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# **Dismantling the Creative Director**

**A media content analysis of creative directors Daniel Lee and Simon Porte**

**Jacquemus**

Allis Stenvall och Isabella Österlund

Division of Fashion Science

Faculties of Humanities and Theology

Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences

Lund University

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Supervisor: Henrik Brissman

## **Abstract**

This bachelor's dissertation is written by Allis Stenvall and Isabella Österlund (2020), Division of Fashion Science, Lund University. The study titled "*Dismantling the creative director*" - A media content analysis of creative directors Daniel Lee and Simon Porte Jacquemus aims to analyze and understand the expectation and definitions of a creative director at a luxury fashion house and what influence the modern consumer has on fashion in the current zeitgeist. Approaching the topic, this paper focuses on two current creative directors, Daniel Lee for Bottega Veneta and Simon Porte Jacquemus for Jacquemus. The theoretical framework consists of Roland Barthes' *Fashion System* and *Mythologies*, Yuniya Kawamura's theories regarding the designer's star quality and tastemaker position, Pierre Bourdieu's field of fashion and Jenny Lantz's take on neomania. The paper is a media content analysis that makes use of findings from different journalistic and popular cultural articles and social media content. The study shows that the spirit of time is heavily defined by social media that is nurturing a close relationship between consumer and brand. It motivates the brand to personalize and show authenticity and thus a shift in how the creative director is perceived, and expected to portray their brand and their personal image. As a coinciding evolution, it gives the consumer greater influence on fashion. We conclude that the consumer has become a legitimate influence on the field of fashion who can accept and reject trends because of a loud voice, enabled on social media. The paper concludes how Daniel Lee and Simon Porte Jacquemus both are embodying their brands through their different approaches to social media. From subtle and discreet to the loud and overt they are legitimising their luxury brand by means of personification. This is reflected in successful sales figures and increased brand awareness.

## **KEYWORDS**

*Creative director, fashion, luxury fashion, zeitgeist, consumer, fashion system, fashion-ology, social media, symbolic value, Daniel Lee, Bottega Veneta, Simon Porte Jacquemus, Jacquemus, field, communication, creativity, craftsmanship.*

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# Introduction

This dissertation discusses the role of the creative director at a fashion luxury house in the current day intertwined with a consumer perspective. The analysis aims to understand a current explanation of these two actors and how their influence on creativity and fashion has been affected by social, cultural and economic changes during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key factors in contributing to their nuanced roles are the rise of social media within the market of luxury fashion and its increasing saturation. We will centre our analysis around two current creative directors helming two luxury fashion houses – Daniel Lee at Bottega Veneta and Simon Porte Jacquemus at Jacquemus. Approaching Lee and Porte Jacquemus and their respective brands and understanding the elusive role of the creative director, this thesis will consider symbolic value creation and a growing strategic branding importance.

We find support in our empirical material, an article published by The Fashion Law (2016), “What are we looking for in a creative director” that emphasizes the ever-changing nature of the creative director in symbiosis with social and cultural developments. In addition to this, our empirical case studies, Lee and Porte Jacquemus will be examined through various journalistic articles. Two articles, one from Financial Times (2019)<sup>1</sup> and one from The Cut (2019)<sup>2</sup> will be of significance in combination with social media findings, foremost from Instagram. The two creatives qualify for this analysis as they are leading two of the current day’s most sought-after brands and are with individual strategies evincing online and offline success. Lee’s design vision resonates with Bottega Veneta’s identity as discreet, minutiae with little trace of ego and Porte Jacquemus curates his own personal, playful vision in Jacquemus. The respective creatives are each other’s antipodes, but at the same time, they are successful luxury fashion designers with a great following and brand awareness.

We are approaching this topic from an industry insider perspective as the employment of a luxury label’s head of design can be a strategic choice aligned with the label’s creative vision and brand identity. Because of the rise of social media, the consumer and digital social audience has gained influence on fashion and trends, and the fashion industry has been

<sup>1</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus-designer-profile.html>

encouraged and pressured to listen and adapt to this actuality. This development motivates and supports us to bring the consumers as industry outsiders into consideration and analyse their influence on the creative director.

### **Daniel Lee and Bottega Veneta**

In June 2018, Italian luxury fashion House Bottega Veneta appointed British fashion designer Daniel Lee (see figure 1) to serve as the label's new creative director. The announcement of his appointment was subtle, and Lee's name was not very known outside of small fashion circles. Lee has an academic background studying at Central Saint Martins and an extensive professional background with Maison Margiela, Donna Karan, Balenciaga and right before Bottega Veneta he served as Phoebe Philo's right hand at womenswear luxury label Céline, where he was director of the French label's prêt-à-porter.

Bottega Veneta was founded in 1966 in Vicenza, Italy. Since 2001, it is part of the French luxury conglomerate The Kering Group and the label is best recognized for its Italian artisan heritage and strong sales within the fine leather goods market. It accounts as one of the most prestigious Italian luxury houses and embodies a rarefied luxury with its signature leather weave *intrecciato* (see figure 2), which has always served as an identifier for the logo-shy and sophisticated luxury consumer. Lee's design aesthetic and vision is simple and modern yet pays homage to the label's heritage. Lee described his perception of Bottega as detail-rich clothes made from the finest quality as he told British Vogue (2019): "I think Bottega really sits at the top of the chain in terms of quality, alongside Hermès and what Céline became during Phoebe's tenure... it's about the minutiae. The tiny details are what I get excited about. There are very few brands left like this."<sup>3</sup>

Since Lee's appointment, Bottega Veneta has become one of the most anticipated and sought-after brands. Sold out products, "It"-pieces which have gained a cult status and products and editorial campaigns have been made into social media phenomenons. This popularity is evident in the label's sales as the label experienced a 5.3% increase from 2018 to 2019, generating a global revenue of €1.17 billion.<sup>4</sup> Speaking with i-D (2020) Heather Gramston, the head of womenswear at Browns Fashion justifies Bottega's success as following

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/442803/global-revenue-share-of-bottega-veneta-by-product-category/>

As most luxury fashion houses are looking to Supreme, Palace and Virgil Abloh to figure out how to get people queuing, it turns out the answer is simple enough. In the case of Bottega Veneta, it's just about doing the opposite of everyone else. No logos, great design, impeccable craftsmanship. In other words, simply fabulous fashion -- no bullshit.”<sup>5</sup>

This justifies our choice of Lee and Bottega Veneta, as one of the zeitgeist's most appreciative designers and brands.

### **Simon Porte Jacquemus and Jacquemus**

The French luxury brand Jacquemus was founded by Simon Porte Jacquemus at the age of 19 (see figure 3). Porte Jacquemus was born in 1990 in Mallemort, a small village in France and was raised by his farmer parents in the French countryside. Growing up, he spent his weekends selling fruits and vegetables on the local market alongside admiring the Parisian tourists and being drawn to the idea that “If you can make it in Paris, you can make it anywhere” as he said in an interview with Tribute Magazine.<sup>6</sup> At the age of 18, Porte Jacquemus moved to Paris to pursue a career in film as he had always been interested in telling stories, specifically stories about strong and radical women, through clothes.<sup>7</sup> He ended up enrolling at the École Supérieure des Arts et techniques de la Mode to get a degree in fashion and to combine his creative interests. One month into the semester he dropped out because of the sudden death of his mother. In 2009, a year after his mother passed away, he launched the label honouring her maiden name, Jacquemus, now recognized as a successful luxury brand.<sup>8</sup> Jacquemus' collections draw inspiration from his childhood and showcase a sense of the sun and freedom translated into playful asymmetrical designs and silhouettes. He plays with contrasts and often makes use of simple-yet-clever detailing that pushes the boundaries of clothing in a subtle and creative way - the “Jacquemus” way.

Since Porte Jacquemus initially lacked the financial freedom to finance his business, he started working as a salesclerk at the Comme des Garçons store in 2011. Luckily, he then became closely associated with the founders of Comme des Garçons, Rei Kawakubo and her partner Adrian Joffe; who saw and appreciated his drive and talent. Porte Jacquemus calls this relationship his real fashion school. Joffe became the brand's first, and very important

<sup>5</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta)

<sup>6</sup> <https://tributetomagazine.com/fashion-designer-jacquemus/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus-designer-profile.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/simon-porte-jacquemus>

main supporter as he stocked Jacquemus at Dover Street market in London. This had positive effects on the brand awareness. In 2012, at the age of 22, Porte Jacquemus was on the official Paris Fashion Week schedule.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, his passion and hard work earned him the LVMH prize in 2015 which was crucial for recognition in the industry as well as it provided a major financial check and a mentorship to support the future growth of the brand.<sup>10</sup> Each year the brand has doubled its revenue according to Forbes. 2018 was highlighted as the brand exceeded \$11 million in sales, where more than 50% originated from online sales which speaks for the brand's popularity online.<sup>11</sup>

### **The luxury fashion segment and the creative director**

The interest for researching the role of the creative director comes from observing the modern-day creative director, and how and why the definition and expectations regarding this role are changing. To give a comprehensive overview of how this role has changed over time we will introduce a historical outlook of how the luxury fashion industry has transformed, helped by contributions from Dana Thomas *Deluxe - How Luxury Lost Its Luster*.<sup>12</sup> Thomas highlights an idiosyncratic shift in the luxury segment, which she describes as traditionally reserved for the upper class and elite, with a small clientele often made specifically for the occasion or person. Thomas brings forward a nuanced picture of the historical background of the luxury fashion industry; how this evolutionary process has evolved and transformed and sees the position of the creative director and its changing responsibility as a direct result of this change.

Luxury was not limited to just a product, it was an honoured craftsmanship, it was a niche business with made-to-order pieces for a very unique and wealthy clientele. She claims that back when each house still was ruled by its original founder, the house's aesthetic was more aligned with the creative vision of the creator in comparison with the luxury fashion houses of today, most of whom have been assimilated into large conglomerates. In the current day, individualism has given way for homogenization for both the brands and their overall aesthetic, in a response to the fear of alienating consumers. Thomas argues that this is a result of both the democratization process, and the big shift from brands being independently

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus-designer-profile.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/profile/simon-porte-jacquemus/#7524e58c423a>

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, D (2008). *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster*. United States. Penguin Press.

owned and run by their initial founders to being run by businessmen and conglomerates who without any experience or knowledge of the fashion industry influences the industry with more strategy than creativity. This shift has transformed the industry to what it is today - a multi-billion-dollar global industry with profit as its driving force. Capitalism is traditionally shown in the elitism that is connected to fashion, thus further viewed in the constant change of products and the pace of fashion.<sup>13</sup> This has evolved in line with digitalization and societal change and has opened up and introduced the luxury industry to new consumer segments and transformed the focus from what the product is to what it represents. The current time spirit's climate is heavily acquired by the emphasis on brand identity and its symbolic value that should represent the brand. The new creative director's job description can be argued to fulfil a fantasy, in a global and democratized form that focuses on growth, visibility, branding and profit in a more commercialized sphere.<sup>14</sup>

In *New Luxury Management, Creating and Maintaining Sustainable Value Across the Organization* (2017), authors Emmanuelle Rigaud-Lacresse and Fabrizio Maria Pini portray the creative director as the brand's fashion coordinator, holding the top position in the chain of the creative direction.<sup>15</sup> The authors also mean that the brand manager supports the CEO and the creative director with positioning strategies and coordinates design- and development processes.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, they highlight the close relationship between creative director and brand manager, who together directs and approves prototypes and merchandising.<sup>17</sup>

## **Empirical materials**

To execute this research, we find support in an article from The Fashion Law, "What are We Looking for in a Creative Director" (2016). The article is qualified for this paper since it identifies our research theme, brings interesting aspects and comes from a trusted and multidisciplinary source. It was published October 2016 on thefashionlaw.com, a site launched in 2012 by Julie Zerbo who serves as the platform's editor-in-chief. Zerbo has an educational background in legal, law and economics and has been cited by numerous publishers like the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Vogue, and the Economist. The

<sup>13</sup> Lantz, J. *Trendmakarna: bakom kulisserna på den globala modeindustrin*. (2013). P. 161

<sup>14</sup> Thomas. (2007) P. 90

<sup>15</sup> Rigaud-Lacresse, E. & Pini, Maria F. (2017). *New Luxury Management, Creating and Maintaining Sustainable Value Across the Organization*. Switzerland: Springer Nature, Palgrave Advances in Luxury. P. 169

<sup>16</sup> Rigaud-Lacresse & Pini, Maria (2017) P. 171

<sup>17</sup> Rigaud-Lacresse & Pini, Maria. (2017) P. 173



Fashion Law aspires to discuss fashion related news, activities and trends from a legal- and business-oriented perspective. Since the article was published in 2016, we can develop and refine thoughts and shine lights on new trends and activities that have shaped the fashion landscape in the last four years, and ergo we can develop and contribute with notions, understandings and present-time conclusions. This empirical finding introduces a brief historical background of the creative director's role and moves on to discuss the growing grey area that the role represents today. It provides us with interesting aspects of the modern-day creative director and the elusive descriptive role of this title. With our research we will enrich this discussion with further analysis of the modern-day creative director's value and role from a consumer- and industry perspective.

For further support in understanding the creative director's role and meaning, and to help answer our research questions and enrich this dissertation our empirical case studies will center around the two chosen creative directors and their brands; Daniel Lee for Bottega Veneta and Simon Porte Jacquemus for Jacquemus. We will use these empirical cases to examine how the relationship between the label and creative director determines or influences the latter's work. Whilst supporting The Fashion Law's emphasis on the role and expectations of a creative lead at a fashion luxury house, these case studies will deepen and enable a rich and detailed focus where they facilitate us to discuss, analyse and compare two modern creative directors in the current day. With these case studies, we can analyse how these two creatives are considered in their role, what meaning and value they bring into it and how they are embraced and acknowledged by the industry, the consumer and the audience. We will also be able to concretize and understand how Lee and Porte Jacquemus themselves are representing their brands; both their personal brand and the luxury brand they are at the helm of. The designers, Lee and Porte Jacquemus, were chosen for this dissertation because of their positions as creative directors at two different fashion luxury houses that are managed in different ways. Daniel Lee, the 34-year old British designer has transformed the Italian heritage house Bottega Veneta into one of today's most exciting brands whilst embodying a shy, private and discreet persona. Simon Porte Jacquemus, the 30-year old French designer and founder of Jacquemus, drives his label's success whilst embodying openness, playfulness and a personally narrated brand.

Our empirical materials highlight the changing and ambiguous meaning of the creative director at a luxury fashion house, and underlines how social changes have influenced how

the creative director has evolved from an exclusive fashion garment creator honouring the craftsmanship to a brand representative that should create and exhibit the entire and cohesive brand image and brand experience.

## **Previous research**

Previous research has brought forward how the role of the creative director has evolved from having only creative responsibility in the design process to being the embodiment of the entire brand image as the brand representative. Research acknowledges how the digitization and commercialization of luxury fashion has had an impact on how luxury houses connect, communicate and represent themselves to their consumer base, and emphasizes how the role of creating designs has developed into a role of creating and breathing the entire brand aura and brand experience. As The Drum (2019) puts it

Today, the creative director is building an amusement park. Building actionable ideas, where solutions and stories become one big experience. So, this analogy should ease that creative anxiety: ideas are still fundamental, but digital and consumer expectations are changing the role they play. And it's going to be one hell of a ride.<sup>18</sup>

The Drum underlines how the creative director's job description now involves being a sort of architect of the brand – and creating and maintaining a creative experience.

Vogue Business examines the role of the creative director in “What luxury fashion brands want in a creative director” (2019) and utilizes Olivier Rousteing, creative director at Balmain

His role no longer begins and ends with designing collections. Rather, he is responsible for developing and executing an all-encompassing vision for the Balmain brand, one that must resonate with clients and on social media, particularly Instagram, where Balmain has 10 million followers. Rousteing, who was hired in 2011 at age 25, has 5.6 million followers.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Vogue stresses how the creative director's employment is more reliant on personality, connection, and is involved across the brand's communication and interaction with consumers and audience.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2019/03/13/the-role-creative-director-the-new-age-advertising>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.voguebusiness.com/talent/articles/luxury-fashion-brands-creative-director-balmain-louis-vuitton-virgil-abloh/>

An explanation of the role of the creative director and a comprehensive overview of the main assets needed is presented by Janyne Alyson and Seung-Eun Lee (2018) who in an equivalent way are trying to address the changing nature and pinpoint the responsibilities of the creative director. The authors embark on how the landscape has changed due to a commercialization of luxury in a fast-paced consumption-driven market, and link this to the changing definition of the creative director. Established from concerns regarding the fast pace, contra quality, craftsmanship and appreciation from the traditional luxury they apply Kapferer and Bastien's luxury brand compass (2012). The compass consists of four parts: more roots, more trends, more status and accessibility. They highlight key principles in defining luxury fashion like heritage, creative modernization, prestige and limited accessibility. Their research shows that these four components are vital for a successful brand; as a tool for the creative director to find and sustain a balance between the past and the present.

Alice Myringer och Johanna Ottosson's bachelor thesis "Who is next to be thrown into the lion's den?" (2016) researches the position of the creative director linked to nineteen articles that touches upon the subject of how different creative directors abruptly have departed, and frequently jumped from one fashion house to another. The authors concluded that the creative directors operate in a field of commercialism governed by large economical capital, where the economical capital is superior to the cultural field of fashion. According to Myringer and Ottosson, the reason for this mainly exists in the name of the luxury house. They claim that the creative directors are less valuable since they can be transferred between different houses, thus, they still acknowledge them as essential. They grant fashion journalism as a force in upkeeping a definition of the creative director and mean that the constantly changing nature of fashion is not affecting all players in the fashion field.

From the previous research we can recount that the role of the creative director is transformative and that the commercialization of the field is inevitably linked to the changing role of the creative director. By examining two specific labels and their respective creative directors and how they operate on today's fashion market, this discussion will be heavily induced by reflecting on how social media is creating and nurturing new relationships between consumer and brand. This is relevant in order to further enhance the conversation around what we are looking for in a creative director today and how luxury houses and their lead creative most successfully operate in our zeitgeist. This study will be one of a kind as it

observes and examines two specific creatives and their respective brands and approaches to their work as creative directors. Despite being dichotomies, these brands have had significant popularity in 2019 and 2020, which enables us to do a fresh and current comparison to examine and get closer to current needs, functions and approaches hence it also invites the consumer perspective.

### **Research problem**

This is a fresh discussion and analysis of the value of the creative director at a luxury fashion house in the 21st Century, which is a thankful research problem as the definition of this role is ever-changing due to the constantly changing luxury fashion landscape. This thesis' ambition is to provide a nuanced dissection of the issue from a contemporary perspective, whilst appreciating and understanding the underlying historical narratives.

### **Knowledge gap**

As the market for fashion is in constant transformation, there is potential for it to be examined from a number of perspectives. This is partly due to the wide-reaching sociocultural and economic implications of the current fashion climate, where the consumer's characteristics, needs and desires are fluid and are undergoing constant transformation. This research topic is therefore particularly relevant and interesting from a fashion science perspective, due to the interdisciplinary nature of this field of study. One is not limited exclusively to a fashion-centred point of examination, but rather is free to draw inspiration from the wider cultural, social and psychological matters. The focus on the two specific creatives has not been provided nor presented, and so we feel gratified in conducting this paper. This nuanced understanding of the two creative directors in symbiosis with reflecting on the consumer's behaviour and pattern will invariably be appreciative to be examined and refined.

### **Research aim and research question**

This thesis aims to further the discussion on the ever-changing role of the creative director at a luxury fashion label. We are motivated to enrich the appreciation and understanding of the zeitgeist's creative director and consumer, operating in an evolving digitalized and globalized climate where fashion, designers and creatives answer and adjust to different needs and

desires, both from consumers and stakeholders in a constantly transforming fashion landscape.

The questions we want to discuss are as follows:

1. How has the media affected a creative director's role at a luxury fashion label?
2. How are Daniel Lee at Bottega Veneta and Simon Porte Jacquemus at Jacquemus portraying the zeitgeist in their roles as creative directors at their respective luxury label?
3. How has social media affected the consumer to have more influence on the field of fashion?

## **Theory**

The groundwork for this thesis will mainly consist of scientific and popular cultural articles that touch upon our subjects; the creative director's Lee and Porte Jacquemus. To successfully conduct this research, a variety of theories and concepts will be adopted by us to reach our research aim, answer our research questions and draw valid conclusions. The role of the creative director in relation to the fashion industry and the segment of luxury is a topic that is widely discussed in the field of fashion science. Consequently, our background from fashion science will be useful as we will approach our empirical material through philosophical and sociological theories that are relevant for the research subject. Theories from the fashion discourse opens up for theoretical explanations of the connections between clothes, fashion and human behaviour in a wider sociological context as fashion science is characterized by its interdisciplinary-ness. For an in-depth understanding of today's current state, we will find value in what a luxury brand and the creative director has traditionally meant but we will excessively aim to understand the process behind a luxury brand and the function of the creative director in the 21st century. The predominant theories for conducting our research will be presented below.

## **Roland Barthes**

One of the most central figures and contributors to fashion theory is Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, philosopher and semiotician. Barthes' widely acknowledged and accepted theory about the fashion system is a pillar in approaching the study and the understanding of fashion. In *The Fashion System*, 1967, Barthes demonstrates the structure and organization of fashion and clothing. His core tool in explaining clothing and fashion is through equalizing them as semiology, as he argues that fashion exhibits a grammatical structure and can be understood as a language.<sup>20</sup> Barthes exemplifies how text and image embellish garments with abstract values and symbolic merits, and thus the garment is no longer just a garment. With this embellishment, the garment or cloth is transformed into fashion; as the piece is armed with text or image that communicates meaning. As Barthes credits text and image as core components in creating fashion, media and fashion communication are the primary elements in his arguments. Into the system of text and image, Barthes fits his other key principle - the mythology. Barthes explains his analysis of myth as an image being the signifier that denotes an event and at a second-order mythological level, this signifies an idea. Mythology is a non-arbitrary metalanguage<sup>21</sup> and can be explained as stories that we create and believe in, and project as our reality. Barthes' theories will be of great use when analyzing the creative director and understanding how Lee and Porte Jacquemus are communicating and thus signifying ideas and creating stories - myths.

## **Yuniya Kawamura**

Sociologist Yuniya Kawamura draws inspiration from Roland Barthes' theories about the Fashion System as she develops them further and presents her own concept; Fashion-ology. Fashion-ology is a combination of sociological and economic theories via which Kawamura emphasizes on how fashion is a socially constructed idea and that the designer holds a gate-keeper position.<sup>22</sup> She suggests that the designer is connoted with values and dressed with meaning, thus, the designer is a symbol similar to the brand itself. "Designers are undoubtedly key figures in the production of fashion and play an important role in the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of fashion. They are at the forefront in the

<sup>20</sup> Barthes, R. (1967). *The Fashion System*. First California Paperback 1990. University of California Press, Ltd. P. 8 - 27

<sup>21</sup> Barthes, R. (1957). *Mythologies*. Library of Congress, twenty-fifth printing 1991. P. 124f

<sup>22</sup> Kawamura, Y. (2005). *Modeologi: En introduktion till modevetenskap*. Norstedts Akademiska Förlag. P. 18

fashion system since their participation determines their status and reputation.”<sup>23</sup>

Kawamura’s demonstration of the designer as a protagonist will be of importance in our research regarding the creative director and provide valid information as we will approach the definition of this position and its hierarchical status. She treats the designer not as a genius but as one of the participants in social relations of fashion and discusses the designer’s star quality as the media have tailored the designer into a celebrity who controls public taste and creates their own image.<sup>24</sup> Kawamura’s remarks on the creative’s star quality will be incorporated in our discussion regarding the current expectations of the creative director.

### **Pierre Bourdieu**

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theories have had profound influence on sociology and the fashion discourse. One of Bourdieu’s main theories is the field theory, in which *the field* is distinguished by a constant interplay between agents with respect to their social positions. Bourdieu describes the field of fashion as being situated between the artistic and economic fields. The ways in which different forms of capital are created and recreated through forms of validation within the field is at the core of his theories. He highlights symbolic capital and cultural capital as crucial in the wider field of cultural production, of which fashion is a part. The symbolic capital is accumulated by social recognition and a dialectic of knowledge. Cultural capital refers to cultural knowledge, dispositions and competence which have no implication on costs of production.<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu also claims that given their unique position within the field, the designer creates symbolic value which further is transformed into economic capital.<sup>26</sup> This symbolic capital is characterised by its distinction and can be transferred both to objects or persons in the field, but only ultimately accepted with a socially created dose of ‘magic or belief in it’ as he frames it.<sup>27</sup> Similarly Bourdieu hails the designer of a luxury house as the highest valued asset on the field, and claims that their position gives them the privilege to assert the most influence on the constant and natural changes of fashion. Thus, value creation does not aim to reconstruct the belief in solely the designer, as the acceptance of value only is possible due to the fashion field and its

<sup>23</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 57

<sup>24</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 65 - 71

<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The field of cultural production*. Columbia university press. P.9

<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Modeskaparen och hans märke – Bidrag till en teori om magin* i Donald Broady och Michael Palme (red.), *Kultursociologiska texter*. Stockholm: Salamander. P. 95

<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 136

interplayers.<sup>28</sup> Despite the important role that heritage plays in the monopoly of symbolic value, all agents within the field of fashion are co-dependent. The acceptance of value is only possible with a social acceptance and due to the interplay between the plurality of actors in the fashion field.<sup>29</sup> Bourdieu's thoughts about the fashion field, capital and value creation will be profound for our research and of great importance to understand the role of the creative director and the social field of fashion.

### **Jenny Lantz**

Writer, consultant, lecturer and researcher Jenny Lantz further explores fashion from her examination of fashion trends. Coming from a sociological approach, she believes our knowledge and conclusions about things and their attributes are a result of our social nature.<sup>30</sup> Lantz contributions are highly relevant as she focuses her attention on interplays within the field, seeing fashion as a complex social reality in which its respective actors are highly co-dependent, similar to Bourdieu's thoughts about the field.<sup>31</sup> The fashion field as described by refers to the relationships between design, production, marketing and the distribution of fashion to retailers, and how these ultimately are linked to the fashion consumer, financial stakeholders also have their share of the power - ultimately all the individuals connected to fashion.<sup>32</sup> Lantz calls the important players on the field tastemakers. She argues that fashion as an industry is rarely emphasised in the traditional fashion literature hence the fashion field acts to describe the relationships between design, production, marketing and distribution of fashion, and how these ultimately are linked to the fashion consumer. The field contains all the institutions and aspects that help the creation of fashion, and the tastemakers create legitimacy and value in the field. The economic aspects are naturally included as financial owners have their share of power hence naturally takes part of the field. The field is characterized by inequality and a constant battle of the status between the participants in the field.<sup>33</sup> Lantz acknowledges the role of capital and the fashion field and claims that the legitimacy unites the cultural and economic logic norms of fashion. And just like Bourdieu, she sees the fashion creators at the top of the hierarchy, but adds the point that fashion trends

<sup>28</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 112

<sup>29</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 101-104

<sup>30</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 16

<sup>31</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 13

<sup>32</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 16

<sup>33</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 16



are not necessarily created by the designers, but rather frequently created outside of the fashion industry.<sup>34</sup> Further she describes fashion as the most commercial of all cultural fields.<sup>35</sup> Lantz's *neomania*, the constant need for newness as a driving force in fashion<sup>36</sup> will too be of use in this paper.

## **Conceptual Frameworks**

From the chosen and presented theories, the following concepts will be of use for our research project: star quality, gate-keepers, tastemakers, field, capital and symbolic value.

Our conceptual framework will consist of Barthes' myth and semiology in connection to the creative director, the gatekeepers of the fashion system through Kawamura's *Fashion-ology* as well as the star quality connected with the celebrity status of the creative director.

Bourdieu's theories of field, capital and symbolic value combined with Lantz's updated point of view on this matter will be of value for understanding the elusive role of the chosen creative directors. The theories and the conceptual frameworks will be further explained and illustrated throughout the paper, as they with relevant literature and media findings naturally finds their place and enriches the research.

## **Methodology**

For gathering and conceptualizing our research a qualitative method will be used since our data will consist of social science rather than numbers and quantitative data. A qualitative method will allow us to explore value and meaning as opposed to data and metrics.

The thesis will be concretised through a media content analysis which will be the most suitable methodology for our research project as this research is carried out observing and benefitting from journalistic articles and social media content. The method was introduced by Harold Laswell (1927) to study and grasp the rapid expansion of mass-media. Media content analysis has since become a well-established research methodology that has gained acceptance and esteem in line with the increase of mass-media. With ambition to analyse and study messages from interviews, tv, editorial and advertising content, the media content analysis method aims to describe what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time. Laswell encapsulates his method as he describes it as looking at who says what, through

<sup>34</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 143

<sup>35</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 248

<sup>36</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 27

which channel, to whom, with what effect. Since its establishment, the method has been given many definitions and one favourable for our research is one from Neuman (1997) who interprets and defines the method as “A technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The ‘content’ refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The ‘text’ is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication”.<sup>37</sup> With this, the method is very well composed in regards to our carried out research, as we are gathering and analysing content in the purpose of clarifying our research problem and answering our research questions. The content we are using are articles and social media content, and it is all analysed in a greater sense - what value it signifies and communicates. Therefore, a media content analysis will be a fruitful methodology for our research project since an examination of the traditional aspects and functions of the creative director and sociological theories regarding fashion will be presented in contradiction to the current day. Decoding of literature and our empirical material will be relevant to find our key concepts which will help us categorise and make selections for the discussion part. It is from the media content analysis our interpretations of the two designers and their surroundings will be shaped, compared and discussed as one simple objective truth or ultimate answer is impossible to conclude.

Critique to the media content analysis is that it focuses on basic qualitative elements and that those factors have social impact. Another critique is towards how the method is time-consuming in its decoding progress of the content and if this decoding is faulty, the findings are invalid.<sup>38</sup> Hence to be aware of this spectrum is valid for our research, to make sure to decode the relevant elements for our research and analysis. For this research, this method is beneficial as it enables us to analyse text and all sorts of content and decode what those messages produce. As our research project will be focused on two creative directors in the current day, mutually compared against each other and against the traditional literature, a rich analysis will be presented where the whole fashion system and its social, economic and cultural aspects will be taken into consideration, and be critically examined.

<sup>37</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267387325\\_Media\\_Content\\_Analysis\\_Its\\_Uses\\_Benefits\\_and\\_Best\\_Practice\\_Methodology](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267387325_Media_Content_Analysis_Its_Uses_Benefits_and_Best_Practice_Methodology) p. 272–273

<sup>38</sup> <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i3223.xml>

## **Limitations**

For a concrete and distinct discussion, this paper will use one empirical material as groundwork and numerous other media findings. The Fashion Law's article *What are We Looking for in a Creative Director* will be discussed for a historical and present day understanding of what a creative director at a luxury fashion house is. Appropriating a more detailed analysis of the creative director of the 21st century, we find support in making two empirical cases that respectively illustrates two active creative directors today - Daniel Lee for Bottega Veneta and Simon Porte Jacquemus for Jacquemus. With these case studies, our dissertation is enabled to use the two designers as focal points in analysing the definition, expectation, value and meaning of a creative director in the present day. Comparing and exploring the role of these two designers will be favourable for an explicit and detailed research and we will not examine other creative directors.

This dissertation will be influenced by our academic perspective that is of fashion science, yet it will not be limited to a fashion perspective, as this would be restricting our conclusion. As fashion science is a multidisciplinary discourse, the research is enabled to include social, economic and cultural aspects. The methodology Media Content Analysis will encourage us to conduct our research with a content centralized focus. Deciding to use this and making this method as rule, we will be adept to make a fair analysis of the two creative directors as we use an analysis administered in the same manner in cases where the content is different.

## **Aimed contributions**

The contributions of this research shall offer a rich and in-depth understanding of two creative directors at two separate luxury fashion houses in the 21st century. The examination of these two creative directors will allow us to shed light on the actual symbolic value of the creative director. The research should be of scientific importance for the field of fashion science, from a theoretical, methodological, practical and managerial perspective. The field for fashion science is one which is constantly growing, developing and exploring new territory and for the sake of further legitimizing this field, we are glad and dignified in making motivated contributions with this research.

We also aim to contribute further to the understanding and knowledge of the organizational structure of the contemporary luxury fashion house, situated within an increasingly globalized and digitized luxury fashion market. Our analysis will reflect upon instances of potential symbiosis between these modern phenomena and the strategic role of the creative director within the contemporary luxury fashion house.

In our analysis we will use the existing knowledge and compare it with the current situation, which is applicable by reason of the transformative, altering and dynamic fashion field. With changes and developments in trends, patterns and behaviour regarding consumer and social- and cultural affairs, a constant knowledge gap is cultivated, and thus constantly grateful to be reviewed as it mirrors and captures the present climate.

### **Disposition**

In this analysis, we will return to our research aim and research questions. We will make use of our theorists, methodology, empirical findings and conceptual frameworks and analyze these in relation to our research aim; to gain and contribute knowledge to the topic in defining today's creative director at a luxury fashion label. The disposition of our analysis aims to be pedagogical and lucid, with titles referring to what we are looking for in a creative director, an in-depth section about Daniel Lee and Bottega Veneta followed by an equal section about Simon Porte Jacquemus and Jacquemus. Moving forward, we explore social media's impact on the creative director - which takes us to further delve into how social media has given rise to a new consumer and its influence on fashion.

## **Analysis**

### **What we are looking for in a creative director?**

Zerbo centers her core-question "What Are We Looking for in a Creative Director" around a case study of the Italian luxury fashion house Brioni. Zerbo observes Brioni's appointment of Justin O'Shea, former fashion director at the e-commerce site MyTheresa.com and argues how this appointment of O'Shea, who without a designer-background, concretizes how the role of a creative director at a fashion brand has changed. Instead of formal designer training, O'Shea's resume references his responsibility of Brioni's collections and image at

MyTheresa.com. His understanding of the fashion business and of the label replaces his lack of design education. O'Shea is also a street style star and can therefore be seen as a tastemaker within fashion thus the appointment might have motives of brand boosting nature and modernization agendas. Zerbo moves on and asks if "creative director" has become another term for brand representative and explains the role of the creative director as a misunderstood one. Just the terminology of 'creative' makes the title hard and complex to define, as this term is intangible in itself and open for interpretations. According to Zerbo, the title is hard to define because it is used interchangeably, and the fashion market is experiencing a constant change of demand. She provides an elusive description in the role as in charge of "leading, focusing and overseeing the intersection of design direction, actual design and practical strategy."<sup>39</sup> She compares the modern-day creative director to the modern-day phenomenon of a brand ambassador. A known name that has a fan base that can influence the brand with awareness and numbers.

Zerbo makes a hierarchical illustration of the creative organization, with the big name creative director at the top - overshadowing a design team and the design director, who are the ones that are mainly responsible for the actual collections.<sup>40</sup> This goes in line with Kawamura's thoughts on the fashion system's hierarchical structure. She too places the creative director with top position, and notes that the star designer functions as a key symbol who communicates value to the brand rather than being an ultimate designer genius.<sup>41</sup>

As for creativity, Zerbo supports the creative director's involvement in the design process which she exemplifies in late Karl Lagerfeld, who during his time at Chanel still provided sketch designs. Zerbo references Kim Winser, contributor to Forbes, who defined the creative director's role as: "It's about an overall vision that takes into account the marketing and advertising strategy, the retail environments, the format of the catwalk presentations, the lifestyle that their new label is selling."<sup>42</sup> Zerbo continues supporting this statement and how the responsibilities and work descriptions of the creative director and the chief executive officer has begun to overlap with each other.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>41</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 59

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

## **Daniel Lee and Bottega Veneta**

Financial Times' Jo Ellison (2019) subtitles her interview with Bottega Veneta's new creative director Daniel Lee with "In just over a year, Daniel Lee has transformed the brand into one of the industry's most exciting labels".<sup>44</sup> Google his name and links transfer you to other publications praising Lee as "fashion's new boy wonder"<sup>45</sup>, indulging in how he is "reinventing Bottega Veneta",<sup>46</sup> and became "2019's star of British fashion".<sup>47</sup>

Since his appointment, Bottega Veneta has become one of the most highly anticipated shows on the fashion calendar. Several of the creative director's pieces have already gained a cult-like status, like the "Pouch bag" (see figure 4) and the "Padded sandals" (see figure 5) which have been favored by celebrities like Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Rihanna and Lauren Hutton. Like a premium facial, Lee treats the label with nourishing ultra-modern features that manifests themselves in his collections. A teasing buffé of modernized heritage and tastes of innovative craftsmanship. Lee can be accounted for expanding the brand awareness, reaching new consumers, increasing sales and giving the brand an upgraded and fresh appearance. All this without personally exposing or posing on social media.

The roots for Lee's status are most likely heavily affected by his background at French luxury label Celine. Lee served as former creative director Phoebe Philo's right-hand, producing womenswear and bringing her vision to life. A vision and design aesthetic which ever since Philo's departure in 2018 has left consumers and followers longing after the designer's essence of a strong and independent woman. When Saint Laurent's creative director Hedi Slimane took over Philo's role, he infamously removed the accent from Céline and went on with implementing his glam rock à la Saint Laurent vision into Celine, and thus removing Philo's vision of simplicity and femininity. Slimane's debut collection was met with critique and hatred from loyal Philo followers. Mobilized and calling themselves "Philophiles", loyal Céline consumers slammed Slimane's drastic and not so humble dissolution of his Saint Laurent-esque aura into Celine. With Philo's Céline gone, there was an empty space in

<sup>44</sup> <https://howtospentit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/a30107331/daniel-lee-bottega-veneta/>

<sup>46</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2019/dec/30/daniel-lee-at-bottega-veneta-2019s-star-of-british-fashion>

fashion, and consequently a discontented consumer that suffered from the absence of the French luxury label's former aesthetic and philosophy. With the announcement that Philo's former close colleague, Lee, would be the new creative director at Bottega Veneta, Philophiles might have hoped that he would bring some of Philo's and Céline's grown-up modern elegance to the Italian label. However, Lee's debut collection did not answer those hopes. His collection was far more radical and glossier, and injected with Lee's philosophy of "what will work is the thing that isn't already there".<sup>48</sup> His models decorated the runway with leather, chain-embellished coats and low cut necklines in a fusion of The Matrix and the Italian luxury label's stealth-wealth image (see figures 6, 7). It was eroticized, hedonistic and fetishized in a way that Céline never was. Even though Philophiles' crave for the Céline aesthetic was not met, Lee's premiere show was unexpectedly arousing. It was the genesis of a new vision for the heritage label, a vision that was about to create and attract a new audience and consumer.

The Kering Group, the luxury conglomerate that owns Bottega Veneta and other subsidiaries like Gucci, Brioni and Balenciaga, partnered Lee with new CEO Bartolomeo Rongone who comes from the conglomerate's Saint Laurent. Two new employees that embody new strategic and creative actions to jumpstart what Lee described as "a sleeping giant".<sup>49</sup> Being attained by a conglomerate, it is hard for an outsider to calculate just how much influence Kering has on Lee's design, vision and creativity. On their website, The Kering Group highlights that "creativity, audacity and diversity" are the main motivations for their successful luxury Houses. Kering further underlines how they support creativity and believe in the House's individual creative direction, as they lend "steadfast support to our Houses while entrusting their creative direction to unique and astonishing individuals; encouraging innovation and nurturing talent; and consistently raising the bar to improve social and environmental standards in our industry".<sup>50</sup>

Rongone joined the house in September 2019 and alongside Lee, they are "transforming the business".<sup>51</sup> As the house employs both a CEO and a creative director speaks of its larger size, and this divide of strategic and creative responsibilities teases that the house is in need

<sup>48</sup> <https://howtospentit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/a30107331/daniel-lee-bottega-veneta/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.kering.com/en/talent/who-we-are/the-kering-group/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://howtospentit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

of and wants clear directions and definitions in those categories. How independent Lee can be in interpreting the label, translate it to consumers and to what extent and in what ways he is allowed to apply his philosophy to Bottega Veneta is, from the perception of the Kering Group, supposed to be quite copious.

I think over-strategizing can kill creativity. You don't know what's going to work. And what will work is what's not already there. You look at the Pouch bag: there's no logo, there's no shoulder strap, it's not particularly practical and from any logistical, strategic way of thinking it wouldn't be a success. But it is. You can't always put your finger on why that is.<sup>52</sup>

Here, Lee proposes a sense of his creative freedom as quite rich. Lee also explains his creative process and remarks on how strategy can be depreciative of creativity, and thus defends his role as creative director at just that, creative. His statement also fits into Lantz's take on Barthes' neomania; a constant search after newsness - we are always craving something new.<sup>53</sup> Lee understands this, and delivers it.

With styles and products becoming fashion catnip in 2019, Bottega Veneta saw a 5.3% increase in sales over the previous year. In 2019, the label generated a global revenue of approximately €1.17 billion where leather goods made up 83% of this and ready-to-wear accounted for 6%, leaving 8% for shoes and 3% for other products. Those numbers reflect the label's strong fine leather goods category, and the sales' increase reflect Lee's strong and favorable creative direction.<sup>54</sup> Lee reflects on his role as: "I think my role is very much about creating a product that has an emotional connection – that draws you towards it. We like a product that has a lot of depth to it. There's a lot of consideration, a lot of precision. And I think that is where we stand out".<sup>55</sup> He clearly connects his role with creation, and this creation has its core in depth, consideration and precision - values that Bottega Veneta signifies.

### **Star quality**

The Guardian (2019) dubbed Lee the "star of British Fashion"<sup>56</sup> as he won four awards at the British Fashion Awards in 2019. The statues made the undisputed Lee a breakthrough star overnight, as he went from being an insider name to a power player. With the gala's

<sup>52</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>53</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 27

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/442803/global-revenue-share-of-bottega-veneta-by-product-category/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2019/dec/30/daniel-lee-at-bottega-veneta-2019s-star-of-british-fashion>



organiser, the British Fashion Council, and fashion journalists confirming his achievements and remarking on his positive influence on fashion, we can approach Kawamura's star quality theory. The attention towards Lee validates Kawamura's arguments for how the media can tailor the designer persona into a star, a celebrity.<sup>57</sup> Being contextualized like this, Lee becomes socially constructed into a star and in agreement with Kawamura, his produced fashion, as an intangible cultural symbol, becomes tangible through the process of his personification of the brand.<sup>58</sup> With this praise reaching the consumer, the consumer is also served with the guarantee that Lee's products and Bottega's identity are fashionable and legitimate. Kawamura argues that people need someone to follow, and that the designer makes for the ideal leader as they are responsible for creating, diffusing and legitimizing clothing as fashion.<sup>59</sup> With his legitimization, consumers trust Lee and his vision and are encouraged to purchase and wear his pieces which will provide a sense of fashion legitimacy. This process also agrees with Kawamura's meaning of how the designer is given and upholds a tastemaking authority, as the consumer now has high confidence in Lee's delivery. Images of the British designer accepting awards, partnered with honouring and glorifying captions and texts also raises his and his label's status. Like symphonized in a glorifying context, the image and the text are creating and manifesting a story around Lee and Bottega, a process that also supports Barthes' theory regarding the myth. All this activity equals curating rumours, perceptions and stories around Lee and Bottega Veneta, and a myth is curated that connects and realizes them as being á jour and innovative. As Lee was taking the stage four times, receiving four standing ovations and four generous applauses, the awards ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall in London turned into the official coronation for the creative director. Lee won Accessories Designer of the Year, British Designer of the Year – Womenswear, Brand of the Year and the most prestigious award, Designer of the Year in which he triumphed over Miuccia Prada, Kim Jones of Dior Menswear and Gucci's Alessandro Michele.<sup>60</sup> The British Fashion Council means that the gala is catered to: "recognise creativity and innovation in fashion, celebrating exceptional individuals whose imagination and creativity has broken new ground in fashion globally over the past 12 months as well as brands and businesses that have transformed the possibilities of fashion today."<sup>61</sup> This statement and Lee's four statues clearly marks and verifies Lee's successful delivery of

<sup>57</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 64

<sup>58</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 67

<sup>59</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 59

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-bites/fashion-bottega-veneta-sweeps-the-fashion-awards>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-bites/fashion-bottega-veneta-sweeps-the-fashion-awards>

design and branding to Bottega Veneta. Kawamura's proposition of how the designer is connoted with symbolic values and dressed in meaning can make sense here. Reflecting on how the now officially confirmed star designer is awarded, his symbolic value is filled with the awards' qualifications. In accordance with Bourdieu, Lee's symbolic values are transferred to his brand and legitimacy, social cultural capital are associated with wearing the designer of the year's collections which consequently transforms into an economic capital for the brand. Bottega Veneta are now hosting these values as an original and curious brand, according to the British Fashion Council's qualifications for the awards, which further are converted into economic capital.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps the most telling evidence of how connected Lee is with both branding and design manifests in how he and his label won both Brand of the Year and Designer of the Year, illustrating his success in both branding and designing. He too comments on this as he tells Financial Times (2019) that: "fashion had become very brand-led, very image-led and the product was almost secondary. For me, it's equally important".<sup>63</sup>

With Lee taking the creative lead, Bottega has attracted a new consumer - a millennial consumer. Design-wise, Lee is embracing refinement rather than anything too loud or trend-led in his collections. He presents collections that pay homage to the heritage house's tradition, fused with a modern and glossy touch. We see how Lee is paying ode to the house's heritage, their intrecciato weaving in his designs. The Padded Cassette (see figure 8), The BV Twist (see figure 9), The Slip Tote (see figure 10) and The Arco Tote (see figure 11) are all made by intrecciato, but in blown up, amplified versions. With these updated intrecciato versions, Lee is commenting on the heritage with a playful and nuanced voice. For his debut show in Milan 2018, Lee told editors that he wanted to honour the "quiet craft" of the Italian house, but to bring an "injection of modernity...turning up the volume".<sup>64</sup> With this vision, Lee manages to deliver what a millennial consumer wants – high-quality pieces that can stand the test of time. His designs are relaxed, elegant, young and bring a fresh perspective to the house. Sympathizing with Heather Gramston who concluded Bottega and Lee's success with: "it's just about doing the opposite of everyone else. No logos, great design, impeccable craftsmanship",<sup>65</sup> Lee is moving away from trend, and the likes of logomania as he builds his collections on a no-logo philosophy, where he allows the label's heritage of fine quality

<sup>62</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 95

<sup>63</sup> <https://howtospentit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>64</sup> <https://howtospentit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>65</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta)

creations speak for themselves in upgraded silhouettes. As he moves away from current trends, he is subsequently creating new trends. A move that inclines with Jenny Lantz's illustration of trends in the field of fashion, where trends are an organised principle, ruled and decided by tensions between different players in the field. With this move synchronized with Bottega's identity of a luxurious fashion house with supreme quality, Lee has designed the perfect recipe for success.

Understanding the appointment of Lee as creative director can be decoded looking at many reasons. There is the reason for Lee's professional heritage - coming from Maison Margiela, Balenciaga and Celine. Especially Celine, where he together with Philo and a design team, accomplished an aesthetic and brand identity that resonated with a huge crowd that answered to the representation of a modern, strong and independent woman. There can also be age-related reasons, as the 34-year old Lee brings a fresh and young take to the heritage house, prepared and capable of infusing modern and contemporary qualities into the traditional prestige. Something that attracts new consumers and modernizes the label. Lee's generation also understands and recognizes social media and how it can be beneficial and crucial for success. Yet, in line with Bottega Veneta's nature, he showcases an anti over-exposing or indulging demeanor, as he is not leveraging his own social media presence to promote the brand.

### **The quiet radical**

British Vogue (2019) dubbed Lee the "quiet radical"<sup>66</sup> as he, since his appointment, has subtly transformed the Italian luxury house into a social media sensation, delivering it-products that have proliferated the label's sales figures and social media impressions. Lee himself is however completely absent from social media, in contrast to our other protagonist, Simon Porte Jacquemus. Before helming Bottega Veneta, Lee was quite unknown as he told British Vogue (2019) "No one knew who I was before this job, which is quite nice."<sup>67</sup> With this, he proves Zerbo's argument that the creative director's employment is much because of them being known as flawed, and projects that it was more his professional merit and vision

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

that employed him. He continues with explaining Bottega Veneta and his approach to social media with

Bottega is about discretion and ultimate sophistication; it's elusive, a little bit insider, a little bit coded, all those things I really like. It's mysterious and expensive and if someone sees me with a beer on a Friday night outside the pub, how does that quantify that kind of price point?<sup>68</sup>

Lee recognizes Bottega Veneta's identity as sophisticated, elusive and mysterious and teases that he himself can agree with those attributed in a personal dimension. In line with Lantz' argument, we naturally gravitate towards the individual.<sup>69</sup> In this case, the individual designer Daniel Lee. We answer to his 'quiet radical' motif. As Lee agrees with the brand's characteristics, he too reflects and embodies them and as an official person - he becomes a brand representative. Being aware of Lee, the consumer is made aware of Bottega, and vice versa. Aligned with Zerbo's comments on the modern creative director becoming a brand representative of sorts,<sup>70</sup> Lee fits quite well. consumers either respond or reject this individual, through their purchase or discarding of Bottega, because fashion is still something commercial.

Lantz refers to Elisabeth Wilson as she argues that change and movement are the main forces that characterise fashion. She argues that trends are time-limited and experienced through a peak-state before they get replaced by the next innovation – the next hype.<sup>71</sup> Talking with Vogue, Lee suggests that the trend of sharing might soon reach its time-limited hype, its peak, and get replaced by the next trend: "I really enjoyed growing up in a pre-Instagram era – we just had fun. It will be interesting to see what will happen next. I do think there will be a return to privacy. I hope so".<sup>72</sup> Here, he personally supports a return to privacy and further displays that preferable private manner, which is homogeneous to Bottega Veneta's discrete character. The cycle of trends peaking and being replaced can mirror the audience and consumer's demand and desire - it changes, peaks and finds replacements. A thought supported by Lantz as she recognizes how neomania supports changes in fashion.<sup>73</sup> In a saturated social media climate where there are no real limitations of how much you can share and show from your personal life, we are enabled to overdose on personas sharing their

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

<sup>69</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 14

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>71</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 16

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

<sup>73</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 27

breakfast, lunch, dinner and weekend plans. This exposing and partaking may not be just a trend, but rather our current cultural state. With this said, there is still a factor of needing and desiring something of the opposite kind. Always being exposed to personal openness and some sort of transparency, authentic or staged, we, the users, might get attracted to and curious about that persona who does the opposite - who does not share, who does not expose, or almost, does not exist. There is a sort of tempting antidote in those contrasting actions.

## **Un-social media**

Bottega Veneta is on Instagram, Weibo and Facebook. The label's activity is quite shy on Weibo and Facebook, and is most active on Instagram (see figure 12) where Bottega shares live content via Instagram story and posts averaging between 2-3 a week to 2.2 million followers.<sup>74</sup> Lee is a solid non-user of all social media. Searching *Daniel Lee* on Youtube and the search field prefers a music artist with the same name, some reviews of Bottega Veneta with less than 2000 views and the only direct content to the creative director is footage of him accepting awards at The British Fashion Awards 2019.<sup>75</sup> No interviews, runway shows or other enticing content from the director or from the label. Maybe contributing to building anticipation towards the designer. to an A rare and scarce library, compared to searches on for example Jacquemus that houses numerous videos - reviews, panels, runway shows, interviews with Porte Jacquemus, "stay at home and make pizza with Jacquemus", "at the beach in Marseille with Jacquemus" and also the creative director's own youtube channel with 13,600 subscribers.<sup>76</sup> Comparing these and it concludes two strategies in personal branding - the quiet, shy route and the loud, open route.

After Lee's debut runway show and collection in 2018, fashion design student Laura Rossi created the Instagram account "New Bottega", devoted to Lee and his fresh take on the heritage house (see figure 13). The account with 280k followers is a curated space, celebrating and embracing Lee's designs and the house, posting editorial pictures and product images. <sup>77</sup> All supporting the social media buzz around the label and Lee's products. One product that exemplifies 'going viral' is Lee's "Pouch bag". The soft, dumpling-like bag quickly took over fashion-accounts on Instagram and the clutch won consumer's desire with

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/bottegaveneta/?hl=sv>

<sup>75</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=daniel+lee](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=daniel+lee)

<sup>76</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=jacquemus](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=jacquemus)

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/newbottega/?hl=sv>

its buttery soft calf-leather. The bag even started a hashtag-movement in #myhandbagatemyshoes (see figure 14), with Instagram accounts posting pictures of the bags wide-open, revealing the label's delicate sandal footwear inside, almost swallowed by the soft leather. The viral attention that Lee's Bottega has received supports Barthes' idea regarding the importance of text and image. "Image provokes fascination, speech and appropriation; the image is complete, it is a saturated system; speech is fragmentary, it is an open system: when combined, the latter serves to disappoint the former."<sup>78</sup> Like the cornerstones in Barthes' Fashion System where he explains fashion as semiology, image and text are codependent instruments in transforming Lee's clothes to fashion. With his collections, shows and editorial materials, Lee has become a revered figure in fashion. A google search on his name links you to articles by different fashion mediums, with titles complimenting the British designer for reinventing the Italian fashion house and how he is "weaving his modern magic"<sup>79</sup> into it. There are currently 1.7 million posts on Instagram with the hashtag #bottegabeneta, 23k with the hashtag #daniellee. Fashion editors share a common addiction and appreciation for Lee, and critical voices are muted by all praise. This praise, online and offline, has created a kind of mobilization. A mobilization of followers and consumers who create Lee and Bottega Veneta's myth and fills those names with valuable meanings. Kawamura (2005) uses the fashion show as an example of an event where a gathering of journalists, buyers and editors collectively confirms what fashion is for this season and are stakeholders in adding value to clothing, which turns it into fashion:

One of the purposes of fashion shows is to show new styles to journalists, editors and buyers. But the unintended consequence of those events is that the site of mobilization confirms that that is where fashion emerges from. That contributes to adding value to clothing and transforming it into fashion although this only happens in people's minds.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the fashion show, we can apply this theory on Instagram-movements and all editorial and journalistic appreciation of Lee and his new Bottega Veneta, and see how this collective applause, posts with fashion-related captions and content that serves a fashionable degree, serves in fabricating Bottega Veneta and Lee into the most in-vogue names and thus, the fashion, values, identity they represent to the most aspirable ones. This following and tribute may be encouraged because of Lee's social media absence, which feeds an appetite for more. And as the craving is not entirely satisfied by the Lee or the label, users create it

<sup>78</sup> Barthes. (1967) P. 17

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/bottega-veneta-daniel-lee-interview>

<sup>80</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 41

themselves. With the user's following and sharing of Bottega Veneta and Lee content, the user is in a way working as the label's marketer. It is not that the house doesn't appreciate or understand the power of social media, or recognizes that within that digital dimension, brand awareness and consumer reach is guaranteed, as evident on the label's Instagram. But instead of overexposing, they realize a more subtle and almost rarefied presence which aligns with the brand's identity and works in their favour. Bottega Veneta's CMO Dario Gargiulo told i-D (2020) that: "Instagram has been a trend, focused around sharing the highlights of one's life. However, it feels that now there is an appetite for something with more substance and depth".<sup>81</sup> Culminating on this acclaimed appetite after substance and depth, Bottega and Lee are feeding this hunger with not over-exposing or being entirely led by trends. They are instead routing their affairs into a rather quiet avenue and pursuing to simply demonstrate innovation and new expressions whilst staying true to their heritage.

Bottega's social media strategy and the consumers' response can too be connected to Barthes' mythology. Observing the process on social media, we witness how a myth around Lee, the 'quiet radical' and Bottega Veneta, the heritage house, is created and defined via mystique and exclusivity. The myth is signified through image and text and recognized and maintained by us - the followers, the consumers, the audience, who are operating inside and outside the industry. As Lee and Bottega are delivering designs and content, we, the observers, are carefully nourishing and responding to what they want to communicate. Thus, we are synchronized in creating, telling and cultivating the myth. Creating a myth, with social media as your employee, serves your brand's ability to do so with almost limitless boundaries. Social media involves storytelling which enables the brand to create and engage users as they tell the story they want to tell - the myth they want to create. This myth involves and charges the creative director and the house with symbolic values, which can be defined as heritage, luxury, exclusive, modern, innovative and sophisticated - terms often hashtagged and captioned together with related posts on Instagram. Being aware of and understanding the discreet Lee and Bottega Veneta, may make you feel like you're part of a secret society, an intimate, closed community. A community that has its own codes and language. And if you can decipher these codes, understand and relate to them, there is a sense of inclusivity in this exclusive community. An inclusivity you strive to be part of if Bottega Veneta's identity, status and value are qualities you want to relate to. There is a produced factor of 'being in the

<sup>81</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/akwa3p/how-daniel-lee-is-reinventing-bottega-veneta)

know’, that makes the consumer feel special, connected and involved in something exclusive. Lee revealed what Bottega Veneta is to him in an interview with Business of Fashion (2020): “It is so much about *you*, not for the world”.<sup>82</sup> A philosophy that becomes very realized in his approach to publicity. Strategic to some extent, but maybe also genuine. And as for his digital absence and photogenic products, well they prove to be a recipe for viral success and sold out products.

### **Simon Porte Jacquemus and Jacquemus**

On the contrary from the quiet radical, we have the social media phenomenon and founder of the eponymous brand Jacquemus, Simon Porte Jacquemus. A simple google search of the brand confirms his personal success and his importance accordingly since the first thing that pops up is not an image of the brand logo and its history but merely a picture and introduction of Porte Jacquemus himself (see figure 15). Similarly, at the official website for Jacquemus we are introduced with the persona immediately as one of the main categories at the top page are titled “Simon”, rather than the more common “about ” section down the bottom of a brand’s web page.<sup>83</sup> Whilst one might assume these observations to be suggestive of Porte Jacquemus’ egoism, upon further examination this does not seem to be the case.

During his 10 years at the helm of Jacquemus, Simon Porte Jacquemus has made himself a key figure on social media and subsequently in the fashion industry. Financial Times (2019), calls the label “fashion’s favourite insta-brand”, and a “social media sensation” as his own Instagram page and persona proves a unique way of tapping into the oversaturated social media landscape.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, this is mirrored in the label’s success as Jacquemus now is one of the top luxury brands, effectively reaching the millennial consumer. In a current sociocultural climate where even Queen Elizabeth II of England, at the age of 94 is looking for a social media manager, the social media landscape is well to be recognized as relevant and seemingly crucial for success.<sup>85</sup> Porte Jacquemus has blurred the lines between the brand and the persona as the label Jacquemus’ official Instagram account is the personal account of Porte Jacquemus himself, where he flaunts a following of 2.3 million confirming his

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.jacquemus.com/simon/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/8f62f38a-a7ac-11e9-90e9-fc4b9d9528b4>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/>



victorious Instagram motion.<sup>86</sup> Combined with his experience as a child model and that he, as Financial Times quotes it “remains good-looking enough to model” has made him the official outwarding face for Jacquemus.<sup>87</sup> (see figure 16) This unique position has given rise to questions surrounding Porte Jacquemus position, and Financial Time raised the question whether he is an influencer or a fashion brand.

On his Instagram, Porte Jacquemus display’s pictures from his French, idyllic childhood in the south of France, his runway shows, clothing and accessories, things that inspire him from all around the world and his personal life with plenty of selfies - and all with a dash of colours and made by the 30-year-old designer himself. (see figure 17) This curated content arouses a close and personal connection with the brand, and its designer, and it also manages to seize and capture “a sense of summer, freedom and happiness” as Vogue frames it in an interview with the designer (2020). On the topic of his Instagram sensation, Porte Jacquemus states that his use of Instagram and his close connection with his community is a natural result of him genuinely wanting to share everything he loves and things that makes him happy, with his community, even non-fashion-related content - rather than it being a conscious or tactical choice based on marketing principles.<sup>88</sup> Porte Jacquemus use of his Instagram account invites for a total brand experience, curated by the designer himself, which speaks for a more personal and “human” approach compared to more private, luxury competitors. Despite his seemingly wholesome background, the “sunshine designer” Porte Jacquemus “knows how to go big, how to go very small, and most of all how to have fun” as The Cut portrays it.<sup>89</sup>

### **The naked radical**

In 1997, seven year old Porte Jacquemus created his first piece of clothing. It was a skirt crafted from a piece of curtain and later proudly worn by his mother and later muse.<sup>90</sup> His naïve and child-like approach has followed him along the way. His Instagram bio can be seen as an indicator of this, as it is a direct quote from the designers teenage years at Tumblr, which in a simple, and childish way states: “MY NAME IS SIMON PORTE JACQUEMUS, I LOVE BLUE AND WHITE, STRIPES, SUN, FRUIT, LIFE, POETRY, MARSEILLE,

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/jacquemus/>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.ft.com/>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.vogue.com.au>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.thecut.com>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

AND THE '80S.”<sup>91</sup> (see figure 17). Originally written in French, but translated by The Cut.<sup>92</sup> This simple, short, uppercase approach is pervading the brands communication strategies through all their channels, captions and messages combined with strong colourful, creative imagery or visual content. In the interview with Financial Times he explains: “Social media changed my career. I started to publish [my looks] on Facebook, saying, ‘Hello, this is my first collection, have a look.’ And people started to share it.”<sup>93</sup>

As Porte Jacquemus grew up with social media and always showed enthusiasm for film and storytelling, this has been made paramount to the brand’s success. With every collection, the designer produces a film, or story that communicates the core of the collection. These films make for attracting audience, views, spread and clicks which connects the strategic and creative parts of the fashion label and enriches the brands storytelling and lifestyle philosophy, which is at the essence of Jacquemus accordingly.<sup>94</sup> Even though Porte Jacquemus himself states an interview with Buro 24/7 (2017) that: “I didn't know that being a fashion designer was a job. I just always wanted to create stories.”<sup>95</sup> He manages to capture both the tangible and intangible aspects of fashion with his collections, visual take and storytelling. Connecting to Barthes and Kawamura Porte Jacquemus uses a combination of text and image to initiate and load the garments with a value, hence moving the object from being just a garment to become *fashion* that communicates a wider meaning which can be elucidated further.<sup>96</sup>

Jacquemus' take on social media and his storytelling has proved to be an effective way of differentiating the brand from its competitors. It also makes it easy for consumers to identify with and relate to the brand and its clothes. Both the designer and the brand are portrayed as *accessible* and *human*. Porte Jacquemus translates a sense of a wholesome, genuine ambiance that is easy to relate to as it takes ground in an appreciation of the simple things in life, such as the sun, to smile and to be happy. Hence Jacquemus represents a romanticisation of the

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/jacquemus/>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus-designer-profile.html>

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.ft.com>

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.buro247.me/fashion/insiders/simon-porte-jacquemus.html>

<sup>96</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 41

simplicity in life - in a subtle luxurious setting and provides a strong lifestyle curation interchangeably linked to the designer himself. With his openness Porte Jacquemus contradicts theories, regarding the fashion designer and its surrounding mystique which often is highlighted in traditional fashion literature as Christopher Brewards states it. Breward scrutinizes and critically reason upon the creative director and its surroundings in his book *Fashion* (2003).

As earlier explained, Barthes' concept of myth is recognized and maintained by the inside and outside operators in the fashion industry. It allows us to create our own reality with the stories and myths we surround ourselves with, a system of endless interpretations.<sup>97</sup> The mystique surrounding a designer has traditionally led to the development of myths, but according to Breward this mystique is rather a way of avoiding the more complex network of factors that constitute the field of fashion.<sup>98</sup> He argues that the creator's role and its meaning is linked with the changes in society, which is a unified theme presented both in our previous research and empirical material. Breward states that "the named fashion designer is fashion", which is more accurate when examining Porte Jacquemus and Jacquemus.<sup>99</sup> In Jacquemus' case there is no mystique surrounding the designer, and it is not a new phenomena; rather it is directly linked to increased opportunities to be seen and heard in the current zeitgeist. Breward utilizes the nude portrait of Yves Saint Laurent photographed by Jeanloup Sieff in 1971 to promote the brands' perfume, as one clear historical example where a designer has made use of his own name, body, and persona for the sake of the label to connect with his audience.<sup>100</sup> In a similar way, Porte Jacquemus portrays himself 'naked' on social media for the audience to see. Breward claims that the promotion outshines the production in the modern fashion system,<sup>101</sup> which consequently can allow the fashion designer to function as a celebrity or outwarding face for the brand, with the same fortune as the more mysterious designer in the current sociocultural climate. With reference to Bourdieu's field theory, it can also be argued that the modern technological climate, specifically with its advancements in

<sup>97</sup> Barthes, R. (1957). P. 124f

<sup>98</sup> Breward, C. (2003). *Fashion*. Oxford University Press. P. 22

<sup>99</sup> Breward. (2003) P. 22

<sup>100</sup> Breward. (2003) P. 90

<sup>101</sup> Breward. (2003) P. 99

communications technologies, has given the creative director unparalleled ability to manipulate the cultural consumption of his products. In this way, the creative director leverages his own personality to cultivate an ongoing narrative that offers a sense of inclusivity and thus holds symbolic value among his following.

### **Breaking the internet**

Jacquemus debut show took place in a swimming pool, as Porte Jacquemus always had an eye for the extraordinary and provocative ways of telling his stories. His collections are usually centered around the question of whether it will look good on social media or not - which is the result of the victorious La Bomba collection.<sup>102</sup> La Bomba Spring Summer 2018 represents a distinctive shift in the story of Jacquemus as it was a viral success - and the time when Porte Jacquemus' story and thoughts really became connected and visualized in his creations. Inspired by photographs of his late mother, the aesthetic and design of the "Jacquemus as we know today" was formed, as The Cut recalls it.<sup>103</sup> La Bomba was a summer collection with Spanish influences that flaunted the classical Jacquemus head scarfs, wrap skirts, dresses and earrings; but that was not enough. Despite being disbelieved by his team, Porte Jacquemus decided to play around with the details and created contrasting pieces in absurd sizes. Represented in the show was the "La bomba", an enormous, handcrafted straw hat, so big that it could "shade a small village"<sup>104</sup> (see figure 18). Further he displayed his mini-shrunken bag "Le Chiquito" in the tiny dimensions of 12 times 9 cm (see figure 19). These surreal, attention-grabbing pieces were at once a provocative artistic statement, as well as a powerful marketing ploy perfectly suited to his social media centred brand presence. The viral success achieved through this playful approach proved his sceptic team wrong as it resulted in sold out products, sought-after by celebrity fans including Kendall Jenner, Rihanna, Beyonce and Kim Kardashian.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore it provided the brand with new retail opportunities as La Bomba was picked up by retail giants as Selfridges, Net-a-Porter and

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/simon-porte-jacquemus-fashion-designer-social-media/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/profile/simon-porte-jacquemus/#7524e58c423a>

Moda Operandi.<sup>106</sup> In the interview with The Cut he explains: “If it’s cute on -Instagram, it will sell,” and “That’s just the world we live in.”<sup>107</sup>

Other social media stunts by the designer is the teasing for Jacquemus’ new menswear line - instituted at his Fall 2018 show as he thanked for the show wearing a hoodie with the phrase “NEW JOB L’HOMME JACQUEMUS”.<sup>108</sup> He further fed the mystery with his signature of three in a row selfies on his Instagram with the hashtag #newjob and himself wearing the hoodie to keep his fans speculating (see figure 20). Had the time come for Porte Jacquemus to hand over the helm of the brand? The new job turned out to be the introduction of Jacquemus menswear line represented in the collection titled Le Gadjo Spring Summer 2019; which he refers to as the “little brother” of the classical Jacquemus women.<sup>109</sup> The menswear show was set up at a beach in the south of France, in Marseille, not far from his childhood home and roots; and displayed in a typical tourist beach way (see figure 21, 22). Le Gadjo is French slang and stands for the bad taste of the typical tourist. “But he’s cute” Porte Jacquemus adds.<sup>110</sup> The show was described by !SSUE as “awkward” and “undesirable” and as if

it was trying to sell the Jacquemus *lifestyle* instead of actual clothes to be worn.” [...] a problem comes along when the pieces presented were so undesirable that the show managed to sell neither of the two, and instead became more of an expensive ego trip for the designer himself.<sup>111</sup>

Being a more established and well recognized brand, and with a supplementary layer of what Bourdieu would refer to as legitimacy on the field, Porte Jacquemus further managed to tap into the zeitgeist by reminiscing back to the viral success of La Bomba and further shrunk his “Le Chiquito” bag into the tiny dimensions of 8,5 times 5 cm and created “Le Petit Chiquito” (see figure 23).<sup>112</sup> Here, he once again answers to the craving for something different and unexpected, the force of change, as Lantz phrases it.<sup>113</sup> The bags were sent out with the tiny invitations for his Fall 2019 show (see figure 24). During the show, the models,

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.issue.ink/post/this-isnt-the-jacquemus-we-know>

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.issue.ink/post/this-isnt-the-jacquemus-we-know>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.issue.ink/post/this-isnt-the-jacquemus-we-know>

<sup>112</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/zmake5/jacquemus-le-mini-chiquito](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/zmake5/jacquemus-le-mini-chiquito)

<sup>113</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 16

walking in a recreation of the French countryside, wore bags so tiny the audience almost missed them (see figure 25).<sup>114</sup> Consequently, Le Petit aroused the internet with memes and jokes (see figure 26), and the question of what you could possibly carry in your Jacquemus bag, exemplified by “air”, “your sim card” or “your dignity”. Critics questioned if it was a ridiculous or revolutionary step, but once again his strategy earned attention, and handbags now accounts for more than 30% of the revenues for Jacquemus.<sup>115</sup> The designer said “if you don’t consider it a bag, consider it jewellery”<sup>116</sup> and further jumped on the meme-wave by cheekily Instagram three pictures of the Le petit bag with the caption “WHAT WILL YOU PUT INSIDE ?” (see figure 23).

Le Petit challenges the traditional functions of a bag and comes with a price tag of \$258. Thus to use the production process or economic price as an indicator to evaluate a product is inadequate when we are examining a product with a dose of “magic” or belief surrounding it as Bourdieu explains it.<sup>117</sup> What Le Petit instead proves is a form of social capital or value embodied by the legitimacy of Jacquemus and accepted by the approval of the community which ultimately gives the product a form of embodied symbolic value which ultimately can justify the economical price.<sup>118</sup> With the products still being sold out and sought after despite their obvious lack of function as a bag, Jacquemus demonstrates the thoughts of Bourdieu’s theory of a symbolic value embodied in the product in practice. This value can only be accepted with the audience’s approval, hence the acceptance of the symbolic value of the tiny Le petit bag forms and proves the ultimate form of a symbolic violence in practice, strengthened by the Jacquemus signature and logo.<sup>119</sup>

To mark the 10-year anniversary of Jacquemus, the Spring Summer 2020 runway show was broadcasted in a scene as close as we can get to the heart of Porte Jacquemus himself. Once again connecting to his roots and love for the South of France, the lavender fields of Provence served as the scenery for Le Coup de Soleil Spring Summer 2020 runway show

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/fashion-week/a26534572/jacquemus-mini-handbags/>

<sup>115</sup> [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/zmake5/jacquemus-le-mini-chiquito](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/zmake5/jacquemus-le-mini-chiquito)

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>117</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 136

<sup>118</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 95

<sup>119</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 117

(see figure 27, 28). The Instagram-worthy 500-meter-long runway show played out on a pink carpet placed in the middle of a hyperreal fuchsia lavender field. The setting was inspired by traditional lavender postcards of Provence, artwork from Christo and Jeanne Claude and an iPad painting by David Hockney. This scenery had Jacquemus stand out in the over-crowded social media sphere and once again the label broke the internet - and not because of the craftsmanship or impeccable design, but because of serene setting and the humoristic and ironic influences. The beautifully created 10-year anniversary show rewarded Jacquemus the astonishing amount of 1.8 million new followers to his Instagram account, validating both the designer and his brand's success.<sup>120</sup> In a conversation with Vogue he expresses his love for runway shows

Some of my shows were the best moments of my life, not because of the applause or the success on Instagram, but the emotion. I'm backstage crying with my family and with my team, and I have so many good emotions [attached to those shows]. I believe in shows and the emotion of them.<sup>121</sup>

### **Authenticity and legitimisation**

The successful 10-year anniversary evoked thoughts about slowing down the fashion production for Porte Jacquemus. As Jacquemus is an independent label we need to take into account that it is a small business compared to luxury fashion competitors operating at billion-dollar levels, who often are partially owned, run and supported by large conglomerates (such as Bottega Veneta). It has been rumoured that Jacquemus shortly would be obtained by a larger conglomerate or supported by a secret sponsor - rumours that Porte Jacquemus shuts down in the interview with The Cut. He claims not to be looking for any investors or having interest in proceeding to another house, and contradicts how sincerity would be kept if you leave your own brand, and that it is not about *more, more, more* for him.<sup>122</sup> This can confirm his sincerity and passion for his brand rather than for profit, and could justify his success. Buro 24/7 asked how he as the creative director manages to balance storytelling with the commercial side of his brand and Porte Jacquemus explained

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/news/article/vogue-global-conversations-reinvention-during-the-crisis>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus>

Ever since the beginning, my second collection was paid by my first collection and so on. I started with no money but I knew that I had to sell. In the end it's half and half, there is no other way. I am always fighting myself on the concept and a strong image and then trying to transform it, so it's 100 per cent transparent with Jacquemus, the brand. We don't sell anything that you don't see in the show. What you see, it's what we sell. I find balance, but I don't think that being commercial is easy and simple now.<sup>123</sup>

Jacquemus has with its 300 stockists worldwide, doubled its profit each year and was supposedly on its way to reach revenues of €20m for 2019.<sup>124</sup> Similarly to O'Shea, Porte Jacquemus lacks formal, technical design skills and training.<sup>125</sup> Included in his LVMH award 2015 was a one year mentorship and his adviser suggested that Porte Jacquemus should himself be the CEO and face for the brand and invest in technically skilled staff members - which has proven to be successful.<sup>126</sup> His team initially consisted of 30 and has now with more financial freedom doubled to 60. Almost every employee has been on board since the start, including his ex-roommate and now commercial director, Fabien Joubert. The team seems to be as passionate for the brand as the designer himself and for the 10-year celebration Porte Jacquemus gathered his team in an appreciation post on social media to further show the sincere creative collaboration behind the making of Jacquemus (see figure 29). Porte Jacquemus himself functions as designer, CEO, brand boosting figure and a 100% stakeholder in his label with a lot of creative freedom and involvement.<sup>127</sup> On his Instagram he posted a selfie at the brand's new headquarters and cheekily captioned it “WELCOME TO JACQUEMUS HQ, CAN I HELP YOU?” to display his personal involvement (see figure 30).

For the wellbeing of the team, and to keep production, marketing, retail and every function of the business under control the brand has now on the designer's initiative decided to slow down production; creating two collections a year instead of the original six. A seemingly honest way of declaring the struggles in running an independent fashion business and to keep everything under control under the operation of a small team alongside keeping the sincerity which Porte Jacquemus honours. It's also a very spot on move with the climate crisis and an

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.buro247.me/fashion/insiders/simon-porte-jacquemus.html>

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/8f62f38a-a7ac-11e9-90e9-fc4b9d9528b4>

<sup>125</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>126</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/simon-porte-jacquemus>

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/8f62f38a-a7ac-11e9-90e9-fc4b9d9528b4>



increased sense of awareness spreading across the globe - or perhaps just another right on time stunt by Porte Jacquemus. But in Vogue he explains it further and defends that conclusion

What I want to say is it's not just for ecologie, it's also people—their rhythm of work also has to have sense. I don't say I'm a green brand or anything like that; it's not marketing. But I think we have to think more like my grandparents did: like, we have tomatoes in the garden, so we eat tomatoes.<sup>128</sup>

Vogue asked how the “internet-breaking success of the show in a lavender field” possibly could be topped when reviewing his Fall 2020 runway show. The designer expressed that the success from his 10th year anniversary show made him question himself and his role in fashion and he expressed that important to be transparent about these doubts despite being successful, for young people to see.<sup>129</sup> In the runway show his “quirky charm” and “French flavour” seemed to be lost, but the backstory behind the collection was there. With the show being titled “L'année 97” the runway show was an ode to the designer's first piece of clothing and his late mother. For his Fall 2020 show, Jacquemus further made efforts to be a less wasteful brand. What we can sense is an attempt to go back to the more traditional or rational aspects of fashion, since fashion as a phenomenon is often expected to justify its function and style to a higher extent than other cultural practices. To cite Elizabeth Wilson: “when it comes to fashion, we become intolerant”.<sup>130</sup>

His previous stunts have been successful due to the fact that they are doing the opposite of the expected. This unpredictability combined with Jacquemus' elevated position as a tastemaker, to reconnect with Lantz, has earned him his success. However, in doing so Porte Jacquemus has had to face personal criticism. From constantly being questioned by the critics, even being called a “bumpkin” with “lack of designer talent”<sup>131</sup>, to being perceived as either “ridiculous” or “revolutionary”. It is in the articles and reviews regarding his Fall 2020 runway show and slowdown that we can sense a growing air of legitimacy surrounding Jacquemus. It is confirmed by journalists and gate-keepers alike in the way they portray him

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2020-ready-to-wear/jacquemus>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2020-ready-to-wear/jacquemus>

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, E. (2010) *Adorned in dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. London : I.B.Tauris. P. 49

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.thecut.com/2019/08/simon-porte-jacquemus-designer-profile.html>

after the success of his 10th year anniversary, he is becoming increasingly acknowledged as a more established player on the field. His provocative ways have ultimately reserved him a spot amongst the more credited designers further proved by the label being nominated as Brand of the year and Accessories Designer of the year at the British Fashion Awards in 2019, alongside Daniel Lee For Bottega Veneta.<sup>132</sup>

Ultimately, Jacquemus has fostered and shaped his own brand, his own language and heritage in fashion shaped around a strong community with sincere and open motives. In an increasingly oversaturated climate, consumers today tend to seek authenticity. Jacquemus has found ways to enhance the spirit of time with his brand in an authentic way that uses the unexpected to stand out in the overcrowded social media domain, and ultimately reserve him an elevated position in the field. In a Youtube interview with Vogue the designer explains

Year after year I have to prove myself more. I don't do catwalks just for doing a catwalk. I create clothes to be worn, and play around with the objects. The accessories. [...] If one day, like, no one will respond to your designs. I would say, it is fine because at the end of the day you were like, super sincere, since the beginning. And that is going to happen, I am sure. But the importance is to be sincere like, with what you are showing, because if not, you can lost yourself and that is a big risk.<sup>133</sup>

### **The zeitgeist's creative director**

Zerbo makes good points in her article as she recognizes how the consumer is attracted to a creative director, they are familiar with and who shows social media appeal. Her point is not universal, as proven in Lee's case, but is nevertheless supported in Porte Jacquemus. Her argument that a creative director merely operates as the brand ambassador is vulnerable to criticism, which she acknowledges herself when mentioning Lagerfeld's sketches and O'Shea's tenure at Brioni lasting a mere six months.<sup>134</sup> This suggests that there is still a need for creativity and innovation.

This confirms our previous research, as The Drum (2019) stated that a creative director today engineers the whole brand image and is responsible for creating and preserving the creative

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.vogue.co.uk/news/article/fashion-awards-nominees-2019>

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaX2tHKXW-o>

<sup>134</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

experience.<sup>135</sup> Speaking with Business of Fashion (2020), Lee acknowledged and recognized a change in the creative director's role

Even Nicolas's job back in the Balenciaga days was very different from now. The industry has changed vastly in the last ten years. A creative director used to do two shows a year and a couple of ad campaigns. Now, every single day, there's content. Emails, Instagrams, billboards, takeovers, collaborations with wholesalers... so many projects. <sup>136</sup>

Lee is highlighting the large impacts that digitalization has birthed, where the main headliner is every-single-day-content via media, something very portraying of our current time. The emergence of social media encourages a more personal connection between brand and consumer. This further encourages the brand and its lead representative to be more visible as there are millions of users who crave and respond to it. To meet the 'every-single-day content' need, the creative's design vision may not be enough in pure quantity, and thus the creative director is encouraged to also share other content - like going to the pub for a beer or the visit to the south of France. Content like this serves a personal distinction and connection between brand and user, an action very evident in the case of Jacquemus. Where Porte Jacquemus is open and loud, Lee is hard to reach and quiet. Zerbo's emphasis on how the zeitgeist's fashion industry seeks after someone who can sell the brand much because of their personal selling power and not because of their merit.<sup>137</sup> This agrees with Porte Jacquemus, who independently established his brand and whose success can be justified by his persona and passion. Lee on the other hand, had a resume that spoke of more formal and technical experience from the industry. Yet, his persona as the quiet radical has too proven to be in favour of the brand in meanings of symbolic value and embodying the brand. Both Porte Jacquemus and Lee are distinctively signifying their respective brands's identity, and as these brand's identities are different - so are the creatives and their strategies. The quiet radical and the naked radical.

An interesting find in our two cases is how they can utilize heritage as one of the main characteristics of their luxury house. Porte Jacquemus is currently creating his house's heritage as sole founder of his namesake label. He has no preconditional heritage or values to consider and as an independent designer, he has creative and strategic freedom. An interesting comparison against Lee who is employed by a conglomerate at a house with a

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2019/03/13/the-role-creative-director-the-new-age-advertising>

<sup>136</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com>

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

heritage worth of fifty-four years. This designates Lee with already established heritage and value to adapt and adjust to, and a tradition to honour. Being designers of the social media era, we are approaching how their heritage and legacy is narrated in this sphere. Jacquemus' brand is so closely linked with Porte Jacquemus' persona which is visualized on social media, and Bottega Veneta's brand is experiencing a revival because of the social media's response to Lee. They are both exposed and narrated by social media, and heavily affected by those social voices and earning social currency. This encourages us to suggest a modernized heritage - a social heritage.

In order to cater to the zeitgeist's digitally social consumer, the creative process must be infatuated with digital creativity - tactics, editorial and commercial material and products that work well on a digital landscape - something both labels have proven to master with their success on Instagram. Something that resonates well with Zerbo's description of Winsor's understanding of the modern creative director's job description as: "It's about an overall vision that takes into account the marketing and advertising strategy [...]"<sup>138</sup> An equal understanding of the digital landscape and how to creatively optimize their social channels might reason from Lee and Porte Jacquemus both growing up with and alongside the explosion of social media. They prove different methods but common results; photogenic products and viral bags; the *Pouch bag* and *Le Petit*. And also, a loyal consumer and a huge following in remarkably almost the same amount of followers on Instagram with Bottega Veneta's 2.2 million to Jacquemus' 2.3 million.<sup>139</sup>

Remo Gettini, CTO at Depop, commented on the fashion architecture and how creativity is vulnerable in a digital climate, and he supports that fashion and designers should not be forced into limiting or adjusting their design and creativity in appropriation to technical evolutions. He told Forbes (2020): "Fashion needs a platform that plugs creative design into the supply chain painlessly and without designers having to change the way they work. This is fundamental".<sup>140</sup> Sympathizing with Kawamura, the concept of creativity is elusive but as for the fashion system, the creative is appointed in a sense due to their innovativeness and innate talent. For this designer's product to be classified as 'creative', external forces

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/bottegaveneta/>; <https://www.instagram.com/jacquemus/>

<sup>140</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/>

have to agree.<sup>141</sup> Today, these external forces can be discussed as not exclusively industry insiders, but as the audience and the consumer that is because of social media enabled to voice a very visible opinion and affect the product or act with their thoughts. With social media redesigning the connection between brand and user, there is also a redesign in the connection between the lead creative director behind the brand and the relationship with the user, the follower. It is all in the word: *social* media. Participants expect social activity. Gettini continues with the meaningful connections that social media is endorsing: “Human-centricity is the key to digital success”.<sup>142</sup> He highlights how users never talk about the app, but about “the experience, the friends they make, the communities they join, the clothes they buy”.<sup>143</sup> Understanding how social media are enabling community features and brand experience, we understand that it also gives the user more influence on fashion.

In Financial Times (2019), Ellison references how Bottega Veneta’s CEO Rongone and Lee are reshaping the business with highly encouraging sales growth that increased 6.9% in a year.<sup>144</sup> Ellison does not further discuss what Rongone’s part in this is, and the entirety of the interview is focused on Lee and how his almost genius has delivered it-products, curated into social media phenomenons, just like our other main creative Porte Jacquemus. To reconnect with Lantz, an explanation of this can be the fact that the company has reconciled a cultural and economical logic. As Lantz grants the fashion industry as one of the most commercial fields, the appointment of Ronoge in symbiosis with the appointment of Lee unifies a fruitful combination of the so often non-compatible fields creating the best of both worlds. Lee’s designs and campaigns ultimately end up facilitating the economical aspect of Bottega through his design, his vision and the creative parts of the label.<sup>145</sup>

As for the creative director’s role, Kawamura means that all actors in the Fashion system have values and goals, and that the making of a great designer is a collective activity. All actors are interdependent, with specific latent and function within the institution, indispensable in producing fashion. As goes for the hierarchy in the Fashion system, the elites, the gate-keepers are the ones who legitimize the standard of aesthetics and hold

<sup>141</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 61

<sup>142</sup> <https://www.forbes.com>

<sup>143</sup> <https://www.forbes.com>

<sup>144</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>145</sup> Lantz. (2013) P. 245

authority.<sup>146</sup> The gate-keeper can be identified in our main cases - Lee and Jacquemus. Their position as gate-keepers is though backed, where Lee is backed by The Kering Group and an organizational structure of a CEO, CMO and a design team. As for the independent Jacquemus, Porte Jacquemus functions as designer and CEO and is backed by his team of 60 employees. This indicates that the creatives actually are allowed to be creative.

Maria Milano, head of womenswear at Harrods declares Lee as a successful creative director of the current day as she told Financial Times (2019): “Not since Alessandro Michele took the helm at Gucci has a change in creative direction resonated so much with the zeitgeist”.<sup>147</sup> Milano then refers to how Lee’s pieces barely touched ground at Harrods before being sold out.<sup>148</sup> This is pure proof that the media believes and signifies that Lee’s creative lead is not just creative, but creative in accordance with our zeitgeist. For Porte Jacquemus, his creative freedom is manifested through the stories and collections as they all are connected to the designer himself - and he holds the narrative where the marketing, retail environment, social media, products and the catwalk presentations all sums up the lifestyle of Porte Jacquemus and ultimately the Jacquemus label. This further speaks for that he is not just an outwarding face for the brand, but proves a deeply manifested connection between designer, creativity and brand which ultimately, in the same way as for Daniel Lee and Bottega Veneta, leads to sold out products closely resonated with the current zeitgeist.

Social media is designed to connect and facilitate networking between users. The more alluring posts, the more likes, shares, reposts and engagement - which can be translated to more consumers, wider audience, growing brand awareness and increased sales. This realization of the current time’s cultural state can be charged with pushing the creative director to be more innovative than practical and functional. The brand will win engagement for delivering captivating, aesthetically pleasing content. A social demand that encourages the creative director and the brand to design collections with the aspiration that the pieces make a good picture and can be categorized as eye-catching content as proved by both the designer’s pieces, for example Bottega Veneta’s *Padded Sandal* (see figure 5) and Jacquemus’ *La Bomba* (see figure 18). The motive might simply be to get people to react and talk, and thus, spread awareness and go viral. An act that is not new in its core, it has always

<sup>146</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 80

<sup>147</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

<sup>148</sup> <https://howtospendit.ft.com/womens-style/207565-daniel-lee-bottega-veneta>

been possible for a designer to produce something shocking and impractical in order to urge talk. But what used to be defined as talk; editors and magazines writings, is now defined as more followers, reposts and going viral.

### **The zeitgeist's fashion user**

We have moved from a fashion climate where fashion trends and activities were communicated via traditional media like monthly magazines to a digital fashion climate where fashion can be experienced every minute of every day via our screens. Subscribed to the email or not, following or not, it reaches us via algorithms, ads or friends who share and like. Social media brings connectedness, innovation and operates as a live and current medium that allows users to participate.<sup>149</sup> It has added layers and features and transformed the former controlled one-sided industry into a more open two-sided one, as users' invitation comes along with a simple 'follow' that allows them to experience, contribute and affect the brand and the trends. This new fashion experience paves way for new demands, needs and expectations on fashion brands. A chrysalis that is practised by both the industry and the audience; the consumer and the follower who is now granted a more absolute display of brand and creativity. Rigaud-Lacresse and Maria Pini emphasize that now, more than ever, consumer insights are important for a label to gather, evaluate and answer in order to make for most effective planning and execution.<sup>150</sup> This encourages a consumer-centric focus as a driving force in brand communication, products, services and experiences and requires a flexible and responsive orchestrated fashion network. Digitalization in the form of social media are cultivating platforms that are inviting different players to take part and influence the game of fashion and trend, and participants are able to create communities, opinions and tastes. This resonates with Bourdieu's fashion field, and what we can identify is an elevation of the consumers in the field of fashion.

Search Engine Journal (2020) reports that the most used social media sites this year are, in this order, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.<sup>151</sup> Instagram is especially a gratified rendezvous for brand and consumer, as the platform is one of the most thankful mediums for image and communication. Here, images are accompanied with text; written captions,

<sup>149</sup> <https://retailtouchpoints.com/features/executive-viewpoints/what-impact-has-social-media-had-on-the-fashion-industry>

<sup>150</sup> Rigaud-Lacresse & Pini, Maria. (2017) P. 32

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/social-media/biggest-social-media-sites/#close>

locations and comments - components that in sympathy with Barthes, creates symbolic value and transforms clothes into fashion. Social media has revolutionized the consumer's role in this new fashion hierarchy to a role with greater influence on fashion and trend. Social media invites the user to a pristine front row seat to experience and affect the brand's symbolic value and the myth created around them with the features of likes, comments and other actions provided by the platform. Founder and editor in chief of Business of Fashion Imran Amed rightfully summarized the user's growing influence on fashion as

“The one thing that has changed dramatically in recent years is the direct relationship brands now have with their consumers. In this new hierarchy, the consumer has the ability to amplify or negatively impact on business, through sharing positive or negative responses”.<sup>152</sup>

As we deconstruct this process, we realize that the brands strategically react and reply to what content and products the online audience are responding to - what gets most engagement, reposts and likes. This confirms the user's more important role in the fashion system and portrays how a more accessible brand is also a more fragile brand, now vulnerable towards individual interpretation and negative response from the app's users. The consumer is no longer just a buying force that accepts what style and products designers, buyers, editors and the other validating agents in the field have decided and dubbed as the new trend. The consumer is active and visible in co-creating and rejecting trends and myths. Not just responding to and investing in, but affecting, maintaining and declining trends and myths. The consumer holds the role of the paying consumer, the avid audience and the co-producer of myth, brand, personas and product. The brands are catering to their communities which results in a broader, and almost total co-creation between brand and engaged consumers.

The criticism is in how the online customer is feeding a fast-paced fashion climate with high and quick demands and desires. This is feeding shallow brands with non-disclosed value chains, which in some extent also awakens and encourages a demand for transparency and authenticity. Public Relations and marketing expert Stephany Greene believe that there will be an increased crave for authenticity from brands and their social media tactics. She thinks that people will see through viral marketing strategies and demand a more genuine tone as she told Insider (2019): “Within the next five years or less, these tactics won't work on either market and authenticity will win after all.<sup>153</sup> This could be favourable for Lee and Bottega

<sup>152</sup> <https://retailtouchpoints.com>

<sup>153</sup> <https://www.insider.com/social-media-effect-on-viral-fashion-2019-5>



Veneta's approach to social media. A strategy that does not falsely exhibit neither the brand or the brand representative, whereas Lee is embodying the brand's value and identity - it illuminates the label and Lee as honest. It might also be in favour for Porte Jacquemus despite his more personally open route, as the core of the brand strongly reflects a humble and honest tone of voice with the deep connection between Porte Jacquemus as a persona and the brand. According to Business of Fashion, today's consumer easily identifies non-authentic communication efforts, and disregards promotional communication.<sup>154</sup> So if the zeitgeist's fashion user desires a core of authenticity, both Lee and Porte Jacquemus cater to that in their individual ways.

## Conclusion

With empirical findings and media content analysis, this research has contributed to the understanding of how two modern creative director's are approaching their role and their creativity at their respective luxury houses.

This paper has presented that media partnered with social media plays part in creating, spreading and maintaining Lee and Jacquemus' status and position. We recognize how Barthes' mythology is of relevance in the spirit of the time, where its narrative is scripted by the label, the creative director, the media and the social media. With text and image, stories are being told. These stories contribute to a brand and its creative lead's perception and because of digitalization these stories are highly accessible to a global consumer. This has affected Lee and Porte Jacquemus' approach to their roles as public creative directors at luxury fashion houses. Their creativity is directed not only to product design, but to photogenic product design that works well on social media and consequently, has transformed their products into "it-pieces". As they both have delivered globally accepted trends, Lee and Porte Jacquemus can be granted Lantz's tastemaker title. This legitimization has as concluded also provided them with a symbolic capital, which as Bourdieu emphasises ultimately can be transformed into an economical capital.<sup>155</sup> This can be validated in the label's respective annual turnover.

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/professional/how-to-make-your-brand-cool>

<sup>155</sup> Bourdieu. (1993) P. 9

We recognize how digitalization is encouraging brands to constantly look for radical ways of redefining their culture and operations to a more digital mindset, to resonate with consumers and stay relevant.<sup>156</sup> As brands want to reach as many consumers as possible, spread brand awareness and increase sales, social media makes for an accessible and easy instrument. This direct connection and exposé also makes the brand vulnerable and fragile as the user and consumer have more access to leave positive and negative impact. With brands being more accessible, today's consumers are more well informed and have a bigger partake of the value creation process. This can be understood as a co-creation of value between a brand and its community.<sup>157</sup>

Lee and Porte Jacquemus are both recognizing social media as a pivotal marketing tool, they just have different approaches and strategies in using it. In both cases, social media favours the designer and the brand and signifies the respective brand's different identities. Lee's anti-social media behaviour creates a mystique around him and whispers of Bottega Veneta's discrete luxury identity. This attracts a synonymous community, who are decoding and relating to Lee and Bottega. Porte Jacquemus and Jacquemus are achieving an equal following and dedicated community; thus as a result of Porte Jacquemus pro-social media behaviour as he enriches his brand's identity with his personal, colourful playful and carefully created content. Both Lee and Porte Jacquemus are embodying their respective label's values and identity, and in agreement with Kawamura, the designers become symbols and can be seen as 'stars' for their brands. <sup>158</sup> As both the designers are embodying their brands, they also embody authenticity in their roles as creative directors. They have become the symbols of their house's characteristics, which resonates with their core personal characteristics. This motivates an understanding of them being honest in their creative directions, as they are employing their personal attributes into their design. They are not producing pieces they don't believe in or feel don't fit into their brand's identity. This philosophy is implemented not only in the design process, but across all communication. With reference to Business of Fashion and Greene<sup>159</sup>, the modern-day consumer desires authenticity and thus, this verifies Lee and Porte Jacquemus as creative directors perfectly fit

<sup>156</sup> <https://forbes.com/sites/brookeroberthislam/2020/01/07/>

<sup>157</sup> Rigaud-Lacresse & Pini, Maria. (2017) P. 24

<sup>158</sup> Kawamura. (2005.) P. 25, P. 67.

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/professional/how-to-make-your-brand-cool> ; <https://www.insider.com/social-media-effect-on-viral-fashion-2019-5>

for the zeitgeist. They breathe their label's philosophy and are living, concrete signifiers, as if the brand's value and identity are packaged and fashioned in these two representatives.

Worth disclaiming here is though the fact that Lee's position also can function as a rather hidden and correlative role, as the consumer can determine to discard or not pay attention to the name of the creative director, but rather just focus on the brand in itself as the designer and brand are not inevitably linked through a name or heritage. Yet, Lee and Porte Jacquemus success and characteristic recognition with their respective labels motivates us to believe their involvement in the design process as entailed, and more importantly, it encourages us to conclude that the consumer wants the creative director to be involved as that would provide more authenticity and genuinity. This theory opposes Kawamura as she suggests that the consumer disregards how involved the designer is in design production.<sup>160</sup> Hence we also condemn Zerbo's original suggestion that the creative director is just another term for brand ambassador. With Lee and Porte Jacquemus, we have identified a high level of design qualities that resonate well with their consumers. The research also brings forward how involved the creatives are in the design process and the entity of their brands, which is in agreement with Zerbo's more deservedly definition of the role as "leading, focusing and overseeing the intersection of design direction, actual design and practical strategy."<sup>161</sup>

As fashion is characterized by its contradicting and ambivalent state this paper captures this as it brings forth how two creatives with different visions and strategies are embodying the current ambivalent zeitgeist. Our comparison between the two chosen designers defines Porte Jacquemus as completely free in visualizing and building his heritage, and positions Lee's role at Kering's Bottega Veneta with a more solid and suggested framework. Being designers in a social media acquired time, we have developed the term social heritage as social media users have such a big influence in experiencing and narrating the brand and its legacy. The current sociocultural climate craves openness, but at the same time, values privacy. The former is personified in the naked radical, Porte Jacquemus and the latter in the quiet radical, Lee. This yin-and-yang-like construction mirrors the ambivalence that exists in today's society where a desire for privacy exists alongside a constant crave and appreciation to share and indulge in triviality on a daily basis.

<sup>160</sup> Kawamura. (2005) P. 67

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.thefashionlaw.com/what-are-we-looking-for-in-a-creative-director/>

As for further research, fashion as a social, cultural and economic phenomena is grateful for constant research and contribution from different perspectives as it is evolving in symbiosis with the present. This equalizes how nuanced examinations of the creative director too is relevant.

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## Figures

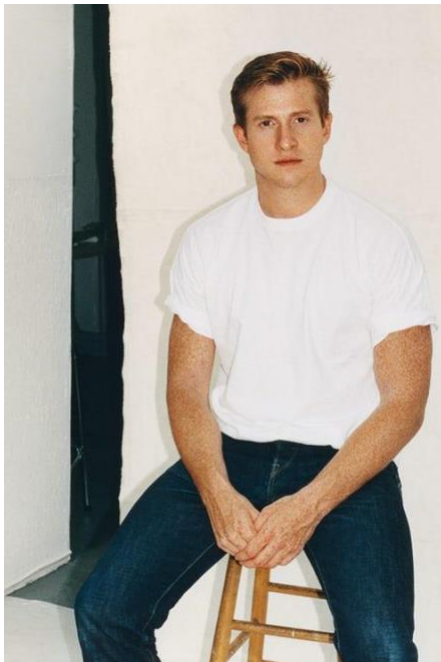


Figure: 1. Tyrone Lebon, 2020, photograph. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/professional/how-daniel-lee-reinvented-bottega-veneta>.

Bottega Veneta's creative director Daniel Lee.



Figure: 2. Bottega Veneta, 2016, photograph. <https://bagaholicboy.com/2016/10/bottega-veneta-behind-the-intrecciato/>

Bottega Veneta's signature intrecciato weave.



Figure: 3. Fe Pinheiro, 2016, for BoF, Photograph

<https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/jacquemus-bigger-than-you-think>

Jacquemus creative director Simon Porte Jacquemus



Figure: 4. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.  
[https://www.bottegaveneta.com/gb/clutch\\_cod45503488iv.html](https://www.bottegaveneta.com/gb/clutch_cod45503488iv.html)  
Bottega Veneta's It-bag, The Pouch.



Figure: 5. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.  
[https://www.bottegaveneta.com/gb/clutch\\_cod45503488iv.html](https://www.bottegaveneta.com/gb/clutch_cod45503488iv.html)  
Bottega Veneta's It-shoe: The Padded Sandal



Figure: 6. Alessandro Lucioni, 2019, photograph.

[https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5c6fda190a980d2d39d5ac69/master/w\\_400/\\_ALE0315.jpg](https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5c6fda190a980d2d39d5ac69/master/w_400/_ALE0315.jpg)

Bottega Veneta Fall 2019 Ready-to-Wear, Lee's debut runway show for the label.



Figure: 7. Alessandro Lucioni, 2019, photograph.

[https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5c6fd92257b95a2d61524b9d/master/w\\_400/\\_ALE0137.jpg](https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5c6fd92257b95a2d61524b9d/master/w_400/_ALE0137.jpg)

Bottega Veneta Fall 2019 Ready-to-Wear, Lee's debut runway show for the label.



Figure: 8. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.

[https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/crossbody-and-belt-bags\\_cod45508881vj.html](https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/crossbody-and-belt-bags_cod45508881vj.html)

Bottega Veneta's fine leather goods, the Padded Cassette with amplified intrecciato.



Figure: 9. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.

[https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/clutch\\_cod45494435bb.html](https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/clutch_cod45494435bb.html)

Bottega Veneta's fine leather goods, the BV Twist with amplified intrecciato.



Figure: 10. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.

[https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/top-handle-bag\\_cod45462059md.html](https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/top-handle-bag_cod45462059md.html)

Bottega Veneta's fine leather goods, the Slip Tote with amplified intrecciato.





Figure: 11. Bottega Veneta, 2020, photograph.

[https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/tote-bag\\_cod45494438pe.html](https://www.bottegabeneta.com/gb/tote-bag_cod45494438pe.html)

Bottega Veneta's fine leather goods, the Arco Tote with amplified intrecciato.

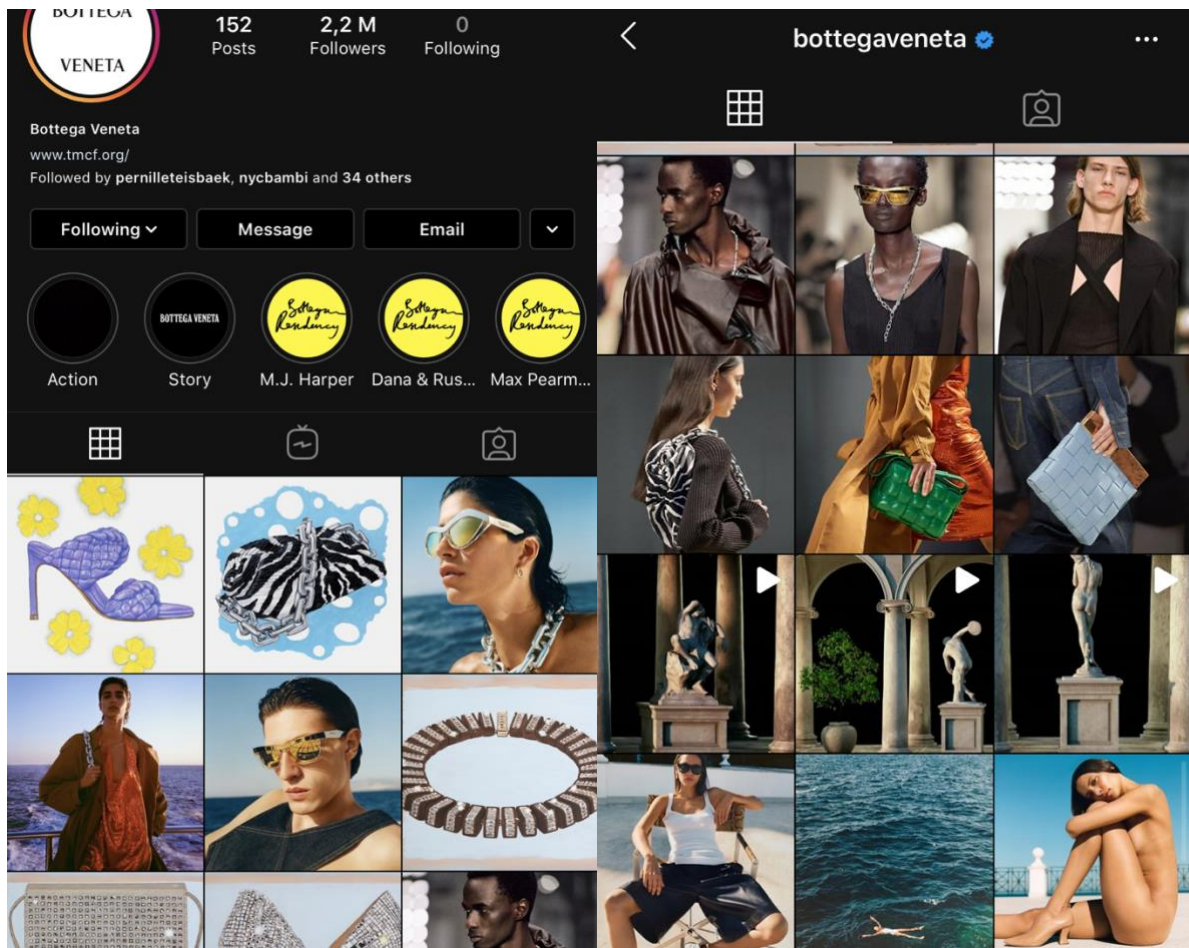


Figure: 12. Bottega Veneta's Instagram profile, 2020, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/bottegaveneta/?hl=sv>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @bottegaveneta, the label's account showcasing its designs and aesthetic.

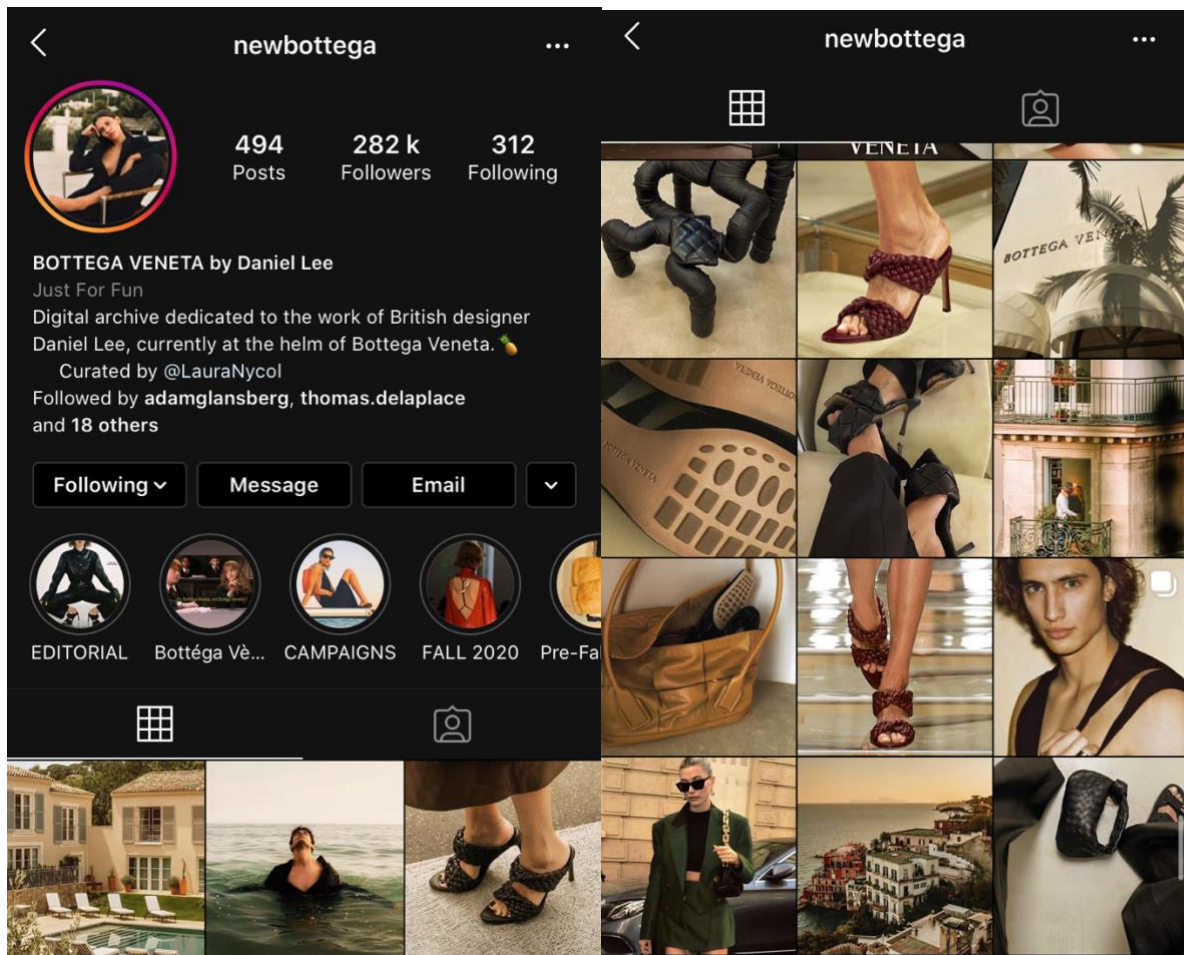


Figure: 13. New Bottega Veneta's Instagram, 2020, printscreen. <https://www.instagram.com/newbottega/?hl=sv>  
Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @newbottegabeneta, a dedication account to Daniel Lee showcasing his designs and aesthetic.



Figure: 14. Zandra, 2019, printscreen.

Double trouble 🍷 #myhandbagatemyshoes part II @suzannekoller  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B5TF6zjAvb2/>

Printscreen of the Instagram account of @z.zzandra, captioning Veneta’s The Pouch and the label’s Stretch Pumps and illustrating the hashtag movement “#myhandbagatemyshoes”.



## Simon Porte Jacquemus

French fashion designer

Simon Porte Jacquemus is a French fashion designer and the founder of the Jacquemus fashion label. [Wikipedia](#)

**Born:** 16 January 1990 (age 30 years), Salon-de-Provence, France

**Nationality:** French

**Education:** ESMOD

**Parents:** Vincent Porte, Valérie Jacquemus

### Profiles



Twitter

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Olivier Rousteing



Loïc Prigent



Marine Serre



Christophe Decamin



Laetitia Casta

Figure: 15. Google search of “Jacquemus”, printscreen. <https://www.google.com/search?q=jacquemus>  
How Simon Porte Jacquemus appears at the front when googling the brand.



Figure: 16. Jacquemus Instagram, 2018, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkf2HoXh1b2/>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing Porte Jacquemus as the model wearing Jacquemus' clothes.

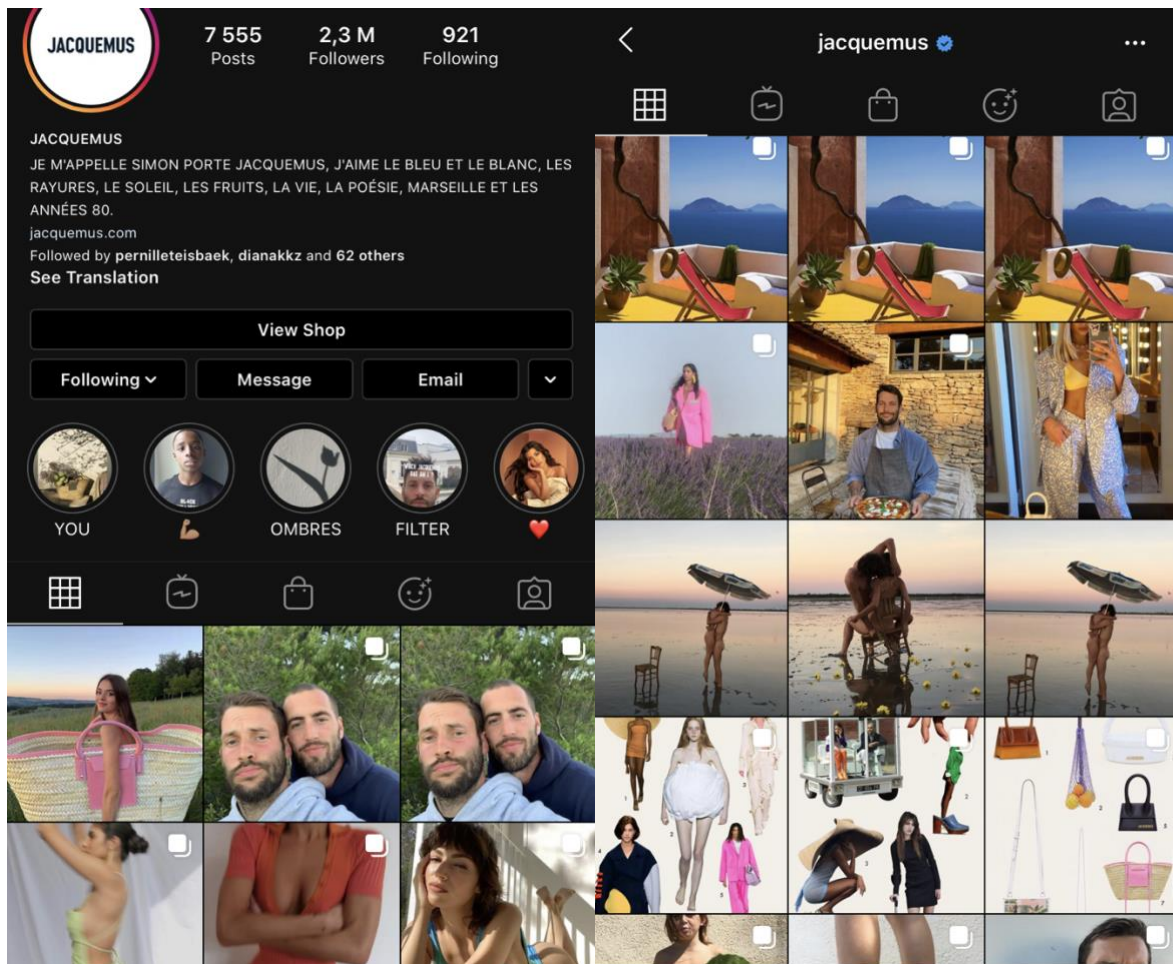


Figure: 17. Jacquemus Instagram, 2020, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/jacquemus/>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing his colourful feed, with the designer seen in the middle.



Figure: 18. Courtesy of Jacquemus, 2017, photograph.

<https://hypebae.com/2019/8/jacquemus-celebrity-brand-instagram-tiny-bag-trend-kylie-jenner-kim-kardashian>  
 Jacquemus La bomba hat on the runway for his Spring Summer 2018 show.

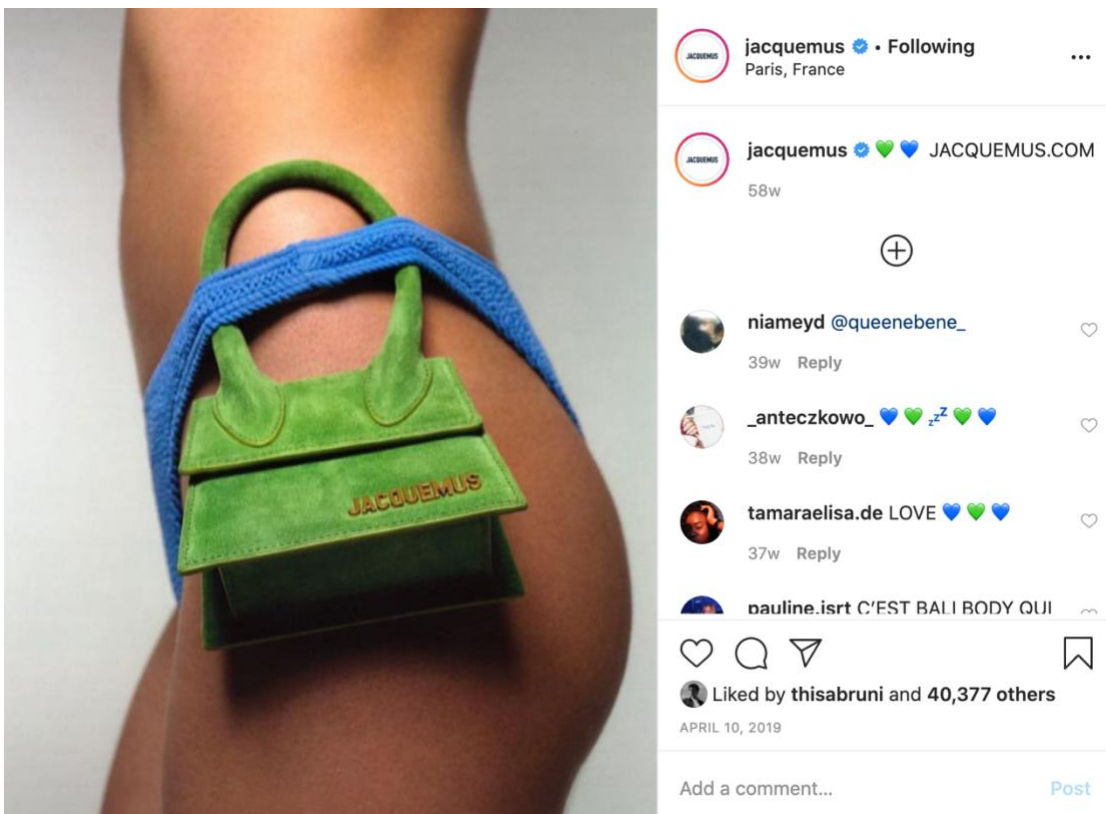


Figure: 19. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/BwFHp1\\_BuZo/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BwFHp1_BuZo/)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing Le Chiquito bag.



Figure: 20. Jacquemus Instagram, 2018, printscreen.

MY NEW JOB:

JACQUEMUS FOR MEN

SEE YOU IN JUNE! 🙌

[Instagram.com/p/BfsZMhfFTPm/?igshid=ubc9f49y2ai8](https://www.instagram.com/p/BfsZMhfFTPm/?igshid=ubc9f49y2ai8)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the designer with his “New job” hoodie.

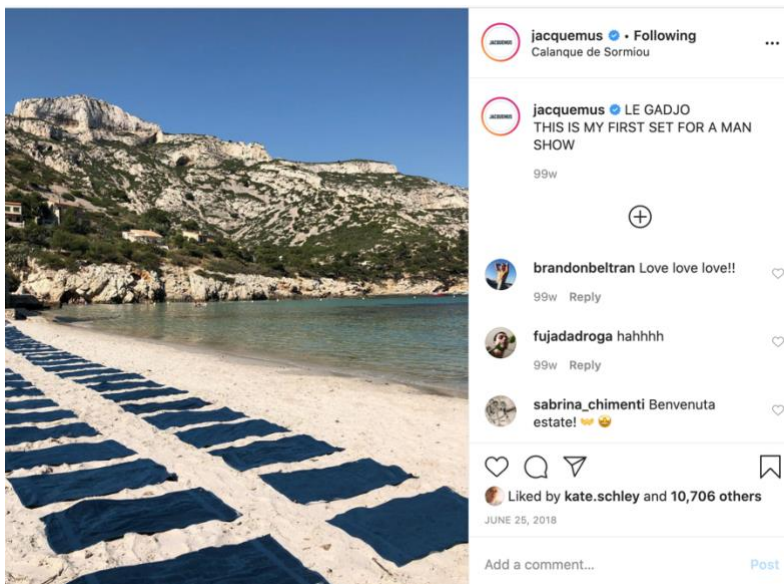


Figure: 21. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

[Instagram.com/p/Bkc-3jGB9Bg/?igshid=9gkga7yrq3wu](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkc-3jGB9Bg/?igshid=9gkga7yrq3wu)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the front row for the Le Gadjo runway show.





Figure: 22. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

[Instagram.com/p/BvuMMRKh-Dr/?igshid=zhcgumfz84m9](https://www.instagram.com/p/BvuMMRKh-Dr/?igshid=zhcgumfz84m9)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus “backstage” for the Le Gadjo runway show - “monday at the beach”.

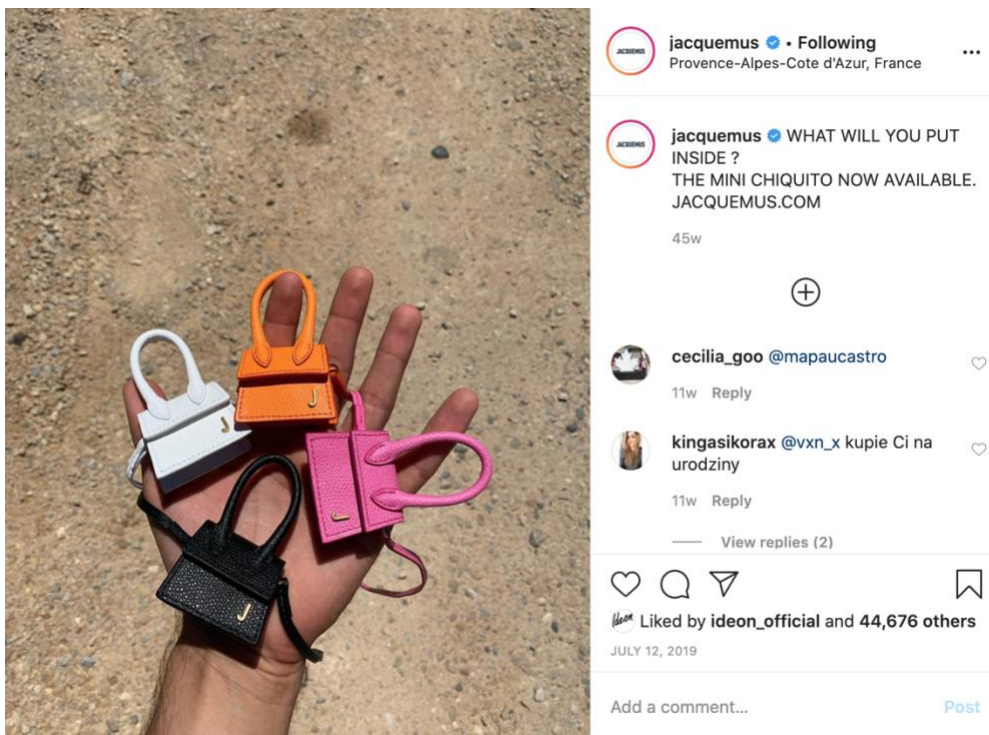


Figure: 23. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

WHAT WILL YOU PUT INSIDE ?

THE MINI CHIQUITO NOW AVAILABLE. JACQUEMUS.COM

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bz0RaYaDG2I/?igshid=1grlyumg1vryg>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing Le Chiquito Petit bag.

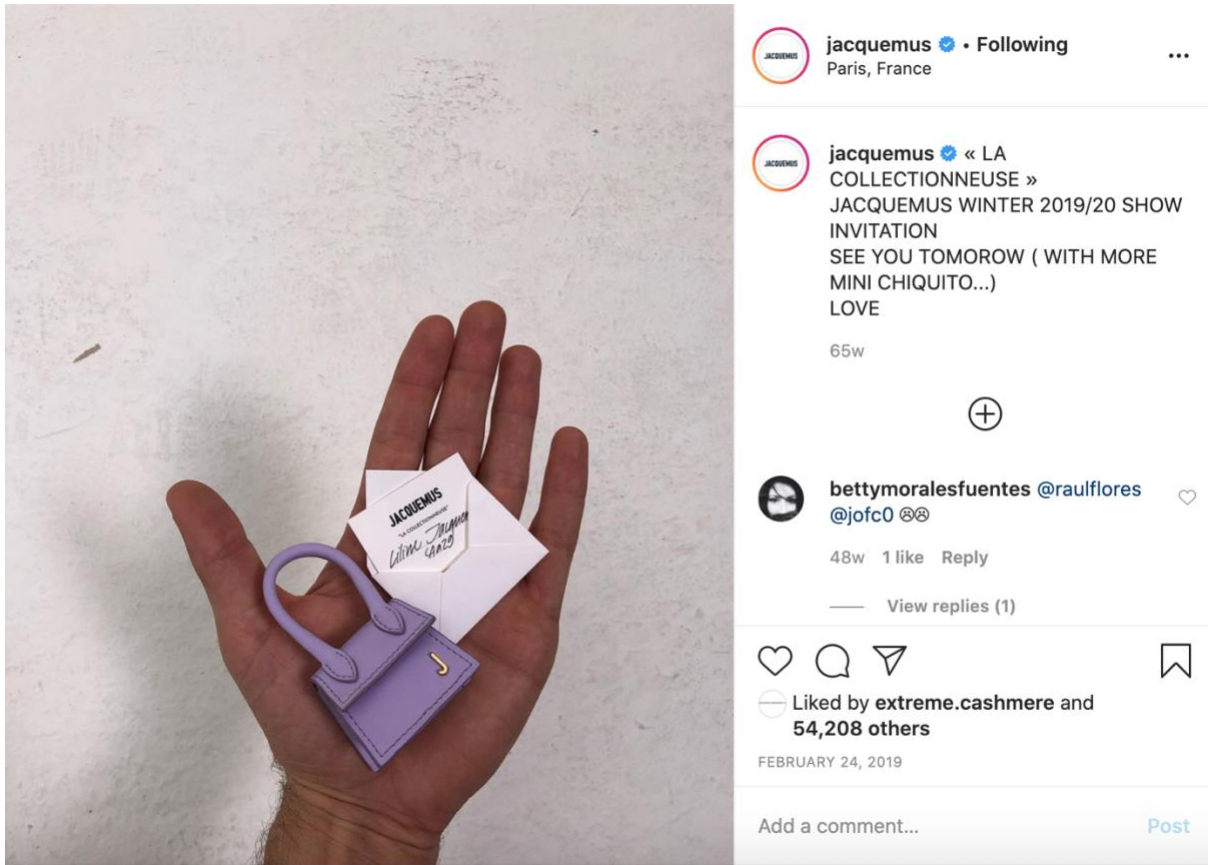


Figure: 24. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BuRb1ZTBVH2/>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing Le Chiquito Petit bag and the tiny invitations for the runway show.

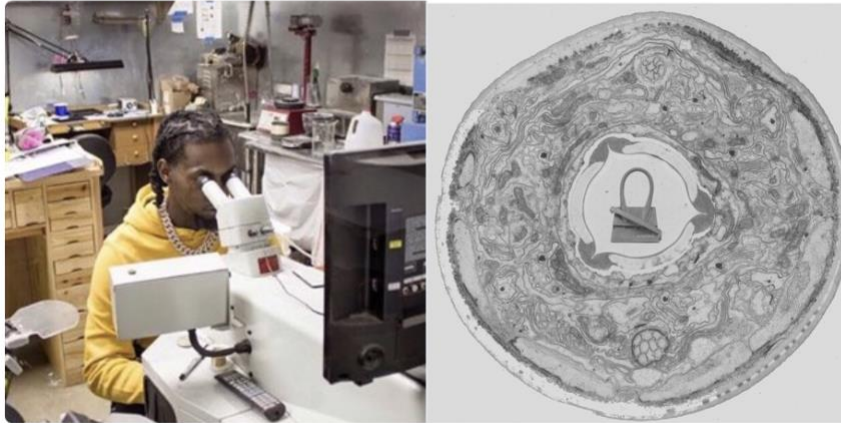


Figure: 25. Pixelformula/Sipa/Rex/Shutterstock. Photograph.

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/fashion-week/a26534572/jacquemus-mini-handbags/>

Model with the tiny Le Petit bag.

new Jacquemus bags are crazy



♡ 612 1:11 AM - Feb 26, 2019



Figure: 26. Twitter.com. Printscreen.

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/jacquemus-tiny-bag-memes-twitter/>

One of many internet memes based on the tiny Jacquemus' bags.

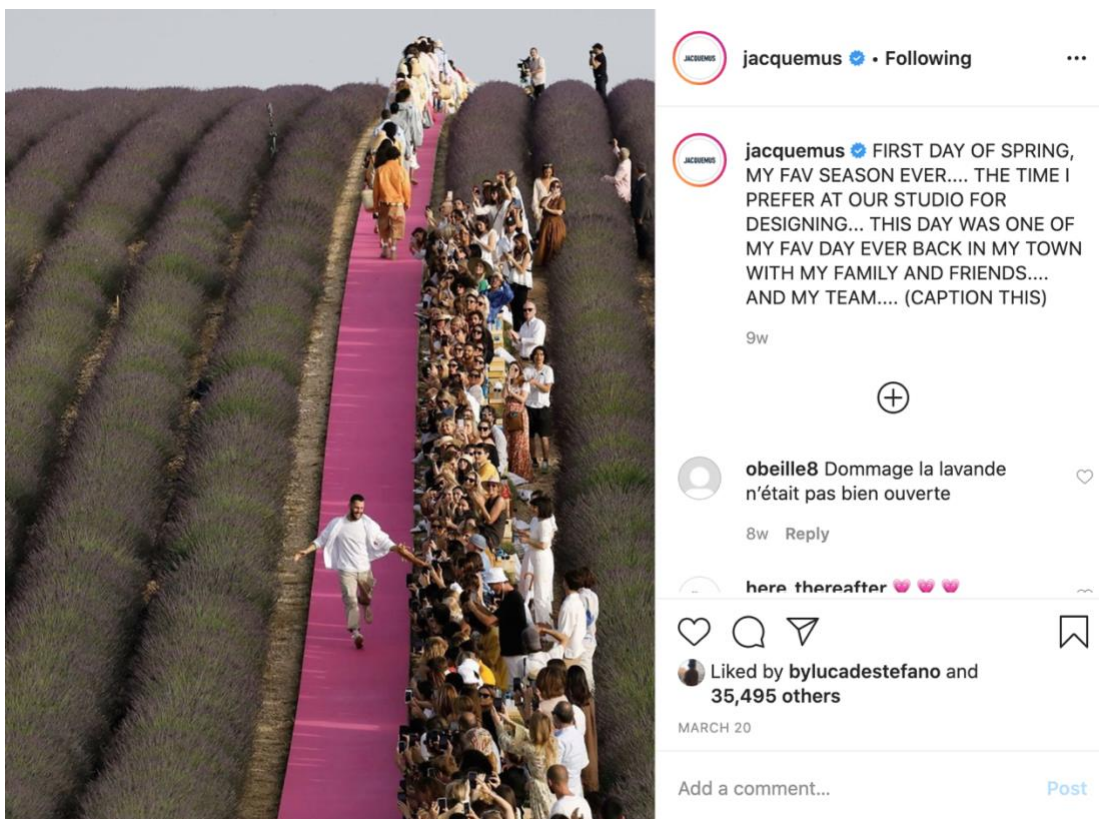


Figure: 27. Jacquemus Instagram, 2020, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B99QAbxDI2p/>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the designer thanking the audience at his Le Souk de soil runway show.

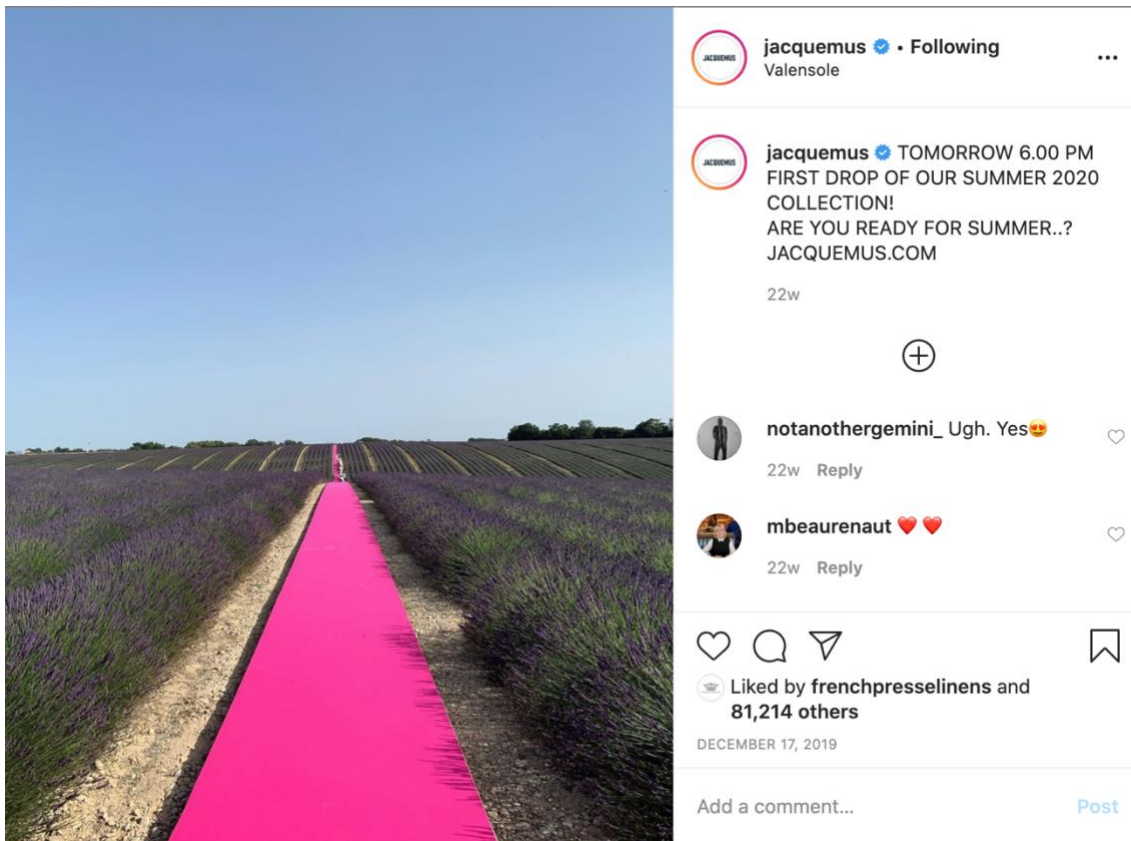


Figure 28. Jacquemus Instagram, Lavender fields of Provance, 2020, printscreen.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B6Llh7fjO-p/>

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the runway for the designer's 10th anniversary show.

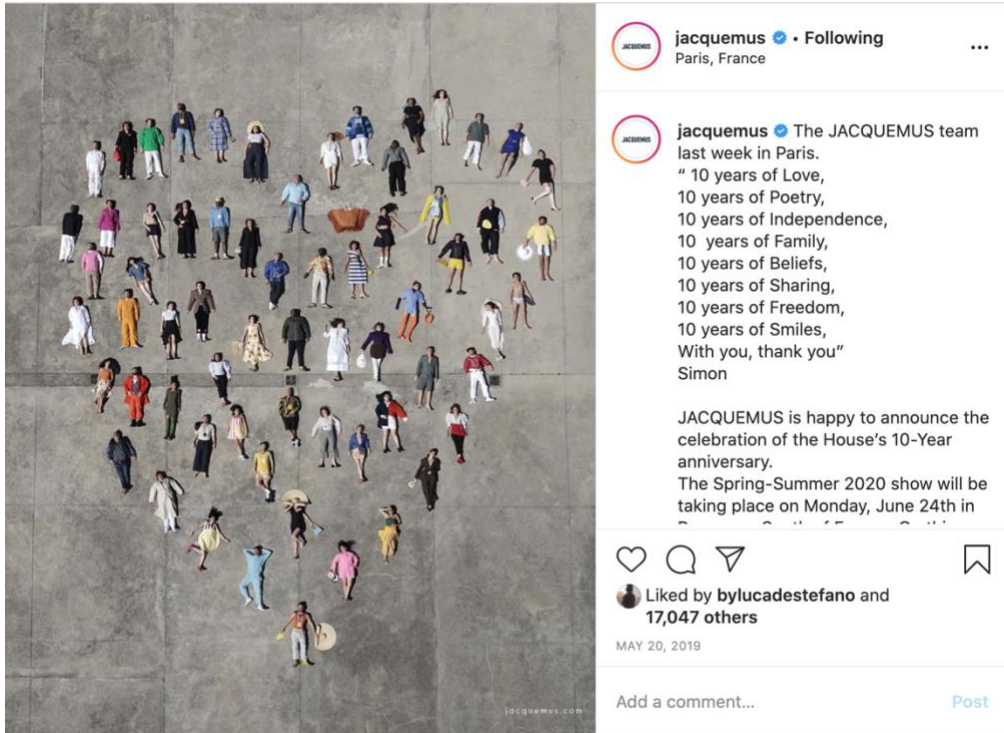


Figure: 29. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

[Instagram.com/p/BxsLz\\_Do239/?igshid=1qj3s0h1jw47s](https://www.instagram.com/p/BxsLz_Do239/?igshid=1qj3s0h1jw47s)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the Jacquemus team in a re-creation of a heart.



Figure: 30. Jacquemus Instagram, 2019, printscreen.

[Instagram.com/p/B4m\\_XkZjw4h/?igshid=1e45b73hbdh0m](https://www.instagram.com/p/B4m_XkZjw4h/?igshid=1e45b73hbdh0m)

Printscreen of the official Instagram account of @Jacquemus showcasing the designer at his HQ. With the caption "WELCOME TO JACQUEMUS HQ, CAN I HELP YOU?"