



## Daphne Guinness Is Afraid of Beige

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By Alex Geana

Daphne Guinness has been called "fashion's wild child" by the New York Times. New York Magazine said she lives in a "jewel box."

She elicits innumerable amounts of comments, posts, blogs and profiles: an endless array of fascination. In short, she's her own fashionable tour-de-force, with her public missteps (literally) being just as followed as her very personal decision to buy the entire Isabella Blow collection five minutes before midnight just before the auction catalogue was set to be printed by Christie's. This heartfelt gesture insured them both a place in fashion mythology.

Many have inquired about her long-standing relationship with McQueen. We started our interview with, "Sarah Burton is going to do a good job. I'm glad they didn't shove someone else in. There's something really fake about it; you feel really cold when you go into the stores." I'm later to find out that Sarah was the one responsible for translating McQueen's couture designs to the ready-to-wear brand. To some, she's a performance artist, to others -- an heiress. To even more, a beautiful oddity.

We met at the GLAAD Media auction where I donated a print. That night, she cried when presenting an award to one of her close friends, David LaChapelle -- someone who's crashed on her couch. She talked about the recent suicides of youthful gay kids in high schools across the nation, and passionately proclaimed it's okay to be different. Everyone applauded. Later that night she was to buy a \$500 glass of water for the cause. "I was thirsty," she says.

Kerry Taylor said to the New York Post, "There are so few people around who've got taste and money and style -- that's why designers love her." After talking with her in her home, she is much more than this simple quote. In many ways Guinness is

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one of the few people that'll actually put her money into causes, people, and art she believes in. She's the rare person that buys art "because I like it."

Walking into her Fifth Avenue apartment, I'm greeted by a Damien Hirst -- one of his butterfly paintings. There's a massive LaChapelle on one side of the living room next to one of Burt Stern's Marylins (The Last Sitting). Next, a haunting photo of a woman on a mattress (has she just been raped by a black man in a forest?). Then a photograph of geishas, where a lonely girl devours a watermelon in a Japanese ally. At the end of the long mirrored hallway, one of David's dunk tank photos featuring Daphne Guinness is parked casually on the floor. She posed five hours for that photo, "I'll do anything for him." Discovering that fact, all the witty things in my mind quickly went away and I was shocked by her stamina as a model. In her study, there's a floor-to-ceiling picture of a horse's ass: a gift from Steven Klein. I spend a few moments trying to figure out how to politely ask about the picture. There was no way to hold back at least a giggle.

"Daphne, why do you have a massive picture of a horse's (pause) behind?"

"It was a gift for my birthday from Steven."

"I need to press -- why?"

"He likes horses."

I can now say I know how a picture can evoke childish laughter. Daphne loves photography; she has a wonderful Polaroid, a Hasselblad and her own lights, which she turned on for our shoot.

She arrived an hour late for our interview and made a stunning entrance. A bit frazzled from lunch, she needed to center herself by clutching a fool's gold ingot. We sat on the floor and started talking. Looking into her eyes, you see a well of caring, a passion for understanding and a genuine interest in people. Although underneath it all, there's a curious inability to understand why people are truly fascinated by her when she's just being herself.

She's mortified of the way we're starting to look -- this new-found homogeneity and our inability to be concerned with putting ourselves together. She's spouts, "Too many dead designers." Then beige, she sees beige everywhere and she's mournful that everyone is starting to look even more homogeneous than ever before.

I asked about what she thought of Karl Lagerfeld's recent statement, that Haider Ackermann should succeed him. Her response: "I don't see Karl retiring any time soon."

Just as obsessed with trends and style as I am, we talk about punk kids with Mohawks, looking at their spikes as a protective armor for someone quite vulnerable instead of rebellious. She tells me about Japanese kids kicked out of their homes at

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21: they hit the streets, find their peers, and they all start to conform with the same look.

She loves high-energy food because she's very active: Irish stew, meatballs and sushi. Although she donates to charity, she'd be excited to have a physicist's lecture actually replace an art lecture for a cause. She insists on altering almost everything she buys. A quick nip and tuck changes a garment and makes it fit properly. Often Daphne thinks in songs -- at one point she had a Radiohead tune stuck in her head and was trying to explain it. It seemed quite appropriate for the time. But she loves Bach and Wagner.

Asking about her love life, she says, "I'm either in love, or I'm not." Then we quickly turn to another topic.

Daphne Guinness took to Twitter, where she shares her unique wit and charm. She amassed 4,000 followers and takes the time to reply to almost each one. In a week and a half, she'd amass 1,000 more.

Many things have been said about the heiress, but in the end she's just being herself. She loves the clothes, the art, the people that surround her. She's simply Daphne Guinness. In this world, to just be yourself, that's the true luxury.

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