

# 10

47  
SS  
18

# STREET POWER



ANGEL BUNNY NEW YORK  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JAMES SPY

Photographer **JAMES GILES** Fashion Editor **GARTH SPENCER**  
Text **JACK MOSS**

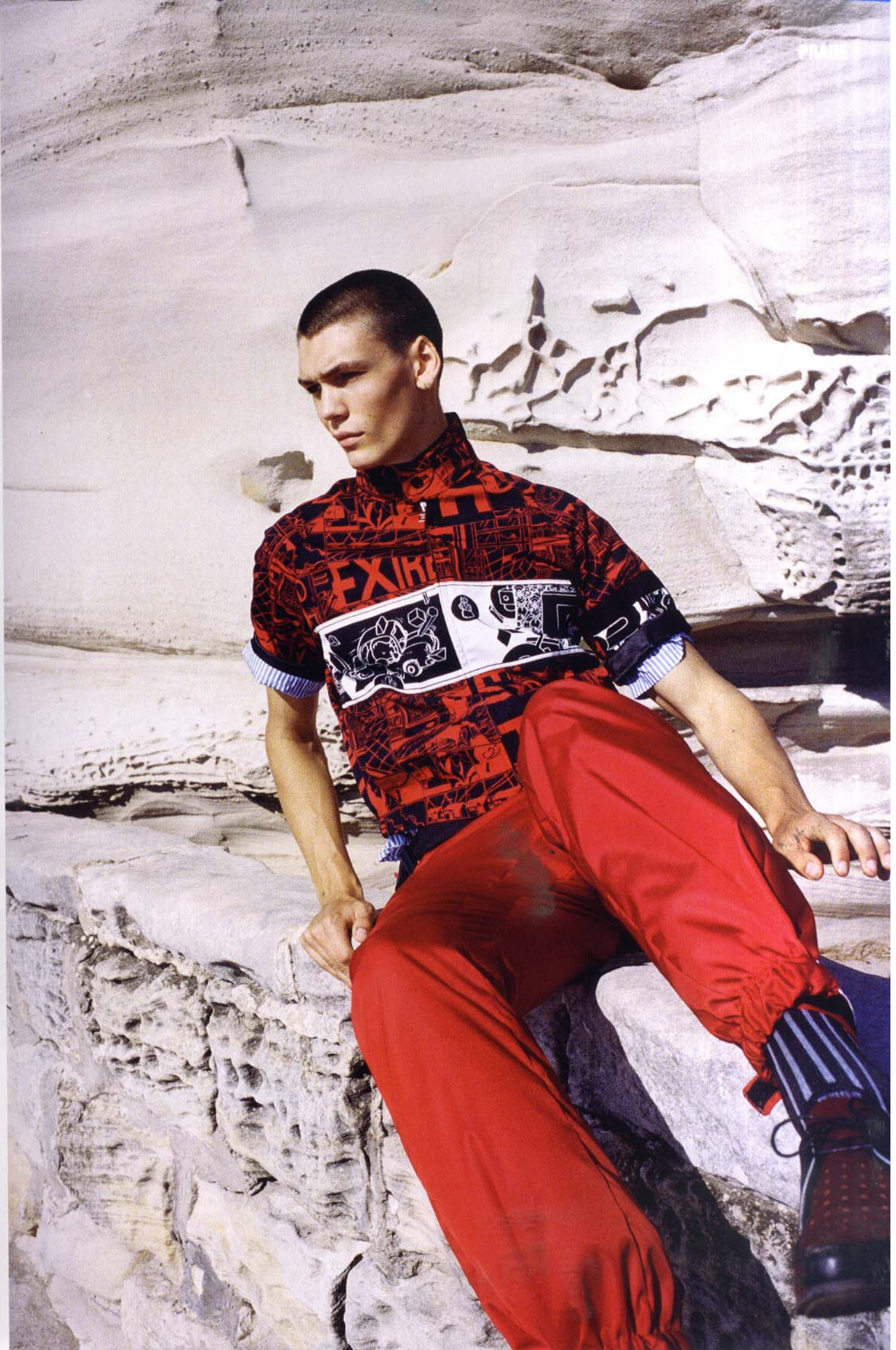
Prada:

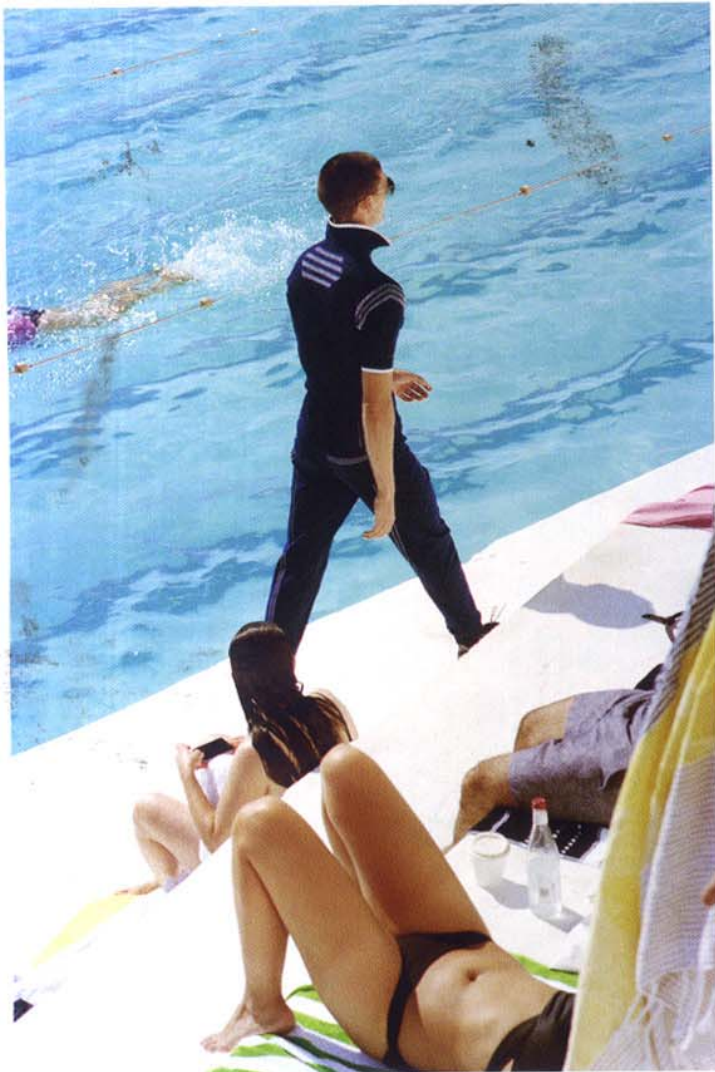
# I ATE CIVILISATION

Hair **RENYA XYDIS** at *Talentland* using *Wella* Models **HUGH BURRY** and **VINCE** at *Kult*  
Photographer's assistants **BRYCE THOMAS, OLY BEGG** and **ALISTAIR WOODS** Fashion assistant  
**ANGELA O'CONNOR** Casting **FELICITY WEBB** Production **ALISON VENESS** and **REBECCA KHOURY**  
Shot at **ICEBERGS DINING ROOM AND BAR, BONDI ICEBERGS** and **SYDNEY HARBOUR, CARE OF**  
**EASTCOAST SAILING** Thanks to **QT BONDI** ([qthotelsandresorts.com](http://qthotelsandresorts.com)) and **SHAY THOMAS**

Instagram: @prada  
[prada.com](http://prada.com)

B2







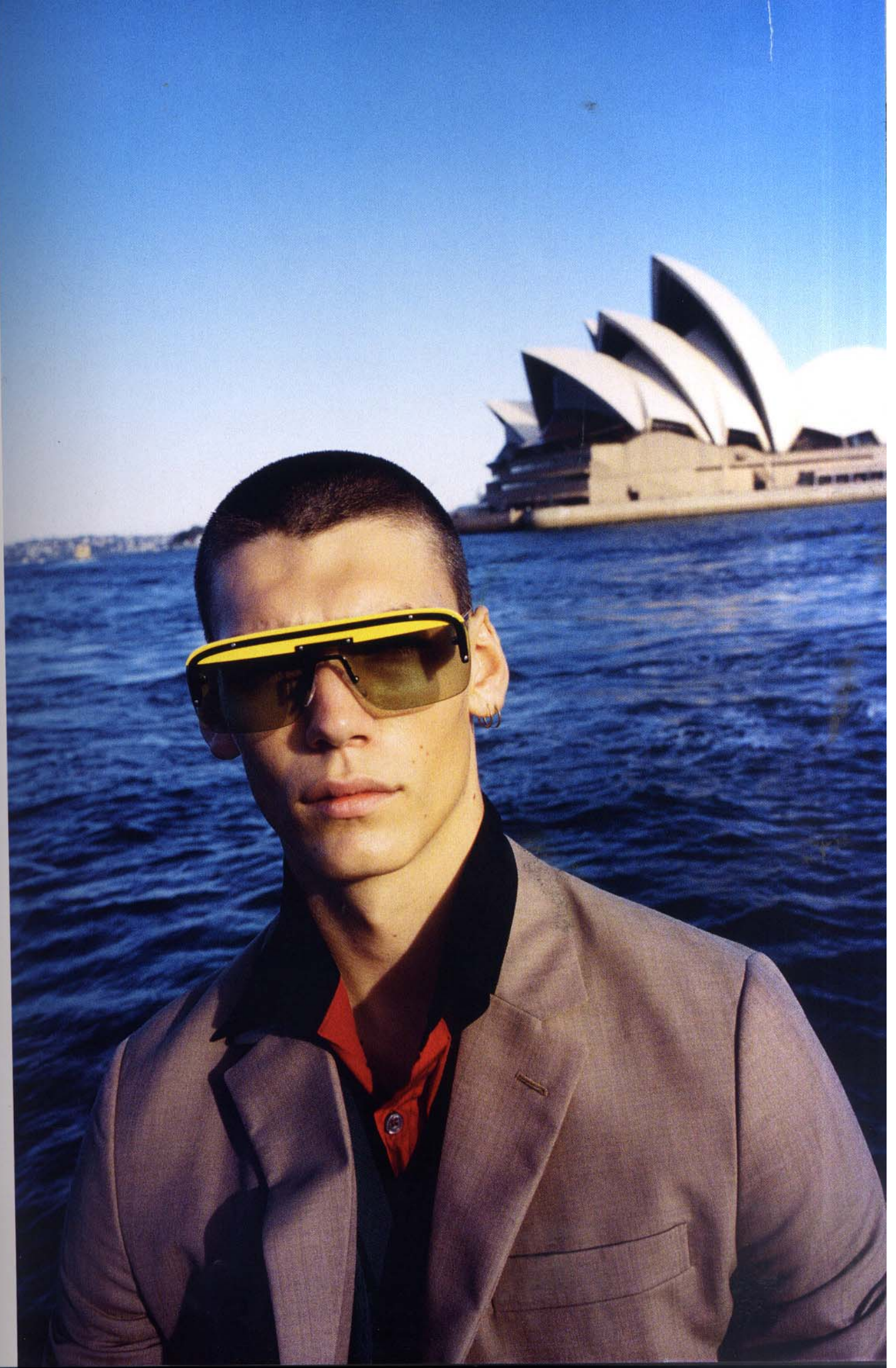


PRADA

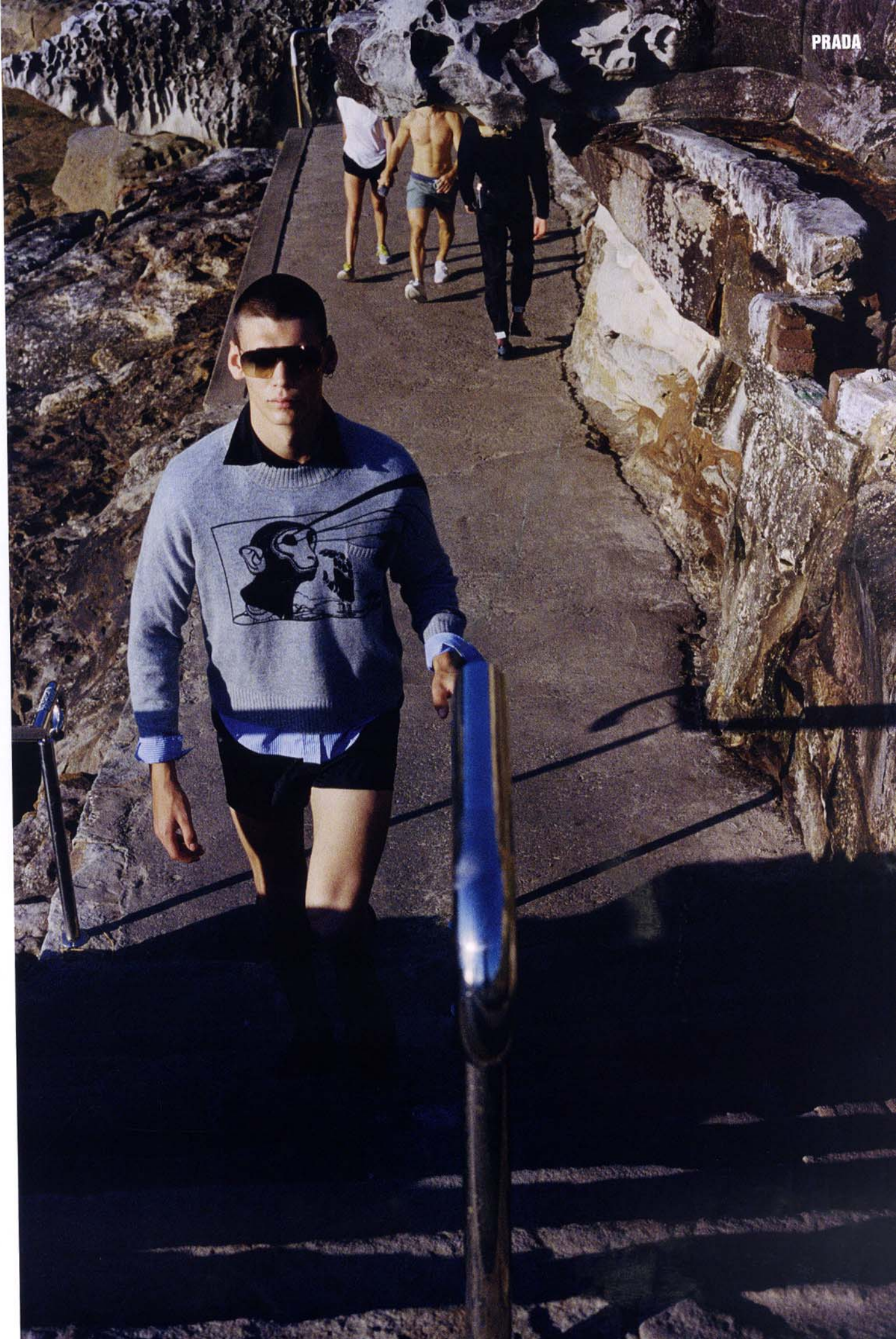


PRADA

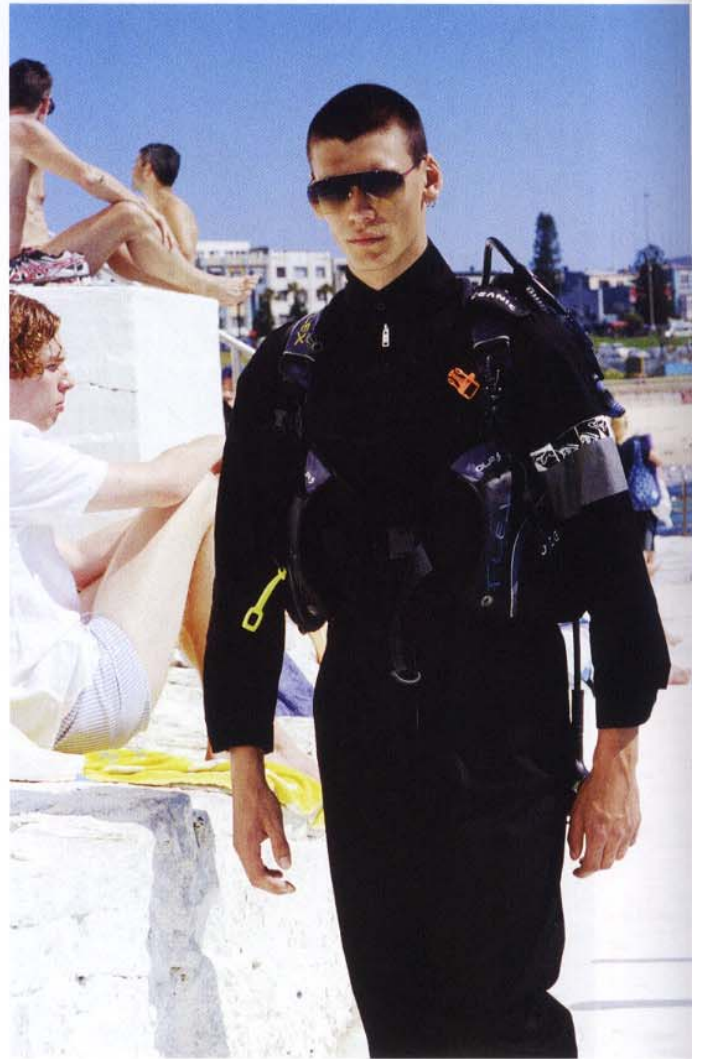
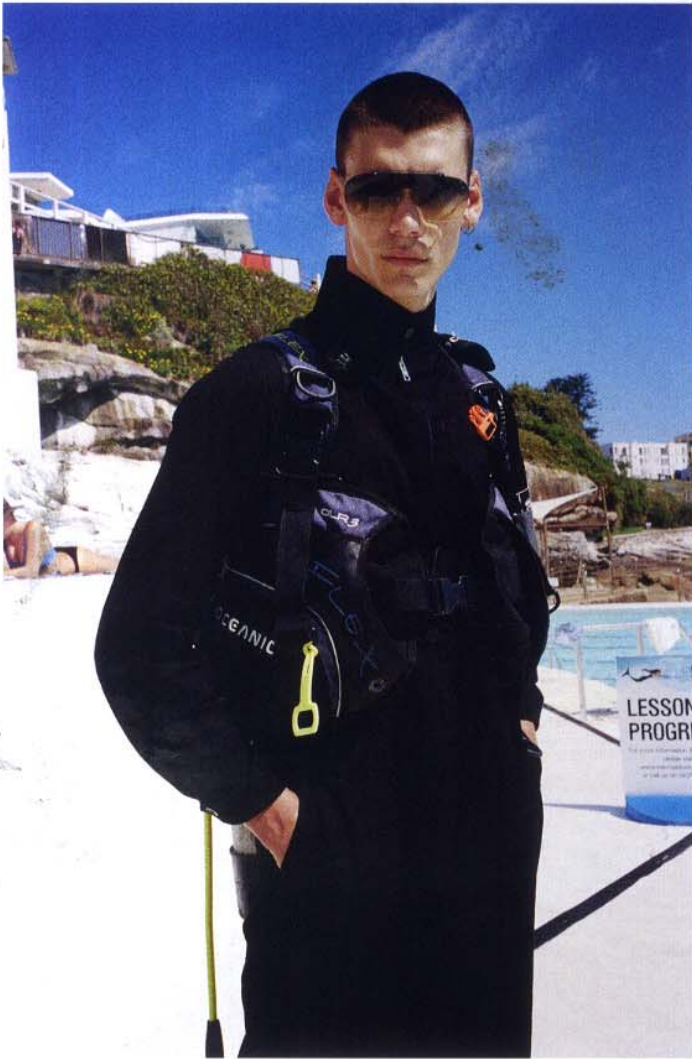








PRADA





PRADA



**W**hat inspires a designer each season? Through genuine interest or simply routine, it's what journalists want to know. And, well-trained as designers are, they offer their answers. A trip. A person. A photograph. A smell. By now, it's a well-rehearsed post-show ritual. But as with most things she undertakes, Miuccia Prada is an exception to the rule. Not that the era-defining designer refuses, like a rare few of her contemporaries, to talk to the gathered press backstage. Rather, as her diminutive form becomes enveloped by the usual mob of overexcited members of the fashion press and it comes to the question of inspiration, Mrs Prada is coy. Her answers are tantalising riddles that she challenges you to solve.

Which is not because she is evasive, nor to suggest that the collections appear from thin air. Far from it – Mrs Prada's work has long been heavy with connotations, if you have the brains to spot them. She seems to know the power of a tease, the act of leaving people to draw their own conclusions. It affords her the ability to make you question yourself – your taste, your ideas of what clothing should be. When it comes to understanding her collections, Mrs Prada makes you work for it.

Backstage at her SS18 menswear show, held in Milan midway through a particularly sweaty season, during which the temperature tipped over 30C, Mrs Prada fielded the usual questions. With her trademark half-smile, she offered that the collection emerged from a juxtaposition – “On one side is the virtual reality and on the other is the reality of the human part.”

It might seem like a well-trodden path of thinking, particularly of late, as fashion designers grapple with the seemingly insurmountable task of reconciling the way they work with the need to keep up with how fast technology is changing. In 2016, The Costume Institute's annual exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum, as good a barometer as any of fashion's latest fixation, was entitled *Manus x Machina*. It explored just this: can tradition endure when fashion can be made with the press of a button? Should it?

Mrs Prada is far from a follower, though, and never settles for such easy binaries. Things aren't that simple. Beneath her SS18 menswear collection may have been questions about the future, but it actually grew out of a more solid and wholly more “lo-fi” inspiration – the comic book, a very recent fascination of hers. “They

are hand-drawn, human, simple and real,” she said backstage. “Even if they contain, of course, all the worst fantasy, they look simple... They are little fragments of life.”

Those fragments became the decoration for the vaulted Via Fogazzaro show space – vast Lichtenstein-esque illustrations blown up across the walls and floors, as though they had been torn from the pages of graphic novels – a careering train, a blinking eye, “PLEASE” written across a suburban row of houses, a monkey with lasers shooting from his eyes.

They were by artists Ollie Schrauwen and James Jean, continuing Mrs Prada's history of collaborating with contemporary artists. Prada buffs will know that Jean's images have adorned Prada's clothes before – in SS08 his *Trembled Blossoms*, swirls of fairies and flowers, leapt tendrillike across the nouveau silhouette of that season. More recently, his bouncing rabbits and a new, expanded and hand-drawn take on the brand's logo adorned Mrs Prada's very first resort show in Milan in May.

Schrauwen and Jean's illustrations would also stand as a precursor for the show space at the womenswear show in September. There, Mrs Prada took the work of nine female cartoonists and manga artists, past and present, and blew them up across the walls, and then across the collection. Spanning the 1940s to now, the choice set the tone for a collection that sought to depict women as both active and present, superheroes of sorts, in a world with so much still against them. Power, too, came with the act of storytelling. “I found it inspiring that, with a pencil in your hand, you can tell your life,” Mrs Prada said.

Backstage at the men's show, though, months before, she elaborated on why the comic book – a medium she admitted to previously disliking – had become such a prevailing inspiration. “That is what we get now from the media,” she said, providing just about as close a comment on the state of the world as you are likely to get. “I never liked comics, I never followed them, but all of a sudden I was obsessed.”

The show notes concurred with this line of thinking: “If storytelling is the root of all communication, the manner in which we choose to tell them – abstract or complex or simple or direct – is significant. The ability to exchange stories makes us human. We live in a jumble of overlapping narratives, some deep and sustaining, others fragmentary, truncated, partially realised or incomplete.”

*“Comic books are hand-drawn, human, simple and real. Even if they contain all the worst fantasy, they look simple... They are little fragments of life”*



So was this Mrs Prada's comment on the election of Donald Trump? On the subject of fake news? On the discombobulating narratives fed to people through social media, or competing television stations, news websites and pop-ups? Perhaps. What was certain, though, was that the intimacy of her previous menswear collection, AW17, which drew upon the warmth of the fabrics and colours of the 1970s – corduroy, hand-knitted sweaters, shaggy sheepskin, leather in rust, camel, brown, beige – was being swept away for something wholly more urgent.

Because if Mrs Prada was not keen for the men of spring to be seen as traditional buffed-up superheroes, their clothes still came with the visual directness and power of a comic book. At points, this was literal – the very same illustrations became a recurring motif, imprinted across the clothing and their matching accessories.

At first, they came as a glimpse – a bright flash of a shirt collar, poking up from beneath a black boilersuit (more on them later), teased the trail of cartoon prints that would follow, while a grey sweater, Look 8, came emblazoned with the same laser-eyed monkey that the gathered crowd could see above them.

They also found their way onto bags, messenger-style, sky blue and grasped in the hand, or on oversized bum bags, worn on the lower back. They, in turn, matched slim belts that sat ever so slightly above the waist. The prints kept coming, across blousons and zip-up shirts, or in literal cartoon strips – panels that ran around sleeves or the chest of a trench coat.

And the design of the garments themselves seemed to at least echo the comic-book starting point – how could you avoid the connotation of Peter Parker or Clark Kent? The awkwardness of those characters, out of their superhero drag, was evoked in nerdy cardigans (tucked in) and 1950s-style bowling shirts.

But was this Prada's Superman mid-phone-booth spin? Because the boyish basics clashed with something wholly more futuristic – clean, technical fabrics and bubble-soled trainers secured by rubber Velcro straps. Even the house's logo was refashioned as a rubber badge that sat on the chest.

Whatever it was, this twinge of awkwardness ran throughout, communicated also through the proportions of the garments. That was mostly achieved through length. Shorts were just that,

grazing the very top of thighs, revealing long, skinny legs. They were worn with socks decorated with the deco chevrons seen in Prada's resort 2018 collection, hitting just below the knee, like a schoolboy after a growth spurt.

And then those boilersuits – “They are my latest obsession,” said Mrs Prada – in electric red or clean black, sky blue or pinstripe, which seemed to shrink the models' torsos, cinched, as they were, with belts (sometimes two). That same silhouette was achieved with high-cut, technical-fabric trousers, worn with intarsia-knit polo shirts or cardigans tucked in. They rested just above the ankle, secured with the same Velcro straps of the shoes.

The effect was of the models outgrowing their clothes – not the dominating figure of the superhero, but something more naive. Simple, even. And that's where it all wound together: like the comic books themselves, these clothes were a simple way of wrapping up complicated messages.

And strip away all of those graphic showpieces and there was more deception at play. Far from clothing fit only for the runway, or for the ravenous fans who gravitate towards the pieces that will be instantly recognisable for seasons to come, there was distinctly normal clothing here, too. Or if not normal, everyday – clothes that will be worn by a very different type of Prada man.

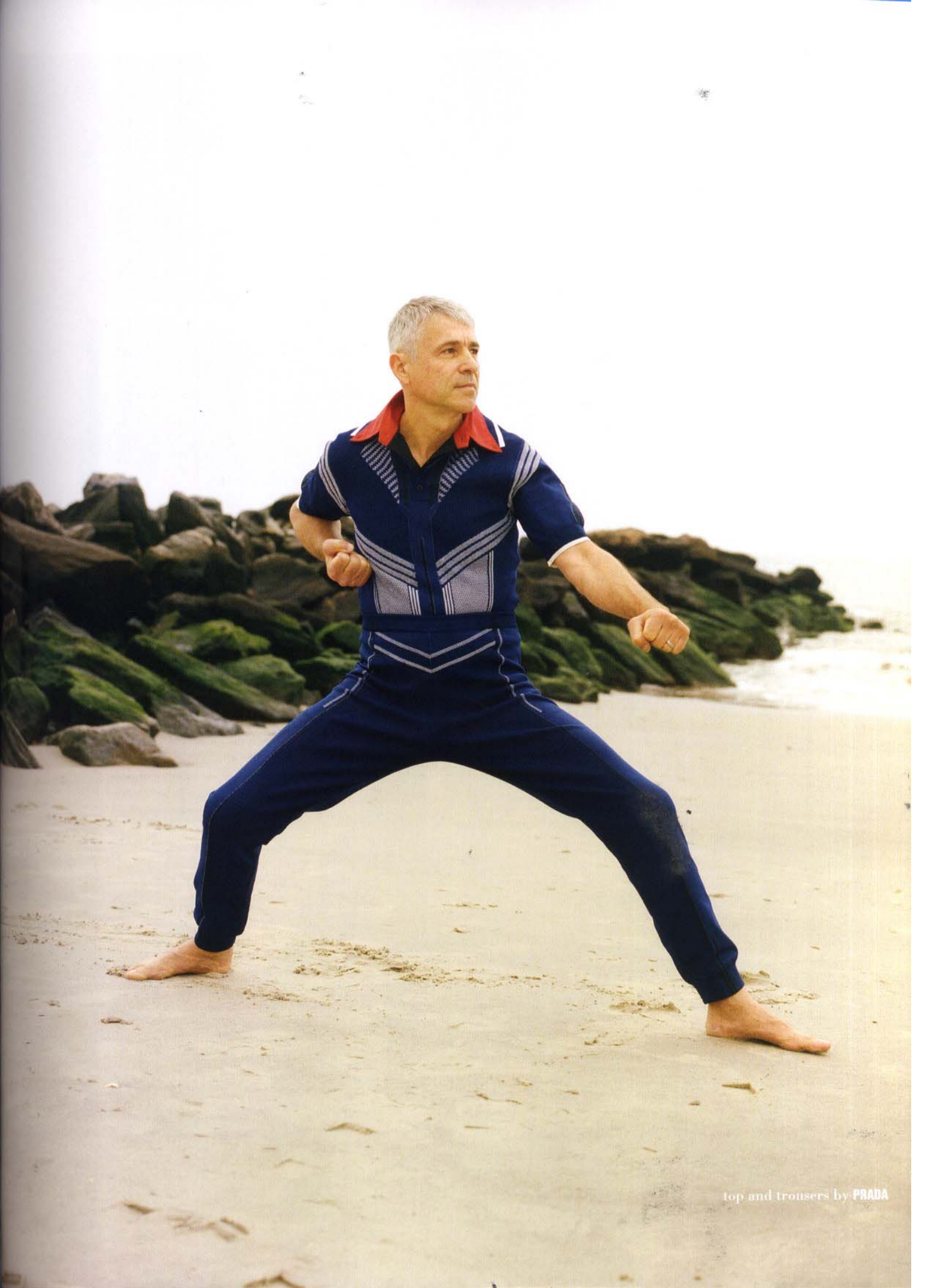
Take the Chesterfield jackets, cut with Savile Row precision, or the perfectly formed suiting in olive, pink and navy. Those pieces will sit just as well on the men who shop on the upper floor of Prada's London boutique, where impeccable tailoring and sharply cut shirts cater to a man with little interest in fashion's to-and-fro, a man whose simple want is a very good suit.

That said, even those pieces came with stamps of Mrs Prada's desire for subversion. The tailored trousers were turned up at the ankle, the jackets slightly curved across the shoulders: simple, almost imperceptible details that have the power to disrupt an entire silhouette.

These are the things that you only notice on second look, and why the show attendees rush backstage to see the garments on their hangers. That's when you can look closer and the clothes start to give themselves away.

Ultimately, though, the best way to understand a Prada collection is to put it on – to wear it and see how it makes you feel.

*“We live in a jumble  
of overlapping narratives,  
some deep and sustaining,  
others fragmentary,  
truncated, partially realised  
or incomplete”*



top and trousers by PRADA



jacket and trousers by PRADA