

A good stylist is a human lens through which a photographer, designer or fashion house can view its subject in a fresh and very particular manner. Here we speak to the stylists who have shaped this issue of L'Uomo in order to understand their history, their outlook, and their sense of the stories they are sharing.

By Josefine Skomars



EMILIE KAREH

Photographed by Oliver Hadlee Pearch

“Fashion is a mirror of society, showing the political and cultural climate of the moment. Clothing is the main way for people to express their identity, and while the industry might be changing, fashion and styling will always have an important role to play,” says Emilie Kareh. She first discovered the occupation of stylist after graduating from art school, when an internship at *Vogue Paris* led to a job assisting one of the magazine’s editors. After four years working in this role between Paris and New York, she moved to Los Angeles without a specific plan to pursue a career in fashion. But styling gradually came back into Kareh’s life when publications such as *Purple* and *Double* started commissioning her for stories. “I found that I could express myself through clothes, images and photography.” Kareh has now been working as a stylist for seven years, with clients ranging from GmbH to Emilio Pucci, and her editorial work regularly appears in magazines such as *Vogue Italia* and *Fantastic Man*.

Through studying costume design and scenography at Central Saint Mar-

tins, Kareh gained the vast knowledge of fashion history and theatre design that now influences her approach to styling. “I prefer to use clothes for fashion stories as I would costume design in a play. I’m interested in the psychology behind dressing, what clothes mean to the person wearing them and the reasoning behind their choice of garments. I imagine the personalities of the characters in my fashion stories in the same way,” she says.

Born in Beirut but raised in Paris, Kareh dresses her characters in outfits that combine classical and contemporary beauty, taking ‘chic’ as her operative word. Starting from timeless garments and adding twists of individuality, she creates dramatic looks for the fashion stage. “Without the stricter dress codes of the past, both women and men are free to create their own elegance mixing eras and genres,” she says. Together with photographer Mark Kean, Kareh portrays for *L’Uomo Vogue* street-casted men who comfortably balance their masculine and feminine side. “This is the new elegance to me – being able to show all that is you without worrying about labels.”

“Fashion is experiencing a revival of menswear couture, once again welcoming elaborate styles and haute couture-like garments for men”, says Beat Bolliger. “After an extensive period when sportswear and streetwear dominated menswear fashion, the current season has brought a return of elegance with designers introducing a generous number of tailored looks.” Bolliger was invited by creative director Thomas Persson to collaborate with him and photographer Solve Sundsbø on a fashion story for *L’Uomo Vogue*, influenced by a contemporary approach to elegance that pushes the boundaries of gender and tradition. Inspired by great couture photographers like Horst P. Horst, Irving Penn and Richard Avedon, the team has interpreted legendary fashion stories, but this time for men. Exploring gender fluidity, the male top models posing for Sundsbø’s camera embrace the full potential of fashion, dressed in tailored couture looks in which they express masculinity in a simultaneously powerful and delicate manner. “Haute couture is about showcasing skilful dressmaking, exquisite materials and unique cuts. With suits of duchesse silk and sharply tailored coats, combined

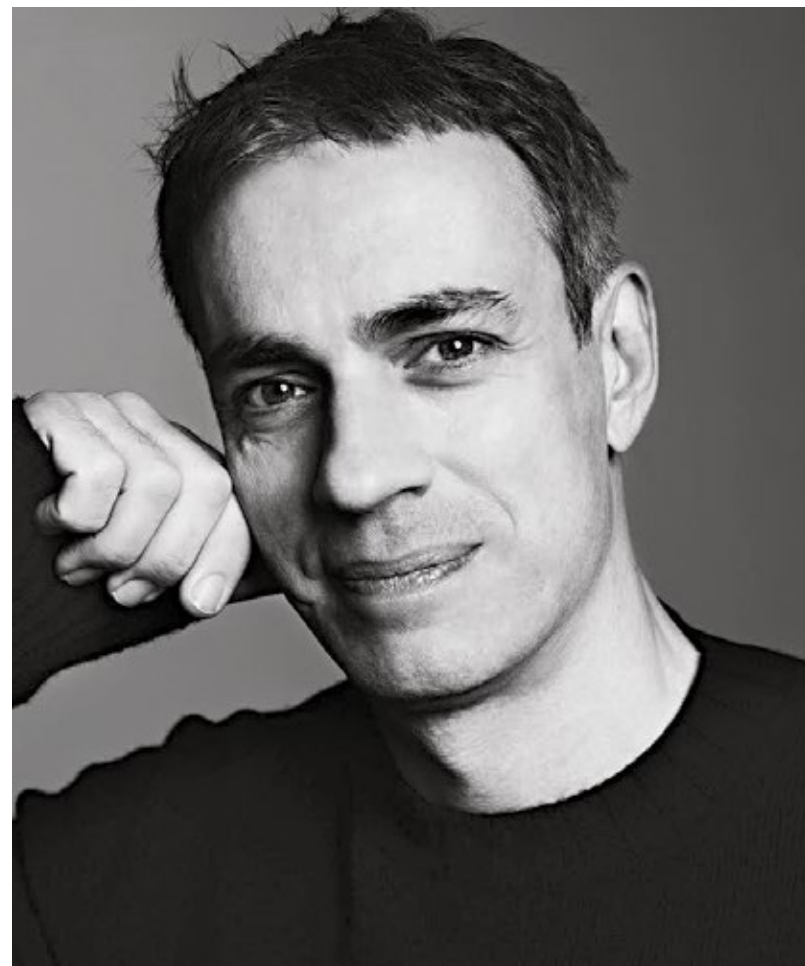
expressively and boldly fashion, the modern elegance takes shape with a punk twist,” says Bolliger.

Having spent his teen years experimenting with fashion and enjoying the myriad ways that it allows people to express themselves, Bolliger left his native Switzerland to study fashion design at Studio Berçot in Paris. Over the course of his 20-year career Bolliger has experienced constant changes in the industry, but says, “my role as a stylist and fashion editor is largely unchanged since I began. Our challenge is the same as in most industries today: the increasing demand to accomplish more in less time.” Bolliger collaborates regularly with brands such as Margaret Howell, Hermès and Giorgio Armani and contributes to publications including *Vogue Italia*, *Vogue China* and *Fantastic Man*. Without making clear distinctions between menswear and womenswear Bolliger places an emphasis on essential garments and classical styles when creating looks of perpetual beauty. He concludes, “with today’s less strict dress codes we have the freedom to rediscover classical styles in any form, but the meaning of elegance remains timeless: tasteful attire and graceful manners.”



BEAT BOLLIGER

Photographed by Solve Sundsbø



MICHAEL PHILOUZE

Photographed by Terry Tsiolis

“As long as humans have a desire to express themselves, fashion will have a purpose. The fashion will change, but the psychology behind it will remain the same,” Michael Philouze says. It was the mystery and arts and crafts of the fashion world that made Philouze dream about becoming a fashion editor. When he was young, it was a smaller industry with just a few people creating the intriguing content of fashion magazines and the fantasy worlds realised in collections and fashion shows. Now there are more people working in the industry and more clothes. The way fashion is consumed has also changed. Philouze says, “The new generation of fashion consumers is more interested in transparency, and through social media getting to know the process and the real people behind the magnified beauty on the fashion page. As a stylist your job is still to create desire, but the way to achieve it is different today.” He continues, “When working with fashion and styling you want to create beauty, something impactful that stirs the viewer’s emotions.” Now the

menswear editor of *American Vogue*, and a contributor to many international *Vogue* editions, Philouze creates fashion stories of subtle and effective beauty revealing the personalities of the characters portrayed. During his 20 years in the industry, Philouze has worked with *L’Uomo Vogue* on many stories, first as a fashion assistant and then as a regular contributor to the publication. Here, together with photographer Daniel Sannwald, he profiles the hip-hop star Travis Scott. Via understated looks, Philouze lets the mood and mindset of the rapper set the tone of the shoot. As he says: “By keeping the styling minimal, Scott’s personality and his emotions at that moment remain the focus.” The way we dress has for a long time been dictated by social class and gender. However, Philouze says, “elegance is defined not by a specific garment or style, but by your true self, which you can enhance and communicate through clothing. Today both women and men have the freedom to dress to feel beautiful and seductive in their own unique way.”

“In my work I enjoy the challenge of being creative within a framework, and fashion offers these parameters,” says Robbie Spencer. In addition to being an independent stylist, Spencer is also the creative director of *Dazed* magazine, where he first cut his teeth as a fashion assistant 13 years ago. As part of this creative collective, Spencer has witnessed first-hand the transformation of the fashion industry in the 21st century. “The structure of the business is constantly evolving, and the challenge is to adapt to it while staying true to your own sensibilities and interests,” says Spencer. Today the audience’s first point of contact with a fashion story is often digital, and on social media the making of the story is as interesting as the end result. “As a stylist you have unique access to the process of a shoot, and today you can choose to showcase your work from your own point of view,” he continues.

There are also other changes. Dressing his fashion protagonists in a juxtaposition of textures, prints and silhouettes, Spencer is reviewing the ever more fluid boundaries between the male and female wardrobe. For *L’Uomo Vogue*, together

with artist and photographer Collier Schorr, he explores the notion of masculinity and elegance. “Her work is often about challenging the idea of masculinity and femininity and what they mean today,” says Spencer on working with Schorr for this story.

Each season Spencer reinterprets the collections in fashion stories saturated with references to art, film and subcultures. In these pages his styling plays on the clichés of elegant male pin-ups of the 1950s and 1980s, reimagined by a very contemporary character, the transgender model Krow. In zoot suits and rayon shirts, Krow channels a nostalgic heart-throb character, taking his cue from suited icons like John Lurie, Chet Baker and Jim Jarmusch. The story celebrates the diverse possibilities of looking at gender and identity through fashion today. “The fashion industry needs to embrace everyone and set an example to the rest of society. I’ve always felt very strongly about supporting and championing LGBTQIA models, and putting Krow on the cover of this iconic men’s magazine is a really exciting moment. There are no longer any limitations to what menswear can be,” Spencer concludes.



ROBBIE SPENCER

Photographed by Ben Toms



MATTIAS KARLSSON

Photographed by Paul Wetherell

Mattias Karlsson grew up in a small community in the north of Sweden, far from the fashion world of which he has been a part since the late 1990s, and which was first introduced to him through magazines like *L’Uomo Vogue*, *The Face* and *Arena Homme +*. What started as a fascination for self-exploration through fashion and style soon became a way to combine his interests in art, film, photography and style. After studying art in Stockholm, he left for London where he continued to explore the potential of storytelling through fashion images. “You can fit anything and everything into an image. With photography and style combined you can tell any story you want, yet it will always reflect the time in which the image was created.” For *L’Uomo Vogue*, together with photographer Paul Wetherell, his long-time friend and collaborator, Karlsson creates a narrative of elegance based on inclusiveness and diversity. “Through the images for *L’Uomo* we want to explore what elegance is to each person we photograph, and to us.” Karlsson continues, “elegance is

defined not by gender, social class, age or time but by personality.” Bringing people together from different backgrounds, countries and cultures, he lets each character tell their own unique story. “Focusing on daywear, I want to show the elegance of the clothes people from all walks of life wear every day.”

Contributing to publications like *Another Man* and *Luncheon* (of which he is fashion director), Karlsson puts together classical garments in a witty take on good taste. An undertone of theatre and humour is part of Karlsson’s styling repertoire, visible, for example, in his playful work for Hermès and dramatic campaigns for Giorgio Armani. Having been involved in fashion for two decades, the context and environment in which the images are created have become as important to him as the current trends. On the future of the fashion industry, Karlsson reflects: “It is in the nature of fashion to constantly transform, but it is up to each of us to choose our own way to navigate the changes and together with friends and colleagues find our own path.”

Carlos Nazario set his sights on a career as a stylist when he was still in high school. Seeing the transformative power of fashion in New York while growing up, he became fascinated by how it can be utilised to change, enhance and communicate one’s personality. After 10 years working at various international magazines and assisting a number of renowned editors, he became an independent stylist three years ago. Now fashion director of *Fantastic Man* and senior fashion editor of *i-D* magazine, Nazario also works with numerous other publications and brands including Matthew Adams Dolan, Hood by Air and Roberto Cavalli.

With diverse casting, mixed cultural references, and both streetwear and tailored looks equally saturated with attitude, Nazario is reshaping what fashion can do and what elegance can be. “Elegance is an optimistic depiction of yourself, presenting yourself in the best way possible, whatever that means to you. Elegance is a mood, it is poise, the way you hold yourself, the books that you read, the food that you eat – it comes from within,” says Nazario.

For *L’Uomo Vogue* Nazario and photographer Oliver Hadlee Peach have created a story that is not just a fashion statement, but also a comment on what is going on in the world. Photographing a group of young Mexican men from East Los Angeles in oversized suit jackets and full trousers nipped in at the ankle, the story references the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles in 1943. “I was blown away by the way the Mexican men took power into their own hands by unifying through clothing. These riots in the 1940’s also feel applicable to what is going on now in the United States and across the world,” Nazario comments. As the prominence of fashion continues to increase in popular culture and in mainstream media in general, the stylist has the chance to take on a more important role as a kind of image maker and opinion leader, who can shape what the world looks like. Nazario stresses, “if a picture is powerful enough it can start conversations that need to be had, illustrate issues that already exist and hopefully help move us in the right direction.”



CARLOS NAZARIO

Photographed by Oliver Hadlee Peach