



STRIKE A POSE

PROENZA SCHOULER TOOK ITS PRE-SPRING COLLECTION OUT OF THE SHOWROOM AND INTO THE WILD WORLD OF VIDEO ARTIST KALUP LINZY. THE RESULT IS A STUDY IN HOW TO MAKE THAT FLEETING IN-BETWEEN SEASON COMPLETELY UNFORGETTABLE

Proenza Schouler's serendipitous beginnings are, by now, well known. Studying together at Parsons, Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez had yet to graduate before their entire collection was scooped up by Barneys. Seven years later, Pitti Uomo, the female arm to Pitti Uomo, invited them to show their Pre-Spring 2010 collection in Florence at the 15th-century Villa La Petraia, a former residence of the Medici family, reopened for the occasion. Instead of relying on the grandiose setting to enhance a classic fashion show, the duo used the occasion to launch their curated issue of *A Magazine*, and surprise guests by inviting three contemporary American artists to interpret the collection. In an effort to serve up "a big slice of Americana," McCollough and Hernandez gave the accessories to installation master Haim Steinbach and the clothes to the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black; whose black-teethed vestals performed baroque-metal versions of mainstream hits like "My Heart Will Go On." Meanwhile, fresh off his solo show at the Studio Museum in Harlem, gender-bending video artist Kalup Linzy unveiled a new work—a hilarious video piece entitled *Fuck U* that stars Chloë Sevigny and PJ Ransone as jilted lovers—and a series of twelve Renaissance-inspired photographs of Liya Kebede, styled in the Pre-Spring collection. Three of them are exclusively published here. **Simon Castets**

SIMON CASTETS Where do all the Botticelli, Veneziano, and Fra Angelico references come from?

JACK MCCOLLOUGH Kalup actually came up with these and brought the project away from the purely fashion context.

KALUP LINZY The challenge for me was to copy iconic Renaissance poses without falling into fashion standards. I had to do a little research, and I did catch an episode of *America's Next Top Model* and saw that they were doing some classic poses. I was glad I caught it because now I know how they've been interpreted before. I don't know the entire history of fashion—I am not as familiar with it as I am with art history. But I do know that the two often intersect.

LAZARO HERNANDEZ We wanted to do something special. A pre-collection, per definition, is a more commercial thing. Showing it like we do twice a year in New York would have been silly. We needed to do something completely different. We wanted to give him the collection and see how he would interpret it. We had to step back, which was a new thing for us.

SC Was it the first time you worked with an artist?

LH Pretty much, at least on such a scale. It was kind of scary for us because we are such control freaks. When we shoot the collection for the lookbook, we do everything ourselves, we are always very much there.

JM We are micromanagers.

LH Kalup would shoot a portrait and I would say, "Oh...but the silhouette is about the legs and the shoes!"

JM We just had to step back and let him do his thing.

LH It was worth it. The collection had nothing to do with anything Italian or anything Renaissance, it was completely about 1960s subcultures, Hawaiian culture, and a lot of Tahitian references.

SC Kalup's character Taiwan could be from a Gauguin painting.

LH Yeah definitely. Weirdly it all kind of loosely connected—Taiwan looking like a Gauguin girl, these Renaissance poses in this 15th-century villa...

JM References all blended and became a complete thing. It became bigger than any of us could have imagined.

LH It's hard to find artists to collaborate with because fashion has to be related to their own work. You cannot force clothing onto an artist or it's a disaster. But here it makes perfect sense because his characters are defined by the way they look. Styling is an inherent part of his work. It's a medium.

KL Which is clearer to me in a way that it wasn't before. I began

to see it differently. I never saw myself in the context of fashion. I have always done costume but I never saw the potential of high fashion. Now we are shooting a series with clothes from Proenza Schouler, so I am thinking all this through in a new way. It has inspired me and it has also given me access to things that I didn't have access to before.

LH We have given Kalup clothes for his different projects and it's cool to think that these clothes are not only being sold in stores, they also have a completely different purpose. It's nice to see our own work filtered through a different vision. What Kalup does is so specific to Kalup.

SC It also seems that with this project for Pitti you had a sort of coming-of-age together, with Proenza Schouler getting so much exposure in an international context, and Kalup's work being so sleek, produced with more money than usual.

LH Right. We were all very impressed by this. We all got there and we were like, "Wow!" [Laughs] We had no idea how great it was going to be.

JM The photographs were done the night before. We got there the next day and thought, Oh, these are kind of...high level.

LH And it was very different being there in Europe than working in New York.

JM The whole thing really freaked people out.

LH All the older Italian people freaked out. "Is that a man in a bodysuit? A woman's bodysuit?" It was amazing.

SC In *A Magazine*, you made multiple references to land art and the austere work of Michael Heizer and Robert Morris. Meanwhile, there is this completely baroque dimension to the Pitti project with the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black and Kalup.

LH We were most interested in showcasing people who have a unique vision...

JM And celebrating people's diversities. They all have a very specific system that they work within, as individuals. That is what we were inspired by—the wide array of people.

KL This is what the American theme represents. Individualism and a melting pot of it all.

Kalup Linzy and Liya Kebede in Florence, Italy, May 2009

Photography Sarah Silver

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