

expressed in fashion designs that are specific to men and women.

RISSO: In fashion, there is definitely more attention to the body right now, than there has been for a long time. For example there's the fashion that Casey Cadwallader is designing for Mugler, very sexy and very beautiful. And there is a newfound freedom that allows people to try out different identities and live new kinds of intimacy and sexuality as they wish. But on social media, the naked body and nudity in general is just seen as something evil that needs to be deleted immediately.

FAQ: Do you have something specific in mind?

risso: I often think about what photographers are and aren't allowed to show today. What would happen to, say, Helmut Newton? Today he would be attacked immediately. Yes, his work was controversial, but also incredibly powerful. I find this climate of cancel culture, a censorship culture, uninspiring. It seems to me that sometimes there is a lack of will to look at the naked body in an unbiased way. Neither sexualized nor as a symbol of freedom.

FAQ: How do you deal with this issue at Marni?

RISSO: For me, bodies are naturally attractive, they are the best thing about all of humanity. For me, there is no reason to be shameful. But of course today there are plenty of reasons to think you should be ashamed: because you're not good enough, too fat or thin or too big. I myself had to break free from the feeling of not being enough. At Marni, 2020 was the moment of breakthrough; in retrospect, I call the fall/winter collection "Melting Bodies," while it was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's book "The Masque of the Red Death." Instead of focusing on the fashion and having the models simply parade down the runway, choreographer Michele Rizzo directed the attention to the bodies and their interaction with each other and with the fashion. He staged the collection as a kind of rave: first the models stood in the show space motionless, then some of them changed into a tight march and walked through the rows of standing people. This accelerated to music, and the bodies seemed to blur into each other. Although they didn't touch each other and there was nothing explicitly sexual, it was a moment that was quite sensually charged.

FAQ: Is the impression correct that the topic of gender doesn't play a big role for you? With you, women show the men's collection, and currently there are many men in dresses.

RISSO: Until a few seasons ago, it was more complicated, because our commercial collection was divided into men's and women's fashion. That's no longer the case, and we design the fashion together, in a single team. This creates a whole new set of possibilities. It's



2

not about excluding femininity and masculinity in favor of a new category. But rather to mix them, into something incomprehensible. Masculine, feminine, crossover. And I notice that an outrageous number of men want to wear dresses because they feel sexy in them.

FAQ: It's overdue, I think, after all these centuries of women wearing men's clothes. However, by slipping into the clothes of - more powerful - men, women were primarily concerned with improving their social status. I'm not sure if men today really want to be feminine or if they are not simply expanding their repertoire?

RISSO: The men I know don't wear dresses to look more feminine. I also tend not to see them in skin-tight ones, but rather in straight-cut ones that perhaps

IMAGES:

2

A typical dress by Marni has a loose fit and accentuates either legs or neck. Currently men are the most avid buyers

3

Shiny sequins are a perfect fit for men at Marni

accentuate the neckline and legs. I think it's mostly about the lightness that a dress offers. Funnily enough women seem to have less and less interest in dresses and opt for pants and shirts all the time.

FAQ: How do your Italian origins fit in with this abolition of gender boundaries? Italian culture traditionally emphasizes femininity and masculinity quite strongly.

RISSO: To me there are two aspects: For one thing, sure, there are lots of beautiful examples of extreme masculinity and extreme femininity in Italian history. All our actresses and singers and filmmakers, all the music and cinema of the 30s, 60s and 70s. I still find that very inspiring today. At the same time, though, there were enough artists like Pier Paolo Pasolini, for example, who challenged the status quo and critically addressed issues like gender and sexuality. In terms of society, however, it took a long time for the rigid division into men and women to change in favor of a more inclusive view. I think things are a little better today than they were when I was a kid. And if I just refer to fashion: When we develop collections, there is no political correctness; even traditional ideas of men and women have a justification if they help to realize an idea.

FAQ: It seems to me that inclusivity to you is a true value rather than just a buzzword. To me Marni is one of the few brands where the models don't look like they're cast in accordance to current beauty ideals, and where casting isn't checked off as "diverse" as soon as a person of color, an Asian model, a larger model and an older model are booked. Your models look more like a community that is open to all.

RISSO: You can't create inclusivity using an Excel spreadsheet. It took me years to find people I could see myself in. Who are as different as I felt growing up and as I still sometimes feel today. I know a wide variety of people because of the many places I have lived in and the various contexts I'm in. I sometimes struggle with questions about my take on the gender debate. Because for me, the people who show my fashion are part of a circle of friends I've made over the years, some of them, because I'm lucky enough to travel a lot. The people who show my fashion are part of my environment, not objects waiting backstage to present themselves by request. They are not interpreters of my fashion, but part of the artistic practice. And we don't do it that way because we want to present a certain image, but because that's exactly how we like to work. That's my idea of circular economy.

FAQ: Why do you think fashion has such a hard time with the topic of age? And even more so with the topic of sex and age?

RISSO: I think that an ignorant understanding of age prevails in the fashion industry. Its recipe being that only Generation Z and even younger people matter. To me that's completely out of touch with reality. It may well be that they want to attract the next generation of buyers, but that doesn't mean they have to exclude other age groups. As everything is so confined to the culture of quick hype and youthfulness, adults per se are not interesting for the brands. That's absurd, because people of all ages live, love and contribute their part to our existence. When it comes to that, the fashion industry is hopelessly behind. It fails to recognize the potential and instead prefers to align itself with what algorithms dictate. My suggestion: Censorship culture should take on the algorithms! ♦



3

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