V PEOPLE

We're taking a step away from the stage and into our community this season with fashion tastemakers in and around New York. Whether we're talking to a set designer, jewelry maker, podcaster, or archivist, these stars' contributions to our era of fashion are bound to be history-making

Photography **ANNA HENDERSON**
Text **SAVANNAH SOBREVILLA**



Jacques wears sweater **AGBOBLY**
Trousers talent's own

JACQUES AGBOBLY
FASHION DESIGNER

At the height of the pandemic, designer Jacques Agbobly founded Agbobly, a destination for Black, immigrant, and queer designers to showcase their work. With a dedicated focus on West African techniques, Agbobly's output is colorful, intentional, and proud—we can't wait to see what he does next.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
JACQUES AGBOBLY: My work is a love letter to Togo, an exploration of identity through the eyes of an Afropolitan. My debut collection at New York Fashion Week was "Bienvenue à Bord" ("Welcome Aboard"). The collection metaphorically situates itself at the departure gate of the airport in Lomé, where I embarked on the plane that would take me away from Togo, my only home, to reunite with my mother in the cold city of Chicago. Dedicating this collection to reflect on that experience has been incredibly generative. In my collections, color often captures their attention; it's my chosen medium to deepen and illuminate each story. Every hue is carefully curated, a call to fellow Afropolitans, inviting them to recognize something familiar, something that feels like home.
V: What makes it possible for you to do what you do?
JA: What makes it possible for me to do what I do is community—my unbreakable circle of support. Growing up, I was surrounded by a family that leaned on each other through every season. My grandmother and my aunts were my teachers in the art of togetherness, instilling in me the knowledge that life is a shared experience. When I moved to Chicago, I lived in a housing community that continued to foster those same values I had learned back home in Lomé. My roots are in a housing community where bonds were built out of necessity and love. We all looked out for one another, forming a network of "cousins" and family-like ties, connected by shared spaces and shared lives. It's these early connections that taught me what it means to belong, to support, and to uplift.
V: When you decided to pursue this passion, was there anything that surprised you?
JA: I quickly realized that dreaming about it was so different from actually living it day to day. The vision I had—the excitement, the creative flow, the freedom—was real, but it didn't account for the full spectrum of experiences. There are moments of exhilaration, but also ones of exhaustion, unexpected challenges, and self-doubt. I sometimes find myself needing to reconnect with the original dream, to lean back into it as a kind of survival. That initial vision reminds me why I started, and it keeps me grounded and inspired when the reality of the work feels overwhelming.
V: Take your flowers. What's something you're proud of that you did this year?
JA: This year, I'm most proud of releasing a collection that has been my labor of love for three years. I lost my brother while working on my most recent collection, and clawing my way out of grief to create something joyful and meaningful was no small feat. The last collection was a dedication to him, honoring his spirit. The next one will be a love letter full of whimsy, heartache, and healing—a reflection on the journey of grieving and growing that I have lived through over the last year and a half. A year ago, I was overwhelmed with questions. I was unsure how I could move forward with my brand and my art. But now, having worked through it, I feel like I've reached a place with more answers than questions. I'm ready to continue, with my brother always in mind.

MILENA GORUM
SET DESIGNER

If you're open to it, you can learn a lot about yourself on set. Take Milena Gorum. For her, modeling at 15 forged the road for a thriving career in set design. Now, her projects fall anywhere on a fabulous spectrum that ranges from Olivia Rodrigo's stage design for the singer's SNL performance last year to Rosalía's *Vogue Plus* cover this past August.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
MILENA GORUM: I'm a set designer, art director, and prop stylist. I design and build sets for commercials, fashion shoots, and music videos. I collaborate with other creatives to flesh out ideas and create real life solutions for conceptual design.
V: When you decided to pursue this passion, was there anything that surprised you?
MG: Realizing the sheer amount of hard, manual labor it takes to do set design was humbling when I first started. Modeling is grueling and relentless on your body in its own way. But I had never experienced what it was like to build out an entire room, then tear it down the same day. I cried after the first job I art assisted on, I couldn't believe this was the career I was so sure I wanted to pursue, yet it felt like I couldn't possibly go in the next day. But I did, and now that impossible job was just another job.
V: If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?
MG: Director of photography forsure. It's emotive, world-building, and challenging. It's arguably the most important role on set.
V: Who should everyone know about?
MG: Crystal Geller, she is an incredible designer. Everything she decides to put out is thoughtful and inspiring. I can't think of anyone else whose vision is more defined.
V: What is a singular work of art that everyone should experience?
MG: Read *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran or watch Nils Frahm performing "Says" live for BBC, see the first light of sunrise sneak through the cracks in the bathroom of Berghain, sit on the bench in front of a Joan Miró painting at the Pompidou.
V: What possession of yours do you feel best captures your essence?
MG: Years ago, I thrifted a small bracelet, probably from the 70s. It's a clear plastic band with rusted jingles; it has a small inscription that reads "disco bells."
V: If you could, what would you say to yourself 15 years ago? What about you 15 years from now?
MG: 15 years ago, keep saying yes to everything. 15 years from now, please learn when to say no.
V: Take your flowers. What's something you're proud of that you did this year?
MG: In May, I had five jobs in three days. It was the most back to back, zero turnaround I'd had in my career. Monday: Thom Browne Met Gala Video. Tuesday: *Vogue China* cover with Rosalia. Wednesday: Sandy Liang campaign while the Invasive Modification lookbook was shooting simultaneously while I sent my assistants in for a *Vogue Taiwan* cover. (I had to split my time between these two sets driving back and forth from Red Hook to Bed Stuy.) The workload was overwhelming, but it ended up being a new threshold for myself.



Milena wears button down, tie, skirt **SANDY LIANG**

On lips
NARS Afterglow Lip Shine in Turkish Delight



Etienne wears vintage suit **MY CLOTHING ARCHIVE**

ETIENNE BOLDUC
FASHION ARCHIVIST

Etienne Bolduc figured out a way to integrate his fanatical love of Japanese design, deep-fried internet irony, and physics schooling into a single platform: My Clothing Archive. Profiled by *GQ*, the *New York Times*, and *Business of Fashion*, Bolduc, also known as the Digital Cowboy, is the guy to know if you're into pleats and obscure-yet-objective fashion history.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
ETIENNE BOLDUC: My work is hard to describe. I can't even describe it. I used to say I was a fashion collector, but now I say that I'm more of a fashion historian, because I think collectors are mostly people that buy expensive stuff, and they don't really do much with it. Before doing fashion research, I was actually in physics—condensed matter physics, more specifically.
V: What makes it possible for you to do what you do?
EB: Frustrations. I see problems or I see things that require research, and I try to figure them out because I love solving problems. From an exterior point of view, you might think that my approach is very clinical and very cold and factual and very methodical—which is true, but at the same time, by doing things this way, it makes it clear that I focus on the facts. The way I find these things, I try to honor people's legacy and the memories of the people that were actually there at the time.
V: When you decided to pursue this passion, was there anything that surprised you?
EB: Every day, I'm surprised. But I will say, the one thing I was most surprised by is that as a single individual, you can have a big impact. Sometimes I find things that no one else has found. Simple things. I found a picture of Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of Pokemon, wearing an Issey Miyake piece. I know the designer who was there at the time, so I sent him a message. I was like, hi, Naoki. I just found a picture of the creator of Pokemon wearing one of your pieces, did you know about this?
V: If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?
EB: I'm thinking about maybe going back into physics a bit more. I like doing research. Honestly, I would research any subject. And I would have the same process and the same respect. I also build tech tools. For example, I mostly collect three brands: Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake, and Comme des Garcons. And for the three brands, I've created identification software. If someone doesn't know how to identify their piece, they can go on my website, enter their information, and get the exact collection of the piece. It's super useful for people who've just started collecting.
V: Best piece of advice you've ever received?
EB: Someone told me it's important to be brave. And I really thought about what it means for me to be brave and take risks. I don't do it as much as I think I do it. It's simple, but it's important.
V: This is a new year's issue. What do you want to accomplish in the new year?
EB: Maybe one thing I would do is be even more behind the scenes. I would like to be a ghost and do great things without anyone knowing. It's hard to describe, but I just want to do good work and use my years of research and knowledge in these decades of fashion to help push forward design. Because I collect the past—and I'm fully aware that these things are from the past—I want to build on the past. People often copy the past, but they don't build on it. They create a cheaper version of it—like a pastiche of the past. So, I think that's the thing. To help push design further than that so that it's not pastiche, but so that we're actually building on top of the past.



Andrew wears sparkly catsuit and chains talent's own

On lips
BYREDO BEAUTY Colour Stick in Kumato

ANDREW DAHLING
MAKE UP ARTIST

Last summer, Chappell Roan went viral after she performed at Gov Ball as Lady Liberty. It was Andrew Dahling, makeup mastermind, who not only coated the popstar in a verdigris hue, but he also gave her an impeccable rich green contour to match. Inspired by the cartoonish club kids of yesteryear, this artist is bringing a fresh, yet informed, take on glam as we know it.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
ANDREW DAHLING: I'm a 'take it as far as you can possibly go' type of artist. I incorporate a lot of color, texture, crazy shapes, and color blocking. My work is very inspired by the early 90s, late 80s club kid era in New York and in London. The 70s London punk scene is really cool. The new Romantics and all those kids were just so revolutionary and rebellious. I like to keep that spirit going and infuse it into what I do as well.
V: What makes it possible for you to do what you do?
AD: Having the right products is key. My favorite product to use ever is the Danessa Myricks mix color fix, because it's super high impact, super colorful, and it stays on so well. There are also meticulous techniques that require you to be intuitive—like how to hold a brush to get the line right. Because a lot of times when you do graphic shapes—your face isn't a flat surface, obviously—you think it's gonna look a certain way, but when you look at yourself straight on, it doesn't create that shape that you wanted. It's a lot of trial and error.
V: Who should everyone know about?
AD: I would say Susanne Bartsch, for sure, everything she's done for the community. Leigh Bowery... I mean, his looks alone were so iconic, but he was such a performer and took up so much space and was absolutely hilarious. I think he's the pinnacle of authentic self expression. I love watching his old videos. I also love John Waters and his films. Those are fabulous.
V: What is a singular work of art that everyone should experience?
AD: Anything Alexander McQueen. When I was in high school, I came to New York and visited The Met. At the time, his exhibit *Savage Beauty* was showing. I got to see a lot of the iconic pieces in person. There aren't many things I remember from that era, but I feel like I could just go through my memory and clearly re-walk it, because it's singed into my brain.
V: What possession of yours do you feel best captures your essence?
AD: This is gonna sound bad, but I was in a vintage shop in Milan and got this vintage arctic fox fur from the 80s. When I put this coat on, it just gives me the life that I need. It invigorates my soul with audacity and fabulousness. I feel like the queen that I am, you know what I mean?
V: If you could, what would you say to yourself 15 years ago?
AD: I would say you don't have as much time as you think you do. There's always tomorrow, yes, but tomorrow doesn't exist. It's all about what you do now. Calm down, do some breath work, meditate, bitch, and don't focus so much on having to heal your traumas before you do things. Just do them anyway and let the fear move through your body. Girls, be brave. Don't wait.
V: This is a new year's issue. What do you want to accomplish in the new year?
AD: I want to be sitting front row at fashion week looking absolutely insane—next to Doja Cat or Kylie or somebody really big—and I just randomly found myself there. I don't belong there. I don't know how I got there, but somehow I'm there. And I look, I don't want to say better than everyone, but like I can confidently say that my look is the most iconic in the room. All of a sudden, the pictures surface, and people are like, 'Who's this?' And I'm like, It's me. It's always been me.

MARTINE ALI
JEWELRY DESIGNER

After launching her eponymous jewelry brand in 2010, Martine Ali's signature silver pieces have been spotted on everyone from Bad Bunny to Bella Hadid. Last year, Ali ventured into shoes, via multiple collaborations with Converse. Given the warm reception that collection received, we suspect 2025 will be a shining year for the raucous designer.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
MARTINE ALI: It feels somewhat familiar... chunky silver with a hint of nostalgia, but interrupted with an unexpected and completely unnecessary, oversized infusion of hardware. I love the contrast of the familiar with the unexpected.
V: What makes it possible for you to do what you do?
MA: The few people in my life who have encouraged me to forge my own path. Also, a craving for individual style over following the pack has created this space where we need pieces to help us all tell our own story with what we wear.
V: When you decided to pursue this passion, was there anything that surprised you?
MA: No one knows what they're doing. We're all faking it 'till we make it.
V: If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?
MA: A hair stylist, or something in interiors... maybe a hairdresser with a sick salon, or an interior designer with sick hair.
V: Who should everyone know about?
MA: We should all seek to know ourselves more.
V: What is a singular work of art that everyone should experience?
MA: Reading *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho changed my life. Experience that, please.
V: Best piece of advice you've ever received?
MA: Follow your heart—my godfather Denver Doggy gave me that one.
V: What possession of yours do you feel best captures your essence?
MA: This giant bag that's in the shape of an egg. It fits everything. One should always be a giant endless well, where things just keep coming out. Like just dropping insane shit, never ending over and over again.
V: If you could, what would you say to yourself 15 years ago? What about you 15 years from now?
MA: I would tell myself 15 years ago to save all your cool shit because it's coming back. Sign and date all your work. Become your own archive. My future self, I would tell them to accept all the growth and trust the losses and experiences as crucial to your own experience.
V: Take your flowers. What's something you're proud of that you did this year?
MA: Slowed down. Pulled back. Edited who and what's part of my life. I did a lot of internal work. It's harder to see, but really important. I'm very proud of that.
V: This is a new year's issue. What do you want to accomplish in the new year?
MA: Intentional movement... staying five steps ahead. Wear less clothes, and crazier looks. Please and THANK YOU.



Martine wears bracelet, rings, earrings **MARTINE ALI**
Camouflage mini dress talent's own

On lips
SUMMER FRIDAYS Lip Butter Balm in Vanilla Beige

Makeup Ryann Carter (Opus Beauty) Hair Takayuki Umeda Digital Technician Takashi Soeh Ist Photo assistant Lamar Kendrick-Dial Styling assistant AJ Grove Production assistants Ha Chu, Gabrielle Arriaga

RECHO OMONDI
PODCASTER

After years in the fashion design space, Recho Omondi decided to turn her savoir faire and love of the trade into a media platform called The Cutting Room Floor. Now entering its sixth season—with several covetable industry interviewees under her belt like Law Roach and Tonne Goodman—Omondi is feeling optimistic about her team and the year ahead.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
RECHO OMONDI: My name is Recho Omondi. I'm a fashion designer and pattern maker by trade. For the last six years, most people would consider me a podcaster in the fashion media space.
V: What is a singular work of art that everyone should experience?
RO: Everyone should experience seeing a Pina Bausch show. She has a lot of shows, but *Rite of Spring* is a must. It will completely transform the way you see choreography, the way you think of dance, the way you think of movement and storytelling through movement in a way that's not related to a musician or musical or movie. It's just going to see choreography for the sake of choreography. I think that's why she's one of the best choreographers of all time. Rest in peace.
V: Best piece of advice you've ever received?
RO: I don't know if it's advice, but it was a statement that kind of acted as advice. It was from the esteemed retired fashion journalist Teri Agins. She said, "The hardest person to be is the person you say you are." Ever since I heard that, which was like five years ago, it really stuck with me. It just speaks to keeping your promises, doing what you said you would do, being the person that you think you are, or that you say that you are. It's really simple, but it's actually really challenging.
V: If you could, what would you say to yourself 15 years ago? What about you 15 years from now?
RO: Oh, my God, pray for her. I would have cut off my friends and gotten more serious about life way sooner than I did. I think I let myself socialize longer than I wish I would have—nothing wrong with socializing, but I had a lot of the wrong people around me. 15 years from now, I'll be 52. First of all, I think she's gonna be so cool and so fucking chic. I think she's gonna be cooler than I am now. I'm hoping to have some really amazing wrinkles. I think she's gonna be a mother. I think she's gonna be a wife. I think she's gonna have amazing jewelry. I think she's gonna have a lot more wisdom. I think she's gonna have a lot more to offer. I feel like I'm still in the stage where I'm taking a lot and I want to get to a place where I'm giving away more, whether it's advice, wisdom, time, or energy. The way I envision her, I think she'll be more of a well.
V: This is a new year's issue. What do you want to accomplish in the new year?
RO: The best part about my job is getting to meet people, and I do have a dream interview. However, you should include this caveat. Most of my dream interviewees are people who are press averse. Like an Olsen twin—I would take one, but I'd prefer both. I think the people that I really love are people who don't feel like they need to talk, because their shit so good. Ann Demeulemeester... Sean Stussy... Phoebe Philo... Those are most of my icons, people who don't want to talk. I would like to have built a career that is known for getting people who don't talk to talk, for them to trust this platform enough to come talk to me would be like the greatest honor. That's really the goal, especially for the 52 year old self.



Recho wears bandana, shirt, belt, trousers, middle necklace and earrings talent's own
Top and bottom necklace **BVLGARI**



Sam wears star top, boxers, pants and wings **SAM FINGER**
Bracelet and hat talent's own

SAM FINGER
FASHION DESIGNER

After a sleazy SS25 presentation held at a Manhattan strip club—featuring New York icon Sophia Lamar and *VMAN* star Jonah Almost—New York born and bred designer Sam Finger has amassed a dedicated following of downtown adorers.

V MAGAZINE: Tell us about your work.
SAM FINGER: My work is very personal, and really is about uplifting, celebrating, supporting the communities that I am a part of, but also all marginalized communities. And always repping New York City too, since I was born and raised in the East Village. Like, the look I'm wearing, it started as this idea of a fallen star. That's how that piece started, and it was originally going to be presented with the angel wings because I wanted to give it an element of hope. I think it's an integral part of change—whether it's in your professional life or society at large—there's a certain level of faith that you need to get out of hardship. The wings are actually made of Tesla car parts. To me, it was about taking this very "capitalist America" idea, especially with the controversial guy that owns it, and creating something hopeful out of it, which gives it many meanings as a brand that celebrates queer and trans identity.
V: What makes it possible for you to do what you do?
SF: Vigor. Relentlessly saying I'm going to keep doing it, regardless of whatever comes my way. And the confidence of knowing that I have a message that I want to say—and that feels like the most important thing at the end of the day.
V: When you decided to pursue this passion, was there anything that surprised you?
SF: I have a theater background, and I didn't expect to use so much of those performance skills in the brand. It's one thing to make the clothes, but to cast models, figure out what you want a show to look like, how you want that to be expressed, how the lighting and video affect that, is something else. The clothes are integral, but they're just one small element of this moving piece, and that's what really excites me. I love production. I love storytelling.
V: If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?
SF: Robin Hood. Stealing from the rich and giving to the poor.
V: What possession of yours do you feel best captures your essence?
SF: My grandmother gave me a gold clock made out of wood by a Mexican artist; it's in the shape of an angel and the clock is in his chest. I have him right where you enter my apartment. My grandmother was an artist, and she was the one who supported me as an artist since I was a kid, so I feel a connection to that piece. And honestly, everything she's ever given me.
V: If you could, what would you say to yourself 15 years ago?
SF: You're worth it, and what you have is special and important and worth doing. There are so many moments in life where you tap into your authentic self and artistry, and somebody shoots it down, or makes fun of it, or doesn't get it. It's scary to put yourself out there. The only thing I regret in my life is the time I spent not trusting that feeling. But I also feel like that's part of my journey, and I trust the story.