

JOAN TARRAGO PAMPALONA QUIKSILVER'S SPECIAL GUEST – NOT ONLY BY THE GRACE OF JOHN GALLIANO



Joan Tarrago + ...

Joan Tarrago Pampalona is a creative criminal. Being a street artist he only knows too well the price of raw expression, as he had to spend a lot of cash to beautify his hometown of Barcelona. It seems that this 27-year-old city-hopper's somewhat illegal definition of art pays off quite well though. Together with Berlin-based fashion designer, Karen Scholz, Joan has recently completed an artist collection for the surf brand Quiksilver. And before he got there, Joan stopped by Paris to visit John Galliano and get creative on some hella pricy fabrics (all legal).

"I've always been painting," explains Joan. "At home, I'm committed to a group of artists called Mamagraphics. We've been doing quite a lot of stuff: stickers and posters, stencils, stamps and trashy graffiti, both in and around Barcelona. And not just graphic actions, but large-scale urban installations. That was (and still is) a lot of fun, but we have often had trouble with the police. I've had to pay a good amount of money for different lawsuits. But this doesn't mean I paid... (laughs)"



... Karen Scholz = Kunst über alles

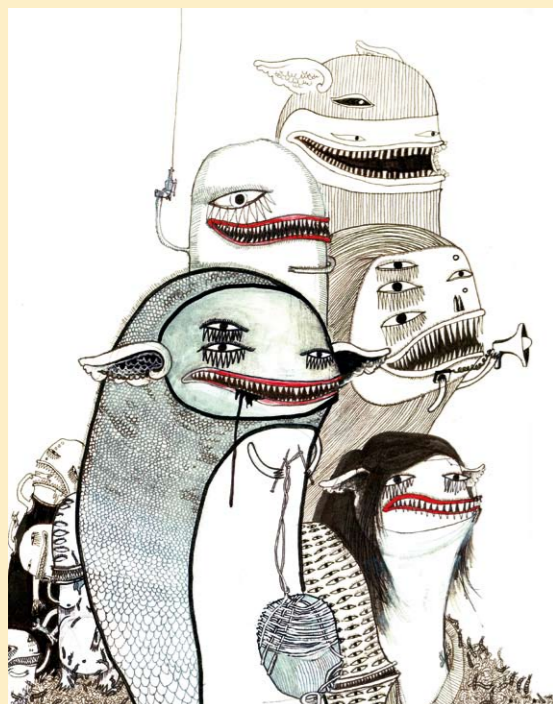
"SHE WAS DESIGNING CLOTHING AND I AM A PAINTER, WE WERE LIKE, 'HEY, LET'S DO SOME STUFF TOGETHER!'"

Miles for styles

To spread his underworld activities and to get some extra education, this graduate in Fine Arts took a semester abroad at the Athens School of Fine Arts, in 2006, where he got to know his current creative partner, Karen Scholz. "As she was designing clothing and I am a painter, we were like, 'Hey, let's do some stuff together!' So I moved from Athens to Berlin." Then things developed fast. "People seemed to like what we were doing so we were able to sell some garments through some local shops like Heimsucht, SupaLife Kiosk, Neurotitan, etc..." What the customers have been most fond of was the dou's exceptional approach to designing fashion. "We realized that everyone in Berlin, Barcelona or London was doing the same: printing graphics on a finished garment. So it's always the clothing that determines where the artwork should be placed. Exactly this was what we wanted to kill, or at least change, because who says that the clothing is more important than the drawings?"

Kunst über alles

"We decided to find a compromise to change this. And here began the trip through our collection, 'Kunst über alles.' I started painting and printing two-meter wild characters onto different fabrics. Once this was finished, I cut them off and gave them to Karen. She used the lines of the drawings in connection with the lines of the body to create clothes. With the help of the dummy (and by 'drapery'), she brought the monsters to life. The result was a twelve-piece collection for women and men alike, named 'Drawellink Places.' That project was our passport to awards and internships in several design competitions.



Noblessed by John Galliano

And not only did Karen and Joan's work turn heads in the streets of Germany's capital, but for a number of fashion authorities all over the continent as well. One of them was haute couture mastermind John Galliano, who offered them an internship under the roof of his Parisian kingdom. "That was obviously a great opportunity. We were amazed because we were able to use materials that are so fucking expensive that we had never imagined working with them. And we were free to do whatever we wanted. The time in Paris was a big inspiration. Afterwards, we had some money on the side to create more stuff for further competitions." And that was what they did. The jury of the German Apparel Industry Foundation issued their European Fashion Award to them last year, as they were as pleased as the initiators of the Apolda European Design Award who honored their collection with a solid sum of grands. "We were kind of successful and able to present our collection to a worldwide audience. That was an amazing experience with amazing people."

The connection to Quiksilver

One of the people that they crossed paths with along the way was Quiksilver's head of design, Jean Kress, at the winter Ispo, 2007. He simply said, "Hey guys, I like your styles. Are you interested in interpreting our brand in your point of view?" We asked ourselves: 'Why not?'" So after they had finished their involvement with Galliano, they made their way to Biarritz, where they worked on this Special Guest Collection for nine months (which will be available in Summer 2009). Joan adds, "It has been an amazing experience. Not just in professional terms but in human terms, as well! We got to know the original old school surfers who have been with Quiksilver since the 70s. When you listen to the stories from those guys, it's not very difficult to get a flashback ticket to the roots of surfing and its vibe."

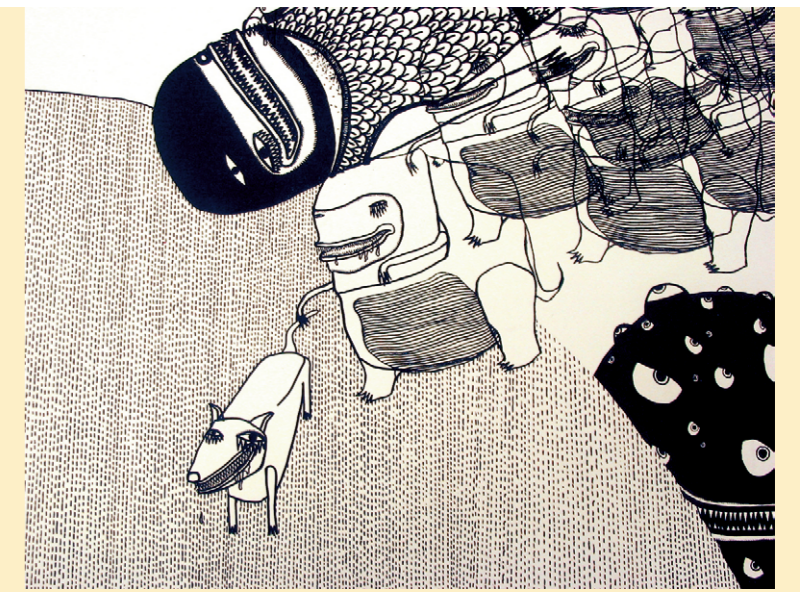
"The weird thing was," Joan continues, "that we just came from that high-fashion Galliano project and now we were able to really create a collection that can indeed be bought by more people, as everybody can afford it. We thought the things we'd suggest would appear a little too crazy for them, but it turned out that they gave us all of the freedom to be creative in the way we wanted to be, well, of course having the compromise with surf culture. So, I once again focused on my characters."

The collection

Indeed, the style of their Quiksilver-collection evidently followed the standards with which they had been so successful with before. Traditional Polynesian tattoos mixed with ancient voodoo graphics in a graffiti trip between Barcelona and Berlin. Bold lines holding accurate handmade drawings. The collection is synthetic and organic, urban and natural, ancient and technical. And it's all about contrasts. On the one hand, there are urban-inspired flash pieces with strong contrasts and powerful lines, which really rock. On the other hand, there are natural, surf-inspired subtle pieces with diverse washed effects, adding a vintage look. The drawing sets out on a journey from the flat to the space, replacing the walls of graffiti culture with the human body. The clothing silhouettes turn into the canvas of the painter, on which he draws by silkscreen printing and embroidery. A union of primitive rituals and up-to-date street painting creates a world where a crew of monsters fool around with a Zen trash style. Joan: "For this collection we made an identification block which links all of the pieces. The all-over, made out of a long time illustration, and the badge, created as a ritual-surf-mask sign, are elements placed almost throughout the entire line. Regarding the color concept, we primarily used our favourite black and white, as well as neon orange. Those are the colors we've been using since the beginning."



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Art meets functionality

The sophisticated drawings make the collection truly unique and timeless. And also practical: "What we wanted to achieve was to combine the artistic aspect with a functional one," explains Joan. "A good example that we created in the past is the Picnic Office Bag. This cool piece can be spread out until it's flat on the ground. A laptop bag is also included as a pillow, which you can use to sit down on. Then you are ready to operate. Workaholics, here's your product! Made out of white PVC and canvas, this bag is embroidered with an illustrated monster's love story." The fabrics show a great passion for details, and so the communication with the human environment is pretty powerful, giving the message that addressing the public is not restricted to walls alone anymore. The comparatively small but complete collection (21 pieces in total) includes jackets, board-shorts, pants, t-shirts, hoodies, shoes, belts and bags. "We're very happy! It's not a massive collection so we could expend more time and go further and deeper on each product. So, what we can present now are wearable art objects that are affordable for everybody." [cb]

www.karenscholz-joantarrago.com

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