

Yoon at Heart

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Together with her husband, rapper Verbal, Yoon is the founder and one half of the Tokyo based jewellery collective Ambush®. Their pieces are worn by the cream of the music and fashion scenes and she boasts legions of Instagram fans, all seduced by her legendary style. We catch up with Yoon, to talk through the evolution of her creativity, sources of inspiration and get a special introduction to her cats.

How would you describe the Ambush® aesthetic?

YA: It's a modern interpretation of traditions. We create our own rules and boundaries, infused with a child-like spirit.

You grew up in Seattle and now you live in Tokyo, what would you say the biggest differences are between Eastern and Western style?

YA: People here in Tokyo have no boundaries, thus anything goes when it comes to fashion, because most of the subcultures are imported. So inevitably, style mutates and becomes a huge mash-up of all sorts of elements put together. Another difference, and the wonderful thing about Tokyo, is that people know how to dress well casually. I think this has led to the birth of many great street fashion brands.

Has living in Tokyo, which has such a strong fashion identity, shaped your taste?





YA: I always had a sense of exactly what I wanted and how I wanted to look. Tokyo just helped me be a little more liberated, because people don't judge you openly, even if you walk down the street looking crazy.

What were the most exciting parts of moving there?

YA: Honestly, moving to Japan wasn't exactly what I planned a few years ago. So when it happened, I believe it heightened the excitement much more because I had no expectations, I didn't know what would happen out here. Fast-forward 13 years and this place is my home now.

How collaborative is the process between you and Verbal?

YA: I do the designing and Verbal takes care of the business side. But we have a good communication and partnership, so we check everything with each other.

Music is a huge part of your life, how does it influence your design?

YA: When I'm working, music is always playing in the background, so it paints the fantasy world in my head unconsciously. It does definitely influence my mood and vibes into the design.

You're inspired by a lot of club kid photos, what era is the most interesting to you and why?

YA: I have a soft spot for British 70s and 80s club photos. Maybe because I wasn't there and everything seemed so liberated and cool. Sometimes, the pictures are more romantic than the reality and I kind of don't want to find out the truth, so I can just enjoy my perception of it.

When working on new pieces, do you feel like you are designing for yourself?

YA: In some ways yes, I do, because the design is influenced by people and things that amuse or inspire me. I do like to imagine myself in their place, thus seeing how I can make their world partly my own.

You've collaborated with many cool brands, such as Sacai, Colette and Kitsune just to name a few, what have been your favourites and is there anyone you haven't worked with yet that you're keen to?

YA: They've all been our favourites! It's really cool that all our collaborations have been love calls from our friends and people who supported us. It's all very organic, we haven't yet reached out to anyone to collaborate with on our end so far.

There seems to be a strong tribal theme in your work, is that deliberate or just a current interest?





YA: Every collection takes on its own course. I can't say what until it's time to start picking up the pencil and sketching the new collection. Tribal isn't really a conscious theme throughout, but our latest collection, *Dreamcatchers*, was influenced by American southwestern Indian jewellery and the *Montage* collection was influenced by different African tribes.

We've read that Alejandro Jodorowsky's work was an inspiration for the *Holy Mountain* collection, what is it about his work and vision that you like?

YA: I've been a fan of Jodorowsky for ages and when I saw the movie again, I knew I had to do something about it. It's so vivid with all the colours and symbolism, I love the elements of surrealism, abstraction and the way everything in it is the kind of stuff that happens in the wildest part of your imagination. I admire the way he's created something really extraordinary.

We often see pictures of you with your cats, can you tell us about them?

YA: I have 2 boys: Ariel is a ruddy Abyssinian and Casper is a Russian Blue, they're funny misfits. Ariel is so chilled and definitely a thinker, always absorbed and engaged. Then there's Casper, who is like a do-er, always vocalizing everything, whatever it is, he jumps straight into action and finds out too late. Ariel's such a nice big brother though, he never gets mad or agitated. No matter what Casper does, he just gives him big slow blinks – in cat language: kisses.

Will you ever do a cat inspired collection or even an Ambush® collection for cats with collars and other accessories perhaps?

YA: We haven't done collections for cats, but the colours camel and grey really grew on me because of my cats, I find them very beautiful now.

Lots of jewellery houses, for example Cartier, have iconic cats as part of their persona, what kind of cat embodies Ambush®?

YA: I won't say a specific type of cat, but I believe the attitude and the feline way of expression embodies who we are as Ambush®. If you watch cats carefully, they are such expressive creatures. Not only do they vocalize, they use eyes, face, ears, tails, the whole body and even their fur to communicate. I relate to that, as we also don't like to use just one specific method of expressing ourselves creatively.

