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Article

Title: The Dance - fashion illustration by Jiakuann selected by fashion editor, Zoe Taylor

Creator: Taylor, Z.


It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work.

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Official URL: http://theaoi.com/varoom-mag/back-issues/varoom-30-play/

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Jiiakuann for Decoy 5 – fashion illustration selected by Zoë Taylor

The exuberant fashion drawings of the Chinese illustrator Jiiakuann mesmerise with their rich colours, dynamic forms and fondness for pattern and detail. Rendering her work in vivid watercolour, she will happily paint her models deep green or magenta if it helps to electrify an image and she seems to enjoy depicting their trainers with special attention to detail.

Her characters bend as if made of rubber and she playfully distorts them, giving them large, dreamy eyes, long, muscular necks, broad shoulders and tiny, spindly hands. Emphasising the muscular curves in their elongated legs and arms, she bestows her characters – the men, in particular – with a sense of elegant voluptuousness. It’s this, perhaps, along with her interest in male beauty and a lyrical sensibility, which explains why her work is so popular with men’s magazines.

Although she is a recent graduate of Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia, her work has already appeared in the Chinese editions of publications such as GQ, Elle Men and FHM, as well as in European magazines such as Numero Homme, Dazed & Confused and the Scandinavian gay lifestyle magazine Dorian.

Finding her work ‘a breath of fresh air’, Richard Kilroy recently commissioned her to make exclusive new work for Decoy, his limited edition publication devoted solely to menswear fashion illustration.

Interpreting looks from the SS15 and AW14 collections, she selected designers who are celebrated for their progressive, eccentric or youth-subculture obsessed approaches. In every case, she invented her own models. Drawing the opening look from J.W.Anderson’s SS15 collection, she poetically referenced the bucolic themes of the collection by showing the model dancing, eyes closed, among giant leaves and flowers. For Look 15 of Thom Browne’s SS15 collection – a padded jacket and short ensemble with butterfly appliques sewn on to long socks and a Thunderbirds-inspired cap – she avoided the collection’s references to the 1982 sci-fi film Tron, instead situating the character in a contemporary urban setting (a gallery or a store, for example, with vibrant, black-and-white graphics that intensify the dynamism of the outfit’s stripes). For Sankuanz AW14, she showed the clothes on wildly dancing clubbers in an image so loaded with movement and detail that it almost becomes abstract. The eye is eventually anchored by the pixelated head designs on a pair of Sankuanz’s oversized baggy shorts.

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http://jiiakuann.tumblr.com
Decoy 5 is available now: www.richardkilroy.com

Interview
**Brief:** I created four images interpreting established looks from the menswear spring/summer 2015 collection of J.W.Anderson, Raf Simons, Thom Browne and the autumn/winter 2014 collection of Sankuanz.

**Materials:** Watercolour on paper.

**Research:** I was listening to FKA Twigs intensively at that time so naturally I looked into the dance moves of performers, particularly Jaden Smith and Tyler the Creator. I always like to inject the images with aspects of youth culture. It’s almost like a ritual that I browse through archives of pictures featuring skaters and people at dance parties that I’ve collected.

**Process:** After I’ve found the image references that I’m content with, I put them in one folder and look at them back and forth to read the visual correlation before starting on the sketch. At certain points, usually after about an hour or two, I have the feeling that everything is in the right place with the right posture from which clothes are displayed at the right angle. Finally I will move on to colour the line work, traced from the previous sketch.

**Resistances:** What I would perceive as a challenge was to come up with different narratives for the four looks I’d selected. I’d imagine myself working on a fashion magazine editorial where I do the casting and set design and photography; everything except styling the look. For this project the characters I created are a Jamaican boy chilling to reggae tunes (J.W. Anderson), a lonesome skater (Raf Simons), a boy posing in front of walls of graphic posters (Thom Browne) and teenagers losing themselves at EDM parties.

**Insight:** Ethnic models interest me. And I noticed it seems to be a rarity to feature ethnicity in fashion illustrations. So this time I ‘cast’ black models. The body language, proportion and skin tone are utterly beautiful and enjoyable to illustrate.

I find body language, proportions and skin tones utterly beautiful and enjoyable to illustrate.
**Distractions:** Doing research/browsing images is most fun and distracting for me. I get carried far away from what I’m supposed to be looking for. But it’s not too late to come back, after taking an inspirational detour with more ideas stocked.

**Numbers:** 11. In November 2014 I moved to a new house and the first project I did was this one. I completed all the work while sitting on the floor before I had purchased a chair and desk.

**Play:** To be inquisitive and young at heart and draw as many boys as I wish.