

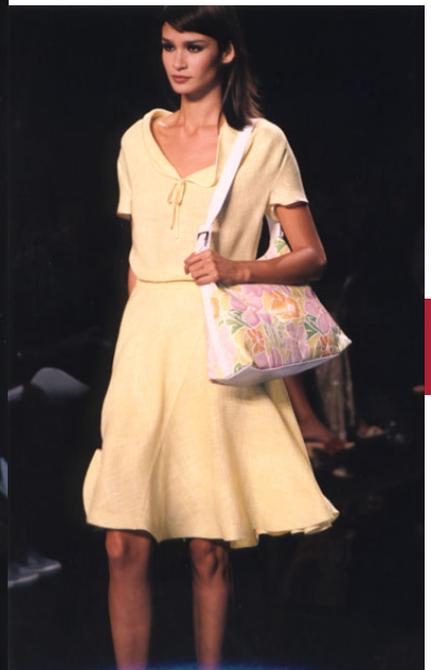
Fashion Forward 2003

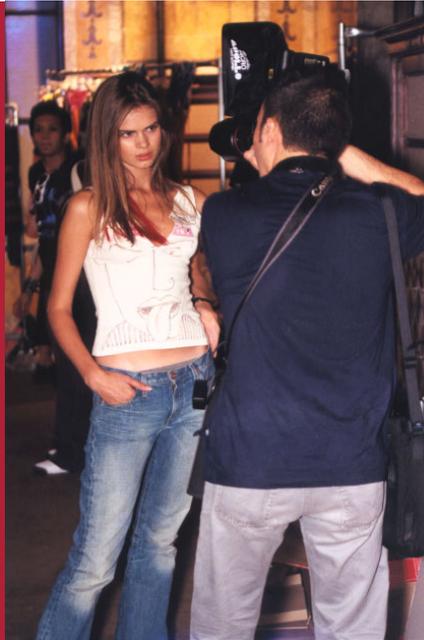
Both sassy and classy, Spring '03 styles are flaunting lots of ribbons, bountiful polka dots, pretty pastels and the softest satins. Weighing in are four of fashion's directional influences, designer Custo Dalmau of Custo Barcelona, Joe Lupu, founding partner of Visual Therapy and *Sex & The City* stylist Patricia Field with David Dalrymple of the House of Field.

By Syl Tang



Caroline Ribeiro and Omahyra are pastel pretty at Luca Luca.





Left to right: Backstage with Custo Dalmau. Model backstage. R&B sensation Mya.

**CUSTO DALMAU
OF CUSTO BARCELONA**

Although you caught the attention of the fashion world with the beauty of your boldly colored tops, you have, more recently, initiated work with a denim line.

What other parts of our wardrobe can we look forward to filling out with Custo designs?

Well, we have swimwear, and now we will have shoes and bags as well. [Next Spring/Summer.] You can get them mostly in specialty stores and the New York store will be our second complete store of our own. We will be opening Los Angeles and San Francisco stores by the end of 2003. Right now you can only get the shoes — the sneakers — in stores in Europe. This is why we are opening our own — you have to. Department stores focus on our print T-shirts. We know there are consumers who want more — this is a problem for all designers — if you are strong in a certain item, then your collection is diluted in the market because the retail shops focus on that one thing.

Describe the design dynamic between you and your brother David?

We started 22 years ago. We are close partners and we design together. I take care of the marketing and he overlooks production. Quality is very important to us.

What city inspires you the most?

There's not just one city. It's traveling. I've been doing it since I was nine years — going from one culture to another. The first city I ever visited I think was Geneva.

Would you agree if I said you were the Jack Kerouac of designers?

Makes sense!

What are your feelings on Lycra?

Lycra is a great invention. It's a big commodity for a woman.

Has a pattern or design ever come to you in a dream?

What we do is very intense. So sometimes when you go to bed, you don't disconnect, you are still working.

What's up with your first US store being in Chicago?

We wanted to do NY but last year before 9-11, it was difficult to find the right space in Soho. When the opportunity appeared in Chicago, we took it.

I heard surfers were the cause of inspiration for many of your creations. Are you, by chance, any good at the sport?

This year, I learned how to kite surf. You know, it's surfing but with a kite, a sail behind you.

When celebrities want to show off your talent in a movie or show do they need approval from you?

No, we always give approval. It's okay with us!

If you could be partners with any other designer for a day who would they be?

No one! My brother is a perfect partner.

Gisele at Marc Jacobs at Eric Goode's Millenium Hotel



Describe the personalities of the men and woman for whom you design.

They are men and women with a “young spirit.” They want to express individuality.

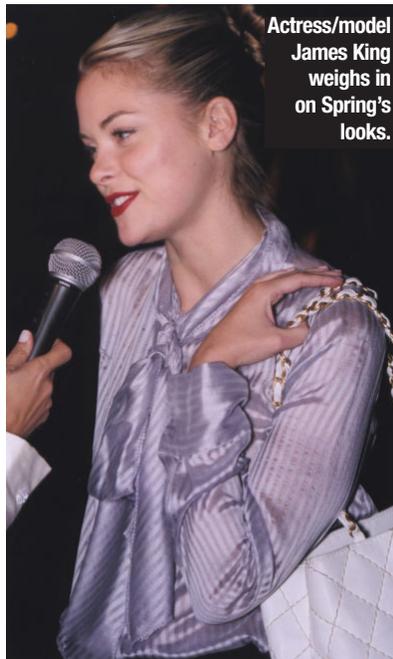
Which one item from your show this season, should any self-respecting hipster not be without?

Oooh. One item. That’s so hard. It would have to be one of the Victorian items. The knit blouses. There are 10 this collection with knit cuffs. And for the men, it would have to be the pants — printed pants.

Is it acceptable for one to drink a beverage other than champagne, while backstage at one of your shows?

Well, yes. Wine!

You have never been on the receiving end of trends - what keeps you sharp? Is there a secret that keeps your designs so consistently chic?



Actress/model James King weighs in on Spring’s looks.



Wigstock founder Lady Bunny at House of Field.

The work — it’s very intensive. Always keep the personality and identity of your product. People have to recognize our product without looking at the label. So we have to be loyal to the concept. You also have to be intensive in the factories, always looking for new materials, new techniques. And you never follow trends.

JOE LUPO OF VISUAL THERAPY

NY Mag named you the best personal shopper in the city. Are you NY’s best at anything else?

I certainly hope so! We all try to be the best. But to be the best cannot be self-declared. Although, I’ve been told that I am the best kisser!

The name of your firm is Visual Therapy. Is fashion truly therapeutic?

Fashion is completely therapeutic when clarified and properly organized. Jesse Garza, my partner, calls fashion the icing on the cake of life — an extension of your inner feelings and part of your identity. Identity is being clear on who you are. It’s the image you put out and how you want to be perceived by others.

When someone comes in for a consultation, do you have them recline on a leather sofa during the session?

No, but depending on where they are — home or office — they have to be where they feel most comfortable. In our office there’s a cashmere Knoll sofa. In their homes, it’s many times on the floor of the closet.

What would Freud say about The Gap?

Freud wrestled with unconscious motivations. He would be motivated to fall into the Gap.



Joe Lupo and Jesse Garza of Visual Therapy.



Usher and Chili at Marc Jacobs.

What is the greatest accessory of all time?

I can't say just one! I have to say two! Hair by Stephen Knoll. He's the most genius. If you are fortunate enough to have hair, you should spend money on it! Have you ever seen a beautiful girl in the perfect outfit and the hair is all wrong, and it just ruins the whole thing, especially if it's the wrong color. Shoes are also definitely it. For a woman who is confident, the shoes make it. Shoes can give you strength and height. You can be sexy or not, powerful or not. They are such an important piece. You can do Blahniks with old jeans and you could look amazing. It all begins with that. Patrick Cox is my favorite. He immerses himself in pop culture and youth. He's a young, cool kid who will never grow up and is always copied.

If you were to be reincarnated as an accessory, what would you be?

I would be a watch. When it's good, it's always on time. It's something people have their whole life. I have two different watches. A Patrick Cox, which you can't find in the US. It weighs a ton but it's very modern and cool. I also have a 1970 Rolex Oyster Bay stainless steel.

How did you develop your razor-sharp fashion eye?

I always try to be my own personal best. I used to be in banking and each season I bought an amazing suit. Back then it was Armani Black Label. It was my power suit and every Friday I would wear it. I believe every piece of clothing should be your favorite piece. You should love it or it goes. Your closet should be as pared down as possible and you should have clarity in your wardrobe. When we work with



Salmon Rushdie and actress Padma Lakshmi at Luca Luca.



Victoria's Secret Model Frederique and Harry Hamlin

corporations, we clarify what's in every season—what must be hanging in a hip closet. You should be able to shop your closet. Clothing should be a tool. If you wake up and it's a bad day and your hair's not working, nothing feels good, you must have the right outfit. You know one of those days when they misunderstand what you say when you order your coffee. Clothing is

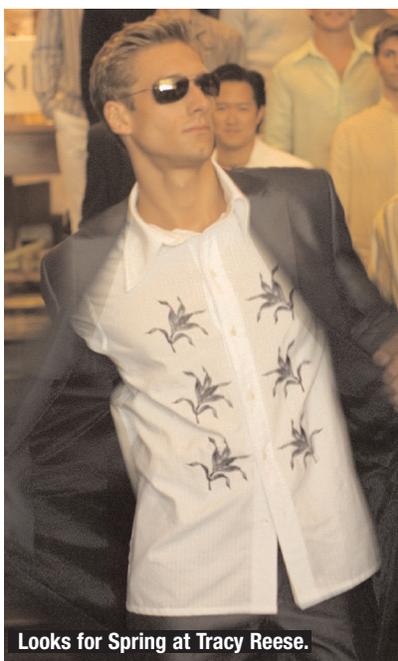
how you're perceived. People treat you differently. Your wardrobe is your mask. Jesse calls it your "Don't mess with me fellas" suit. It's from when Joan Crawford goes to see the boys at Coke in Mommie Dearest and she has her hat and gloves.

Which celebs do you think qualify as genuine fashion emergencies?

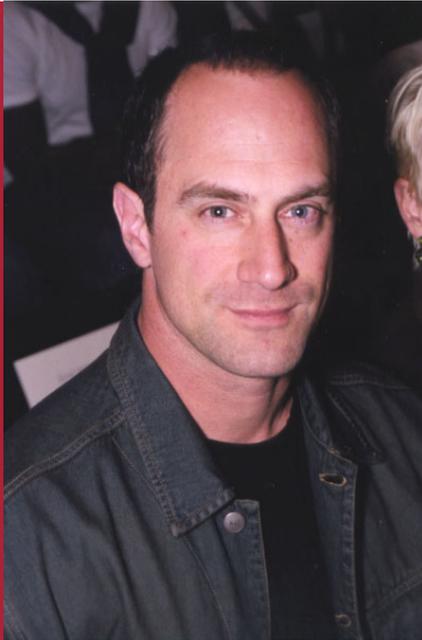
Our first rule of practice is to never judge. We like to say people are victimized by fashion and it's not their fault. One thing that's important to us is we love any celeb who pays for their clothing. Designers have a tough life and they get taken advantage of a lot. If a celeb can pay for their clothing, they should. I love Dolly Parton personally. She's so comfortable in her style. She radiates an inner beauty.



CHRISTOPHER M. LYNCH



Looks for Spring at Tracy Reese.



Left to right: Law & Order's Chris Meloni checks out Luca Luca. Feminine Jumpsuits at Christopher Deane. Jane Krakowski showing off Spring's delicate look.

It's not a style I get but she embraces it and it's her own. She's an example of someone other people would say is a fashion emergency but she embraces her style. And I'm not even a fan of her music!

Have you ever met anyone beyond your help?

Yes, several! The unwilling! They can't really see who they are. You have to know and love yourself, see who you are. Embrace your weight, skin and hair. These are people who make the decision that it's not for them at their initial consultation.

Do you believe in the idea of shopping addiction? Can it ever be detrimental, other than to your credit rating?

Absolutely. People need to fill a void. It's like overeating or overdrinking. You should have a predetermined goal when you go out and have an idea of what you want to buy. You're definitely allowed to treat yourself 100%.

I heard that most shoppers turn to the right when they enter a store; why is that?

People are trained to always walk to the right. Even in London. It's just natural.

What are the financial repercussions of playing Muzak in stores, versus trendy pop, do you think?

It's all about the mood. The music, smell, temperature and the appropriate lighting is used to target the customer. Nothing should be taking away from the product.

Psychologists say orange antagonizes yet fashion designers love it. Why? Does it sell well?

Orange is very difficult. There are trend colors and you should do accessories in trend colors—an orange handbag, an orange sweater around the shoulders.

How does that happen that there is just one color every year? Is there some magical conspiracy?

Textile designs are how colors happen. There are textile designs on display in Paris where designers go.

Why purple this year?

Purple reflects strength and health due to 9-11. Spring colors are always bright and vivid.

If you could only attend one show this year, which would it be?

Dolce and Gabbana because they are so directional and fun. Their collections are mimicked for years after. It's genius.

What do you see as the hottest trend striding across



the runways this season?

I definitely see a gothic trend this season. For men it's nice rich fabrics. I call it "active luxe".

What do you think of Lycra?

I love it. The stretch. It's one of the strongest sellers. Lycra with luxurious fabric, such as cashmere. Stretch leather. People are all about functional luxury. Makes them mobile. Our needs have changed.

PATRICIA FIELD & DAVID DALRYMPLE OF HOUSE OF FIELD

Who has been your most favorite person to dress?

PF: Oh, I couldn't pick just one favorite. There have been so many! Each person comes with something different to offer. Each person is a set of different qualities. People bring their own personalities and you work with it.

DD: I feel the same way. Britney, Eve and the Dixie Chicks all have their own unique vision and style. It is great that I have the opportunity to collaborate with such innovative people.

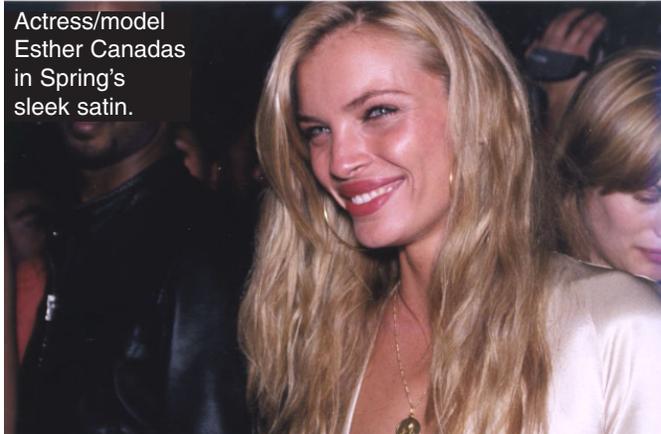
How did you come to work with The House of Field? Was it through the Downtown Costume Institute or Chi Chi Valente?

DD: I was designing way before the DCI. I started making clothing for different theatrical stage performances. Pat and I had friends in common. She had seen my work. She then asked me to come and design the House of Field line.

So you got a new styling gig on Guiding Light?

PF: Yes, it is so fun! *Sex & The City* is wonderful but this is great in a completely new way because it runs the whole gamut of dressing. I get to focus on every one — from someone who is a fifteen-year-old through all the decades.

Do you think the new star Joan Collins will be up to wearing one of your leather strappy bikinis? She



claims to be very versatile.

PF: Well, she does have a pretty good body. And she's quite adventurous. I hope so!

Do your White Trash Charms symbolize your affinity towards truck drivers?

DD: It is more like our affinity for all things American.

You've brought back the power of the flower. Did you ever think your trend would last that long?

DD: Not at all. When you design something you never really think about it in terms of a trend like the flower.

If you could create your own character on a series would he or she resemble any character you've worked with already or would they possess a completely different style and identity?

PF: I'd create a whole new TV show based on everyone at the House of Field. Everyone here is so artistic, so visual. It would be great to have it be TV knocking on our door, as though they were coming into our living room at the House of Field. The design company as cast!

DD: Definitely.

Which television cast is currently in the most desperate need of a style make-over? Or, if you could pick one show to give a Patricia Field/David

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Dalrymple style make-over, which would it be?

PF: I've been so busy! I really don't get to watch TV. I've been too busy! But I think my focus is on Guiding Light right now. I've been able to zip right into it. They have been so welcoming, so very supportive. They really get it.

DD: Law and Order could do with a House of Field makeover!

You/House of Field have been a driving element of the fashion scene since the 60s. What is your favorite trend from the last thirty years of New York fashion?

DD: I don't think of just one. I think New York fashion trends as a whole affect the entire world. People see New York as a style capital.

What one item from this season epitomizes the fabulousness of the House of Field runway show this week?

PF: It would have to be this patchwork skirt I am wearing now (points to skirt with asymmetrical edges made of square patches of suede and tweed). It's my favourite item this year. You can get it at Henri Bendel and of course, my shop, Patricia Field! I think it's on our web site too.

DD: I think it would be our recycled concert tees that are remade into dresses and tops. It epitomises our rock and roll edge.

Has your view on merchandising and fashion changed in light of 9-11, and if so, how?

DD: I think my view of life has changed. It really prioritizes what's important in your life. Even though fashion is fun and glamorous, an event like 9-11 makes you really think about how what you do affects the entire world. Fashion, in situations like these, becomes unimportant. ❖

— *Production by Hip Guide.*

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