

# A cut above

Who are the hottest new fashion photographers? We turned to the experts for answers, and there's not a Mario Testino in sight. [Diane Smyth](#) reveals all

Fashion is nothing if it's not innovative, and that applies to the photography as much as the clothes. New names are constantly emerging, presenting different takes on fashion imagery with which they hope to hit the big time. But who stands out among the latest generation? We asked fashion agents, curators and photographers to recommend their favourites, and each in their own way is the polar opposite of the 'work it baby' stereotype. Instead of hi-gloss glamour, they espouse the use of lo-tech craft and hi-tech multimedia.

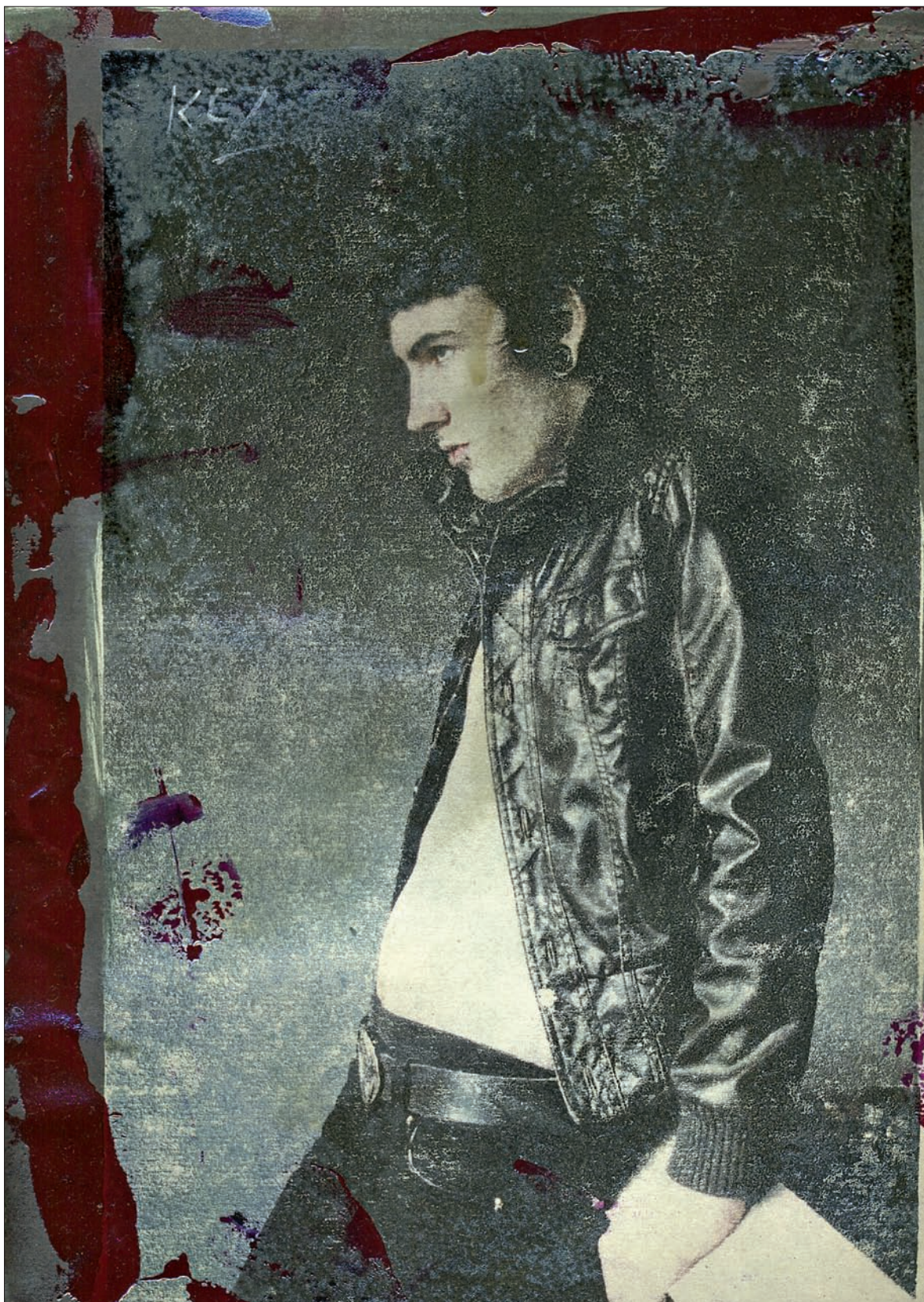
## Toyin Ibiidapo

Tim Walker is hot property right now, shooting regular assignments for *Vogue*, while the Design Museum recently gave over a whole exhibition to his work in fashion. So who does he tip as the Next Big Thing? 'Toyin Ibiidapo's work stands out because it is instantly recognisable,' he says, pointing in particular to her *Cult of Boys* project. 'They're fashion photographs which hold so much more than just the fashion.'

'The absolute point of fashion photography is to provide some sense of what's going on in fashion, but it's what you mix that information with that's really interesting. Whether it's a sense of portraiture of an interesting model, a fantasy or a narrative, the deeper the river runs the more valuable the resultant fashion photograph.'

'Toyin's photographs could be bracketed into the fashion picture category, but the layers run so much deeper. Her images are just as much tender, personal portraits of the boys she captures as they are portraits of herself as an artist, responding to what she is seeing. They're relevant to fashion's eternal pre-occupation with youth and cool, and they also perfectly carry the torch of the beauty of damned youth, which was previously held by Corinne Day and Will McBride.'

Ibiidapo, who's based in London, has shot for *Wonderland*, *Dazed & Confused* and Sony



Above: Image, from *Cult of the Boys* © Toyin Ibiidapo, selected by Tim Walker.



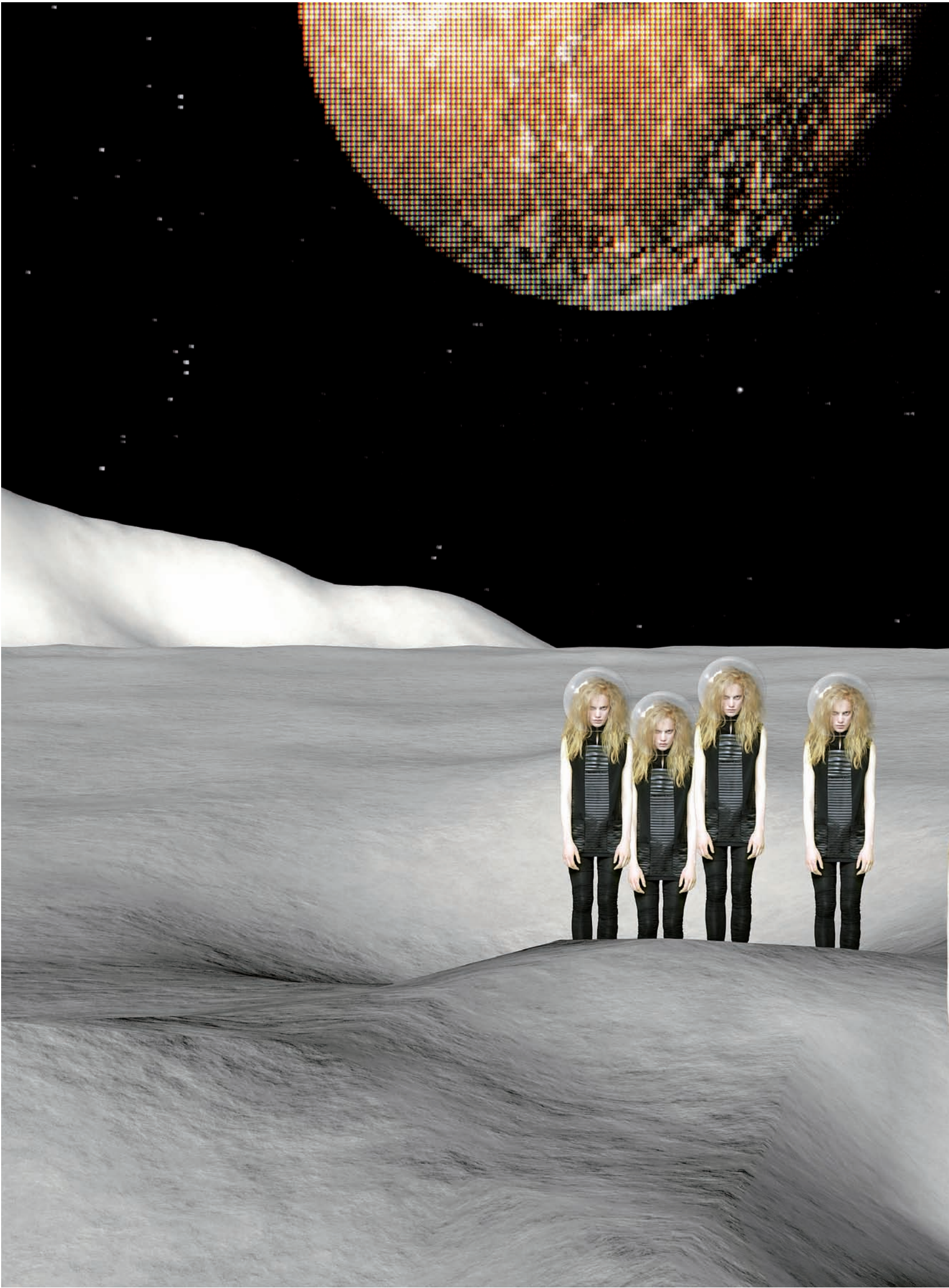




Image © Reed+Rader, selected by Susan Bright.





Left: Image © Can Evgin,  
selected by Miles Aldridge.

Right: Image © Mel Bles,  
selected by Anna Suznjovic.

BMG but, having graduated from Bournemouth back in 1994, says she's most interested in shooting images she likes now. 'I shoot boys in a provocative way, and straight, male art directors sometimes find it hard to take,' she says. 'They don't know what to do with it – are they supposed to be turned on, or to identify with the men the way that women do with female fashion models? Some even told me I couldn't shoot men, which was when I realised I'd have to stick to my guns and do it my way.'

She's worked on the *Cult of Boys* for eight years, shooting the images in her bedroom and funding it herself. Having built up a substantial body of work, she now hopes to publish it as a book. 'That's my plan for this year,' she says. 'I've got to do it – so many people know about the damned thing.'

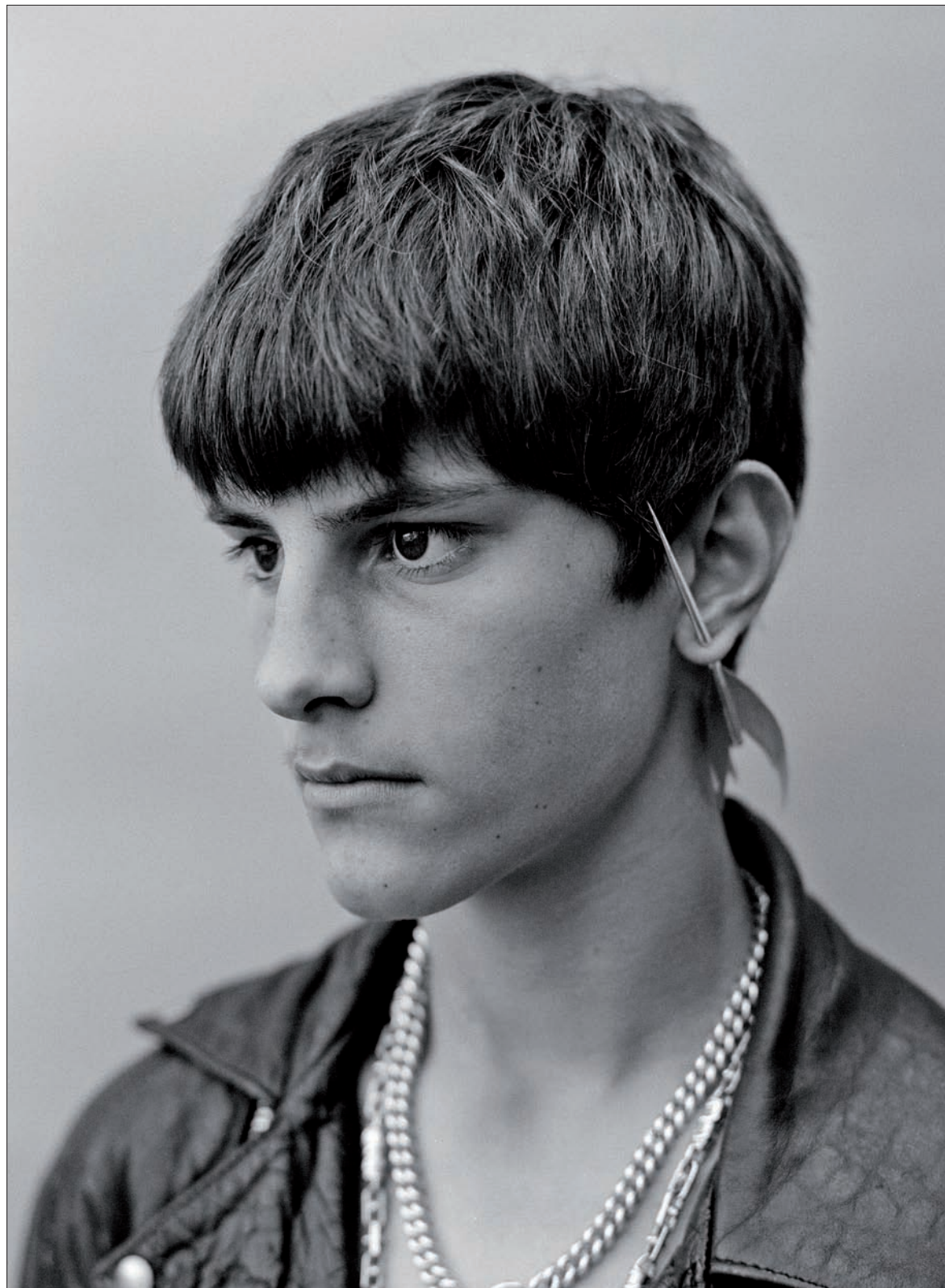
### Reed+Rader

Writer and curator Susan Bright picked out New York-based photography duo Reed+Rader for recognition, citing the tangible energy of their work.

'They seem very fresh at a time when so much fashion photography is commercially driven, not very experimental and rather safe,' she says. 'There is also a welcome element of fun. They utilise very contemporary methods of production but their work has an almost 1960s feel, with 'handmade' props and a mix of illustration and photography.'

Fresh they certainly are, having graduated from New York's School of Visual Arts in 2007. But, as Bright is well aware, their sense of fun and DIY aesthetic belies a sly sophistication, which is creating a stir at fashion's cutting edge. In fact, they got involved with fashion photography, they tell *BJP*, because it allows them to be creative. 'We like magazines like *V*, *Pop*, *Dazed & Confused*, which allow photographers to be really free,' they say (and they literally share the phone call). 'Our work is photography but it's also illustration, design and many other things.'

It's also incredibly technically advanced – Bright describes their Youtube portfolio as 'like a conceptual art video'. They laugh the complement off, poking fun at their 'nerdy' love of computers,



but in fact computers and digital imaging are a major driving force. From innovative use of software to 'moving stills' videos, they're at the vanguard of new technology. 'It's such an interesting time for photography,' they say. 'It will be really interesting to see what happens with photography and magazines as they move away from paper pages.'

Where do they want to be in five years' time? 'Diane, I just want to be on the moon,' says

Pamela Reed. As Bright puts it, they're out there. But, as she adds: 'It's because they're out there, doing their own thing, that they will be really successful.'

### Can Evgin

Turkish photographer Can Evgin has only been in London for a year but he's already caught the eye of this week's *BJP* cover star, Miles Aldridge. 'I hate boring pretty girls with their boring boyfriends on skateboards,' says

'I love the mad ones. The impossible loves, the drunks, the anxiety cases... never happy, never bored, questioning of life and constantly captured in beautiful light by Can Evgin.'



Aldridge. 'I love the mad ones. The impossible loves, the drunks, the anxiety cases... never happy, never bored, questioning of life and constantly captured in beautiful light by Can Evgin.'

He's also caught the eye of the fashion magazines, and in recent months has worked with *Qvest*, *Tank* and *British Vogue*. 'I left Turkey when I was 18 and have been living in Manhattan for the last six years,' he explains. 'But there were only really three American magazines I was interested in – *V*, *W* and *US Vogue*. Somehow I've always worked more for the European magazines, so it's useful to be here.'

Evgin shoots both fashion and portraits, and says portraiture is central to all his fashion work. 'I try to capture whoever it is I'm shooting,' he says. 'The image is more about them than me or what they're wearing. Casting is really important to me; I have to find something in the person.'

Entirely self-taught, Evgin first got into photography by assisting photographers for a couple of years before breaking out on his own. But having taught himself this much, he doesn't intend to relax – like many of the young fashion photographers in this article, he's currently exploring fashion video. 'There's a lot more to do in fashion photography now,' he says. 'There's a real excitement and energy.'

### Jez Tozer

Respected fashion photography agent Anna Suznjec gives a brief recommendation for Jez Tozer – but it's to the point. 'He used to assist Nick Knight and he's great,' she says.

As Craig McDean and Sølve Sundsbø can attest, assisting Nick Knight doesn't do an aspiring fashion photographer any harm at all – McDean once famously stated that he 'learnt more in my first month with Nick than in four years at college'. Tozer echoes his works, describing his three-year stint as 'an incredible technical journey through 10x8, digital and big budget studio shoots, both still and commercial'. Plus, he adds, he was exposed to leading talents in the fashion industry, from models and stylists to hair and makeup, retouching and production.

For Tozer, the challenge has been learning to wear that learning lightly. 'I think it is probably inevitable, having worked so closely with someone as visionary and technically evolved as Nick, that you will for some period of time display what you have learnt. The first time I really started to take my own pictures was in a series I shot during open castings in the middle of last year. It was very much about letting the subjects find their own space, however comfortable or not they were in front of the camera.'

It's a modest claim but perhaps not one that his clients would agree with – he's shot for Lancome, Swarovski, Yves St Laurent, *i-D*, *Intersection* and *Japanese Vogue*, among many others. But not all his commercial work is still, because he has a burgeoning interest in, and aptitude for, fashion video.

'I'm making more and more short fashion films, which can mainly be found on Show Studio's site,' he says. 'It started when Nick asked me to collaborate with Aitor Throup, whose graduate collection I had shot for *i-D* magazine. The film was shown as part of Aitor's debut installation in September 2007, and I made another film with Aitor the following season. It just went on from there. Most recently I shot with Aganovich, Show Studio and *Dazed & Confused Japan*.'

### Mel Bles

Anna Suznjec is equally brief – and enthusiastic – in recommending Mel Bles. 'Her menswear is brilliant!' she says. 'Amazing!'

Bles had an unusual path into fashion photography – though she studied at St Martins, she took a graphic design course. But the tutors were open-minded and by the last year, she was focusing on photography. On graduating in 2000 she assisted Benjamin Huseby and William Selby –

neither of whom are strictly fashion photographers but both of whom are, as she puts it 'very good at what they do'.

'You have to be quite careful about who you work with early on because it sort of shapes your life,' she adds.

Her trajectory since has been enviable, with magazines commissions for the likes of *V*, *British Vogue* and *Wallpaper\**. Some of these shoots were for portraits, not fashion though and Bles says that her non-fashion photography is key to her work. 'Obviously fashion is important but I try not to let it overwhelm my work,' she says. 'My images need to be informed by other things. You're the photographer, not a member of the fashion department, so what you produce has to work photographically.'

'I shoot portraits and landscapes, and I shoot a lot of self-assigned work. I try to keep my fashion personal, so that it feels interesting and intriguing. It's important to find your own message and be happy in that, not feel you have to be shoe-horned into something else.' **BJP**

**Above: Image © Jez Tozer, selected by Anna Suznjec.**

#### Online

melbles.com  
canevgin.net  
toyinibidapo.com  
reedandrader.com  
jeztozer.com