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HIGH ART

THREE EMERGING STARS DRAW FROM FASHION.

By Maura Egan

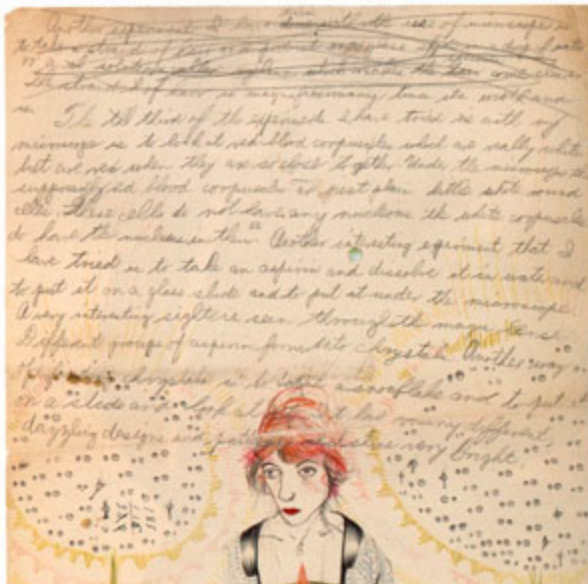


In this era of art and fashion mash-ups — in which Marc Jacobs finds a muse in artists like Elizabeth Peyton and Rachel Feinstein, and the pop art sensation Takashi Murakami earns rock-star status with his cherry blossom Louis Vuitton bag — it's no surprise that many artists are mining the runway and style.com to trigger the creative flow. With proverbial paper and pencil in hand, these up-and-comers were asked to incorporate a piece of fall fashion into their signature styles.

Researching the Prada collection for visual cues was a departure for Amy Cutler, who populates her fairy-tale tableaux with sturdy women who are often dressed in modest Victorian garb — more Mennonite farmer than Milanese high-fashion priestess. "It's different than I usually work," says the Brooklyn-based Cutler. "I typically dress the people after I draw them." Cutler perched three Prada-clad ladies atop an elephant balanced precariously on twiglike trees. She built the piece around one red strappy high-heel sandal. "Walking down the runway in those must be equivalent to an elephant on stilts," she says.

The house of Chanel, meanwhile, may seem an odd choice for the men who inhabit the Houston painter Robyn O'Neil's stark, snowy world. Usually in uniform sweats, they look like a lost fitness tribe that made a wrong turn at the Mall of America and ended up in a Bruegel landscape. Karl Lagerfeld, however, is himself a devotee of uniforms. And his gray, black and white palette for this season fits easily into her woody setting, in which half the men wear Chanel and half are in their customary gym wear. "The Chanel men represent individuality, while the other men have lost their identity," O'Neil explains. "They're zombies." In other words, high fashion (and cross-dressing) wins.

Which is often what happens in the work of Simone Shubuck. Not only is she conversant in the latest Nike Dunks, but also her titles — e.g., "You Can Definitely Take Better Care of Yourself in Prada" — can sometimes sound as if they have been ripped from the pages of a fashion glossy. When Shubuck saw Etro's kaleidoscopic fall collection, with its bright colors, Japanese embroidery and geometric shapes, she immediately envisioned an Egon Schiele type with her high *fin de siècle* ornamentation. Shubuck, based in New York, often draws her decorative doodlings on found objects. For this piece, her canvas was a boy's scrawled science homework, which she salvaged from the trash. "He writes about shiny and dazzling designs," she says. "It seemed to go perfectly with the dress." ■



Simone Shubuck

FOR "RED HAIR ON CHESTER'S HOMEWORK," ETRO WAS THE MUSE.

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