

Rick Owens' magic equation is 5% creativity and 95% execution

The designer is the protagonist of the newest Polimoda Duets episode "Pushing Against Convention"

Florence, July 31st, 2020 – Polimoda is saying goodbye to the 2020/2021 academic year with a special tribute for fashion fans; the newest episode of the **Polimoda Duets series is online and features designer and creative director Rick Owens in conversation with journalist and fashion critic Stephan Rabimov**. Over the past 20 years, the fashion envisioned by Owens has been defined as visionary, transgressive, provocative, prophetic, perhaps even wild, and today his vision seems, more than ever, like a guiding light in a world shaken by global changes.

In an exclusive one-hour interview, the award-winning designer recounts his creative vision and talks about the evolution of fashion in regards to the world we're living in. From the global lockdown to the protests raging in the United States, what is the role and responsibility of fashion in reflecting and representing society? For Owens, fashion and aesthetics have always been fundamental parts of the human experience, with an important role in culture and society and the responsibilities that result from this role. Fashion can be used as a form of protest, representing social ideals and identities as well as communicating messages as an art form. Fashion influences society and in turn is influenced by it and this has a special value in this historical moment.

"Fashion is communication. The way you present yourself is who you want to be," shares Owens. "It's always been very important to me to kind of tweak conventions when I present clothes. Fashion is about symbols and subtle signifiers. When I make a black skirt, there is something in the cut of that, that is pushing against convention in a very subtle way. And somebody is going to recognize that and align themselves with that and be encouraged that somebody is encouraging them to push in a different direction. And that eventually is going to influence something else. So this is the kernel of an influence."

"It is the seed of something, it's energy that I'm putting out there. When I make clothes that are pushing against a conservative, intolerant bigotry, and when I present shows that are pushing against that, that are encouraging other people to want to push back, I feel that I'm doing the right thing and I feel it is a political gesture in a very very subtle way."

For Owens, fashion is a tool used to convey a message, challenging conventions to provoke and push change. It's fashion as a vehicle for freedom of expression, a value that is highly appreciated by new generations. Creativity alone is not enough; you need technical expertise and the knowledge of the structure of a garment to be able to give life to unconventional ideas, and you need to know how to find the right alchemy with the other components of the fashion chain for these ideas to be successful.

"A lot of people have great ideas, but to get them executed with the right touch [is what makes the difference]. Just in the way hymns are finished, there are so many decisions and so many elements that can go wrong. The way linings are put in, the way a piece of clothing feels. And then, getting it into the right store, at the right time, on time and at the right price, there are so many variables. It's magic when all of that comes together and it kind of works. And that's why it's so compelling — because it's magic."

What is the role of fashion education? Owens doesn't hide the fact that he did not particularly love school, but he recognizes that school can cultivate and structure creativity. You can learn essential notions, techniques and cultures to build your own artistic language and translate your ideas into something concrete. But above all, you can meet people who are going in the same direction as you by creating a community where those with complementary skills in business and creativity can learn to collaborate. Learning the basics of garment construction, the fashion business and finding the right synergy is what Owens recommends to all young people who study fashion.

"What [school] does is it creates a concentration of like-minded people who are going in the same direction. You build a community that is going to stand you in good stead later on."

"The best recommendation that I can come up is that we should start a dating hub where someone who wants to be a CEO and [people who are interested in the business] can find a creator they have an affinity with, and that something clicks because that is the key. That is the kind of marriage that can make the business work. [...] Creativity is 5% of the equation and the other 95% is the execution."

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The video is part of the Polimoda Duets series that has already featured Marina Abramovic, Marco Bizzarri, Linda Loppa, Margherita Missoni, John Rankin, Lidewij Edelkoort and Mobolaji Dawodu. With these creative conversations, Polimoda connects the worlds of art, fashion and contemporary culture, combining its tradition of collecting direct testimonies from key figures in the sector with this new format of exclusive video interviews. In each episode, an icon of our time is interviewed by a different interlocutor in a conversation about the central themes of modern society.

"If training is the link between the world of culture and professional reality, then our task as educators is to accompany young people in the discovery and knowledge of these two universes, and that merging becomes a foundation to build personal identity and professional growth on," explains Polimoda's director Danilo Venturi. *"At Polimoda, we chose to do so by giving voice to the great contemporary figures of our time, offering our students, but also a wider audience, the opportunity to meet them, listen to them and treasure their words."*

Polimoda Duets Video: Rick Owens

<https://youtu.be/mnciFYXZLoA>

Credits:

Idea: Danilo Venturi

Interview: Stephan Rabimov

Images: <http://bit.ly/Polimoda-Duets>

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