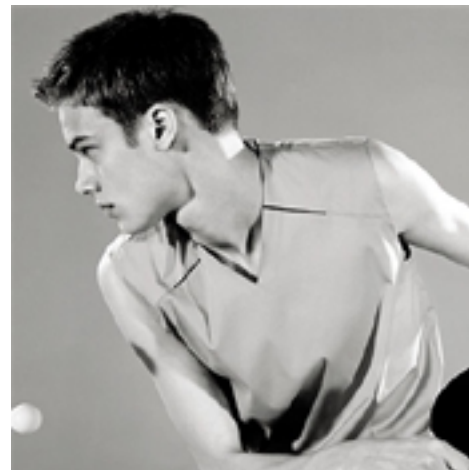


"The most innovative and imitated graphic designer of this times."



Images copyright Fabien Baron ©

Shooting stars: Fabien Baron
Article from: Hint Fashion Magazine

A born image-maker, Fabien Baron has been at the top of his field for nearly two decades. After moving to New York from Paris in 1982, Baron rapidly rose the ranks in magazine publishing to become Art Director of Italian Vogue and Interview. But it wasn't until 1992, when he was appointed Creative Director of Harper's Bazaar by Liz Tilberis, that Baron cemented his position in the publishing pantheon. It was during these celebrated years that his signature minimalist style, with its expanses of negative space and oversized, scrambled letters, became the fashion aesthetic.

Now with his own advertising and design agency, Baron & Baron (there's no other Baron, he confesses), the 41-year-old father of three and his staff of 27 have the mind-boggling task of conceiving and realizing the ad campaigns and product designs for Prada, Calvin Klein, Issey Miyake, Giorgio Armani, Michael Kors and Ian Schrager hotels, to name a few. As if that weren't enough, Baron keeps busy with two new loves: photography and furniture design (his eponymous line of geometric chairs, sofas and beds debuted this month in Milan through Cappellini), all the while staying one step ahead of imitators.

Here, the poster boy for ADD brings Lee Carter up to speed on his myriad creative endeavors.

Lee Carter: Your time at Harper's Bazaar with Liz Tilberis is the stuff of legend. Was it as magical a tenure as folklore has it?

Fabien Baron: Yes, I look back at those years with immense fondness. Liz truly was an inspiration. But, at the same time, I put a tremendous amount of stress on the staff, probably more than I should have, but they rose to the challenge brilliantly. I remember never feeling satisfied and always pushing for more, but we all felt like we were on a special mission and knew we had to keep pushing.

LC: And the new Bazaar?

FB: Well, I loved Liz and I had a lot of respect for her. I remember at the time, I was only interested in one magazine, Bazaar. So, when the job came along, I grabbed it, but I did my job there and that was it. After I finished the issue of Bazaar that was dedicated in Liz's memory, I left.

LC: How did you leave things with Kate Betts?

FB: I've never had a conversation with her. We've never even spoken on the phone. Kate never called me. I never called her.

LC: Let's talk about your photography for W and Arena Homme Plus, for which you're Editor-in-Chief. There's a lot of action, i.e. Stella smashing vases and Gisele being carried by a mob, mosh pit-style (left). What are you trying to say?

FB: I like simplicity and I like translating simple ideas into high-impact imagery. I think it's beautiful to capture a model being carried off, or bottles and vases crashing to the floor.

LC: You haven't always been like this, though. It's quite different from product shots.

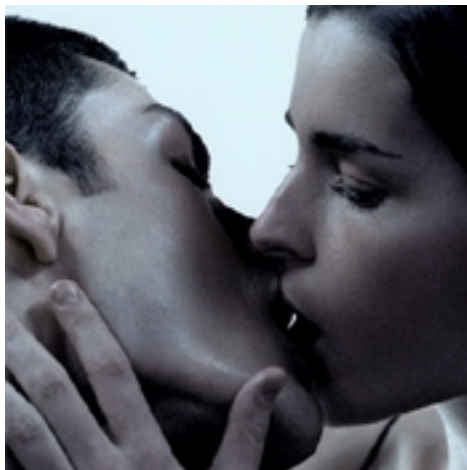
FB: I began incorporating a lot of action when my clients all asked for something that wasn't static. They wanted photos that had more than a model posing. I then began superimposed them on each other like I did with the Hugo Boss campaign, in which one model is seen in varying layers of motion. The flexibility of the clothing remains clearly visible, but it also becomes interesting to look at.

LC: You've collaborated many times before with Karl Templer, Creative Director and Fashion Editor for Arena Homme Plus. Was it a homecoming when you became Editor-in-Chief there or was there some getting used to?

FB: Karl's really talented and we work great together, so fortunately there was no big wake-up call. I felt very much at home.

LC: For most people, being Editor-in-Chief would be their only job, but not you. How do you find enough hours in the day?

FB: I move really fast and never think about all that's on my plate. I'd probably freak out if I did. And Arena Homme Plus only comes out twice a year so it doesn't take up a lot of time. I don't let it take up a lot of time. I could never do a monthly. I'm also really not interested in working for anyone but myself.



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LC: In fashion photography, who are you inspired by?

FB: For me, it's still about Steven Meisel. He rules the fashion world. He is fashion. He gets it and he knows what to do with it. I worked with him for many years at Italian Vogue, but not after I went to Harper's Bazaar, since obviously the two magazines were mutually exclusive. They boycotted each other. But before that, it used to be like a family.

LC: Let's talk about Sex, the book. You and Meisel collaborated on it and though the reception was mixed, to say the least, art directing it must have been somewhat a boon for you. Did you feel like you were in the crossfire?

FB: Yes, absolutely. Madonna and I have remained friends and we laugh about it to this day. We still feel it was a great project and I'm proud to have worked on it. It had everlasting impact and we have absolutely no regrets.

LC: Do you get frustrated when people steal your style?

FB: Yes, I get a lot of that, but I'm used to it. I realized it's because I have a very specific point of view and I work a lot. I was saying that recently to Calvin Klein, who's the same way. I really admire him. He knows what he wants and he knows where he's going. It's as simple as that.

LC: How do you deal with the copycats?

FB: I just move on. By the time I'm copied, the work has already passed to the mainstream. It just forces me to work more and faster, to look for new ideas.

LC: Do you take photos for yourself, a private collection?

FB: Yes, actually. I'm developing a private collection of photographs of the sea. Not many people have seen them. I already have hundreds. It's very therapeutic. The horizon line is what unites them all. It stays exactly the same in each of the shots while the waves are like fingerprints, each one completely different. Maybe one day when I'm famous they'll become a book. I'd like to hang them in a new Soho apartment that I had built.

LC: What's next, Fabien?

FB: Interior design. I have a furniture company called Fabien Baron and it sells through Capellini, the Italian manufacturer. I design couches, tables, chairs - all in wood and metal. It's all very simple and minimal. I've been working on this for the last year. Everything was designed quite fast, but production takes a while.

LC: Is architecture in your future?

FB: Yes, I hope so.

LC: Next you'll be designing for NASA.

FB: That would be cool. (laughs)

CREDIT: Hint Fashion Magazine
<http://www.hintmag.com/>



Baron 001



Baron 005



Baron 009



Baron 001