



photo Joke Hermans model Nona

half way

A cross between a pirate's bandanna and a nun's cap, Eva Gronbach's demi-bonnets have been a hit among Parisian fashionistas from the moment they landed in the shops. Consisting of a 10cm wide strip of knitted wool and a metal wire that you push halfway on your head like a headband, they were invented almost by accident by German fashion student Gronbach, who graduates from La Cambre this spring. Gronbach has already sold 400 of her bonnets at the suggestion of journalist Elisabeth Paillié. For summer, the extremely flattering headbands will be made in cotton yarn.
Ninette Murk

Available from Colette Maria Luisa and L'Eclaireur (Paris) Comme des Garçons (Cologne)

nocturnal



32
2001

D U C H



no fashion please, we're German

a designing generation is putting style in German hands by Elizabeth Paillié

Germany has always had a queasy relationship with fashion. Apart from the minimalist elegance of Jil Sander and the triumphant career of Karl Lagerfeld - who had the advantage of a Swedish father and an education à la Française at the Lycée Montaigne - Germany is known for producing industrial products effectively targeted for a domestic market that doesn't require more, at least not from his compatriot designers. But today, German names are starting to crop up everywhere on the fashion scene.

"Since the beginning of the nineteenth century Germany has concentrated on standardized products: like coats, suits and jackets," says historian Xavier Chaumette. "Know-how was in the hands of the Jewish community, and fascism wiped out a considerable part of that. Fashion - synonymous with openness and tolerance - was obviously not a priority in a fascist economy. After the war, clothing regained its social significance, but was not intended to express personality." Today, Germany may be fertile ground for fashion, but its best designers are setting up shop in Antwerp, London and Paris rather than Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin. What is discreetly called "the weight of the war" remains in the consciousness of the post-war generation that has dared to dare. "History is too present," says Lutz. "We haven't completely digested it yet. To create, there is no alternative but to go elsewhere." While Darja Richter defends Berlin's creative potential, she adds, "You can't get anywhere over there. I did underground shows, but there are few people who understand your work. Germans don't consider clothing as something cultural, only industrial. Berlin is very free but it has no structure. In order to mature and to better understand my roots, I had to leave." Anke Lohe went to Antwerp because Germany was "too clean," but her first collection for summer 2001 was inspired by Pina Bausch. And Joseph Beuys is well represented in Richter's designs. "The real drama of Germany is that it doesn't believe in itself," explains Karl Lagerfeld, who finds the German climate "very antiseptic." "Only industrial fashion design is taught there and the boutiques don't support young designers."

Stephan Schneider recognizes that his personality has changed after ten years in Antwerp, where life is cheaper and calmer than in his home country, or in Paris. "Today, I don't feel German. I have an English sense of humor and a particularly Belgian form of nonchalance. But my critical sense remains very German, as does my energy. I'm the first person at the studio every morning." Bernhard Willhelm is generally thought of as a Belgian designer, but it doesn't bother him. After all, he went to the Academy, and his collection is entirely produced in Belgium. Still, his inspirations are very much tied to childhood memories; he's even shot videos of his mother knitting comfy pullovers for his summer 2001 collection.

I love Germany - Eva Gronbach

Though she considers herself European, Eva Gronbach dubbed her graduation runway show Declaration of Love for Germany, which she also had printed on T-shirts. "My experience has taught me that I have to focus on my own history," she says. After attending fashion school in Dusseldorf, Gronbach spent five years at La Cambre in Brussels and three months in the Erasmus program at Paris's IFM. None of this stopped her from moonlighting for Stephen Jones, doing a training program at Yohji Yamamoto and creating uniforms for the Sephora chain worldwide. Her unique half knitted cap, which rests on the head like a triangular head band, was a hit in Paris stores even before she was out of school. *EP*



Christian Dior

