

A person is shown from the waist down, holding a dark blue Louis Vuitton bag with a gold chain strap. They are wearing a skirt with a large, light-colored pattern and high-heeled sandals. The background is a light blue sky.

SCOTT SCHUMAN TOMMY TON

STREET STYLE
PHOTOGRAPHY



beauty carefully staged, street style photography depicts people who are not necessarily models but fashion victims: chic and styled people such as Carine Roitfeld and Franca Sozzani, former editors-in-chief of *French* and *Italian Vogue*, or Anna Dello Russo, designer and fashion editor of *Vogue Japan*, fashion buyers, designers, students, and any other strikingly dressed visitors to fashion shows or just people in daily life who dress creatively and exceptionally. Street style photographs are mostly taken quickly, some by chance, but also by making the subject of desire pose, either during international fashion weeks in New York, Paris, and Milan, or while walking around hip city districts or past luxury department and concept stores.

The Nicola Erni Collection is presenting two of the most important and influential street style photographers and fashion bloggers—Scott Schuman and Tommy Ton—who have documented fashion and style trends since 2005.

Born in 1968 in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, Scott Schuman had worked in the fashion industry as a sales and marketing manager for fifteen years, eventually opening his own showroom for emerging designers before he launched his famous fashion blog “The Sartorialist” in 2005. Since the blog’s beginnings it has become hugely admired in the fashion industry and beyond. Today millions of people visit the website and on Instagram “The Sartorialist” now boasts 740,000 followers.² In addition to his work as a photographer and journalist for his blog, the self-taught photographer shoots for numerous magazines including *French* and *Italian Vogue*, *American GQ*, *Elle* and *Interview*, as well as for advertising clients.

Schuman’s interest lies in the fashion tastes of real people around the globe. In his words, he started “The Sartorialist” simply “to share photos of people I saw on the streets of New York that looked great. When I worked in the fashion industry, I always felt that there was a disconnect between what I was selling in the showroom and what I was seeing real people (really cool people) wearing in real life.”³ From then onward he has been acting like a modern trendscout taking photographs of people who have an individual style. Schuman is especially interested in how people combine clothes and focuses on the “how” of wearing clothes, instead of looking at models who are dressed for the catwalk. He said: “I try to make this blog more about style than fashion.”⁴ Not single brands are the focus but the individually combined outfits of the people. Attracted to details and unexpected style, he shows how people wear clothes in real life after they have bought them:

Ten years ago the fashion industry’s obsession with “street style” began. Before fashion shows start, swarms of street style photographers and fashion bloggers arrive, longing for pictures of fashion magazine editors, buyers, and directors dressed in extravagant outfits. Part of the “circus of fashion”¹ are also young girls and young designers dearly wishing to be photographed and discovered. Pocket-sized digital cameras and cell phones with built-in cameras enabled fashionably styled people on the street to be captured on film and shown straight away on fashion blogs.

Previously, while it was fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* which primarily molded the picture of fashion, it is now fashion blogs and street style photographers that have even conquered the realm of the classical fashion journal. Street fashion and how street fashion is worn are, more than ever before, essential to the creative and commercialisation processes of the fashion industry. They act as role models for major designers and fashion stores and influence the work of fashion editors and bloggers. Street style photography would not be as vital as it is nowadays without its founding father, Bill Cunningham, who died June 25, 2016, at the age of 87. Since the launch of his *New York Times* series, “On the Street,” in 1978, Cunningham contributed to establish a new method of reportage that captured trends and fashion lovers, both famous and unknown, in their most candid moments.

In contrast to fashion photography presented in high-gloss magazines, in which clothes and brands are usually highlighted and the ideal of female

1 Suzy Menkes in *The New York Times Style Magazine*, 02/10/2013.

2 www.spiegel.de/stil/scott-schuman-mode-blogger-sartorialist-bringt-bildband-x-raus-a-1067794.html

3 www.danzigergallery.com/artists/the-sartorialist

4 Nicola Erni and Ira Stehmann in conversation with Scott Schuman in New York City, 12/5/2013.

expensive single items get combined with garments from fleamarkets with personal favorites or cheap clothes. His photographs are shown on this website shortly after they have been taken.⁵ As alluded to in the name “sartorialist” (a person interested in tailoring), Schuman’s fascination lies in menswear. Since the outset, he has been a strong promoter of elegant and dandy-like stylish clothes.

From a formal point of view Schuman’s photographs show people in natural poses, from head to toe, positioned in the middle of the picture, either seated or standing. His photographs are mainly portrait format and colored. Often the light situation as well as the depth of focus play a major role, placing the figure at the glowing center of a picture, surrounded by a blurry background. By dedicating himself to the single figure, Schuman elevates it to the rank of a style icon. The items are easily recognizable and Schuman’s aesthetic stands in contrast to a development in fashion photography which has taken place over the past few years in which the clothes themselves dissolve in the decorative surroundings.

Schuman’s photographic paragons are August Sander, the great portraitist of *People of the Twentieth Century*,⁶ and Bruce Weber of whom he said that he is fascinated by the dignity and beauty Weber attributes to all his subjects and which seems to have informed his own portrait style.

Tommy Ton, born in 1984 in Oakville, Ontario, Canada to Vietnamese parents, fell in love with fashion when he was only thirteen years old and quickly became obsessed. He started working in the fashion industry at the early age of fifteen. Ever since then he has accumulated an immense knowledge of fashion design. In 2005 he founded a web magazine, named Jak & Jil which was officially launched as a fashion blog in 2008.⁷ In 2007, he visited Paris for the first time during fashion week to experiment with street style photography, a trend which was just taking off due to the pioneering work of Scott Schuman and Garance Doré. His reputation grew constantly, and in 2009 he was allowed to sit in the front row at Dolce & Gabbana’s fashion show in Milan, next to Schuman, Doré, and Bryanboy (aka Bryan Grey Yambao). All of a sudden, the photographers who had been shooting editors and buyers outside the shows were taking up seats that once belonged to their subjects. Shortly before the Dolce & Gabbana show Ton was asked to step into Schuman’s shoes at Style.com,⁸

where Schuman had been blogging on fashion weeks. From then on, he had the most high-profile street style photography coverage of fashion weeks including style.com (womenswear) and GQ.com (menswear). Following the discontinuation of Style.com⁹ Ton launched his own website, tommyton.com.¹⁰ Having an incredible knowledge of major collections and a well-trained eye, Ton instinctively knows which outfits are arresting and worth capturing.

Since competition amongst the dizzying throng of street style photographers at fashion weeks is fierce and most people copy Schuman’s signature style, Ton said early in his career: “I’m tired of taking head-to-toe shots. No one can touch Scott at those photos—he is the king.”¹¹ Ton instead decided to focus on details which caught his eagle-fashion-eye: close-ups of vivid accessories such as killer high-heels which can include a revolver or elegant and fancy bags—images also included in the works shown at the Nicola Erni Collection. Unlike Schuman, Ton has a preference for the landscape format which sets him apart as well. Most of his images are cropped and, adopting this technique, directs our eyes to outlandish and colorful dress patterns, multiple layers of bracelets and sparkling and precious watches. He also highlights contrasting materials and takes shots of people from behind walking away from the camera. His ability to frame the picture and to make a fetish out of the looks is outstanding. His photographs magically breathe the atmosphere and energy of fashion weeks.

Looking at Nicola Erni’s selection of street style photographs, it becomes quite apparent that she is not interested in celebrity shots of chief fashion magazine editors or directors but much more in the style of real people who have a personal aura as well as an individual and authentic style. Such photographs will probably be remembered since they have a mystical touch and are sincere documents of *zeitgeist* and style.

Ira Stehmann

5 thesartorialist.blogspot.com/

6 Cf. Gunter Sander (ed.): *August Sander: Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts Portraitphotographien von 1892–1952*, Munich 1994. Revered as a father of modern photography, August Sander (1876–1964) so refined the art of portraiture that his moving images of his fellow countrymen have been heralded both as an important sociological document and a photographic masterpiece.

7 The website Jak & Jil was sold by Tommy Ton and is today a platform for online fashion shopping.

8 This website was designed to broadcast Fashion Weeks online.

9 Conde Nast’s Style.com has been transferred to Vogue Runway where fashion shows past and present can be viewed online.

10 The site features more than 15,000 Ton-lensed images from the past decade, including those previously featured on Style.com, GQ.com and the photographer’s former blog, Jak & Jil.

11 www.businessoffashion.com/articles/business-blogging/the-business-of-blogging-tommy-ton

SCOTT SCHUMAN THE SARTORIALIST 2007-2013



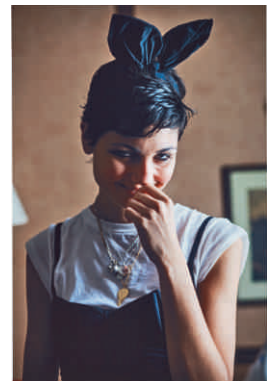












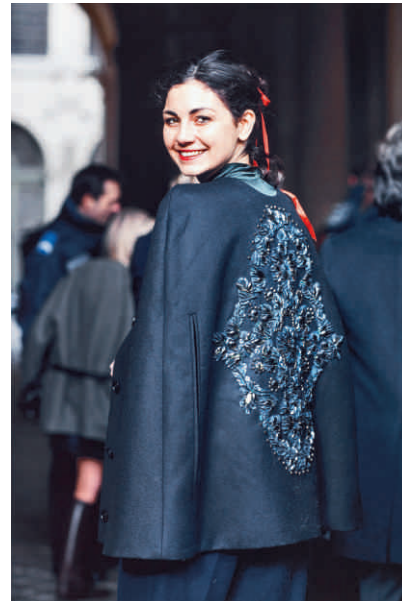


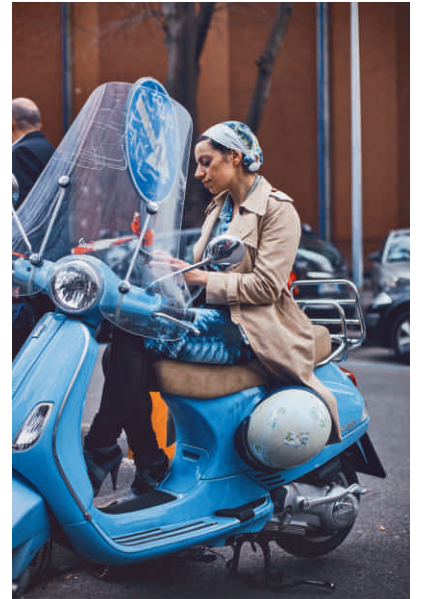














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