

Words **Jepp** Ugelvig

eye on the street

Few have defined the past decade's faces of fashion like Eva Gödel of Tomorrow Is Another Day. The powerhouse agent rose to prominence with her army of non-muscular male models, found on the streets of her native Cologne, in the 2000s. Today, 'her boys', as she calls them, promenade the catwalks of Louis Vuitton, Prada, Gucci, and, most recently, Balenciaga.

The model reel found on Eva Gödel's website is testament to an awkward, subtle, and antipodal kind of beauty, filled with character and particularity, disaffected by the fashion industry's glitzy beauty standards. Borrowing from the legacies of punk, 90s skater boys, and German expressionism, Tomorrow Is Another Day, acronymed TIAD, specializes in sourcing anti-beauty directly from the streets, ensuring a constant influx of authenticity into a speculative industry that too quickly turns everything, including non-conformity, into a 'look'.

DANSK meets Gödel over lunch at the Rhine riverside in Düsseldorf, Cologne's neighbouring city, where she has lived for the past couple of years. A Rhineland native, Gödel grew up in Cologne and loves its vibe, its strong art scene, and easy access to cities like Frankfurt, Brussels, and Paris. "We have a lot of medium-sized cities close to each other, so it never gets boring," she enthuses, as she explains her entry into an ephemeral industry. She began model scouting as a teenager working in a local skate shop, where she'd photograph passersby and decorate the shop windows with their Polaroids. "I've always loved people on the street and to recruit them for art projects and shoots for friends". She continued to study graphic design (Gödel is also the partner of Chewing the Sun, a communication design firm) and for her thesis project, she co-founded her first modelling agency, Nine Daughters and a Stereo, with a handful of boys scouted in her local area, naming the firm after a favourite David Bowie lyric. Her very first booking job was Rosemarie Trockel, the famed German artist, who used Eva's boys in her photography and theatre work. Shortly after, two key European menswear designers recognized her unique vision. "I emailed Stephan Schneider and Raf Simons, who both answered immediately. Two weeks later, I drove to Paris in a van – me as the driver, with seven boys in the back. This is when I had my first boys in Stephan's shows and the first one in Raf's shows. Stephan later told me, "I wasn't sure if she would arrive or not, but let's see!"

She did arrive – and the next season, there were two vans coming from Cologne to Paris. The rest is history. Today, Eva's boys appear on the runways of Lanvin, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, and Prada, and in the campaigns of Valentino and Gucci, to name but a few. She single-handedly founded Tomorrow Is Another Day in 2010, focusing almost exclusively on male models, and within a few years, she's recognized as one of the best agents in the industry. With a third of her models in London, and Paris and Milan just a stone's throw away, she covers all of Europe's fashion capitals, and today, her portfolio includes over 250 regularly employed boys.

a search for mushrooms

Is this feat explainable, I ask her – what is it about her 'eye' that is so unique, continuously providing new faces for fashion? "I really don't know", she says. "I think I'm just really interested in people. I love watching them. I watch everyone, and then I see who could fit my ideas, or my clients, or a special atmosphere. It's not just a specific look — it could be some specific physical attributes or the way someone moves or walks. Fashion is about youth, and what young people are doing has always interested me."

Her recipe of sourcing boys from the street, where fashion truly takes a life on its own, has become the lingua franca of model casting today — but Eva still champions it like no other. "Eva really was the first to legitimize the idea of running an agency that focuses on street-cast models", Robbie Spencer, creative director of Dazed & Confused, affirmed to the New York Times earlier this year. To Gödel herself, the approach seems obvious. "I don't know what else it could be! I never worked with a modeling agency. I think at the moment everyone is insisting on street casting, but for me, it was always the natural thing to do – I mean, where else should I find them?"

From the South London suburbs and the streets of Berlin to Instagram and Tinder, Eva and her team are always on the look-out for new guys. "I'm always looking, always" she says. Often I don't find anything. It's a bit like searching for mushrooms, you know? You can go to certain places, but in the end, it's about luck. You can wait for hours, but still, I like it — I think that's also the interesting part. I like to stand on the street and look what people do, watch them and observe them. And of course, it's great to finally find that person where you think 'yes, this fits so well, I'm so looking forward to photographing them tomorrow". She describes her scouting technique as curious and insistent, with good persuasion skills being absolutely essential. "I think I'm quite unsuspecting," she laughs with some irony. "When I come to them they say 'me, a model, are you joking, are you fooling me?' but once they see the website, I think they can identify – they see that they're not so different from each other".

The other element that makes TIAD special is Gödel's dedication to the well-being of her models. None of her boys are signed elsewhere, which ensures a more intense and devoted engagement as well as time and space for them to develop and improve. As she explains, while some of her models have landed Lanvin campaigns the day after being scouted, some boys take years to groom and develop – and with some as young as 15, balancing school and work, parents are often closely involved. "They need to feel safe, and they need to enjoy it", she makes clear. "I always say that if you don't like one job, you don't have to do the next. I think they need to feel really comfortable because that's the only way that they get really good". Gödel still travels with her boys to fashion week, organizes wake-up calls in the morning for each model, and overall acts as a maternal figure for a fraternal group: she always tries to promote a strong sense of friendship among the models, despite them often competing for the same jobs. "There's a strong social element to it, and that's very important to me. Competition is something you have to learn, of course, that's life! I don't want them to feel it, I want them to stick together, and I think that's why TIAD works really well", she says, countering the predominant myth of agents as



coldhearted money-makers taking advantage of young people with little or no support as they are moved from job to job. Is she the exception to the rule? "Again, I have no idea", she states. "I have never worked with other agencies, so I don't know how else I should do it. But the human aspect of fashion interests me, not just with the models, but also with the clients. We have to enjoy this job. Fashion is about team-work: if everything doesn't come together perfectly, it's not special".

Modeling is a demanding profession widely discussed and speculated about by the public due to its often damaging effect on mental and physical health. Does this apply to male models, too? Although the male model as a celebrity figure has risen drastically in the age of social media (Eva shrugs at the Instagram models, and never forces her boys to use the channel), the key distinction between men and women is still the money, she attests: the budgets are far bigger for womenswear, triggering a whole different climate in the model market. "For a woman, if you're on a certain level, it's a full-time job — with the boys, it's not", she explains. "They might have a year where they do modeling between school and university, but they also do other things. But I like that: I like that they're studying, that they're musicians, engineers, or carpenters — one of my boys right now is a marmalade maker, it's so cute! All of this gives them character. It's so important to know your interests". The other key difference between male and female models is the body standards: while girls are pursuing unnaturally skinny measurements, guys tend to more so go through those skinny years post-puberty. "They just have it; they can eat McDonald's every day and drink beer every evening, and it won't change," she smiles. "— Well, it'll change soon, but for the moment, they're alright". TIAD employs a handful of girls, but Gödel explains that she sees them as some of her boys. "I think generally, modeling is much harder for girls", she states.

disposing of ken

It was by no means incidental that Stephan Schneider and Raf Simons were her first clients, along with Rick Owens, Prada, and Hedi Slimane at Dior: designers who have gone to great lengths in redefining the figure of the male model in the past two decades. In comparison to the muscular, hyper-masculine models of the 90s, the model of the new millennium is skinny, edgy, and far from quintessentially 'Ken'-like. "I never liked the image of the trained, muscled guys – that's not real", she attests. "Rather, I'm interested in what is going on in the streets, examining what young people are doing and asking, why shouldn't that be in fashion?" Stripping any heroic motivation aside, she makes it clear that she never had a conscious goal to change the industry. Post-muscular, the modeling industry is currently undergoing a new development of expansion, this time about race and ethnic diversity. "I think what we're seeing is a really strong mix of cultures, of backgrounds, and ethnicities" she explains with her characteristic tone of curiosity. "I recently found one half-Pakistani, half-Scottish guy – and another half-Tunisian, half-French". Echoing the political changes in the industry, it's Gödel's job to constantly seek out new talents and push the boundaries of fashion – which manifested itself most recently at the Balenciaga men's show in Paris, the first of its kind under the tenure of new creative director Demna Gvasalia, also co-founder of Vetements. Working closely with stylist Lotta Volkova, Eva oversaw the complete casting of the show, employing 25 boys directly from the street with no previous modeling experience: this enormous task brought her to Bologna in Italy and Marseille in France, as she went hunting for looks that are unavailable among mainstream agencies. "Demna and Lotta were after a Mediterranean look" she explains a week after the hugely successful gig. "We got together a hugely diverse group of boys from all over. I'm so pleased that it felt cohesive, and that we made them feel unified". It was precisely Balenciaga (and Vetement) that half a year earlier received criticism for their all-white shows, a critique they seem to have internalized. While she understands the point, Gödel felt it to be exaggerated. "I felt sorry for them because the show was really great", she says. "And I think inserting a black person just for the sake of it is just as bad. I think with them, you could see that the design is so diverse, and it really does have a space for lots of different characters".

A week after her biggest job yet, as well as a season of London, Milan, and Paris fashion weeks, Gödel is grateful for the short break that the international fashion calendar offers her as an all-male agency. "If I had to do shows again in a few weeks for women's fashion week, I would kill myself!" she laughs. "I'm so happy now to take a break. Sometimes I think I should take some girls, but I still don't know". Widely recognized and celebrated, she makes it clear that she never thinks about growth and expansion. "I never think about questions like that. My ambition is to work, to do something special with people I really like, and where I really think it makes a difference — to find new boys, and give them the opportunity to experience something incredible when working with us. Actually, the only reason I take on new boys is because I find so many great people — I always think, 'he's so great, we really need to work with him', and so it continues". In this way, Gödel's hunt for new faces to redefine male beauty keeps moving ahead.