working, Lindsey, a member of his production-management team, tells me, as Rocky paces around a corner nook at Soho House, behind him a delightful display of glass candy jars situated on sage-green lacquered shelving. But it's been only eight days since the Harlem-born rapper, designer, and father to two was acquitted on assault charges. Everybody's on a post-not-guilty high.

Rocky's been at this for roughly 10 hours—by which I mean hanging out, seeing friends, family members, and business associates, and talking to me about the upcoming Met Gala over tea (chamomile for him, English breakfast for me). I've met his assistant, Marco; his photographer, Brandon; the designer Joshua Jamal; Rocky's longtime friend A\$AP TyY; and his grandmother Cathy. And I've watched strangers float in and out of his orbit, including a handful at Soho House, who, after stealing glances at the self-professed "pretty boy" from Harlem, sensed correctly that he was open to them joining our group.

Rocky has an inviting spirit. I'd experienced it earlier that day uptown in the sprawling basement of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, across the street from a brownstone once owned by the poet, playwright, and activist Langston Hughes, where *Vogue* had staged its shoot. This featured, among other things (Balmain, Jacquemus, and Ozwald Boateng suits; trunks of jewelry; a pair of dalmatians), Rocky's collection of vintage Louis Vuitton and Goyard suitcases, all stacked on a stage. Nearby was a craft-services table laden with the plant-based items he requires—trays of sweet potatoes, avocado rolls, and cabbage salad next to a coffee-and-tea station with fresh lemons and ginger root. The candle burning was Flamingo Estate Adriatic Muscatel Sage, and Law Roach was on hand, too, fitting Rocky into his next look.

"What's up, sis," Rocky said to me, flashing a smile and extending his arms for a hug. "It's nice to meet you."

He remained infectiously gregarious for what would become hours, talking about everything from *The Brutalist* ("I really did watch it three times," he said. "It's that good, to me, because I'm an aspiring furniture designer") to Roach's diamond-bezel Audemars Piguet watch ("That's my watch, bro! I was supposed to buy it when I was told not guilty, but I got too high") to his affection for Cathy ("I was a grandma's boy kind of kid," he told me. "She was my best friend"). Cathy herself arrives at the shoot in a red suit, a double strand of pearls, and caged, kitten-heel mules in gold. The two pose for photographer Tyler Mitchell's camera.

She lives nearby and that's where we head next, Rocky in his chauffeured Rolls-Royce Cullinan; his grandmother and a family friend in an Escalade behind us. He has something to share about nearly every building and block we pass, and a few that we don't. He knows that those who call Harlem home are no monolith, and he's proof. "I'm not a street dude at all," he says. "I'm just from here."

Before we go inside his grandmother's building, Rocky—now dressed in oversized jeans, the band of his Savage X Fenty boxer briefs peeking out; a white collared shirt from the fashion design arm of his creative agency, AWGE; and a floor-length faux-fur Puma coat—offers a disclaimer of sorts: "I know my circumstances, I know who I am, but none of that matters to me. I'm still regular, as much as possible. This is what I do all the time—come here, kick it with her."

As for the apartment I'm being welcomed into, "You're not going to believe it," he says. "I swear you won't. You're going to be like, *You stay here?*"

UPTOWN LEGACY

Rocky, photographed in the Harlem home of Langston Hughes, wears a Todd Snyder suit, Balmain shoes, Mikimoto earrings, and a Joseph Saidian & Sons brooch. Fashion Editor: Law Roach.



RUFF AND READY

Jacquemus coat and shoes. Balmain suit, shirt, and tie. Ray-Ban sunglasses. Jean Schlumberger by Tiffany & Co. earrings and ring.



But it's not surprising at all. The apartment is marked by a narrow hallway, off of which are two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen, and if you make your way to the living room in the back, sink into his grandmother's plush sofa, and listen to Rocky and Cathy banter and reminisce, you'll learn that he often spends nights in the second bedroom on his old full-size bed. Laundry hangs from the type of wooden-and-glass china cabinet innumerable Black grandmothers have in their houses. ("Grandma's still old-school, she likes to air-dry," Rocky says.) Cathy tells me they used to watch cartoons together when her little "Rockman" was a boy. She's lived at this address for more than 20 years. "At one time, I was considering getting an apartment [with] a ter-

race on the top of the building," she says, referring to a nearby luxury mid-rise. "But why pay three or four times the amount of money to be in the same neighborhood?"

"Because your grandson is me!" Rocky tells her, throwing his arms in the air. "You can get that terrace if you want it."

Cathy was always convinced Rocky "was going somewhere," she says—but she's especially proud of the parent he's become to sons RZA and Riot, and the relationship they were born from. "I'm glad that he settled down, and I'm happy with who he settled down with," she says of Rihanna. "She's a down-to-earth person."

"She *loves* her some Rih Rih," Rocky adds. (Both Cathy, who is Rocky's paternal grandmother, and Rihanna are Bajan, so that helps too.)

"Are you excited for the Met Gala?" I ask Cathy.

"She don't know what that is," Rocky says.

"Of course I know what the Met Gala is," Cathy says.

"My bad, damn," Rocky says, then throws his head back, remembering one of his fellow Met Gala co-chairs. "My grandma got a crush on Colman Domingo."

"I love him," Cathy says.

Because the windows are often down while we're in the car, people on the street spot Rocky, making their enthusiasm known by yelling his name. He replies to everyone with a "What's up?," a "Preciate you!," a "Thank you, G," or a "Thank you, sis."

"It's just like an exchange of energy, right?," he says of the interactions. "Like, I sincerely love people; I'm a loving person. When you come across people that genuinely match that energy, you feel like a kindred spirit."

We're headed downtown, to Mitchell's new exhibition of photographs at Gagosian, "Ghost Images," and once we're inside it's Rocky who is doling out the praise. "It feels like a

scene from a movie," he says about one image of a group of subjects on a dock. His reaction to a photograph, printed on fabric, of a man wearing a general's jacket: "Alright, Tyler." And when he first sees a print of three women all dressed in white, he proclaims, "That's the one."

Rocky spent much of 2024 working on his forthcoming album, *Don't Be Dumb*, and during the week leading up to his *Vogue* shoot, he transformed a two-room suite at Soho House into a studio space—with one room furnished to his liking with a number of his suitcases, a furry lime-green coatrack he designed in the shape of a giant cactus, and various baskets filled with an ever-growing collection of

toys he's bought for his kids. "I need to include what I just experienced," he says of the music left to record.

It's in this suite where Rocky conducts a video interview, sequesters himself to FaceTime with his family, and eventually reflects on what it was like to be named a Met co-chair and given a cover of *Vogue*.

"Shooting in Harlem today was surreal," he tells me. "It was like a dream come true." Even though his family sometimes struggled when he was younger, he says, "what I was privy to and got to experience made me so lucky. I grew up with both parents; I got to see love. And being from Harlem, it just gives you this... pizzazz." (Being photographed inside Hughes's brownstone was a consola-

tion of sorts, as Rocky inquired about buying the home a few years ago. The owner wasn't willing to sell.)

While Rocky appreciates his co-chair appointment, he wasn't necessarily surprised by the honor. "Who else?" he jokes. Figures spanning decades and a mix of backgrounds come to mind when he thinks about Black dandies: Louis Armstrong, Frank Lucas, his father, Malcolm X, the members of Dipset. Even his sons come up. "It's in them already," he says. "Look who they moms is. She dress her ass off."

Despite his New York City roots, Rocky set foot in The Metropolitan Museum of Art for the first time in 2014 at the Met Gala, which honored the CONTINUED ON PAGE 182

FAMILY TIES

ABOVE: Rocky in an AWGE suit, with his grandmother Cathy. OPPOSITE: Louis Vuitton Men's suit, scarf, and his personal trunks. A mix of Van Cleef & Arpels and his own brooches. Jacob & Co. watch. In this story: For Rocky: hair, Tashana Miles; grooming by Michelle Waldron using Dior Sauvage. For Cathy: hair, Sondrea "Dre" Demry-Sanders; makeup, A. Love. Details, see In This Issue.



All in the Details

Colman Domingo has arrived at his leading-man moment, becoming a vibrant red-carpet presence in the process. But, as he tells Marley Marius, it starts with the little things. Portraits by Iké Udé.







Out

there is a video, captured on someone's phone, in which Colman Domingo, star of last year's affecting prison drama *Sing Sing*, can be seen onstage during the Oscars, doing a jaunty little dance. As he bops along to Maze's "Before I Let Go," his lank frame a blur of scarlet and black Valentino, he shouts out members of the audience—"C'mon, Cynthia! C'mon, Penélope!"—not that they need much persuading: The entire front row, from Kylie Jenner to Demi Moore, is on their feet.

Some 30 years into his professional acting career, the 55-year-old Domingo is surely one of the most celebrated men in Hollywood right now. Not celebrated as in *winningest*, per se—though he's won an Emmy and been nominated for two Academy Awards, two BAFTAs, four SAG Awards, two Tonys (including one as a producer), and an Olivier—but in the "wow, people *love* this guy" way. Bradley Cooper has called him "a luminous human being." George C. Wolfe has praised his "joyful, playful, available spirit." Per Oprah Winfrey, Domingo is "the real deal."

For what it's worth, this writer can also vouch for Domingo as genuinely lovely company. Over lunch at New York's Café Chelsea (an endive salad and coffee for me; endive salad, a cheeseburger, and two lemonades—"Why not!"—for him), he regales me with stories from his childhood in Philadelphia: trailing his older siblings to see Carrie and the latest Bruce Lee movie (his older brother, Rick, was a big Lee fan); helping his mother, Edith, decide which wig to wear. (One favorite improbably combined an Afro, cornrows, and straight bangs.) Glimpses of his sun-dappled life out in Malibu with his husband and producing partner, Raúl, also surface; Domingo informs me that Raúl, who only recently learned how to drive a car, is now flying planes. (This is a couple that can't resist a whim; their glancing first encounter outside a Berkeley Walgreens in 2005 led to a Craigslist "missed connections" posting and then their first date.) Domingo is tall and nicely groomed but unfussy, dressed in an oversized white button-down, a baseball cap, and a smattering of gold jewelry. He laughs loudly and often. Of course, Domingo's good name has been dutifully earned, built up across more than 60 film and television roles and many years working in the theater, whether as an actor, director, or playwright. (He began his stage career in San Francisco after studying at Temple University in Philadelphia.) Yet to the general American public, he wasn't really a *thing* until about 2019, when he first appeared as Ali Muhammad, an NA sponsor and friend to Zendaya's troubled Rue Bennett, on *Euphoria*. His performance in that wildly popular HBO series—otherwise known for its lurid color palette and operatic sexual drama—crackled with wisdom and moving warmth, scoring him that Emmy.

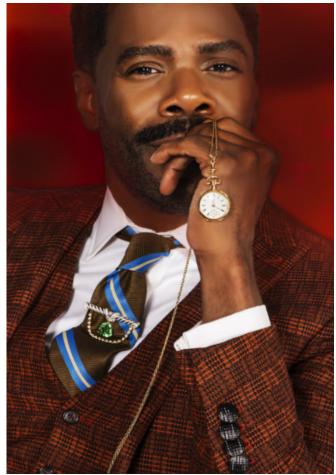
It was the sort of part that Domingo's mother, who died in 2006, had wanted for him from the beginning; one that would "be in service to people," he says. "I can make people laugh, make people feel things, and that would be my greatest gift." So, too, did Ali help deliver Domingo from journeyman-actor purgatory, appearing in everything—police procedurals! Sketch shows! Post-apocalyptic horror series! Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*! Ava DuVernay's *Selma*!—but never at the top of a call sheet.

"I think that was the beginning of people seeing me as a leading man," Domingo says. "I'd been a supportive player for many long years, happily. And for a long time I thought maybe the lead was always meant for someone else...while knowing that I could probably do well if I had the opportunity."

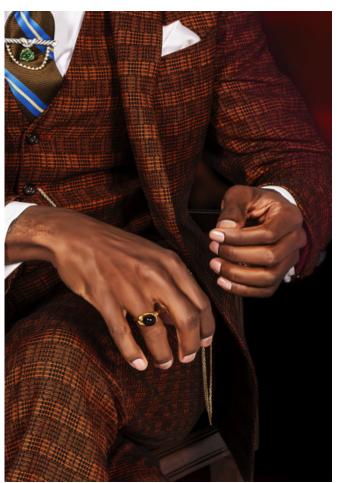
When the opportunity did come, with 2023's *Rustin*, Domingo received his first Oscar nomination for best actor. (Directed by Wolfe, the film is an elegant portrait of political activist Bayard Rustin, a key organizer behind the March on Washington who was also an openly gay, lute-playing Quaker.) But more than just ratcheting up his profile, *Rustin*'s promotion cycle announced Domingo as one of the best-dressed men in show business.

At a time when most Hollywood actors pin a brooch to their tuxedo jacket and call it a day, Domingo's spirited experiments with color and CONTINUED ON PAGE 182









PRODUCED BY BOOM PRODUCTIONS. SET DESIGN: SPENCER VROOMAN. FLORALS BY SCHENTELL NUNN AT OFFERINGS.





"I'm Here Now"

On the podium and in the paddock, Lewis Hamilton has revolutionized the culture of Formula 1. He reflects on what it means for a Black man to dress up, show up, and make no apologies. As told to Leah Faye Cooper. Photographed by Malick Bodian.

Men

I learned that The Met was celebrating the Black dandy, I was a bit blown away, to be honest.

Black dandyism, the men who came before us—curator Monica L. Miller's work and how she explains this history in the exhibition "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style"—it's all so important to learn. What hit home hardest is how far back it goes, and that there are so many different ways to present as a man; you don't have to be traditionally masculine. And Black men have always had to be more excellent than our white counterparts. I've seen that with my father and with me—we needed to be overachievers. That's why this theme is just so important to me.

When I was growing up outside of London, there were no museums near me, there wasn't much diversity, and there certainly wasn't any exposure to fashion.

So I lived vicariously through magazines and music videos and films. The people I looked up to—it was Muhammad Ali, it was Michael Jordan, it was Eddie Murphy in Beverly Hills Cop wearing that cool leather jacket. And then a little bit later I started to learn about Cab Calloway, James Baldwin, Nelson Mandela, and André Leon Talley. I saw how their image was so important to them, and how they presented themselves through fashion.

At the same time, I was trying to understand how I wanted to present myself. As a teenager I didn't have any money for clothes; my family and I spent it all on racing. So I would wash cars along my street for pocket money and go to the little thrift store in town and get the Tommy Hilfiger pieces that I saw in music videos. They gave me the confidence to show up and say, "This is who I am."

Just before I got to Formula 1, I remember being looked up and down by a boss, and he definitely wasn't impressed with what I was wearing. I was probably in FUBU and

Timbs. I remember thinking, Shoot, I've really got to fit into this mold. And my dad expected me to fit into that mold too. Sometimes I would dress one way leaving the house, then drive down the road and change into a baggy, swagged-out look. I would go out and have the best night ever, then change back into what I left the house wearing before I came home.

When I first signed with F1 I was only allowed to wear suits and team kits, and it was horrible. I didn't feel comfortable, and I didn't feel like I was able to be myself.

Eventually, I had the courage to push beyond those boundaries and say, "Look, I want to turn up to the track in what I want to wear. I'm here now—you can't get rid of me or change the way I dress." The pushback was massive, but when the sport saw the impact of my little runway, other drivers started doing the same thing.

Of course, I always wanted to go to the Met Gala, and I got invited for the first time in 2015. It's always been a privilege to attend, but in 2021, I no longer wanted to just be another person in the room. I was working with Law Roach, who is a dear friend, and I was like, "What if we created a table together where we invite a few up-and-coming Black designers, have them dress some guests, and we all show up together—so it's about creating space and opportunity?" And also, I was going to buy the table myself. Of course, everyone looked great, but I felt like that night opened up a dialogue about amplifying underrepresented voices and talent.

Naturally, I hope this year's Met Gala sparks conversation and reconfirms the connection between fashion and self-expression, and how deep it runs in Black culture. I hope it allows us to show that we have ownership of our identity and how we see ourselves CONTINUED ON PAGE 183

Power Play

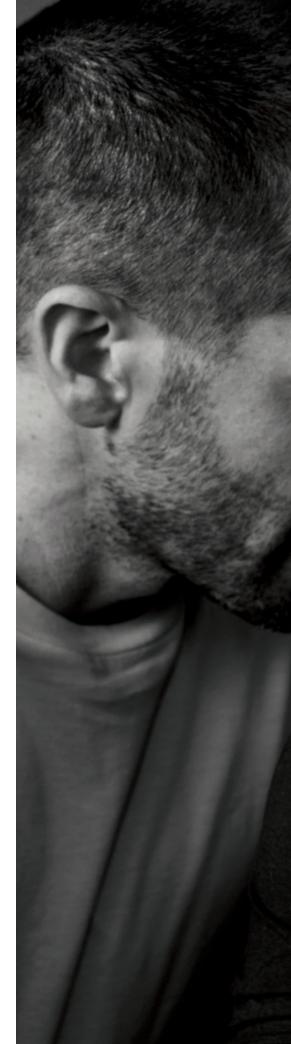
On Broadway, Denzel Washington and Jake Gyllenhaal star in an *Othello* for the ages. They talk to Maya Singer about its themes of faith, love, battle, and betrayal. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

Ve're talking about faith. Last December, just before Christmas, actor Denzel Washington was baptized and licensed as a minister, and so it hasn't taken long, chatting about his return to Broadway playing the title role in Othello, for conversation to turn to matters of belief. Not religious, per se; Shakespeare's great tragedy turns on themes of love and jealousy and betrayal. Perhaps, I muse, Othello's choice to trust the evidence of his eyes—a planted handkerchief—over his innocent wife Desdemona's protests that she has never strayed is a kind of loss of faith, a misguided embrace of rationality over spirit. "Well, sure, he wants proof," pipes up Jake Gyllenhaal, who costars in the production as Iago, planter of the aforementioned handkerchief, "and Iago keeps leading him back to the handkerchief—look, look!—but the only reason he can manipulate Othello that way is that they have a bond. They've fought together, trusted each other with their lives. He knows this is a man with a great sense of faith and love."

"Mm-hmm," adds Washington. Meanwhile, he's picked up a thick binder and is flicking through it. We're in a small Midtown office a few minutes' walk from the Barrymore Theatre, where the two actors will be performing in *Othello* through June 8—one of the starriest outings in what is shaping up to be a very starry Broadway season. In an hour or so, the pair is due at the theater for a meeting with the

WHISPER CAMPAIGN

"Who are these people? What makes them do what they do?" asks Gyllenhaal. He and Washington star in *Othello* on Broadway through June 8. Sittings Editor: Eric McNeal.





play's director, Broadway veteran Kenny Leon, who staged a revival of *Our Town* at the Barrymore just last fall. Rain is pelting down outside as we chat, and Gyllenhaal seems to be keeping half an eye on it as he continues ruminating. "But Iago also knows, Desdemona—she's something new for Othello. Which makes him vulnerable."

"He's not experienced putting all his cards on the table for one woman," Washington chimes in, still focused on his binder.

"He's been at war," adds Gyllenhaal.

"Seven years of war," adds Washington, citing the play. "So that's his biography, right there. That's where he's comfortable. The battlefield."

I feel like I'm in college. I say so. Gyllenhaal laughs. "This is what we do. It's the best—going around and around, trying to figure out, who are these people? What makes them do what they do?"

"Ah!" Washington holds up his binder. He's found what he was looking for: a page from his notes on the script, with a line of Othello's scrawled in all caps: If she be false, heaven mocks itself. He flashes his iconic megawatt smile. "Talking about faith—that's actually the first thing I wrote down," he says. Then, from under his ball cap, he fixes me with an ardent gaze and says the line aloud, falling into character. "If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself! I'll not believe it!" I don't feel like I'm in college anymore. A different, dreamier smile plays over Washington's face as he quotes from elsewhere in the play. "For know Iago, but that I love the gentle Desdemona...."

Returning to himself, Washington grins, forms a finger pistol, and aims it at Gyllenhaal. "Learning my lines! Finally catching up with this guy!"

n a manner of speaking, Gyllenhaal started learning his Iago lines seven months before rehearsals for *Othello* began in New York. "I'd never done Shakespeare," he explains. "And you get that call and it's, not only do I want to do this, I *have* to do this. But honestly, I didn't know: *Can* I do it? It scared me."

Thus Gyllenhaal embarked on a five-day-a-week, two-to-three-hour-a-day Shakespeare training regimen not entirely dissimilar, I suggest to him, from the process of getting into fighting form for, say, *Road House*. "Sort of..." he assents, somewhat skeptical of the analogy. "You're learning a language. And that top layer of 'what does this mean?' you can get through pretty fast, but then the words, they're so intense, what he's actually saying—you can get lost in them. And the only thing I'm concerned about," Gyllenhaal continues, "is being present and able to listen to one of greatest actors ever when we're onstage."

"And I'm seven months behind," quips Washington, who—at time of writing, a week before opening night of previews—still wasn't off-book.

"But you're used to this, the words don't get in your way," notes Gyllenhaal. He glances over at me, then turns back toward Washington, gazing at him with not a little wonder. "He can say his lines like, you know, like they're just coming out of his mouth...." Great acting, Gyllenhaal will later remark, is often a matter of doing as near as possible to nothing.



MEN OF WAR

Gyllenhaal, Washington, and *Othello*'s director, Kenny Leon. In this story: grooming by Laila Hayani, Netty Jordan, and Alex Keating. Details, see In This Issue.

"Sometimes you'll have this sort of explosion of inspiration from the word when you hear it," says Gyllenhaal. "And sometimes you keep it as simple as you possibly can."

"Well," Washington offers with a shrug, "sometimes the line is just Shakespeare's version of 'get out of here."

For Washington, *Othello* is a homecoming. And a reunion. Twenty years ago, he played Brutus in a lauded



Broadway production of *Julius Caesar*; his itch to do more Shakespeare wasn't satisfied by his turn playing the title role in Joel Coen's 2021 film *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. In the interim, Washington had struck up a fruitful collaboration with director Leon, with whom he'd worked on the Broadway plays *Fences* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. It so happened that Leon was fresh off mounting a production of *Hamlet* for Shakespeare in the Park—only his second staging of the Bard, after winning the 2020 Obie for his direction of *Much Ado About Nothing*—when Washington got it into his head to take a fresh crack at Othello, a part he first played half a century ago as a 20-year-old drama student.

"I'll tell you exactly what happened, we were doing *Gladiator*, and the young boy's down on the Colosseum floor doing all the fighting," Washington recalls, referring to the recent sequel starring Paul Mescal. "And all us old senators are sitting around in our gowns with our pinkies up, we're extras basically, just talking, and someone brings up *Othello*. And I'm like, oh man, I wish, but I'm too old now. And one of the other senators says to me, no, no, no, go back and read the play...."

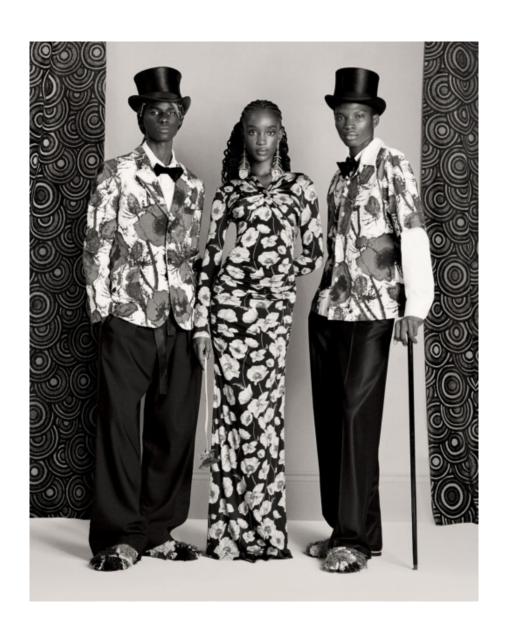
In the popular imagination, the other-ness of "the Moor," as Othello is often called, boils down to race. Yet as Washington points out, lines in CONTINUED ON PAGE 183





Kind of Blue

With a sumptuous palette of cobalt, indigo, navy, and turquoise bonding some of the season's finest eveningwear—from fantastically patterned jackets to dresses that follow the body like water—a blue mood has never seemed quite so appealing. Photographed by Malick Bodian.



MATCH POINTS

Model and photographer Malick Bodian (who shot this story), FAR LEFT, mirrors Gueye's (FAR RIGHT) floral **Wales Bonner** jacket and shirt (walesbonner.com) and a **Margaret Howell** white shirt—while Fall holds the center in a **Carolina Herrera** dress (carolinaherrera.com).



BIG FEELINGS

FROM LEFT: On model Sunira Da Silva, a prettily patterned strapless dress by **Michael Kors Collection**; michaelkors.com. On Daing, an **Eton** shirt and **Dior** pants tread the line between confidence and attitude. Gabriel's **Blumarine** dress (blumarine.com), meanwhile, goes long on whimsy.





ELEGANT VARIATION

FROM LEFT: Fall can't help but take a shine to a swimwear-inspired **Schiaparelli** dress (Maison Schiaparelli, Place Vendôme), while Gabriel rustles up a little romance in a **Zimmermann** dress (zimmermann.com). Daing opts for vampy **Brandon Maxwell** (brandonmaxwell online.com), and Gueye is downright dapper in a **Ahluwalia** shirt and trousers (ahluwalia.world).



FAIR SQUARES

FROM LEFT: Gabriel wears a **David Koma** suit and shirt; davidkoma.com.
Fall wears a **Valentino** suit; Valentino boutiques. Gueye wears a **Thom Browne** suit and shirt; thombrowne.com for requests.



LINE DRIVES

FROM LEFT: Gueye makes a good case for the return of preppy style in an **Off-White** suit; off---white.com. Fall's enjoué **Chanel** skirt and sweater set is a very elegant kind of double trouble; select Chanel boutiques. Gabriel ties it all together in a **Labrum London** suit; labrumlondon.com.



GROUP CHAT

FROM LEFT: Gabriel wears a Holland Cooper jacket and waistcoat (hollandcooper .com) and Brunello Cucinelli, Madison Ave.). Da Silva wears a Bella Freud suit and shirt; bellafreud.com. Fall wears a Ralph Lauren Collection dress; select Ralph Lauren boutiques. Daing wears a Brunello Cucinelli suit; Brunello Cucinelli, Madison Ave. In this story: hair, Virginie Moreira; makeup, Ammy Drammeh; grooming, Yuko Fredriksson; braiding, Lorraine Dublin, Angela Torio Rivera. Details, see In This Issue.













SMALL WONDERS

TOP LEFT: Colman Domingo (see page 158) wears a **Valentino** suit and **Beladora** brooch. TOP RIGHT: **Tiffany & Co.** by **Elsa Peretti** brooch and **Khiry** ring. BOTTOM LEFT: **Tiffany & Co.** blue diamond ring. **Mateo New York** citrine ring. **Michael German Antiques** cane. BOTTOM RIGHT: **Cartier** tie pin. **Chanel High Jewelry** brooch. **Balmain** vintage jacket and trousers.

Portraits by Iké Udé. Fashion Editor: Max Ortega.

"IT'S OUR TURN"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 150

Williams, a longtime friend and muse to Karl Lagerfeld, and also the first man to lead a handbag campaign for the French house. "And I just loved it because it left me to be the only one."

That sense of being the only one could be isolating. When he was growing up in Virginia Beach, Virginia, he remembers feeling that his outsize imagination was somehow bigger than his surroundings—an experience he likens to "being like a firefly in a preserve jar." The first trip he took to Japan, in the early '00s, proved transformative. "Traveling to Japan for the first time cracked everything open," explains Williams, whose latest collection for Vuitton was a full-circle moment: made in collaboration with Nigo, whom he met on that eye-opening trip.

"It gave me the sense that there was more out there, that what I was sensing was real, that possibilities were really infinite," Williams says. "That's why I recommend that for every young mind, especially Black and brown minds, get out and see the world. You realize there really are no ceilings except the ones that you perceive."

For Williams, the need for a crossdisciplinary collective of Black voices feels more urgent than ever. The Met Gala is a critical start: "I want it to feel like the most epic night of power, a reflection of Black resiliency in a world that continues to be colonized, by which I mean policies and legislation that are nothing short of that," he says. "That's why it's so important to me to have successful Black and brown people of every stripe in the room: not just athletes and actors and actresses, entertainers, but also authors, architects, folks from the fintech world. We've got to invest in each other. We've got to connect with each other, because it's going to take everybody to coalesce the force of Black and brown genius into one strong, reliable force. It's our turn."

MADE IN HARLEM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 156

late designer Charles James. "I know that sounds mad ignorant, because you could be a local and still go to a museum," he says, but the Louvre isn't always filled with Parisians either. At this year's gala, "I'm looking forward to seeing everybody celebrate Black excellence," Rocky says. "When people celebrate a different culture or race," he adds, "sometimes it's done with intent, sometimes with ulterior motives." The exhibition "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style" strikes Rocky as "genuine...and very, very, very...." He takes a second, choosing just the right word. "So many I want to say, but I'm just going to say, *important*."

While Rocky realizes that his own penchant for the pearls, kilts, barrettes, furs, and Saint Laurent suits he wore throughout his trial have labeled him a modern dandy, he's quick to point out that what some call a very specific aesthetic, he just calls getting dressed. "That's regular for us, bro," he says. "I'm from Harlem, we showed y'all how to do this."

The late-night hours involve a delivery of orecchiette and ravioli from Cucina Alba, drinks and fries upstairs, and several smoking breaks. There is also more talk of Rihanna (Rocky describing his love for her as "internal, external, infinite, the past, the future") and his kids, whom he's seemingly missing. "The older one, he stays to himself—he likes his books," Rocky says of RZA. Riot, on the other hand, thrives on attention. "He likes to take stuff from his brother so his brother can chase him."

By 1 a.m. there are no fewer than 10 people at the Soho House pool table, and by 1:30 we've migrated to the center of the dining room for three rounds of crazy eights. (Half of the people Rocky deals in are those who just happened to be at Soho House.) At 2 a.m. the bartender is pouring tequila shots at Rocky's insistence, and Rocky raises his glass to propose a toast: "I'm so glad to be here with all of you and not in jail." At 2:52 a.m. (when I'm ready to bid my farewell) Rocky and a few of his collaborators have decided to head back to the suite to work on some music. The look on his face is of pure contentment—which is exactly what he describes: "I feel so blessed," he says. "I feel lucky. I feel happy. I feel joyful. I'm on a high. I'm going to enjoy it while it's still here. It's just beautiful." □

ALL IN THE DETAILS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 161

silhouette mark him out, with the likes of Timothée Chalamet and Jeremy Strong, as a stylish exception. For the world premiere of *The Color Purple*, in which Domingo played the terrifying Mister, he chose an amazing burgundy suit—complete with a satin train—from Louis Vuitton; for the 2024 Critics Choice Awards he wore mustard yellow Valentino; and his whimsically proportioned Boss jacket, high-waisted trousers, and bowed necktie zhuzhed up the carpet at last year's BAFTAs.

Domingo has always appreciated clothes. His mother, stepfather, and Belizean birth father all had their own "style and swagger," he says, and as a child, he can remember admiring the bell-bottoms of the session musicians who lived next door. (In his 30s, his first designer purchase was a set of Tom Ford bow ties from Barneys when he was doing *Passing Strange* on Broadway.) Yet his recent prominence on the red carpet has pushed him to be ever more

deliberate about the way he puts himself together. Mapping out his recent Sing Sing press tour, for example, Domingo had a tricky balance to strike. The film, inspired by the Rehabilitation Through the Arts program established at Sing Sing almost 30 years ago, centers on a group of prisoners staging a play, and its reallife cast was mostly formerly incarcerated men. (One, Clarence Maclin, took home a Gotham Award for his truly great supporting turn.) Domingo "didn't want to take away the shine from the costars," he explains. "I wanted to put the energy on them, not on what I was looking like." So, for the first part of the season last fall, he and his longtime stylists, Wayman Bannerman and Micah McDonald, reached for restrained, even vaguely militaristic silhouettes, mostly in black: a monogrammed Gucci moment at the LACMA Art+Film Gala, for example.

Yet as time went on—and Domingo made more appearances alone—"I would stunt just a little bit," he says, cracking a smile. The internet went berserk for his polka-dotted shirt and scarf tie, both by Alessandro Michele for Valentino, at the Golden Globes (a house ambassador, Domingo feels that he and Michele were "cut from the same cloth"), as it did for his 50 shades of Boss brown at the Critics Choice Awards.

By now, Domingo looks about as natural on a carpet as most regular people do stalking a grocery aisle—but he does not, for even one moment, take his visibility in these spaces for granted. Ahead of this year's Met Gala, where he'll serve as a co-chair, Domingo met with Monica L. Miller, guest curator of the Costume Institute's "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style" exhibition, to start scouting references. What he didn't anticipate was becoming quite so moved at the sight of Black mannequins. "I am a Black man who loves style, loves tailoring, and it struck me that I had never seen images like that—of myself, saying, I belong in these clothes," he says. "I always had to look for a vision outside of myself."

In a way, it was a similar impulse—to embrace joy—that led Domingo to The Four Seasons, a new half-hour comedy from Tina Fey, Lang Fisher (Never Have I Ever), and Tracey Wigfield (30 Rock, The Mindy Project), streaming on Netflix this May. After jumping from The Color Purple and Rustin directly into Sing Sing and The Madness—a thriller series that cast Domingo as a news pundit being framed for the brutal murder of a white supremacist—his body and mind were crying out for lighter fare: "I thought, This Tina Fey series is an opportunity to wear a sweater and laugh."

Inspired by Alan Alda's 1981 rom-com of the same name, the show centers on six

40- and 50-something married friends who must reckon with a new, young girl-friend in the mix after one couple splits up. Domingo is hysterically funny as Danny, a caustic interior decorator feeling suffocated by his worrywart Italian husband (the delightful Marco Calvani).

"As a scene partner, Colman is a dream," Fey tells me via email. "He's generous and playful and prepared. Also he's really tall, which is great for actresses over 50, cause you can look up and smooth out your neck. Highly recommend."

Another thing to know about Domingo is that he takes his pleasure as deadly seriously as his work. He celebrates each and every birthday with Champagne and oysters (a tradition he commenced at 21); he has been known to host raging parties with Natasha Lyonne; and between the photo shoots and interview clips and trailers on his Instagram feed is normie footage of him hiking, or peeking out from a hammock, or riding a carousel, or dancing for no discernible reason. Even while shooting The Four Seasons in upstate New York, Domingo and Raúl rented a four-bedroom house so that they could have people over, use the sundry fireplaces, and watch the sunset.

For Domingo, these things aren't indulgent trifles so much as exercises in common sense: "You need love. You need art. You need all these things in order to do the work you're doing, whatever work that is," he says. And he has so much work on the horizon: season three of *Euphoria*, Antoine Fuqua's Michael Jackson biopic (Domingo is playing his father, Joe), Edgar Wright's new adaptation of Stephen King's The Running Man, Gus Van Sant's crime drama Dead Man's Wire, and an as-yet-untitled Steven Spielberg film. Also, two directorial efforts: his feature debut, Scandalous!, about the doomed love affair between Kim Novak and Sammy Davis Jr., starring Sydney Sweeney (who brought him the script) and David Jonsson; and a Nat King Cole biopic, in which Domingo is also meant to star.

I don't even need to say it: "I feel like I'm firing on all cylinders," Domingo says, sipping the last of his lemonade. "I feel like telling everybody's story. Everything that can *possibly* live in this body, I'm here for it—and I'm also here for the fun and the fashion and the shenanigans. I don't know how long this is going to last, but while it's happening right now, I'm going to enjoy myself." Who could doubt him?

"I'M HERE NOW"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 165

and how we see one another, and how we use fashion to combat preconceived notions with humanity and dignity. If you think about where we are in the world—and particularly in the States, in terms of

people pulling back on diversity—I think this Met Gala sends a really strong message that we must continue to celebrate and elevate Black history.

When I look at the images of Black men from the past—images like the ones in the exhibit—they were so stylish. My stylist, Eric McNeal, and I have been thinking about how I'm going to turn up at the Met Gala. We're both very thoughtful and intentional when it comes to fashion, and I hope that everyone else attending is compelled to really research and think deeply about what they're wearing. I also hope people take time to see the exhibit; the storytelling is amazing.

Timing is everything, and to have co-chaired a previous Met Gala wouldn't have been as special. I'm really proud. (Also, I remember watching Pharrell as a kid and thinking, He's so stylish and cool. It's surreal for me to now be co-chairing with him.) The moment is going to be huge. A testament to our legacy. A message that it can't be erased. \square

POWER PLAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 169

the play suggest that the peculiarity of his marriage to Desdemona has as much to with age—she is young, whereas Iago refers to Othello as "an old black ram," and Othello describes himself as having "declined into the vale of years." (We don't think about the age thing so much because Othello is so often played by vigorous men in the prime of life—to wit, James Earl Jones, long synonymous with the part, was 33 when he won an Obie for his performance in Joseph Papp's 1964 production in Central Park.) Class is also a factor: Othello is an ex-slave turned soldier who has worked his way up, on the strength of his formidable talents, to a high-ranking military position; Desdemona is the daughter of a powerful politician in Venice, where the play is set. She's sheltered; Othello is a man of the world.

Leon leaned into this last contrast with his casting, plucking the virtually unknown 27-year-old Molly Osborne to play opposite Washington, an actor who has surpassed mere celebrity to become one of the greatest leading men ever produced by Hollywood. "It's surreal," says Osborne, who'd been bouncing around the English theater scene for about a decade before she finally booked a West End show—Fiddler on the Roof directed by Trevor Nunn-and started the dominoes falling which ended with Leon hopping on a flight to London to meet her in person. "That's what they say, right? It only takes one part, and then you're off," Osborne says with a laugh, before going on to admit she was not expecting career takeoff, in her case, to lead her more or less straight into the arms of Denzel Washington. "It's an honor just to be in the room. But you can't just be awestruck—you have to do your job and be a good scene partner."

Of course, being a little awestruck helps when depicting someone in love. At the start of the play, Othello and Desdemona are utterly dazzled by each other. A question raised by the play is: why? Theirs is a pairing so out of the ordinary, it seems to demand to be justified. "We're still finding it," says Osborne. "Kenny's renamed rehearsal 'discovery,' which I love, and that's what we've been doing, discovering aspects of their relationship. Like, we know Othello's told her all about his lifeand in modern terms, maybe she's the first person who's really, you know, held him with that, held his trauma. It's very pure. She sees his pain as part of what makes him beautiful. But maybe that also means she's in denial of his darkness."

As is common these days, Leon has time-shifted *Othello* out of Renaissance-era Venice and Cyprus. His version is set in 2028, and Othello and his troops are an occupying force of the US Marines—a battle-hardened band of brothers that find themselves suddenly and, as Gyllenhaal points out, dangerously idle. "You train these guys for combat, they go on mission after mission, then they're waiting around, they've got nine months off—where are they going to put the target?"

"I wanted Jake because I knew he was going to search for the truth in the character," says Leon. "I wanted humanity, not some mustache-twirling villain." If ever a role tempted such a portrayal, it would be Iago, who Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously described as a "motiveless malignancy." He schemes to destroy Othello, drives him half-mad, and—spoiler alert—brings out Othello's murder of his beloved wife and his own eventual suicide, and again you wonder—why? Racism? Resentment about being passed over for promotion? Sheer boredom? No explanation is sufficient.

"I'm not sure *I* even understand what I'm doing, in the sense that, okay, Iago starts a ball rolling, but then it's rolling faster and faster, and he has to start making choices that maybe he doesn't even believe in, but there's just no way back," says Gyllenhaal. "Or that's one interpretation."

Another: The person Iago is actually trying to destroy is Desdemona, because that's how he gets his beloved general, his Othello, back. "You talk about faith, and you talk about love, and really it's heartbreaking, because I do believe that Iago loves Othello, deeply," Gyllenhaal continues. "Admires him."

"At war, these two men, it was like they were one person," Washington interjects.

"And then they get to Venice and he meets Desdemona and I'm losing it," Gyllenhaal concludes.

"It's easy to say Othello is gullible," adds Washington. "No, no, no—he trusts this man more than he trusts anyone in the world. He trusts him with his life."

If love is a conspiracy of two, impenetrable to outsiders, Iago finds a way to pierce through, seeding doubt about Desdemona in Othello. In so doing, he establishes a competing conspiracy, and the men draw closer. "I am your own forever," Iago vows in act three, marriage-like. The play doesn't work if Othello and Iago don't read as authentically intimate. Judging by the easy rapport between Washington and Gyllenhaal, they won't struggle to find that camaraderie onstage.

"We've been asking ourselves, who was Othello, who was Iago before the wars? Because we're trying to understand, you know, what here is what war's done to them, versus what's their actual essence?" says Washington.

"That's a part of the play that speaks directly to today," he goes on. "You send these men and these women out to fight for freedom, they're going to come back changed. PTSD. Something. They've go scars."

There's a simple logic behind Leon's choice to set the play in 2028, rather than the here and now: He's aiming for resonance, not "relevance." "This is a play about the struggles of all time," he says. "The struggle to be a human—to love, to trust, to be curious, to grow, to heal, all of that; take away everything except what makes us naked, pure human beings, that's how people can find themselves in this story." What Leon hopes to avert is Othello being pinned down, butterfly-like, to a political position, or forced onto one side or another in this country's seemingly never-ending culture wars. It will be hard to avoid—the moment is fraught; the play has an interracial couple at its heart; what is racism, if not a "motiveless malignancy"? People will chew on the Broadway first of an Othello directed and lead-produced by Black men—Leon and Brian Anthony Moreland, respectively—and cut their assumptions about that to fit their preexisting views. But becoming grist for hot takes is very much not the point. "When Denzel came to me a year and a half ago and said, 'I've got free time in 2025,' we didn't know who'd be sitting in the Oval Office, we didn't know what'd be in the news-and it didn't matter," notes Leon. "Shakespeare wrote this play more than 400 years ago. This is about our time on the planet.'

And anyway, there's something about Othello that rebuffs reduction. When I chat with Osborne, for example, she mentions that she and Leon imagine Desdemona as the daughter of a prominent American political dynasty—"and she's rejecting all that." But almost immediately upon saying this, Osborne doubles back and adds, "There's more to their love, of course; it's not explainable. It's just—love is love."

Washington echoes this syntax when he details what Leon is seeking from his actors' performances. "No pinkies up, no 'Shakespearean acting,' I don't even know what that is. You think that's what people were like 400 years ago? You think that's how they went around the corner to get coffee? No," Washington posits, shaking his head. "Just truth. And the truth is the truth. That's what Kenny says, The truth is the truth." And knowing when you've touched that is matter not of mind, but of feeling-of faith, you might even say. A surrender to the sublime mysteries of the human heart.

"I keep watching him, thinking, How do I do that? Because it's not as simple as 'keep it simple,'" Gyllenhaal says, peering at Washington. "And then the answer is just—be great. That's it, be great."

Washington breaks into a belly laugh, wags a finger at Gyllenhaal. "Look at you, ready for opening night.... You're Iagoing me already."

In This Issue

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"I'M HERE NOW"
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alexisbittar.com. On
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ghbass.com. Acne
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studios.com. Manicurist:
Adam Slee. Tailor:
Judith Grant.

THE GET

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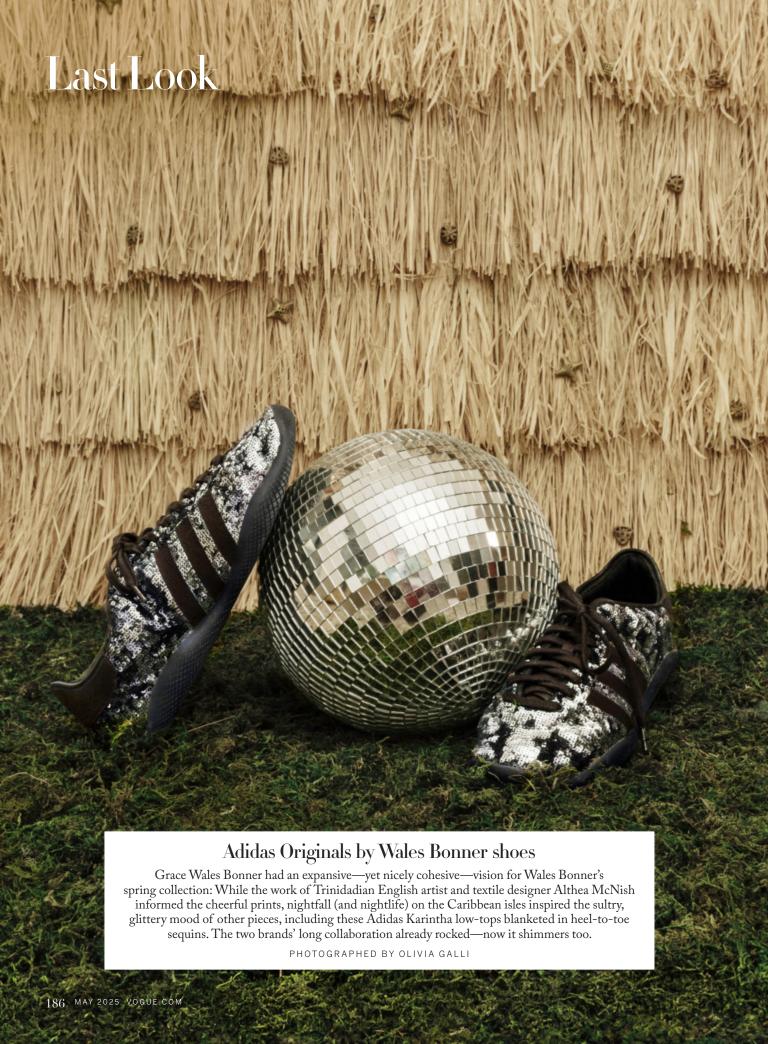
LAST LOOK

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THE BOLD LOOK OF **KOHLER**.





REACH FOR THE CROWN





THE DAY-DATE

