

art attack

M/M PARIS are Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag, two of the most celebrated graphic designers and art directors working today, and the subjects of a new book by **Thames & Hudson**.

TEXT SARAH HAY

One wall of M/M Paris' design studio, located on Canal Saint-Martin, has what Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag describe as "three visual channels." One channel shows a poster of their most current work, another their latest art poster, while the third is a poster from their "classics or greatest hits." Adjacent is a wall stacked high with bookshelves that took fourteen of the eighteen years that the quirky French pair have inhabited the space to finally erect. Understated, calm and unfussy, the studio exists as the perfect anecdote to the brilliant, hyperactive minds of Mathias and Michael.

Mathias is chatty and not dissimilar to a mad professor with unruly hair and a notebook into which he's constantly sketching. While Michael is more reserved, an observer, the kind of guy who frightens people lacking confidence into streams of verbal diarrhoea with his silence. Despite Mathias being the ying to Michael's yang, both designers possess sharp, whirring minds and clearly don't miss a trick.

Their 23 year career has included retrospectives at the Centre Pompidou and Guggenheim Museum, creative direction of magazines (including i-D, The Feminine Issue, No. 252, March 2005), a long collaboration with Inez & Vinoodh, a scent (M/M Ink for Byredo) and the creation of Bjork's game-changing iPad application *Biophilia* amongst many many others. So do they ever feel competitive or jealous of their contemporaries? "I don't see myself as a true graphic designer," confesses Mathias, "I'm not really playing the game of graphic design, it's like we've invented our own game. You can't say, 'Don't touch the ball with your hands' because I'm saying, 'We're not playing football.' It might look to you that I'm playing football but I'm not, it's a new game so that's fine by me."

This fall, a thick tome, the *M to M of M/M* is being released by Thames & Hudson. Designed not by them (otherwise they admit it would never be finished!) and edited by a writer that they met at the Royal College of Art over a decade ago, it's a gathering of all their key works from the past twenty years. To flick through the book is to come face to face with their creative genius, and the extent to which this pair have sprinkled their touch across popular culture.

A milestone in every creative's career is realising that you are making a living, that the train is on the tracks and moving. Mathias says that this realisation happened to them whilst working on a Jil Sander catalogue starring Amber Valletta (also featured in this issue) and photographed by Craig McDean. "When we finished the mock-up," says Mathias, who constantly builds multiple thought strands into one sentence, "I felt professional and old, I was around 30, it felt good but on the other side I realised, either you become extremely professional which is one life or you try things that might feel ambiguous or meaningless but in fact aren't meaningless." This stream of thought, like everything Mathias says, has a point. They once made a geometric invitation for Givenchy that felt like a small, completed task yet unbeknownst to everyone involved, Givenchy are still producing items that are made from ideas unearthed from this original show invitation. The Japanese were the first to acclaim the work of M/M Paris, which the pair find very flattering. "It took a long time for us to produce a true piece not just a little stamp or a caricature," says Mathias. "In the beginning you're selling a style, it's like baking an endless cake, changing its length, its weight or saying, No you can't have more cake because you've already had too much."

As he talks, Mathias finishes drawing a pair of baroque lips before moving onto another shape in his black moleskin that he'll fill entirely before moving onto another. Quiet Michael is a list-maker, he focuses and organises life by creating lists on his desk and online. "What I love the most is tidying the lists, crossing everything that has been done and saying 'ahh hmmm yes.'" After twenty odd years of working together how do they keep their work process feeling fresh? How do they handle boredom? "Well," says Michael, ending on another M and M-ism, "we can't really answer that because we have never been bored at the same time."

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brrm! brrm!

LOUIS WONG's new capsule collection for A.P.C. reinvents the classic leather jacket. Drawing inspiration from 70s French movies such as *Le Choix des Armes* and *Exterieur Nuit*, the former Louis Vuitton assistant designer and History of Art graduate remarks, "I always thought there was a strange gap between the cool people you see wearing leather jackets and the leather proposed by luxury brands. I wanted to fill that gap." His resulting collection takes the aviator, the motorcycle jacket and the bomber to a new level of sensual cool. As Louis explains, "A man in a beautiful classic leather jacket is incredibly sexy... If you think of iconic actors, there's always a famous picture of them in a leather jacket." He also delights in the socio-cultural ambiguity of the jacket, which is as much a uniform of the roughneck as it is of the rock star, and can scare and attract at the same time. The newly launched collection uses soft deerskin glove leather, Scottish tweed, sheepskin and beaver, while its stitched detailing and vintage hues of brown, navy and black remain authentic to the history of the beloved biker jacket. As for the other love of Louis' life, it's cafés... "Cafés! In Parisian cafés, you see the whole world; tourists, students, fools, and of course some very inspiring and beautiful people!" Louis explains. "French people like to talk, and for me nothing beats that feeling of French conversations in a café. It can be the fancy Costes, the traditional Café de Flore, or a filthy place at 1am; you will always get something special out of it, even if it's just a hangover."

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TEXT CLEMENTINE FIELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BRUNO STAUB
STYLING ANDREAS KOKKINO

Grooming Sarah Sibia at See Management

Model Benjamin Eidem at Request NY

Benjamin wears jacket Louis W. for A.P.C. Gloves stylist's own.

"Alison Mosshart and Freja Beha are my role models because c'mon, it's FREJA BEHA AND ALISON MOSSHART!" @outgebt

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Parisian Archives 1960-2000-2010
Exhibition video: "Met In Fashion: Fashion and Photography in the Sixties" (2010) (documentary film) (documentary film) (documentary film) (documentary film) (documentary film)
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