

**Kim Jones HAS ALWAYS FELT THE PULL OF JAPAN. ITS STRANGE BREW OF FANTASY-FUTURISM, SUBVERSION, TRADITION AND ULTRA-NERD FANDOM DRAWING HIM BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR, FEEDING HIS CREATIVE VISION. SO WHEN IT CAME TIME TO STAGE HIS PRE-FALL COLLECTION FOR DIOR – HIS SECOND SHOW AS THE HOUSE’S MENSWEAR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – WHERE ELSE BUT TOKYO? CUE A LASER-FRENZIED SPECTACLE OF STEELY SUITING, KIMONO JACKETS, HIGH-TECH HARDWARE AND ONE GIANT METALLIC SEXBOT.**

**BACK IN LONDON AND FRESH FROM HIS TOKYO TRIUMPH,  
Jones EXAMINES HIS LIFELONG OBSESSION WITH THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN...**

"I blame Keiko. She was my friend when I was seven or eight and she introduced me to Hello Kitty. That was my first experience of Japan. I was quite impressed because Kitty was cute and unlike anything I'd seen before. Fast forward a few years, I'm a teenager, reading magazines and seeing the amazing streetstyle things coming out of Tokyo. I was properly seduced.

I worked at Michael Kopelman's agency Gimme Five when I was in college. A Bathing Ape had been going for a bit and it was a huge cult in Japan, but you couldn't get it for love or money in England. Through Michael, I met Nigo from BAPE, and Hiroshi Fujiwara and Jun Takahashi from Undercover, and I got to know magazines like *BOON*. I kept them all. I used to go through them at my old place with Kanye and Virgil.

Michael was always really kind and gave us loads of stuff so we were wearing everything. And obviously I was aware of Comme des Garçons, Yohji, Issey Miyake from *The Face* and *i-D* and going to department stores. I remember a white Comme shirt with pearl buttons. Things like that stay with you.

When I left college, I did an exhibition of my graduate collection at The Pineal Eye. Nicola Formichetti was working there then. And Yuko. That was another link to Japan. John Galliano bought a lot of my stuff. Michael Stipe did too. And people like Honey Dijon were freaking out over all my Chicago rave flyers and records, wondering who the hell this obsessed collector was. There was a guy called Alex at Gimme Five who used to play lots of Ron Hardy and Larry Levan, and we went out to record fairs on the weekends because that was the only way to do it. Proper completist nerds.

It was around that time, in 2001, that I went to Japan for the first time. My sister gave me a ticket on Virgin air miles as a present for finishing college. She was there for a couple of days. Then I was by myself for a week, lost in translation. I found it really hard. Didn't know anyone or how to get around. No signs in English. Not much money, though I found Undercover and Bathing Ape and managed to buy a t-shirt and a pair of socks. It was exciting to go into convenience stores and all that, but it was overwhelming to be on my own. And it was November, so it was windy and cold.

The next time I went, it was spring, I was with lots of friends – Magnus, Nicola, Koji – and I completely fell in love with Tokyo. We did a shoot for *Dazed Japan*. By then, I was selling in a few places, just printed t-shirts, which was all I could afford to do, but I was getting a bit popular, which meant I had access to things people wouldn't normally get to see. There's that thing about the Japanese that they really take something on when they can relate to it. And they related to me. People understand me because I'm quite easy to understand. I think it helped that my name was easy to say. It's funny, when I do a signing now, there are people who'll bring in things I did right at the beginning. They're very completist in their approach. Just like me, the way I scour the world for the things I want. I got a nice Frank Sinatra painting the other day.

I saw that impulse with Nigo and Hiroshi and Jun, and the way they collected. Nigo's place was like the best vintage shop you could ever go to, 40 of each thing in perfect condition – Americana, lots of toys, rare KAWS things, a cold store for his clothing collection. All perfect. He auctioned off his *Star Wars* collection recently. He had every single figure in every single permutation.

From the beginning, what fascinated me about Japanese style was the way they mixed things up. In London, there were fashion tribes of different people going to different clubs. In Tokyo, they had those too, but it was mixed up. Going shopping was such a big part of the culture. They'd buy really expensive clothes and wear them with vintage jeans or cool Nikes. A completely open, forward-thinking mix of past, present and future fashion culture. Taking something vintage or American and making it better than it was, combining tradition and technology. The fabrics were great, I was always impressed by the details on everything. It was a good way to work and to make things, and it became something I felt I wanted to do.

I think a lot of what I do is also based on how I saw Nigo working with Jun, and Jun working with Hiroshi, all those people cross-pollinating, skating, doing each others' graphics. There was a sense of community and a work ethic there I found really interesting. Not like anywhere else. Rei Kawakubo supports

# DIOR

# HELLO WORLD

INTERVIEW Tim Blanks