

Fashion critic, photographer, filmmaker, journalist / blogger... and also an icon within the world of fashion design since her successful outfits in the early 80s in the city of New York. Next June she will be presenting a new edition of the international fashion film festival *ASVOFF MILAN - A Shaded View On Fashion Film* -, which is an itinerant platform created by Diane Pernet to promote new artists and to highlight the diversity in the cinema.

If we make a flashback, we could see a girl dressed in pink in the city of Philadelphia. As a teenager, a girl dressed in pastel colours, stockings, pleated skirts and ponytails... When did the change happen?

Pink left my wardrobe long before I was a teenager, probably I was finished with pink by the time I was 8 years old. For years I played around with many different looks but started wearing black as a uniform about one year after I became a designer. The reason was that I felt that my own fashion was interfering in my concentration and so I felt more serene wearing black, others wore white lab coats, my uniform was a black shirt and black trousers.

After studying for 9 months in the FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York), you left it prematurely. Do you think that fashion schools can frustrate creativity in some way?

I think it depends on the school but FIT certainly did not inspire creativity. I already had my degree from Temple University in film and communications so I was only taking courses at FIT and Parsons at the same time. I found the teachers at Parsons far more inspired and inspiring. FIT felt more like a factory to me. I quit because I thought if I stayed there any longer I'd lose all desire to design and that was what I wanted to do so I quit and just opened up my own brand and basically grew up in public.

You had to leave fashion design for a while when you moved to Paris. Yes, it's true, you're still involved in fashion through other means of expression, but... don't you miss working with tactile materials, objects and designs in your studio...?

I was a fashion designer for 13 years for my own brand. I loved designing, it was my passion, my everything and I never lost my love for it, I just could not live in NYC any longer, it was in a not so beautiful state and I did not have the money to start all over again in Paris. Honestly, I did it, I loved and lived it and have no regrets.

How were your beginnings in Paris?

Extremely difficult. I went from having my success in NYC with my brand and then coming to Paris and starting all over again. I found I would never starve here as I was always invited to people's homes for dinner but no one was helpful getting work. When I took my book around looking for a design job all I heard was you don't need a job you need a backer. Truth was, I did need to pay my rent. My first job was designing costumes for Amos Gitai, then working as an assistant to the Producer of Fashion Files on CBC, then JOYCE as a fashion editor, then Elle.com, Vogueparis.com... A Shaded View on Fashion.com.

Emulating 'Dr. Diane' from Elle magazine, your style advice column some years ago... which 5 advices would you choose?

Tough to think back to 5, how about 2. I remember receiving a question from an ex-circus performer who's husband was objecting to her wearing sequins when she got dressed up. She wanted to know if that was a fashion mistake. I took time, don't have access to the actual answer anymore, but basically, told her to wear what ever she felt comfortable in and nothing wrong with sequins outside of the circus. The other one that sticks out in my mind was from a large size woman that was getting married to a marine and wanted to surprise him on their honeymoon wearing transparent camouflage. I connected her with Dior who at that time was doing transparent camouflage. A lot of the

concerns were not really all that interesting. The staff at Elle.com would go through the questions and only send me the best of them for the column the rest I believe they answered off line.

Being a talent hunter seems fun, but I'm sure it isn't so easy. Is there anyone that has really impressed you?

I remember when I discovered Sandra Backlund in Stockholm I was really moved by her work and her spirit. More recently when I was on the jury of La Cambre I was totally impressed by the work of a graduating student Zoe Vermeer, I want to see where she will take her career. She is extremely shy. I loved Raf Simons from the beginning of his career, same with Haider Ackermann and many others.

Despite the fact that there is an international style, when you travel and go out in the streets of different countries, can you easily identify the local style?

Yes, of course but with globalization sometimes everyone everywhere looks pretty similar but it is fun when you see a Tokyo look, or a Mexico City look, or a London look, Australian... When you see something that has an energy that could only come from Brazil or another more sexually driven culture. At any rate what is the most fun is a local style.

Almost in the role of a Sicilian widow, with the Marie Antoinette's hairstyle, a mantilla, a fan, a pair of sunglasses and red lips. No doubt, your own appearance has a great performative character and you have also participated in several films. What kind of sensations do you feel when you're in front of a camera lens?

Actually I am not all that comfortable in front of a camera. I'd rather be behind it than in front of it. Once committed to be in front of it I have to feel comfortable with the person that is filming me or else I feel not comfortable and tense and just don't want to be there. For Roman Polanski or Robert Altman, I was basically playing myself so it was easy.

Last January at the international fashion film festival ASVOFF Barcelona, you have included the category 'Mobile' as an aspiring award for the first time. It's one of your basic tools... Isn't it?

Yes, I'm a blackberry fanatic but I love the software and things you can do with an iphone but I don't use one. I love new technology and was super happy with the winner of the mobile phone category, Jason Last.

How do you feel knowing that your blog gets about 360,000 visitors a month?

I should work on getting more traffic. I don't really exploit it as I should, I more or less just let it happen organically.

When the night falls, some people need to find their loneliness, quietness, silence... and some moments of intimacy and introspection. Do you like creating.... working at ungodly hours? Are you an 'owl'?

I work all the time, do not sleep enough, love to be alone, I am a loner at heart despite the fact that I love people , I also love and need to spend a lot of time alone. I love to create and spend a lot of time in front of my computer.

If Diane Pernet was a movie, it would be...

Hopefully passionate and funny at the same time. There have been some tragic moments like my first husband dying at the age of 31 in a car crash but I believe that something good comes out of every bad experience and I've always had the ability to laugh at life. There are a few quotes that I like to live by: Jean Louis Barrault - 'Feel passion for it all and cling to nothing'. And a psychic once told me: 'Where there is harmony let it flow, where there is not, let it go'. I think that those two sayings have helped to form how I approach life. I would like to express the love I had for my first husband, the craziness before, the passion I had for designing my brand and the fun it was living in NYC and then the devastation of AIDS which was about the time I left NYC and moved to Paris. The tough time I spent in Paris for the first 3 years and how good it feels to be here and have my ASVOFF fashion film festival which puts it all together in a beautiful circle.

It's enviable the ability you have to reinvent yourself, being a pioneer in many ways. Is there anything you think you

need to do that you haven't done yet?

For right now I want to concentrate on building my fashion film festival. Having 5 strong and secure cities where the festival will always be every year and then adding others as invitations arrive and I accept or reject them. There is always more one can do with making this the best and most complete and stimulating platform for fashion films.

This ambitious project you are talking about sounds really good. Precisely I watched a promotional video about the ASVOFF Milan on your blog some days ago, which will take place from June 22th to June 25th at Fabbrica del Vapore...

Yes, those are the dates and location. What I'd like to add is that there was also an open call until April 30th for a one-minute-film competition in ASVOFF Milan and the brief was DESTINY. Fashion has to be a protagonist but aside from that it is *carte blanche*.

Although it seems short time, great things can be said in just 1 minute... and... what about the preparations for the 5th edition of Paris ASVOFF?

It's coming! The deadline for films for ASVOFF 5 is September 15th, 2012 and it will take place at the Centre Pompidou November 9, 10 & 11th. It's an open call, so filmmakers should visit www.asvoff.com and click on submissions, fill out the form and send us their films.

No doubt you are making a strong bid for young talent in all your projects. What would you say to young people and in particular to designers who are starting?

Do not start until you have something to say. Listen to what people tell you but then filter out what does not feel right. Carve your own path like the fashion designers Rick Owens, Bernhard Willhelm, Raf Simons, Haider Ackermann... Don't look at others for their ideas, find your own and follow them.