

CYRIL VERDAVAINNE

Early years

Cyril Verdavainne was born in 1978 in Casablanca, Morocco to a stylish Parisian mother and a self-made entrepreneur father in advertising, both of whom inspired Cyril's early work ethic and taste for elegance, style, and fine living. As a child, Cyril demonstrated an early talent for the fine arts, particularly in painting and drawing; Color is reminiscent of his childhood spent on the Moroccan coast, with the maroon sands of Ouirgan; the bright colored spices in the magical "*souks*"; the endless gardens of emerald palm trees punctuated with fuchsia bougainvillea flowers and the blues of the Atlantic Ocean roaring behind his bedroom window.



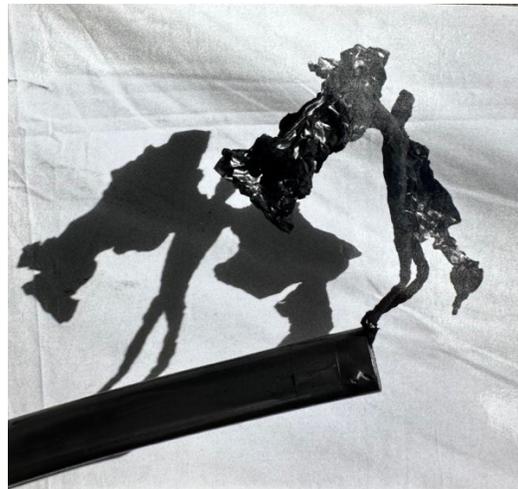
The Verdavainne property – Coast of Casablanca, Morocco

As a teenager, Cyril found comfort and passion in sketching. In his bedroom, adorned with a giant American flag pinned above his bed, Cyril would spend endless nights sketching to countless bottles of Diet Coke and listening to Bruce Springsteen songs, dreaming one day of being an artist in America.

“In the macho world that was Morocco back then, I was drawn to women and beauty,” recalls Cyril. “Women found me ‘cute’ and they called me their ‘*little Saint Laurent*.” In 1995, at age 17, Cyril embarked to the south of France to finish high school. It was there he became passionate about art history. By the age of 19, Cyril mastered painting and drawing using all media and completely assimilated the techniques used by the abstract and conceptual artists of the 20th century. A year later, Cyril would show his work for the first time at the Vecchio Galerie in Cannes.



'Drowning of Icarus'- Metal on canvas -1995



'The Fall'- Bronze -1995

In 1997, Cyril attended Blake College in London, where he immersed himself in photography, sculpture, life drawing, textile design, interior architecture and, for the first time, fashion design.

Finding his calling in Paris

The next year, the budding fashion designer moved to Paris where he attended Parsons School of Design and trained at the houses of Pierre Balmain and Thierry Mugler under the tutelage of then-director of *haute couture*, Kouka Denis. At Thierry Mugler, the boundaries of Cyril's conservatism were put to the test. “Mugler's couture was fantasy, materialized in real life. It was a forbidden pleasure, stretching the boundaries of romance and sexuality”. First influenced by the likes of the great Yves Saint Laurent and his chic elegance, Cyril found a new fascination with themes of sexual ambiguity, power, domination, and danger in his experimentation with fashion.



A Thierry Mugler Ensemble worn by Jerry Hall

The year 1999 marked the end of an era with the closure of Thierry Mugler's couture line; however, Cyril was still dreaming of lavish fashion shows and embarked to complete his studies at Parsons in New York.

New York, New York

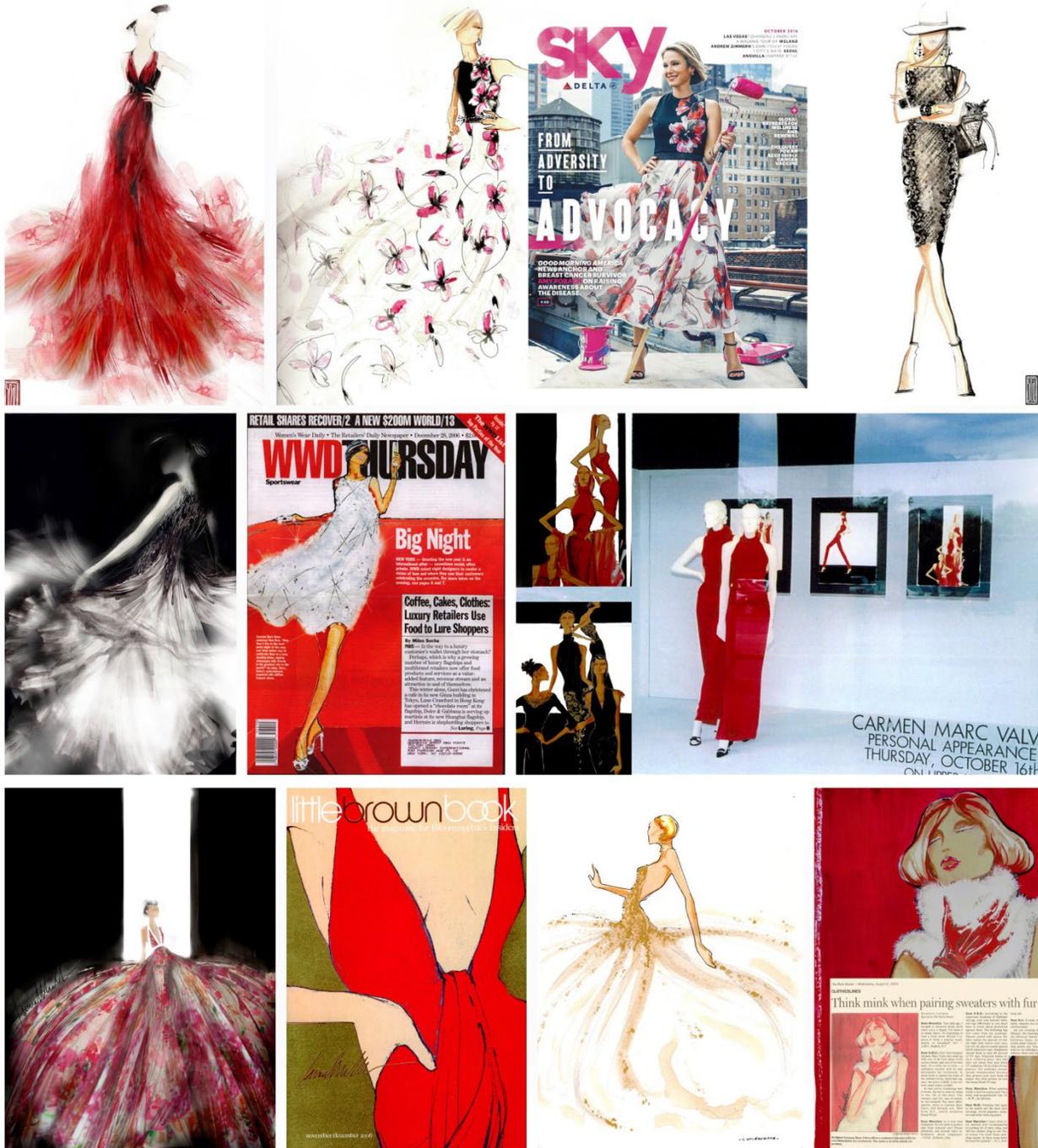
When Cyril landed in New York, all eyes on the American fashion scene were on Tommy Hilfiger and Donna Karan, both completely unknown to him. Everything felt foreign to Cyril; however, he quickly understood that America was about business and working within parameters already proven successful.... rather than the idea of imposing an aesthetic of his own.



'Kimono' - Verdavainne Senior Bucol-Solstiss Thesis
Bucol Silk taffeta & Solstiss lace
Parsons School Of Design
Class of 2001

Cyril completes his degree at Parsons in 2001, and star evening wear designer Carmen Marc Valvo hires him as an intern. Valvo's success laid in the making of more affordable high end evening wear; pioneering using master tailors in Hong Kong to achieve the manufacturing of *couture* craftsmanship at more inclusive price points.

Cyril would work with Carmen Marc Valvo for five years, beginning as a house illustrator before being promoted to assistant designer and then coordinating the design and communications for all licensee lines under the brand.



Cyril Verdavainne Editorial Illustrations for Valvo

During that time, Cyril truly learned about designing and developing a commercially successful American evening wear line. "In fact, I think I had to unlearn what I had previously learned" muses Cyril. "When money is no object, there is no challenge. I had to learn to work within the limitations of a specific budget/price point for a specific client and deliver an equally attractive product."

In 2007, Cyril saw an opportunity to launch his own line of cocktail dresses which was ultimately picked up by Saks Fifth Avenue for four consecutive seasons. The financial crisis of 2009, however, led to Cyril closing his atelier.



Verdavinne Fall 2009

Taking a break from women's wear, Cyril joined Martine Verbruggen, the "shoe baroness of New York" and brings \$ 2.2 million in revenues to Martine's ARCHE flagship on Madison Avenue, all the while, building his versatility not only as a designer but as a sharp businessman and salesman in the fashion industry.

Cyril re-joined Carmen Marc Valvo in 2013 to lead the licensee business, while also creating and coordinating new lines for Ascena’s Dress Barn and JS Group of Canada.



By 2018, Cyril had worked on products across all evening wear categories and price points, from made-to-measure couture for Bergdorf Goodman to “budget” day dresses for Dillard’s. Cyril truly was now ready to fulfill his destiny to launch **VERDAVAINNE**.