

CLASSIC DRIVER

Cotton Candies: The girls of American Apparel

Lead

Colourful cotton and bare skin: no other fashion label embodies the hipster movement of the noughties as strongly as American Apparel – not least because of the frivolous adverts, which showed innocent girl-next-door types sprawled in unambiguous poses.

There are no statistics available on the number of accidents caused by the girls from American Apparel as the young ladies basked on their billboards on Sunset Boulevard, openly demonstrating the benefits of skin-tight leggings or transparent swimsuits, watching the commuters below them. The sight of bare skin is nothing unusual in Los Angeles, but in combination with amateur aesthetics, suburban teenage innocence and the breathy promise of full lips, the ads are strangely provocative. In the UK, some of the more sexually charged images were banned.





Behind the company which uses the label 'Made in the USA' and promises fair wages for more sustainable fashion production is the Canadian CEO Dov Charney. The founder of American Apparel is not just the face of simple, slogan-free clothing, but also the ad campaigns, and many of the models that are seen lounging in brief underwear or aerobics outfits work as saleswomen for the company or were 'spotted' by Charney on his travels. Unlike such competitors as H&M or GAP, American Apparel does not heavily Photoshop its models – a suggestion of leg hair or dark spots all adds to the credibility of the image.





However, this ‘aesthetic of authenticity’ is often only a hair’s breadth from pornography. As a formative influence on fashion photography in the new millennium, it has nevertheless gone down in advertising history.

Related Links

Archived ads from American Apparel can be found at www.americanapparel.net

Photos: American Apparel

Gallery

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