

Q&A / FASHION
EV A GODEL

**BRINGING
 MENSWEAR BACK
 TO THE STREETS**

a job at a shop in Cologne called Made In. It was the coolest shop for clothes. They were the first to have Stüssy, and it was the time of techno in Germany, and all the DJs, like Mike Ink, went there to shop. So I went out a lot, starting at 15. I was quite lucky that I was really good in school so I could work. Sometimes I worked four days a week after school there.

What did you learn from that experience?
 I actually started to travel a lot because the owner trusted my taste. It was the best thing I can remember. I went to New York to meet designers he wanted to sell. I was 16 when I met Patricia Field! Then I went to London to meet Acupuncture. It was great for me and I'm still friends with the owner now.

When did casting begin?
 Actually that began in the shop. One day we did this kind of Polaroid project – I was shooting anyone cool who came in the shop, we made Polaroids of them which they could write something on and we put them in the window. We kept adding more and more Polaroids until it was full. By that time I really started enjoying it. Then an advertising photographer came to the shop and asked if I could do some scouting for him of some kids. That became a second job – I would give him people to shoot and be able to grab 50 marks off him for it. (Laughs)

You've done a lot to change men's fashion's eye away from the gym-obsessed, old-fashioned archetype. What's your view on it?
 It never drew my interest, and I think back I couldn't name you any fashion models. Still now I never know any models other than mine. Maybe it's strange but maybe it's just because I am more interested in the people and the character. From my youth I only really remember the (Davidoff) Cool Water ads. What really interests me is other male archetypes. I was about 14 when I saw a Larry Clark exhibit in Cologne in 1992. His photography and his way of seeing subculture really influenced me. I got into other photographers from that and as soon as I could drive a car I went everywhere to see shows. And then there's film, of course. I remember *My Own Private Idaho*, and also Johnny Depp in *21 Jump Street*. The first fashion models that really caught my interest were in the first Helmut Lang and CK and CK one ads.

Your work is centred around youth. What was your life like as a youngster?
 I grew up near Cologne and I was always outside in our garden with my brother and the boys next door. We played football and built treehouses. That was mainly what I was interested in. Then, as a young teenager, I was skateboarding. During school I started working with things that influenced me – I had



You must've developed a sixth sense by now for how a boy would look on camera.
 Yes. Sometimes I get out of the car on the street and sometimes out of the corner of my eye I see someone interesting and I stop. Most of the time I am right. It is such a strange habit but it's really like that.

There's appeal in unawareness. Do you think a lot of your boys are unaware of their beauty?
 Yes, most of them. I think over the years the best ones I ever had were always those who don't think they look really good. Of course, I have some who are classically good-looking, which I like as well, but really a lot of them are not so. Mostly they are in school and they are maybe not aware. I like it when boys don't think they look too good.

That nonchalance is really powerful.
 Yes, a nonchalance. Most of the time when I ask if they want to come for casting at my modelling agency, they laugh and say, 'You're fooling me, this is a joke,' or whatever. I speak with them and tell them to look at the website then they really like it. They see the others on there and I think they identify quite quickly with them. But of course they are also proud. Always.

You designed the website too, and you've had a design agency, Chewing the Sun, since 1999.
 Yes, I founded that with two partners in 1999, when we studied together, and I'm still doing it. We mostly do websites but we also do all sorts, like print design, logotypes, catalogues and photoproductions.

What's the best thing about Düsseldorf, where you're based?
 There are a lot of good things about the Rhineland. First, the people, who are really open and friendly. Düsseldorf is strongly connected with art, which I think influences me more than anything else. We have the best art-academy in the world at the moment. What I like about the city is that it's international. There are many artists here, teaching and students coming in. Everyone talks about Berlin but the most important collectors, the most important museums and the people who finance shows and art are here. There is a long tradition of patronage.

Düsseldorf has a thriving art scene. Do you collect?

"Sometimes I get out of the car on the street and out of the corner of my eye I see someone interesting and I stop. Most of the time I am right"



When I started Tomorrow is Another Day, Rick Owens was my first, with a lot of my boys in his show. It's special when I meet such a great person like him – I love him and there are wonderful people everywhere in his team. He helped my boys get real jobs – it's hard in Paris without any support from family or anything. They took Benoit and now he is working in the design studio. That is the nicest thing about working with Rick. They will educate him. I learnt a lot from Raf over the years because he always came to Cologne to look at the boys I had found. Then there's Stephan Schneider, who I still work with and now do all the lookbook shooting and design for. I really enjoy it when the relationship develops to friendship and a long-time working relationship. I think, in the end, that is most important to me.

We've talked a lot about boys. What about girls?
 I am not good with them to be honest! I have one or two interesting girls at my agency, but actually they approached me. It's not that I wouldn't like to do girls, but I can never see it with them. Sometimes a boy suggests a girl that he likes but it's always really funny – always sexy and suntanned!

What about your relationship with designers? Your boys have appeared in the most influential shows by Hedi Slimane, Rick Owens and Raf Simons...
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EV A GODEL'S FIVE KEY BOYS OF TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP)

"I can't really put them in an order, but here are my most recognised boys at the moment..."

ANDREW W
 Andrew is a 20-year-old, half-British boy living in Germany. Besides school he sings in his band Tommy and the Krauts. Look out for him in Ben Toms and Robbie Spencer's shoot for the new *Another Man*.

BENJAMIN J
 He is one of the London-based boys I found when I went scouting last May. I thought it was a good idea to have models in London for UK clients. Ben was one of my most booked boys for SS13.

ALEJANDRO
 Cuban-born Alejandro lives in Germany. He was in the Düsseldorf shoot with my boys in last August's *Dazed*. He's the best dancer in my agency.

JOHANNES S
 Johannes is 24 years old and from Leipzig. He has his hair shaved short and feels uncomfortable when it grows. He has a very sweet three-year-old daughter and skateboards in his free time.

IBRA
 Born in Chechnya, Ibra is 18 years old and lives in Düsseldorf. Besides school, Ibra is a German kickboxing champion. Now I have also his younger brother Sulumbek.



DAZED

TEXT
 DEAN MAYO DAVIES

PHOTOGRAPHY
 BEN TOMS

Eva Gödel runs celebrated modelling agency Tomorrow is Another Day from Düsseldorf, in the heart of the Rhineland – not far from her native Cologne. She first made an impact in fashion as co-founder of agency Nine Daughters and a Stereo, named after a David Bowie Iggy Pop lyric (from 'Tumble and Tumble', off Bowie's *Tonight*), and played a significant part in changing the menswear landscape of the 00s, building an agency of exclusive lean European models a million miles away from dated beefcake archetypes – boys with personality and a story as well as good genetics. Naturally, such a story is very much linked to subculture, skateboarding, music and photography; all facets of teenage reality. The story has blossomed from the cast-iron ideologies (and aesthetics) of designers such as Raf Simons, Hedi Slimane, Rick Owens and Stephan Schneider, and today Gödel's boys are adopted by brands like Lanvin, Prada, Givenchy, Balenciaga, Paul Smith and Marc Jacobs. Menswear today is in the position it's in because, by using more real, street models, Gödel and others have made it more relatable.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN TOMS; STYLING: DEAN MAYO DAVIES; HAIR: ANDREW W; MAKEUP: BENJAMIN J; SHIRT: RICK OWENS; TROUSERS: HEDI SLIMANE; SHOES: TOMMY HILF; LOCATION: DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY; COURTESY: WWW.DAZED.COM