

POLIMODA

Art Thou: The Emotional Awakening of a New Generation of Creatives in Polimoda's latest book

A collection of the best works of fashion design, styling and art direction students curated by Massimiliano Giornetti and the faculty

Florence, September 16th 2021 – How does the new generation of creatives envision the future? With this in mind, **Art Thou**, the latest book from Polimoda, curated by Massimiliano Giornetti and the school's faculty, has collected, for the first time in 35 years, the best works from the students and graduates of the **fashion design, fashion styling and art direction 2020/2021** courses.

The images of the book depicting the new world jump off the pages, eager to be seen and discovered: one can perceive the young's urgency to go back to their normal lives, to revive social relations, following a challenging and uncertain time when creative energies have remained largely unexpressed.

This is an emotional and creative awakening, especially for the young, the “blooming flowers,” as Sara Sozzani Maino describes them in the foreword to Art Thou. A new beginning, here represented by the myth of Persephone, which inspired one of the book's chapters. Playing with clashing ideas, these ten chapters point to a number of topics closely connected to present times - diversity, inclusion, competitiveness in the fashion world -, hinting at mythology, technology, the social networks, mirroring the complexities and contradictions of a world where the new generations often struggle to find their own space. **Each chapter-vessel contains the images, the poetic fragments, the photographs, the drawings, the prints, the fashion designs and the moodboards illustrating the new visions on styling, art direction and fashion design.**

Fashion, created and worn, but also photographed, sketched or styled in fashion magazines or on catwalks, is not just a way to present ourselves to the world, **but also an encouragement to stay true to our own identity, one of Polimoda's mainstays.** The expressive tools, the ideas, the impulses of these young creatives outline manifold paths, unique and peculiar, where one may sometimes detect common traits in the way the body, the face, the garments are represented. In some of the photo shoots, the model's face is covered, shifting the focus to the clothes. Sometimes it is hidden by a box, a piece of colored plastic, a finely smocked bonnet, a fabric mask reproducing human features, possibly evoking the surgical face masks we have been wearing for months. By contrast, in some other shots or drawings faces are exposed, heavily made-up, the traits accentuated or digitally modified.

The garments created and photographed by the new generation of global creatives are sometimes voluminous, shapeless, intentionally unpolished, transitory (reflecting our present times?), hiding the body's curves and making the wearer's gender unidentifiable, thus not relevant. The oversized, padded shoulders on some of the outfits look as if they were reclaiming their space in the world; a woven leather bodice turns into a protective shield; the impeccably crafted fabrics are woven tightly, layered, becoming an extension of the body, or are given new life through meticulous and authentic upcycling practices. In other styling and art direction projects, the body becomes unrestrained, *free(d) at last*, sometimes unclothed, painted, or crouched, depicted by intimate poetic verse, reflecting the doubts and qualms of this generation. **Young creatives start exploring their surroundings and discovering nature**, featured in illustrations and prints, or only hinted at in butterfly or floral appliqué on sartorial pieces.

Art Thou illustrates the countless incarnations of instinctive, sheer, individual talent, which in turn embraces and inspires the whole fashion community: a valuable contribution to the collectivity, an opportunity for reflection, a tool to research new ideas, forever the nourishment of fashion. Reminding us that self-expression remains a core value, *“the greatest of virtues,”* underlines Massimiliano Giornetti in the introduction to the book. Against all homologation. *“Art thou?”*, that is, *“Is it you?”* is an invitation to get to know ourselves better, and convey our inner world without fear and with total freedom.

Art Thou is an exciting book that will inspire all of us to shape, get to know, and grasp the future of fashion and emerging trends. Published by Gruppo Editoriale, it is available for purchase at major bookstores and online.

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