

GUNS, GERMS, \$TEAL

Scientist Jared Diamond explored the idea of Eurasian societies and how they managed to conquer. For Diamond, three elements – guns, germs and steel – held all the power for society survival. Below, we sit down with designers smiley stevens and philippa price... The two girls behind guns germs \$teal. The latest (and coolest) menswear brand conquering the world of fashion.





In almost every article or interview I've read about Smiley Stevens and Philippa Price, the writer stresses how crazy it is that these six-foot, ex-models have started such an aggressively popular menswear line. After sitting down to chat with them, it really didn't seem that off beat to me. Why? Because it became clear that these are two of the coolest girls in the menswear game. Period. And their collections showcase that to the fullest.

Without any formal training in fashion design, the girls feel they aren't held to any "guidelines" and enjoy hitting the pavement with their male friends in an effort to experience what it is guys really need when it comes to luxury sportswear. Soon after getting together on the idea, practically overnight, they started Guns Germs \$teal from the buzz of one – slightly faked – blog post. Mind you, at this point I was already cracking up about the blogger story, but my laughter continued to burst as they told me about their adventures with Dom Kennedy, A\$AP Rocky and Chad Muska. Fun fact: Chad Muska shot the GG\$ Spring/Summer 2013 lookbook images that are featured in this story.

Below, get to know the duo responsible for producing eclectic and beautifully designed clothing (with a side of rad accessories), but remember, whatever they make they'll always do so with a "form follows function" philosophy. OK, that's definitely coolne\$\$ in our book. Or should I say... In our magazine. — Steven Pippis



SHK: YOU BOTH MOVED FROM L.A. TO NEW YORK. WHY SWAP SUNSHINE FOR HIGHRISES?

SMILEY & PHILIPPA: It just kind of happened. So many people from L.A. go to New York for college, it's really weird. We didn't know each other on the West Coast... We met at a bar in the city, realized we weirdly had a lot in common and connected over the fact that we were both six feet tall. Then we decided we were going to be best friends. So, I guess that's why we work so well together.

THAT'S GOOD. IT TAKES THAT QUALITY TO START A LINE TOGETHER. SO, THE NAME OF YOUR LINE IS REALLY INTERESTING. IT'S BASED OFF OF THE BOOK OF A VERY SIMILAR NAME BY JARED DIAMOND.

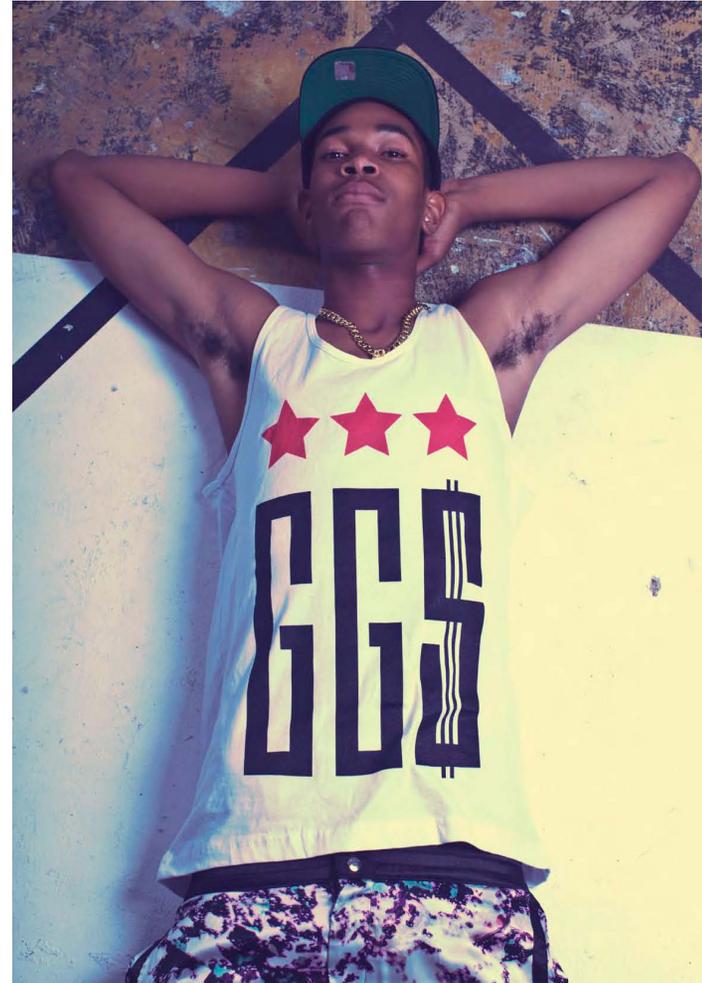
Yes it is.

I HAVEN'T READ THE BOOK, BUT IT TALKS ABOUT EURASIAN SOCIETIES AND HOW THEY MANAGED TO CONQUER, LESS ON THROUGH THEIR INTELLIGENCE, AND MORE THROUGH THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION. HOW DO YOU SEE THAT RELATING TO YOUR LINE?

It relates in a few ways. First of all, we both love the book. We think it's interesting that it discusses the idea of why a lot of amazing cultures were wiped out because of those three things: guns, germs and steel. But also, it's all you need to take over the world. So that's what were going to do [laughs]. It's a lot about power and circumstance. A lot of Jared Diamond's writing is about different cultures and different societies and that's one of our biggest inspirations in designing. We love to merge design and culture together. We try and bring that into our brand as much as possible and design clothes that bridge the two concepts.

SO WHEN DID YOU START MAKING YOUR SIGNATURE METAL WALLET?

At Parsons. I [Philippa] was taking metal working classes at Parsons during the winter, and Smiley used to come up with me on the weekends and we'd work all day. It was funny because, to get into the metal studio, you have to take a class and a test. First of all, to get into the building you have to have a school ID, and to get into the metal room... I mean, you're working with molten metal, not anyone can get in and you have to wear these all-in-one suits with a mask and stuff. Well, Smiley was able to sneak past even without a student ID. It's hard for six-foot tall blonde girls to sneak past! But I somehow managed to do it. I got kicked out a few times, but it didn't really stop us. We were just making stuff for our friends mostly. Anyways, Smiley sent in a photo of one of the wallets to a blog, as if we were an official brand, and literally overnight our company got started. Then, we got almost a hundred orders that next day! We didn't have a website, we didn't have anything, we were just like... OK. We're doing this. Let's do it. We still make them the exact same way we made them when we started. They're all hand stamped, and they're our favorite accessory from our company so far.





HOW DID THE RAP LYRICS BECOME A PART OF IT ALL?

They became a part of it because we love rap, we love music. Music is a huge part of everything we do. The real story is, I was listening to a Biggie song while I was making our very first piece and I just stamped it on there.

WHAT BIGGIE SONG?

“Big Booty Hoes.”

IT'S INTERESTING HOW EVERYONE REALLY STRESSES HOW WILD IT IS THAT TWO SIX-FOOT, EX-MODEL WOMEN ARE CREATING A MENSWEAR LINE. IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR WOMEN TO CREATE MENSWEAR LINES; YOUR LINE IS JUST DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT FROM CONTEMPORARY LINES THAT WOMEN ARE CREATING FOR MEN. THAT'S YOUR STAND OUT. WHAT DREW YOU INTO MENSWEAR?

It just kind of happened really naturally for us. It's more of a challenge and it forces us to think outside the box, which is something we really love. We've both been friends with guys and like more masculine things, but like Smiley was saying, it's a different process than designing for women. If we were creating womenswear, we would just create a line of everything that we would want to wear, whereas when we're designing for men, we have to pay attention. We're always listening and taking notes every time one of our guy friends says something. We noticed a lot of our skater friends wear their iPod, but they have nowhere to clip their headphones on their shirt... We pay attention to things like that.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE BRAND. I'VE SEEN A LOT OF DIFFERENT NAMES THROWN OUT LIKE GANGSTER, HIGH FASHION, STREETWEAR, BUT HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE IT?

With our first collection we got people who liked to use the word “streetcar” about our clothes, which we don't really like. We're definitely street inspired, but there's so much design behind each of our products. I think you'll see over our next two seasons that were heading towards a more high-end position in the market. Luxury sportswear, that's how we define it. All of our clothes, our new designs, are definitely inspired by '90s athletics, but it's also a mixture of that with 100% silk fabrics. So, it's kind of like these rich fabrics with a more sporty athletic fit.

DO YOU HAVE A FUTURE COLLABORATION THAT YOU'RE DYING TO DO?

Well we have some really exciting ones coming up over the next few months, but people will have to wait and see. Our dream is to collaborate with NASA.

WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR WARDROBES?

All over the place. Salvation Army is one of our favorite stores. We go shopping at thrift stores and vintage stores a lot for inspiration, and to find reference garments. We've recently started doing a lot of styling too, so our wardrobes have multiplied for the better. And we've begun to work on a new project with Dom Kennedy. He asked us to design his apartment! We're really excited about that because it's another one of our passions, designing spaces, and we get to design a rappers apartment.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DESIGNING AN APARTMENT AND A CLOTHING LINE? HOW DO YOU HAVE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY FOR THESE TWO?

It's a totally different process, but we both have this visual taste and sense of aesthetic that the more we put out, the more people respond to. Ever since we first started, even when we just had little displays of our first wallets, we always liked to create an environment for our products. Designing a space is like designing the environment for our clothing, or someone who would wear our clothing, would live in.

SO YOU MUST HAVE A STELLAR APARTMENT.

Yeah it's pretty fun. Our studio too. But we're always redesigning and redecorating.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INTEREST IN STARTING A WOMENSWEAR LINE IN THE FUTURE?

In the future. We definitely want to stay focused on our menswear and we think a lot of our pieces are somewhat unisex... If you're a cool girl. If you can handle it. We know exactly what were going to do for our womenswear, but we want to continue to establish ourselves as a menswear brand first.

