

Margiela, the Hermès years

To Jenny Meirens and Jean-Louis Dumas

Martin Margiela

MARGIELA
THE
HERMÈS
YEARS

Preface

- 7 Suzy Menkes
- 9 Kaat Debo
- 11 Olivier Gabet

Dedication

- 19 Marie-Claude Gallien

Essays

- 25 Kaat Debo Margiela, The Hermès Years
- 109 Vincent Wierink The Words of a Wardrobe
- 183 Rebecca Arnold Luxury, Luxe, Luxus. Redefining fashion for the new millennium
- 231 Sarah Mower A View from the Front Row
- 253 Ina Delcourt The Ghost Wardrobe

Interviews

- 67 Sandrine Dumas
- 85 Pierre-Alexis Dumas
- 97 Jenny Meirens
- 98 Olivier Zahm
- 142 Véronique Nichanian
- 146 Linda Loppa
- 150 Nadège Vanhée-Cybulski
- 163 Patrick Scallon
- 170 Sophie Pay
- 176 May Vervoordt
- 197 Joanna Van Mulder
- 198 Sibylle de Saint Phalle
- 203 Kanako Koga
- 205 Kate Betts
- 210 Marina Faust
- 214 Akiko Fukai
- 225 Christian Blanckaert
- 245 Stéphane Wagnier



HERMÈS, Autumn-Winter 2003-04,
kimono sleeve in double-faced
cashmere.

SUZY MENKES

The idea of deconstruction as an art form was a bold gesture at the end of the 1980s. Fashion was then at its most affluent and extravagant – bold, brash and shouting to be noticed. Only a still small voice of calm was speaking a different language. Instead of excess, there was distressed cloth. In the face of exaggeration was becalmed elegance. The orgy of opulence was here replaced by clothes that were deliberately deconstructed with visible darts, frayed hems and shoes with split toes.

Martin Margiela changed the course of fashion – but subtly, subversively. Even more elusive and invisible than Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, Margiela rejected the catwalk, the supermodels and the idea of using his own persona to head up his brand. His studio was painted white from ceiling to floor and his staff wore white coats, as if they were workers in a fashion laboratory.

After graduating from Antwerp's Royal Academy of Arts in 1980, Martin Margiela spent his formative years with Jean Paul Gaultier, from 1984 to 1987. Then, in 1988, he and Jenny Meirens established Maison Martin Margiela, built on loose threads and labelled with a square of large white stitches.

It was the maverick side of this designer that gave him fashion status. His collection featured clothes wrapped in dry-cleaner plastic, shown on rough land on the outskirts of Paris; the invitation was scribbled on the outside of an envelope; wigs were used like strands of thread; and clothes were presented in two sections, one black, the other white.

Margiela's skill was to make the ordinary extraordinary. And the top note came with his unexpected collaboration with Hermès, from 1997 to 2003. This was fashion's arch-radical, facing off the noble French house. Hospital-coat white meets sunset orange. Layers of impeccable tailoring built on the V-shaped *vareuse* gave the collaboration a timeless elegance. Hand-sewn buttons, with threads stitched into an 'H' for Hermès, showed their robust attention to detail. Even after 18 years hanging in storage, the quality of the finest leather, cashmere and cloth remains exceptional.

The exhibition put together by Kaat Debo at MoMu, the Fashion Museum in Antwerp, is a fashion memory bank. Realized before the age of the Internet, smart phones or instant images on Instagram, Margiela's exceptional application of modern elegance might well have been lost. This exhibition reveals and unfurls his innate classicism – with a maverick twist.



KAAT DEBO

How exceptional it is to have the honour of presenting a designer whose work has consistently been based on infinite respect for women, at a time in which all around the world, hundreds of thousands of women are coming onto the streets to demand their rights and respect for their physical integrity. Martin Margiela's collaboration with the French house of Hermès (1997-2003) is the starting point for the book that lies before you and the eponymous exhibition at the Antwerp Fashion Museum. *Margiela, The Hermès Years* covers not only his work for Hermès, but also looks more deeply into his own label, Maison Martin Margiela, as two worlds with a single artistic DNA. For Hermès, Margiela developed a vision in which the woman herself is central, not as an ideal image of eternal youth, but a real, natural and independent woman. For her, he developed a slowly evolving wardrobe with comfort, quality and timelessness as fundamental elements. He presented his collections on women of differing ages and body types, something that was not only an exceptional statement in the late 1990s, but unfortunately still is today. And, although he designed his vision for Hermès within the well-defined segment of luxury fashion, its impact reached much further. Margiela's fashion adapted itself to its wearer, instead of forcing itself onto her body. His designs offer potential answers to the question of what it is to be a woman. In this and many other aspects, Martin Margiela was well before his time. His entire oeuvre is shaped from a great knowledge of and deep respect for the past. Craftsmanship, skill and creation are the building blocks of a vision that not only then, but still today offers an alternative to a system of fashion that is increasingly under pressure.

Margiela, The Hermès Years would not have been possible without the support and enthusiasm of many people. For the realisation of both this book and the exhibition, we were able to count on the loyal cooperation of Hermès and Maison Martin Margiela. My thanks go out to the administrators of the archives and the teams of both houses. In particular, I thank Axel Dumas (CEO, Hermès) and Pierre-Alexis Dumas (Artistic Director, Hermès) for their exceptional collaboration and unflinching hospitality towards my team. A special word of thanks also goes to those who have made works available on loan for the exhibition and to the authors and photographers for their indispensable contributions to the book. I am delighted, of course, to thank the entire Fashion Museum team, most especially Karen, Elisa, Robby, David, Birgit, Monica, Wim, Frédéric and Danique. My sincere thanks also to Bob Verhelst and Jelle Jespers, respectively, for the design of the exhibition and the book.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to Martin Margiela. I hope that *Margiela, The Hermès Years* will be seen as a gesture of great respect for the exceptional creativity of an outstanding designer whose fashion heritage has continued to feed and excite the fashion world for more than three decades.

Director and curator in chief, MoMu, Fashion Museum Antwerp







HERMÈS, Autumn-Winter 1998-99,
vareuse vest in teddy lambskin,
seamless pullover and removable
collar in cashmere, gloves in
cashmere.





HERMÈS, Autumn-Winter 1998-99,
sleeveless dress in tricotine with zippers in
the side seams, which can be transformed
into a tunic over wide trousers in the same
material.



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA, Spring-Summer 1997, invisible zippers in darts and seams make the narrow dress wearable. It is worn over a jacket in raw linen, in the form of tailor's dummy, jeans and leather tabi boots.



SANDRINE DUMAS

I met Martin Margiela through my very close friend Pierre Rougier, who began working with him in 1990. The first show I saw was the 'Terrain Vague' show, in the 20th arrondissement in Paris. It was a total riot, with journalists trying to get in, and models walking around with the neighbourhood children on their shoulders. It was a very lively moment!

With regards to my role in the appointment of Martin Margiela to Hermès, in the 1990s, I modelled in a few fashion shows for Martin, so of course my father knew of him and the esteem in which I held his work. One morning, my father phoned me and explained to me that Claude Brouet, in charge of women's ready-to-wear at the time, had discussed a few names with him for her successor. He wanted to know which name made the most sense to me. He added that Claude Brouet was also listening. I immediately pointed out Martin as the most creative and challenging choice. So let's say I participated in his decision process. But he made the final call.

Of course we discussed it a few times, because how big can the risk be when you appoint a huge talent by your side? I believe my father was quite proud of this decision, because if it seemed an unexpected choice for some people, it gave a clear insight into Hermès' fashion ambition.

There was something obvious about the combination of Martin and my father. They shared a vision of working towards ultimate perfection, a sense of detail, of craftsmanship. They also shared an infinite curiosity. Martin Margiela had such an intelligent approach towards the DNA of Hermès. Moreover, with Hermès,

he could work with new materials that he never had the opportunity to work with at Maison Martin Margiela. Even if it was sometimes provocative, he had a very serene vision of women, not a sexually aggressive one, for instance.

What I most appreciate in his work is that he created clothes that, in a way, seemed to have always existed. It was as if, by looking through the archives, he brought ghosts back to life, giving them an eternal modernity. And they were so comfortable...

In terms of innovation, I think that his presence made people look at Hermès differently, seeing its innovative spirit. Also, his inventiveness and playful reversal of some of the Hermès codes liberated the creative energies in the house itself. But this is only speculation. He created a vision for the Hermès woman which all the designers who have worked for Hermès since have adopted.

I still remember the private presentation of his first Hermès collection that he did for me. All the clothes were hanging in a vast and empty room and he took me around, showing me each detail, the edge of the shirt rolled like a scarf, the six holes in the buttons to create an 'H'... I will never forget the pure jubilation in his eyes and the joy he took from sharing his work. After each show we did for Maison Martin Margiela, Martin would give us an outfit. It was a long time ago, and I still wear them! Once you wear his clothes, you always go back to them...

Actress and daughter of Jean-Louis Dumas



2000

EXHIBITION (PARIS, 2018)

MAD

PRESIDENT

Pierre-Alexis Dumas

DIRECTOR GENERAL

David Caméo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

Olivier Gabet

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Pascale de Seze

EXHIBITION

Curator's Office

GENERAL CURATOR

Olivier Gabet

CURATOR

Marie-Sophie Carron de la Carrière

ASSISTED BY

Marie-Pierre Ribère

PRODUCTION

Exhibitions Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD

Jérôme Recours

PROJECT LEADER

Stéphane Perl

ASSISTED BY

Francesco Pastore

ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Martin Margiela

SCENOGRAPHY

Bob Verhelst

SIGNAGE

Agnès Dahan Studio

Agnès Dahan, Raphaëlle Picquet

LENDERS

MOMU - FASHION MUSEUM ANTWERP

HERMÈS

Ready-to-wear, shoes, accessories
and cultural heritage teams

MAISON MARGIELA

LAILA CO.,LTD

INDIVIDUAL LENDERS

Pascaline Bachelet

Léa Bouchet

Kristina de Coninck

Astrid de Gerlache

Karin Dillen

Sandrine Dumas

Marie-Claude Gallien

Béatrice Gouyet

Inge Grognard

Danique Klijs

Linda Loppa

Agnès Poncet

Hermine Redeke

Maria Schaefer

Pascale Siegrist-Mussard

Ingrid Smits

And those who preferred to stay anonymous.

The exhibition has received the support of Hermès.


 The logo consists of the letters 'MAD' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are stacked vertically, with 'M' on top, 'A' in the middle, and 'D' on the bottom. The 'M' and 'D' are wider than the 'A', creating a balanced, rectangular shape.

CATALOGUE

This catalogue was published as part of the exhibition MARGIELA, THE HERMÈS YEARS, conceived and presented in Antwerp by the Fashion Museum Antwerp (MoMu), 31 March – 27 August 2017, and presented at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 22 March – 2 September 2018.

AUTHORS

Rebecca Arnold
Kaat Debo
Ina Delcourt
Elisa De Wyngaert
Olivier Gabet
Suzy Menkes
Sarah Mower
Karen Van Godtsenhoven
Vincent Wierink

TRANSLATION

Mari Shields

COPY EDITING

Mari Shields

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jelle Jaspers

PHOTOGRAVURE

Johan Bursens

IMAGE RESEARCH

Birgit Ansoms
Elisa De Wyngaert
Monica Ho
Karen Van Godtsenhoven
Nora Veerman

HERMÈS

Cultural Heritage, Communication and
Press teams

COVER

Exhibition view 'Margiela, The Hermès Years',
MoMu-Fashion Museum Antwerp, 2017
Photo: Stany Dederen
Graphic design: Jelle Jaspers
Concept: Martin Margiela

PUBLISHER

© Lannoo Publishers, Belgium, 2018
ISBN 978 94 014 5236 6 – D/2018/45/149
NUR: 452/644

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

MoMu - Fashion Museum Antwerp has made every effort to trace copy right holders. If, however, you feel that you have inadvertently been overlooked, please contact the publisher.

www.lannoo.com

Register on our website for our newsletter with new publications as well as exclusive offers.

If you have any questions or remarks, please contact our editorial team: redactiestijl@lannoo.com.