

FASHION'S EVERLASTING WUNDERKID

*Wolfgang Joop continues to
take us on a fashion journey.*





“The soul of Wunderkind is beyond the conventional realms of high fashion.”

With an unconventional background in acting, illustration, and advertising, German fashion designer Wolfgang Joop has built a veritable empire from his modest design studio in his hometown of Potsdam, Germany. Joop’s enormously successful Wunderkind Spring/Summer 07 collection has achieved critical acclaim for its quirky silhouettes, flamboyant lines and luxurious fabrics and detailing.

Mixing cropped leather jackets with high-waisted trousers and minimally detailed shirts with floating skirts, the collection features slouchy, softened forms and crumpled, folded fabrics that make use of perforated textures, ruffles, lace, and dynamic prints and patterns in vibrantly feminine hues. Joop speaks exclusively with *Clear* about the development of Wunderkind, his favorite place to relax, and finding inspiration in the work of iconic 20s film director Fritz Lang.

Fashion, illustration, graphic design, writing...how do you work on so many creative fronts at the same time?

Art and fashion are one and the same to me, intrinsically linked. I was a young art student when I turned to work in fashion. I always draw inspiration from the art I am surrounded by and by my world. I am passionate about the work I do and so simply make time. What’s more, I find that writing positively influences the way I work on a collection and vice versa.

How would you describe your creative process?

I design the Wunderkind collections in the same way I would make a portrait of the woman who fascinates me or that I love. Wunderkind is dedicated to a fearless woman. She is not afraid of being herself, regardless of her social standing, her age, and her figure. The creative process is a dialogue from start to finish.

Any plans for other creative ventures in the future? Jewelry or car design, perhaps?

I am always involved in new design projects, such as interior design for our Wunderkind boutiques where I want each store to exhibit its own space-specific personality, or in preparing for our accessories and jewelry business. I also enjoy designing the packaging for our recently launched and successful Wunderkind The Art of Beauty skincare line. It is another dimension entirely to designing fashion. Cars are not really my thing. I don’t even have a drivers licence, and I feel safer on my bicycle!

You launched Joop! in 1979 and worked on it for more than 20 years before ending your involvement with the brand in 2000. What inspired your 2003 launch of Wunderkind?

Having sold Joop!, I took a conscious break from fashion. I dabbled with the film industry, wrote novels and essays, and traveled. After a couple of years “off,” I wanted to turn the switch back on and return to what I ultimately love most and what I am passionate about. And as a creative man, Wunderkind is the ultimate luxury. I have a wonderfully energetic and creative team, and we all share the same goal. Wunderkind is my real voice.

What does Wunderkind bring to fashion that makes it so successful?

The soul of Wunderkind is beyond the conventional realms of high fashion. It is absent of rules and absent of strict historical references and absent of conflicting licences. It is a true luxury label in that it is exclusive. It does not brandish garish logos; it is about the individual pieces and the art of unique style. I think this is what the luxury market has been yearning for – something really special.

Your designs feature innovative pairings of material and texture. Do you spend a lot of time researching new materials?

I have a great team that does a lot of research from a brief and then comes back to me with all their finds. I also take references from historical embroidery and costume. I love the texture, weight, opaqueness, or translucency of materials, particularly the unique combinations in styling contrasting materials so as to accentuate their particular quality. Above all, it is the touch that seduces me first.

What are some of your favorite places to visit and why?

I love to travel, though my favorite destinations are honest ones; destinations that have an intrinsic and virgin charm. Hiddensee [an island paradise in the Baltic Sea off the coast of Germany, a retreat once popular with Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud] is one of my absolute favorite places to be! It is like time-traveling to a secret island. No cars, small bungalows, and the rustic way of life – true luxury absent of modern day inconvenience and distraction; a place where one feels to be an actual part of nature.

What about your home? Do you think how and where you live are reflected in your design?

Absolutely. My home is in Potsdam, the former heartland of Frederic the Great and the Prussian Empire. During the Cold War, the Villa Wunderkind was cut off from West Berlin by the dividing borders of the Federal Republic and the former communist Germany, a few hundred meters from the Glienicke Bridge where spies were swapped. The difficult history casts a shadow on me but also serves to inspire the new, the better, the adventurous, the honest, and the unique. Potsdam has rightly been rediscovered as the jewel of Berlin – an inspiring landscape saturated with woodland, lakes, and castles.

The hues, silhouettes and textures in your current collection are fantastic. What were your main inspirations?

It was a collection based on coloring Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, a hugely significant and futuristic film in his time that still proves influential today. I brought color to the visions and memories of [protagonist] Maria’s post-modern, half real, half virtual world. She has a faded glamour and an eroded fortune and an uncertain future. I wanted to infuse her with life and bring her flowers, Yves Klein Blue, shocking pink, texture, frivolity, and richness, and I wanted to punctuate her delicateness with gold eyelets and industrial gold zips.

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