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THIAN

You are in the band Open, what is your role in the band and how did you guys form? We had all known each other well before deciding to form Open, us having interacted musically in minor projects prior, alongside being close friends. I had played guitar since I was 8 years old, and the other members, likewise, were musically inclined from a young age. To this day my role is still guitar (occasionally the bass), and I honestly don't see that changing, even in future projects. While Laszlo, more or less our frontman, can adapt to such a variety of instruments and styles, I find myself regimented to what I know and can do well. Open essentially formed when a group of 13 year olds decided to cover a Sigur Rós song for a school talent competition, and we've been doing whatever the hell we've wanted to ever since. The band would have eventually formed with or without that inciting event; we were destined to make music together at some point or another. It is rare that you can find a group of people so compatible with each other both socially and musically, and so I consider myself lucky. The band certainly tested our friendships, as working creatively with anyone does, but I think it ultimately made us understand each other on a much more fundamental level. **You've spent time behind the camera taking photographs and working in other creative mediums: what's your relationship with the world of visual arts?**

My relationship with the world of visual arts is certainly far more conceptual than physical. When I think of the word art, or artist, I still get that traditional image of a painter or a sculptor working tirelessly in their studio, crafting their work slowly by hand. Of course in the time that we live in, anyone can be an artist and anything can be art. I'm useless with my hands, I really am. I remember being a kid in primary school drawing cartoons with my friends, and while I liked my conceptual ideas of characters and settings, it never quite translated to the physical page. My handwriting was no different really, so pens and pencils have been out for a while now. Naturally, still being a creative kid (like most are), I drifted towards video because it took care

of creating all that visual nonsense for me and I could focus on the actual content. Inspired by the early days of Youtube, I made numerous short films and eventually bought myself a DSLR. This resulted in me by proxy learning photography, to which I discovered was far more enjoyable than video because I could creatively take most of the control, and didn't have to rely on others. I liked taking photos, not for any particularly profound reason, I just liked the geometry of it. It was enjoyable to adapt real life into a frame and to watch all the shapes of an image form a complete whole. This was similar to my interest in creating music I suppose; all the notes were there, I simply had to find a way for them to all fit together in an interesting way. Other visual artists have to create something from scratch, a blank canvas, and that concept has always terrified me. My love of photography eventually crossed over into my later love for fashion, but my core approach of visually engaging images has still remained. **You are a standout in some public environments eg. gigs for your clothing - is personal style important to you? Is fashion something you are interested in?** While personal style was still a priority for me in my earlier days of engaging with fashion, it has certainly become paramount today. My love for fashion was born out of an obsession for its history and subculture, with me meticulously analysing archival designer shows and reading pages upon pages of niche fashion forums. This ultimately led to placing a priority on buying garments that I felt were important statements from the designers that I adored the most. I valued them for their relevancy within the design history of that label, more so than whether they were necessarily wearable on a regular basis. However, I eventually discovered my own identity in this process, and focused my wardrobe on what I felt was true to my own self. It's difficult to describe your own core tenets without sounding arrogant, so I'll spare the details, but it involved a romantic fascination with the past, an appreciation for the feminine, and a heavy dose of black. A person's wardrobe communicates something about the wearer; it's a way of

talking to someone before you've even exchanged words. That's why I've always appreciated uniforms, or at least a cohesive sense of style. It shows that you can define yourself, that you can be confident in who you are and what you represent. This cementation of one's own style leaves room for the person to experiment and expand their interests in the rest of their daily lives, while still retaining an aesthetic core that they can always rest on. What does wearing a selection of overhyped flavour of the month brands, plus a topping of whatever Yeezy is doing at the moment, say about the wearer? I'm not quite sure. Having your sense of style perpetually stuck in a loop of trend and hype nullifies any sense of individuality that one might convey, and ultimately leaves the person communicating nothing at all about themselves. My interest in fashion quickly merged with my fascination of photography, and I ultimately discovered a love for fashion imagery. In the modern era I feel that most people attach themselves to fashion through imagery, whether it be in the traditional magazine or through juggernauts like Tumblr and Instagram. I started this way as well and I felt compelled to immerse myself further in this side of the industry, considering my entire path was inspired by the images that I personally considered iconic. Fashion photography at its core is about aesthetic and personality, about describing individuals and the worlds that they live in through beautifully realised images. This means images that are focused on people, real or fictional, with each person telling their own story through what they are wearing. A fashion image capturing the societal zeitgeist of a generation could be just as relevant as an image that was simply composed and shot beautifully, and that is completely okay, because each could still tell a story. This is why editorial images are so compelling to me, as they encourage this storytelling through a series. Editorial work requires pacing between images, juxtaposition of shots, plus a beginning, middle, and end. Once more a series of images leaves space for the viewer to fill in the gaps in-between, rather than a story conveyed



TOP TEND

FASHION DESIGNERS

- 1 Raf Simons 3 Ann Demeulemeester 5 Thom Browne 7 Craig Green 9 Takahiro Miyashita
 2 Yohji Yamamoto 4 Elena Dawson 6 Damir Doma 8 Uma Wang 10 Christophe Lemaire

through video, which leaves less to the imagination. Fashion imagery is also fun and knows not when to take itself too seriously, which is always something to admire. **You brought in a book for the shoot - tell us about this book. Who is it by? What is it about?** The book is a biography on the work of the legendary Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto, published by Rizzoli. It essentially constructs a massive framework of the Yohji Yamamoto brand; from its history, its philosophy, down to the minutiae of the brand's collaborations and subdivisions. It was a birthday present, and an amazing one at that. Yohji still to this day draws no parallel in the industry; his shapes are wholly unique and his commitment to the avant-garde is nuanced instead of overt. He is the perfect example of a designer who still manages to remain conceptually exciting from season to season, while always retaining the recognisable core of his design. What I love most about Yohji is his attitude. He is often cynical, but remains good humoured, sometimes speaking paradoxically and asking significant questions that should be evaluated more in fashion design. Environmental disaster, the effects of war, the power and independence of women, James Bond... he has a lot to say. **Do you think it's important to take the risk and expose your talents and ambitions to the public to gain acknowledgement?** Almost always in my mind. Life is meant to be a shared experience, with each person informing one another to varying degrees. Art and craft, when exposed to the right people, has the ability to completely transform their lives. Without the sharing of ideas and creations, society quite literally would be stuck in the stone ages. Connecting with each other is simply how we progress. A person's talents and creations are of course very emblematic of the person themselves, and thus might be treated as a very private thing. Some people create for the sake of creation, to fulfil themselves and no one else, not feeling the need to share their work with the world. This is wasted

opportunity in my eyes, and each person that refuses to share their talents is denying the potential for the embetterment of other people's lives. **Do you stand by any specific philosophies in your life currently? If so what are they?** Honesty and sincerity for one. I enjoy being open with people, saying what I like when I like. I find that people can engage with me on a much deeper level if I simply be who I am and not try to mask that. I also respect people that treat me with the same level of honesty; I'd rather hear the truth than civilities, and I'm sure they are big enough to hear it as well. This ties in with my thoughts on appreciating alternative sides of things, whether it be people you disagree with or things that you don't enjoy. The world is made better through diversity, and is balanced by a ying-yang relationship. Having opposition gives purpose to the causes that people support, and having people to argue with makes my life far more interesting than being surrounded by likeminded and flawless people. Let people speak their mind, let them be honest, then tell them that they're wrong if you'd like. I also implore others to be obsessive. I find that appearing apathetic is viewed as such a cool state of being; to be the one who moves through life at ease, shrugging off the things and people around them. But what I find obsession tells me about a person is that they deeply care about something, that they are able to carve out their own niche instead of adapting to the broad views of others. This demonstrates a sincerity that I admire, and a sincerity that I can relate to, even if we aren't passionate about the same things. Life without passion is also just depressing. **You mentioned you spend a lot of time thinking about things in depth, Has these moments helped you find your intentions to create and pursue certain career pathways?** At a younger age I certainly had a very calculated approach to my future, with my career goals being determined by my passions and interests, alongside an unusual ambition. Of course you soon realise that life isn't as simple as just making

decisions, and so you end up learning to adapt to the situation instead of creating the situation for yourself. If I were to pursue the romanticised version of my life, I would be attempting fashion design (which I would be useless at) or trying to study photography at the London College of Fashion next year. But sometimes you have to make practical decisions instead of the ones that make you happy. I've decided to pursue the career path that I'm best at, and a lot that has involved large amounts of isolation, simply researching and studying the knowledge required instead of wasting my time doing the same thing in an institutionalised environment. Ultimately I believe in doing what is necessary. **If you could tell your younger self anything what would it be?** Stop wasting time. Also, don't do a year of audio engineering. **Have you got any advice for young creators wanting to find a form of self expression that suits them best?** Firstly, question whether or not you need to be creative. It's okay for some people to not engage in that side of things, opting to instead pursue a simpler path that makes them just as, if not more happier, than the creatives in the world. They are certainly more financially stable. If you do feel the need to be creative, then keep your horizons broad instead of regimenting yourself to what you think you know. Loving something and being good at it are two completely different things, and you could be talented in an area that you haven't even explored yet. Tastes change, people adapt; I am a completely different person to the one that I was four years ago. Just remember to focus once you've found your path and explored what is available to you, because spreading yourself too thin could leave you shallow. Unless you are a connoisseur in everything you put your mind to, then don't mind me. If you know what you are good at, then take direct inspiration from the works in that medium that inspire you. Analyse them, reproduce them, find out what makes them tick, and you will discover yourself in the process.

