

دبي فايفز مجلة

# DUBAI VIBES zine

VOLUME 2 - ISSUE 9 - NOVEMBER 2022

www.dubaivibesmagazine.ae

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YOURS?

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# A FASHION MAVERICK

Interview by Vassilios  
Nicolaos Vitsilogiannis



Image credit: supplied



**D**iane Pernet is a Paris-based American-born international fashion blogger, critic and founder of the international ASVOFF (A Shaded View on Fashion Film) festival.

She became a New York City fashion designer in the 1980s and she maintained a label of her own for 13 years. She relocated to Paris in the 1990s where she got her first job as a costume designer for director Amos Gitai and his film *Golem, l'Esprit d'Exile*. Pernet also worked for the CBC's *Fashion File* which led to an appointment at Hong Kong *Joyce Magazine*, where she was the fashion editor for five years.

In the late '90s, Diane took on a "Dr. Diane" fashion-advice column at *ELLE*.

Her brainchild ASVOFF showcased for the first time in September 2008, with fashion films as a centerpiece and from that point it developed into a yearly travelling international event with satellite conferences, performances and exhibitions.

Butheina Kazim of *Cinema Akil* interviewed Diane Pernet at *Fashion Forward* in Dubai when she screened a selection of ASVOFF. Diane strongly believes that Arab countries have too much to offer in Art.

Her appreciation for art is quite diverse. Most recently she was moved by *The Sleeping Chapter* by a young French artist, Théo Mercier, who has often been called the Prince of Contemporary Art. For Diane Pernet what counts the most is that the artwork passes an emotion, makes her think, it could be disturbing like Anish Kapoor's blood paintings. The blood-red installations could evoke nightmares, but the thing is they do evoke something visceral. Johan Creten is a Flemish sculptor based in Paris that works a lot with ceramics and bronze. His pieces are sensual and often sexual; recently, many are dusted with gold. She like photographers such as Daido Moriyama, she considers photography like art and appreciates his sensual, haunting night photography.

**She loves feeding on art exhibitions, films and life in general. That's her source of inspiration.**

She thinks even the most 'non-fashion' person puts consideration into what they wear. She remembers living with an old boyfriend who

was an artist and a photographer and totally against fashion thinking it was very superficial, yet he took great care in what he wore even if it was almost like an institutional workwear. Diane thinks fashion plays an important role in our lives. Some dress in labels to show the inside of their wallets and some dress to belong to a tribe like for instance the tribe of Rick Owens or Demna. Some, and they are very few, have their own distinctive style and at this point, one must define the difference between fashion and style in the most basic of terms. As she sees it one buys fashion, and it has a sellout date, but style is forever and doesn't necessarily have to cost much.

She gives a meaning to every article she wears, it expresses her personality. On the one hand, she is very warm and open as a person but by wearing dark glasses and a veil she is not encouraging people to come too close. Not at all into hugging but more Japanese in the sense that warmth is not necessarily expressed by the distance between two people.

Diane Pernet focuses on the uniqueness of documentary filmmaking in comparison with the other genres of filmmaking. She's always felt that life is stranger than fiction. In the current edition of ASVOFF, there was a focus on interesting documentaries like Bruce Weber on the Italian photographer Paolo di Paolo who took the most amazing reportage photographs but when the newspaper he worked for closed he did not lift his camera for 50 years and his own daughter had no idea what a brilliant photographer her father was. At the age of 95 when he'd not taken photos for 50 years Pier Paolo from Valentino contacted him to take backstage photos at his couture show and the story of his life was told in a poetic and emotionally moving way. More than ever she thinks people born around the 90's have a hunger for what went on before them and that has been captured in films like *Kingdom of Dreams Part one and two* which cover the golden years of fashion, or a documentary on Azzedine Alaïa A French Couturier by Olivier Nicklaus or a film on *Sisters with Transistors* tracing the women in electronic music through the ages or a film on Guy Bourdin the epic photographer are all really immersive and it is like reading an autobiography of someone you admire but set to emotion and with the elements of the image and sound a personal entry into a world that you would not ordinarily be privy too.

One day Diane made her decision to leave for Paris. New York in the end of 1990 was like *Blade Runner* in the worst of ways, 80% of Diane's neighborhood was dead or dying from AIDS, the homeless situation was out of control, drugs were rampant as was crime and as a fashion designer, which is what she was at that time, this just was not inspiring. She thought about leaving for at least 4 years before she took the leap across the ocean with no strategy and no plan other than she could not stand living in New York anymore. Diane believes that Parisian society is not an open society. She recalls moments from NYC where the New York society embraced foreigners, in Paris, they repel them. It was tough the first three years, but she was determined to stick it out. Thirty-two years later she still lives in Paris.

Diane studied film, that is what she got her degree in all those decades ago, she had her own brand as a fashion designer in New York for 13 years and in between she worked a little bit as a costume designer for films and understood that there was a fear of fashion for most directors and by putting together ASVOFF, the first festival actually was in 2006 and it was called *You Wear it Well*, Diane wanted to show how one supports the other so in a way it was joining a circle, a circle that was her life experience. She likes to support fashion designers and filmmakers but more than anything what ASVOFF really is, it is a cultural event: fashion, culture, film. It is not about advertising or celebrity, it is about creation.

She loved paying tribute to Alejandro Jodorowsky, William Klein, she is happy to say she gave the talented Woodkid his first concert in Paris.

Diane Pernet discloses some of her future plans. She collaborates with Konstantinos Menelaou, a film director living in Athens, for a documentary. She is starting a membership to ASVOFF via the creation of a limited number of NFT's. She is looking forward to doing something in Japan next May and who knows what else is in store... just keep going forward as long as she can.

Photo credits of Ruven Afanador, Christian Tarro Toma & ASVOFF