

street



LOUIS BOU

street



COLLINS | DESIGN

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STREET T

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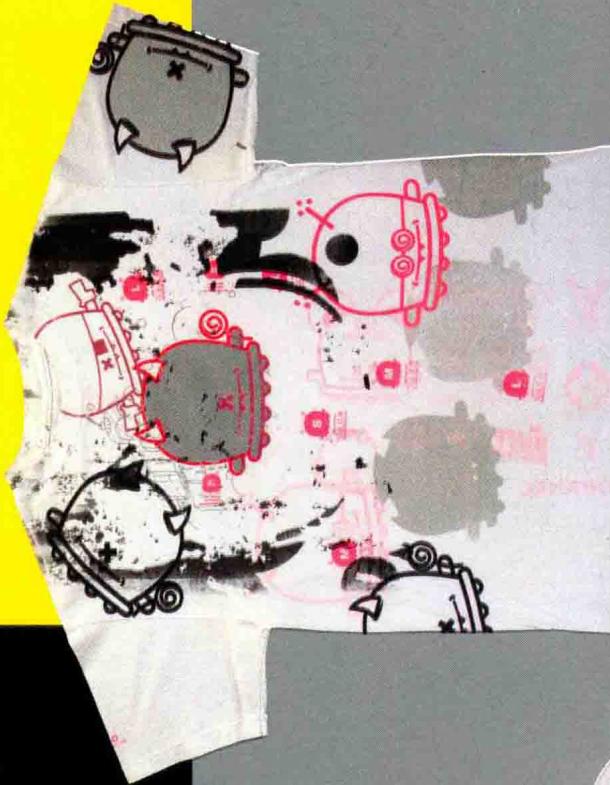
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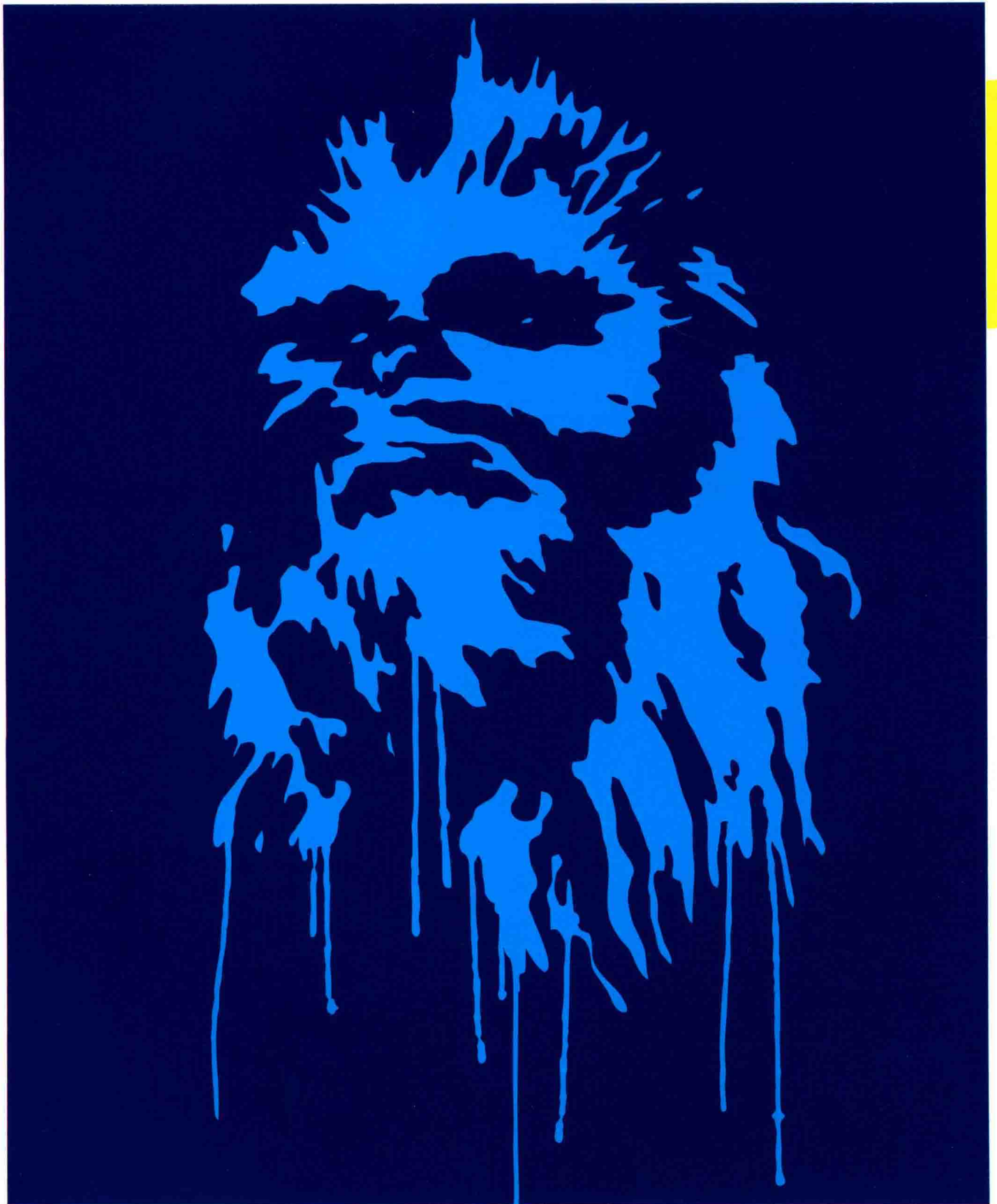
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Artwork by Flying Fortress.

living in a T world!

Street T is not just a book about T-shirts—it is a window onto the worlds of graphic design, art, and fashion. For more than 20 years now, T-shirts have been escaping from the bottom of the underwear drawer to become ultra-popular, everyday outerwear. Leaving behind a humble past, the T-shirt has metamorphosized through countless fashions and trends, even rising to form a crucial part of renowned international couture collections. It was back in the 1990s when, for the first time, designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier, and John Galliano sent T-shirts strutting down the catwalk and then sold them for exorbitant prices.

Today, the T-shirt is a fundamental basic worn by millions all over the world, especially by young people. Together with jeans and sneakers, the T-shirt makes a perfect outfit for nearly any occasion: comfortable, easy to wash, and attractive. Although all T-shirts share the same basic essence, there are thousands of designs, patterns, colors, and fabrics making each one unique and allowing each T-shirt wearer to stand out as an individual. The T-shirt is used as a symbol of protest, an advertisement, a political campaign sign—and, also, as a way for many artists and designers to express themselves and promote their work.

At the turn of the millennium, the “graffiti” movement went through a resurgence, reinventing itself to become the socially recognized form of “street art.” A large number of artists—the vast majority of which came from the ranks of graphic design—used the street as a medium to transmit their art directly to the public on a wide scale and, most importantly, free of charge. The boom of street art resounded through the world, and new talents, creators, and aesthetics sprang forth in a totally new kind of artistic renaissance. Artists who have achieved international fame now make their own lines of products and merchandise, using not only T-shirts, but also toys, badges, hats, and sneakers as mediums with which to spread and promote their work. The graffiti artist El Xupet Negre says:

“A T-shirt is the perfect way to hype yourself and spread your message. People see you as serious when they see something on a T-shirt, rather

than on a wall. It seems more important. What’s more, the T-shirt can travel on the street and around the world.... It’s a way for a logo to go anywhere in the world, without the artist ever having to set foot there.”

Street art activists go by the motto “Do it yourself,” often creating their T-shirts with homemade stencils and simple cans of spray-paint. Through these rudimentary processes, they can attain effects, qualities, and textures virtually impossible to get with more complicated methods of heat presses and silkscreening. Their T-shirts, despite sharing the same template, are each unique, which makes them valuable as collector’s items. Thanks to technological advances, it’s fairly easy to make a personalized, artistic T-shirt in your own home: With only an ink-jet printer and some transfer paper, you can have your own special T-shirt ready to wear in a matter of minutes. The graffiti artists captured in *Street T* show us a new way of spreading a message and marketing a product—and, most important, a new way of making art.

Beyond the orbit of the graffiti artist there is another world, that of the graphic designers and illustrators who use T-shirt designs as a fun escape from their stressful design careers. They may devote much of their time to their work in design studios, agencies, and publishing houses, but on occasion, they also design and manufacture their own T-shirts, often in a completely amateur way—just for the fun of it. The Catalan artist Pollock, for example, secretly hand makes a collection of T-shirts every year to sell or give away to friends, with the simple intention of having a good time:

“One day, when I was 15 and at home in a bad mood, I said to myself: I wanna do T-shirts! And so, with a paintbrush and a jar of paint I did three T-shirts; I kept one for myself, and sold the others to my brother. Ten years later, I said to myself again: I wanna do T-shirts! Although I took it more seriously this time, my intention was still the same—to have a good time.”

Other designers go much further toward using the T-shirt in a conceptual context. Take Sweden’s

T-Post, the first magazine created “to be worn”: a T-shirt received in the mail, by subscription, every six months, with an illustration on the front and a short article printed on the back.

“Back in 2004, we started coming up with new ways to engage people important topics, and T-shirts seemed ideal for doing so. T-shirts are conversation pieces, and when you put an actual news story on one, you get people thinking—forming opinions, discussing various topics with their friends. Nobody asks you about the article you read in the bathroom. But if you’re wearing an issue of *T-post*, people tend to ask what it’s about.”

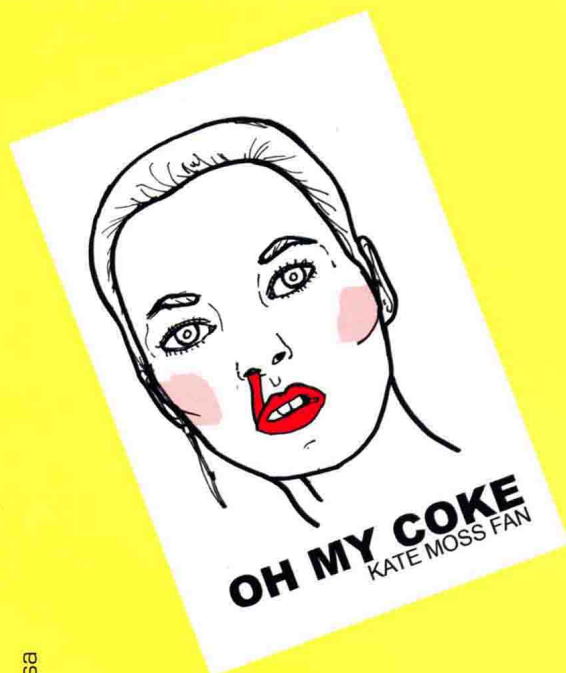
The world of fashion is also covered by this book, as many fashion designers use the T-shirt to promote their logo or brand, and, on many occasions, make the T-shirt a fixture in their more sporty streetwear collections. The New York artist Cassie K, founder of the brand New York Couture, uses vintage T-shirts to create unique and original garments, even daring to reinvent the classic I Love NY T-shirt into a sexy mini dress. She says:

“The first T-shirt I designed was a flutter-sleeve top. I took an old vintage size extra-large band tee from the ‘80s and cut off the sides and sleeves. Then I hand-tailored the top to make it fit nice and snug on a slim body. I added a flutter-sleeve to make the top very flirty. I still offer this style.”

With the explosion of graphic design that accompanied the Internet revolution at the turn of the century, the T-shirt attained its status as a fashion phenomenon. Companies such as Threadless have had a hand in this: a community of designers, illustrators, and graphic artists who submit their designs to the website from any point on the globe; the designs with the most votes of approval are marketed and produced through the same website. As the website says: “T-shirts are the perfect medium for illustration. They’re accessible, and everyone loves a tee!”

Street T is an introduction to the passionate world of T-shirt design—an integral part of the current developments of urban culture.

Louis Bou



ELENA GALLEN is a young, completely self-taught, multidisciplinary artist currently living in Barcelona, who combines graphic design with web design, photography, illustration and painting. Together with the shoe brand Victoria she has also dabbled in the world of publicity (www.calzadosvictoria.com). She likes the cinema, diamonds, old toys, photography, postmodernism, monsters, music, fashion, skateboarding, the '80s and '90s, Chanel perfume, surrealism, the art of transgression, unicorns and, vampires.

Why T-shirts?

Because it's an easy way to reach a potential audience without frightening them. Sometimes "art" in any kind of form, including illustration, can be taken as a big word. I thought of using T-shirt design as a platform to reach general public with my creations and help them take art less seriously. Plus it's a pleasure to have your work not only recognized but actually worn by people. There's a step between liking something and making it part of oneself; I think T-shirts are able to eliminate that step.

What was the first T-shirt you designed?

I designed some tees last year but the first one I brought to life was one I hand painted with pantone markers of an old Super 8mm camera. I called the tee *J'adore cinéma*.

What are you wearing right now?

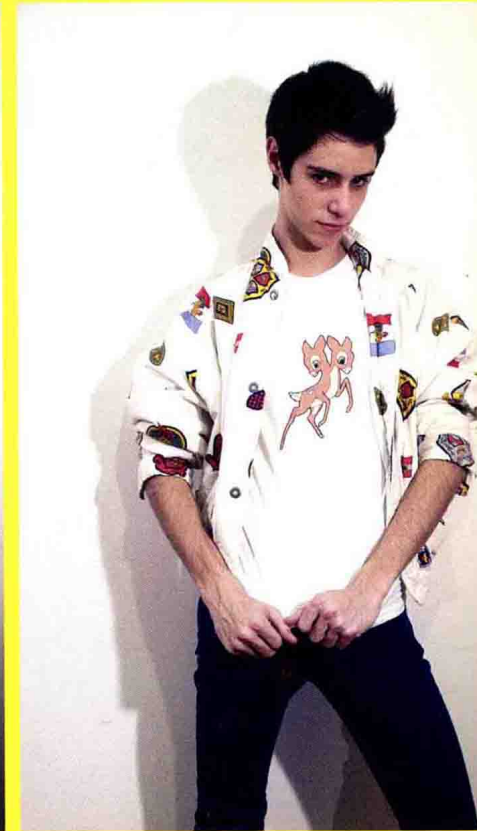
I'm wearing a vintage T-shirt of Victoria Beckham in her Spice Girls days, which I found snooping in some boxes in the storage room of my parents' house last year. It was given to me as a present by a kid in my school like 8 years ago. And slim-fit black jeans and a pair of Vans old school shoes.

What famous person would you like to design a T-shirt?

Wow! I have so many idols it'd be hard to pick. I'd choose Lady Di for being an influential celebrity connected to the music, art and movie worlds. A very contemporary and controversial figure that fits with the profile of my customer.

A message you would like to spread with a T-shirt...

Don't resign yourself. Question, reinterpret, twist and turn the world until you can feel it as your own. That's the main message I would like to spread with my tees. Especially with my first T-shirts, the Freakshow series, I wanted to focus on reinterpretation of well-known worldwide symbols, as I consider reinterpretation the vertex of postmodernism.





All images from fall/winter 2007 collection "But Here I Dreamt I Was An Architect."

All photographs by zachgold.com.

02_ Ju\$T Another Rich Kid

www.justanotherrichkid.com
New York City, USA

New York based artist and designer Ken Courtney is the founder of the independent fashion label JUST ANOTHER RICH KID. The collection is composed of tailored, custom-fit men's crew-neck and deep V-neck T-shirts, short-sleeved polo shirts, and hooded sweatshirts. Every season a new collection is designed, using an electric mix of one-of-a-kind artist-drawn graphics, each with a hint of rebelliousness and a taste for all things pop culture.

Courtney debuted in 2002 with an installation entitled *The New American Dream*, addressing the commodity of celebrity. He then presented a performance piece entitled *Paparazzi* in September 2004 at the now infamous, short-lived exhibition Terminal 5 in New York. In the spring of 2005, he invited Tobias Wong to collaborate with him on the highly successful design collection *Indulgences* (for the man who has absolutely everything!), which has been sold around the world and displayed in the galleries at Colette and Loveless. This series then led to a collaboration on an Absolut vodka ad, featuring a gold plated Absolut bottle, "Absolut Indulgence."

Why T-shirts?

I was painting prior to starting Ju\$T Another Rich Kid, but that was a very different process. Lots of time at home alone, and nobody ever saw what I did. I needed more interaction with my work and people. Painting also sucks up all your money. It's so expensive.

What was the first T-shirt you designed?

The now infamous I Fucked Paris Hilton tee.

What are you wearing right now?

Nothing. (Kidding...) Ju\$T Another Rich Kid SS07 pink Suicidal Tendencies tee, a navy New Era New York Yankees baseball cap, dark blue Levi's Eco jeans, and white Air Jordan Retro 3's.

What famous person would you like to design a T-shirt?

Patti Smith.

A message you would like to spread with a T-shirt...

Don't believe the hype.

