

REVIEW

THE PRADA SPRING SUMMER 2009 CAMPAIGN

BY CATHY HORYN



The handsome young men in the new PRADA ads are CLAUDE and LOUIS SIMONON, the sons of TRICIA and PAUL SIMONON of THE CLASH. HEDI SLIMANE, the former designer of DIOR HOMME, took the pictures. PRADA is, of course, MIUCCIA PRADA, the Milan designer who rarely does anything predictable. I glanced at the new campaigns of LANVIN, GUCCI (a '60s mood, suggested in part by a model who resembles a young MICK JAGGER), TRUSSARDI, DIOR, GIVENCHY (sleek heads and inexplicable facial expressions) and CALVIN KLEIN. I'm a sucker for fashion ads, although they have lost a good deal of their energy and cinematographic quality in recent years—if you recall the GUCCI campaigns prior to September 11th, 2001, when the principal message seemed to be promoting lots of hedonistic sex as a cure for romantic disillusionment. I found myself returning to the new PRADA ads, simply for reasons not offered by the other campaigns.

For the campaign, which consists of a number of images of clothing and accessories like eyewear, SLIMANE photographed the SIMONON brothers together and individually against a background that resembles a modernist stone room. The setting is fairly formal, which heightens the sense that the boys are a study of youth and mood—and, of course, the dynamics of their being brothers. Without knowing the identity of the boys, you would know from their features they are related. When she presented this collection, last June, MIUCCIA PRADA remarked that it was about a man poised between fragility and power. The line of the clothes was fluid, with loose knit tops and some interesting combinations of white cotton shirts and shorts that reminded me of boys in a locker room—horsing around before they put on their dress clothes.

I think SLIMANE captured an authentic mood without specifying it. When you consider the stylistic devices of other campaigns—the extreme effort to be contemporary, the almost anti-human quality achieved through abstraction and layering—the PRADA campaign has moved away from those conventions. SLIMANE has essentially made black-and-white portraits. He has shifted the focus from the abstract to the simple and direct, and in doing so he makes us question the legitimacy of the perspective of the other campaigns. It's not so much a question of what is new that attracts us, as what is clear, for I think we are in a moment when we want clarity and reasonableness.

SLIMANE, it seems to me, captures the weight and ambivalence of young manhood. Young men doubt everything but at the same time they're narcissistic. I love the tentativeness in their expressions. Also, CLAUDE and LOUIS have their hair in a high, smooth crest. This is a wonderfully telling gesture. When I was in Paris in January for the men's shows, I couldn't help but notice the number of boys around town with great heads of hair, but concentrated on top. A friend told me that the band BB BRUNE is an influence. In any case, hair takes on a huge significance for boys and young men if other aspects of their personal style are under the control of school or a workplace.

The stylist OLIVIER RIZZO, who has worked with PRADA for a number of years, suggested to me that having brothers in the ads may have had a special appeal to PRADA, who has two boys herself. The brothers do project a mood and an experience quite apart from the clothes, which you wouldn't get from professional models, and this lends more interest to the photographs. Who are they? Which boy is older? What is the particular dynamic in their relationship? I tend to be more curious about clothes if the photographer has captured more real qualities of character in his models—not merely an imagined "scene" or mood. In the end, though, I like the way the SIMONON brothers wear these clothes, particularly the suits with the extra layer of a T-shirt under the white dress shirt, and the loose pullovers. There is a becoming aspect to the clothes, in both senses of the word. And it's certainly not a forced impression.

Of course you can't ignore the fact that PRADA has allowed another designer of menswear to give an interpretation of her vision. And SLIMANE is not just any designer; he gave DIOR HOMME an influential aesthetic, both in design and presentation. The abiding quality of these portraits is their relative simplicity. You have to consider the campaign in the context of what has happened to traditional media in the last decade because of the Internet and other forms of digital technology. There has been a virtual suppression of creative thinking in fashion advertising (and to some degree in fashion photography), in part because audiences are moving away from print media and no one seems clear about how to reach them. They're hedging their bets. SLIMANE, on the other hand, has been extremely direct in his approach. I won't say he is worshipping youth. On the contrary. I think he has presented a very honest view of two young men.

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REVIEW

A MAJOR HANGOVER

BY CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN

"I never met a hangover I didn't hate." I used to say that on certain bleak mornings, usually around 11am, usually in front of a bathroom mirror, usually trying to discern if my contacts were in backwards or

not, although I have begun to wonder if that statement is entirely honest. Drinking and hangovers follow the predictable causal-relationship pattern that comes with most excesses (shopping to credit-card bills;

casual sex to STDs; lovers' spats to unexpected blow-outs resulting in keys being sent by mail). It is generally accepted that drinking is a lifestyle—glamorous, reckless, danceable—and hangovers are the unfortunate price one pays. But I now believe that hangovers are a lifestyle too; they might in fact be the point. You can't over-think on a hangover; depressions are lighter and less specific; your movements and thoughts are constrained to what's in front of you; no one waxes on the meaninglessness of existence with a tire-iron bludgeoning their skull and the taste of twelve-hour-old CUERVO GOLD on their lips. As I get older, I have luckily steered away from the hangover lifestyle, but I do admit to periodically falling into them. They are like distant family, comfortingly familiar and irritatingly insistent.

I fell into one on the morning of January 26th, 2009, waking up in my hotel room in Paris, four hours short of catching a plane back to New York. The lamp by my bed was left on (typical sign of getting home drunk unable to navigate unfamiliar switches), and although I still had to pack, I reached over to turn it off. Dark room, love with the lights off. On a hangover Richter scale of one to ten, I'm giving this one a six. (I usually like to make this assessment in the first two minutes of standing, but as I said, I had to pack.) The sides of my temples were beating like rave music turned low. My tongue stuck to the ceiling of my mouth when I tried to drill for saliva. I needed water, but I wasn't in such bad shape that I couldn't eventually get out of bed for it (that's a ten, the Great Earthquake, everything in ruins, spooning a trash can between heavens). My limbs were working, my headache didn't spin into a Eurotrash club in Ibiza when I rolled over on my back, red velvet worms didn't crawl across my eyelids when I shut them. Prognosis: nothing two EXCEDRIN and a pair of RAY-BANS won't cure. The eye closure was relieving some manic bass-line, but it was also calling to mind the reasons why the prospect of zipping up luggage suddenly felt like a Promethean task: oh, yeah, that bottle of red wine at dinner, which, in a rowdy celebration of a designer friend, became the dinner; oh, no, fleeting memory of surly French waitress being reminded that yes, I did want that vodka soda (in my best Ohio accent); dear god, a stuffed basement club that I only went to because I felt like I had to say hi to the deejay, with a bartender saying they accepted credit cards. A round on me! It's my last night in Paris! All I have to do is board a fucking plane. Fucking plane!

Eyelids back to their upright positions. The furniture just sits

there, and it's so charmingly quiet. A hotel room is the quintessential place to recover from a hangover. It doesn't ask anything from you or you from it—it doesn't remind you of some more functioning version of yourself who managed to compile a life in four walls. I pick sleep from the corner of my eyes and make a go at swinging my legs out of bed, but they refuse to obey central control. There's that fucking plane at CHARLES DE GAULLE, probably already parked on the tarmac.

It occurs to me that hangovers (registering five or higher) are like inoperable planes on tarmacs. They look like they should fly but they just sit there with their wings out. I'm lying with my arms splayed across the bed just like a plane that won't barrel down the runway and take off.

Some hangovers come with surprising bursts of energy, probably because you're still half drunk—a weird, jittery nervousness just before the afternoon rigor mortis sets in. Today's hangover is exceedingly lazy. Even if this hangover had one more day to itself in Paris, it wouldn't go see the VUILLARDS at the Musée d'Orsay or take advantage of all of the *soldes* signs in the shop windows. It would demand scrambled eggs from room service and stare meaningfully for ten minutes at the used ashtray on the desk, trying to come to terms with its presence. Finally the pilot does find the keys to the plane (or however you turn a plane on) and I get up. Wow. No spinning. No stomach free fall. Just some light coughing and a bout of acrid, leaf-shrivelling breath before heading to the bathroom sink for a few splashes of cold water. I'm recalibrating. Look, it's not a science; the measuring equipment often predicts the worst. This hangover is a five. Seven drinks, two too many, and mostly due to mixing wine and spirits. It's liveable, this hangover. I can think beyond three seconds. I can even zip up my bag, which is located in another room, which, with a hangover reading eight or higher, would seem like a galaxy away. I wonder if booze in Europe is like European food—you can eat more of it and because it's fresher and not shot up with preservatives, it doesn't have the ghastlier American side effects. If my hangover were only a two, I might sustain enough interest to Google that. But I don't. I'm craving EXCEDRIN and a pair of RAY-BANS. I'm craving the bad minipizza that AMERICAN AIRLINES serves its economy inmates. I do believe that life would be better without drinking. I do believe the devil is in the liquor. But I don't have time to moralise right now. My hangover has a plane to catch.

Mr. CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN is the editor-in-chief of INTERVIEW magazine who is also hard at work on his long-awaited debut novel. He lives in the West Village of Manhattan, and his interesting home was recently featured in the second issue of APARTAMENTO, a new Spanish magazine on interiors.

THE COLLECTIONS

WHAT THE DESIGNERS WERE WEARING

PHOTOGRAPHED BY GERT JONKERS
IN FLORENCE, MILAN AND PARIS, JANUARY 2009

When congratulating a designer on the brilliance, splendour, or interestingness of his or her recent catwalk presentation, a certain deference and a hint of a bow always seems quite fitting. And what does one see? Their shoes.



KRIS VAN ASSCHE
wearing DIOR HOMME



MILAN VUKMIROVIC
wearing TRUSSARDI 1911



FRIDA GIANNINI
wearing GUCCI



TOMAS MAIER
wearing BOTTEGA VENETA