



LONDON'S NEW GOLDEN BOYS

by Silvia Bombardini

Something is happening to London menswear, a fresh clarity and foresight blended with renewed curiosity and younger, more multicultural audiences. Flawless tailoring and dynamic creativity have met in a warm but widespread embrace, one that moves from bespoke suits to elasticated waistlines without missing a beat. It's the welcoming party of a new sensitivity as well as the celebration of centuries old traditions, and it offers a charming perspective on the young British man.

Witness the latest collection for winter 2013 by Agi & Sam. "We wanted to show another side of British aristocracy rather than the stiff upper-lip mentality that we are often coined for. Britain has some of the most incredible and brilliant eccentrics and we wanted to show them off," say Agape Mdimulla and Sam Cotton. Their muse for the season was Alexander George Thynn, the 7th Marquess of Bath who owns a massive estate in Somerset and lives there with his 74 "wifelets". Impossible not to see the appeal. I caught up with the pair after their recent show at Fashion East in London. Young indeed, hopeful and gifted, it wasn't really that long ago that the boys moved to London looking for work, like we all have, at some point, planned to do. After various internships with the likes of Karl Lagerfeld, Armand Basi, J.W. Anderson and Carolyn Massey, they met at Alexander McQueen, back in the days when the eponymous designer was there. "I love the way stories are told at McQueen", Cotton recalls. "Everything there had a real depth. This is definitely something we try and do with our collections and shows too. Creating a character and a theme, rather than just having clothes, we want to convey humor and personality".

Soon after in fact, Agi & Sam was born. And if they started off their brand working on Mdimulla's living room's floor, they now have a studio of their own at the London College of Fashion, and looking back at 2012, their memories are nothing less than impressive. "Our highlights include our nomination for Emerging Menswear at the British Fashion Awards, meeting Prince Charles at St James Palace, visiting 10 Downing Street, taking the collection to Hong Kong and LA, meeting David Beckham and Anna Wintour at the Vogue Dinner in LA, our first catwalk show at London Fashion Week, starting to visit Sir Paul Smith for mentoring, selling our collections in Liberty and Harvey Nichols" they muse. They've also recently launched a capsule womenswear collection for Harvey Nichols and they promise to expand it into a full line, "when everything is ready". In the meantime, their offering for spring calls for a paradoxical mix of proper masculine lines, moustaches and delicate lavender hues. Inspired by endless afternoons spent at their grandparents' houses in the late 80s, it borrows its colors and silhouettes from detective programs like *Magnum PI* and *Miami Vice*, and its trademark prints from lace doilies and faded floral upholstery. It speaks of a man of confidence and grit, one who wears what he wants when he wants to, moving easily from grandma's parlor to the most dangerous grounds; a man of firm values and fair judgment who would only accept perfect tailoring; a sensible man, decorated in primroses from head to toe.

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