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CARLI HERMÈS

three decades of
uncompromising photography

FINALs
Kitchen shot:
"Target" shoot
CALLI HERNEY.











**For Dalì and Maas, by far
my most original creations**

—Carli Hermès

chapter_01

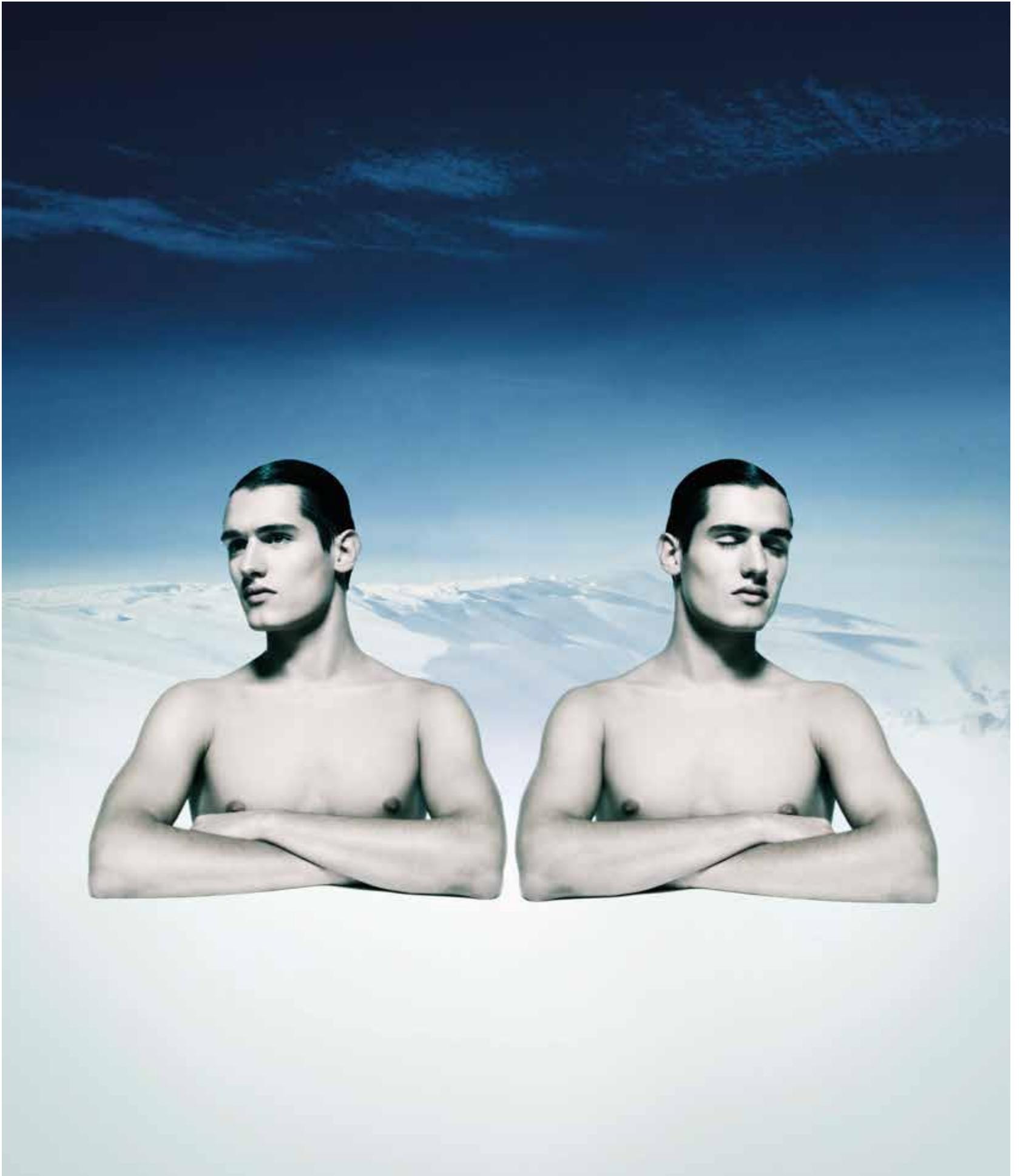
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“If I were to start this agency, would you let me represent you?”

Whenever Carli walks into a room, he brings an atmosphere of wisdom and peace with him, making things very reassuring for the models he works with. He always respects the models' privacy during shoots, even as he subtly draws them out. You can tell when you look at a photograph if the model distrusts the photographer, but when Carli works with models, they surrender themselves to him completely.

That calm, down-to-earth and perhaps typically Dutch approach gives many clients complete confidence in Carli, and this remains true even when he offers only broad outlines of what he has in mind. He's at his best when he feels you trust him. He doesn't work with a detailed script and doesn't storyboard the shoot in advance. He shows up with a clear, basic idea, but it's during the shoot that he decides how best to explore it.

Carli loves the variable nature of people and light, and the unforeseeable situations these create. That's why his work always brims with energy. He says he doesn't like to have the idea fully worked out before the shoot as that precludes spontaneity. He instinctively picks up on the mood, vibe and energy of the models at the shoot, as his photographs demonstrate.

He's able to improvise so effortlessly because he has complete mastery of the technical aspects of photography. I've seen lots of really good photographers over the years, but they seem to know less and less about the technical side. This is not the case with Carli: he shows up at the shoot and once he's tested his equipment he can focus all his attention on what's happening in the moment. I've never seen Carli's method fail him.

This is why his photographs radiate energy and turn out so well: he combines his particular working method and photographic skills with a good dose of courage. I still remember one legendary shoot for G-Star that for the first time ever offered only the barest glimpse of the product. Most other clients demanded more product-oriented shots, but Carli couldn't stand that.

You can see that same daring and courage in his work for Suit Supply. Carli's photographs always tell a story and it's never his intention to upset anyone. He just likes to push the boundaries. There is a big difference between a close call and vulgar, and Carli knows exactly where the former fades into the latter, which is why he's able to play around with the clients' needs with such freedom and clarity.

We've worked together for almost 30 years now. You could say that I started Unit, my agency, because of Carli. I'd known him for a short while and used to give him business advice when one day he turned to me and said, "Since you know so much about this, why not set yourself up in business to offer this as a service?" I gave it some thought then called him to ask, "If I were to start this agency, would you let me represent you?"

You could argue that it is precisely this challenge that is the secret of our working relationship. He encouraged me to start Unit and we've kept each other on the ball ever since, challenging, encouraging and stimulating each other to keep getting better and better at what we do.

Narda van 't Veer
- Founder & Owner Unit c.m.a.







Whenever people see any of the photographs that Carli has shot for us they usually identify them immediately as true representations of Suit Supply. Which shows how integral Carli's images are to our brand. We've

been working together for 14 years with the whole team hitting the road twice a year and each time is a new adventure, as well as hard work. After all, every campaign must surpass the previous one.

Over the years, we have developed a particular way of working: with his exceptional talent for improvisation, Carli works best with few restrictions and he's capable of quickly translating his ideas into images. As a result, it's important that we choose locations with conditions conducive to the way he works, which is why we often shoot in Cape Town. If we were shooting in Los Angeles or New York and suddenly needed to blow something up, we couldn't just close off a street for a few minutes.

Carli's improvisational talent gives us the freedom to create something new every six months, and I value this highly. And despite never knowing what exactly to expect, we have complete confidence in his talent. We have been working with him for so long that we always know the results will be beautiful. Other brands continually elaborate on a single theme, such that their campaigns and - shots look almost identical from one season to the next. We don't.

Carli has worked with us on 28 campaigns and each of them has had a completely different theme and story: one campaign might be a riff on the masterpieces hanging at the Rijksmuseum, while the next might find us shooting in a Soweto slum on the theme of 'ambition'. And yet our images are always recognisable – Carli's surreal signature style is the only recurring element in all the campaigns.

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It took a while for people to get Dali, too.

His images are often somewhat alienating, which immediately makes them intriguing. He not only creates beautiful images, but also fills them with tension so they attract and captivate your attention. That's why I consider Carli the Dalí of photography. It's self-evident that advertising photography is by definition art. The tension that Carli infuses into his images makes people respond to the work and that's a good thing.

Carli shoots people, not buildings, and he captures a particular kind of tension and emotion. Moreover, the chemistry between men and women is a recurring theme in fashion photography. Fashion wouldn't exist without that chemistry. Our campaigns revolve primarily around men – they're the ones who buy our suits. As a result, the role of clothing for the men in the photographs is different than its role for the women.

When Carli shoots women for our campaigns, he always makes sure they're in a dominant position, despite the fact that the focus is on the man's suit. He plays around with the apparent inequality this creates. For instance, in a recent underwater shoot, the female model was portrayed as a sort of mermaid moving beautifully and effortlessly through the water. The man, on the other hand, was out of his depth in the mermaid's underwater world and would have been lost without her.

In another recent campaign, Carli portrayed women as giantesses playing with men made to look so small in comparison that they could as well have been toys. The intention wasn't to shock. The context and surreal, Dalí-like effect of Carli's images completely neutralised the apparent disparity. Not everyone got that, but well, it took a while for people to get Dalí, too.

Fokke de Jong
- Founder & Owner Suitsupply



