

A woman with long dark hair is standing next to a dark-colored car. She is wearing a dark, pinstriped jacket over a light-colored skirt. The background is a stone wall. The car's side mirror and door are visible.

FACTORY GIRL

by Silvia Bombardini

Not that long ago, in the placid little French town of Brame-Jean, Simon Porte Jacquemus was born in the fields. The last full decade of the second millennium had only just begun, and French pop songs from the late 80s were still playing on the radio. We tend to imagine such bucolic scenes as tedious for the young and restless, especially those whose talent and dreams would later take them to Paris. But for Jacquemus, the countryside of his childhood would remain a constant and beloved reference in his work.

The aspiring designer was lured to the bright lights of Paris at the age of 18. He began studying at the prestigious ESMOD university, but left just a few months later in search of a more instinctive approach. "It wasn't boring, but it was disappointing. All I had imagined about this school and the atmosphere, about fashion meaning no rules... and yet, there I was, learning rules," says Jacquemus. "I was in constant conflict with all my teachers."

Meanwhile, Jacquemus lost his mother, and after a short stint as an assistant stylist, it became clear he did not want to waste more time. "Losing my mother then was like a sign," he says. "I suddenly knew who I was and what I wanted."

What he wanted was his own line, so that's what he did, all innocence and resolution, that simple. We were then in 2010, five seasons and two and a half years ago, and if that may not seem a long time when you're old and wise, it certainly does at 22. I tell him it's about time for a little wrap-up. "The most exciting moment so far was maybe the first commercial season, when my agent Persephone told me that GAGO in Aix-En-Provence and Opening Ceremony would buy my collection. That was good," recalls Jacquemus. "Most scary, well, the first clothes production, the first bill, all the first times doing something else than just designing."

JACQUEMUS is now available online and in every boutique that matters in London, Milan, Tokyo, New York, Zurich and Sydney. Despite keeping production in France, the price tags remain fairly reasonable. There is indeed something radical and candid, mildly socialist perhaps, in the Jacquemus universe. His working woman's wardrobe shows a wilful rejection of trends and adornments, a certain seriality, honesty, raw minimalism and strength. His 'L'Usine' collection last winter was made entirely from boiled wool in pastel hues. The factory look spoke of uniforms, country, family and roots.

Jacquemus's clothes are affordable enough to be worn every day until they fade and wrinkle, transforming into sincere life stories told in lavender linen. Each collection begins like a movie, with a script or a plot, a main character and her costumes, which are both functional and suggestive. The blue-collar worker, the kennel caretaker, and now a teenager deep in the 90s: they are all versions of *la femme* Jacquemus - the silent muse who discloses a new aspect of her distinctive, unique personality with each season. "She's a raw and sensitive person, very naive and simple but also very strong. She's never sexy, she never wears makeup," says the designer. "I put a lot of myself in her. She's very personal."

In 'Le Sport 90,' Jacquemus's new fall collection, she wears stretch and fluorescent vinyl, trainers and zips and pinstripe suits.

www.jacquemus.com