



coat, jacket, and pants:  
Lanvin Homme, waistcoat:  
Polo Ralph Lauren, shirt:  
Dior Homme, bow tie: Marc  
Jacobs, shoes: Pierre Hardy

photo: Chus Antón,  
styling: Ana Murillas

# SChOol of FasHion

## Vol. 1: Luis Venegas

What to read, watch, listen to, and know about to become a bullet-proof style expert. SULEMAN ANAYA (username: [vertiz136](#)) talked to the Spanish magazine mastermind LUIS VENEGAS about his list of references.

At 31, Luis Venegas is already a one-man editorial powerhouse. He produces and publishes three magazines that, though they have small print runs, have a near-religious following: the six-year-old *Fanzine 137* – a compendium of everything Venegas cares about, *Electric Youth (EY!) Magateen* – an oversized cornucopia of adolescent boyflesh started in 2008, and the highly lauded *Candy* – the first truly queer fashion magazine on the planet, which was launched last year. His all-encompassing, erudite view of the fashion universe is the foundation for Venegas' next big project: the fashion academy he plans to start in 2011. It will be a place where people, as he says, “who are interested in fashion learn about certain key moments from history, film and pop culture.” To get a preview of the curriculum at Professor Venegas' School of Fashion, Suleman Anaya paid Venegas a visit at his apartment in the Madrid neighborhood of Malasaña, a wonderful space that overflows with the collected objects of his boundless curiosity.

## Television

• *Dynasty* • *Dallas*

**What are you watching these days in your scarce spare time?**

I am in the middle of a *Dynasty* marathon. I have the entire series on DVD, so I am re-watching it. It's so entertaining and educational.

**That's true. I grew up with *Dynasty*. My parents used to send me to bed before it came on, so I would watch through the keyhole. It's a seminal show. Is there a character you identify with?**

Oh, I completely adore Alexis Colby – everything about her – from her bitchy English to her wonderfully crazy outfits.

**That's funny, I think I used to like Crystal more than I liked Alexis. In fact, I wanted to be her. You were way ahead of me for liking the cooler of the two rivals. What are your favorite fashion moments in *Dynasty*?**

There are two looks in this series that I particularly love. One is when the Alexis character, played by Joan Collins, is introduced for the first time. I don't know if you remember that in the first season Blake Carrington accidentally killed [his homosexual son] Steven's boyfriend, so there is a trial. The season ends with a new character appearing at the trial. It's Alexis, and she's wearing a Thierry Mugler-style white skirt-suit. The jacket has black insets on the sides that make her look even thinner than she already is. She wears this with a veiled hat and sunglasses. It's very dramatic and absolutely crazy. And there's another great fashion moment, also in the first season, when Fallon wears a red dress with white sleeves – it's really great. *Dynasty* is my favorite TV series ever.

**What about *Dallas*? That one was also hugely formative for me.**

Yeah, *Dallas* is great. But it's different because in *Dallas* they live on a ranch, you know? I mean come on, it's not the same thing. In *Dynasty* they have this palatial place with an amazing library and that insane staircase – how many times did a character fall down those stairs?! And you know, in *Dynasty*, when they wore furs it was real fur. Same thing with the diamonds. Nothing was ever fake on that show. Especially Joan Collins' character. What she wears is real Valentino and Chanel from that time. And I love the fact that the evil woman is from Europe – it's such an American idea of casting. And Crystal is this blond, healthy, homemaking ideal of American femininity. It's funny.



## Magazines

- *American Vogue* • *Interview Magazine*

### What magazines do you read, now or in the past, that you consider influential?

Well this answer may come as a surprise, but I LOVE American *Vogue*. It's the honest vision of one person (Anna Wintour) who knows exactly what she wants, who she wants to reach, and how she wants it done. And let's not forget that before he died, American *Vogue* was the only magazine still publishing Irving Penn, which is a huge deal for me. They also published some brave stories by Helmut Newton. American *Vogue* is a reference. It is the magazine that other magazines are measured by. For instance people will say, "Purple is so independent and sexy and blah blah blah," which may be true, but what are you comparing it to? The answer is – and always is – *Vogue*. And when you say *Vogue* what you really mean is American *Vogue* because that magazine is America. It started there. So it's the standard and that is something. I also love *Interview*.

## Movies

- *The Women* • *Valentino: The Last Emperor* • *The Eyes of Laura Mars* • *Working Girl* • *Ordinary People* • *Kramer vs. Kramer* • *Hannah and her Sisters* • *Interiors* • *Xanadu* • *Darling* • *To Die For* • *Everything by Brian de Palma* • *Noah Baumbach's work*

### What movies will be on your students' viewing list?

One movie that is very important is *The Women* from 1939 by George Cukor. Joan Crawford is in it, who by the way was the screenwriter's main reference in developing the Joan Collins character for *Dynasty*. The movie starts with this amazing scene of women going to a spa and it is total Hollywood glamor. You can clearly see it's a set. But everything is so fast and sharp – what they say, how they look, the things they do. The whole movie is in black and white until one moment when they go to this big fancy department store to see a fashion show. And just for that scene, the movie switches to color. Only for that scene! It is such a declaration to the importance of fashion, and very unusual for its time. Imagine being a young woman in the 30s, going to the cinema and seeing this. At a time when there was no TV, no internet, and fashion shows were something very few people got to see. It must have been tremendous.

### What else would you make your students watch?

Well, I love all the new fashion documentaries. Like the Valentino one [by Matt Tyrnauer]. For me, these movies are changing the way of doing fashion documentaries.

### I am more interested in non-fashion movies that have informed you in some way.

There are too many. *The Eyes of Laura Mars* is one, with Faye Dunaway as a fashion photographer. Some of the pictures you see in the movie that are supposed to be hers are actually by Helmut Newton. Of course, *Working Girl* with Melanie Griffith is very relevant because it speaks so well about the 80s in New York. Sigourney Weaver plays this powerful executive and dresses the part. The whole film captures a very special

time in cultural history. Women were coming into powerful positions, from Margaret Thatcher to normal, everyday career women. But also, this new consciousness about bodies was emerging. In the 70s, nobody went to the gym. It all started in the 80s with Bruce Weber's pictures and Herb Ritts' photographs of athletes. Jane Fonda started doing her workout videos during this era too. *Laura Mars* expresses all this so well. All the idiosyncrasies of the period are pitch perfect. I watch it at least once a year.

**I think that 80s movies set in New York, even not so good or lesser-known ones, are great for the certain feel of the time that they convey, mostly in the details.**

I agree. In fact my friend and I have invented a genre for movies that have that feeling you are talking about. We call it 'Autumn in America'. Everything is kind of beige and brown, with some red and a bit of green. It's also connected to this other fascination that I have with Ralph Lauren and American preppiness in general. I love the look of Republican, middle-class America and collegiate life. Robert Redford's *Ordinary People* is another movie where you can see that. There's also *Kramer vs. Kramer*, which is great.

**That's one of my favorite movies of all time. I remember when I first saw it; it made such an impression on me.** Meryl Streep wears a Burberry trench when she comes to see their little kid. For me, THAT is fashion.

**But everything is so tied to a certain idea of life in the city, and specifically New York. That is so powerful. Those scenes in Central Park, the way the city looks, so anonymous and urban, what the characters wore, even their problems, like divorce, seemed so appealingly sophisticated to me as a kid. Woody Allen's films and Kramer are what made me want to move to New York, which I eventually did.**

It's also a bit like Alan Rudolph movies and, yes, definitely Woody Allen. For me the Woody Allen movie that shows what we are talking about best is *Hannah and her Sisters*. In general, I think the movies he made with Mia Farrow are his best.

**There's also Interiors, which is great.**

Oh my God, when Geraldine Page walks into the ocean to die, that's amazing.

**Ok let's move away from the beige beige East Coast. What else should Professor Venegas' students watch?**

Even though its very camp, I think *Xanadu* is really great. Have you seen it?

**Yes, my first boyfriend, Tommie, who wore a cowboy hat and thought he was David Bowie, made me watch it one strung-out morning after returning from the Endup, which was a club in San Francisco around 2000. In love and high, I thought it was the best movie ever, especially the songs and, of course, Olivia Newton-John.**

Olivia Newton-John was the seed of Britney Spears and all the other Disneyish, dumb blondes that are kind of sexy but also fresh and innocent. They are very different from the Marilyn Monroe type, which is much more overtly sexual.

**Yes, they have that girly American thing going, it's a very un-European form of sexiness.**

I loved when Olivia Newton-John appeared on *Glee* recently. She played a bitchy version of herself. It was really great. *Darling* is also an amazing movie everyone should see. Julie Christie plays this ambitious girl who would do anything to advance socially. It reminds me of my favorite Nicole Kidman movie, *To Die For*. There are so many more movies that are essential. All the Brian de Palma ones. And, among recent stuff, Noah Baumbach's films remind me of bit of the 'Autumn in America' genre.



## Books

### Biographies

• Cheryl Tiegs • Kathleen Turner • Nancy Regan • Liz Tilberis • Yves Saint Laurent • Jean Shrimpton • *Front Row: Anna Wintour; The Cool Life and Hot Times of Vogue's Editor in Chief*

### Photo Books

• *Irving Penn's Passage* • Helmut Newton • Richard Avedon

### Novels

• Jules Verne • *Crime and Punishment* • James Joyce's *Ulysses* • John Irving's books (especially *The Hotel New Hampshire* and *The World According to Garp*)

**I love your library, Luis. You have a Sophia Loren cookbook next to biographies by Cheryl Tiegs and Kathleen Turner next to Proust and some major fashion photography tomes!**

I do love biographies. I also have Nancy Reagan's, Liz Tilberis', Yves Saint Laurent's, and a lot of others. But if there was a fire and I could only save one book from my collection, I would take my copy of Irving Penn's *Passage*. It's like a greatest hits of Penn, who is my favorite photographer. People are always surprised when I say that, because his work is not obviously sexy. But he was so himself whenever he shot something. The book spans his whole career, everything he did starting in 1938. It is real fashion history and fashion at its best. Penn did things nobody had done before and they are still influential. Of course, I also adore Richard Avedon and Helmut Newton. I mean, with Penn, THEY ARE THE HOLY TRINITY OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY. They are the fathers of everything that is being done. If you want to learn anything about fashion photography, go look at them first and then you can look at others. (Of course, the three are very different. Penn was always looking inside of himself, while Avedon was always looking at what was happening around him. Penn was more into shapes and colors, Avedon into civil rights. And Newton was always into sex, women, and fun, in a very German way.)

### Do you read fiction?

I love biographies of models. I love to read about these girls who are sometimes supposed to be used by the industry, but also become these beings that are idealized by many people. It's interesting for me to read about how they feel and talk about themselves and how they are often not lacking in love. They are like novels but about real people. And I like to read about their relationships with photographers – both professional and personal – because it teaches me things about the photographer too. For instance if you read Jean Shrimpton's biography, you learn a lot about David Bailey.

### Anna Wintour looks like rat on the cover of *Front Row*. Is it any good?

I also like the gossip books, tell-alls, like the one about Anna. And I like her as a person. I like women that have triumphed through talent but also through sheer ambition – or rather passion. Pushing and pushing till you get what you want. There is something very honest about that. Wintour is an example of somebody who completely became who she wanted to be. I like that about her.

### Any more books or types of books that you recommend? Your required reading list is so eclectic.

Well, you must know your classics. I read them all as a kid and they still inform my

work and how I see the world. Jules Verne, *Crime and Punishment*, even James Joyce's *Ulysses*. More contemporary works in the same vein are John Irving's books *The Hotel New Hampshire* and *The World According to Garp*. He's like a contemporary Dickens. The great thing about a big book is that it stays with you for a long time and you carry it with you everywhere you go, so you develop a long relationship with it. In a way, when you are really absorbed with something you are reading, it's like a relationship with a boyfriend – you don't ever want it to end. I think it's really important and good for you.

## Icons

• *Diana Vreeland* • *Yves Saint Laurent* • *Halston* • *Rei Kawakubo* • *Christian Lacroix* • *Linda Evangelista*

**Who are the most important figures to you, in fashion or outside of it, that your students should know about?**

In fashion, Diana Vreeland is probably my number one. But also Yves Saint Laurent and Halston, who for me is like the American Saint Laurent. Then definitely Rei Kawakubo and, on the opposite end, Christian Lacroix. I like Lacroix very much and love what he does – the amazing mixes of colors and patterns. I hate nothing more than when so-called style experts say things like “polka dots don't match with stripes.” I love the fact that in a single Lacroix outfit you could have lace, polka dots, stripes, yellow, green, fur, and more. And it all somehow works in this amazing way. I miss Lacroix's haute couture shows. It makes me sad that they are over. How is it possible that someone like Alexander Wang is successful and Lacroix goes bankrupt? I just don't understand the logic behind that.

**Who else is iconic?**

We can't talk about icons without talking about my favorite model of all time: Linda Evangelista. All her work just makes your jaw drop. She put so much energy into that fierce expressive face, even in more naturalistic pictures taken by Corinne Day and Juergen Teller. With Linda, it's like with some great actresses, you always get Linda. It's not the character or look you see but Linda's take on it. To me, Linda Evangelista is what Bette Davis must be to people in their 60s. You had to be there to get it. I appreciate Bette Davis, no doubt, but she didn't form me in the way Linda did. So when I tell people about her, I feel like I am talking about some bygone greatness but it is true – I was there when Linda was amazing and I clearly remember her in that Galliano collection where she was wearing that incredible, big yellow gown (John Galliano SS95). It was on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar*, when Tilberis was doing *Bazaar* with Fabian Baron. And there was Linda, looking like the most glamorous Tweety Bird ever.

**Models play an important role in your great narrative of fashion. Would students at your academy have to know their models?**

Well they would certainly have to know the three main generations of supermodeldom. There is the first generation: Linda, Christy, Cindy, etc. After that came the generation of Amber Valetta and Shalom Harlow. It was at the same time that Stella Tennant and Kirsty Hume came out, along with many others. Michelle Hicks for instance could be

a great model to come back at a Givenchy show now. Most people would go, “Who the fuck is that?” But a few people who know her would recognize her immediately and would understand what she represents. Trish Goff is from that group too. Then there is the third generation that includes Erin O'Connor, Karen Elson, and Audrey Marnay. I love all those girls.

## Fashion Moments

• *Me asking Jerry Hall to take off her diamond ring* • *The FW94 Chanel collection* • *The collaboration between H&M and Karl Lagerfeld (Autumn 2004)* • *The debut of Hedi Slimane at Dior Homme (2000)* • *Seeing Rei Kawakubo in the front row of an LVMH show*

**Linda as Tweety on the cover of *Bazaar* is such a classic and era-defining moment. Tell me some of your other favorite fashion moments. Let's start with a personal memory, since you have so many in your short life.**

I did an internship with Thierry Mugler in 1996. It was the season when he did his first haute couture show. The same season when Jean-Paul Gaultier did his first haute couture show too and when Galliano did his first Dior show – the one with the Masai women. It was also the season that McQueen did his first show for Givenchy. A magical time really. I was in charge of the gloves for the Mugler collection. So I remember one day there was this commotion because Jerry Hall was in the house. And she had on this huge diamond ring that she was supposed to take off to wear this delicate Mugler glove. So here I was, this 18-year-old kid from Spain, in the heart of Paris high fashion, standing in front of Jerry Hall, faced with the task of telling her she needs to take the biggest rock I had ever seen off her hand. How do you do that? So I chose to flatter her instead and said, “Jerry, what an amazing ring you have on.” She responded simply, saying, “It's Mick's gift.”

**That is incredible. I am jealous. What else?**

In terms of essential knowledge, there was a Chanel collection – I think it was 1993 or 1994 – that I think is one of the best moments in modern fashion. The current fall collection actually reminds me a bit of it. This 90s collection also had fake furs but in bright colors, like yellow and green, with a mix of gold. It was totally Chanel but done in a young way. Kind of a nouveau riche take on Chanel. It was also around this time that a black girl was doing a Chanel campaign for this first time. The model was Brandi Quinones.

**That's quite a name, I've never heard of her.**

Yes, she is absolutely forgotten now. Recently I saw her – like four seasons ago in a Givenchy show. Riccardo Tisci cast her. He sometimes uses obscure models from the past. But that Chanel collection was great and it was at the time when Karl Lagerfeld was really fat. He used to openly talk about how much he liked McDonald's – imagine him saying that now!

**I think he'd rather be caught gloveless than biting into a Big Mac today. With the singular transformation he has undergone, Lagerfeld's persona is his best creation.**

Well, he is the contemporary Warhol. Everybody in the world knows him. By the way, the collaboration between H&M and Lagerfeld is a very important great fashion moment too. It meant something. It started something and it was very clever. I think it's good to

do things that make people dream. You can be a snob about something like H&M and Lagerfeld but if it helps someone, somewhere live out a fantasy because he gets to dress in Lagerfeld, I say it's a good thing. I should have bought one of those T-shirts with his face on it to keep in my closet and bring out after 15 years, because it's a fantastic document of its time. It changed the rules.

**With Mugler, Chanel, and H&M, your view of fashion culture is really broad. Like a liberal arts education.**

I also have to add one more crucial fashion moment to those: the debut of Hedi Slimane at Dior Homme. Of course we know that before Dior Homme, he was doing great things at Saint Laurent. But there is a picture by the French photographer Gauthier Gallet (who recently died at a young age) of the audience at Slimane's very first show for Dior Homme. The photo captures this moment in all its significance. There, sitting together in the front row, you see Karl Lagerfeld, Stephen Gan, Suzy Menkes, Pierre Bergé, Bernard Arnault, and Rei Kawakubo (Rei Kawakubo attending a show – that never happens!!). To see all these people at the debut of a not-yet-well-known designer is amazing. But to see Rei at the front row of an LVMH show, that's just fantastic. It is as great as fashion moments come.

**Any other fashion moments?**

The John Galliano collection (John Galliano SS95) from before he was at Dior. It was very black and inspired by the 50s allure of Irving Penn photos. Madonna is wearing a Galliano jacket from that collection in the video for "Take a Bow." For me, that's the collection that got him hired at Dior.

## Spanish Icons

• *Julio Iglesias* • *Isabel Preysler* • *Naty Abascal*

**I read somewhere that you like Julio Iglesias. We have that in common. Julio was like a surrogate father to me growing up. My mom was a huge fan, so we listened to him at home all the time.**

People are going to crucify me for saying this but I think he is a fashion icon too. For Latin people, he is The Greatest. He was one of the first singers who did the same songs in Italian, German, English, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese, etc. As a result, he is a completely global star. And while he doesn't have much of a voice and hardly any volume, he does have recognizable, personal style: he sings everything like he is having an orgasm. Whether you want to admit it or not, he is sexy.

**He does sound like he is dying.**

He's dying of pleasure. And now he lives in Punta Cana with his wife and their many children and they all dress in white all the time. They look like a church.

**He gets extra points in my book for having married Isabel Preysler. I mean, talk about class, the woman personifies it. She's untouchable. In the same league as Bianca Jagger.**

She is the most elegant person in Spain. It's funny that she was able to attain that level of untouchability, as you say, and maintain it, because she has been married to everyone. To Iglesias of course, a pop singer, then to a marquis, then to a finance minister during the socialist period (they had a place with 14 bathrooms!). And throughout, she kept her aura of elegance intact. It's quite a feat.

**Let's talk about another fascinating and sometimes elegant Spanish lady: Naty Abascal. As a teenager, I used to think she was the epitome of style after seeing her in every copy of *Hola* at my German orthodontists. Then recently, when I saw her in the Valentino documentary so desperate for attention, that image was shattered a bit. Is she a nut job, iconic, or both?**

Yeah, it's easy to make fun of her. But she is a real Spanish fashion icon of the highest order. She was friends with Avedon, painted by Dali, hung out with Warhol, and even had a part in a Woody Allen movie. She has done and seen everything. She is living history. People tend to forget that because sometimes on TV she looks like this crazy drunk woman. But she has earned the right to be a little off. And she is a hard worker too. I have a story about Naty that shows how great she is. For a very brief period, like seven months, I worked as an art director for Spanish *Marie Claire* – it was the worst time in my life. So one day during that time, me and a group of Spanish fashion people, including Naty Abascal, were in Paris for the collections and had to get from the Lacroix show to Valentino. We had maybe like an hour between the two shows and traffic was insane. It was impossible to move or find a taxi. Naty of course was at her best, you know, dressed in full-on Valentino and a fur. And yet it was her who promptly announced, "Oh no, we're taking the metro." So we rode the metro and it was amazing because she did not behave like a tourist. She knew where to buy the ticket, that you have to move quickly, where to switch to a different metro line... I mean, she wasn't a princess lost in this mortal environment. She knew exactly what she was doing. And it was rush hour, so the metro was full of normal Parisians going home from work, really crowded. And there she was in her furs and polka dots, with the big hair. People were blown away by her presence on the train but she was totally unperturbed. That's when I really gained respect for her. I said to myself, she is Somebody. She is a worker. She knew her way around the metro from her days when she was modeling and lived in Paris. Her glamorous life hadn't erased the practical woman in her.

**Hmm, so maybe she's a bit bananas but also thoroughly modern. I like that.**

Yes, and she's had her share of tough personal stuff too. Did you know she married a duke with whom she had those two amazing sons but then the duke turned out to be a pedophile! It was a big scandal here in Spain. So she sent her boys to New York to live with Oscar de la Renta and Carolina Herrera. And then he died. She didn't speak much about it publicly or dwell on it, but just went on to reinvent herself as this new persona.

**A lot of the things and people we have talked about are also examples of how style can encompass some elements of trash or so-called bad taste.**

Absolutely. I am against good taste. I prefer to play with the idea of what's considered bad taste, because good taste is the safe option. If you look at *Candy*, before it first came out I would tell people I am going to make a magazine about transsexuals and transvestites and they would say, "Oh," somewhat skeptically. And now it's hot. But it meant taking a risk. It's a bit like Julio Iglesias or Dolly Parton, who many people might think are tacky. Also, I love bright things. I don't like when things are too dark or sad. To give you an example, I have no clue about Joy Division. I don't really know what New Order is. I am not saying it's bad, it just does not interest me. ★