



THOROUGHLY MODERN KARLIE

From the snappy cut of her bob to the tips of her *JAZZ* fingers, *Karlie Kloss* is the modern flapper girl. Enter the world of *Gatsby*, where the dresses shimmy, the jewels *DAZZLE* and the stars shine bright.

VOGUE

AUSTRALIA

THE FLAPPER WEARS PRADA

MIUCCIA PRADA brings her *magic* to the brilliant party costumes of *The Great Gatsby*. Enter stage left: Karlie Kloss and Justin Peck. By HARRIET QUICK. Photographed by ARTHUR ELGORT.

Prada sequined fringed dress. Tiffany & Co. hand bracelet. Miu Miu shoes. New York City Ballet soloist Justin Peck wears an American Apparel T-shirt. T by Alexander Wang pants. Prada shoes. **Previous page:** Prada sequined organza dress. Tiffany & Co. necklace and ring. Miu Miu shoes. Fashion details last pages. **Fashion editor** Natasha Royt

This will be a short interview, as I did not do that much!" says Miuccia Prada with a laugh that makes her diamond and amethyst drop earrings sway wildly, casting glimmering refractions over her freckled, gently tanned face. With this humble "not that much",

Miuccia is referring to the 40 costumes that she collaborated on with Baz Luhrmann for his film *The Great Gatsby*, a brilliant, ambitious and provocative adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's seminal novel about power, vanity, money, love, betrayal and desire that takes place in Long Island and New York in the 1920s Jazz Age against the looming cloud of the Great Depression.

"I don't remember if I read *The Great Gatsby* when I was young – maybe I remember more clearly seeing the movie [the 1974 version starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow]. When I spoke with Baz, about my help in doing the movie, I read it again, as he was interested in being very, very loyal to the text; very precise to the book. That was his intention – at least, that's what I understood," explains Miuccia of her entry into the project. Although this conversation happened some years back, Miuccia describes it with the clarity of an event that occurred yesterday.

"The problem that interested me most when I first spoke to Baz was in regards to not just the clothes but also the cars, and also the homes of the period: was it better to stick with the originals, so the dresses are all really from the 1920s? Or create a more

contemporary version, so they would look in a way even more 20s? So I left him with this dilemma, as he had still to decide whether he wanted to stick with the historical or whether he wanted to show the energy and the feeling, the spirit of modernity today."

Miuccia says she was "very happy" that Luhrmann decided to capture the spirit of the age rather than keep to historical accuracy. For a start, that decision meant they could work together again. Their friendship dates back some 16 years, when Miuccia designed Leonardo DiCaprio's suit for *Romeo + Juliet*.

To be precise, Miuccia collaborated on the costumes for the two big party scenes that take place in the grounds of Jay Gatsby's immaculate neoclassical mansion; the type of home that still is "the dream" for newly minted moguls today.

It's with these glittering party scenes that Luhrmann really outdoes himself in the mastery of the big choreographed bonanza. Flapper girls dancing, music produced by Jay-Z, towers of champagne and a blinding display of diamonds and sequins bring Gatsby's illusionary world to life. Gatsby, just like Luhrmann and Miuccia and, indeed, Fitzgerald, prefers to observe and orchestrate such dazzling mirages rather than go to parties himself. They all share a bittersweet taste for the trappings of vanity.

"The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names," observes the narrator of the book, Nick Carraway, who is played by Tobey Maguire.

The air-kissing, superficiality and obsession over status and pedigree is as relevant to our current age as the Jazz Age of Fitzgerald's novel. And this is where Miuccia's offhand and perverse way with glamour, her taste for exaggeration and avoidance of cliché work so brilliantly.

Designs include a shimmering striped "flapper shift" covered in giant sequins and a matching fox fur stole inspired by the Prada spring/summer '11 collection; a vibrant orange and plastic fishscale-embroidered dress from the same year; and an inky blue embroidered raw-edged Miu Miu slip. The *pièce de résistance* is a dress created for the character Daisy Buchanan (played by Carey Mulligan), which is covered in crystal chandelier drops from Prada's 2010 collection (and which features on the cover of this issue).

"Baz wanted to show the distance between old money and new money and show the wife [Daisy] to be both a lover and a kind of trophy, so she dresses ..." says Miuccia with a broad smile, "... like a chandelier! In the show, that dress was about light, and in the film it is about money."

All the costumes were inspired by looks in the Prada and Miu Miu archives; statement designs that have previously wooed press and buyers on the runways, set the tone of collections and, in a bigger sense, epitomised what is "fashion".

"Catherine Martin analysed my archive and gave some ideas of what could work. What also interested me was that something that was not meant to be 20s at all could look so

20s in the film. Pieces on the runway that were meant to be a completely different story look perfect in the film as 1920s avant-garde modernism – and it all works – and that for me was impressive. Of course, we did variations in colours and lengths, and also [Martin] did all the hats and so much more ... so it's not like I did a *big job!*"

This is not the first time a fashion designer has collaborated with a film director, but the story of *The Great Gatsby* is also a story of how two brilliant minds of a generation collide and combine to create something of meaning and substance. Baz Luhrmann and Miuccia Prada are both artists who change the way we perceive the world and how we are perceived within it; and both refer back to history to shine a light on our present in miraculous ways. Just as one can never predict what we will next see walking down a Prada or Miu Miu runway, one never knows what new ambitions Luhrmann has for the big screen.

Both never shy away from a challenge, whether that's turning heavy, thick tweed and raw-edged leather into some of the season's most desirable and ravishing dresses, as Miuccia Prada did for autumn/winter, or turning a great American novel, which has been endlessly interpreted on stage and in film, into a hugely entertaining as well as piercing parable of our times. It is no wonder that Baz Luhrmann and Miuccia Prada, two great alchemists, are also great friends.

"Anytime we can meet, we meet. For instance, the last time we met was for *Impossible Conversations*," says Miuccia, referring to the brilliantly madcap exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum ▶

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ARTHUR ELGORT

CROSS THE LINE
Prada sequined dress
and fur stole. Tiffany &
Co. necklace and
bracelet. Miu Miu shoes.



STEP RIGHT UP
Prada satin dress.
La Crasia gloves, from
lacrasiaigloves.com.
Miu Miu shoes.

ARTHUR ELGORT





EVENING STAR
Prada sequined
textured satin dress.
Stylist's own headband.

Hair: Rutger
Make-up: Makky
Model: Karlie Kloss/
IMG Models

ARTHUR ELGORT

of Art in New York, which Luhrmann co-curated and in which Miuccia has an “impossible conversation” with the legendary designer Elsa Schiaparelli.

“It’s difficult to describe a director and a friend – what I would say is so special about Baz is his vast and open intelligence and his energy, his incredible and generous vision. His brain is very quick and subtle – he can do so many things in one moment.”

Miuccia has an equally mercurial brain and enjoys vast interests that criss-cross art, architecture, film and music. She also has a very lively sense of elegance. Today, she is wearing a pencil skirt, a thick navy blue sweater, red crackled leather stilettos and a matching car coat. Her amber eyes, just like her earrings, are constantly dancing – darting back and forth over her modernist office, which features wall-to-wall windows, two desks stacked high with books and a meeting table surrounded by moulded plastic chairs in orange and off-white, the crackled finish of which might (or might not have) inspired her shoes. You can never assume anything in Pradaland or, indeed, much about Miuccia’s real life. The truth is, she has just returned from a holiday in Mexico, where she joined her son on a car rally. Exciting? “Not as a mother!” she shrieks with anxiety.

A mother, yes, but this is also a woman who, even in her mid-60s, is not shy of thrills herself. In her office is the entrance to a giant aluminium tube: a curlicue slide that swooshes down through four floors to deposit you on the concrete courtyard below. She commissioned the piece from the artist Carsten Höller and has enjoyed the ride quite a few times. The slide is one of many pieces of art that she and her husband Patrizio Bertelli have collected for the Prada Foundation. Miuccia seems constantly surprised at the choices she makes herself, whether that’s a taste for banana-shaped earrings, studded rockabilly jackets, giant wedge-soled brogues or giddy-making artworks.

It’s that element of surprise that makes Prada Prada and keeps us interested, delighted and coming back for more. In today’s world (overcalculated, overanalysed and oversystemised), Miuccia as a designer is endlessly stimulating; she keeps the dialogue about clothes and self vivid on the runway and in the reality of stores (in 70 countries around the world). The Prada business generated \$4 billion in net revenue last financial year and employs more than 7,800 staff globally to design, make and sell millions of products, from delicate lingerie to the flower-patterned fur coats and cartoonish geisha sandals of this summer’s collection (yes, you can even design your own pair) to crazy sunglasses and sublime perfume.

“I go by intuition – I move with intuition – it is afterwards that I have to search the knowledge in order to rationalise it!” Is that a

learnt intuition? “I go where I am attracted – I never thought of it as a discipline – I follow a track that is my own track,” says Miuccia of her process, which even during our conversation she is questioning and exploring.

“If you have 10 books in front of you why do you take one? Also, what I think is interesting is following chance in life. While in Mexico, I saw an incredible photography exhibition of a little-known photographer and I was there by chance and it really moved

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me. So there are some things you want to pursue and others that just happen ... so these ‘jumps’ between things are also dictated by chance.

“This is the way I learn from myself; I do ‘jumps’ without any system. It’s the same way with the art collection. Usually a collector collects with a system; my husband and I, we collect what we like – it’s what I call a learning process – it goes with interests, one thing leads to another.”

Miuccia is on an incredible journey. From being an “outsider”, critical and maybe uncomfortable with the superficiality of fashion, she has over the past few years fallen in love anew with her profession. She proudly states that she is now “one of fashion’s biggest defenders”.

“What is so great about fashion is that you can react immediately and express yourself every six months. Good designers really do represent the moment.

“The biggest challenge is keeping in contact with people – you cannot ‘follow’, you have to be in symbiosis, to be part of the whole process – if you are in touch you can design what is relevant to people. I try to be popular, and this is the most challenging part of what we do. It’s easier to do a few pieces that the cognoscenti understand but if you want to be commercial in a good way you have to retain both creativity and commerce and that is difficult but it’s what I like: if I do something I think is good and people like it, that’s what is so rewarding. *We try!*”

Popularity, touching the souls of the people and remaining creative, that’s what bonds Miuccia and Luhrmann. “Of all the arts, I’m so interested in the film director’s profession and respect it very much – how a director has to have culture, intelligence, ideas and express himself in a way that is ‘popular’ and touch the spirit of many people.

“It is very important today that culture and art does not stay ‘closed off’ in a secluded group of smart people. The more you are cultivated, the more you are clever, the more you have to confront and communicate with many people.”

And with that, Miuccia Prada has to get back to her studio. As Fitzgerald recognised, some people – for their hope, perception and also for their immense talent – deserve the word “great”. ■